TROPICAL NARRATIVES:
STUDIES IN A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY POETIC OF DESIRE AND WRITING

by

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Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 1986

ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to re-evaluate the role of trope in English late-medieval poetic narratives. The main texts included in this study are The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Lydgate's Temple of Glas, The Kingis Quair, Skelton's Bowge of Court and Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, and The Isle of Ladies. Material drawn from other late-medieval texts is used for comparative and illustrative purposes.

Study of these texts suggests that trope should be approached as a constitutive element of narrative structure, and so, while a particular use of familiar trope emerges in this study, the thesis also offers a methodology of reading which may be useful for understanding late-medieval narrative poems in general.

One of the major issues discussed in the thesis is the relation of the individual text to a poetic discourse which is seen as pre-given and in determining relation to narrative structures. The thesis traces the emergence of a range of metaphors for the discussion of poetic and linguistic issues in narrative poems themselves. In particular, images of navigation are isolated as a major metaphorics of writing seen as an activity which engages with a problematics of the control of a pre-given discourse. Thus the thesis identifies the use made of trope, in a fifteenth-century poetic, to provide a comprehensive language for the discussion of meta-fictional and meta-linguistic issues.

The introductory chapter examines the implications for fifteenth-century narrative of its response to an inherited (mainly) Chaucerian poetic discourse. The second section of this chapter also provides a study of the possible role of trope in narrative texts. The claim that trope is a constitutive element of narrative structures is tested by a reading of The Floure and the Leafe in section three of this chapter. In section four The Assembly of Ladies is studied as a text which exemplifies fifteenth-century narrative poems' self-consciousness about the writing process.

Chapter Two examines Chaucer's strategies towards lyric trope in Troilus and Criseyde, and then discusses Lydgate's reading of those strategies of The Temple of Glas. The objective of this chapter is to point out some of the different responses to the use of lyric tropes in poetic narrative. In Chapter Three The Kingis Quair is studied as a text which fictionalises the pleasure and confidence which may accrue from the 'mastery' or control of poetic discourse both past and present. In contrast, in Chapter Four, Skelton's Bowge of Courte presents a fiction of the anxieties of writing within a specific, prescribed poetic discourse. In this poem Skelton generates a narrative from the use of the typical anxieties of the conventional modesty topos. Skelton's Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, provides a contrast to The Bowge for while it uses similar metaphors for its discussion of poetic issues, it constructs a fiction of poetic virtuosity; of over-confidence rather than high anxiety.

Finally, in Chapter Five a study of The Isle of Ladies suggests that this text may stand as a comprehensive overview of fifteenth-century writers' knowing use of commonplace tropes and also of the relation of the individual text to its pre-given intertextually constituted, poetic discourse.

TRO'PICAL. *adj.* [from *trope*]

1. Rhetorically changed from the original meaning.

   A strict and literal acceptation of a loose and *tropical* expression was a second ground. *Brown's Vulgar Errours.*

   The words are *tropical* or figurative, and import an hyperbole, which is a way of expressing things beyond what really and naturally they are in themselves. *South's Sermons.*

   The foundation of all parables is, some analogy or similitude between the *tropical* or allusive part of the parable, and the thing intended by it. *South's Sermons.*

2. [From *tropic.*] Placed near the tropick; belonging to the tropick.

   The pine apple is one of the *tropical* fruits. *Salmon.*

Samuel Johnson,
A Dictionary of the English Language.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of writing this thesis many people have been generous with their help, encouragement and time. I would like to thank especially Catherine Batt, Clare Lees, Fran Little and Roz Yu.

My thanks to Pat Brooksbank and Margaret Burton for typing, and David Guy for proof-reading and final checking.

I owe my greatest thanks to Nick Davis, whose supervision has always kept good faith with the tropics of fifteenth-century poetry despite my own often erratic navigations in those waters. Other debts of help and scholarship have been acknowledged at the appropriate points throughout the following chapters.

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PREFACE

There is a tendency for strange things to happen in the fifteenth-century narratives discussed in this thesis. Fervent solar heat causes havoc amongst a party of knights and ladies; sixty thousand knights manage to travel across the ocean in only three ships; a prison suddenly evaporates to leave a gaoled narrator-figure (who has, in any case, just returned from a journey to the Zodiac) free to love his flower. While there is much, then, that strikes us as peculiar in these texts, they do not seem to be concerned to build internally coherent fantasy or magical worlds. In this sense they are not 'realist' texts. Rather, these narratives appear to use magic to arrest the flow of linear, sequential narrative action, and thus to focus the reader's attention on the constituent elements of narrative structure itself.

The more one examines narrative events such as those detailed above, the more one becomes aware of their relation to metaphors which are commonplaces in much fifteenth-century writing. The objective of this study is to identify the implications for our readings of fifteenth-century narrative poetry of the use of commonplace trope as a constitutive element of narrative structure: to examine the relation of trope to the make up of narrative event and action. This examination will involve detailed readings of a range of variously related and analogous texts: The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Lydgate's Temple of Glas, The Kingis Quair, Skelton's Bowge of Courte, and The Isle of Ladies. Illustrative and comparative material drawn from other texts has been used at relevant points in the discussion.

My approach in this study will be broadly two-fold. Firstly to examine the effects on narrative of the use of familiar trope from a poetic discourse made up from other prior texts and the implications for narrative meaning of a heightened awareness on the part of the individual text of its own intertextuality. Secondly, I will discuss the textual strategies employed within each poem, for the reformulation, expansion (or condensation), and transformation of these tropes. These strategies themselves could be described as based on tropical operation, that is on the control of systems of relation based on figurative processes.

My introductory chapter takes as its general subject the implications for narrative of the use of trope as a constitutive element of narrative structure. I argue that such a deployment of trope defines fifteenth-century poets' attitudes to their conventional poetic discourse. The first section of this chapter provides a brief review of the implications and limitations of critical attitudes to the nature of fifteenth-century poetic discourse, and an examination of the nature of the tradition fifteenth-century writers inherited, and within which they worked. In section two I concentrate on the possibilities for narrative of the use of trope, and attempt to assess the effects of tropical operation on narrative reference itself. This involves a brief survey of the definitions of trope, and of theories of the role of tropical operation in narrative. The third section of this chapter involves a testing of these theories by a reading of The Floure and the Leafe. In section four a study of The Assembly of Ladies will provide a useful illustration of the way in which the individual text encodes its relationship to an already established poetic discourse through a fiction of its own becoming - a fiction of the process of textualisation itself.

One of the implications to emerge from my introductory chapter is that for fifteenth-century poets Chaucer was seen as instrumental in the formation, and handing-over, of the intertextual poetic discourse in which they place themselves. Accordingly, in Chapter Two, I examine the way in which Chaucer uses trope in Troilus and Criseyde, and how Lydgate uses a similar, sometimes directly borrowed, tropical language in The Temple of Glas. My study of Chaucer's poem centres on the growth of a discourse of erotic desire from the lyric tropes of Troilus' first song - the 'Canticus Troili' of Book I, lines 400-420.

A comparative study of the differing uses of trope in Troilus and Criseyde and The Temple of Glas is useful not only because Chaucer is seen as vital in handing over a tropical language to fifteenth-century writers, but also because it is suggestive of fifteenth-century response to such an inheritance: in many ways The Temple of Glas stands as an early fifteenth-century reading of Chaucer's strategies towards lyric trope in Troilus and Criseyde.

One of the issues which emerges from a study of Chaucer's and Lydgate's use of trope in Troilus and Criseyde and The Temple of Glas is that of linguistic referentiality. For Chaucer tropical operation, and the use made of tropical language by various individuals, are ways in which linguistic reference is radically relativised; for Lydgate, on the other hand, trope seems imbued with an almost magical ability to change, or transform, that to which it refers. For Lydgate trope's multi-referentiality appears to be a source of confidence in language's purchase on the world of experience, while for Chaucer that relation is radically relativised by historical process and implications of differing individual perspectives.

Chapters Three and Four follow through this issue of the effect of tropical operation on attitudes to the status of linguistic reference by studies of The Kingis Quair and Skelton's Bowge of Courte. In the former poem, trope's capacity for multiple reference, and semantic slippages, is a source of confidence and pleasure on two levels. Firstly, for the narrator, the multi-referentiality of tropical language, while at first seeming to threaten or problematise his writing endeavour, eventually confirms the almost divinely sanctioned patterning of his experience. Secondly, for the Quair-poet, the slippages of metaphoric reference allow a comic perspective to emerge in the poem; a comedy which displays an assured control of linguistic reference and an awareness of the writerly pleasures such assurance may bring.

The Bowge of Court, in contrast to *The Kingis Quair*, constructs a fiction of the anxieties of writing. The poem fictionalises the issue of the problem posed by multiple reference for our attempts to get a linguistic purchase on the world. In Skelton's poem the activities of trying to control, or determine one's experience in the world, and the activity of trying to control linguistic reference, are shown to be not merely analogous endeavours but intimately inter-related. My study of *The Bowge of Court* in Chapter Four also uses material from the *Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*. In this latter poem Skelton uses a similar metaphorics to that used in *The Bowge of Court*, that of seafaring, but directs this tropical discourse to an exposition of the ability of the poet to control his material; the *Garlande* takes as its subject poetic skilfullness itself.

In these three texts (*The Kingis Quair*, *The Bowge of Courte* and the *Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*) a conventional metaphorics - that of navigation - emerges for the discussion of poetic and discursive issues. In my final chapter I examine the implications of the use of this metaphorics in *The Isle of Ladies*. In this chapter I argue that it is through the use of commonplace metaphors, including those of navigation, that the *Isle*-poet anatomises the conventional poetic discourse in which he is working. *The Isle of Ladies* stands as a comprehensive overview of the relation of the individual text to an intertextually constituted poetic discourse. It provides, moreover, a striking analysis of the role played by trope in the inscription of this discourse in narrative itself, suggesting that an awareness of the operations of trope in the individual text will lead to a better understanding of the way in which the subject of this fifteenth-century poetic discourse is often the make up and status of poetic discourse itself.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION – THE RELATION OF TROPE AND NARRATIVE

SECTION ONE : CONVENTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

In their descriptions of English poetic narrative in the fifteenth century a number of critics use organic metaphors. H.S. Bennett writes of the lifelessness of the poetic traditions of the fifteenth century;[1] John Speirs limits 'the most living poetry in the fifteenth century' to the efforts of the so-called 'Scottish Chaucerians';[2] while Pamela Gradon in her discussion of style in late medieval poetry characterises the period as a 'mannerist age, in which, in spite of new stylistic techniques, the arteries hardened'.[3] Derek Pearsall goes so far as to write of a 'disembodied and motionless fervour' as a characteristic of Lydgate in particular and the fifteenth-century courtly tradition in general.[4] We get the impression, even from those critics whose language is less biological, that all that was alive and vital in the Ricardian poets died, or at least atrophied, in the succeeding century.

It seems unlikely that fifteenth-century poets themselves saw the poetic traditions in which they worked as dead and lifeless. The consistent and long-lasting use of poetic convention suggests that fifteenth-century writers did not view their chosen poetic discourse as wholly restricting and worn out. This study approaches poems written within a specific fifteenth-century poetic as evidence of fifteenth-century poets' active response to an inherited poetic discourse.

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1. H.S. Bennett, Chaucer and the Fifteenth-Century (Oxford, 1947), p.128.
2. John Speirs, 'A Survey of Medieval Verse', in A Guide to English Literature: the Age of Chaucer edited by Boris Ford (London, 1961), pp.15-65 (p.43).
3. Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London, 1971), p.335.
4. Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry (London, 1977), p.214.

The critical views cited above are merely one, organically expressed, example of a general critical unease with the fifteenth century's relation of poetic form and content. It is an unease which results from a radical separation of poetic form (as expressive style) from poetic content (as theme, experience or ideas). John Ganim, for example, describes Henryson's intentions in The Testament of Cresseid as a direct response to the prolixit of normative fifteenth-century poetic practice:

> Henryson seems to recognise the vacuity of a kind of poetry that would devalue experience by endlessly duplicating the forms that had been invented to express it.[1]

While Pamela Gradon describes the fifteenth century as 'predominantly a period of new ideas and old themes, of stylistic originality and conventional content'.[2]

Such criticism operates by assuming a particular model for the relation of language to what is seen as an independent world of things, of ideas or experience - what R.O. Payne calls 'the idea/language conceptual model'.[3] It is a model in which language is used to express experience or ideas; to give form to these 'contents' which exist independently of the language used to express them. My argument in this study is that (to use the language of such form/content dichotomies) the forms of fifteenth-century poetic discourse do not somehow simply express an ideological content, nor that poetic convention works to hamper this expression, but rather that the discourse of poetic convention is constitutive of, or in determining relation to, narrative content. Formal poetic conventions, therefore, effectively transmit and transform meaning.

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1. John M. Ganim, Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative (Princeton, 1983), p.125.
2. Pamela Gradon, Form and Style, p.335.
3. Robert O. Payne, 'Late Medieval Images and Self-Images of the Poet: Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Henryson, Dunbar', Studies in Medieval Culture: Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages, 16 (1984), 249-261 (p.251).

Responding to the splits of form and content which characterise much criticism of late-medieval poetics Sheila Delany has argued for an awareness of a late-medieval poetic

> in which meaning is likely to be developed through structural repetition. Explicit content, then, may be less central to meaning than method or structure, and that structure may be grasped at various points in the work.[1]

In this study I shall argue that these various points of entry to poetic structure are, in the fifteenth-century poetic I examine, largely the product of the use of familiar trope. In this vein Lee W. Patterson suggests:

> We might even be led to argue that late medieval literary creation operates, deliberately and even enthusiastically, at the level of form and that the poet understands his immediate task as being to dispose and vary a range of inherited tropes.[2]

Delany and Patterson suggest here that late-medieval poets read and worked rhetorically by identifying and responding to various rhetorical elements, particularly trope, from an inherited poetic discourse. Narrative in such a poetic may be seen as generated from the expansion and transformation of commonplace rhetorical topoi and trope. This study is largely concerned with an investigation of this generative process and the awareness of the determining relation of an inherited poetic discourse to narrative structure (and hence meaning) which is inscribed in the individual text. This investigation focuses on the reformulation of a range of rhetorical tropes of erotic desire and writing within a group of medieval texts. I shall examine the nature of trope, and the implications for a poetic in which narrative is generated largely in response to the familiar tropes of an inherited literary discourse, in section two of this chapter. At this point I wish to identify and examine some of the more important features of the poetic discourse encoded in the fifteenth-century tropical narratives studies in this thesis.

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[1] Sheila Delany, Chaucer's House of Fame : the Poetics of Skeptical Fideism (Chicago and London, 1972), p.49.

[2] Lee W. Patterson, 'Ambiguity and Interpretation: a Fifteenth-Century Reading of Troilus and Criseyde', Speculum, 54 (1979), pp.297-330 (p.327).

Catherine Belsey has described discourse as:

> a domain of language use, a particular way of talking (and writing and thinking). A discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterize it ... ideology is inscribed in discourse in the sense that it is literally written or spoken in it; it is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of 'ideas' and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing.[1]

Recent critical writing on fifteenth-century poetry has emphasised the period as one in which poets explicitly perceive themselves as working within an established poetic discourse. Hence these poets take up a position in a particular, well-defined, 'domain of language use' and poetic creativity is thus largely centred on the reformulation of the constitutive elements of this discourse.

A.C. Spearing has written of the fifteenth century as 'the first age in which it is possible to speak of the history of English poetry'.[2] Spearing means 'history' here in the sense of fifteenth-century poets' awareness of writing within a specific discourse and with an awareness of the influence of earlier writers - for the greater part the influence of Chaucer. This awareness Spearing names, in Bloomian terms, as fifteenth-century poets' 'anxiety of influence'.[3] If Spearing is correct to identify the fifteenth century as an age particularly aware, because for the first time, of literary influence then it can be described as an age with a par-

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1. Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (New York and London, 1980), p.5; emphasis added.

2. A.C. Spearing, 'Lydgate's Canterbury Tale: The Siege of Thebes and Fifteenth-Century Chaucerianism' in Fifteenth-Century Studies, edited by Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, Connecticut, 1984), pp.333-364 (p.333). See also Alice Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven and London, 1975), p.26: 'from Lydgate to Spenser, English poetry acquires a new sense of its own historicity'.

3. Spearing refers to Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence (New York and Oxford, 1973).

ticularly heightened intertextual awareness; that is of the inscription within the individual text of a discourse constituted from other, prior, texts. Criticism has the option of tracing back this intertextuality, positivistically, to specific 'sources' in (mainly) Chaucerian texts, but this study is less concerned with the identification of specific sources, a task which has been scrupulously undertaken by the editors of fifteenth-century texts, than with the examination of the implications for poetic narrative of an acute intertextual awareness.

Describing intertextuality Jonathan Culler has written:

> this notion of intertextuality emphasises that to read is to place a work in a discursive space, relating it to other texts and to the codes of that space, and writing itself is a similar activity: a taking up of a position in a discursive space.[1]

All writing, therefore, is informed by an intertextual quality; writing necessarily involves the use of codes which are constituted as codes by their use in other texts and discourses. Intertextuality is thus a ubiquitous quality of all writing. But intertextuality, writing as a 'taking up of a position in a discursive space', is particularly well signalled in the fifteenth-century narratives studied in this thesis. For fifteenth-century poetic texts display a particularly acute awareness of the poetic discourse in which they 'take up a position'. Louise Fradenburg has written of a fifteenth-century poetics of intertextuality and she claims that fifteenth-century texts are 'inscribed with a consciousness of their relations to other texts' and that they 'frequently take, as a subject of their discourse, the nature of literary revisionism'.[2] As Fradenburg suggests fifteenth-century narrative poems may, in many cases, be best understood as directly addressing the issue of their relations to a poetic discourse constituted from other, prior, texts.

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1. Jonathan Culler, 'Presupposition and Intertextuality', Modern Language Notes, 91 (1976), 1380-1396 (pp.1382-1383).

2. Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', in Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature (Medieval and Renaissance), edited by Roderick J. Lyall and Felicity Riddy (Stirling/Glasgow, 1981), pp.177-190 (p.178).

As I suggested above, fifteenth-century poems' intertextual awareness is focused, for the reader, through the use of commonplace trope. I wish also to put forward a theory that writing in such poems is a process generated by the response to established poetic tropical discourse. Moreover, my study of fifteenth-century narrative poems has suggested that tropical language operates less as an element of poetic diction and more as a constitutive element of narrative structure itself. Accordingly, the emphasis in this thesis will be less on what V.A. Kolve in his study of the imagery of Chaucerian narrative calls the 'passing metaphor or simile',[1] or what Anthony Jenkins, editor of the fifteenth-century poem The Isle of Ladies, describes as 'verbal fireworks',[2] and more on tropical language as constitutive of narrative itself. Trope, in fifteenth-century narrative poems, is less an overlay to an already established literal narrative, and thus expressive of that narrative, than an active element, and process, in the generation of that narrative.

The inscription of an established poetic discourse in the individual narrative through the play of trope (understood as a constitutive element of narrative structure and meaning) has implications for what the narrative is 'about': the subject of narrative discourse. As the individual poetic text takes up a position in an intertextually perceived poetic discourse, so the 'space' for narrative within each poem becomes the place where a range of literary issues can be discussed. These structural spaces are often strikingly well-defined in fifteenth-century narrative poems, hence the near ubiquity of dream-vision form which locates a narrative history within a 'frame' of a narratorial first person discourse. Such framing

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1. V.A. Kolve, Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative (London, 1984), p.2.
2, The Isle of Ladies or The Ile of Pleasaunce, edited by Anthony Jenkins (New York and London, 1980), p.52.

fictions can, explicitly or otherwise, locate a text's relation to a specific intertextual discourse. The constituent elements of such a discourse would thus tend to become the terms by which we read the framed narrative. Hence narrative itself is often the space where poetic issues accruing from the relation of the individual text to a prior discourse are addressed. The ways in which fifteenth-century narrative poems display their consciousness of relating to other texts are not, therefore, purely by direct reference - as in what R.O. Payne has called the 'auctoritee _topos_' by which the fifteenth-century poet ritualistically pays homage to one, if not all, of the great triumvirate of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate[1] - nor is this consciousness purely a product of the positivistic reader's ability to remember specific sources; it is also, strikingly, a consciousness displayed in narrative itself.

The place of the individual text in the intertext of a traditionally conceived poetic discourse gains a material presence if we consider the places where many fifteenth-century narrative poems are to be found: the manuscript collection. In our period shorter narrative poems are often located in the fascicular, or collected, manuscript - that is a collection of poems bound together. R.F. Green describes these 'anthologies' thus:

> The bulk of so-called fifteenth-century 'Chaucerian' verse is to be found in heterogeneous manuscript collections which combine the efforts of occasional authors whose output was inadequate to guarantee them individual anthologies (men like Clanvowe, Roos and Suffolk) with the shorter social verse of poets whose main energies were expanded on other kinds of writing or on longer more self-sufficient works (Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate).[2]

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[1] Robert O. Payne, 'Late Medieval Images and Self-Images', p.256.

[2] Richard Firth Green, _Poets and Princepleasers : Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages_ (Toronto, 1980), p.130.

While Derek Pearsall writes that:

> collections of 'Chauceriana' were being made by other copyists throughout the fifteenth-century, sometimes at the behest of wealthy individuals, more often as a speculative commercial venture. The frequency of 'fascicular' manuscripts indicates how booksellers would keep separate quires of poems, ready copied, in stock, to be bound up to the tastes of particular customers.[1]

Within such manuscripts the individual text has a physical place within a discourse of other texts. Gerald L. Bruns has written of the 'closed text' of a print culture and the 'open text' of a manuscript culture.[2] The individual text in the manuscript culture is, for Bruns, open to alteration and change in a way quite different from the finished text in print. In the manuscript collection the individual text is open, too, to the influence of its contextual discourse; its physical placing in relation to other texts. The openness of the text to such a physically realised intertext suggests at least a partial reason for fifteenth-century texts' heightened intertextual awareness; what Spearing would call their 'anxiety of influence' and Fradenburg their revisionist tendencies. A particular example of the openness of the text in such a manuscript culture may be suggested by what we know of the manuscript circumstances of The Floure and the Leafe, of which a reading is provided later in this chapter.

Manuscript Longleat 258 contains, on the last leaf of the manuscript, a list of contents in the scribe's hand. A poem called 'De folio et flore' (all titles are Latinised) is mentioned, but the poem itself has been

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1. Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry, p.213.
2. Gerald L. Bruns, 'The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture', Comparative Literature, 32 (1980), 113-129.

removed from the manuscript - a complete quire (fols 33-48) is missing.[1] The lacuna in the manuscript suggests the way in which texts may be gathered into and removed from the manuscript collection. As Derek Pearsall remarks of this probable manuscript of The Floure and the Leafe:

> The practice of circulating poems in separate quires, which were afterwards bound together in a single manuscript, was well known in the fifteenth century, while John Audelay's malediction upon those who cut pages from his manuscript indicates that the fate of The Floure and the Leafe is not unique.[2]

Bruns has noted that such manuscript contexts have implications for:

> The ways in which textuality is imagined and with the ways in which this imagining bears upon or, indeed, shapes the act of writing.[3]

Writing, within such a manuscript context, must be imagined as a taking part in a discourse which precedes the individual text. Several poetic narratives in the fifteenth century, including The Floure and the Leafe, make allusion to their relation to a traditionally conceived poetic discourse. The manuscript context evokes quite a physical notion of what this discourse might be, which in turn shapes the narratives of these poems themselves, by providing a basis for the often spatially conceived relation of texts to the prior discourse of other texts in narrative. Narratives in these poems imitate and reflect the spaces individual texts appropriate in this traditional discourse. This imitation is signalled by the conventional and shared nature of these narrative places for they are common places such as the *locus amoenus* of the garden, or the prison - the *locus* of thwarted desire. In The Floure and the Leafe the narrative 'place' is the field and garden, and the preferred metaphor for the relation of individual, present text to its antecedent texts is the Chaucerian one of growth; the present text grows out from the field of other, older texts.

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[1] For a description of MS Longleat 258 see Eleanor Prescott Hammond, 'MS Longleat 258 - A Chaucerian Codex', Modern Language Notes, 20 (1905), 77-79. Hammond concludes (p.79):

> The compiler thus seems to have exercised some selection among the material accessible to him, and this uniformity of taste suggests the possibility that the copyist was also the owner.

See also Pearsall's description of the MS in The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, edited by Derek A. Pearsall (Edinburgh and London, 1962), pp.3-8.

[2] Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe, p.3.

[3] Gerald L. Bruns, 'The Originality of Texts', p.113.

Only one of the longer narrative poems included in manuscript, which are treated in this study, stands by itself, that being the Isle of Ladies. In both manuscripts of the poem (Manuscript Longleat 256 and British Library Manuscript Addit., 103030) the poem stands alone.[1] All the other poems in this study, with a manuscript provenence, are found in manuscript collections. Manuscript Longleat 258 mentioned above as probably containing The Floure and the Leafe is dated about 1460-1470 by Schick in his edition of the Temple of Glas[2] and at about 1500 by Derek Pearsall in the introduction to his edition of The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies.[3] The manuscript includes texts of The Assembly of Ladies; Chaucer's Complaint of Mars (of which the first six stanzas are included on the last leaf of the missing quire which may have contained The Floure and the Leafe); Chaucer's Complaint unto Pity and the Temple of Glas.

The writer of which the fifteenth century is most aware is, of course, Chaucer. Louise Fradenburg writes of fifteenth-century poets completing Chaucerian discourses,[4] while Derek Pearsall identifies the pre-dominant poetic discourse of the period (and all poems in this study except Skelton's Bowge of Courte belong to this tradition), as the Chaucerian poetic discourse of love:

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[1] For a description of the manuscript tradition of The Isle of Ladies see Anthony Jenkins's edition of the poem, pp.6-8.

[2] Lydgate's Temple of Glas, edited by J. Schick, EETS extra series 60 (London, 1891), p.xxiv.

[3] Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe, p.7.

[4] Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', p.189.

> The Chaucer of this tradition is primarily the Chaucer of the love-visions, the Troilus (sometimes excerpted for its inset 'lyric' poems), the lyrics and among the Canterbury Tales, the Knight's Tale and the Franklin's Tale, in other words the poet of love.[1]

Pearsall writes also, as does Fradenburg, of fifteenth-century poetry as a palinode to Chaucerian poetic discourse.[2] The Chaucerian nature of this discourse is reflected in manuscript collections like Longleat 258 described above. The Assembly of Ladies, for instance, is included with The Parlement of Fowles; the Legend of Good Woman and the Complaint unto Pity in the Trinity College, Cambridge, Manuscript R.3.19, a fascicular collection written and compiled in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.[3] In a third manuscript, British Library, Manuscript Addit., 34 360 the Assembly of Ladies is included with Chaucer's Complaint to his Purse and the Complaints to Fortune and unto Pity. Pearsall describes the manuscript as a late fifteenth-century codex 'probably not later than about 1485'.[4]

The unique manuscript of The Kingis Quair in the Bodleian Library (Manuscript Arch. Selden B.24) contains many Chaucerian works, not least the Troilus (fols. la-111b); including The Complaint of Mars, The Complaint of Venus, The Parlement of Foules and the Legend of Good Women.[5] As Matthew

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[1] Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry, pp.213-214.

[2] Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry, p.217; and Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', p.183.

[3] For a description of the contents of the Trinity College, Cambridge MS R. 3. 19, see M.R. James, The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, 4 volumes (Cambridge, 1900-1904), II, 69-74.

[4] Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe, p.8.

[5] For a description of the manuscript see Eleanor Prescott Hammond, Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual (New York, 1908), pp.341-343. For a stimulating account of the manuscript's implications for fifteenth-century poetics see Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', pp.185-189. Fradenburg writes (p.185):

> The Selden manuscript attests the centrality of the Chaucerian text to the aspirations of Scottish culture. By bringing together Chaucer's most important courtly works ... with two late Scots Chaucerian pieces the manuscript historicizes revisionist poetics in a bound volume.

McDiarmid, *The Kingis Quair*'s most recent editor, notes, the manuscript can be dated between 1488 and 1513 on account of the main scribe's note on fol. 120 which gives the birth date of his king James IV. James acceded to the throne in 1488 and died at Flodden in 1513.[1]

Lydgatean poems are also popular inclusions in manuscript collections, particularly *The Complaint of the Black Knight* and *The Temple of Glas*. British Library Manuscript Addit., 16165 [2] includes both these poems with Chaucer's *Boece* and the *Complaint of Anelida*. The latter is abstracted from its fragmentary narrative context as it is in the Cambridge University Library's manuscript Ff.1.6 which also includes Chaucer's *unto Pity*, *The Parlement of Foules*, Chaucer's *Complaint to his Purse*, The story of Thisbe from the *Legend of Good Women*, *The Complaint of Venus* and a nascent complaint sequence attributed to Lydgate. This manuscript is the so-called 'Findern Anthology'; the manuscript also contains several other popular 'anthologised' works such as Clanvowe's *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and Roos's translation of Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*.[3]

These manuscript collections are, of course, by no means so internally homogeneous as this short account might suggest. While the works attributed to Chaucer and Lydgate predominate, not all works are within the poetic discourse of love. Much of Lydgate's shorter religious verse is included; Manuscript Addit., 34360 described above includes, for instance, paraphrases of the psalms by Lydgate; a hymn to Jesus Christ and another to the Virgin which are both attributed to Lydgate; and, in addition, Lydgate's version of *Secreta Secretorum*.

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[1] *The Kingis Quair of James Stewart*, edited by Matthew McDiarmid (London, 1973), p.3; Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *Chaucer: a Bibliographical Manual*, p.314, reaches a similar conclusion.

[2] For a description of the manuscript see J. Schick, *Lydgate's Temple of Glas*, pp.xxii-xxiv.

[3] For a facsimile and detailed discussion of Cambridge University Library MS Ff. I. 6 see *A Facsimile of the Findern Manuscript*, introduced by Richard Beadle and A.E.B. Owen (London, 1977). See also R.H. Robbins, 'The Findern Anthology', *PMLA*, 69 (1954), 610-642.

The heterogeneity of these manuscript collections makes it difficult to talk generally of a thematically conceived discourse emerging through the anthologising impulse alone. Texts are however placed in relation to other texts which display a fairly consistent traditionally conceived discourse, and this placing can not be without implications for how these poems are to be read. Firstly, readers did have a sense of poetic 'making' as the disposition of a range of inherited tropes and topoi; the manuscript collection would make this conception of writing inescapable. Secondly, specific interrelations would emerge and be pointed, whether or not as a result of a thematic intention on the part of the compiler; for instance, the use of a similar metaphorics in the Troilus and The Kingis Quair in Manuscript Arch. Selden B.24., and in Chaucer's Boece and The Temple of Glas in the British Library Manuscript Addit., 16165.

Such interrelations between the individual texts of the manuscript collection are suggested by the Trinity College, Cambridge, Manuscript R.3.19 described above. The manuscript includes poems of the Chaucerian Tradition: The Bird and the Churl; the Parlement of Foules; The Assembly of Ladies; La Belle dame sans Merci; the Legend of Good Women; Chaucer's Complaint unto Pity and the Courte of Love. The manuscript also contains several non-poetic works - described as treatises — including 'A tretis of the iiij seasons of the yere that is to say ver, estas, authumnus yemps' (fols 49a-52a); a 'genylmanly Tretyse' of 'conceytis in love vnder covert termes off fysshyng and ffowlyng... for contemplatiff lovers to rede and vnderstond made by a noble clerke, Peirs of ffulham sum tyme vssher of Venus Scole' (fols 241a-245b); and 'a tretise of the iii complexions' (fols 526-54). The manuscript suggests the interrelation of the poetic texts with these prose treatises. Piers of Fulham's treatise, in particular, suggests a self-consciousness of reference to the discourse of erotic poetry with its allusions to 'Venus scole' and the 'covert termes' of lover's discourse. Lydgate's Assembly of Gods is also prefaced by an interpretative 'treatise' in this manuscript. O.L. Triggs, the poem's editor, remarks that this is 'the earliest and the only authoritative manuscript' of The Assembly of Gods and he also notes that the 'interpretacioun' is not to be found in the only other manuscript of the poem (British Library, Biblio. Reg. 18. D. II).[1] This suggests it was the specific aim of the compiler of the Trinity College, Cambridge, Manuscript to provide treatises to be read in relation to poetic works included in the manuscript.

This Trinity College, Cambridge, Manuscript presents us with several prose treatises bound with poetic works. In this manuscript 'treatise' appears to denote a prose work which treats of, or addresses itself to, a body of knowledge or a particular 'domain of language use'. That is, a treatise seems to involve an explication of a well-defined discourse. This definition of the word correlates with what Donald R. Howard infers from Chaucer's use of the term:

> Chaucer never uses the word 'treatise' to refer to a literary work - a 'book' or song - but always to writings in prose. He applies 'treatise' to the Melibee (VII, 957 and 963), the Parson's Tale (X, 955-960 and the Treatise on the Astrolabe.[2]

Chaucer's use of the term 'treatise' in these examples suggests that to write a treatise involves a thoroughgoing examination of a subject, an examination conducted methodically and with some degree of completeness. This certainly appears to be the implication of Hugh of St Victor's description of a treatise (tractatus) in Didascalicon: 'a [treatise] is the exposition of a single matter in its many aspects' ('tractatus est unius rei multiplex expositio').[1] This definition is corroborated by the Oxford English Dictionary which defines 'treatise' thus:

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[1] John Lydgate, The Assembly of Gods, edited by Oscar Lovell Triggs, EETS extra series 69 (London, 1896, reprinted 1957), p.vii.

[2] Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976), p.59.

> a book or writing which treats of some particular subject; commonly (in modern use always) one containing a formal or methodical discussion or exposition of the principles of the subject.[2]

As Howard notes Chaucer also uses 'treatise' in the sense of a written contract or legal agreement. In the Clerk's Tale Griselda's 'tretys' (331) is her marriage contract with Walter; while in Troilus and Criseyde 'tretis' refers to a truce between the Greeks and Trojans (Book IV, 64).[3]

As a treatment of discourse, therefore, 'treatise' – both in Chaucer and MS R.3 19 – denotes an explicatory exercise which is likely to be in prose. In 'Chaucerian' writing, however, the term is taken over and applied to poetry. Thomas Usk in The Testament of Love provides us with a convenient example of this change-over; the female personification of Love recommends Chaucer to the prospective lover:

> [Chaucer] in a tretis that he made of my servant Troilus, hath this mater touched, and at the ful this question assoyled. Certainly, his noble sayinges can I not amende ... in the boke of Troilus, the answere to thy question mayst thou lerne.
>
> (Book III, Chapter IV, 253-259. My emphasis)[4]

'Tretis' here still retains the semantic force of a full or methodical treatment of a subject, for even Love herself cannot add anything to Chaucer's treatment of erotic discourse in Troilus, but significantly a poem has here become a treatise - a repository of erotic lore, and an explication of erotic discourse.

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1. See Hugonis de Sancto Victore, Didascalicon : De Studio Legendi: a Critical Text, edited by Charles Henry Buttimer (Washington, 1939), Book 4, Cap.XVI; and The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor, translated by Jerome Taylor (New York and London, 1961), p.119.
2. OED., vol.XI, p.309.
3. All line references are to Troilus and Criseyde, edited by B.A. Windeatt (London and New York, 1984). All line references to other works by Chaucer are to The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957).
4. Quoted from Chaucerian and Other Pieces: a Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), p.123.

Several of the texts discussed in the following chapters refer to treatises, sometimes naming themselves by this term, thereby defining themselves as transmitters and revisers of a discourse of love and/or writing. Thus one aspect of the poetic examined in this thesis is its explicatory or revisionary relation to a prior discourse, which suggests poetic writing in the fifteenth century as a treatment and reformulation of already established discourses.

The sense of a treatise as a full explication of a subject is retained by Lydgate. At the end of The Temple of Glas the narrator promises to send his lady 'a litil tretise' until he has had time to write down the dream which makes up the greater part of the poem:

> I purpose here to maken and to write
> A litil tretise and a processe make
> In prais of women, oonli for her sake,
> Hem to comende ... [and]
> This simple tretis forto take in gre
> Til I haue leiser vnto hir heiȝ renoun
> Forto expoune my foresaid visioun.
> (1379-1389)[1]

In The Temple Lydgate maintains a careful distinction between this 'tretise' and the poem or 'boke' (1393) as a whole. In The Kingis Quair this distinction is blurred for the narrator refers to the poem as both a treatise and as a book. The Quair is explicitly called a 'trety' (st.18) or 'tretisse' (st. 194) and also a 'buk(e)' (sts 13, 197).[2] If, as seems likely, The Quair was written with the subject of James I's marriage to Joan Beaufort in February 1424 in mind (a marriage which marked the end of the formal negotiations for James's release from his English prison), then the reference to the poem as 'treatise' could suggest the specific uses of the term we have noted in Chaucer's Clerk's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde.

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[1] Quoted from John Lydgate: Poems, edited by John Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1966) p.111, all references to The Temple are to this edition unless otherwise stated.

[2] See The Kingis Quair, edited by Matthew P. McDiarmid. All references are to stanza number in this edition.

Out of all John Skelton's poetic productions it is only The Bowge of Courte and the Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell which are called treatises - 'Here begynneth a lytil treatyse named The Bowge of Courte' and 'A ryght delectable tratyse upon a goodly Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell'.[1] Furthermore in the long list of Skelton's works given in the Garlande (of which many are possibly apocryphal) there are references to 'the Tratyse of the Triumphis of the Rede Rose' (1223) in which 'many storis ar bravely contayned/That unremembred longe tyme remayned' (1224/5); and to 'a tratyse ... callid Speculum Principis' in which is contained 'All the demenour of princely astate' (1228-1231). Skelton's use of 'tratyse' in the Garlande suggests the continued use of the word to denote a full treatment of a subject. The singling out of The Bowge and the Garlande as treatises suggests that these poems were defined as treatments of a subject (i.e. of the problematics of writing) rather than simply representational fictions.

The distinctions drawn between books (poems) and treatises in the fifteenth century is, therefore, by no means so rigid as Howard suggests to be the case in Chaucer's works. For the Quair-author the distinctions between a 'buk' and a 'tretisse' are blurred while for Skelton a treatise seems to suggest a certain meta-poetic or meta-linguistic element to a poem (as is also suggested by Piers of Fulham's treatise in the Trinity College, Cambridge Manuscript discussed above). Moreover, the multiplicity of registers in the Garlande (and to a lesser extent The Bowge) suggests a poetic equivalent to Hugh of St Victor's definition of a treatise as a treatment of a subject 'in all its aspects'. These examples of the use of the word 'treatise' suggest that for fifteenth-century poets poetry could be seen as having a relation to a prior discourse, i.e. a meta-discursive quality; a poem could be a treatment of an established discourse and an explication of the relation of that discourse to the individual text itself.

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[1] See John Skelton : the Complete English Poems, edited by John Scattergood (Harmondsworth, 1983), p.46 and p.312. All line references are to this edition.

For Thomas Usk, as we have seen, Chaucer's Troilus stands as a repository of erotic lore for the prospective lover; the poem has the status of a treatise on erotic discourse. The Chaucerian text provides a discourse, the response to which defines fifteenth-century poetic activity. The status of Chaucer's Troilus as The Testament of Love suggests, as the pre-eminent Chaucerian text of the discourse of erotic desire is further evidenced by the numerous excerptions and borrowings from the 'boke of Troilus' in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Perhaps the most popular of passages for excerption in the Troilus is Troilus's first song (Book I, lines 400-420) and it is for this reason that I will discuss the influence of this Petrarchan lyric on the formation of a discourse of erotic desire in the first section of Chapter Two. But Chaucer's Troilus was also plundered for other examples of this discourse, passages which stand as independent 'lyrics' (usually erotic complaints) in several manuscript collections, in particular the 'Devonshire Manuscript' (British Library, Manuscript Additional 17492),[1] and Bodleian

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1. For discussions of the 'Devonshire Manuscript' see Kenneth Muir, 'Unpublished Poems in the Devonshire Manuscript', Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 6 (1944-1947), 253-282; Ethel Seaton '"The Devonshire Manuscript" and its Medieval Fragments', Review of English Studies, new series 7 (1956), 55-56; and Raymond Southall, 'The Devonshire Manuscript Collection of Early Tudor Poetry, 1532-1541', Review of English Studies, new series 15 (1964), 142-150. The excerptions from the Troilus are as follows: fol.59^{v}- Book I, 946-52 (see Muir, p.273 and Southall, p.144); fol.91v- Book II, 337-350, 778-784, 785-791, 855-861 (see Muir, pp.279-280); fol.29^{v} - Book IV, 13-14, 288-308, 323-329 (see Muir, pp.265-266 and Seaton, pp.55-56).

Library Manuscript Rawlinson C.813.[1] For fifteenth-century poets, writers and compilers Chaucer's Troilus was an 'open text' from which borrowings and excerptions could be made and from which illustrative passages could be drawn.[2] The Troilus stood as perhaps the pre-eminent Chaucerian treatment of the discourse of erotic desire; hence, this thesis will follow a fifteenth-century response to the tropes of an erotic discourse largely mediated for the period through its treatment in Troilus and Criseyde.

Fifteenth-century response to Chaucerian poetic discourse tends to emphasise the status of that discourse *as* discourse, that is, it concentrates less on that discourse's language as a transparent access to meaning, experience or ideas and more on the linguistic and rhetorical strategies of discourse itself. It is a critical given of fifteenth-century response to Chaucerian texts that it stresses and valorises the rhetoricity of Chaucerian poetic discourse. Extensive evidence of this response has been collected by Caroline Spurgeon and Derek Brewer.[3] This response to

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[1] In the Bodleian manuscript Rawlinson, C.813, fol.48^v there is a nine stanza love letter which is adapted from several passages from the Troilus. These are respectively: Book II, 1121-1127, 841-947, 869-882; Bock IV, 561-567; Book V, 1072-1078; Book II, 778-784; Book I, 708-712; Book V, 139-140; and Book IV, 260-266, 267-273. For a parallel text of Chaucer's lines and the Rawlinson MS see Wilhelm Bolle, 'Zur Lyrik der Rawlinson - HS C.813', Anglia, 34 (1911), 273-307 (pp.284-287). See also Frederick Morgan Padelford and Dr. Allen R. Benham, 'The Songs in Manuscript Rawlinson C.813', Anglia, 31 (1908), 309-397 (pp.362-363); and Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse (Lexington, 1965),p.223.

[2] One of the more interesting examples of this illustrative use of the Troilus is to be found in a fifteenth-century prose treatise entitled Disce Mori found in two manuscripts (Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 99; and Jesus College, Oxford, MS 39). In this treatise a stanza from Troilus's first song (Book I, 400-406) is quoted as an example of the contradictory effects of erotic desire. For discussions of this borrowing see Willis J. Wager, '"Fleshly Love" in Chaucer's Troilus', Modern Language Review, 34 (1939), 62-66; Lee W. Patterson, 'Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth-Century Reading of Troilus and Criseyde'; and Stephen Medcalf, ed., The Later Middle Ages (London, 1981), p.298.

[3] Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, ed., Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion (1357-1900), 4 volumes, Chaucer Society second series 48, 49 and 50, 52, and 55 (London, 1914 (for 1908)-1923); and Derek S. Brewer, ed., Chaucer: The Critical Heritage, 2 volumes (London,1978).

Chaucerian rhetoricity is part of fifteenth-century writers' self-consciousness about writing processes as displayed in poetic texts themselves. As is suggested by some fifteenth-century poets' designation of their poems as treatises, fifteenth-century poetic discourse often takes as its subject the nature of its relation to a poetic discourse made up from other, prior texts. While for the narratives studied in this thesis the apparent subject of their poetic discourse is erotic desire (or,in The Bowge of Courte, the dangerous nature of life at court), so great is their concern with issues of writing that they often seem better understood as texts about poetic itself. These are narratives which, at any stage, are willing to weaken their mimetic reference, or simply drop their apparent 'subject', for the sake of either an explicit discussion of writing or for those linguistic and rhetorical stratagems which emphasise the verbal texture of the poem. But more than this, narrative itself in these poems is constituted from, and is thus often implicitly about, conventional elements of an inherited poetic discourse. Thus, through the transmission of commonplace trope this discourse is inscribed in narrative itself: narrative setting, action and event can thus be seen to be constituted from the tropes of an inherited poetic discourse in these texts.

This deployment of commonplace trope emphasises fifteenth-century texts' willing disposition to self-consciousness concerning poetic activity by making their chosen poetic discourse a markedly opaque use of language - one which resists being used to provide a simple access to a world of experience, ideas or things which exists 'behind', and therefore independent of, language's purchase on it. These texts thus address in their reformulations of this discourse what may be called meta-discursive issues; that is these texts work as commentaries on the nature of the determining relation of prior poetic discourse to the individual narrative.

While the fifteenth century has been identified as a period of heightened awareness of literary pasts, and hence of a whole range of poetic issues, the poetic discourse of erotic desire, which for fifteenth-century poets was largely mediated through Chaucerian texts, had always included an awareness of past writing and of the prior discourses of love. Several of Chaucer's narrative poems in this tradition, for instance the dream poems and the Troilus, include a great awareness of the past, of the materiality of the poem's textual lineage and of the physical location of the present writing enterprise in relation to past writing.[1] Chaucer is innovative in focusing this awareness of the pastness of a text's discourse through the phenomenology of reading,[2] but it is an awareness which works to focus many poetic issues.

A self-consciousness about literary pasts and poetic issues could thus be said to be conventionally encoded in the discourse which the poems in this thesis work within. Such a self-consciousness which is manifest in Chaucerian texts is also part of the French tradition which Chaucer uses, particularly the Roman de la Rose and the narrative dits of Machaut and Froissart.[3] In the works of these latter two fourteenth-century writers this self-consciousness operates to bring the activities of writing and desiring into relation. In Froissart's Paradys d'Amours,[1] for example, the narratorial persona is a poet who wins the praise of both his lady and the God of Love by his poetic dexterity with the various *formes fixes* of different lyric types: love-making is achieved by means of poetic productivity. Significantly, in the light of our discussion of the term 'treatise' in fifteenth-century English texts, the Paradys d'Amours is entitled as 'un *trettié* amourous, qui s'appelle Le Paradys d'Amour' (my emphasis). While in Chaucerian texts desiring and writing are often placed in an ironicised relation to each other, critics are agreed that in at least two cases - The House of Fame and The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women[2] - Chaucer wrote poems which are substantially about poetic issues. In fifteenth-century texts the meta-poetic concerns of this literary discourse tend to be foregrounded, under the influence of a heightened sense of the concreticity of the tradition as it is focused through Chaucerian texts. Moreover, in fifteenth-century texts the conventions of this discourse take on a palpable narrative presence, as discourse is inscribed in the individual text through the deployment of the tropes of that discourse.

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[1] Compare The Book of the Duchess, ll.44-61; The House of Fame, ll.1-65 and the Dido/Aeneas story in Book I, esp., ll.425-431; Parlement of Foules, ll.1-28 and 695-699; Prologue to the Franklin's Tale, V, ll.709-728; Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, F. ll.17-39, 66-83, 97-102 and 366-425; and finally Troilus and Criseyde, Book II, 1-35 and Book V, 1793-1799.

[2] See Marshall N. Stearns, 'Chaucer Mentions a Book', Modern Language Notes, 57 (1942), 28-31 (p.31):

> it seems probable that the mention of a book in love-vision literature can be correctly called a conventional device only after Chaucer. Chaucer's use of it appears highly original.

See also Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: a Study of Chaucer's Poetics (Westport, Connecticut, 1963), p.117; and Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales, pp.66-67.

[3] For a discussion of poetic self-consciousness in the Roman de la Rose and the works of Machaut, see Kevin Brownlee, Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut (Madison, 1984), esp., pp.3-23. Of Machaut's dits the one most overtly involved with poetic issues is the Jugement dou Roy de Navarre, in which the first person narrator is depicted as a professional writer arraigned by the God of Love for his previous poetic productions; specifically the Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne. For a discussion see William Calin, A Poet at the Fountain: Essays on the Narrative Verse of Guillaume de Machaut (Lexington, 1974), pp.110-129. A similar fiction operates, of course, in Chaucer's Prologue to the Legend of Good Women.

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1. For discussions of Froissart's poem see Douglas Kelly, Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love (Madison, 1978), pp.174-176; and A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (Cambridge, 1976), pp.43-47. A text of Paradys d'Amours can be found in Jean Froissart, Poésies, edited by Auguste Scheler, 3 volumes (Brussels, 1870-1872), I, 1-52.

2. On the poetics of the House of Fame see: Piero Boitani, Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame (Cambridge, 1984), ch.6; Robert B. Burlin, Chaucerian Fiction (Princeton, 1977), pp.45-48; Sheila Delany, Chaucer's House of Fame, pp.44-47; J.O. Fichte, Chaucer's 'Art Poetical' (Türbingen, 1980), pp.66-80; Robert M. Jordan, 'Lost in the Funhouse of Fame: Chaucer and Post-Modernism', Chaucer Review, 18 (1983-1984), 100-115; Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, pp.129-139; L.K. Shook, 'The House of Fame' in Companion to Chaucer Studies, edited by Beryl Rowland, second edition (New York and Oxford, 1979), pp.414-427.
On the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women see: Robert Worth Frank, Jr, Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), pp.25-36; Lisa J. Kiser, Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women (Ithaca and London, 1983), esp., chs 1, 2 and 5; Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, pp.91-111; and A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, pp.104-105.

In fifteenth-century poetry a lore of love, and increasingly a lore of writing, is transmitted and investigated by the reformulations of commonplace trope. The emphasis on writing in the fifteenth-century poetic discussed in this study is fostered by this awareness and valorisation of trope; the awareness of trope as constitutive of narrative structure. The focus on language as language, and on those tropical operations for the expansion and transformation of a conventionally conceived poetic discourse, emphasises the processes of writing. In particular the inscribed relation of the individual narrative to a discourse constituted from other texts emphasises writing as a problematics of control. Hence writing is seen as a process of controlling a materially conceived poetic discourse; a discourse which the individual text expands, reformulates, even transforms or criticises, but which it also, inevitably, continues. The identification of a metaphorics of writerly control is partly the objective of this thesis, but at this point I should like to turn to a closer examination of the relation of trope to narrative.

SECTION TWO: TROPE AND NARRATIVE

> The word tropic derives from tropikos, tropus, which in Classical Greek meant 'turn' and in Koine 'way' or 'manner'. It comes into modern Indo-European languages by way of tropus, which in Classical Latin meant 'metaphor' or 'figure of speech' and in Late Latin, especially as applied to music theory, 'mood' or 'measure'.[1]

Trope has been defined, with an admirable degree of comprehensiveness, as an 'alteration in the ideal relationship of transparency between signifier and signified, or between sign and meaning, or by deviations with respect to a degree of zero of signification'.[2] Orlando's 'degree zero' implies a base

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1. From Hayden White, The Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore and London, 1978), p.2.

2. Francesco Orlando, Toward a Freudian Theory of Literature, translated by Charmaine Lee (Baltimore, 1978), p.163.

line of signification which in no way draws attention to its own signifying processes. Thus a definition of trope as a noticeable deviation or turning from 'proper' signification is perhaps the most common way in which tropical operations are understood.[1] So the Oxford English Dictionary in its definition of trope follows Quintilian's familiar conceptualisation of the term as a deviation from proper usage:

> [Trope] - a figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it.[2]

Quintilian's definition of trope in terms of proper signification - 'a trope means the artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another'('tropus est verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione in aliam cum virtute mutatio')[3] - is echoed throughout the Middle Ages. So John of Salisbury writes in the Metalogicon:

> Disponit et tropus, id est modos locutionum, ut cum, a propria significatione ex causa probabili, sermo ad non propriam trahitur signifiacationem: qualis est metaphora, metonymia et synecdoche, et similes.
>
> (Grammar also regulates the use of tropes, special terms of speech whereby for sufficient cause, speech is used in a transferred sense that differs from its own proper meaning. Examples of tropes are found in metaphors, metonymy, synecdoche and the like.)[4]

The concept of trope as a deviation from a natural or proper mode of signification is well known throughout the middle ages and into the sixteenth-century. George Puttenham in the Arte of English Poesie, for instance, writes of the 'Courtly figure Allegoria', that

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[1] See Hayden White, The Tropics of Discourse, p.2:

> For rhetoricians, grammarians and language theorists, tropes are deviations from literal, conventional, or 'proper' language use, swerves in locution sanctioned neither by custom nor logic.

[2] OED, volume XI, p.397.

[3] Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, edited and translated by H.E. Butler, 4 volumes (London, 1922), III, Book 8, vi, I.

[4] See Ioannis Saresberiensis, Metalogicus, in Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, edited by J.-P. Migne, 221 volumes (Paris, 1844-1864), CXCIX (1855), cols 823-946; Book I, Cap.XIX (col.849); and John of Salisbury, Metalogicon, translated by Daniel D. Mcgarry (Gloucester, Massachussetts, 1971), p.56.

> euery speach wrested from his owne naturall signification to another not altogether so naturall is a kinde of dissimulation,because the wordes beare contrary countenaunce to th'intent.[1]

Other definitions and theories of trope emphasise not the blockage or deviancy of relation between sign and signified but the spatial transposition of signs; so that the sign present in the text - '_in praesentia_' - is in relation to an understood sign '_in absentia_'; one recent definition of trope in these terms states that 'a trope is a semantic transposition from a sign _in praesentia_ to a sign or signs _in absentia_'.[2] In Vinsauf's _Poetria Nova_ we find just such a spatial concept of trope as difficult ornament. Writing of the arch-trope metaphor Vinsauf states:

> Noli semper concedere verbo
> In proprio residere loco: residentia talis
> Dedecus est ipsi verbo; loca propria vitet
> Et perigrinetur alibi sedemque placentem
> Fundet in alterius fundo: sit ibi novus hospes,
> Et placeat novitate sua.
>
> (Do not always allow a word to reside in its usual place: such residence does not suit it; let it avoid its proper place and wander elsewhere, to find a pleasing seat in another's ground: let it be a new sojourner there and please by its novelty.)[3]

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[1] George Puttenham, _The Arte of English Poesie_, edited by Gladys D. Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), Book III, xviii.

[2] Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, _Rhetorical Poetics : Theory and Practice of Figural and Symbolic Reading in Modern French Literature_ (Madison, 1983), p.19.

[3] See _The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine_, edited and translated by Ernest Gallo (The Hague and Paris, 1971), ll.763-768 (pp.54-55). All references to, and translations of, _The Poetria Nova_ will use Gallo's edition unless otherwise stated. See also Margaret Nims' article '_Translatio_: "Difficult Statement" in Medieval Poetic Theory', _University of Toronto Quarterly_, 43 (1974), 215-230. Nims discussed Vinsauf's _Documentum de Modo et Arte Dictandi et Versifcandi_ (translated by Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee, 1968)). In this treatise Vinsauf refers to the metaphorical potential of words by the term _convertibilitas_. Nims writes (p.217):

> This potential of the words for convertibility, and at the same time its resistance to the total loss of semantic identity in the alien land of metaphor, seem to be essential conditions for the possibility of _translatio_.

and later he writes:

> Quando tuum proprium transsumis, plus sapit istud
> Quod verit ex proprio. Talis transsumptio verbi
> Est tibi pro speculo: quia te specularis in illo
> Et proprias cognoscis oves in rure alieno.
>
> (Such a metaphorical use of words serves you like a mirror, for you can see yourself in it, and recognize your own sheep in a strange countryside.)[1]

My interest in this study is directed towards the use of trope in narrative, what could be called the expansion of lyric, tropical discourse into narrative structures. The concept of trope as a spatial repositioning of the sign, or as a disruption of referential linearity is of particular importance in understanding the nature of the relation of trope and narrative in fifteenth-century poetic texts. Such spatial and linear concepts of trope invite an investigation of the way in which such fifteenth-century texts use spatial structures in their narratives and how various, usually commonplace, tropes can be used to generate the spatial and linear/ sequential structures of poetic texts.

Tropical operation - whether we understand it in terms of the degree of opacity, deviation or transposition it brings to discourse - involves an awareness of a disjunction in the signifying chain. This is an awareness dependent upon a contextually perceived incompatibility of sign and referent. Trope may be used in narrative to sharpen or clarify reference, in which case its disjunction of simple reference almost immediately 'feeds back' into narrative referentiality and confirms it. In this way trope acts as a function of narrative's descriptive or referential strategies. Trope may, however, have a more radical effect on narrative reference, by focusing attention less on a referential reality, or structure of ideas, understood as somehow 'outside' the text and more on the operations of tropical reference itself: the play of signs within the text.

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[1] Poetria Nova, 11.801-804 (pp.56-57).

Trope can occasion a distancing from narrative's mimetic referents because of its disruption of the narrative referentiality of the sign. At its most extreme, in oxymoron for instance, this disruption may deny the possibility of accurate reference at all, or at least point to its severe limitations.[1] Even with less extreme examples trope's temporary arrest of simple, proper, reference implies a new perspective or a multiplicity of possibilities for reference. Trope's non-transparency as sign tends to direct attention away from single or 'mimetic' reference and towards a possible problematics of multiple reference. It is no simple co-incidence that some fifteenth-century tropical narratives have narrator figures struggling to control the referentiality of language, nor that the period developed a metaphorics of writing as a process of control. Because of the highly tropical nature of their narratives, fifteenth-century texts often directly, and indirectly,address the issue of the problematics of an adequate and trustworthy system of reference.

The problems tropical operations can cause to narrative, are strikingly present in the articulations of narrators of fifteenth-century poetic texts. Critics of the period, understanding narrative as basically atropical, have separated off trope to the stylistic 'level', resulting in an impoverished sense of what fifteenth-century poetic narrative is. As has been noted, several fifteenth-century narrative poems, including The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies and The Isle of Ladies, do not seem much interested, stylistically, in tropical language.[2] If narrative is understood

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1. See R. Howard Bloch, Etymologies and Genealogies:a Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages (Chicago, 1983), p.114; Bloch discusses the ability of tropical signification to 'deny the purchase of language upon the world'.

2. See The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, edited by Derek A. Pearsall, pp.75-77 for a discussion of the lack of verbal ornament in these two poems. See also Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, pp.52-53.

as a basically layered, hierarchical structure with a base line of a mimetically conceived interaction of sequential plot and character, with trope occurring, if at all, as the stylistic or decorative embellishment of this infra-structure, then this view of these texts is justified. If trope is viewed as having a more than purely ornamental function in these narratives, however, then we can see how all three texts are using tropical language and operations to generate their narratives.

The inadequacy of a theory which would see rhetorical trope's relation to narrative as purely decorative has been exposed by certain developments in linguistic theory in the twentieth century. Much work has been done which suggests that the rhetorical operations which formal rhetorics may have limited to the single word or phrase operate on a much broader discursive and textual scale. The result has been the rhetoricising of the many possible relations which may exist not only within the text but also between the text and reader and the text and other texts. Harold Bloom's theories of the latter relation of the 'strong' text's tropically defined misreading of a precursor text have already been invoked by one critic as relevant to late medieval poetics.[1]

It is, of course, Roman Jakobson's article 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance'[2] that many theorists, in many disciplines, have taken as the crucial, seminal moment in this rhetoricising

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1. Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence and A Map of Misreading (New York and Oxford, 1975). A.C. Spearing, 'Lydgate's Canterbury Tale', pp.333-334, recalls Bloomian terminology.

2. Roman Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance', in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, The Fundamentals of Language (The Hague, 1956), pp.55-82.

of discursive and textual operations, a rhetoricising which may be understood as the rescuing of trope from the narrow confines of the isolated figure of diction.

Jakobson's study of the language disorders of aphasics in terms of the operations of metaphor - revealed in the inability to use or recognize similarity within linguistic paradigms - and of metonymy which is expressed in the difficulties caused by the exigencies of the combinative operations of contiguity in the linguistic syntagm, opened the way, as Jakobson himself suggests it should,[1] to the application of these terms to many symbolic and semiotic discourses. Lacan and Metz, among others, have, for instance, suggested that the operations of the unconscious may be profitably read in terms of the metaphor/metonymy distinction.[2] These are suggestions which have led to a re-reading of Freud's theories of condensation and displacement as they operate in dreams and jokes as descriptive of the rhetorical processes of metaphorical operation (condensation) and metonymic operation (displacement).

We have had recent, timely, reminders that the danger of the pan-rhetorical lies in the wholesale appropriation and application of Jakobsonian terms resulting in 'convenient lists of opposing items'.[3] Jakobson himself insists that the simple identification of sets of metaphoric and metonymic oppositions in poetics, for instance, is a rather gratuitous pastime; Jakobson suggests that it is rather the inter-relations between metaphor and metonymy, the overlapping and conscious play with such rhetorical operations, that needs to be examined.[4] Some critics and theorists have seen the limitations of the Jakobsonian approach to lie in the very binary nature of his rhetorical identifications, and have suggested the presence in literary texts of rhetorical operations and relations based on the tropes of metaphor (similarity); metonymy (cause and effect); synecdoche (inclusion/part and whole); and irony (opposition).[1] Such developments reinforce, however, the usefulness of seeing the text as a product of rhetorically conceived relations, which define both how it constructs meaning and the reading processes it demands.

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[1] See Roman Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language', pp.76-82.

[2] See particularly Jacques Lacan, 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious', Yale French Studies, 36-37 (1966), 112-147; and Christian Metz, Le Signifiant Imaginaire (Paris, 1977). In anthropology Claude Lévi-Strauss has also used the metaphor/metonymy distinction to define anthropomorphic categories, see The Savage Mind (London, 1966), p.207.

[3] Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, Rhetorical Poetics, p.10.

[4] Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics', in Style in Language, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok (New York and London, 1960), pp. 350-377, esp., p.358.

In the light of this heightened awareness of the rhetorical operations at work within and around texts one commentator on the twentieth century 'magical realist' novel has written that such works

> ...could be written with the strictest avoidance of figures of style such as metaphors, yet could contain an undeniably high figural density, though one which would be analyzable only on the basis of units in the text that are larger than those by which figures of style are usually examined.[2]

It is, apparently, a long way from the magical realist novel of the late twentieth century to the products of fifteenth-century poetics. Yet there are similarities, including the deliberate breach of narrative mimesis; the conscious reference to the materiality of writing and the phenomenology of the book. Fifteenth-century narrative may well display a 'high figural density' not necessarily related to the use of 'figures of style'. Orlando's concept of such a figural density in narrative suggests ways of approaching late medieval poetic texts. As I have noted above, for instance, three of the poems examined in this study, The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies and The Isle of Ladies have elicited critical comment on their lack of figures of style; yet an awareness of a 'high figural density' in these texts is essential, I believe, for a fuller understanding and appreciation of these poems.

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[1] See Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, Rhetorical Poetics, pp.19-34. Jakobson himself sees his task as a breaking down of the traditional metaphorico-centricism of rhetorical approaches, see 'Two Aspects of Language', pp.77-79; and 'Linguistics and Poetics', pp.375-377. Rice and Schofer broaden out the possibilities for rhetorical reading to the four tropes and tropical operations outlined above.

[2] Francesco Orlando, Toward a Freudian Theory of Literature, p.166.

Late medieval poems operate within a highly encoded poetic discourse. The tropical status of fifteenth-century poetic narrative need not, necessarily,be signalled by figures of style, because this status is achieved as a product of their intertextual relation to poetic discourse. Late medieval poems maintain, then, a high figural density even if this is is not reflected in the use of the figurative language of an Aristotelian concept of trope. For Aristotle in Rhetorica metaphor works with the force of sudden illumination, it hones rather than seriously disrupts reference, so that 'the mind seems to say, "How true it is! but I missed it"'(' καὶ ἔοικε λέγειν ἡ ψυχὴ "ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἐγὼ δ' ἥμαρτον." ').[1] Angus Fletcher has characterised the Aristotelian trope as a 'momentary dramatic device'[2] — a sharpener of referential processes. The emphasis in this study will be less on trope used in this Aristotelian sense than on the tropical operations within the text which may be used to generate narrative structures and hence meaning.

The taxonomic approach to the conventionally understood rhetorical text, a listing and labelling of its tropical and topical rhetorical parts, seems inadequate as a way of examining the use of rhetoric in late medieval poetic narrative. It is an inadequacy which would suggest the desirability of reading across the text, rather than purely linearly and sequentially, establishing what Émile Benveniste calls 'procédés stylistiques du discours'

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1. Aristotle, The 'Art' of Rhetoric, edited and translated by John Henry Freese, (London, 1926), Book 3, XI, 6.
2. Angus Fletcher, Allegory: the Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, 1964), p.77.
3. Émile Benveniste, Problèmes de linguistique générale (Paris, 1966), pp.86-87. Benveniste calls for the revival of 'le vieux catalogue des tropes' (p.86), as a means of analysing many different discourses.

stylistic procedures which would enable trope to be seen as establishing relationships between structural units of various lengths throughout the text.

Some critics writing on medieval narrative have realised the importance of trope understood in this way, and have used the terms of the twelfth and thirteenth century rhetoricans, particularly Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria Nova to analyse medieval texts. The twentieth century's distinction between figures of style and the processes of symbolisation or figuration across the text, have analogy, for these critics, to Vinsauf's well known distinction between figures of diction and figures of thought, or to the classical rhetoricians' distinction between trope and figure (see Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, IX, I, 1-28), of which latter Fletcher has written that as 'the former [is] a play on single words, the latter on whole groups of words, on sentences and even paragraphs'.[1] M.R. Kelley writes of rhetorical contentio, as both figure of thought and of diction, working as a 'principle of design' in The Parlement of Foules.[2] Claiming that the instances of this figure as trope indicate the structural use of antithesis in the poem Kelley writes:

> The rhetorical figure of antithesis is particularly well-suited for use as such a structural design, since it operates both as a figure of diction and a figure of thought. As such, it is potentially adaptable to nearly every structural element on a literary work. The antithetical arrangements of word, style, and description are variations of the figure of speech. The antithetical arrangements of character, plot, narrative point of view, tone and theme are variations of the figure of thought.[3]

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1. Angus Fletcher, Allegory, p.84. See also Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by William R. Trask (New York, 1953), pp.44-45, discusses the distinctions between trope and figure and concludes that the distinction remained somewhat fluid owing to 'a lack of a settled terminology' (p.45).

2. Michael R. Kelley, 'Antithesis as the Principle of Design in the Parlement of Foules', Chaucer Review, 14 (1979-1980), 61-73. See also Denis Walker, 'Contentio: the Structural Paradigm of the Parliament of Fowls', Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Proceedings number I (1984), 173-180.

3. Michael R. Kelley, 'Antithesis', p.68.

Similarly, R.O. Payne writes of a possible rhetorical poetics where:

> The distinctions between tropes and schemes, figures of sense and figures of words, figures pertaining to structure and those pertaining to style, simply establish a series of parallels at the various levels of structure (proceeding always from the more general to the more particular). The order and scope of the treatments of figures are direct reflections of the manner in which the weight of poetic statement is passed down through the supporting members of the structure to rest ultimately upon style.[1]

Both modern and medieval rhetorics show a concern with the scale of application of rhetorical precepts to discourse. Vinsauf, for instance, writing about metaphor discusses the possibility of the metaphorical phrase or statement:

> Sic transfert unam simplex mutatio vocem.
> Est quando plures ...
> ... transfertur adhuc oratio tota
> Et pars nulla sui.
>
> (Thus a simple change makes a metaphor of a single word. At times there can be several such changes ... further, an entire statement can be metaphorical and not merely a part of it).[2]

One must be wary, however, of making too easy equivalences between the terms of classical and medieval rhetorics and those of twentieth-century rhetorics based on structuralism. Vinsauf, as the quotation above illustrates, rarely writes of rhetorical operations working in larger units than the sentence, and moreover remains committed to the concept of trope as a decoration or ornament of discourse. For fifteenth-century poetic narratives it is better to see trope as having a two-fold textual importance. Firstly, inherited tropes provide basic, constitutive units of narrative structure; secondly, tropical operations (which have been identified by twentieth-century rhetorics of discourse) are the means by which these units are expanded, transformed and related, and therefore the means by which narratives are generated. Margaret Nims' observations on the medieval use of metaphor are pertinent to an understanding of tropes as basic units of narrative structure:

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[1] Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, p.49.

[2] Poetria Nova, 11.941-947 (pp.62-65).

> It would seem that the *translatio* that is metaphor underlies the *transformatio*, the *transfiguratio*, that is poetry. As a small but complete act of *obliqua figuratio*, metaphor appears to be a basic unit of verbal making - of *poesis*, of *mimesis*. Metaphor, we might say, is a poeseme.[1]

It is in allegory that trope has been allotted a more extensive narrative role than usual - what Nims would call a role as allegoreme.[2] Both Cicero and Quintilian write of allegory as continued metaphor. Quintilian describes allegory as being introduced by 'a series of metaphors' ('plerumque continuatis translationibus');[3] while Cicero notes 'when there is a sequence of metaphors, the sense of the words is totally altered; this is the case when the Greeks speak of 'allegory' ('Iam cum fluxerunt continuae plures translationes, alia plane fit oratio; itaque genus hoc Graeci appellant ἀλληγορίαν ').[4] George Puttenham describes the 'figure allegorie to be called a long and perpetuall Metaphore...[involving the] ... inuersion of sence in one single worde [to operate in] whole and large speaches'.[5]

In his study of allegory Angus Fletcher describes 'teleologically controlled tropes', which he argues organise allegorical narrative.[6] The tropes of synecdoche and metonymy are characterised as teleologically

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1. Margaret F. Nims, '*Translatio*', p.221.
2. Margaret F. Nims, '*Translatio*', p.229, note 20.
3. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, III, Book 8, vi, 44.
4. Cicero, *Orator*, translated by H.M. Hubbel (London, 1939), Book XXVII, 94.
5. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, Book III, xviii.
6. Angus Fletcher, *Allegory*, p.85.

controlled by Fletcher because both involve operations which organise signs into systems of relation, of either part to whole (synecdoche), or cause and effect (metonymy). Both tropes involve, in other words, the organisation of the individual sign into larger narrative structures. Fletcher sees such synecdochical or metonymic potential as a marker of the allegorical sign, and allegorical narrative as, in part, constructed through synecdochical and metonymic operations.[1]

In The Language of Allegory[2] Maureen Quilligan has described how the polysemy of language operates to construct a 'literal' level in allegorical narrative, and how the same potential in language for polysemy, and tropical signification, often 'deconstructs', or is disjunctive of, that literal level. For Quilligan allegory constantly frustrates the reader's expectation of a continued literal level (i.e. a sequentially conceived story-line) by forcing the reader to focus attention on the workings of the text's language itself. Quilligan argues that allegory works to expose the literal level as 'a translation of the story's events to a different (metaphorical) set of terms',[3] and she suggests that it is precisely the wish for such a metaphorically created and sustained 'fictional activity or "plot"'upon which allegorical interpretation (conceived as the translation of the events to a different set of terms beyond or behind the text) depends and which allegorical texts themselves deliberately set out to thwart or breakdown.

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1. See also Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit: the Making of Allegory (New York, 1966), pp.113-114, esp., p.114:'for the meanings of allegory depend, as in poetry, upon the accretion of certain tropes... allegory as an extended trope may include the functions of all other tropes - metaphor, irony, metonymy and synecdoche'.

2. Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre (Ithaca and London, 1979).

3. Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory, p.67.

Quilligan's study thus has important implications for how the relation of trope and narrative is understood. In normative allegorical interpretation - what Quilligan describes as allegoresis - allegorical signification is separated into figurative and literal levels. In this interpretative model the figurative (or tropical) constantly feeds back into, or expresses, a literal level somehow independent of the text itself. Quilligan's analysis of the strategies of allegorical narratives suggests that tropical operations themselves generate narrative structure by exploiting the polysemousness of language and by playing with language's referentiality. This would indicate that allegorical texts are less concerned to refer simply to a world of things or experience outside the text than with examining the nature of reference itself; with how experience itself is constituted as having meaning.

It has been written that Jakobson's article on aphasia:

> shows convincingly that rhetoric stands at the very core of our verbal processes, whether in literary works or in everyday speech.[1]

Jakobson's study revealed that rhetorical operations do not overlay discourse but are fundamental processes which build and generate discursive structures, including literary texts. It is partly the unease with rhetorical trope's capacity for multiple reference, for creating opacity or transposition, in the referential process - in Freud's terms trope's ability to displace or condense reference - which makes it appear foreign to narrative discourse understood as a basically sequential and mimetic form of reference. Trope's relation to narrative has thus been often characterised as one of decoration, as time off, or distraction from, narrative's real business as a sequentially and mimetically conceived form of reference. Trope, in this view, is not seen as operative in the constitution of the mimetic.

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[1] Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, Rhetorical Poetics, p.8.

I would agree with Quilligan that trope can be far more basic to narrative discourse than this view would allow. For fifteenth-century poetic narrative the definition of trope as decorative seems inadequate; there is a lot which risks being characterised as silly, banal or careless if we reduce these narratives to their base levelof a mimetically understood story-line. In limiting the play of signs which forms the tropical operations and inventiveness of these texts, we effectively deny, or reduce, their literary value. In these poems the multiplicity of reference and the interplay of signs which trope brings about generate narrative structure.

The conventionality of trope used in these texts implies a lessening of the sign's capacity for mimetic reference, as tropes (often gathered together in rhetorical _topoi_ with identifiable lineages) are viewed less for what they refer _to_ and more for their literary and poetic status. Rather a conventionalised trope stands less in relation to a referent outside poetic discourse and more to a series of multiple relations to other literary and poetic signs: other tropes. Thus texts which employ conventional tropes may exploit the multiplicity of analogy which such discursive relations make available. At times the various meanings of a trope, its various referents, may condense or collapse into a single moment; clinching a whole structure of analogies by pun, for example. Moreover, poetic structures may be generated from the use of the multiple meanings of one or more conventional tropes.

The grouping together of trope into identifiable clusters labelled _topoi_, the _loci communes_ of classical rhetoric, seems a good place to start in an examination of how trope may generate narrative structure. It is as investigations, in narrative form, of the potentialities of such common places, that many narrative poems in the fifteenth century are best understood. For Quintilian topoi were the 'sedes argumentorum', 'the secret places where arguments reside, and from which they must be drawn forth'.[1] For the fifteenth-century poetic studied in this thesis topoi function rather as growing points for a series of tropical inter-relations; they work less to focus a network of ideas or information seen as separate from its linguistic 'expression', and more to focus a network of poetic inter-relations, within an established poetic discourse. Topoi work, therefore, as nexuses of a series of poetic, discursive possibilities which are realised by narrative itself. In the next section I shall test these assertions by a reading of The Floure and the Leafe.

So far in this chapter I have discussed various aspects of trope and tropical reference which suggest that trope may be approached as a constitutive element of narrative structure. As we have seen there have been various theories, throughout history, which have attempted to assess the role of trope in narrative. The texts included in this study also address this question of the place of tropical reference in narrative discourse: the effect of trope on narrative reference. I have argued that this is a particularly important question with regard to fifteenth-century English poetic narrative because of the period's highly conventionalised poetic idiom: again and again familiar images and tropes are used as basic constitutive units of narrative in these texts.

One of the implications of the conventionality of a poetic language concerns the referentiality of the poetic sign. The poetic sign is constituted intertextually, and conventionality tends to emphasise this constitutive process. Thus, to some extent, the conventional poetic sign is referentially opaque in that it is recognised as a convention; as a familiar, and specifically literary, sign. The conventional poetic sign has, therefore, an available valency of reference to its own status as a convention, and to its own intertextually constituted and discursive heritage. In this way the conventional poetic sign retains the potential to work as a trope of poetic and textual elements, processes and concerns.

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[1] Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, II, Book 5, x, 20. For a discussion of topoi see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature, p.70.

This 'residue' of intertextually constituted meaning - this ability of the literary sign to work as a trope of its own discursive processes - may, as twentieth-century theories suggest, be a ubiquitous quality of all writing. But in the fifteenth-century poems discussed in this thesis this residual capacity is often made explicit; in fact, these texts uncover or bring into realisation the potential of the conventional poetic sign to refer to discursive and poetic issues. This is partly because of the period's awareness of the historicity of its poetic discourses but also because of the highly conventional nature of those discourses themselves. Poets in the fifteenth century worked to explore the multi-referential potential of their conventionalised poetic language, in particular they exploited the opacity of their poetic discourse - its referential valency to its own constitutive processes. It is in this way that the twentieth-century theories of the role of trope in narrative which have been discussed so far in this chapter - theories which centre on the intertextual constitution of the poetic sign - are particularly suggestive in the context of fifteenth-century narrative poems. The conventionality of fifteenth-century poetic discourse makes its intertextuality all the more tangible and emphatic.

This thesis thus makes special claims for a fifteenth-century poetic of intertextuality based upon the exploration of the potentialities of conventional trope. The texts included in this study have been selected because they illustrate different aspects of this exploration and different attitudes to the multi-referentiality of their conventional poetic discourse. Thus, this study focuses upon a selection of fifteenth-century texts which display well the variously reverberative patterns of analogy between an inscribed sense of an intertextually constituted poetic discourse and the presentness of the individual text's tropical strategies. Moreover, this study also aims to explore the general implications of the use of trope in fifteenth-century narrative poetry; some of these implications will be suggested by the use of illustrative material from many fifteenth-century texts - other than the ones studied at full length - in the following chapters. The thesis also has a secondary aim to identify and describe a metaphorics of writerly control which emerges as particularly popular in the fifteenth century. This metaphorics - of seafaring - emerges in the fifteenth century as the privileged trope for the discussion of poetic issues within a narrative context.

Readings of _The Floure and the Leafe_ and _The Assembly of Ladies_ are included in the last two sections of the present chapter. These two texts are treated first in this study because they illustrate various general aspects of the use of trope in fifteenth-century narrative poetry, and therefore serve to give textual examples of the issues raised and discussed so far in the present chapter. Both poems, then, illustrate how meaning is constituted in the individual text within a poetics of intertextuality. _The Assembly of Ladies_, in particular, stands as an example of the tendency of fifteenth-century texts to include tropes of themselves and thus to create fictions which explore their own poetic or textual condition, lineage and milieu.

The first part of Chapter Two takes a chronological step back to the end of the fourteenth century with a study of the use of trope in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. While The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies are treated first, in the present chapter, because they offer an introduction to the potentialities of the use of trope in fifteenth-century poetic narrative, Troilus and Criseyde illustrates the origins, or more strictly the handing-over point, of a specific discourse of desire and writing which the fifteenth century took up and developed. Moreover, it is from Troilus and Criseyde that the images of the ship and navigation, as metaphors for both desiring and writing, derive for fifteenth-century poets. These are metaphors which are important in all the fifteenth-century texts included in the succeeding chapters of the thesis.

Troilus and Criseyde is included at this point in the thesis, therefore, as an introduction to the English origins of a poetic discourse important in the poetic productions of the fifteenth century and also because it introduces an important metaphorics of writerly control which itself proves popular with Chaucer's successors. Furthermore, my reading of Troilus and Criseyde emphasises Chaucer's tropical strategies in the poem; strategies which aim at revealing the implications for reference of the use of tropical discourse.

These implications are taken up and examined with reference to Lydgate's Temple of Glas in section two of Chapter Two. The Temple of Glas is a text which borrows tropes from Troilus and Criseyde, but one which displays a very different attitude to the issue of poetic reference than does Chaucer's poem. The Temple of Glas has been selected from the notoriously large Lydgatean canon for two main reasons. Firstly, its relation to the Troilus - displayed in its use of a borrowed tropical language; and secondly, because of its own economy (always a relative term in Lydgate) of tropical strategy and process. Lydgate's is patently a different type of narrative than Chaucer's: part of the argument of Chapter Two is that this difference accrues from contrasting approaches to the role of trope in narrative. Lydgate, by commingling tropes from the discourse of erotic desire - some directly borrowed from the Troilus - creates a narrative of some tropical density. One implication of this, I argue in Chapter Two, is a huge confidence in tropical language's purchase on the world. In the Troilus there is not this confidence.

One of the reasons for the inclusion of Troilus and Criseyde in this study of fifteenth-century poetics is that Chaucer's text may be seen, in part, as a disquisition upon the nature of the conventional. In the Troilus the nature of a conventional discourse's relation to experience, and narrated history, is examined by the manipulation of the tropes of that discourse. The fifteenth-century poetic studied in this thesis takes its special character from the conventionality of its poetic discourse: Chaucer's Troilus - as an examination of the nature and role of the conventional in reference - throws considerable light on the work of fifteenth-century poets.

The Kingis Quair, The Bowge of Courte and The Isle of Ladies - the subjects of Chapters Three, Four and Five respectively - have all been chosen to illustrate particular developments of the metaphorics of navigation. In a more general vein, these three texts display contrasting attitudes to the issue of the referentiality of language - particularly poetic language. They address through their narratives the implications for reference of the relation of form and content within their specific poetic discourse.

The Bowge of Courte is particularly interesting because it takes up the commonplace image of navigation as a metaphor for the writing enterprise and uses it to create an ostentatiously multi-referential narrative. In The Bowge of Courte Skelton writes a conventional satire which takes as its primary target the duplicitous nature of dealing at the court, and adds to that allegorical narrative a self-reflexive and meta-linguistic element through the use of the ship metaphor.

The Bowge of Courte is interesting too because it is not a love poem and yet it signals an important part of its meaning by using a commonplace poetic trope of fifteenth-century erotic discourse. While The Bowge of Courte thus differs from the other narratives included in this thesis - because it is not a text concerned with erotic desire - it does address questions concerning the nature of reference and the relation of form and content which are similar to those found in The Temple of Glas and The Kingis Quair. It is for this reason that a reading of The Bowge of Courte has been included in the present study.

The Bowge of Courte shows how the use of trope from the discourse of erotic poetry may span generic boundaries. My final chapter - on The Isle of Ladies - follows through this aspect of the use of trope across various genres. My argument for the status of The Isle of Ladies as an allegory of desire and discourse, and an overview of the determining relation of erotic discourse on the individual text, rests upon its use of the tropes of erotic discourse from a variety of different genres. The Isle of Ladies presents a throughgoing investigation of the 'intertextual poetics' of the fifteenth century and one which provides an overview, and summary, of many of the issues raised throughout this study. It is for these reasons that The Isle of Ladies is the subject of the final chapter of the thesis.

SECTION THREE: THE FLOURE AND THE LEAFE

In The Floure and the Leafe the season is spring - May - and it is in this springtime setting that we find a female first-person narrator who is unable to sleep. The text is careful to mark out that this sleeplessness is not for the conventional reason of love-sickness:

> ... but why that I ne might
> Rest, I ne wist, for there nas earthly wight,
> As I suppose, had more hearts ease
> Then I, for I nad sicknesse nor disease.
>
> (18-21)[1]

The narrator gets out of bed and walks into 'a pleasant grove' (22) ... where she describes the ideal landscape. Into this garden setting come many knights and ladies, first of the party of the leaf and then of the party of the flower. The narrator describes what these various people do and what happens to them and then turns to a lady of the party of the leaf for an explanation of what she has seen, which she is given. The lady of the leaf rejoins the procession of her 'great company' (583) and the narrator returns home, where she writes down all she has witnessed. The poem ends with what D.A. Pearsall, the poem's most recent editor, calls 'the modesty epilogue', a variation of the submission *topoi* of classical rhetoric, 'the modest *captatio benevolentiae*, the admission of inadequacy and request for indulgence, which was characteristic of the *peroratio* in classical rhetoric'.[1]

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[1] All line references are to The Floure and the Leafe and the Assembly of Ladies, edited by Derek A. Pearsall.

In this section I will examine how the poem's narrative is constructed from the elements of one major conventional poetic *topos*, identified by Rosamund Tuve as the spring opening,[2] a *topos* which broadens out in *The Floure and the Leafe* to the obviously related *locus amoenus*, the beautiful, often enclosed, garden setting for themes and events pertaining to love and desire. The poet of *The Floure and the Leafe* uses the multiple referentiality of the signs and tropes made available in the *topoi* of spring and garden settings to construct a narrative referring not simply to the didactic meaning which the lady of the leaf supplies but also to issues involving the poetic discourse of which *The Floure and the Leafe* is a part and from which it gathers its full meaning. Moreover, the process of growth associated with the spring *topos* and the garden setting works in the poem as a metaphor for the production of meaning and of texts and of the relation of the text to its poetic tradition. *The Floure and the Leafe* may stand, then, as a particularly concise and well-structured example of how narrative may be generated from the examination of the multiple significance of conventional rhetorical *topoi* and trope. Even more impressive is the fact that *The Floure and the Leafe* displays the nature of this process of generation as itself tropical. While the trope for textual and semantic process in the poem is the metaphor of growth, of germination, of unfolding and blossoming, that process itself is effected tropically, based on a structure of synecdochical relation. In The Floure and the Leafe the narrative is generated from the tropes of the spring topos and the garden setting, by a series of synecdochical relations, the relation of part to whole. Other conventional tropes of the poem's discourse, such as the metaphors of desire as heat, of passion as storm or of desire as sickness are also economically related, synecdochically, to the poem's total structure as examples of the natural phenomena included within the spring/garden topos which determines the development of the narrative and poem as a whole.

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[1] Derek A. Pearsall, *The Floure and the Leafe*, p.68.

[2] See Rosamund Tuve, *Seasons and Months: Studies in a Tradition of Middle English Poetry* (Paris, 1933 reprinted Cambridge, 1974); and 'Spring in Chaucer and Before Him', *Modern Language Notes*, 52 (1937), 9-16.

The poem begins with an astrological periphrasis indicating the May time setting, and progresses at once to a description of the process of growth observable in spring, a process which provides the inclusive whole of which all the other tropes of the poem are parts. The first two stanzas, presenting the conventional spring topos, establish the major metaphors of the poem, the latent metaphors from which the narrative is generated or constructed. Thus we find reference to the sun in line 1; the rain (4); the ground (5); leaves and flowers (8); fields and meadows (9); renewal and growth (6, 11, 13) and finally seeds (12). The opening two stanzas establish all the principal metaphors from which the topography of the poem's narrative is constructed and also they provide the metaphors which are basic to the poem's action and plot. It is necessary to look at these stanzas more closely, however, to examine how they also establish - through the multiple reference of the tropes they intimate - an important strand of the poem's meaning concerning the production of significance and the text's relation to its traditional poetic discourse.

In the first stanza we are told, after the situating of the poem's events in May, of the 'shoures sweet of raine' (4) which fall causing new growth. In stanza two the quality of these showers is amplified in these terms:

> So very good and wholsome be the shoures
> That it renueth that was old and deede
> In winter time, and out of every seede
> Springeth the hearbe, so that every wight
> Of this season wexeth glad and light.
> (10-14)

Pearsall and Tuve remark on the conventionality of these elements as part of the _descriptio_ of the spring _topos_.[1] It is this very conventionality, however, which tends to weaken the mimetic reference of these lines as a description of a spring setting. In fact we need not look far in the literary tradition of the poem to be reminded that the renewal of spring after winter, and the germination and growth of seeds, work as metaphors for textual and discursive issues and, in Chaucer, as a metaphor of the process of extracting what is useful and valuable from old texts and for the problems of working within a specific literary tradition. It is in this vein that we find, in _The Parlement of Foules_, the narrator discussing the merits of reading old books:

> For out of old feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere.
> (22-25)[2]

While in the _Prologue to the Legend of Good Women_, the situating of the present poet/narrator's enterprise as a poet with regard to the poetic

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1. Derek A. Pearsall, _The Floure and the Leafe_, pp.48-49; Rosamund Tuve, _Seasons and Months_, pp.58-70, esp., p.59.

2. _Parlement of Foules_, in _The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer_, edited by F.N. Robinson. On the relation of the _Parlement_ and the _Prologue to the Legend of Good Women_ to _The Floure and the Leafe_ see G.L. Marsh, 'The Sources and Analogues of _The Floure and the Leafe_', _Modern Philology_, 4 (1906-1907), 121-167 and 281-327.

productions of the past is accomplished by the use of the same metaphorics of the seed. Past lovers and poets have

> ... lad awey the corn,
> And I come after, glenyng here and there,
> And am ful glad yf I may fynde an ere
> Of any goodly word that ye han left.
>
> (F. 74-77)

As R.A. Shoaf points out this use of metaphor in the Prologue and in The Parlement of Foules clarifies Chaucer's 'attitude to the conventions his poetry inherited' and 'reveals his awareness of the depletions of traditions'.[1] Significantly the tradition to which Chaucer alludes in the Prologue, through the use of seed and agrarian metaphor, is the same as that of The Flower and the Leafe. For Chaucer's poet/narrator is worrying at this point in the Prologue about how he can write sufficiently well about a flower, his 'daysye'. Just a few lines before the quotation cited above, he makes mention of the cult of the flower and the leaf - 'Whether ye been with the leef or with the flour' (F.72) - a cult with which our poem is, of course, directly involved.[2]

Without too great a strain an analogy can be drawn between field and text, and seed and sign in both Chaucerian examples, Shoaf puts it this way:

> The image of the 'ear of corn' evokes the 'seed' and the 'field' or the sem- and the text (I am using the partial homonyms 'semen' and 'sēmeion' to isolate the 'seed' in the sign and the 'sign' in the seed): the polysemantic vitality of the text is analogous to the seminal virtue of the field.[3]

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[1] R.A. Shoaf, 'Notes Toward Chaucer's Poetics of Translation', Studies in the Age of Chaucer, I (1979), 55-66 (p.56).

[2] In the Prologue the narrator expands his reference to the cult of the flower and the leaf at lines F.186-196. On the French and English tradition of the cult of the flower and the leaf see G.L. Marsh, 'The Sources and Analogues of The Floure and the Leafe'; and Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe, pp.22-29.

[3] R.A. Shoaf, 'Chaucer's Poetics of Translation', p.56.

What I wish to stress at this point is the potentiality of metaphors of growth, particularly pertaining to the growth of flowers and the production of seeds, to such meta-discursive issues as a text's relation to literary tradition and the signification of the text. The great emphasis on flowers in the *Prologue*, we remember, acts to focus a series of explicitly poetic issues, in such a way that R.O. Payne writes of the *Prologue* coming close to being Chaucer's 'art of poetry'.[1]

Guillame de Lorris's *Roman* is another poem in this tradition which uses seed imagery. The rose which appears to be the central symbol of Lorris's poem, the goal of Amant's journey and desire,and the centre of the poem's meaning, is actually shown to be but a container for the hidden seed, which acts as an image of the poem's fiction of meaning being hidden, inaccessible and always penultimate.[2] This state of penultimacy, of meaning always being at one remove, of Amant as desirer always being on the outside of what he desires,is illustrated in the *Roman* by the story of the seed-sower who, when he thinks he has the prospect of a good harvest has his hopes cruelly shattered by foul weather.[3] In the *Roman* the seed, which acts as a metaphor of the love sown in men's hearts, works also as an image of the poem's strategy of delaying, or postponing, ultimate meaning. The poem's journey structure, based on a series of revelations or uncoverings, is basic tothis delaying strategy, so much so that its unfinished state is possibly deliberate; meaning is promised the reader at the poem's end so insistently as to make one suspicious of that meaning's constant deferment. The seed metaphorics of the *Roman* illustrate this structure of deferment.

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[1] Robert O. Payne, *The Key of Remembrance*, p.56.

[2] See Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, edited by Stephen Nichols (New York, 1967), 11.3357-3378; and *The Romaunt of the Rose* in *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 11.3627-3648.

[3] See *Le Roman de la Rose*, 11.3960-3970. For a discussion of Amant as on the outside in the *Roman* see Evelyn Birge Vitz, 'Inside/Outside: First-Person Narrative in Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose*', *Yale French Studies*, 58 (1979), 148-164.

In The Kingis Quair[1] the processes of natural growth - the germination, growth and flowering of plants - work as an explicit 'takining', or metaphoric process of signification, of how Venus would have humankind observe the ordinances and procedures of true love. Flowers grow, Venus explains, because of her tears which act as rain:

> And of my cristall teris that bene schede
> The hony flouris growen vp and sprede,
> That preyen men, ryght in thaire flouris wise,
> Be trewe of lufe and worschip my seruise.
>
> (st. 117, 4-7)

This passage in The Kingis Quair uses the processes of natural growth as a metaphor of signifying processes, and it is presented as part of the I's sentimental education; he must learn to read metaphor correctly.

Shoaf points to the nature of the fields in the Prologue and the Parlement as analogous to the text: the narrator in both poems is a reader of old books and we, as readers of the present text also act as gatherers of seed, of the text's virtual meaning. The field is not, of course, simply a metaphor for this text, but also for all those other texts of the particular literary tradition within which the poet is working. In The Floure and the Leafe the ideal landscape the narrator enters on leaving her bed situates a 'pleasant herber, well ywrought' (49) within a field, which she describes as follows:

> In the field, that was on every side
> Covered with corne and grasse, that, out of doubt,
> Though one would seeke all the world wide,
> So rich a field coud not be espide
> On no coast, as of the quantity,
> For of all good thing there was plenty.
>
> (72-77)

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[1] All references to The Kingis Quair of James Stewart, edited by Matthew McDiarmid.

By entering this landscape the narrator is entering an intertextual space of literary tradition, a place of rich textual possibility. The poem is generated from the polysemous signs and tropes of this semantically rich and splendid literary field and of the splendidly detailed rhetorical _locus amoenus_ of the garden. In this landscape the mimetic and naturalistic are juxtaposed with the metaphoric and the artificial. The garden and field are at once full of nature, with its complement of naturalistically conceived detail, _and_ full of convention.[1]

As images of the text and the inter-text, of literary tradition and convention spatially conceived as places, shared by the present text and other past poems, the field and the garden work as growing-points for tropes relating to poetic and literary issues. Within such a context the colours and flowers of the field and garden suggest that the _colores_ and _flores rhetorici_ have been made palpable entities as part of a textual, traditional literary landscape which the narrator observes and of which her poem finally becomes a part. In stanza two the rains of spring cause dead fields and meadows to bring forth new flowers - that is new poetic tropes. In the narrative itself, the party of the flower disport themselves in a meadow 'Al oversprad with floures' (343) and wear chaplets 'made of goodly floures, white and red' (333). This field of poetic discourse is one full of the _colores_ and _flores rhetorici_,[2] decorative rhetorical figures which do not survive the fervent (dare one say tropical) heat of the sun which operates as a metaphor of desire:

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[1] See David V. Harrington, 'The Function of Allegory in _The Flower and the Leaf_', _Neuphilologische Mitteilungen_, 71 (1970), 244-253 (p.245): 'By comparing it with any number of other medieval poems, the literary historian can point out that nearly every element pertaining to nature in _The Flower and the Leaf_ is conventional'.

[2] In the _Goldyn Targe_ Dunbar establishes a similar analogy between women as flowers - set in a field of flowers - and rhetorical figures as flowers in the textual 'field' of the poem. Compare esp., 11.55-59, 11.64-72 and 1.117, see _The Poems of William Dunbar_, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford, 1979). For a Chaucerian play with these metaphors of flowers and colours see the _Prologue to The Franklin's Tale_, _The Canterbury Tales_, V, 11.723-726. In his modesty _topos_ the Franklin is eager to disclaim any rhetorical competence, but then ironically confirms his discursive skills. So that he disclaims a knowledge of 'Colours of rhethoryk' (1.726) but knows only those 'colours as growen in the mede' (1.724).

> As about noone, the sonne so fervently
> Waxe whote that the prety tender floures
> Had lost the beauty of her fresh coloures.
>
> (355-357)

The heat of the sun which at the beginning of the poem initiates growth,and therefore initiates the unfolding of the text, at this point prevents the growth of flowers, and thus curtails the flower's decorative potential and their narrative potential. The catastrophe occurs midway through the poem's diurnal time scheme, 'about noone' (355), and from this moment on the leaf, and all the leaf represents,dominates the narrative. While until this point the poem appears to have been developing as a tableau of decorativeness after the catastrophe destroys the flowers in the field a didactic signifying takes over. The poem is divided between accounts of decorativeness and accounts of moral meaning and significance.

Prior to the storm, we have been given detailed accounts of the beauty and artifice of the garden and the field, of their rich decorative textuality, and detailed descriptions of the dress and appearance of both the party of the leaf and the flower. The description entails an account of clothes, gems, embroidery and insignia. The description of decorativeness ends with the heat of the sun and the cold of the hail, an oxymoronically conceived catastrophe, which polarises the two parties of leaf and flower in terms of how they react. The radical division is signalled in the narrative by the spatial divisions of the two parties topographically and by the action of the nightingale and goldfinch; the former flies to join the lady of the leaf the latter to sit on the hand of the lady of the flower. Central to this battering down of decoration is the destruction of the flowers and their colourfulness - the destruction of decorative figures of rhetoric - by structurally employed trope which encodes conventional metaphors of desire as heat and storm as passion, within an oxymoronic structure of the conventional erotic polarities of heat/cold and dry/wet.

The narrative at this dividing and decisive point, then, involves complex tropical operations. Central to the narrative division are the terms of commonplace oxymoron of erotic poetic discourse, the oxymorons of cold/heat, dryness/wetness and sickness/cure. The action of the narrative clusters round these polarities. The party of the leaf remains dry and cool and healthy, the party of the flower becomes hot and wet and sick. The landscape suddenly becomes a map of the effects of erotic desire, with those who gather in one place, under the tree and therefore protected from the heat and damp by leaves, being judged superior in terms of sexual propriety, to those who are gathered in another, in the field and thus unprotected among the flowers. Trope at this decisive, determining moment in the poem, plays a crucial structural role. The metaphors and oxymorons of erotic desire inform narrative action, event and setting, and finally result in narrative judgment. Not only does the landscape become a map of erotic desire and its effects, but the tropes of erotic desire themselves operate in narrative terms, by constituting the weather which produces these effect on the landscape and those who people it. Furthermore both weather and landscape, both structural and decorative trope and figure at this point in the poem are generated from, and grow out of, the rhetorical places of the spring _topos_ and the garden setting.

The narrative is generated through the synecdochical expansion of the spring _topos_ and garden setting. Such synecdochical expansions relate the landscape to those who people it, and both to the poem's structures of moral value. Finally the whole text is synecdochically related to the conventions of the poetic tradition which it utilizes, conventions contained within the spring topos and locus amoenus, for the narrative is shown to grow out of these conventions, and all its parts are contained within the whole of these rhetorical places. Growth is the determining metaphor of the poem, a metaphor both of how this text produces meaning and also a metaphor of this text's relation to its literary traditions. The poem's synecdochical processes of generation are akin to a process of exfoliation (the poem's own metaphor is one of unfolding see line 595), as each part of the poem's narrative structure is held in a relation of inclusion to a larger part; included as a part of a whole. It is necessary to examine the poem in some detail to show how trope is used in this exfoliated structure to 'unfold' a narrative.

The central section of the narrative, where the narrator observes the activities of the knights and ladies of the leaf and the flower (lines 134-455), begins with the narrator describing the entry of 'a world of ladies' (137) into the landscape of field and 'herber'. The ladies are soon joined by 'such a rout' of knights that it seems to the narrator 'as all the men on earth had been assembled/In that place' (197/8). The ideal inclusiveness of the poem's world begins, then, synecdochically: the party of the leaf which is made up of these ladies and knights, is itself, a synecdoche of the world for the narrator. This world in miniature apparently complete, the narrator proceeds to give full descriptions of the knights, in particular their "chaplets new'. The particular type of leaf used in these chaplets is determined by the hierarchical status of the individual knight, i.e. his degree:

> And all they were, after their degrees,
> Chapelets new, made of laurer grene,
> Some of oke, and some of other trees.
> Some in their honds bare boughes shene,
> Some of laurer, and some of okes kene,
> Some of hauthorne, and some of woodbind
> And many mo which I had not in mind.
>
> (267-273)

The rhetorical markers of this passage; the catalogue, the repetitio on 'some' and the narrator's occupatio of the last line, signal this passage as a nexus of the analogy operating in the poem between the ladies and knights and the leaves and trees of the landscape they inhabit. There have been signs of such an analogy throughout the preceding descriptions, see for instance lines 154-5; 174; 222; 249-50 and 259-60. In the joust which follows the passage quoted above the hierarchy of degree which has been established and validated by this analogy is confirmed, for the victors in the joust receive crowns of leaves, 'tho that crowned were in laurer grene/wan the prise' (289/90).

After the joust the knights and ladies pair off and stand under the shade of a tree:

> ... a faire laurer that stood fast by,
> With leves lade, the boughes of great brede.
>
> (304-305)

The repeated and insistent occurrence of leaves and trees, especially the 'laurer grene' (lines 249; 290 and 304), signals how the narrative is being generated by synecdochical relations. Those who people this landscape are synecdochically part of it; they use the emblems of various leaves to identify their social status - their 'degree'. By synecdoche a value relation is established between persons and leaves or trees: the party of the leaf is a synecdoche of the leaf and tree filled landscape it inhabits. This landscape becomes, in turn, through the expansions of synecdoche, a map of social values. The 'laurer grene' is seen as of the highest degree, and therefore its place in the landscape synecdochically stands as a locus of privileged social degree. This has obvious implications for the narrative action later in the poem when the landscape expands into a map of the sexual mores of its inhabitants. With the expansion the shade of the laurel becomes the privileged locus of prudent and chaste sexual behaviour. The narrative, then, by synecdochically conceived relations, generates meaning through the relation of people to landscape and landscape to a system of social and sexual values and proprieties. The central signs of this generative process are leaves and trees, themselves conventional elements of the spring topos and the garden setting. Thus by synecdochical relations, the narrative is generated, grows out of, these two poetic commonplaces.

The description of the party of the flower (lines 323-353) follows a similar pattern of synecdochical expansion or exfoliation: both the knights and the ladies of this second company wear chaplets 'made of goodly floures, white and red' (333) and disport themselves in a meadow 'all over sprad with floures in compas' (343). It is a landscape which deliberately recalls the description of the poem's opening spring topos, especially lines 8-9. Moreover one of the ladies sings 'a bargaret in praising the daisie' (348) providing a poetic (lyric) element in the identification of people with flowers. Having established a narrative pattern of synecdochical relation between people and landscape with the party of the leaf the same pattern is continued with the party of the flower but with a greater economy. So the latter wear flowers, they sit and dance in a meadow full of flowers, and they sing lyric poems about flowers (recalling the narrator's adoration of the daisy in The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women). Descriptio, conceived as an account of decorativeness, reaches an exquisite peak with the party of the flower, for it is the raison d'être of these flowers to be beautiful and to decorate the landscape. As narrative embodiments of the colores and flores rhetorici their description forms the culmination of the poem's apparent decorativeness. The field operates as a metaphor of the text and the flowers which decorate the field, are both metaphors and literal manifestations of the decorativeness of the poem's textuality up to this point. With the destruction of this floral landscape the tropically constructed moral and evaluative aspect of the narrative comes to the fore.

The sun and the rain which cause flowers to grow in the poem's opening spring topos at the beginning of the poem's day, batter down and destroy flowers at the poem's temporal centre. The growth of the text and of a specific poetic discourse, alluded to at the poem's opening through the metaphor of the growth of flowers, a discourse which reaches its purest, most exquisite manifestation in the lyric 'bargaret' sung to the daisy, is brought to an abrupt halt by the irruption of other, distinctive aspects of that discourse into the poem. Appropriately these other aspects consist of the metaphors and oxymorons of erotic desire, for which the spring topos and locus amoenus are themselves a conventional setting, and are, moreover, conceived of in terms wholly appropriate to these settings; taking the form of the weather which effects the spring garden landscape.

As noted above the narrative at this point displays a high degree of tropical saturation or condensation as commonplace metaphors and oxymorons of the discourse of erotic poetry are grouped together to inform and generate narrative setting, action and event. Event in the landscape - ie. the wilting of the flowers in the meadow because of excessive heat -analogically relates to what happens to those who people that landscape; the ladies are 'tobrent' (358) and the knights 'swelt' (360) because of the heat and the lack of shade. As the narrative is saturated with the tropes of desire at this point, so the storms of hail and rain saturate the knights and ladies until

> The ladies ne the knightes nade o threed
> Dry on them, so dropping was her weed.
> (370-371)

The narrative is so tropically overloaded at this point that a condensation must take place and this is reflected in narrative event. The oxymorons of desire - of heat and cold and wet and dry - morally and topographically plot the positions of the parties of the flower and the leaf respectively. Moreover other metaphors of desire congest the narrative at this point. The metaphor of desire as a sickness (and the corollary of relief from desire as cure) also structures narrative event. This metaphor is first introduced by pun.

The party of the leaf are protected from the 'great affray' (374) of heat and storm by the shade of the meritricious laurel, the party of the flower who are not so lucky, make earnest request of them that they should

> ... yede for routh and pite,
> Them to comfort after their great disease
> So faire they were the helplesse for to ease.
> (376-378, my emphasis)

This punning allusion to the metaphor of desire as disease, literally 'dis-ease', is followed through at lines 391-392 and lines 395/6 ('for in right ill array/She was with storm and heat') as the lady of the leaf condescends to agree to help her unfortunate 'suster' (398). At lines 391-392 the lady of the leaf promises to 'please' the party of the flower by easing their 'dis-ease'. The pun is clinched, and the metaphor of desire as sickness realised in narrative, through the actions of the party of the leaf as they help the party of the flower: the former administer cures to the latter in the form of medicines made from leaves:

> And after that, of hearbs that there grew,
> They made, for blisters of the sonne brenning,
> Very good and wholsome ointments new,
> Where that they yede the sick fast annointing.
> And after that they yede about gadering
> Pleasaunt salades, which they made hem eat
> For to refresh their great unkindly heat.
> (407-413)

The synecdochical operations here are obvious: cure to an excess of desire, itself a conventional metaphor of the discourse of erotic poetry, comes in the shape of leaves, of 'hearbs that there grew' (407). The most inclusive and enclosing metaphor of the poem - that of growth - here provides the terms of a metaphorically conceived cure to a metaphoric disease, the 'dis-ease' of an excess of sexual desire, an excess mirrored in the excess of tropes of sexual desire in the narrative at this point.

On the map of sexual proprieties which the landscape of the poem creates, trees and the shade of leaves become *loci* of protection from the excesses of sexual desire. Cure to such an excess of desire, therefore, is narrativised as the administering of 'wholsome ointments' (409) and 'Pleasaunt salades' (412) made from leaves. The metaphoric cure is related, synecdochically, to the poem's narrative landscape and thus to that landscape's mapping out of sexual proprieties. Furthermore the party of the leaf are in a way, synecdochically curing the flower's 'dis-ease' by administering themselves. The herbs and salads are synecdoches of the party of the leaf's sexual prudence and chastity: by giving the party of the flower leaves in the form of herbs and salads the party of the leaf are effectively administering their sexual prudence to the sexually imprudent party of the flower.

This synecdochical transference of sexual qualities from leaf to flower is also apparent in the stanza immediately preceding the one quoted above. The party of the leaf dry out the saturated party of the flower by building fires made from the branches of trees:

> To make their justs they would not spare
> Boughes to hew downe and eke trees square,
> Wherwith they made hem stately fires great
> To dry their clothes that were wringing weat.
> (403-406)

Here the party of the leaf's knight's characteristic activity, jousting (see lines 281-287) acts as a metaphor for their curative function concerning the party of the flowers sexual imprudence. Trees, which act as those parts of the poem's narrative landscape which map out places of sexual prudence, are dismantled at this point to provide an antidote to the saturating effects of sexual imprudence. The transference of sexual proprieties thus effected is synecdochical in nature, consisting of the transfer of moral properties from landscape to those who people that landscape, and then from these privileged people to others who lack those moral properties for dealing with sexual excess.

All narrative elements at this point - narrative landscape, figures, objects, events and action - are synecdochically related to the poem's determining metaphor of growth. It is a metaphor which links the poem's two places - spring _topos_ and garden setting - and also a metaphor which creates an analogy between the poem's method of producing meaning to the poem's narrative events and actions. The poem also reveals oppositions within commonplace metaphors. For the rain and the warmth which at the poem beginning make the field (the poem as text) grow and generates all its narrative elements - trees, leaves, flowers and herbs - can also destroy certain of those elements. Heat is both cause of 'dis-ease' and the way to repair that 'dis-ease'. The warmth of the party of the leaf's 'stately fires' (405), is set in opposition to the fervent heat of the sun (line 355) which causes the flowers to wilt and the party of the flower to erupt in blisters. Narrative,here, takes shape from an investigation of the oppositions - some of them oxymoronic in conception - and implications of commonplace metaphors of desire. Such a narrative use of trope seems to displace - to literally batter down and erase from the textual fabric of the poem - trope conceived as decorative. As though to mark this sea-change from this point on the poem's narrator ceases to be concerned with the description of beauty, decorativeness and appearance and becomes curious as to the meaning of all that she has witnessed:

> And I, that had sene all this wonder case,
> Thought I would assay, in some manere,
> To know fully the trouth of this matere.
> (451-453)

The narrative of The Floure and the Leafe, the so-called 'literal level' of its allegory, is constructed from commonplace trope and generated by tropical (synecdochical) relations. The poem may usefully be understood as an investigation, by trope, of the narrative possibilities of the spring topos and the locus amoenus and the discourse of erotic poetry these loci allow access to. In The Floure and the Leafe these possibilities are not dead conventions but the source of narrative structure and meaning, the very growing point of narrative setting, event and participants. As such the poem's opening comments on the revivifying effects of spring on old fields, work as a metaphor (as it does in Chaucer) for the revivifying of old conventions by the narrative text. In particular the poem investigates, in narrative form, the tropical designations of male and female roles in the discourse of erotic love poetry. The party of the leaf takes on the female metaphors of this discourse while the party of the flower take on the metaphors of the hapless male lover of this traditional discourse. Hence the members of the party of the leaf administer (and synecdochically are) the cure to the party of the leaf's sickness. The leaf is at once the source of heat (the source of male desire)and the place of coolness (of freedom from desire)thus displaying in narrative terms the polarities of the heat/cold oxymoron of the discourse of erotic poetry. Through these commonplace tropes The Floure and the Leafe examines the positions of male and female roles in this traditional poetic discourse and wittily places women in the privileged role, whereby they can condescend to the hapless men who are overcome by an excess of desire.

In the lady of the leaf's gloss to the events which the narrator has witnessed, the relation of this narrative's events to a past, literary, discourse is emphasised.[1] In explaining the meaning of the laurel as a sign, the lady of the leaf tells the narrator about the knights of the leaf:

> And for their worthines ful oft have bore
> The crowne of laurer leaves on their hede,
> As ye may in your old bookes rede.
>
> (507-509)

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[1] See David V. Harrington, 'The Function of Allegory', p.247. Harrington describes The Floure and the Leafe as

> a miniature book of courtesy as it were, or a nostalgic looking back upon a 'golden age' of leisure, decorum, consideration, and decency. It isn't important to mark out precise parallels with established literary tradition. It is the quality of feeling counts.

I would argue that what is important in the poem is the literary, discursive nature of the past, a past from which the present text 'grows'.

She goes on to plot the textual history of the discourse the party of the leaf representsthrough the Arthurian tradition of the Round Table (515); the order of garter knights (519) and finally to Rome itself (530-32). This Arthurian literary tradition is set in opposition to the lyricism of the party of the flower's literary predilections (for example the singing of the bargaret). This awareness of pastness is important in the poem because of the enduring values it keeps alive, through the use of sign (in the crown of laurels for example). The lady of the leaf's gloss really consists of a lesson in the importance of the sign of the leaf (see lines 517-8; 544-46; and 548-51). The longevity of the leaf, as against the flower, makes it an apt sign not only of long-lasting virtue, but also of the long-lasting value of old conventions The poem is consciously conservative in its valuation of the past, which has analogy to its use of the poetic convention's of old fields or 'old bookes'.

The process of growth acts as a metaphor which defines the nature of the relation between this present text and the old fields of poetic tradition, as the present text grows out of the conventions of that traditional discourse. It works also as a metaphor of the synecdochical operations by which the narrative is generated from the signs and tropes of the spring _topos_ and the _locus amoenus_. In the last stanza, at the end of the poem's diurnal time-scheme (see line 588), the narrator returns home, to put all that she has witnessed into writing, into the poem - 'the little booke' (591) which we, as readers have just read. In this stanza the conventional humility _topos_ extends the metaphor of growth to include reading. At line 593 the narrator addresses her poem with the words 'It is wonder that thou wexest not rede'. The line punningly refers to 'rede' as 'to read' as well as to become red, i.e. to blush.[1] The pun is encouraged by the use three lines previously of 'rede' referring to the act of reading. The poem has grown, it 'wexeth' - to be read. The pun makes a nice, ironic point in this modesty epilogue, for it would be a wonder if the poem had grown and yet remain unread - 'not-read' - while at the same time the narrator wonders why the poem doesn't blush, 'grow red' (like the flowers in the meadow whose lack of sexual decorum causes them shame) because of its lack of verbal sophistication. The pun points the poem's determining metaphor of growth and thus signals for the reader the nature of the poem's investigation of the possibilities of poetic convention and also the nature of the processes by which the poem's narrative is generated, the way in which it 'unfolds' its language 'full boistously' (595).

Paul Zumthor has written:

> C'est à ses marques formelles dans la texture des oeuvres que l'analyse doit percevoir l'existence de la tradition. Cette exigence nous amène à privilèger les eléménts récurrents qui, de texte en texte, nous apparaîtront comme une trace significative.[2]

Zumthor suggests that the inscription of an inherited, traditional poetic discourse in the individual text takes place by the deployment of 'les eléménts récurrents'. In this section we have seen how commonplace trope acts as such a formal marker inscribed in The Floure and the Leafe. While

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[1] See Ann McMillan, '"Fayre Sisters Al"': The Flower and the Leaf and The Assembly of Ladies', Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, 1 (1982), 27-42 (p.36):

> This pose of modesty echoes Chaucer's words to his 'litel boke' at the ending of Troilus. Yet here, the words go beyond the conventional, to take on attributes of the narrator herself. Like a woman, the book should blush for the fact that it does not know who may 'behold' it.

[2] Paul Zumthor, 'Topique et Tradition', Poétique, 2 (1971), 354-365 (p.354).

Zumthor is mainly writing about the implicit traces of the conventions of traditional discourse in the text, the use of trope in The Floure and the Leafe suggests that in fifteenth-century texts this implicit trace is transformed into an explicit strategy of the individual poem. Thus, the nature of the relation of the individual text to its inherited poetic discourse often becomes the subject of narrative discourse itself. In this vein The Floure and the Leafe may be read as a meta-discursive allegory; an allegory of how discourse constitutes a particular meaning and inscribes it in a text through the operations of trope. The twentieth-century movements towards the rhetoricising of discourse which I have discussed in section two of this chapter, have revealed the tropical operations present in all narrative texts. But the fifteenth-century poems studied in this thesis display a particular awareness of the work of trope in narrative; for it is by the expansion and transformation of commonplace trope that narrative is generated in these texts.

Furthermore, the process by which an inherited poetic discourse is inscribed in the individual narrative is often an explicit subject of narrative discourse itself. These narratives address this process of inscription through what may be called fictions of textualisation, by this I mean the sometimes self-reflexive encoding within the text of its own writing. This awareness of textualisation is focused, primarily through first-person narrators as writer/poets. A brief study of The Assembly of Ladies will provide a useful illustration of the narrative possibilities of such fictions of writing.

SECTION FOUR: THE ASSEMBLY OF LADIES - A FICTION OF TEXTUALISATION

The Assembly of Ladies has often been linked with The Floure and the Leafe since W.W. Skeat's claims for a single (female) authorship for the two poems;[1] and while we have no extant manuscript of The Floure and the Leafe, it is highly probable that the two poems were originally bound together in Manuscript Longleat 258.[2] The links between the two poems are mainly based on the fact that both texts use the unusual feature of a female first-person narrator. While Derek Pearsall in his edition of the two poems argues against a single authorship,[3] he places the poems in comparative relation; a comparison in which The Assembly of Ladies is found wanting:

> Where The Floure and the Leafe accepts with serenity an age, a civilisation, a scheme of values, a poetic, The Assembly of Ladies is all bustle and movement, ever reaching after the new though rooted in the old. Its very shortcomings throw into relief the remarkable qualities of The Floure and the Leafe.[4]

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1. Skeat bases his theory of a common female authorship on the use of a female first-person narrator in both poems; a similar use of 'stupid tags' and rhymes; and a similar feminine (sic) taste for the description of clothes. See Walter W. Skeat, 'The Flower and the Leaf', Academy, 35 (1889), 448-449, and Academy, 41 (1892), 592. In 'The Authoress of "The Flower and the Leaf"', Modern Language Quarterly, 3 (1900), 111-112, and Athenaeum (1903), i, 340, Skeat develops his theory that both poems are by Margaret Neville, Countess of Oxford. See also Skeat's introduction to Chaucerian and Other Pieces: a Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1897), pp.lxii-lxx; and The Chaucer Canon (Oxford, 1900), pp.110-111 and 139-141.

2. The Assembly is extant in three manuscripts including Manuscript Longleat 258 the other two being British Library MS Addit. 34360 and Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R. 3. 19. In the Longleat manuscript the quire containing The Floure and the Leafe (fols 33-48) is missing see my discussion of the manuscript in section one, pp.8-10 above. See also Eleanor Prescott Hammond, 'MS Longleat 258 - A Chaucerian Codex', p.78; and Derek A. Pearsall The Floure and The Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, pp.2-3.

3. Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe and the Assembly of Ladies, pp.13-19, esp., p.17: 'the evidence as a whole, it will be seen is emphatically against common authorship'. All line references to The Assembly of Ladies are to Pearsall's edition.

4. Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, p.2.

The poem has been characterised, most vituperatively by C.S. Lewis,[1] as silly and careless because of these 'shortcomings', but recent studies of the poem have emphasised the text's deliberate strategies for the ironic denial of normative allegorical expectations and also its evasion of a simple, unambiguous, meaning.[2] Thus Ann McMillan, while still setting The Assembly and The Floure and the Leafe in comparative relation reverses Pearsall's qualitative evaluation of the two poems, with The Assembly becoming the more interesting text: 'The Assembly of Ladies takes the comfortable, congratulatory images of The Flower and the Leaf and stands them on their heads'.[3]

One of the ways in which The Assembly deliberately plays with allegorical expectations of meaning may be seen by the provision of alternative 'reading models' within the poem. The Assembly sets the narrative motif of the journey - as a model of the linear, end-directed search for ultimate meaning (in the judgment of Loyalty) - against the motif of the maze - a model of uncertainty, lack of direction, and ambiguity of meaning.

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1. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, pp.249-250 (p.249):

> Taken as an allegory, it is as silly a poem as a man (sic) could find in a year's reading ... the poem belongs to that class in which the allegorical pretence is assumed only at the bidding of fashion.

2. Judith M. Davidoff, 'Flouting Literary Convention: Structural Irony in The Assembly of Ladies', Mediaevalia 8 (1985 (for 1982)), 259-276 (p.273): 'what we have in The Assembly is a poem that draws on the traditional structural movement from need to fulfilment, but undercuts with irony the literary motifs it ostensibly portrays with seriousness and care'. See also Pamela Gradon, Form and Style, p.376; Ann McMillan, '"Fayre Sisters Al": The Flower and the Leaf and The Assembly of Ladies', Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, I (1982), 27-42; John Stephens, 'The Questioning of Love in The Assembly of Ladies', Review of English Studies, new series 24 (1973), 129-140. I would like to thank Ms Davidoff for sending me an offprint of her article; she also informed me that she discusses The Assembly in her book Beginning Well: Framing Fictions in Late Middle English Poetry (forthcoming, Associated University Presses).

3. Ann McMillan, '"Fayre Sisters Al"', p.36.

The maze's importance as a reading model of the text is signalled by wordplay. For the women at the beginning of the poem walk in a 'mase' (lines 16 and 32); which makes them 'so mased in theyr mynde' (38, emphasis added) i.e. bewildered; and at the end of her dream the narrator tells us that she is 'al amased' (739) - full of wonder/bewilderment. This punning adnominatio emphasises the maze as a reading model in The Assembly, the poem's meaning remains ambiguous, and undefined, thus the journey to Loyalty's court ends indecisively - with no judgment from Loyalty herself - and the poem itself is circular in structure, beginning and ending in a maze.[1]

The poem's ironic, possibly parodic, relation to the norms of the discourse of love-allegory - revealed in its use of a female I figure who evades the modalities of allegorical signification (see below), and in such wordplay as I have described above - has been well documented by recent readings of The Assembly. In this study I will concentrate on one particular aspect of the text's self-reflexivity, that is the poem's fiction of textualisation, and also on the implications such a fiction has for our readings of fifteenth-century narrative poetry, particularly love-allegories.

The frame narrative of The Assembly establishes the fiction of the narrator telling her tale in response to a question from an unidentified man:

> 'Wherof I serve?' on of hem asked me.
> I seyde ageyne, as it fil in my thought:
> 'To walke aboute the mase, in certeynte,
> As a womman that nothyng rought'.
> He asked me ageyn whom I sought...
> 'Forsoth', quod I, 'and therby lith a tale'.
>
> (15-21)

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[1] For discussions of mazes and wordplay in The Assembly see: Ruth M. Fisher, 'The Flower and the Leaf and the Assembly of Ladies: a Study of Two Love-Vision Poems of the Fifteenth Century' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1955), pp.180-186; Judith M. Davidoff, 'Flouting Literary Convention', pp.261-266; Ann McMillan, '"Fayre Sisters Al"', pp.37-38; John Stephens, 'The Questioning of Love', pp.133-136.

At some point in her narration the narrator stops telling a tale and begins writing a book, for at the end of the poem the same questioner demands to know what 'ye the booke do cal' (748). Although in the opening stanzas there is no reference to the narrator as writer, by line 307 a writerly consciousness is inscribed in the narration for the narrator assures us - 'as my penne can endite' - of her accurate transmission of the words Contenaunce wears on her sleeve. Thus, by the end of the poem the very material substance of the words which we, as readers have just read - the work's 'bookness' - demands the status of the textual. The poem's concluding rhetoric confirms this textuality:

> With that anon I went and made this booke,
> Thus symply rehersyng the substaunce
> Because it shuld nat out of remembraunce.
> (740-742)

Such fictions of textualisation are common concluding moves in medieval poetic texts.[1] However in The Assembly the fiction gains a special significance because the narrative takes textualisation as its subject. The narrative action of the dream in The Assembly is largely concerned with the transposing of 'experience' into words: the troping or textualisation of experience. While the narrator's turning of her experience into a 'booke' is the largest, most inclusive, fiction of textualisation in the poem, textualisation also takes place in the dream/narrative, for each lady or gentlewoman must write down her experience in the 'bille' she presents to Loyalty. Moreover, each petitioner and personification in Loyalty's court must turn herself into a text by wearing her word on her sleeve. The wearing of these 'wordes' (mottoes, in French, which obscurely refer to what their wearer's experience has been or what they are)[1] is a 'custom of the place' of Loyalty's court, a local exigency which all except the narrator must follow.

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[1] Compare, The Book of the Duchess, ll.1330-1333; The Bowge of Courte, ll.531-532; The Floure and the Leafe, ll.589-590; and The Temple of Glas, ll.1378-1392.

In The Assembly Loyalty's court is the place where experience has to be written down; it is a place where a traditionally conceived poetic discourse is institutionalised in the narrative as a *locus*, a *locus* where experience is turned into discourse. Loyalty's court is, then, a *locus* of textualisation where each of the women must entrust their experience to written discourse, quite literally hand over their experience to a spatially conceived poetic tradition - that of the wronged woman. All the women, excepting the narrator who, significantly, reads out her 'bille' rather than writing it down,[2] must write down their complaints against men (see ll. 583, 597, 616, 627-630, 652-655). The women are unwilling to entrust their experience to written discourse - 'Yit loth she was to put it in writyng/But neede wil have his cours in every thyng' (664-665) - and are anxious that writing preserve, and not disfigure, their 'triewe meanyng' (427). The narrative action of The Assembly enacts in small the relation of the individual text to an inter-textual poetic discourse; for Loyalty's court is the *locus* of a literary discourse of wronged women, as evidenced by the nature of the paintings which decorate the walls of the palace, and each of the women must hand over a text of their particular experience to this place. In this way the individual text is 'entrusted' to the poetic discourse it continues.

If Loyalty's court acts as the discursive *locus* of a poetic tradition of wronged women, then the allegorical action of the poem consists of the assimilation of each petitioner's experience into this tradition. Moreover, the court is also the place from where each petitioner will receive an answer to, or judgment on, her complaint, and this answer will be discursive, that is it will be written down - 'for Diligence shall bryng it yow bi writyng' (728). Diligence here acts as a personification of every woman's diligent reading of a literary tradition. This discursive tradition acts as a mirror for the individual woman; access to it is by means of writing, while diligent study of this traditional discourse may provide answers to each woman's problem or dilemma.

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[1] See Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe and the Assembly of Ladies, pp.157-158.

[2] See The Assembly of Ladies, ll.689-693.

In The Assembly the narrator does not follow the textualising customs and demands of Loyalty's court nor the exigencies of the allegorical action, for she refuses, twice, to wear 'her wordis' (410) on her sleeve[1] (although she does consent to wear blue, which is another 'custom of the place'), and also she is the only petitioner who delivers her complaint orally rather than by the written word. The narrator, then, does not participate in the textualising moves of the poem's allegorical strategies, for her textualising activity is concerned with the writing of the book. The narrator transposes her dream experience into a written text; a text which continues and commemorates, while ironically commenting on, its inherited poetic discourse. In this way the allegorical action of the dream/narrative re-enacts the larger, more inclusive textualising moves of the poem's narratorial fiction. As the narrator creates a text from her dream experience, so each petitioner must not only textualise herself, by wearing her 'words', but also must produce a text of her experience - a 'bille' which entrusts or inscribes experience in a traditional poetic discourse. In the concluding moves of the poem the narrator also entrusts her 'booke' to this discourse, so that it does not pass out of 'rememberaunce'.

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[1] The Assembly of Ladies, ll. 311-315 and ll. 410-413.

The Assembly is a useful text because it exemplifies the tendency in fifteenth-century poetic narratives to move away from addressing their ostensible subject, typically erotic desire, and towards examinations of literary and meta-discursive issues. Landscapes in these narratives are less maps of psychic interiorities, and more literary and textual landscapes involving issues of the relation of the individual text to its inherited poetic discourse. The *locus* of ultimate meaning in fifteenth-century poetic narrative is, more often than not, the place of literary tradition. Discourse is thus institutionalised in the narrative as a landscape and as particular places in that landscape. These landscapes and privileged places are the settings for narrative actions and events which are generated from the tropes and conventions of an inherited poetic discourse. It is, therefore, as narrative explorations of this conventional poetic discourse, and the individual text's relation to it, that these narratives are best understood.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NARRATIVE EXPANSION OF THE TROPES OF LYRIC DISCOURSE

The objective of this chapter is to examine the relationship between the tropes of lyric discourse and narrative structure and meaning in two late medieval texts. Section one centres this examination on the narrative implications of the use of the 'Canticus Troili' in Book One of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, while section two involves a reading of Lydgate's Temple of Glas.[1]

In particular, this study will focus on the use of identifiably lyric metaphors and oxymorons in both narrative poems. While each text displays a different use of the relation of trope to narrative, both works use trope structurally rather than ornamentally. Such tropes as metaphor and oxymoron are used to generate narrative in both these poems, and thus an awareness of figurative language and tropical operations is an important part of the way in which meaning is created and signalled in these texts.

The relationship of The Temple of Glas to the Troilus has been well documented by the editors of Lydgate's poem.[2] The relation is important not only for an understanding of how the two poets differ in their use of trope in narrative but also, perhaps more importantly, because it indicates how Chaucer was read by a fifteenth-century poet who had enormous influence

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1. All line references and quotations from Troilus and Criseyde are from Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde : a new edition of 'The Book of Troilus', edited by B.A.Windeatt (London and New York, 1984). Also consulted is the edition of the poem in The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957). All references to other works by Chaucer are from Robinson's edition unless otherwise stated. All line references and quotations from The Temple of Glas are from John Lydgate: Poems, edited by John Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1966); also consulted is The Temple of Glas, edited by J. Schick, EETS extra series 60 (London, 1891).

2. For the noted relation between the two poems see J. Schick, The Temple of Glas, p.cxxvi and John Norton-Smith, John Lydgate, pp.177-178 and pp.185-191.

on the poetry of that century. Hence, an understanding of the relationship between the Troilus and The Temple will be helpful in assessing fifteenth-century attitudes to the place of trope in narrative poetry. Accordingly, my examination of Lydgate's poem will focus on the traceable relation of the two poems' poetic language as a starting point for an examination of the role of this language - its metaphors and oxymorons - in the creation of structure and meaning in The Temple.

In section one I have chosen to concentrate on the 'Canticus Troili' and Book One for two reasons; firstly because the use of Troilus's song gives a striking example of Chaucer's metaphoric strategies in the Troilus, and secondly because it is the metaphors of this lyric which Lydgate picks up and uses in The Temple of Glas. Moreover, by concentrating on Book One of the Troilus and showing how the narrative is generated from an investigation of the tropes of the 'Canticus Troili', and also by noting the occurrence of these tropes throughout the poem, it is hoped that the relation of trope to narrative will be made clearer by what is in fact an isolation of certain tropical operations from their complex interrelation in the whole text. To a great extent this methodology of reading, involving the isolation of certain topical operations and developments in Chaucer's text, corresponds to Lydgate's reading of the Troilus as revealed in The Temple of Glas. It also works to shed light on how Lydgate's and Chaucer's poems were read in other fifteenth-century texts.[1]

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[1] For a discussion of a fifteenth-century reading of Troilus and Criseyde see L.W. Patterson, 'Ambiguity and Interpretation: a Fifteenth-Century Reading of Troilus and Criseyde', Speculum, 54 (1979), 297-330. Patterson describes the excerption of the first stanza of the 'Canticus Troili' in a fifteenth-century prose treatise entitled 'Disce Mori' in two manuscripts: Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 99; and Jesus College, Oxford MS 39. Patterson concludes that this use of the 'Canticus Troili' suggests that the fifteenth-century writer 'understands his immediate task as being to dispose and vary a range of inherited tropes' (p.327). For an earlier, less well informed discussion of the inclusion of this Chaucerian extract in the 'Disce Mori' see Willis J. Wager, 'Fleshly Love in Chaucer's Troilus', Modern Language Review, 34 (1939), 62-66.

My approach to the Troilus and The Temple is based on the assumption that narrative and thematic developments are generated and signalled by linguistic transformations and developments. In the Troilus the plotting of the transformations of the metaphors and oxymorons found in the 'Canticus Troili' describes a process of narrativisation: the tropes of Troilus's first song are used by the narrator, and later Pandarus, to initiate and describe narrative action and event. This approach to the Troilus, which focuses on the inter-play of different discursive 'levels' in the text has been pioneered by Eugene Vance, whose suggestion that the lyric or exclamatory discursive axis in the poem generates narrative action and event I have taken up and examined in this study.[1]

Discussing the relation of linguistic to narrative event in the Troilus, Vance writes:

> The Troilus is basically an autotelic poem where the supposedly non-linguistic events which the narrative axis is destined to convey are, in fact, highly linguistic events.[2]

Vance does a deal of violence to the Troilus by over-emphasising the purchase of the linguistic on the narrative, as evidenced by those who have quarrelled with him.[3] The statement quoted above, with its stress on the autotelic, would perhaps better describe poetic narratives of the fifteenth century, including The Temple of Glas, than the basic processes of the Troilus. Nonetheless Vance's article is valuable in focusing attention on the relation of the various discursive elements in Chaucer's poem, particularly on the relation of lyric 'pure' speech to the rest of the narrative.

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1. Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals: Poetics, Sign Theory, and Politics in Chaucer's Troilus', New Literary History, 10 (1978-79) 293-337 (p.304).

2. Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals', p.307.

3. For discussion of Vance's approach see Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Continuities and Discontinuities', New Literary History, 10 (1978-79) 409 - 416; and John A. Burrow, 'The Alterity of Medieval Literature', New Literary History, 10 (1978-79), 385-390.

In The Temple of Glas, an awareness of the inter-change between narrative and linguistic expansions and transformations is essential for our understanding of the poem, both thematically with regard to the emphasis on the act of speaking as progress in the poem, an emphasis which privileges linguistic means of breaking tropically conceived impasse, and also structurally by heightening our awareness of the relation of the framed dream to the narratorial frame fiction.

SECTION ONE: THE 'CANTICUS TROILI' AND BOOK ONE OF TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

This study of the use of metaphor in Book One of the Troilus will focus on the first of what has been called the 'lyric cores' of the poem,[1] that is the 'Canticus Troili', for it is from this lyric that the metaphoric patterning of Book One begins. The 'Canticus Troili' has attracted much critical attention as Troilus's first formal expression of the effect of his love for Criseyde, for instance Charles

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[1] Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals', p.304. See also R.A. Lanham, 'Opaque Style and Its Uses in Troilus and Criseyde', Studies in Medieval Culture, 3 (1970), 169-176. Lanham describes the lyrics in Troilus as 'spurts of hot language forced up through the layers of the narrative. They seem to interrupt the narrative and fragment the poem' (p.175). Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance : a Study of Chaucer's Poetics (Westport, Connecticut, 1963), also characterises the lyrics as interruptions of narrative progress:

> Taken as a group, apart from their individual contexts these ten lyrics constitute a kind of distillation of the emotional progress of the poem... they interrupt the action at each major turn of events.
>
> (p.186)

Muscatine commenting on Troilus's song writes:

> His first utterance as a lover, when he is not feigning an antiromantic attitude for protection, is in the form of a song (I, 400-20). It stands out in bold relief from the narrative current; the narrator takes a whole stanza to frame it. It is a fine, lyric expression of the paradoxical nature of love.[1]

The 'Canticus Troili' was obviously popular, too, in the fifteenth century judging by the number of manuscripts in which it is excerpted, particularly the first stanza which George B. Pace describes as 'an unusually popular Chaucerian quotation' in the fifteenth century.[2]

Muscatine notes that Chaucer is careful to set off the 'Canticus Troili' from the narrative by the narrator's comments on 'myn auctour called Lollius' (394), who gives only the 'sentence' (393) of the song whereas he boasts of giving the song as it was sung 'save oure tonges difference' (395). This concern on the narrator's part to discriminate between the narrative and the lyric suggests a quite deliberate strategy by Chaucer to emphasise the lyric and focus our attention on its language; its metaphors and oxymorons. It is from these that a metaphoric discourse of desire is formed in Book One and throughout the poem. By setting apart the seminal point of this discourse from the narrative, by placing it in a lyric rather than a narrative context, Chaucer signals the importance of these lyric metaphors and oxymorons as a trace in the narrative itself.

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[1] Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition : a Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p.134. For other discussions of the 'Canticus Troili' as lyric utterance see, Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, pp.198-204; and Donald W. Rowe, O Love, O Charite! : Contraries Harmonised in Chaucer's Troilus (London and Amsterdam, 1976), pp.3-4 and pp.72-78.

[2] George B. Pace, 'Otho A.XVIII', Speculum, 26 (1951), 306-316 (p.313). The first stanza of the 'Canticus Troili' is extant as a separate item in four manuscripts: Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4. 12, foll. 105v; Bodlean Library MS Laud Misc. 99, fol.252r; Jesus College, Oxford MS 39, fol.311r; Huntington Library, Ellesmere MS 26. A. 13, fols.ii, iii; the whole of the 'Canticus Troili' is excerpted in the Advocate's Library, Edinburgh MS I.I.6, fol.230r. Pace describes how this stanza was also excerpted in the lost MS Otho A. XVIII. The MS was lost in the Cotton Library Fire of 1731, but the stanza remains in a partial transcription made in 1721 by William Thomas. For a list of MSS see Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, The Index of Middle English Verse (New York, 1943), 3327, which, as Pace notes (n.46), omits the Huntington Library Ellesmere MS. See also B.A. Windeatt, Troilus and Criseyde, pp.75-76.

The 'Canticus Troili' has been described as Troilus's examination of his own interiority.[1] The song may be better understood, however, as an examination of the effect of forces beyond the self - outside the self - which work on Troilus. The song's questionings are directed less towards interiority and more towards those exterior forces which Troilus perceives as entailing a loss of control or self-determination. The song refers not so much to the self as to what has happened to reference itself. Reference has been knocked out of kilter for Troilus, and because of this he is neither able to name adequately that which is affecting him nor those effects themselves. The assault on reference which has taken place by Troilus's falling in love is reflected linguistically in the song for it is famously structured by the rhetoric of _contentio_ - 'the balancing of .... clauses against each other in paired oppositions'.[2] This rhetorical structure so radically relativises reference in the song as to almost destroy it by cancelling out the individual terms of each of its pairs of binary oppositions.

As we shall see, each of the paired oppositions in the 'Canticus Troili' uses commonplace metaphor. In the narrative following the song these metaphors are transferred from their reference to Troilus's perception of the effect of falling in love, together with the relativisation of reference which this perception entails, to Criseyde herself. In so doing these metaphors become determining factors in how Criseyde is presented and read.

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[1] Monica McAlpine, _The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde_ (Ithaca and London, 1978), p.127:

> as his first Petrarchan song of love suggests Troilus
> is at first fascinated by love as a wholly individualistic
> and interior experience.

[2] The use of _contentio_ in the 'Canticus Troili' is discussed by Robert O. Payne, _The Key of Remembrance_, p.198 and pp.202-203.

For the purposes of narrative, understood as the exigencies of a sequentially unfolding plot, it is imperative that the radical relativatisation of reference in the 'Canticus Troili', which amounts almost to a breakdown of language's purchase on the world of sense perception, should be overcome. Accordingly, the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' are made more specifically referential: they point towards and name Criseyde. This section will examine the process of transfer by which the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' are made to refer to Criseyde. Chaucer's narrative strategies at this point may be understood best in terms of tropical operations involving the transposition of metaphoric signs from their reference to the perceived effect of falling in love, in the 'Canticus Troili', to the cause of that effect which is defined as Criseyde. The process of transposition is thus metonymic in nature, involving the transfer of signs from effect to cause.

The 'Canticus Troili' is well known as Chaucer's version of sonnet CXXXII of Petrarch's Canzoniere, 'S'amor non è'.[1] For ease of reference I shall quote both this sonnet and Chaucer's translation in full.

> S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
> Ma s'egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa, e quale?
> Se bona, ond'è l'effecto aspro mortale?
> Se ria, ond'è sí dolce ogni tormento? 4
>
> S'a mia voglia ardo, ond'è l pianto e lamento?
> S'a mal mio grado, il lamentar che vale?
> O viva morte, o dilectoso male
> Come puoi tanto in me, s'io nol consento? 8

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[1] The text of sonnet CXXXII is cited from Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca, edited by Nicola Zingarelli (Bologna, 1964), pp.785-791.

E s'io'l consento, a gran torto mi doglio
Fra sí contrari' venti in frale barca
Mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
Sí lieve di saver, d'error sí carca,
Ch'i' medesmo non so quel ch'io mi voglio;
E tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno.

Canticus Troili

'If no loue is, O God, what fele I so?
And if loue is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
Whenne euery torment and aduersite
That cometh of hym may to me sauory thinke,
ffor ay thurst I the more that ich it drynke.

'And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
ffrom whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
If harm a-gree me, wherto pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne whi vnwery that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in me swich quantite,
But if that I consente that it be?

'And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, i-wis; thus possed to and fro
Al sterelees with-inne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndos two,
That inne contrarie stonden euere mo.
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
ffor hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye.'

Several critics have described the very obvious changes Chaucer has made to Petrarch's sonnet in his translation.[1] The most major re-emphasis in

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[1] For discussions of Chaucer's use of Petrarch's sonnet see, Stephen A. Barney, 'Troilus Bound', Speculum, 47 (1972), 445-458 (p.447); Donald W. Rowe, O Love, O Charite!, p.72; Patricia Thomson, 'The "Canticus Troili" : Chaucer and Petrarch', Comparative Literature, 11 (1959), 313-328; and Ernest H. Wilkins, 'Cantus Troili', English Literary History, 16 (1949), 167-173. See also Thomas Watson's preface to his own translation of Petrarch's sonnet in 'The 'Εκατομπαθία or Passionate Centurie of Love' (1582), in Thomas Watson : Poems, edited by Edward Arber (London, 1895), p.41:

> All this Passion (two verses only excepted) is wholly translated out of Petrarch, where he writeth... [quotes first four lines of Sonnet 132] ... Heerein certaine contrarieties,...are liuely expressed by a Metaphore. And it may be noted, that the Author in his first halfe verse of this translation varieth from that sense, which Chawcer vseth in translating the selfe same: which he doth vpon no other warrant then his owne simple priuate opinion, which yet he will not greatly stand vpon.

Chaucer's version is that Troilus's questions imply a doubt in the existence of love itself while the I of Petrarch's sonnet also questions whether this specific situation can be classified as love. The sense of wonderment expressed in the first stanza of the 'Canticus Troili' is thus as a result of the realisation on Troilus's part that love does indeed exist; it is a realisation underlined by the personification and apostrophising of love. Love strikes the hitherto sceptical Troilus with the force of a palpable entity and is thus reified as object and person. In Petrarch's sonnet 'amor' and 'Dio' are kept separate; love itself is not personified. Donald W. Rowe, discussing the difference between Petrarch's sonnet and Troilus's song, comments:

> when Petrarch questions whether it is good or bad, he would seem to be referring to the lover's experience, not to the nature of love. Chaucer has generalised Petrarch's sonnet to make it an analysis of both the lover's psychic state and the general nature of love.[1]

By thus generalising the existence, condition and effect of love, Chaucer makes Troilus's questioning metaphysical rather than empirical:[2] Troilus has no previous experience of love against which to judge his present feelings.

The metaphor of the 'sterelees' boat in line 416 of the 'Canticus Troili' provides an image which emphasises Troilus's sense of helplessness in the face of love, understood as a force external to the self; a force, moreover, of cosmic proportions. For the I of Petrarch's sonnet, however, the contrary winds are very much opposing forces within the self. This emphasis towards the exploration of the self is further strengthened by the final tercet of Petrarch's sonnet, which locates the centre of the poem's questionings, as the I's own desire, 'Ch'i'medesmo non so quel ch'io mi voglio' (13). This tercet is omitted from Chaucer's translation and replaced by the oxymoronic contentio 'ffor hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye' (420).

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[1] Donald W. Rowe, O Love, O Charite!, p.72.

[2] Stephen A. Barney, 'Troilus Bound', p.447 also comments on Troilus's tendency toward metaphysical speculation.

Sonnet CXXXII is dominated by metaphors structured by contentio and antithesis as shown by the oxymorons of line 7, 'O viva morte, o dilectoso male'. It has been noted that this sonnet almost out-Petrarchs Petrarch in respect of its emphasis on antithetical oppositions.[1] As Patricia Thomson points out Chaucer's use of this particular sonnet may or may not be significant depending on whether Chaucer had access to other Petrarchan poems from the Canzoniere.[2] Chaucer's oxymorons of the last line of the 'Canticus Troili' suggest that Chaucer was deliberately emphasising the antitheses of what is acknowledged to be an already heavily antithetical poem.[3] While it cannot be certain that Chaucer chose sonnet CXXXII from the mass of poems in the Canzoniere, and therefore chose a poem structured by antithesis, the emphasising of the sonnet's antitheses suggests that this was the case. Whether or not Chaucer deliberately chose this sonnet the fact remains that he chose a sonnet, that is a lyric rather than a narrative context for the metaphors of desire used in the 'Canticus Troili'. Similar metaphors, of the ship and of heat as desire were available in a non-lyric, non-antithetical context in Chaucer's most immediate source, Boccaccio's Il Filostrato.[1] Chaucer's lyric strategies here are, I would argue, directed toward tne emphasising of these metaphors by their lyrical and antithetical context.

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[1] Stephen Minta, Petrarch and Petrarchism : The English and French Traditions (Manchester, 1980), pp.54-55.

[2] Patricia Thomson, 'The "Canticus Troili"', p.313.

[3] Donald W. Rowe, O Love, O Charite!, p.72 :

> Chaucer also intensifies the oxymoronic quality of the song, especially by translating Petrarch's final line 'e tremo a mezza state, ardento il verno' ('I tremble with cold in midsummer, I burn in winter'), as 'For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye' (I, 420).

The use of antithesis is the stylistic basis for much of the proverbialistic discourse of the poem, a sapiential discourse peculiar to Pandarus and the narrator.[2] In the 'Canticus Troili' Chaucer provides the stylistic model for this discourse, which is based on the division of existence into pairs of polarised oppositions. Rowe has plotted the derivation of this discourse in the Troilus from Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae, Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae and Jean de Meun's Roman de la Rose.[3] The essential statement of the premises of this discourse is made by Pandarus in Book One of the Troilus:

> Thus often wise men ben war by foolys.
> If thow do so, thi wit is wel bewared;
> By his contrarie is euerythyng declared.
>
> (I, 635-637)

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[1] Chaucer does, of course, translate Boccaccio's fire of love metaphors in Troilus and Criseyde. Compare Il Filostrato, Parte Prime, sts. 40-41 and Troilus, Book I, 11.435-449. But Chaucer's borrowings are made part of his lyric strategies. In Il Filostrato Troilio is simply reported to sing (Parte Prime, st. 37, 1.4) whereas Chaucer includes the text of the song as a way of emphasising its metaphors. Chaucer is deliberately assembling metaphors of desire as heat/fire from a number of different sources in Book One. Compare for instance The Romaunt of the Rose, 11.2465-2479 for other parallels to the metaphors of heat/fire in the Troilus.

For the seafaring metaphors in Il Filostrato, which refer to the voyage of the poem having reached its end, see Parte Nona, sts.3-4. Text consulted is The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio, edited and translated by N.E. Griffen and A.B. Myrick (Philadelphia, London and Oxford, 1929).

[2] For a discussion of the use of proverb in Troilus and Criseyde see Karla Taylor, 'Proverbs and the Authentication of Convention in Troilus and Criseyde', in Chaucer's Troilus, edited by Stephen A. Barney (London, 1980) pp.277-296.

[3] Donald W. Rowe, O Love, O Charite!, p.7 and pp.72-74. Compare Chaucer's Boece, Book III, metrum I; Alain de Lille, The Plaint of Nature, translated by James J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1980), Book IX, metre 5; and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, edited by Ernest Langlois, 5 volumes (Paris, 1924), II, 4293-4358 and V, 21573-21582.

This process of defining by opposition, is precisely the type of defining process which the questionings of the 'Canticus Troili' attempt. As we have seen, however, the antithetical structures of the 'Canticus Troili' problematise reference rather than providing fixed points of reference. Vance describes the use of Troilus's first song as a 'wily attempt to challenge the consecrated conventions of the medieval erotic lyric with the logic of narrative',[1] however the lyric also works to 'challenge' the proverbial discourse in the narrative, by revealing the relativising of reference which antithesis, the basis of that sapiential discourse, inevitably involves.[2]

The metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' are part of Troilus's attempt to define feeling and fix a stable point of reference but they do not have this effect, for desire is read as full of contradictions and antithetical responses. The metaphors of the lyric; of desire as thirst, of desire as heat, of desire as sickness or death, and of the desiring self as a 'sterelees' boat, attempt to gain a linguistic purchase on the love which Troilus is feeling, but take part in a lyric structure based on antithesis, a structure which relativises and problematises this attempt. The song constitutes a questioning of the feeling which can bring about such contradictions and oppositions. The specific contrastive terms available within the semantic field of any one chosen metaphor enable these contradictory responses to be articulated. Thus, thirst has as its corollary drink; heat cold and so on. These are metaphors about desire, in that they use metaphor to create sets of terms the antithetical relations between which define unfulfilled desire. However, this process of definition is problematised through the use of several unrelated metaphors in the song: no one metaphor adequately defines the nature of Troilus's desire with any sense of completeness. Language is shown as only able to prescribe the perimeters of feeling, for the metaphors in the lyric do not make a definitive link between their sign and signified: desire is heat and thirst and cold and drink. The alternative metaphors in the lyric preclude any definitive link for any one metaphor. These metaphors establish sets of opposing terms heuristically: they are each an attempt to gain a linguistic purchase on desire.

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[1] Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals', p.317.

[2] Karla Taylor, 'Proverbs and the Authentication of Convention', p.293 discusses the use of proverbs in Troilus and Criseyde as stemming from 'the desire to capture experience in the timeless repetition of traditional words'. Taylor goes on to describe how the proverbial's attempt at such fixity ultimately fails (pp.286-287).

While in the 'Canticus Troili' metaphor can be seen to operate in a testing of language's ability to adequately define desire, in the narrative the narrator uses these metaphors as the determining terms of a definitive discourse of erotic desire. The narrator takes the terms with which the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' work questioningly and creates from them a definitive erotic discourse. It is a discourse with its own 'auctor' - Lollius - and its own proverbialistic wisdom.

Several main metaphors may be identified in the 'Canticus Troili'; desire as thirst (a metaphor not found in Petrarch's sonnet), desire as burning, desire as sickness or death and finally the metaphor of the self as a boat tossed to and fro by opposing winds, that is between the opposing feelings Troilus experiences on falling in love.[1] As has been noted above each of these metaphors is included in a paradigm of cognate terms. Thirst has as its corollary drink and thirst quenched; burning presupposes a source of heat; sickness holds out the possibility of cure; and the boat the prospect of safe harbour. It is precisely metaphor's available valency to these linguistic structures and paradigms which is developed in narrative. The development of these structures generates narrative.

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[1] For discussions of the nautical metaphors in *Troilus and Criseyde* see Paull F. Baum, 'Chaucer's Nautical Metaphors', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 49 (1950), 67-73; D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Annuale Medievale*, 13 (1972), 14-31; and Martin Stevens, 'The Winds of Fortune in the *Troilus*', *Chaucer Review*, 13 (1978-1979), 285-307.

The thirst/drink metaphor will provide a brief example of the signalling by metaphor of narrative event. The use of the thirst metaphor in the 'Canticus Troili' is one of the several attempts to define Troilus's desire, or rather the unfulfilled nature of his desire. Criseyde's perception of her desire for Troilus, in Book Two, is also expressed by the use of this metaphor of thirst/drink. Criseyde looks out from her window to see Troilus returning from battle against the Greeks, she notes how he reacts to the adulation of the crowd welcoming the Trojans back to Troy, and at this moment falls in love. Her consciousness of Troilus's effect on her is expressed by the metaphor of drink:

> Criseyda gan al his chere aspien,
> And leet it so softe in hire herte synke,
> That to hireself she seyde, 'who ȝaf me
> drynke?'
>
> (II, 649-651)

While Troilus's desire in the 'Canticus Troili' is expressed as a lack - as a thirst - Criseyde's desire at this point is expressed as a sudden surfeit of desire, a sudden access of drink.[1]

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[1] Later in Book Two, as Criseyde deliberates over the sagacity of loving Troilus, she uses the storm and drink metaphors for the effects of desire on women:

> ffor loue is ȝet the mooste stormy lyf,
> Right of hym self, the euere was bigonne;
> ffor euere som mystrust or nice strif
> There is in loue, some cloude is ouere that sonne.
> Therto we wrecched wommen nothing konne,
> Whan vs is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke,
> Cure wrecche is this, oure owen wo to drynke.
>
> (II, 778-784)

The thirst/drink metaphor occurs again in Book Three. The narrator is commenting and proverbialising on the parting of Troilus and Criseyde after the consummation of their desire:

> O sooth is seyd, that heled forto be,
> As of a fevre or other gret siknesse,
> Men moste drynke, as men may ofte se,
> ffull bittre drynke; and forto han gladnesse,
> Men drynken ofte peyne and gret distresse —
> I mene it here as for this auenture,
> That thorugh a peyne hath founden al his cure.
>
> (III, 1212-1218)

At the point where the goal of erotic desire has been reached the narrator brings together two of the metaphors by which the progress of that desire has been plotted in the poem. The narrator's discourse of desire originates in his glossing of the 'Canticus Troili' where these metaphors of thirst/drink, sickness/cure are found. As a corollary of Troilus's thirst/sickness of desire the consummation of that desire is described as a drink or cure. That this drink is a 'full bittre drynke' (III, 1215) now expresses the pain the lovers have endured and perhaps presages, on the part of the narrator, the 'wo' which will occur in Book Four.

The metaphoric synthesis of this passage in Book Three, and our concomitant awareness of metaphoric pattern is focused and signalled through the meta-linguistic consciousness of the narrator. The meta-linguistic function of the narrator is emphasised by his glossing activity, which is signalled by such phrases as 'I mene it here...' (III, 1217). It is by this consciousness, of which Chaucer makes us consistently aware by means of the narrator's rhetoric of asseveration, glossing and commentary, that narrative event is seen as inextricably related with linguistic, often tropical, event.

This relation of narrative and linguistic event may be seen to emerge clearly in the metaphoric patterning of Books One and Two. One of the principle metaphors of Book One is that of desire as heat or as fire. Its immediate point of origin is the 'Canticus Troili', line 407, 'And if that at myn owen lust I brenne' and the oxymorons of line 420, 'For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye'. The narrator takes up this metaphor and uses it as a way of confirming his own status as an authority on desire by developing the metaphor into a determining discourse of erotic desire. This discourse of desire is thus structured by the use of metaphor: metaphor gives desire form and pattern. Lyrically expressed desire is narrativised by means of the extension and transformation of lyric metaphors. Accordingly, this study will focus on the use of these metaphors to generate narrative in the poem.

Immediately following Troilus's song the narrator gives us a gloss by which we can understand the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili'. By so doing he defines, and eventually makes definitive, the terms of the erotic discourse we have entered via this lyric. As part of this defining process the signified of the metaphor of fire/heat is fixed as love in line 436, 'The fyre of loue...'. This metaphor is used by the narrator frequently in this passage, at line 440 - 'And brende hym so in soundry wise ay newe'- and at line 445 'fforthi ful ofte, his hote fire to cesse'. The narrator in this passage uses these metaphors to emphasise his knowledge of Troilus's desire, a knowledge which is signalled by the expansion of Troilus's metaphor for his desire.

The narrator's development of Troilus's metaphor from the 'Canticus Troili' leads to his proverbialistic observation that the nearer Troilus was to Criseyde the more desire he felt, 'And ay the ner he was, the more he brende' (I, 448).[1] Something important has happened by this point in the process of the narrativisation of lyric metaphor. The fire has ceased to be a metaphor of Troilus's perception of the desire he is experiencing, it is now a metaphor of the cause of that desire, Criseyde herself. The metonymic transfer from effect to cause brings about the spatialisation of lyric metaphor which enables that metaphor to generate the spatial structures of narrative.[2] Troilus can now move closer to, and away from, the fire which is now the source of his desire. This spatialisation of lyric metaphor, which is so important for the metaphor's narrative potential, also brings about a quantitatively expressed effect on the nature of desire Troilus feels: the closer Troilus is to the fire the more desire he experiences. The metonymic transfer of the metaphoric signs of the 'Canticus Troili' to the narrative in this passage works to de-problematise the nature of metaphoric reference which we noted as operative in the 'Canticus Troili'.

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[1] Compare The Romaunt of the Rose, ll.2470-2478:

> It may be likned wondir well,
> The peyne of love, unto a fer;
> For evermore thou neighest ner,
> Thou, or whooso that it bee,
> For verray sothe I tell it thee,
> The hatter evere shall thou brenne...
> Whereso thou comest in ony coost,
> Who is next fyr, he brenneth moost.

[2] Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, Rhetorical Poetics: Theory and Practice of Figural and Symbolic Reading in Modern French Literature (Madison, 1983), p.24, define metonymy as the transposition of the sign based upon the relationship of causality:

> Metonymy is characterised by a semantic and referential relationship of causality made possible by the presence of the category of semantic feature cause

Rice and Schofer list the various metonymic transpositions as based on cause for effect (which is what happens when Criseyde becomes the fire and good port in the Troilus); effect for cause; instrument for action; action for instrument; agent for action; action for agent; producer for produced and produced for producer (pp.27-28).

The metaphor of fire/heat now has a specific, unproblematic reference to Criseyde herself. The fire is no longer an ill-defined, problematic desire which effects Troilus, the narrator has turned it, through metonymic transposition, into a metaphor for the source and goal of that desire.

The narrator's glossing of the metaphor of fire/heat as desire in this passage involves the transposition of the metaphor from a lyric to a narrative context. Hence, the signified of the metaphoric sign is first made a prescribed substantive (the signified of the lyric metaphor was left unstated, _in absentia_),[1] which then becomes a proper noun, Criseyde herself. The signified of the metaphor has been shifted from Troilus's keenly felt but unspecified awareness of desire, through a fixing of that heat as specifically love (line 436), to the identification of the source of that heat as Criseyde. One metaphor's polyvalent facility for reference to several signifieds - desire, source of desire and a specific person - is here shown to determine narrative development. Narration consists here of the translation of lyric generality and heuristic unfixity, in that several metaphors have to be used in the lyric's attempts to define, or even refer to, desire, into narrative specificity (noun and proper noun), and also into narrative demands of space and location.

Furthermore, this metaphor of heat as desire also marks the production of the narrative's proverbialistic discourse. The effect of this narrativising process is to fix the metaphor's relation to narrative meaning by proverbial logic:

> ffor ay the ner the fire the hotter is
> This, trowe I, knoweth al this compaignye.
>
> (I, 449-450)

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[1] Donald Rice and Peter Schofer, _Rhetorical Poetics_, p.19 define trope as 'a semantic transposition from a sign _in praesentia_ to a sign or signs _in absentia_'.

The narrator's glossing procedures, which have effected the assimilation of lyric metaphor into narrative, are confirmed and made a fixed point of reference, by the style, tone and appearance of proverbial wisdom. The narrator's position as an authority on desire, and his omniscience as narrator of this specific story, is confirmed in this passage by his ability to mould metaphor into a position given authority both by the weight of apparently traditional wisdom, the proverbialistic, and by the air of complicity with an intra-narrative audience, 'al this compaignye' (I, 450).

The knowing nod in the direction of his audience confirms the narrator's position as a commentator on narrative. Similarly, the narrator's use of the proverbialistic discourse confirms the veracity of this discourse of erotic desire which he has created in his glossing of the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili'. The narrator in his description of the development of Troilus's desire uses the same metaphorics that Troilus uses in his song. This inter-change of metaphorical language between Troilus and the narrator is an important way in which the relation of the narrator to his narrative is created and revealed in the poem. The use of the metaphor of desire as heat/fire becomes a marker of his special, shared, knowledge of the workings of Troilus's desire. So, when at line 490 the narrator again uses the metaphor of desire as burning, it is in terms of his allowing us a special insight into the operations of Troilus's desire, a knowledge which Troilus attempts to conceal from others:

> Therfor a title he gan him forto borwe
> Of other siknesse, lest men of hym wende
> That the hote fire of loue hym brende,
>
> And seyde he hadde a feuere and ferd amys.
> (I, 488-491)

A case of hiding one metaphor, desire as burning, with another, desire as fevered sickness. (Compare Book III, 1212-1218.)

These metaphors of erotic desire as heat or desire as fire emerge in the Troilus as determinative of narrative event, situation and place. This narrativisation of lyric metaphor produces, as Vance has noted, a synecdochical relation between Troilus's individual consciousness of erotic desire and his environment, both geographical and historical.[1] Moreover, this narrativising of metaphor reflects the processes of the spatialising and historicising of lyric language which we have noted as characteristic of Chaucer's tropical strategies in the poem.

In Book Three, for instance, the fire is the locus of textualised erotic desire. Pandarus, having finally got Troilus into bed with Criseyde ('now wol ȝe wel bigynne': III, 974), retires to the fireside to read a book:

> And with that word he drow hym to the feere,
> And took a light and fond his countenaunce,
> As forto looke vpon an old romaunce.
> (III, 978-980)[2]

More disturbingly, in Book Five, Troilus predicts his own funeral pyre in which his body would be, quite literally, consumed with flames:

> But of the fir and flaumbe funeral
> In which my body brennan shal to glede,
> And of the feste and pleyes palestral
> At my vigile, I prey the tak good hede.
> (V, 302-305)

The relation of Troilus's microcosmic flames of desire to the macrocosmic schemes of the pagan universe is signalled by the historicising of the metaphor of desire as fire. The historical event of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans is informed by the emotions of pagan divinities. Diana's anger against the Greeks is described thus:

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[1] Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals', p.313.

[2] I would like to thank Lesley Johnson of Leeds University for pointing out how Pandarus dis-places his concern with things erotic from the lovers' bed to the fireside and 'an olde romaunce': from the experiential to the textual.

> Diane, which that wroth was and in ire
> ffor Grekis nolde don hire sacrifice ,
> Ne encens vpon hire auter sette afire,
> She, for that Grekis gonne hire so despise,
> Wrak hire in a wonder cruel wise.
>
> (V, 1464-1468)

The 'Canticus Troili' is the growing point in the Troilus of a discourse of erotic desire. The metaphors of the lyric are used by various figures in the poem to reveal their knowledge of, or defining position towards, this discourse. This knowledge may be exploratory, like Troilus's articulations in the 'Canticus Troili' itself, or a tactically deployed knowledge as used by Pandarus. The narrator's knowledge of this discourse is important in revealing the stake he has in the narrative of Troilus's desire. The narrator tends to use the metaphors of this lyrical, exclamatory discourse at moments of highest emotional involvement with the story of Troilus's 'double sorwe' (I, 1).

Stephen Barney has plotted the progress of a wholly different metaphorics, that of desire as binding and entrapping, throughout the poem. As Barney notes, Pandarus's use of this metaphor tends to signal his cynicism towards erotic desire. It is, perhaps, a cynicism based on experience for Pandarus is himself bound by love, 'ffor loue hadde hym so bounden in a snare' (I, 663). Metaphors of entrapment are used by the narrator, Troilus and Pandarus, and Criseyde is famously described as netted by Diomede (Book V, 771-777). According to Barney, the narrator's use of metaphors of entrapment reveal:

> how the narrator's painful involvement and even more painful progressive detachment from the action of his own reported history work to control the reader's response.[1]

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[1] Stephen A. Barney, 'Troilus Bound', p.445.

Chaucer uses metaphor, then, to map out his character's response to narrative event and to reveal the nature of the narrator's emotional involvement with his 'reported history'; for instance, the narrator's dislike of Diomede makes him describe his seduction of Criseyde as an entrapment. Moreover as Barney points out in this quotation the relationship of the narrator to the narrative conditions our response as readers to the story of Troilus's desire. Chaucer's metaphoric strategies thus have wide-ranging implications both for narrative meaning and reader response in the *Troilus*, especially for the relativising of perspective and point of view. A shared metaphoric discourse is seen to operate in the *Troilus* with each of the participants in that discourse, or rather those discourses, using it, or being used by it, differently. The occurrence of recognizable metaphors alerts the reader to the differences of each character's use of them and to their use in signalling narrative event and meta-fictional issues (such as the relation of the narrator to his narrative).

The shared nature of the erotic discourse of the 'Canticus Troili' is revealed when Troilus makes known his love for Criseyde to Pandarus. Troilus is, in effect, opening up his erotic discourse to another level of audience in the poem. This is effected by the use of those metaphors which occur in the 'Canticus Troili'. Troilus uses both the heart as ship on the sea metaphor (the heart is itself a synecdoche for the desiring self), and the metaphor of desire as burning :

> That steight vn-to the deth myn herte sailleth;
> Therto desire so brennyngly me assailleth.
>
> (I, 606-607)

While Pandarus enters the narrative with his own metaphors of desire (love as a game for instance, see Book I, 868), he also shares Troilus's metaphors of entrapment as Barney has noted. It is only by entering Troilus's discourse, as he is entering Troilus's history, that Pandarus gains the necessary credence and complicity from Troilus which enables him to bring the two lovers together, so that the narrative may continue. Pandarus promises, for instance, to be Troilus's 'boote' (I, 832), and tells Troilus that his love for Criseyde is not 'booteless' (I, 782), referring by a pun on boat and remedy, to two of the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili', desire as sickness and the desiring as a sea-voyage.[1]

Troilus sees himself as a lyric lover, and thus his defining discourse in the poem is largely characterised by lyric metaphors.[2] Pandarus in addressing Troilus and advocating a strategy which for the first time makes Troilus accept the possibility of success in his desire for Criseyde, employs the metaphors of the lyric lover. Pandarus redefines Troilus's notion of what being a lover entails:

> 'What sholde he ther-fore fallen in dispayre,
> Or be recreant for his own tene,
> Or slen hym self, al be his lady faire?
> Nay, nay, but euere in oon be fresshe and grene
> To serue and loue his deere hertes queene,
> And thynke it is a guerdon hire to serue
> A thousand fold moore than he kan deserue'
>
> (I, 813-819)

Pandarus uses the language of the lyric lover here; 'recreant', 'lady', 'fressh and grene' and 'guerdon', and also picks up and employs Troilus's metaphor of desire as service to one's lady (see Book I, 421-434).

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[1] See D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart', p.22. Burjorjee comments:

> No doubt 'boote' here means 'remedy', but since we already have the image of the sailing heart, the possibility of reading 'boote' as a homophonic pun on 'boat' cannot be ignored.

[2] For discussions of Troilus's status as lyric lover see Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, pp.134-137; R.O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, pp.185-187; Davis Taylor, 'The Terms of Love : A Study of Troilus's Style', Speculum, 51 (1976), 69-90. Taylor's study of Troilus's style examines the use of quantitatives, superlatives and monologues in Troilus's discourse and concludes (p.80):

> From 'a realistic point of view' Troilus often looks helpless or absurd. He is the static, lyric protagonist who is incapable of action and therefore the butt of many jokes.

See also Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals', p.306 'the "I" of Troilus's speech is already that of the very conventional lyric voice'.

Moreover, Pandarus is knowingly employing the language Troilus has come to accept as his own defining discourse, and thus he gets an immediate response, 'And of that word took hede Troilus' (I, 820). Pandarus introduces a new metaphoric relation between Troilus and his object of desire, a relation which narrative has the potential to develop.

Pandarus's awareness of the importance of the discourse/reality relation; that the discourse one uses determines the nature of the reality one inhabits, is further testified by his redirecting of the ship metaphor of the 'Canticus Troili'. Pandarus continues the process of revealing the narrative potential in Troilus's lyric discourses. As the narrator narrativises the metaphors of heat and burning in the 'Canticus Troili' earlier in the poem, so Pandarus narrativises the ship metaphor:

> And sith that god of loue hath the bistowed
> In place digne vnto thi worthinesse,
> Stond faste, for to good port hastow rowed.
> (I, 967-969)

Here, a Boethian metaphor for a lack of cosmically proportioned control, and a Petrarchan metaphor for the opposing and contradictory forces within the self, found in the 'Canticus Troili', is carefully turned into a metaphor for self-direction and control; self-direction because Troilus is doing all the rowing in this Pandarian version of the ship metaphor. The metaphor from Troilus's first song is given direction, for the boat has been directed to a specific place, a 'good port'. This 'good port' is, moreover identified with a specific person, Criseyde. Thus the metaphor for lack of direction in the 'Canticus Troili', for a condition of stasis brought about by contradictory forces operating on the self, is made into a metaphor for movement, direction and control. Moreover, the metaphor is made spatial, the ship is directed to a specific place identified as Criseyde herself.

Criseyde is made, quite literally, into a good place - a 'place digne' (I, 968 and III, 1014) - that is a worthy or suitable place towards, or away from, which Troilus and Pandarus can move. In Book Four Troilus tells his soul that its proper place is no longer Troy (IV, 308). It is emphasised in the poem that Criseyde has her own place (II, 78 and III, 218), that is her own house. In Book Five it is this house, Criseyde's 'own place', that becomes a synecdochical substitute for Criseyde herself. In Troilus's lyric address to Criseyde's house the imagery is that of the pilgrimage and the reliquary, suggesting the sacramentalising of 'the good place':

> ȝet syn I may no bet, fayn wold I kisse,
> Thy colde dores dorste I for this route;
> And far wel shryne, of which the seynt is oute.
>
> (V, 551-553)

The spatialising of the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' makes the referent of those metaphors - Criseyde - a place, a location. Pandarus labels Criseyde as a place, a locus of desire, several times in Book One (see 1.895, 'a worthy place'; 1.905, 'so good a place'; 1.968, 'a place digne'). At line 960 Pandarus warns Troilus against being 'parted in everi place', i.e. that he should love one woman rather than several, while at the end of Book One Pandarus leaves Troilus to 'fynde a tyme therto and a place' (I, 1064) for the love affair to take place. This last reference signals Pandarus's role in narrative concerns of time and space. Pandarus works to make explicit the narrativising of Troilus's lyric desire into spatial and temporal structures.

Barney has pointed how the narrator and Troilus share a common metaphorics, and how this reveals the narrator's relation to the narrative he is recounting. At the beginning of Book Two the narrator invokes the ship and seafaring metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' to discuss his writing of the poem. By so doing he shifts the signified of these metaphors from the Petrarchan desiring self to the narrative 'matere' of Troilus's history:

> Owt of thise blake wawes forto saylle,
> O wynde, O wynde, the weder gynneth clere,
> ffor in this see the boot hath swych trauaylle,
> Of my konnyng that vnneth I it steere.
>
> (II, 1-4)

The 'steerless' boat of the 'Canticus Troili' is transposed at the beginning of Book Two from a lyric to a narrative context, in that it refers to the narrative task of the narrator. The narrator must 'steere' the boat of the narrative if it is to remain under control. While the steering of the boat has become a metaphor for the production of the narrative, the sea has taken on a dual metaphoric role in this passage. The sea operates as a metaphor of both Troilus's despair and of the complex problem, both emotional and authorial, with which the history of this despair confronts the narrator.

The ship of the poem and seafaring as the writing of the poem are, as several critics have described, medieval commonplaces.[1] Chaucer uses these conventional metaphors to point the nature of the narrator's relation to the history he is recounting. Troilus's desire concerning Criseyde is analogous to the narrator's desires concerning his narrative. The gloss which the narrator provides for the sea points the dual metaphoric role it has both as a metaphor of Troilus's despair and of the narrator's task in writing about that despair. Moreover, the narrator's use of metaphor at this point confirms his narratorial authority, for he provides

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1. See Paull F. Baum, 'Chaucer's Nautical Metaphors'; D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart'; and Martin Stevens, 'The Winds of Fortune in the *Troilus*'. Baum merely lists some of the metaphors in the *Troilus* and wonders whether Chaucer's use of seafaring metaphors is based on the observation of nature or on literary borrowings (p.71). Burjorjee sees the use of the ship metaphor as plotting the voyage of Troilus's soul from earthly desires to its place in the afterlife, and thus argues that Chaucer had an anagogical purpose in using seafaring metaphors (p.14). Stevens also sees the sea of life metaphor as tied closely to the 'destinal thesis' of the *Troilus* (p.280), and that it is manipulated by the major characters to reflect their own world views. For a more general discussion of nautical metaphors in classical literature and the Middle Ages see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, translated by William R.Trask (New York and London, 1953), pp.128-130. For a further discussion of Ovid's use of seafaring imagery in the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Remedia Amoris* see John M. Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven and London, 1979), pp.15-17.

both the metaphor and the gloss:

> This see clepe I the tempestuous matere
> Of disespeir that Troilus was inne —
>
> (II, 5-6)

This narratorial authority tends to ironically undercut the rhetoric of authorial modesty which follows (Book II,8-49), for the narrator does control his 'matere' at this point by the glossing of metaphor.

The Boethian and Petrarchan metaphor of the boat of the self buffeted by the winds of fortune plots the progress of Troilus's desire throughout the poem, as D.M. Burjorjee has shown.[1] The conflation of meaning in the word 'steere', for it can mean both 'star' and 'to steer', allows Criseyde, who is first imaged by the narrator as 'so bright a steere' (I, 175), to become the means by which Troilus steers the boat of his heart. In Book Three Criseyde has become Troilus's guiding star (III, 1291), Criseyde is now the means by which his voyage in life may be navigated. In Book Four, however, Fortune has again reasserted herself and Troilus has returned to being a boat at Fortune's mercy and steered by her (IV, 282). By Book Five, as Burjorjee has noted, the metaphorics of seafaring and navigation expresses Troilus's growing acceptance of his own fate and death.[2]

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[1] D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart', pp.26-27.

[2] D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart', p.22:

> Clearly, then, the nautical images in Book One of the *Troilus* are no mere literary adornments. On the contrary, it seems Chaucer is working in the patristic and Boethian tradition when he exploits organically in the *Troilus* the image of the heart sailing on the bitter sea of life.

In his song in Book Five, Troilus uses the ship metaphors of the first 'Canticus Troili':

> O sterre, of which I lost haue al the light,
> With herte soore wel oughte I to biwaille
> That uere derk in torment nyght by nyght,
> Toward my deth with wynd in steere I saille:
> ffor which the tenthe nyghte, if that I faille
> The gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,
> My ship and me Caribdis wol deuoure.
>
> (V, 638-644)

Robert O. Payne notes that this second 'Canticus Troili' is 'a reprise of the imagery in the first, but this time... not arranged in contentio'.[1] For Payne the contentio which is a marked feature of Troilus's discourse is the stylistic marker of Troilus's inability to act, representing as it does 'nearly paralyzing ironies'.[2] In this second song the lack of contentio suggests the determinacy of the narrative's movement to an inevitable, unironic, end.

In this second song the ship and Troilus's self are discrete, and Criseyde, though still addressed as a star has lost her guiding quality, she no longer emits light for Troilus. The separation of Troilus from his ship pre-echoes the distancing of Troilus from his history, his 'matere', which is a marked feature of his address to the earth from the eighth sphere. In Book Five Troilus achieves a distance from his history and looks down at this 'litel spot of erthe that with the se / Embraced is' (V, 1815-16). While at the beginning of Book Two the sea is all but overwhelming for the narrator and Troilus, in Book Five the sea, embracing this 'litel spot of erthe', acts as a metaphor for the worldly concerns which appear far from overwhelming but rather small-scale and insignificant.[1]

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[1] Robert O.Payne, The Key of Remembrance, p.203.

[2] Robert O.Payne, The Key of Remembrance, p.202.

The metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' attempt to get a linguistic purchase on the world of sense perception, specifically the nature of Troilus's desire for Criseyde. As we have seen, it is an attempt which actually displays the relativity of such linguistic relations: it is difficult to make the word cousin to the deed, particularly when that 'deed' is erotic desire. In the 'Canticus Troili' not only are there many alternative, mutually exclusive metaphors available to define desire, but also the oxymoronic and antithetical structure of the lyric relativises reference to the point where each term in the oxymoron almost cancels its opposing term.

In the narrative,first the narrator and then Pandarus attempt to translate Troilus's lyricism into narrative terms by labelling Criseyde as the object to which these metaphors refer. Hence, narrativisation is displayed as a process of de-relativisation of metaphor; as an attempt to fix a specific metaphor to a specific referent, Criseyde herself. The narrator's and Pandarus's attempts to stabilise Troilus's boat, to direct it to a good port, are attempts to give that desire the possibility of narrative fulfilment. Rather than fixing the relation of individual perception to experience this translation from lyric to narrative opens up Troilus to the contingency and fluidity of experience, to the relativities and fluctuations of the diachronic.

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1. For an interpretation of Troilus's sea metaphors in the epilogue as marking an anagogical and eschatological theme in the poem see D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart', pp.27-28.

The narrator also uses one of the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili', that of the ship, to articulate his relationship to the history he is recounting: to get a purchase on the story of Troilus's 'disespeir' (II, 6). However, the narrator is always losing his hold on the 'matere' of this history: this hold is loosened by the relativity resulting from the temporal gap which separates him from the story he is recounting. The seafaring metaphors at the beginning of Book Two are followed by a passage of just such an awareness of the effect the passage of time has on the apparent stability of convention. The passing of time, says the narrator may well make Troilus appear silly or 'nyce and straunge' (II, 24), but all things, especially the conventions of speech, are subject to the depletions of time. The narrator then warns 'any louere in this place' (II, 30) not to wonder that Troilus's behaviour or speech is strange by providing a few proverbial observations on the relativity of social and amatory conventions:

> ffor euery wight which that to Rome wente
> Halt nat o path or alwey o manere;
> Ek in som lond were al the game shente
> If that they ferde in loue as men don here,
> As thus, in opyn doyng or in chere,
> In visityng in forme or seyde hire sawes;
> ffor-thi men seyn, ecch contree hath hise lawes.
> (II, 36-42)

It is precisely this awareness of the passage of time and how it can adversely effect the conventional, which is contingent upon the synchronic, that invests the narrator's farewell to his book (Book V, 1786-1798) with such valedictory poignancy.

The proverbialising of the narrator and Pandarus in the Troilus, is an attempt to gain a linguistic hold or purchase on experience. As such they are very like the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili', it is no accident that many proverbs in the poem are metaphorical nor that proverbs are made out of the metaphors of Troilus's first song. A proverb tries to make the relation between its linguistic formulation and experience stable and authoritative: the proverbial, and the proverbialistic, are assertive discourses. Karla Taylor has described how the sapiential hold the proverbs in the Troilus promise over experience is deceptive

> because the same words can mean various things in various contexts, and because the relationship to reality they propose is not direct, but mediated by desire.[1]

Moreover, the very linguistic means by which proverb attempts to gain its purchase on experience, by often defining qualities by, or against, their opposite actually relativise proverbial knowledge rather than establishing it as stable and therefore authoritative.

The relation of trope to narrative, as displayed in the use made of the metaphors and oxymorons of the 'Canticus Troili' in the Troilus, could not be described as ornamental.[2] Rather tropical operations are shown to be at the heart of Chaucer's narrative concerns and strategies. The play of metaphor reveals, as we have seen, Chaucer's awareness of the relativity of the apparently stable and conventional, rather than simply being an example of such conventionality as Vance would seem to suggest. The metaphors and oxymorons of the 'Canticus Troili' generate, structure and fuel narrative issues in the Troilus. They inform such narrative and metafictional concerns as character, the role of various conventional discourses in the poem, including the lyric and the proverbialistic, and the relation of the narrator to his narrative. It is through this latter relation that the meta-linguistic and meta-fictional concerns of the poem are focused, such issues as the reception of the text, the depletions of time and the difficulties, both emotional and intellectual, of writing. Moreover, the way in which metaphor is narrativised in the Troilus signals Chaucer's interest in the relation of the conventional and synchronic to the contingent diachrony as revealed by the 'double sorwe' of Troilus's history. For it is by the narrator's and Pandarus's work to narrativise the tropes of the 'Canticus Troili' by making them refer, simply, to Criseyde, and by spatialing them by giving Troilus's fire a specific location and Troilus's boat a specific direction, that the two lovers are opened up to the contingencies of diachronically conceived experience.

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[1] Karla Taylor, 'Proverbs and the Authentication of Convention', pp.286-287.

[2] For this point of view see Arthur K. Moore, 'Chaucer's Use of Lyric as an Ornament of Style', Comparative Literature, 3 (1951), 32-46.

The play of tropes, focused through Troilus's first song and the other lyric interruptions of the sequentiality of the narrative, informs and signals major areas and concerns of Chaucer's poem, in the next section I shall examine how Chaucer's tropical strategies were read and exploited in Lydgate's Temple of Glas.

SECTION TWO : LYDGATE'S TEMPLE OF GLAS

In Troilus and Criseyde, as we have seen, various attempts are made to use tropical language, particularly metaphoric language, to get a purchase on, that is to define or control, narrative event. The metaphors and oxymorons of Troilus's first song attempt to define Troilus's feelings. The narrator uses these metaphors to reveal his control over his narrative, his special knowledge of Troilus's passion, and he discusses his relation to his narrative at the beginning of Book Two using the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili'. Pandarus, on Troilus's behalf, attempts to direct and control narrative event by the manipulation of Troilus's metaphors.

But narrative event is shown to slip away from attempts to control or define it. Narrative event evades the narrator's control; and Pandarian attempts to fulfil Troilus's desire by directing his boat to a 'place digne' end by thwarting that desire by opening it up to the shiftings of narrative history. For a time it seems that the narrative is a realisation of the metaphorics of a Troilian discourse of desire (a discourse shared by Troilus, Pandarus and the narrator), for Book Three marks the peak not only of Troilus's passion but also of that lyric, exclamatory and intensely metaphoric language by which that passion is articulated.[1] But this language's 'hold' on narrative event falters, and Criseyde slides away from Troilian desire, or rather from the hold the language of that desire has over the exigencies of narrative event. The narrator and Pandarus attempt, and for a time succeed, to translate Troilus's lyricism into narrative, but finally lyric trope is shown not to have a fixable, determining relation to narrative event, despite various male demands that it should. Criseyde functions as sign in Chaucer's text, as sign of the instability and relativity of language's purchase over experience.

In The Temple a similar, at times directly borrowed, tropical language does have an adequate purchase on narrative event. The transformation effected on that language is narrative event. While in the Troilus narrative could be said to exist 'behind' language's attempts to get a fix on it, and is thus evasive of those attempts, in The Temple the narrative is a product of, that is it is generated by, the transformations of a lyric metaphorics. There is no gap between narrative event and language's attempts to get an adequate purchase on that event in The Temple. Because of the shared metaphoric language in The Temple and the Troilus, the former poem is a good place to start in our examination of the nature of the relation of trope to narrative in fifteenth-century narrative poems.

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[1] Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance, p.186, remarks on the 'continuously lyric high plane in the action from the consummation scene through to the end of Book III'. Of the ten lyrics which Payne identifies in the Troilus, four occur in Book Three.

The Temple offers a reading of the Troilus because it employs and conflates the metaphors of Chaucer's poem. Lydgate's narrative is, in part, a response to the tropical language of the Troilus, particularly Troilus's language of complaint. Lydgate generates a narrative from the expansion and transformation of this language. Lydgate identifies oxymoron as the major rhetorical expression of the complaint: for his narrative to move beyond the lyric stasis of the complaint its oxymoronic language has to be transformed. Accordingly this section involves an examination of this process of expansion and transformation. The close relation of narrative progression to linguistic transformations is paralleled in the poem by an emphasis on the pragmatic necessity of the use of language, as speech, as a means of progressing from unfulfilment to a mutually declared desire. Progress by the use of language is, then, a 'theme' of The Temple as well as its narrative method. Unless the knight in The Temple speaks to the lady, as Venus encourages him to do, the narrative will, quite literally, stop short.

This emphasis on linguistic progression leads in this section to an examination of the relation of the frame fiction of the poem with the dream itself. As the knight must speak in the dream so must the narrator use language and write. My reading thus involves an examination of the growing sense of the narrator as writer as the poem progresses. Focusing on the use of a conventional tropical language in the poem provides a useful way of identifying not only the principal thematic concerns of the poem, and its structural methodology, but also a useful model for how frame and framed narrative may be significantly related.

Pearsall has noted that the Temple of Glas is one of Lydgate's few longer narrative poems without a single identifiable source.[1] The poem does, of course, use much from Chaucer, the Troilus in particular, but its narrative putting-together seems wholly Lydgate's own. Because of this status in the Lydgatean canon the poem may serve as an example of Lydgate's construction of narrative from the conventions of the late medieval poetic tradition, for the originality of the arrangement of the narrative perhaps allows us a better appreciation of Lydgate's use of other texts as the basis of his poem. Lydgate's construction of narrative partly from his borrowings from Chaucer, illustrates well both how Chaucer was read by Lydgate and also how narrative structure and theme may be generated from rhetorical trope. As Lydgate read Chaucer so was Lydgate himself read. The Temple was popular in the fifteenth century, particularly, as Pearsall has noted, 'as a quarry for other poets'.[2] Several poems in the following chapters display direct borrowings from Lydgate's poem.

The popularity of the 'Canticus Troili' and of those commonplace metaphors and oxymorons given emphasis by their inclusion in Troilus's first song, is confirmed by fifteenth-century borrowings and excerptions from the Troilus. In The Temple Lydgate appears to examine the narrative potential of the oxymorons and metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' and creates a poetic structure which can be seen as an attempt to break out

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1. Derek A. Pearsall, John Lydgate (London, 1970), p.104.

2. Derek A. Pearsall, John Lydgate, p.104. See also Pierrepont H. Nichols,'Lydgate's Influence on the Aureate Terms of the Scottish Chaucerians', PMLA, 47 (1932), 516-522; and Ronald D.S. Jack, 'Dunbar and Lydgate', Studies in Scottish Literature, 8 (1970-1971), 215-227.

from complaint's language of unfulfilled desire to the celebratory language of mutual love. In the Kingis Quair (see Chapter Three), metaphors from the Troilus and The Temple are an important part of how the I's experience in that poem is patterned and validated. I make this point of two fifteenth-century poet's readings of the Troilus not solely as an indication of Chaucer's influence on that century's revisionist poetics, but also to indicate what these poets selected from their readings of the Chaucerian text, i.e. their use of a particular tropical language from the Troilus.

In The Temple Lydgate uses the most obvious of the Canticus Troili's oxymorons, that of the simultaneous cold and heat of erotic desire and also the metaphor of the boat as the desiring self. Direct verbal echoes indicate the substantial link between Lydgate's and Chaucer's texts. Moreover, Lydgate adds to these borrowings those metaphors of entrapment and binding which Stephen Barney has identified in the Troilus.[1] In addition Lydgate emphasises oxymoron and antithesis in The Temple with oppositions of brightness and darkness, lightness and oppressive heaviness, and clarity and obscurity. Lydgate's narrative is constructed from the expansions and transformations of this emphasised tropical language. Narrative event in Lydgate's poem is concerned with finding ways out of polarised opposition, and with the turning of metaphor away from the stasis of complaint's articulations of unfulfilled desire towards the narrative potential of those metaphors for expressing mutual desire.

Lydgate's poem is set in midwinter 'when of Ianuarie/Ther be kalendes of þe nwe yere' (6/7), and an unidentified I retires to his bed 'for heiȝ distress' (2), where after much tossing and turning he falls asleep.

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1. Stephen A. Barney, 'Troilus Bound'.

The narrator dreams that he is near a temple of glass, which he enters. He describes the wall-paintings depicting stories of women and men wronged in love and accounts of Ovidian metamorphoses which he sees there. Eventually the narrator observes a lady 'benign and humble of chere' (298), who is making an appeal to the Goddess Venus, whose temple this is. The narrator recounts the whole of this lady's complaint concerning her unhappy lot, for it seems she is bound to one man while loving another. In response Venus gives this lady some boughs of hawthorn.

The narrator then proceeds to describe the 'Gret pres of folk with murmur wondirful' (533), who occupy the temple and who are petitioning Venus to remedy their various unhappinesses. The narrator's attention homes in on one particular 'woful man' (695), whose complaint to Venus he recounts as well as he can remember. Venus answers this knight and tells him that he must tell the lady he loves of his desire, as there can be no other remedy for his unfulfilment: 'Withoute spech þou maist no merci haue' (912).

The narrator tells us how he personally reacts to Venus's advice and then recounts the knight's declaration of his love to his lady who is, of course, the lady we have met earlier in the poem. The lady reacts favourably to the knight whom she loves, but there remains a barrier to their mutual desire - the lady's lack of freedom - so both lovers apply to Venus for help. Venus responds by encircling the two lovers with 'a golden cheyne' (1106) of love and encourages the lovers to be patient and faithful. If they are then all obstacles will be overcome (although Venus is a bit vague about the details at this point) and the lovers will be together forever.

The narrator's dream ends with Venus's temple resounding with song in celebration of love's power. The poem concludes with the narrator's resolve to write to his lady, sending her 'a litil tretise ... in prais of women, oonli for her sake' (1380/1), until he has the time to tell her the whole of his dream. Finally, in an 'Envoi de quare' the narrator sends his poem on its way to his lady.

The first things which the narrator notices on entering the temple are the wall-paintings of 'sondri louers' (46). He proceeds to give a description of these paintings, a long description amounting to about 100 lines. Descriptions of such wall-paintings are commonplace in late Middle English poems,[1] but the prominence accorded to this passage placed at the very beginning of the narrator's dream, and its lengthy elaboration, should make us look closer at the relation of this description to the poem as a whole. A typical critical response to this narrative episode would see it as an exercise in Lydgatean amplification; an example of Lydgate's garrulousness and inability to be selective.[2] However, I will argue that the stories which are depicted in these paintings have been carefully selected as an introduction to the major metaphors of The Temple and also to provide a model for the sequence of Lydgate's narrative. As such it operates as what Honig and Quilligan would call the 'threshold text' for the narrative which follows.[1]

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[1] John Norton-Smith, Lydgate : Poems (Oxford, 1966), p.181, suggests that these wall-paintings are probably based on those described in the Parlement of Foules, ll.284-94. However, such paintings are fairly standard in Chaucerian poems. Compare, for instance, The Romaunt of the Rose, ll.139-143; the Book of the Duchesse, ll.321-334; and the Knight's Tale, ll.1914-2088.

[2] C.S.Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1936), p.240, describes Lydgate's 'fatal garrulity' in The Temple, while Derek Pearsall, 'The English Chaucerians' in Chaucer and Chaucerians, edited by Derek Brewer (Alabama,1966), 201-239 writes of Lydgate being driven by the 'daemon of inclusiveness' (p.21). For an opposite point of view see Judith M. Davidoff, '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), 103-125.

I noted above the transformations which are effected in *The Temple* as regards the movement from a language of erotic complaint to a language of erotic celebration. This theme of transformation is introduced by the description of the ekphrastic depictions on the temple walls. Many of these stories are taken from the classical *locus* of transformation, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[2] By entering the temple the I has gained access to the *locus* of transformation, the place where narrative transformations may take place. The 'decorative' paintings on the wall signal the nature of the temple as such a place of transformation. Moreover, the sequence of paintings is carefully arranged by Lydgate to prefigure the sequence of the narrative of the poem. The paintings progress from those depicting the complaints of women wronged — of Dido (55-61) and Medee (62-63) — through images of suffering women — Penelope, Alceste, Griselda, Iseud, Thisbee and Philis — to paintings which show the suffering of men — Paris, Achilles, Palamon and Phebus. There follows a description of the major classical scene of transformation involving Jove and Europa. The descriptions end with the marriage of Mercury and Philology, the birth of poetry and the singing of Canace. These examples 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. It is this transformation which provokes singing in the temple and encourages the narrator on waking, to write a poem to his lady.

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[1] Edwin Honig, *Dark Conceit : the Making of Allegory* (New York and Oxford, 1966), p.72; and Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca and London, 1979), pp.51-64.

[2] Several of the stories in the wall-paintings may be traced back to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in some cases through Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. See Venus and Adonis, *Metamorphoses*, X, 11.503-739; Thisbe, *Met.*, IV, 11.55-166, *Legend*, F, 11.706-923; Theseus, *Met.*, VII, 11.403-452; Philomene and Philomela, *Met.*, VI., 11.424-674, *Legend*, 11.2228-2393; Phoebus and Daphne, *Met.*, I, 11.452-567; Dido and Aeneas, *Legend*, 11.924-1367; Medea, *Legend*, 11.1580-1679; Phillis, *Legend*, 11.2394-2561.

The sequence of the paintings can thus be seen to prepare the reader for the sequence of the narrative which follows: woman's complaint, man's complaint, transformation, uniting, song and poetry.

These descriptions also introduce two of the metaphors which are important in the development of the narrative; the metaphor of desire as heat and the metaphor of desire as binding or entrapment. The metaphor of desire as heat, which provides the basis of the oxymoronic structure of the lady's and knight's complaint, is introduced in the description of the painting of Phillis and Demophon:

> And hou þat Phillis felt of loues hete
> The grete fire of Demophon . . . .
>
> (86-87)

The metaphor of the binding chains of desire, which Lydgate develops in the poem, is introduced through the story of Mars and Venus:

> There sauȝ I also hou þat Mars was take
> Of Vulcanus, and wiþ Venus found,
> And wiþ þe cheynes invisible bound.
>
> (126-128)

The Ovidian cast of the paintings in the temple may be seen in the repeated emphasis on transformation and transmutation in their description. This emphasis may be seen in the paintings of Alceste and Admete (73-74); of Philomene and Progne (98-99); and of Diana (114-115). The most important example of transformation is, however, that of Jove and Europa:

> And hou þat Ioue gan to chaunge his cope
> Oonli for loue of þe faire Europe,
> And into a bole, when he did hir sue,
> List of his godhode his fourme to transmwe;
> And hou þat he bi transmutacioun
> The shap gan take of Amphitrioun
> For his Almen, ...
>
> (117-123)

The first extended descriptive passage of The Temple thus provides a model for the principal theme of the narrative, that of the power of love to effect transformations. It also introduces the two major metaphors, the transformations of which effect narrative progression and development, additionally the sequence of the paintings acts as a guide to the reader of the narrative sequence to follow. I should now like to turn to a further use of metaphor in Lydgate's poem, and to examine the implications of a relation of The Temple to the Troilus, a relationship which is based on the borrowing by Lydgate of metaphors from Chaucer's text.

About half-way through The Temple the narrator reports to us that he observes and overhears a knight lamenting 'the lak of his desire' (564). This desire is for his lady whose complaint the narrator has reported to us earlier in the poem. This knight's lament contains all the commonplace metaphors of the love complaint tradition: love is service, love is pain, desire is fire, unfulfilled desire is death, the lady is the cure to love's wound. The knight laments the loss of self-control and self-direction caused by his unfulfilled desire. The metaphors of his complaint express this loss of control. The God of Love binds the knight with 'his fire cheyne' (574); the lady has the advantage in a series of warfare metaphors such as 'the palme is hires, and pleinli þe victorie' (593); and the knight likens himself to a bird which has lost its freedom to fly as it wishes:

> But lich a brid þat fleith at hir desire
> Til sodeinli within þe pantire
> She is icauȝt, þouȝ she were late at laarge.
> (603-605)

The knight's complaint can be seen to be constructed from the metaphors of Troilian discourse, it uses, for instance, the metaphor of the desiring male as a boat on the sea from the 'Canticus Troili':

A nwe tempest for-casteþ now my baarge,
Now vp nov dovne with wind it is so blowe,
So am I possid and almost ouerþrowe,
Fordriue in dirknes with many a sondri wawe.
Alas, when shal þis tempest ouerdrawe
To clere þe skies of myn aduersite;
The lode-ster I wot I may not se,
It is so hid with cloudes þat ben blake.
Alas, when wil þis turment ouershake.
(606-614)[1]

This passage from The Temple has obvious verbal echoes of the use of seafaring metaphors in the Troilus, including Troilus's rudderless boat from the 'Canticus Troili'; the narrator's exclamations of the difficulty of writing at the beginning of Book Two, and from Troilus's laments to the absent Criseyde in Book Five:

thus possed to and fro,
Al sterelees with-inne a boot am I
Amydde the see, ...
(I, 415-417)

Owt of thiseblake wawes forto saylle,
O wynde, O wynde, the weder gynneth clere,
ffor in this see the boot hath swych trauaylle
Of my konnyng, that vnneth I it steere:
This see clepe I the tempestous matere
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne.
(II, 1-6)

'Who seth ȝow now, my righte lode sterre?
Who sit right now or stant in ȝoure presence?
(V, 232-233)

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[1] Compare the use of the word 'possid' by Charles D'Orléans:

For as the shippe forpossid is this and this,
Right so of loue the hertis arne y-wis
As now in wele and now in gret penaunce.

From The English Poems of Charles of Orléans, edited by Robert Steele and Mabel Day, EETS original series 215 and 220 (London, 1941 and 1946 (for 1944) reprinted 1970), Roundel 49, p.129, ll.3854-3856. For Lydgate's use of Chaucer's term 'possid' see J. Schick, Lydgate's Temple of Glas, p.102.

> That here-vpon ȝe wolden write me,
> ffor loue of god, my righte lode sterre,
> That deth may make an ende of al my werre.
>
> (V, 1391-1393)

Lydgate appears to have read across Chaucer's text: to have read across the various parts of the Troilus and identified the various seafaring metaphors which Chaucer uses.[1] Lydgate has conflated the instances of the seafaring metaphor as they occur severally in the Troilus, and has constructed from them a part of his metaphorics of control. This reveals how Chaucer was read by Lydgate: Lydgate has read the Chaucerian text tropically, identifying and conflating various tropes from the Troilus. There is evidence then that Lydgate displays his understanding of his poetic role as being what Lee W. Patterson describes as 'to dispose and vary a range of inherited tropes'.[2]

Lydgate's methodology of reading as displayed in his use of the Troilus's metaphors of seafaring and navigation is confirmed by his borrowing of other tropes from Troilian discourse in Chaucer's poem. Lydgate's image of the knight caught between two states:

> Thus stand I euen bitwix life and deþ
> To loue and serue while þat I haue breþ
> In such a place where I dar not pleyn.
>
> (625- 627)

---

[1] Lydgate's direct borrowing of Chaucer's term 'lode-sterre' is suggested by the uncommonness of the term in this metaphorical sense. Both Trevisa in his translation of Higden's Polychronicon, and Mandeville use the word in its astronomical sense as pole star, see Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis; together with English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth century, edited by Churchill Babington, 9 volumes (London, 1865-1886), I, Cap. XXIII, p.199 and Cap.XXIX, p.301. Mandeville's Travels: Translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, edited by P. Hamelius, 2 Volumes, EETS, original series 153 and 154 (London, 1919 and 1923), I, Ch.XXI, p.119, 1.25. Only Chaucer, prior to Lydgate uses the term to mean 'guiding star'. Lydgate uses the term often, see The Troy Book, part I, Book Two, 1.8476; The Life of Our Lady, Book Five, 1.700; The Legend of St. George, 11.6-7. See also La Belle Dame Sans Merci, translated by Sir Richard Roos, in The Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), 1.257.

[2] Lee W. Patterson, 'Ambiguity and Interpretation: A Fifteenth-Century Reading of Troilus and Criseyde', p.327.

> Hanging in balaunce bitwix hope and drede
> Withoute comfort, remedie or rede.
>
> (641-642)

echoes the lines in the 'Canticus Troili':

> ... bitwixen wyndes two,
> That in contrarie stonden euere mo.
>
> (I, 417-418)

Some of these borrowings have been noted before, as has The Temple's more general relation to the Troilus,[1] but the point I wish to make is that Lydgate appears to have read Chaucer's text tropically, along the lines I have described in Section One of this chapter. Lydgate does not direct his metaphorics to an examination of character as does Chaucer but rather to an accumulation of metaphors figuring the control/lack of control theme. Moreover, Lydgate's metaphoric strategies do, unlike Chaucer's, have a determining purchase on narrative event. The transformations of tropical language in the poem determine the change from the unfulfilled desire of complaint to the expression of mutual desire. It is to these transformations, which show trope's determining relation to narrative in The Temple, that I now turn.

Much has been made of the nature of the barriers to the fulfilment of desire between the knight and lady in The Temple.[2] Critics have consistently supplied what Lydgate quite deliberately leaves ambiguous by interpreting this barrier as the lady's married state - basing their interpretation on lines 335-341:

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[1] See John Norton-Smith, Lydgate: Poems, p.177 and p.188, also J. Schick, Lydgate's Temple of Glas, p.cxxvi.

[2] For discussions of the lady's marriage see Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London, 1971), p.376; Derek A. Pearsall, John Lydgate, p.107 and Old English and Middle English Poetry (London, 1977), p.215; Alain Renoir, The Poetry of John Lydgate (London, 1967), pp.93-94; A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (Cambridge, 1976), p.176; and C.S. Lewis The Allegory of Love, p.241.

> For I am bounde to þing þat I nold:
> Freli to chese þere lak I liberte,
> And so I want of þat myn herte would,
> The bodi knyt, alþou3e my þou3t be fre;
> So þat I most, of necessite,
> Myn hertis lust outward contrarie -
> Thogh we be on, þe dede most varie.
>
> (335-341)

Whatever the nature of this barrier to 'liberte', and it is surely significant that Lydgate leaves the issue undefined, the function and effect of this barrier is to make the lady practise 'doubelnes' (11.441 and 1245), that is to be secretive and duplicitous (11.340-1).

The temple of glass is the place where this doubleness may be discarded. The temple represents that place of poetic convention wherein the problems of the knight and lady may be overcome, and transformed. They are transformed (appropriately enough in a locus of poetic convention) by the use and manipulation of language - of the metaphors and oxymorons from the conventional poetic discourse of desire, several of which tropes are direct borrowings from the Troilus. The lady complains to Venus that because of the secret nature of her desire for the knight 'I haue no space wiþ him for to be' (366). The temple represents just such a rhetorically created poetic space, which both knight and lady may inhabit. By calling the poem The Temple of Glas, this point of the poetic nature of this space is made reflexively, for the poem itself thus becomes the space where the knight's and the lady's desires may come together. The actual nature of the barriers to their mutual desire are unimportant in the poem, beyond the functional necessity of there being a barrier - any barrier - to be overcome. The focus of interest in The Temple lies not on the nature of the barrier, but on the transformations of tropical language by which those barriers are 'overcome'.

Desire in The Temple is redefined by the operations of tropical language, in this way trope is shown as constitutive of desire in the poem.

The temple may be seen, therefore, as the place where experience of erotic desire is transmuted through the operations of trope. This transformational purchase of tropical discourse on experience is never doubted in The Temple (it is not subjected to those relativising strategies which we have seen in Troilus and Criseyde), yet it remains a mysterious, almost magical, quality of relations in Lydgate's poem. We do not learn how metaphor may affect the knight's and lady's experience, we are simply shown that it does through the actions and speeches of Venus. Lydgate imbues the operations of the tropical language of poetry with great value by making the locus of poetic tradition - the temple - the place where poetic trope has an unquestionable determining relation to narrative event, situation and experience.

In Section One of this chapter, on the use of the metaphors of the 'Canticus Troili' in the Troilus, I noted the spatialising of metaphor as one way in which both the narrator and Pandarus narrativise the figurative language of the lyric. In The Temple the space which the knight and the lady lack for the articulation of their desire is provided by the temple. It is within this spatially defined framework that the metaphors which map the progress and state of their desire are plotted. This spatial element is fundamental to the narrativisation of metaphor and is provided in The Temple by the locus of the temple itself. The connection of this space to the desire metaphorically constituted within it is shown by a consonance of terms used to describe the temple, Venus, the lady and love itself. These are the terms of light, brightness, clarity and crystallinity. The narrator on first seeing the temple describes it as 'so clere/As eny cristal' (21/22), while the lady is described by him through a series of similes concerned with light and brightness:

> But alderlast as I walk and biheld,
> Beside Pallas wiþ hir cristal sheld,
> Tofore þe statue of Venus set on height
> Hov þat þer knelid a ladi in my si3t
> Tofore þe goddes, which ri3t as he þe sonne
> Passeþ þe sterres and doþ hir stremes donne;
> And Lucifer to voide þe ny3tes sorow
> In clerenes passeþ erli bi þe morow...
> (247-254)

Moreover, Venus describes the lady as 'þis worldis sonne and li3t (1208). Venus herself is severally described as 'O clere heuens li3t (715); 'O goodli planet, O ladi Venus bri3t' (835) and as:

> Fairest of sterres, þat wiþ 3oure persant li3t
> And with þe cherisshing of 3oure stremes clere,
> Causen in loue hertes to be li3t
> Oonli þuru3 shynyng of 3oure glade spere.
> (1341-1344).

Throughout the poem metaphors and similes of light connect the location of the temple with the concept of love and the object of the knight's love, the lady. As the sun shines so brightly that the narrator cannot see at the beginning of his dream, so Venus, and the lady herself are seen as suns and stars which illuminate male desire throughout the poem.

This metaphorics of light - of light as love - co-exists in the poem with a metaphorics of heat - of heat as desire - a metaphorics based on the oxymorons of the 'Canticus Troili' in the *Troilus*. It is the lady, in her complaint to Venus, who first uses the oxymorons of the 'Canticus Troili', to express the doubleness by which she must, of necessity, operate:

> And þus I stond, departid euen on tweyn,
> Of wille and dede ilaced in a chaine.

For þouȝ I brenne with feruence and with hete,
Wiþin myn hert I mot complein of cold;
And þuruȝ myn axcesse thoȝe I sweltre and swete,
Me to complein (God wot) and I am not boold
Vnto no wiȝt - nor a woord vnfold
Of al my peyne (allas þe harde stond)
That hatter brenne þat closid is my wounde.
(354-362)[1]

At the conclusion of her complaint, Venus offers the lady a symbol, not of the reconciliation of cold and heat into oxymoronic tension, but of a quality which cuts across such doubleness. The hawthorn which Venus offers her, is a traditional floral symbol of desire from the Provençal troubadours onwards,[2] and provides a symbol of a long-lasting singleness which cuts across the doubleness of the cold/hete, outer/inner dichotomy expressed in the lady's complaint:

And as þese bowȝis be boþ faire and swete,
Followiþ þ'effect þat þei do specifie :
This is to sein, boþe in cold and hete,
Beþ of oon hert and of o fantasie,
As ar þese leues þe which mai not die
Þuruȝ no dures of stormes þat be kene,
Nomore in winter þen in somer grene.
(510-516)

---

[1] Compare Lydgate's *The Complaint of a Lover's Life*, 11.218-238, for the development of this particular oxymoronic structuring using the oppositions of heat and cold.

[2] In Provençal verse the hawthorne is typically an image of the pleasure of erctic desire, and its white blossom is contrasted to the iciness of suffering in desire. See Jaufre Rudel's 'Lanqan li jorn son lonc en mai', in *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, edited and translated by G.Wolf and R.Rosenstein (New York and London, 1983), pp.146-147:

Remembrami d'un 'amor de loing:
Vau de talan embroncs e clis,
Si que chans ni flors d'albespis
no·m platz plus que l'iverns gelatz.
(11.4-7)

Compare Guilhem de Peitieus's 'Ab la dolchor del temps novel', in *Introduction à l'étude de l'ancien provençal*, edited by F.R. Haubin P.T. Ricketts and J. Hathaway (Geneva, 1967), pp.54-55:

La nostr'amor va enaissi
com la branca de l'albespi
qu'esta sobre l'arbr'entrenan,
la nuoit ab la ploia ez al gel,
tro l'endeman que·l sol s'espan,
par la fueilla verz e·l ramel.
(11.13-18)

See also *Le Roman de la Rose* II, 3672 and *The Knight's Tale*, 1.1508. In English fifteenth-century poetry the hawthorn is mentioned in *The Floure and the Leafe*, edited by Derek A. Pearsall (Edinburgh and London, 1962), 1.272, and *The Kingis Quair* of James Stewart, edited by Matthew McDiarmid (London, 1973), st.31.

J. Norton-Smith in his article on Lydgate's changes in The Temple of Glas,[1] has shown convincingly that the different manuscript versions of The Temple represent a process of revision by Lydgate of the text.[2] One of the major differences between groups of MSS, that Norton-Smith identifies, concerns the two stanzas dealing with the giving of the hawthorn, and Venus's glossing of its significance. For clarity, I shall write out the manuscript variations in full.

MS VARIATIONS IN STANZAS 27 AND 28 OF THE TEMPLE OF GLAS

(From John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes in the Temple of Glas', Medium Aevum, 27 (1958), 166-172.)

Group GS 27

And þan anon Venus cast adoune
Into hir lap, Roses, both white and red,
So fresshe of hewe, þat wenten environ
In compas wyse euen aboute hir hede;
And bad hir kepe hem of hir goodelyhede,
Which shal not folowe ne nevir wexen old,
If she hir bidding kepe as she haþ told.

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[1] John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's changes in the Temple of Glas', Medium Aevum, 27 (1958), 166-172.

[2] John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes', distinguishes the MSS sigla as follows:

G - Camþridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27.
S - British Library, MS Additional 16165.
F - Fairfax MS 16.
B - Bodley MS 638.
T - Bodley MS Tanner 346.
P - Magdelene College, Cambridge MS Pepys 2006.
L - Longleat MS 258.
Si - British Library, MS Sloane 1212 (fragmentary).

These MSS may be grouped as Norton-Smith describes (p.171):

> The sequence *GS - *FB - T actually represents the vital development of Lydgate's poem. *GS is an early, unfinished draft... In T we have the completed poem in a polished, self-consistent, poetically important version. Incidentally, we have an unusual example of the mediaeval poet at work.

28

And so as ȝe ben callyd Margarete,
Followiþ þe feythe it doth specifie,
This is to sein, boþe in cold and hete,
Beþ of oon hert as is the daysye,
I-lyche fresch, þe which mai not die
Þuruȝ no stormys of dures þat be kene,
No more in winter þen in somer grene.

Group FB 27

(as in GS)

28

And as þese bowȝis be bothe faire and swete,
Followiþ þeffect þat þei do specifie:
This is to sein, boþe in cold and hete
Beþ of oon herte, and of o fantasie,
As are þese leues, þe which mai not die
Þuruȝ no dures of stormes þat be kene,
No more in winter þan in somer grene.

Group T 27

And þan anon Venus cast adoune
Into hir lap, braunches white and grene,
Of hawethorne, þat wenten environ
Aboute hir hed, þat ioi it was to sene,
And bade hir kepe hem honestli and clene:
Which **shal** not fade ne nevir wexin old,
If she hir bidding kepe as she haþ told.

28

And as þese bowȝis be bothe faire and swete,
Followiþ þeffect þat þei do specifie:
This is to sein, boþe in cold and hete
Beþ of oon herte, and of o fantasie,
As are þese leues, þe which mai not die
Þuruȝ no dures of stormes þat be kene,
No more in winter þan in somer grene.

As Norton-Smith points out in GS MS group the flowers of stanza 27 and the gloss of stanza 28 are not consonant.[1] The roses 'white and red' of stanza 27 have no thematic link with the proposed singleness of stanza 28. In fact another flower - the marguerite (the daisy) - has to be introduced as an example of 'oon hert'. Version FB represents an attempt to tighten the structure of thought by simply referring to the roses as

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[1] John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes', p.171.

'þese bowȝis be boþ faire and swete'. However, the doubleness of roses 'both white and red' is still an inadequate emblem of the singleness Venus is promoting. Thus in the final T version the hawthorn is used. As Norton-Smith notes the colour of the lady's dress at line 299 is also changed, in the T version, to agree with the colour symbolism:[1]

> And so þis ladi, benigne and humble of chere,
> Kneling I saugh al clad in grene and white.
> (298-299)

Lydgate is thus shown to be making tighter the oppositional theme of singleness/doubleness in these revisions of the colour and flower symbolism in the poem.

In the knight's complaint the metaphor of desire as heat is also used. At line 574 the knight talks of being embraced by love's 'fire cheyne', and as part of his list of metaphors plotting the scope of his powerlessness owing to his desire he says:

> I dar not wele, for drede and for daunger
> And for vnknowe, tellen hou þe fire
> Of louis brond is kindled in my brest.
> (631-633)

These metaphors of desire as heart are common places of the late medieval poetic tradition of love poetry. Their status as commonplace, however, allows them to be used more effectively in mapping out the principal theme of the poem, the reconciliation of opposites and of lovers. The commonplace metaphor provides a recognisable structure for the progress of this theme. Venus gives the lady a symbol which cuts across the oxymoronic antithesis of cold/heat; a symbol which gives love ultimate value as a means of surmounting the tensional stasis of unfulfilled desire figured by oxymoron. The symbol of the hawthorn transforms the tensional opposition of cold/heat oxymoron with a long-lasting singleness which will last 'boþe in cold and hete' (512). The knight feels himself to be bound by the heat of desire for the 'fire cheyne' is one of the many metaphors by which his sense of powerlessness, and lack of control, is figured in the poem. His request of Venus is that the lady, who must perforce display a cold exterior, should feel the same heat that he feels:

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[1] John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes', p.171.

> Nou wiþ ȝoure fire hire herte so restreyne
> (Withoute more, or I deie at þe lest)
> That she mai wete what is my requeste.
>
> (726-728)

The narrative development of The Temple is mapped out by the use of metaphor. The knight feels himself to be afflicted with the heat of desire and asks that the apparently non-desiring lady should be similarly afflicted. His repetition of this request (834-847) shows a movement from wishing that the lady simply feel heat to his also wanting her to feel light. This progression is marked by the coalescence of the two metaphors of heat and light in the poem:

> And ȝov I prai of routh and eke pite,
> O goodli planet, O ladi Venus briȝt,
> That ȝe ȝoure sone of his deite
> (Cupid I mene) þat wiþ his dredful myȝt
> And wiþ his brond þat is so clere of liȝte
> Hir herte so to fire and to mark,
> As ȝe me whilom brente with a spark.
>
> (834-840)

The knight's aim in making the lady feel the same heat as he does is to incite her 'pite' (845) - her empathy:

> For of pite pleinli if she felt
> The selfe hete þat doþ myn hert enbrace,
> I hope of rouþe she would do me grace.
>
> (845-847)

Venus' reply to this request from the knight is to tell him to speak to this lady, and later the narrator commentating on the knight's condition is inspired to feel an analogous empathetic response towards him to that which the knight requests from his lady:

> Of him I had so gret compassioun
> Forto reherse his weymentacioun
> That, wel vnneþe þouȝ with myself I striue,
> I want connyng his peynes to discryue.
>
> (948-951)

The metaphor of desire as heat is used in The Temple to map out the progress of the lady's and the knight's love relation from a state of static desire, in which articulation is contained within the self and not communicated to the desired, to a state where both the lady, passive receiver of the symbol of the hawthorn, and the knight, actively bringing together both light and heat, become aware of the reconciling power of love. The success of the knight's enterprise to achieve this equality of desire is signalled by the empathetic response of the narrator, and also by the dropping of the fire/ice, heat/cold oxymorons for mapping out desire in the poem. As the tensional doubleness of two separate unfulfilled desires evaporates, that is when the knight if finally persuaded to talk to the lady, then the figurative language used to express those desires evaporates too. This movement from unfulfilled, self-referential and self-tormenting desire to a state of a mutually articulated love, may to some extent be seen as a move from complaint to what amounts to celebration (a similar structure can be seen to operate in The Kingis Quair, see Chapter Three).

A further instance of the use of metaphors to signal the important thematic development from unfulfilled desire to a celebration of mutual love in The Temple is the adoption and reworking of the chain metaphor from Troilus and Criseyde.[1] It is first used in the description of the wall painting in the temple, of Mars and Venus. Mars is bound with 'cheynes invisible' (128), by Vulcan, after he has been found, 'wiþ Venus' (127); these chains represent Mars's thwarted desire. The image of the chain is next used as a metaphor for the tensional relation by which the lady feels her internal feeling and her external appearance and deeds are yoked together. The lady has articulated the nature of this inner/outer dichotomy and defines her state by use of this metaphor:

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[1] For a discussion of the use of metaphors of bondage in the Troilus see Stephen A. Barney's article 'Troilus Bound'.
For Chaucerian instances of the use of chain imagery, other than the Troilus, see the Knight's Tale, ll.2987-93. See also Boece, Book Two Metrum 8, 15-27; Book Three, Metrum 9, 20-35; Book Four, Prosa 6, 126-153 and 379-402; and Book Four, Metrum 6, 44-59.

> And þus I stond, departid euen on tweyn,
> Of wille and dede ilaced in a chaine.
>
> (354-355)

The chain, therefore, operates as a metaphor of precisely that tensional relation which can be seen to be the unstated third term of the oxymoronic sign which remains in absentia. This point is emphasised in the poem by a focus, in the stanza following this use of the chain image, on the principle terms of the oxymoronic examination of unfulfilled desire in the 'Canticus Troili':

> For þouȝ I brenne with feruence and with hete,
> Wiþin myn hert I mot complein of cold.
>
> (356-357)

In his article on the changes in the various manuscript groupings of The Temple, Norton-Smith suggests that the changes made to lines 335-369 in the revisions of the poem reveal a growing interest on Lydgate's part in making the lady's character more plausible.[1] In the earlier G and S manuscripts lines 335-369 do not occur and are replaced by four stanzas which include an attack on 'Jelusye/The vile serpant'. In revising the poem these four stanzas, with their allegorical personification of the jealousy which binds the lady, are omitted and replaced with the lines 335-369 which use metaphors of heat and cold and the image of the chain.

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[1] See John Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes', pp.169-70 and also Lydgate: Poems, p.176.

I would suggest that Lydgate has revised these lines to stress the oppositions of contraries, and the tropical language of the poem. The four stanzas in the earlier GS group of manuscripts have no such stress on opposites and contraries and they focus on the cause of the lady's complaint, i.e. jealousy. In his revisions Lydgate de-emphasises causation and emphasises the rhetoric of _contentio_, and the metaphors which are so important in _The Temple_ as a whole, metaphors of heat and cold, and of the chain as a metaphor of the binding together of opposites.

The lady first uses the chain image as a metaphor for the violent yoking together of opposing feeling within herself and as a metaphor of her powerlessness in the face of these feelings (354-355). When Venus next uses the chain image it has been transformed into a metaphor of the power and control the lady has over the knight who desires her, Venus instructs the lady:

> To loue him best for noþing þat ȝe feine,
> Whom I haue bound so lowe vndir ȝoure cheine.
> (522- 523)

This use of the chain image, by which Venus grants the lady control over the knight, is the culminating image of a passage dominated by Boethian metaphor and oppositions concerned with the individual's perception of the controlling forces which determine his or her life. Images such as the storm of life metaphor (515),[1] and oppositions such as 'wele or for wo' (517), 'For ioy, turment or for aduersite' (518), and 'Wherso þat fortune fauour or be foo' (519). Venus has thus taken the lady's chain metaphor for lack of control and transformed it into a metaphor for the lady's control over the desiring knight. Narrative progression is effected by altering the referent of the lady's metaphor. This is analogous to the process we have noted in Book One of the Troilus, where Criseyde is made the referent of Troilus's metaphors in the 'Canticus Troili'.

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[1] For Boethian seafaring metaphors see _Boece_, Book One, Prosa 3, 69-75; Book One, Metrum 5, 58-60; and Book Two, Metrum 3, 14-21.

The knight's first use of the chain image brings together the chain as a metaphor of a lack of control, the fetters of fortune, with the metaphor of desire as fire. This conflation of the two metaphors occurs as part of the knight's list of metaphors which attempt to define his feelings of a lack of self control stemming from his unfulfilled erotic desire:

> But nov of nwe within his fire cheyne
> I am enbraced, so þat I mai not striue.
>
> (574-575)

The 'cheyne' operates here as a metaphor of the constraints on the knight caused by his secret, unfulfilled desire. The chain prevents the knight from acting out his proper, metaphorically conceived role towards his lady. He cannot serve his lady as he desires:

> ...I mai not striue,
> To loue and serve whiles þat I am on lyue
> The goodli fressh in þe tempil yonder
> I saugh riȝt nov...
>
> (575-578)

The metaphors of binding and entrapment associated with the chain image dominate the knight's perceptions of the determining relation between Venus as a figuration of love, and himself. Hence the knight's use of metaphors of restraint (726 and 733); binding(784 and 809/10); and embracing (846). Consonant with these metaphors are the opposed metaphors of release. The knight begs Venus to release him so that he may be allowed to serve his lady. Venus's reply to the knight's complaint also employs the metaphor of release (861), but her speech works to replace the metaphorics of constraint/release with a metaphorics of desire as sickness and fulfilment as cure. The knight's 'cure' is pointed by Venus as the articulation of his desire to his lady:

> For who þat wil of his preve peine
> Fulli be cured, His life to help and saue,
> He most mekeli oute of his hertis graue
> Discure his wound and shew it to his lech,
> Or ellis deie for defaute of spech.
>
> (913-917)

These medicinal metaphors work to represent the curative value of articulation and of speech, which is an important developed theme in the poem.

In his complaint to Venus the knight addresses the goddess as the one who can fulfil his desire. Lydgate has Venus use the sickness/cure metaphor to direct the knight's desire to its source, the lady. While Venus must release the knight, it is the lady who will cure him. Narrative development, to the end of bringing the knight and lady together, is effected by the transfer of a metaphorically encoded role from Venus to the lady.

The metaphor of the pain of desire is associated throughout this passage with the metaphor of desire as a constraint (968, 995, 1087, 1096). The two words most often used in this metaphoric alignment are rhymed several times in this passage, 'peyne' is rhymed with 'constreyn' and 'compleyne'. The two metaphors of sickness/pain and binding/constraint are used in tandem throughout the knight's request to his lady and also her reply. Hence the lady says to the knight:

> Boþe ȝe and I mekeli most abide,
> To take agre and not of oure disease
> To grucch agen, til she list to appese
> Oure hidde wo soinli þat constreyneþ
> From dai to day and oure hertis peyneþ.
>
> (1084-1088)

Here both the knight and the lady are the objects of metaphors of constraint and sickness. Both are subject to the same demands concerning the secrecy of their desire ('Oure hidde wo'). The narrative is progressing to a statement of the mutuality of desire for both knight and lady, by making both subject to the same metaphors of desire.

Lydgate intertwines metaphoric strands in this passage; the metaphors of sickness/cure and those of constraint/release are brought into close relation which is marked by the rhyming of the key words 'peyne' and 'constreyne' from each metaphoric field of discourse. Lydgate narrative method here operates by the manipulation of alternative, conventional metaphoric strands. Narrative progression is effected by Lydgate by working through alternative metaphoric strands or trains of thought. Lydgate uses the metaphor of desire as sickness or pain to move the knight and lady to a position of mutual desire. The chain image then re-emerges and metaphors of pain and sickness slide under metaphors of constraint and binding. The chain has been re-defined by Lydgate's metaphoric strategies in this passage, the mutuality of the two lovers' desire now means that they are both bound by Venus's golden chain of love; as the narrator remarks:

> Me þou3t I saw with a golden cheyne
> Venus anon enbracen and constrein,
> Her boþe hertes, in oon forto perseuer
> Whiles þat þei liue and never desseuer.
>
> (1106-1109)

This metaphysical golden chain is further contrasted by Venus to her 'cheyne þat maked is of stele' (1120), with which she has bound the knight in a state of desire so far in the poem. The chain imagery is used in the poem to mark the development of narrative event, the transformations of this imagery with its metaphors of binding and constraint mark important ways in which the narrative is generated. The chain, and the metaphors associated with it, are used to refer to several separate narrative elements and also work as a metaphor of the synthesis of those elements. The chain is used to refer to the lady's state of tension between the opposing demands of inner feeling and outer appearance; to the knight's condition of unfulfilled desire and also to the restraints which he feels prevent him from fulfilling that desire; and finally to the metaphysical golden chain of cosmic love which binds the two lovers together eternally. It is this latter image which reconciles the 'doubleness' of each of the previous uses of the chain image and its associated metaphors.

In the knight's first complaint there are many metaphors used for lack of self-control and self-determination. Most of these metaphors derive as we have seen from the Troilus. In addition to Troilus's metaphors of the self as boat, there are metaphors of binding chains, caged birds, and imprisonment. The knight's last example of 'constraint' (667), is that he cannot speak to the woman he desires:

> Of my distresse siþ I can no rede
> But stonde dovmb, stil as eni stone,
> Tofore þe goddes I wil me hast anone.
> (687-689)

This stress on the knight's inability to speak marks an important theme in the poem concerning speech and writing. It is only by speech that the metaphoric and oxymoronic stasis of both the knight's and the lady's complaints may be overcome, so that lyric monologue may be transformed into narrative dialogue. This progression in the narrative from monologue to dialogue is paralleled in the poem by the narrator's progression from non-writerly stasis and inertia at the beginning of the poem to the impulse to write at the end of the poem when the narrator addresses his poem as a text, a written entity.

At the end of her advice to the knight, Venus exhorts him to speak to the lady he desires. Venus's speech signals the importance of discourse as narrative action in the poem, speech is important for the narrative progression of the knight's desire:

> Go forþe anon and be riȝt of goode chere,
> For specheles noþing maist þou spede.
> Be goode of trust and be noþing in were,
> Siþ I myself shal helpen in þis nede;
> For at þe lest, of hir goodlihed
> She shal to þe hir audience enclyne,
> And lovli þe here til þou þi tale fyne.
>
> Fore wel þou wost (ȝif I shal not feine)
> Withoute spech þou maist no merci haue:
> For who þat wil of his preve peine
> Fulli be cured, his life to help and saue,
> He most mekeli oute of his hurtis graue
> Discure his wound and shew it to his lech,
> Or ellis deie for defaute of spech.
>
> (904-917)

Speech is explicitly signalled as the means of narrative progression; the knight must speak, and the lady must listen, until he 'finishes his tale'.[1]

The exigencies of narrative progression which Venus insists on in the above quotation have an obvious parallel to the narrator's progressive emergence in the poem as a writer: as the knight must speak the narrator must write. By the end of the poem the narrator has fully emerged as a writer, and he addresses the poem with a full awareness of what Donald R. Howard calls 'bookness', that is the materiality of poem as object.[2] The narrator's intrusions into the narrative, and his acts of commentary on his dream, become progressively more marked by the rhetoric of authorial and writerly display.

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[1] Compare the importance placed on Troilus's speech in Troilus and Criseyde. Criseyde asks Pandarus:

> 'Kan he wel speke of loue', quod she, 'I preye?'
> 'Tel me, for I the bet me shal purueye'.
>
> (II, 503-504)

[2] Donald R. Howard, The Idea of the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976), pp.56-67.

At the beginning of the poem we find no reference to the I of the poem as a writer. The narratorial I does not refer to himself as a writer, but rather as a reporter of what he has seen in his dream, 'If I þe soth ariȝt reporte shal' (43). His chief activity is visual and descriptive, and he is also a reader; he reads 'þe hole tale' of the wall painting of Philomene and Progne (97-99), and he refers to himself as part of a community of readers of Chaucer (110). The narrator of the poem at this stage has no articulated sense of himself as a writer. As the poem progresses, however, the narrator's commentary on the dream becomes more overtly rhetorical, and the narrator gains more sense of his commentary as distinct from described event itself. Hence the rhetorical disclaimer of descriptive ability (536-540); of _occupatio_ (545); of a sense of the rhetorical proprieties of description (554); and of an awareness of the partiality of memory (695).

The display of the narrator as a writer becomes more explicit when he empathises with the knight's suffering (932-969). The knight, we will remember, has just been enjoined by Venus to speak to the lady he loves, it is at this point when speech has been stressed that the narrator stresses the difficulties of writing emotional and physical in a typical _topos_ of narration, the modesty _topos_. Lydgate borrows the rhetoric of narratorial inadequacy from the beginning of Book Four of the _Troilus_, to describe his narrator's anxiety as a writer:

> For rouþe of which his wo as I endite
> Mi penne I fele quaken as I write.
> (946-947)[1]

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[1] Compare _Troilus and Criseyde_, Book IV, 11.13-14:

> And now my penne, allas, with which I write,
> Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite.

Such is the sadness of the narrator's dream at this point that he must call to Thesiphone and her sister 'that bene goddesses of turment and of peyne' (960), for inspiration and it is their tears which provide the ink for the narrator to go on writing. As the knight prepares to break through the blockage to his desire and speak to his lady, the narrator articulates a full sense of himself as writer, needing a style (956), inspiration (957), ink (961), and paper (962). Writing is displayed here at its most physical, and in what amounts to a literalisation of rhetorical method.[1]

At the conclusion of the poem the narrator's status as writer is fully confirmed. Although the narrator wakes up in a similar psychological state to that which he was in at the poem's beginning, the answer to this circular impasse is to be found through writing:

> I purpose here to maken and to write
> A litil tretise and a processe make
> In prais of women.
>
> (1379-1381)

And in the 'Envoi de quare', the experience of the narrator's dream has become a written text, a material entity:

> Nou go þi wai, þou litel rude boke,
> To hir presence, as I þe commaund.
>
> (1393-1394)

Writing is thus seen for the narrator as the way out of, and as a way of transforming, a state of emotional impasse, just as, for the knight, speech is the way out of his suffering and as a way to progress towards the goal of his desire.

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[1] For a discussion of a similar emphasis on the physicality of writing in Stephen Hawes's The Pastime of Pleasure see Seth Lerer, 'The Rhetoric of Fame: Stephen Hawes's Aureate Diction', Spenser Studies, 5 (1984), 169-184 (p.175):

> In fact, Hawes seems possessed by the physicality of writing: by the feel of the pen, the touch of an engraving, or by the weight of a book. Such an attitude informs his transformation of the tropes of rhetoric into palpable entities.

Hawes claims to be greatly influenced by Lydgate, see The Pastime of Pleasure, edited by William Edward Mead, EETS original series 173 (London, 1928 (for 1927)), ll.1394-1396:

> I lytell or nought expert in poetry
> Of my mayster Lydgate wyll folowe the trace
> As euermore ...

The poem begins with an opposition, posed in terms of lightness/clarity and darkness/obscurity, between the narrator's waking and dreaming environments. The narrator goes to bed 'for thouȝt, constreint and grevous heuines' (I), and the time of year is December when 'derk Diane, ihorned, noþing clere/Had hir bemys vndir a mysty cloude' (8-9). His dream, however, begins with a description of the temple flooded with light, shining so brightly that the narrator, at first, cannot see anything 'ne nyst noþing, as I would,/Abouten me considre and bihold' (27/28). As both Lois Ebin and Judith Davidoff have shown, the metaphor of light in The Temple refers not only to love but also to the value and nature of poetry.[1] In The Temple the bright light marks it as a locus of poetic value and of poetic tradition. It is the place of represented desire and the place of transformation, as signalled by the paintings depicted on its walls. In the temple the narrator is learning how to write, how to represent his dream experience in poetry. By the poem's end he has learnt this, and the 'bookness' of the poem itself, the articulated sense of the poem we have read as a material object, stands as testimony to the efficacy of the learning process, and thus poetic process itself. At the close of the poem the narrator's awakening threatens a return to the darkness, constraint and emotional and physical nadir of the poem's opening. Writing to his lady is the narrator's immediate response to this threat, and realises his progressive emergence as a writer throughout the poem.

At the conclusion of the poem the narrator, now fully the writer, has the utmost confidence in his ability to gloss his dream correctly, as opposed to his earlier anxiety concerning his role as a writer. He sends a treatise in praise of women to his lady 'in gre' - in good part - until he has time to fully expound the meaning of his dream to her:

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[1] Lois Ebin, 'Lydgate's Views on Poetry', Annuale Medievale, 18 (1977), 76-105 and Judith M. Davidoff, 'The Audience Illuminated'.

> Til I haue leiser vnto hir heiȝ renoun
> Forto expoune my foreseid visiuon;
> And tel in plein þe significaunce
> So as it comeþ to my remembraunce,
> So þat herafter my ladi may it loke.
>
> (1388-1392)

The narrator progresses from images of obscurity and ill-defined meaning at the beginning of the poem to a promised willingness to make meaning open and explicit at the end of his dream. At the beginning of his poem the cause of the narrator's suffering is not made explicit, but by the end of the poem writing has become the means by which 'significaunce' will be made open, and meaning clarified. The temple is the place where this transformation occurs, for the temple is the locus of transparent rather than opaque meaning. For the knight and the lady this means an escape from the limits imposed by secrecy on their mutual desire, for the narrator it means a transformation from hidden to open meaning and a growth in his confidence as a writer.

The narrator passes from a rhetorical topos in which nothing is 'clere' (8), to a locus which is 'so clere/as eny cristal' (21-22), to the place of immediately accessible meaning. Venus's dislike of 'doubelnes' and her ability to see through appearance into one's 'privete' (796), are both markers of that transparency of meaning which is the chief characteristic of the temple. By the end of his dream the narrator feels he can see through his dream to the 'significaunce' within, the narrator as lover and writer has been transformed by the locus of the temple.

Conclusion

As we have seen in the 'Canticus Troili' of Chaucer's Troilus, several different metaphors are used in an attempt to adequately define or simply to get a referential purchase on the nature of erotic desire. The very multiplicity of metaphoric alternatives reveals the problems of the enterprise; no one metaphor can define desire adequately. This relativising of conventional language's ability to refer or define experience which we observe in small in the 'Canticus Troili', recurs throughout the poem and invades its largest structures and meanings.

In The Temple Lydgate uses many different metaphors and oxymorons, largely from the Troilus, to develop his narrative. The multiplicity of trope in the poem does not seem to constitute such a threat to referential and signifying processes as it does in the Troilus, rather conventional trope is the privileged way in which Lydgate effects narrative progression and creates narrative meaning. In Chaucer's poem the relativity of tropical language's relation to experience is in part revealed by the use of a similar tropical language of desire by different characters with widely different motivations, for instance Troilus and Diomede. Chaucer deploys tropical language to investigate and display precisely these relativities between language and motivation, and language and experience (especially in proverbial discourse which attempts to make its linguistic hold on experience one of sapiential value).

In Lydgate's poem Venus's temple is the place where doubleness, of which the split between language used and intention is one example, is transformed into singleness: the word is made 'cousin to the deed'. Venus's attack on 'doubilnesse' is an attack on precisely that complex relativity of relation between language and event which Chaucer addresses in the Troilus. As the narrative progresses in The Temple we become aware of tropical language's determining relation to narrative event, as Venus transforms the knight's and the lady's language from the non-progressive language of oxymoronic complaint to the celebratory language of mutually declared love.

The linguistic transformations of *The Temple* follow a similar traceable pattern to that which emerges in Books One to Three of the *Troilus*. The use of chain and binding imagery, in particular, follows that of the *Troilus*. In the *Troilus*, as Stephen Barney has noted, Troilus's imagery of binding and entrapment progresses from seeing erotic desire as something which traps and binds the individual to the celebration of the cosmic power of love to bind together the disparate elements of the universe which occurs in Troilus's hymn to love at the end of Book Three (III, 1744-1771).

Chaucer's lyric strategies in the *Troilus* throw into relief conventional language's attempts adequately to define the synchronic moment. The use of proverb in the poem may be seen similarly, as it derives from the conventional metaphors which are foregrounded in the poem by the deployment of lyric, opaque, discourse. In the *Troilus* these attempts, by conventional trope and proverb, to gain a synchronic purchase on experience, particularly the experience of being in love, occurs within the context of a narrative diachrony - a pattern of historical event. As several critics have noted, lyric, conventional discourse in the poem appears to interrupt, and at times prevent, the linear imperative of such narrative history. The *Troilus*'s meta-discursive strategies tend to highlight just that relativising of conventional language, and the wisdom which derives from it, by historical process. Historical process necessarily disrupts conventional language's referential valency to experience, and to history itself.

Lydgate's reading of the Troilus in The Temple de-historicises Chaucer's poem by removing the lovers from a specific historical context. Specific detail concerning the lady's and knight's experience is unimportant in Lydgate's poem. For instance, Lydgate leaves the cause of the lady's lack of freedom deliberately vague, it is irrelevant to his narrative purposes, as are questions of character's relation to narrative event. The locus of the temple provides an a-historical and generalised ideal setting for the transformations of the conventional language which the lady and the knight use to articulate their desire.

Lydgate's poem can be understood then as a de-historicising of Chaucer's narrative enterprise in the Troilus, a de-historicising which effectively cuts out the threat which the relativising of historical process poses to conventional language's purchase on the experience of history itself.

The Temple displays Lydgate's great faith in language, and his great estimate of language's hold on experience and also of poetic process itself. It is by poetic process, by the transformations and expansions of metaphor, that narrative event and meaning is created in the poem. The valorising of poetry and poetic process is confirmed by the narratorial fiction of the poem. The narrator steadily emerges as a writer in the poem, and the emphasis on 'bookness' at the end of The Temple makes the 'frame' fiction of the poem a fiction of poetic process itself. The Temple thus serves as a better example of what Vance calls an autotelic poem than the Troilus , for The Temple's frame narrative is concerned with the problematics, both physical and emotional, of writing and the poem unreservedly confirms the value and meaning of the poetic language used throughout the narrative.

The temple is a locus of literary tradition, and thus a model of Lydgate's poetic enterprise may be seen depicted in the wall-paintings the narrator describes on entering it. The sequence of paintings ends with the marriage of Mercury and Philologye, a marriage which Margaret Nims describes as 'the most widely-celebrated marriage of the Middle Ages - the marriage of eloquent word with perceptive awareness of things'.[1] For Nims this marriage re-enacts the ideal 'mixed marriage' of metaphoric operations, operations which she sees as basic to poetic process in medieval poetry. In The Temple this marriage of eloquence and sapience displays Lydgate's stress on tropical and poetic processes in the poem. Narrative event in the poem re-enacts the transformations of the wall paintings in the temple in its tropical and poetic processes. The temple is the locus of such transformations: it is the place of poetic tradition.

As we have seen Lydgate reads the Troilus tropically; that is in The Temple Lydgate borrows several tropes from Chaucer's poem and expands and develops them. For Lydgate trope, particularly metaphor, is the basic poetic unit for the creation, confirmation and transmission of meaning and value. His reading of the Troilus tends to collaborate this observation, for in de-historicising the narrative of the Troilus Lydgate effectively cuts out the threat to trope, and other conventional uses of language, which the relativising of historical process inevitably involves. By thus ensuring the a-historical purity of rhetorical trope in The Temple Lydgate makes it the privileged poetic element for the creation of narrative value and meaning.

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[1] Margaret F. Nims, 'Translatio: "Difficult Statement" in Medieval Poetic Theory', University of Toronto Quarterly, 43 (Spring 1974), 215-230 (p.215).

In the next chapter I shall examine the use of trope in *The Kingis Quair*. As in *The Temple* this tropical language is largely influenced by Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, but the differences in how this inherited tropical language is deployed in the two poems are quite striking. Lydgate maintains the 'purity' of trope in *The Temple* by imbuing tropical operations with a mysterious, but unquestionable, determining relation to narrative structure. Lydgate does not analyse this relation in *The Temple*, as do Chaucer and the *Quair*-author in their poems, rather it exists as a given of his poetic methodology.

In *The Kingis Quair*, on the other hand, the *Quair*-author delights in exposing the workings of metaphor in the construction of poetic meaning. The *Quair*-author draws our attention to the slippages of metaphor between discrete areas of his poem. As we have seen metaphoric parallels do exist in Lydgate's poem between the narratorial fiction of the frame and the events of the narrator's dream but, for Lydgate, these areas of his poem remain discrete, whereas the *Quair*-author delights in those slippages of metaphor which bring into collision apparently separate elements in his poem. In *The Temple* Lydgate displays his confidence and good faith in the workings of tropical language. *The Kingis Quair* could be seen as a fiction of such confidence: the poem involves a laying-bare of the tropical operations by which such a confidence is constructed.

CHAPTER THREE

'SUM NEWE THING TO WRITE': INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES AND THE PLEASURES OF WRITING IN THE KINGIS QUAIR

As we have seen in The Temple of Glas the privileging of speech in the dream narrative, and the narrator's movement towards writing in the dream-frame, reflect and confirm Lydgate's poetic methodology and values. In Lydgate's poem rhetoric, particularly rhetorical trope, has a large part to play in narrative development: the narratives of the narrator, and of the knight and lady, progress because of rhetorical operations. Not only are they narratives about the need to employ rhetoric in speech and writing in order that a desired progression may take place, but these narratives are also indicative of Lydgate's poetic method which involves the expansion and transformation of thoroughly conventional rhetorical tropes, many of which come, as we have seen, from Troilus and Criseyde. Narrative event in The Temple is, therefore, intimately related to the rhetorical operations Lydgate uses in the poem. The poem takes as its subject the transformations effected by the use of rhetorical discourse - in both speech and writing - and such transformations are basic to the poetic methodology of the text itself.

Lydgate's threefold rhetorical strategy in The Temple: enclosing a fiction of the rhetoric of speech within a fiction of the rhetoric of writing, and constructing both by a poetic process which expands and transforms commonplace trope, involves a huge, if implicit, confidence in the operations of rhetoric and poetic. It implies, too, a confidence in the purchase language has on experience, for value is confirmed in The Temple by the operations of rhetoric, and Lydgate appears to have a real belief in the efficacy of rhetoric, and therefore poetry, to reveal and communicate the value and meaning of experience, in effect a real belief in the capacities of writing to change or transmute experience.

In The Kingis Quair, which is the subject of this chapter, this confidence in the linguistic, the rhetorical and the poetic is so overtly foregrounded as to become almost the poem's subject.[1] The Quair makes explicit the implied confidence which we have noted in The Temple, furthermore The Quair's insistence upon its own bravura of writerly control is perhaps alien to the integrity of Lydgate's poetic method and textual strategies. For whereas Lydgate establishes progressively unfolding parallels between the discrete areas of his narrative, the Quair-author delights in bringing apparently separate areas of his poem into collision. The Quair is thus very much concerned with the pleasure which can accrue from the interplay of the linguistic and rhetorical with the experience of a narrated history; an interplay which signals the issue of writerly control and skill in the poem.

In The Temple an obvious structural division in the poem between frame and dream is used by Lydgate to juxtapose the experiences of a narrator who progressively becomes more a writer, with the story of a knight and lady as they progress from monologic to dialogic speech. The parallels across this dream-vision structure have been described in the last chapter, but they are most forcibly shown in the passage where the narrator empathises with the knight's suffering and anxiety (lines 932-969): as the knight calls for help to Venus to aid him to speak to his lady, so the narrator invokes his muses and the goddesses of pain and torment to help him to write. Thus the activity of writing and the events of the dream narrative are progressively and carefully brought into analogous relation in The Temple.

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[1] All references to The Kingis Quair are taken from The Kingis Quair of James Stewart, edited by Matthew P. McDiarmid (London, 1973), unless otherwise stated. Text is referred to hereafter as The Quair. References are to stanza number and line number within each stanza.

In The Quair this analogy is taken one step further to effect a metaphoric condensation or melding of experience and writing. While in The Temple the narrator and the protagonist in his dream remain separate, in The Quair the I of the narratorial fiction is also the I of the narrated history and dream. By making the narrator of the poem the central protagonist of the history he is narrating, the Quair-author brings the activity of writing into a much closer relation to the experience of that history and dream than the one we have identified in The Temple. Moreover, metaphors used to describe one area of the narrator's experience 'slip' into other areas; the distinctions between past and present collapse at certain points in the poem often through the operations of rhetorical trope.

Wordplay also works in the poem to bring about moments of condensation, when various metaphoric strands are brought into close alignment, and when apparently discrete elements of poetic theme and narrative event are shown to be meaningfully interconnected. In this way pun is used to confirm the value and meaning of the poem's analogies between the experiences of erotic desire and the activities of reading and writing. Thus the process of textualisation, of the writing down of experience, is validated in the poem: by the operations of trope and wordplay textualisation is shown as a preferred mode of access to the meaning and value of experience. As we shall see, pun is also displayed in the poem as potentially subversive of carefully built semantic structures; for pun suggests the purely contingent and artificial nature of the poem's analogies and patternings and thus hints at a possible threat to the meaningfulness of the poem's processes of textualisation.[1]

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[1] Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre (Ithaca and London, 1979), p.63 discusses 'good' and 'bad' pun in Piers Plowman. Good pun reveals a truth that would otherwise go unnoticed; bad pun conceals truth. In The Quair pun works to confirm the rightness, or truth, of the I's patterning of his experience. In the pun on 'indegest' in stanza 14, however, wordplay works to undermine the authority of this pattern, see pp.169-171 below.

The Quair focuses our attention on the desire of a male I figure; it is a desire which involves him in a Boethian questioning of man's freedom and of the sway of fortune, and also in an education in the proprieties and ethics of sexual love. Some years later the same I figure decides to write a poem about his past experiences. The dual identity of the I of the poem, as both writer and lover, means that the poem is concerned not only with the progress of erotic desire, but also with the almost erotic pleasures of writing. The moments of condensation in the text, of metaphoric slippage between apparently discrete narrative areas, and the use of pun and wordplay, both confirmatory and subversive, tend to emphasise the pleasure of writing. The poem's conclusion is celebratory not just of the past I's success in terms of being granted the love of his lady, but also of the pleasure, and confidence, writing can bring about.

In large part the pleasure and confidence in writing which is so conspicuous in The Quair accrues from the integration of the I's past experience as lover, into a written, poetic structure. The poem, in one sense, takes as its subject this process of integration; the poem's conspicuous rhetorical brio, therefore, is a marker of this process. Structurally, the emphasis on writing, on the creation of a poetic structure of meaningful signs, works to unify the disparate elements which critics have noted in the poem. The Quair-author integrates the poem's diverse elements into a fiction concerned with the relation of writing to experience.

A survey of critical response to the poem's structure may help us to better understand the full nature of this integration in The Quair. Many of the readings of the poem have effectively foreclosed on the text's conspicuous integrative strategies and its concomitant awareness of the issues of poetic control, by focusing on the description of the product of those strategies, that is the poem's coherent structure, rather than examining how integrative and textualising processes are explicitly addressed in the text itself.

Because The Quair's integrative strategies involve the use of many, apparently diverse, literary and poetic traditions and conventions critical writing on the poem has focused largely on the question of the coherency of the poem's structure. W.W. Skeat's comments on the 'fragmentary nature' of the poem[1] echo earlier observations which praise the poem's constitutive parts but not its overall arrangement.[2] More recent studies of The Quair have sought to demonstrate the structural soundness of the poem, by stressing the poem's Boethian content and/or the theme of fortune. Murray F. Markland, for example, would see the poem as unified by its central doctrinal subject and purpose:

> The subject is Fortune. The purpose of the poet is to tell a story illustrating Fortune as he comprehends it.[3]

Markland's description of The Quair leaves its other structural elements, particularly its emphasis on writing, out on a limb; as Markland states

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1. The Kingis Quair, edited by W.W. Skeat, Scottish Text Society, new series 1 (Edinburgh, 1911), see esp. pp.xii-xiii:

   > notwithstanding that some art has been shown in giving a certain connectedness to the whole by... the subsequent introduction of occasional connecting phrases, some want of order still remains.

2. See, for instance, Dr. David Irving, History of Scottish Poetry, edited by J.A. Carlyle (Edinburgh, 1861), p.135:

   > its principle beauties are to be discovered in particular passages, rather than in the general structure of the whole.

   See also Henry Wood, 'Chaucer's Influence upon James I of Scotland as Poet', Anglia, 3 (1880), 223-265 (p.226):

   > The Kingis Quair does not deserve corresponding praise as a poetical production, especially when considered as a whole. Many smaller parts show real poetical talent, but the invention is poor, the arrangement is awkward.

3. Murray F. Markland, 'The Structure of the Kingis Quair', Research Studies of the Stage College of Washington, 25 (1957), 273-286 (p. 275).

of the poem's fiction of the narrator as present writer 'the expository framework can be disregarded'.[1] In contrast Andrew Von Hendy's reading of the poem as the restatement of Boethian philosophical orthodoxy rests on the premise that The Quair 'can best be understood, not as botched autobiography, but as a carefully designed, serious and lovely whole'.[2] John Preston[3] and Ian Brown[4] both stress that The Quair differs from Chaucerian narratives in its structure. Preston claims that the structure of Chaucer's dream poems leaves the reader 'to work out for himself the pattern that makes a whole of the separate parts of his poem',[5] and he characterises James I as a poet who radically differs from such Chaucerian strategies; he writes that James 'is very much alive to the interrelation of the different parts of the poem'.[6] Ian Brown sees The Quair as linking its discrete parts by 'dovetail form... this form, economically linking, relating and contrasting ideas, is an advance on Chaucerian technique and suggests a highly competent artist'.[7]

While agreeing that The Quair's structure is a well-crafted synthesis of its constituent parts, Walter Scheps would disagree with Brown's and Preston's view of this synthesis as non-Chaucerian.[8] Scheps treats The Quair as a typically Chaucerian synthesis of elements from Boethius; the traditions of courtly love; allegory and from dream-vision.[9] Scheps is, moreover, at some pains to 'demonstrate the skillful way in which the poet, by synthesising diverse traditional materials, had produced a coherent and well-constructed poem'.[1] While Scheps is right to stress the Chaucerian elements in The Quair, I would agree with Brown and Preston that the poem's structural synthesis ultimately marks its difference from Chaucerian narrative strategies. However, The Quair stands as a development of a structural technique which Chaucer uses, as we have seen, in Troilus and Criseyde. This technique employs the interplay between metaphoric meanings to create and signal narrative structures. Louise Fradenburg has written of the relation of fifteenth-century texts to Chaucerian texts as one of completion, 'fifteenth-century critical discourse fills in the gaps which is discovers for itself in the Chaucerian text, and styles itself, often, as a palinode to that text by offering it closure'.[2] Derek Pearsall has also characterised The Quair as a palinode to the Knight's Tale.[3] While The Quair's integrative strategies are based on Chaucerian techniques, in that they develop and complete discourses mediated through Chaucerian texts, those strategies themselves cannot be accurately termed Chaucerian as Scheps has argued.

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[1] Murray F. Markland, 'The Structure of the Kingis Quair', p.275.

[2] Andrew Von Hendy, 'The Free Thrall: a Study of the Kingis Quair', Studies in Scottish Literature, 2 (1965), 141-151 (p.141).

[3] John Preston, 'Fortunys Exiltree: a Study of the Kingis Quair', Review of English Studies, new series 7 (1956), 339-347.

[4] Ian Brown, 'The Mental Traveller, a Study of the Kingis Quair', Studies in Scottish Literature, 5 (1968), 246-252.

[5] John Preston, 'Fortunys Exiltree', p.340.

[6] John Preston, 'Fortunys Exiltree', p.340.

[7] Ian Brown, 'The Mental Traveller', p.249.

[8] Walter Scheps, 'Chaucerian Synthesis: the Art of the Kingis Quair', Studies in Scottish Literature, 8 (1970-71), 143-165.

[9] Walter Scheps, 'Chaucerian Synthesis', p.144.

Lois Ebin's article 'Boethius, Chaucer and The Kingis Quair', concludes that 'the difference between The Quair and its sources are perhaps more important for an understanding of the poem than are the similarities'.[4] Ebin's reading of The Quair is germane to my argument because she is one of the few commentators on the text who have attempted to account for 'the conspicuous emphasis on writing in the poem'.[1] Ebin also notes, but does not develop, the role of metaphor in the poem for she sees _The Quair_ as a coherent literary structure based on metaphoric inter-connectiveness.[2] However, my approach to _The Quair_ in this chapter differs considerably from Ebin's discussion of writing in the poem. Ebin concentrates on writing as a thematic element of _The Quair_ while I shall argue that this thematic emphasis on writing works to focus the reader's attention on the poem's mimesis of this theme in its textuality. The central passage of the poem against which I shall test this assertion involves the seafaring images by which the narrator metaphorises his youth and his present writing enterprise (sts. 14-19).

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[1] Walter Scheps, 'Chaucerian Synthesis', p.144.

[2] Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', in Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature (Medieval and Renaissance), edited by R.J. Lyall and F. Ridley (Glasgow, 1981), 177-190 (p.183).

[3] Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry (London, 1977), p.217.

[4] Lois Ebin,'Boethius, Chaucer and the Kingis Quair', Philological Quarterly, 53 (1974), 321-341 (p.341).

This passage will be examined in some detail below, so at this point we need only note that these stanzas are not simply about, or concerned with, writing as a thematic subject, they also display a mimesis, in the poem's textuality, of the problematics of writing which are under discussion at this point in the narration. My examination of these densely packed stanzas inevitably involves a degree of artificial layering, by the separating out of the operations of metaphoric slippage, inter-textual reference and pun as they occur in this passage. In the poem all these operations occur concurrently, demonstrating that _The Quair_'s concern with the integrative processes of writing is not merely thematic but is also, startlingly, part of the poem's linguistic textuality.

Ebin sees the poem as differing from Boethius and Chaucer in that _The Quair_ appears to privilege erotic desire as a means of overcoming fortune, and because it uses Christian ethics, through the figure of

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[1] Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the _Kingis Quair_', p.321.

[2] Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the _Kingis Quair_', p.339. See also Robert M. Slabey, '"Art Poetical" in the "Kingis Quair"', _Notes and Queries_, 205, new series 7 (June 1960), 208-210 (p.209):

> The two themes, the writing of the poem and the workings of Fortune, are artistically united in the first stanzas.

Minerva, to give authority to this theme. In this Ebin substantially agrees with Dolores L. Noll who also sees The Quair as differing greatly from Boethian ethics; Noll locates the poem's privileging of erotic desire in the tradition of the Neo-Platonic Creator-God and she argues that the Quair-author ignores the Absolute-God 'whose dominating presence in De Consolatione Philosophiae is evidenced by its contemptus mundi cast'.[1] In contrast, Vincent Caretta interprets The Quair's departures from Boethian orthodoxy as evidence of the poem's ironic and essentially conservative attack on the folly of an I figure who hopes to overcome the vicissitudes of fortune by faith in erotic desire, and the power of human, sexual love.[2]

All of these critical studies focus their examinations of the poem's 'coherent structure' on its development as an allegory of fortune.[3] All, to some extent, react against C.S. Lewis's characterisation of the poem as 'the first modern book of love'.[4] More concerned with the poetic structure of the work is John Norton-Smith who argues that The Quair owes more to the 'eclecticism' of Lydgate's Temple of Glas than to Chaucer's poetry.[5] Norton-Smith views The Quair as 'serial in construction' and the poem's central dream sequence as structurally faulty because of its

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[1] Dolores L. Noll, 'The Romantic Conception of Marriage: Some Remarks on C.S. Lewis's Discussion of the Kingis Quair', Studies in Medieval Culture, 3 (1970), 159-168 (p.167).

[2] Vincent Caretta, 'The Kingis Quair and the Consolation of Philosophy', Studies in Scottish Literature, 16 (1981), 14-28, see esp. p.16:

> Although the narrator grasps the sense of the Consolation as a story about Fortune, he fails to understand the sentence that teaches us how properly to overcome Fortune.

[3] See also Mary Rohrberger, 'The Kingis Quair: an Evaluation', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 2 (Autumn 1960), 292-302.

[4] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1936), p.237. For a discussion of Lewis's approach to The Quair see Dolores L. Noll, 'The Romantic Conception of Marriage'.

[5] The Kingis Quair, edited by John Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1971).

'additive patterning which merely repeats the sequential form of the surrounding non-dream narrative structure'.[1] It is precisely this 'additive patterning' which I would see as the means by which The Quair confirms and validates meaning, and therefore as a positive rather than a negative structural device.

Carl E. Bain in his article 'The Nightingale and the Dove in The Kingis Quair' aims to show 'how carefully the author of The Quair has worked in building an integrated literary structure'[2] and he emphasises how the symbolic values of the nightingale and the dove, their conventional meanings, are used 'in the economy of the poem';[3] while in her study of the poem Alice Miskimin investigates the numerological structures of The Quair.[4] Although perhaps at times over-ingenious Miskimin's analyses are valuable in that they establish a definite relation of the stanzaic structure and formal symmetries of The Quair with the apparent schematising of the I's experience into numerical units. This close relation of experience and writing is a marked concern of The Quair and it is useful that Miskimin's analyses reveal a further level on which this relation is established. While I would take issue with Miskimin's identification of the 'core metaphor' of The Quair as 'the piercing eye, potent glance of love motif',[5] I would agree with her consideration of the numerical structures of The Quair as an underpinning of the poem's metaphoric structures.

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1. John Norton-Smith, The Kingis Quair, p.xvi.
2. Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove in The Kingis Quair', Tennessee Studies in Literature, 9 (1963), 19-29 (p.20).
3. Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove', p.21.
4. Alice Miskimin, 'Patterns in the Kingis Quair and the Temple of Glas', Papers in Language and Literature, 13, number 4 (Autumn 1977), 339-361.
5. Alice Miskimin, 'Patterns in the Kingis Quair', p.340.

For Bain and Miskimin _The Quair_'s sense of the 'mysteriously meant'[1] - the divine order which the I perceives in his experience and which determines narrative event at certain crucial points - is constructed from, for Bain, the use of religious symbol and iconography and,for Miskimin, from the use of poetic number. To both these might be added the presence in the poem of the Zodiac as a model of a fixed, yet moving, system of signs which may help the individual discover the order of his experience.

As remarked above, this study of _The Quair_ aims to examine the part played by metaphor in forming the 'integrated literary structure' of the poem. What has been called the 'economy' or 'closeness of texture'[2] of the poem is created, I shall argue, by means of the construction of metaphoric structures. Both Bain and Norton-Smith make the point that critics in trying to find a sound and coherent structure for _The Quair_ have tended to emphasize one part at the expense of others.[3] In particular the narratorial fiction of _The Quair_, that is the fiction of the I figure as present writer, tends to be either disregarded or treated as secondary to the major theme of the poem, whether that is identified as Fortune, Boethius, or auto-biography.[4] In attempting to redress this imbalance this study will focus on the implications of the relation of the narratorial fiction of the I as present writer to the embedded narrative

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1. See Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove', p.22, and Alice Miskimin, 'Patterns in the _Kingis Quair_', p.340.

2. John Preston, 'Fortunys Exiltree', p.340.

3. Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove', p.20, and John Norton-Smith, _The Kingis Quair_, pp.xiii-xiv.

4. One critical reading of the poem which does focus on the narrator as a source of unity in the poem is William Quinn, 'Memory and the Matrix of Unity in _The Kingis Quair_', _Chaucer Review_, 15 (1980-81), 332-355. Quinn argues for the mnemonic as the unifying element in _The Quair_, see p.334:

> I believe that the narrator's skilfull recreation of the actual experience of a personal memory provides the unifying catalyst of the _Quair_ and that this mnemonic experience generates the poem's immediate impression of wholeness.

of this I's past and oneiric experiences. While to a large extent this relation in the poem has remained unmapped, my approach builds upon the suggestions of various critics who have identified the particular emphasis on the processes of writing, reading and remembering in The Quair.[1] The poem's self-consciousness concerning these processes signals that an important part of The Quair's meaning is involved with an examination of poetic process; in particular the issue of how experience, reading and convention are controlled in the individual text.

The various critical attempts to claim a coherency of literary structure in The Quair concentrate on the skill of the Quair-author as craftsman: the poem is seen as a skilful welding together of its disparate elements, and therefore as a product of extra-textual integrative strategies.[2] I propose a modification of this approach by suggesting that The Quair directly addresses this process of integration, through the narratorial fiction, and its poetic texture. The I as present writer is shown to at first struggle with, and later to celebrate, the integration of his past experience into a present textuality which gives that experience value and meaning. This process of textualisation works to focus the issue of poetic control in The Quair, an issue which directly deals with the relation of the individual text to its conventional 'mater'; its relation to those Chaucerian and Boethian discourses which The Quair takes up and of which it offers a continuation.

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[1] See Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the Kingis Quair'; Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Role of the Reader in the Kingis Quair', Actes du 2e colloque de langue et de littérature ecossaises (Moyen âge et Renaissance), edited by Jean-Jacques Blanchot and Claude Graf (Strasbourg, 1978), 198-206; and William Quinn, 'Memory and the Matrix of Unity in the Kingis Quair'.

[2] Perhaps the most thorough of such approaches to the poem is Carl E. Bain's thesis, 'A Critical Study of the Kingis Quair' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Baltimore, 1961). Bain examines the conventional elements which make up The Quair, and some of the rhetorical methods the Quair-author uses to structure his narrative. Bain concludes that,

> on the whole, the poem seems to me to represent a skilfully constructed and effective example of poetic art working in a sophisticated conventional framework. (p.223)

In his essay on the 'Structural Analysis of Narratives', Roland Barthes proposes a threefold distinction of the levels for description in narrative: the level of functions; the level of actions and the level of narration.[1] For Barthes these three levels are bound together according to a process of progressive integration; an integration which may be described as a series of inter-relations between a hierarchy of describable narrative units or elements. I will concentrate on Barthes concepts of narration and integration insofar as they are useful in understanding the integrative processes of The Quair.

For Barthes narration appears to be the most inclusive of integrative processes within narrative: function and action only receive their final narrative meaning when narrated or, as Barthes puts it, when they are 'entrusted to a discourse which possesses its own code'.[2] Narration is that discursive process involving the tenses, aspects and modes of narrative which integrates the logic of action and discrete narrative functions into a meaningful structure.

While I do not intend to attempt a fully structural analysis of The Quair in terms of its breakdown into a Barthesian hierarchy of levels, Barthes' notion of narration as an integrative process in the text which works towards the production of a final meaning in narrative may be useful to describe the process of textualisation in The Quair. In The Quair, narration in the sense of integration is hypostatised through the actions of the narrator, the I as present writer. It is not, perhaps, overly fanciful to understand The Quair's strategy as the drawing out of a Barthesian level of description of narrative process and structure, to make it part of narrative action itself. The Quair explicitly addresses

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1. Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', translated by Stephen Heath in Roland Barthes: Image - Music - Text (London, 1977), 79-124 (p.88).

2. Roland Barthes, 'Introduction', p.88.

itself, through this strategy, to the issue of writerly control understood as the integration of discrete elements of historical and dream experience and reading into a meaningful and valorised poetic structure. This is what the I as present writer attempts, and congratulates himself for achieving, in The Quair - the integration of his reading, his past experiences (both oneiric and waking) into a meaningful, even divinely sanctioned, poetic whole.

Through the fiction of the textualising process of integration the Quair-author examines the issue of poetic control necessary in the textualisation of one's 'mater'. This examination uses a metaphorics - that of seafaring - which, as we have seen in Troilus and Criseyde, works as a metaphorics of poetic control. The integrative processes insisted upon in The Quair are quite alien to Lydgate's discovered parallelism between writing and conventional love experience which we have seen in The Temple. It is this type of parallelism which G. Kratzmann points to in The Quair, a relation 'between personal fulfilment through love and the ability to write good poetry'; for Kratzmann this remains merely a 'charming fiction' in The Quair.[1] In this study I will argue that this fiction operates less to bring experience and writing into parallel and more, through the operations of metaphor and wordplay, to collapse each into the other. These condensations work to reveal The Quair's interest in textualisation and poetic control.

The opening section of The Quair (stanzas 1-24) marks a series of attempts by the narrator to start writing about his past experience. A variety of conventional opening moves are introduced in the attempt to provide an adequate rhetorical and poetic starting point for his writing enterprise: astrological periphrasis; the reading of a book; images of fortune; a discourse on poetic inspiration; an apostrophe to youth; an extended metaphor of fortune; an invocation of the poet's muses and finally another astrological setting. The poem's fiction of the I as present writer thus begins rather tentatively and exploratively, with the poet / narrator searching for adequate rhetorical models to get started on his poetic task. As the poem progresses the narrator's confidence as a writer grows until at the end of the poem it is almost unassailable.

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[1] G. Kratzmann, Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations: 1430-1550 (Cambridge, 1980), p.61.

This growing sense of confidence on the part of the narrator as present writer is linked to his knowledge of the successful outcome of his historical experiences. Intermittently throughout the poem we are made aware of the narrative's successful outcome by the narrator's interruptions into his narration of past event. A.C. Spearing has remarked on the effect of the known quality of narrative outcome in The Quair:

> Any dream-poem is written in the past tense it says 'I dreamed', not 'I am dreaming' but here the dream is past not just in relation to the time of writing but also in relation to a series of subsequent events which serve to confirm its validity.[1]

For the narrator at the beginning of the poem the uncertainty is not concerned with the outcome of his experiences, but with the success of his writing endeavour. For the I as present writer the outcome of his past experiences is known, and he writes from the standpoint of successful lover. As the poem progresses towards its known endpoint the narrator's confidence in his own writing becomes more overt; he becomes less concerned with the problematics of writing than he is at the beginning of the poem and more convinced by the accuracy and value of writing itself. Poetic process is shown to be cumulative in The Quair, writing is displayed as gaining pleasure and value as it accumulates textual substance.

The present I's attempts, as writer, to get the right relation of his writing to his past experience may be seen to parallel the past I's attempts to control, and understand his experience as a youth, a prisoner and finally as a lover. Two distinct areas of control may be distinguished in the narrative; the present I's attempts to control his writing, and the past I's attempts to control the course and nature of his experience. The convergence of the two recurs throughout the poem and thus marks out a third area of 'control' in the narrative, that of the Quair-author himself. The past I is shown not to be in control of his own experiences, things happen to him and he is acted upon by others: he has finally to be pushed bodily onto Fortune's wheel. The I as present writer has an at times comic confidence in his control of experience through writing. By the end of the poem this narrator feels able to make a comparison between his status as writer and that of God who 'all oure lyf hath writt' (196,5). Writing allows the narrator to discover a meaningful pattern of events in his past experience, and his celebration at the end of the poem is a thanksgiving for this discovery. For the narrator, writing confirms the validity of his past experience just as the patterns discoverable in that experience confirm the value and meaning of his writing. The Quair-author's poetic control is revealed in the rhetorical texture of the poem itself. As we shall see in the passage of extended seafaring metaphors, the Quair-author's poetic skill and sophistication is revealed at precisely the point where the narrator proclaims his lack of ability to control his poetic matter. While, at times, the Quair-author shares the narrator's joy and pleasure in writing, his overall control of poetic meaning in The Quair allows him to put this joy, and the confidence it creates, into an almost comic perspective.

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[1] A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (Cambridge, 1976), p.183.

Critics who have seen The Quair as primarily involved with the re-counting of experience, as (auto)biography, miss the central importance of the emphasis on, and self-conscious pointing of, the processes of writing and reading in the poem. Experience in the poem is almost entirely conventionalised; refracted through a traditional literary discourse which has powerful connections to Chaucerian texts such as the Knight's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde. In The Quair the I figure is captured and imprisoned, sees a lady and falls in love. This I figure is educated in the conduct, morality and contingent nature of experience by dialogues with the goddesses Venus, Minerva and Fortune. Finally the I receives a message which assures him that his love is reciprocated. This experience is the 'mater' of the I as present writer's poetic enterprise, the poem focuses not merely upon the past I's experience, both in and out of his dream, it also emphasises the poetic process by which this 'mater' is textualised.

Barthes writes of texts in which the anecdotal plane signifies 'weakly', texts which only yield their 'full force of meaning on the plane of the writing'.[1] The 'weakness' of the anecdotal in The Quair is typically, and self-reflexively, pointed by the narrator:

> Bot for als moche as sum micht think or seyne,
> Quhat nedis me aponn so littil evyn
> To writt all this?
> (182, 1-3)

Infact The Quair focuses upon those processes by which the anecdotal is made to signify; processes which at times, especially at the beginning and the end of the poem, dominate the experiential 'mater' which tends to slip out of sight under the foregrounded plane of writing. The textualisation of experience, the rhetorical operations which make the narrator's experience meaningful, is emphasised in the poem by narratorial pointings such as the one above.

One result of the emphasis on the plane of writing in the poem is that events on the plane of the anecdote are seen less as causally related than as rhetorically related. By this I mean that the I of the text, the narrator, perceives a metonymic relation between effect and cause in his experiences, a relation which he invests with a full metaphoric significance. This rhetorical relating of narrative episodes is pointed by the use of conspicuous passages of rhetorical, opaque language at key moments in the narrative, and by the use of wordplay, which makes us concentrate on the rhetorical textuality of the poem; its verbal texture.

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[1] Roland Barthes, 'Introduction', p.90.

In *The Quair* causal relations in narrative experience - on the plane of the anecdote - are often marked by a slippage into the plane of writing, by a focusing on the textuality of opaque rhetorical language and wordplay. Thus narrative development is furthered by rhetorical means. Aspects of the narrative which present problems of causality, or which constitute a potential blockage or threat to known narrative outcome or established narrative decorum are 'neutralised' by rhetorical effects such as wordplay, the use of metaphoric polysemy and the deployment of rhetorical *topoi*. It is upon such effects that this chapter will concentrate, noting, for instance, how the rhetorical structure of the poem is signalled by the narrator's use of the authorial rhetoric of *amplificatio*, *digressio* and *occupatio*.[1] *The Quair* deliberately draws attention to its own rhetorical strategies by such means.

At the beginning of the poem the I figure, unable to sleep, begins to read a book, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. He reads the book with a writer's admiration of the author's 'metir suete' and 'flourit pen'

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[1] See Robert M. Slabey, '"Art Poetical" in the "Kingis Quair"'. In this short, but thought-provoking article Slabey points out the high rhetorical competence of the *Quair*-author, see p.208:

> Although he apologizes for his 'rude and crukit eloquens' (st. 195), it is highly probable that the poet was familiar with the rhetorical theories of the time and had studied such text-books as the *Ars Versificatoria* (c.1175) of Matthieu de Vendome and the *Nova Poetria* (1208-1213) of Gaufred de Vinsauf.

Slabey points out, for instance, the highly important nature of retrospective writing in *The Quair*, see p.208.

(4, 2-3). And, displaying a high anxiety of influence, the narrator compares himself unfavourably to the author of the Boece who can 'endite' 'in his faire Latyne tong/So full of fruyte and rethorikly pykit' (7, 2-3). Finally he puts the book on one side and proceeds to address himself to the narrative proper,

> Therefore I lat him pas, and in my tong
> Procede I will agayn to the sentence
> Of my mater, and leve all incidence.
>
> (7, 5-7)

The Quair-author quite deliberately points the rhetorical structure of an amplified narrative at this point. The narrator summarily lays aside Boece, dismissing the book as 'incidence'. The Quair-author draws attention here to the rhetorical strategies of amplificatio; Boece is signalled as a digression away from narrative 'sentence' at this point, but Boethius's Consolation provides much of the 'mater' of the poem.

The narrator shuts the book and lays it at his head, and thinks over the issues of fortune with which the book deals, his thought processes replicating the very image by which he depicts fortune, the turning wheel.[1] He cannot sleep or rest, however, and undergoes that type of anxiety typical of the narratorial personae of Chaucerian and Lydgatean dream poetry. Unlike his literary forebears, however, this narrator's anxiety is not because of problems of erotic desire, rather it is identified as the anxiety of writing, of the impulse he feels to relate his experiences. He finally determines to write after imagining that the matins bell speaks to him, urging him to write; 'Tell on, man, quhat the befell' (11, 7). So motivated and determined to write 'sum newë thing' (13, 5), the narrator begins again:

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1. See stanza 8, 5-7, and stanza 10, 1-2.

> ...I set me doune,
> And furth-withall my pen in hand I tuke
> And maid a croce, and thus begouth my buke.
> (13, 5-7)

This beginning is pointed in the MS by the use of the mark of a cross.[1]

This lengthy fictional prolegomenon to writing, amounting to some thirteen stanzas, constitutes a part of the poem's exploration of the writing/experience relation; as C.S. Lewis points out 'the poem opens with what is really a literary preface'.[2] Specifically this preface deals with the motivation and inspiration behind the impulse to write.[3] As we have seen the first nineteen stanzas of the poem are marked by various attempts to start the narrative. The first attempt is distracted into a 'digression' on Boethius, a digression which actually points a literary authority for a great part of the poem's subject matter. The narrator's laying aside of this 'incidence', involves him in a further digression on the causation behind the impulse to write; whether that be a mysterious, possibly divine voice, or 'myn awin ymagynacioune' (12, 2). The second 'beginning' to the poem occurs at stanza 14 with an apostrophe to the narrator's past youth thus invoking the 'mater' of the narrator's past experience. However, this apparent return to narrative business after much digression itself digresses into an explication of the tropical language used to describe the narrator's youth, thus foregrounding the process of writing, rather than narrative history. It is a digression away from narrative plot and towards the present difficulty of writing, specifically the difficulty of handling metaphor. The narrator then makes another attempt to get started, to resolve the reflexive complexities of stanza 18, with an appeal to the Muses to help him write:

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[1] John Burrow, 'Hoccleve's Series: Experience and Books', in Fifteenth-Century Studies edited by Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, Connecticut, 1984), 259-273 (p.272), notes this use of the cross in the MS as a marker of the poem's reflexive moves to draw attention to its own textuality. John Norton-Smith, The Kingis Quair, p.57 points the similarity of this marker of the start of writing to the opening of Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum. See On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, edited by M.C. Seymour, Gabriel M. Liegey et al, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1975), I, 40, ll.4-6.

[2] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p.235.

[3] Compare Lydgate's stress on poetic inspiration in the Temple of Glas, ll.950-960. Seth Lerer, 'The Rhetoric of Fame: Stephen Hawes' Aureate Diction', Spenser Studies, 5 (1984), 169-184 (p.169), writes of Lydgate's fascination with the issue of poetic inspiration, 'Lydgate was interested in the process of poetry writing, in the relationship between God and the Muses and the poet'. The Quair develops Lydgate's interest in The Temple, as part of its exposition of the writing process.

> At my begynnyng first I clepe and call
> To ȝow Cleo, and to ȝow Polymye,
> With Thesiphone, goddis and sistris all,
> In nowmer nyne as bokis specifye.
>
> (19, 1-4)

The beginning of the poem can thus be seen to be marked by what amounts to a statement about the nature of narrative in the poem. The narrative will not be a simple account of a sequence of historical events, rather that account will involve 'interruptions' which display a high consciousness of the process of writing down that historical narrative. I shall now turn to the second 'beginning' of the poem, to examine the implications of this consciousness of writing in The Quair.

In his apostrophe to his past youth in stanza 14, the narrator describes himself as having been an undirected and unsteerable ship, 'as the schip that sailith sterëles' (15, 3), this ship sails among 'rokkis blake' (17, 1). The simile,which expands into extended metaphor,has a reasonably clear meaning; the ship is the narrator as a young man, and his voyage is the voyage of his life's adventures. The rocks represent those events upon which youth, lacking the wisdom of experience, may come to grief. Undaunted by such apparent transparency the I figure provides his own gloss. A gloss which explains the metaphors of the ship, the sea, the voyage and the 'rokkis blake' not in terms of the I's youthful experiences but rather in terms of the difficulty of writing about that youth. The metaphors of seafaring are shifted from their reference to the description of past experience to the present discussion of the problematics of writing. Hence in stanza 18 the rocks represent the semantic complexities of the use of metaphor; the lack of wind the difficulty of writing, and the ship itself the whole narrative enterprise:

> With doutfull hert, amang the rokkis blake
> My feble bote full fast to stere and rowe,
> Helples, allone, the wynter nyght I wake
> To wayte the wynd that furthward suld me throwe.
> O empti saile, quhare is the wynd suld blowe
> Me to the port, quhare gynneth all my game?
> Help, Calyope, and wynd, in Marye name!
>
> The rokkis clepe I the prolixitee
> Off doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall.
> The lak of wynd is the deficultee,
> Enditing of this lytill trety small.
> The bote I clepe the mater hole of all,
> My wit vnto the saile that now I wynd
> To seke connyng, though I bot lytill fynd.
>
> At my begynnyng first I clepe and call
> To ȝow Cleo, and to ȝow Polymye,
> With Thesiphone, goddis and sistris all,
> In nowmer nyne as bokis specifye;
> In this processe my wilsum wittis gye,
> And with ȝour bryght lanternis wele conuoye
> My pen to write my turment and my joye.
>
> (stanzas 17, 18 and 19)

In this passage semantic slippage occurs between areas of writing and experience. As the I extends the metaphors he uses to describe his past youth they develop into metaphors of the problematics of the control of writing. The process of writing itself takes on the palpable quality of an experiential voyage. The Quair-author uses a Chaucerian metaphorics of control as navigation to effect this slippage between writing and experience, and hence to explore the relation between the two.

This passage offers a striking example of the way in which The Quair is continuing, extending and directing the Chaucerian discourse of individual and narrative control which we have identified in the Troilus. The Quair's own discourse of narrative control is focused through the awareness of the Chaucerian origin of this metaphoric discourse, an awareness which involves an expansion of Chaucer's metaphors; a revision, in Fradenburg's terms, of the originating Chaucerian text.[1] We remember that the unique manuscript copy of The Quair (Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24) also contains a copy of the Troilus which suggests how that manuscript could be said to contain a specific intertext in which The Quair's use of metaphor would be read and understood.

In addition to this specific context of Chaucerian discourse the image of the ship and the voyage are common both as metaphors of the self and of life; of the control or directing of experience and also as metaphors for the writing enterprise; for the control of one's narrative 'mater'. The use of the seafaring metaphor in terms of the self as ship, that is as a metaphor referring to issues of individual control, has a long heritage in the Middle Ages and can be found in texts the Quair-author obviously knows, such as the Consolation of Philosophy, Lydgate's Temple of Glas and, most importantly, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.[2] This metaphor is common in narratives which treat of the individual's relation to forces greater than the self, such as Fortune and Love.[3] As

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1. Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', p.178.

2. For instances of the sea of life metaphor in the Consolation see Chaucer's Boece, Book I, metrum 2, ll.1-6; Book I, prosa 3, ll.62-7; Book 2, prosa 1, ll.101-04; Book 2, prosa 4, ll.51-4; Book 2, metrum 4, ll.1-5. All references to the Consolation are from Chaucer's Boece in The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957). In The Temple compare lines 605-615. For representative examples of this metaphor in the Troilus see Book I, ll.415-17; Book II, ll.1-7; Book V, ll.638-44 and l.1815. For discussions of the use of seafaring metaphors in Chaucer and the Middle Ages generally, see Paull F. Baum, 'Chaucer's Nautical Metaphors', South Atlantic Quarterly, 49 (1950), 67-73; D.M. Burjorjee, 'The Pilgrimage of Troilus's Sailing Heart in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde', Annuale Medievale, 13 (1972), 14-31; and Martin Stevens, 'The Winds of Fortune in the Troilus', Chaucer Review, 13 (1978-79), 285-307.

3. For an examination of the image of the winds of Fortune in the Middle Ages see Howard R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1926), pp.101-107.

Ebin notes the Quair-author in using the ship metaphor as a metaphor of the inexperience of youth, rather than of the lack of control perceived by the lover, as in the Troilus and The Temple, or of the rule of Fortune, as in the Consolation, is departing from his sources.[1] However, the most striking aspect of this use of the seafaring metaphor is how the Quair-author chooses to redirect this metaphoric discourse towards an examination of the writing/experience relation.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, seafaring as a metaphor for the writing enterprise, specifically navigation as a metaphor for the control of one's narrative 'mater', has a considerable tradition for the Middle Ages,[2] stretching back at least as far as Ovid.[3] The metaphor occurs in

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[1] Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the Kingis Quair', p.329:

> James, in contrast to Boethius, Chaucer and Lydgate, explicitly links the ship with youth. The ship is in danger not because it is in the storm of life or love as in the Consolation, Troilus and Criseyde or the Temple of Glas, because it lacks a guide.

Ebin is perhaps wrong to suggest that The Quair differs radically, in its use of this metaphor, from the Troilus. Troilus's ship itself requires, and loses, its guiding star (see Book V, 11.638-644); and the knight in The Temple also needs a guide, his 'lode-ster' (1.612). The Quair's use of this metaphor constitute's a continuation of Chaucerian metaphoric discourse, an expansion and conflation of metaphors in the Troilus.

[2] On the classical and medieval tradition of this metaphor see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), pp.128-130.

[3] For Ovid's use of seafaring as a metaphor of poetics see Ars Amatoria, Book 1, 11.771-772; Book 3, 11.99-100; and Book 3, 11.747-749. Compare also Remedia Amoris, 11.577-578, see The Works of Ovid in Six Volumes, volume II, The Art of Love and Other Poems, edited and translated by J.H. Mozley, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1969). For a discussion of Ovid's metaphors of seafaring see John M. Fyler, Chaucer and Ovid (New Haven and London, 1979), pp.15-17.

Dante's Divina Commedia[1] and Boccaccio's Il Filostrato[2] in addition to the examples we have noted in Troilus.[3] The use of this metaphor in The Quair extends Chaucer's use of seafaring in the Troilus; there are several direct verbal echoes between the two poems, compare this passage from the beginning of Book Two of the Troilus with stanzas 17, 18 and 19 from The Quair quoted above:

> Owt of thise blake wawes forto saylle,
> O wynde, O wynde, the weder gynneth clere,
> ffor in this see the boot hath swych trauaylle
> Of my konnyng that vnneth I it steere:
> This see slepe I the tempestuous matere
> Of disespeir that Troilus was inne -
> But now of hope the kalendes bygynne.

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[1] See La Divina Commedia, edited by Guiseppe Giacalone, 3 volumes (Rome, 1969), II, Paradisio, canto 2, ll.1-9:

> O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
> desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
> dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,
> tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
> non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
> perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.
> L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;
> Minerva spira, e conducemi Apollo,
> e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.

The similarities between this passage and stanzas 17, 18, and 19 of The Quair are quite striking and suggest a possible direct use of the Commedia in our poem. The poet/persona of the Paradisio uses Minerva's exhalation as a metaphor for his poetic inspiration - as the wind which propels the boat of his poem - which suggests the Quair-author's use of wind in a similar metaphoric fashion. Minerva is also, of course, one of the three figures which the I of The Quair visits for advice later in the poem. Compare also, Purgatorio, canto I, ll.1-3. On the links between Italy and Scotland during the reign of James I see Ronald D.S. Jack, The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature (Edinburgh, 1972), pp.1-2.

[2] See Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio, general editor Vittore Branca, 12 volumes, II, Il Filostrato, edited by V. Branca (Milan, 1964), Parte Nona, sts. 3-4.

[3] See Troilus and Criseyde, Book II, ll.1-7; for another Chaucerian example of the ship as poem compare The Legend of Good Women, F. ll.616-623.

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
To ryme wel this book til I haue do.

Troilus and Criseyde, Book II, 1-10.[1]

There are several parallels between this passage and stanzas 17, 18 and 19 of The Quair. Most striking are the similarities in glossing procedures, Chaucer's 'this see clepe I ...' (1.5) and The Quair's 'the rokkis clepe I ...' (st. 18, 1), and the invocations to the wind and the Muse Cleo. The Quair-author develops Chaucer's use of the seafaring as a metaphor of narrative control, and points this issue by a startling metaphoric slippage. This slippage is one between the apparently discrete areas of the description of past experience and the discussion of the problematics of writing. The perception of a lack of control over the experience of youth slides into the anxiety concerning a lack of control in the writing enterprise.

The Quair-author is explicitly revising a Chaucerian text at this point. The process of revision suggests that the Quair-author read Chaucer tropically, that is he identified and developed a metaphorics which is mediated through its use in the Troilus. In the Troilus navigation operates as both a Petrarchan metaphor for Troilus's desire for Criseyde and also a metaphor (derived from Boccaccio and Dante) for the narrator's relation to the narrative 'matere' of that desire. The Quair-author's use of this metaphorics conflates these two references, increasing its Boethian (and possibly Dantean) associations, and uses it to draw the reader's attention to the processes by which narrative is generated from the deployment of an intertextual metaphoric discourse. The Quair-author is not simply bringing experience and writing into decorous analogy, as

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[1] Quoted from Geoffrey Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde, edited by B.A. Windeatt (London and New York, 1984). All references to the Troilus will be taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.

Ebin has described,[1] he is also, and rather shockingly, signalling how narrative is generated from the collapse of such analogies into one another.

The Quair-author is thus using an available metaphor for control - the ship - thatis a metaphor which has a double reference to experience and writing- so that the fiction of present writing may be brought into conjunction with the fiction of past experience. This digression from the development of narrative experience, the plot of the narrator's past experiences, stands as an example of the narrator's inability to let a particular narrative order stand unmolested. Hence, the metaphorical slippages of this passage, and its status as a digression from narrative plot, signal the metafictional strategies of the Quair-author, for this passage draws the reader's attention to the construction of narrative and metaphor's constitutive role in that construction.

The difficulties of writing are thus not only stated, but are also mimetically made part of the poem's rhetorical structure. The digressio of the beginning of the poem maintains the fiction of the I as writer experiencing difficulty in beginning to write. This is shown partly through the alternative metaphorics, and literary models, for narrative development which the I tries out. In the passage under question (sts 14-18) metaphor is shown as particularly problematic; for it is partly the difficulties of sustained metaphoric development of which the I complains in stanza 18. The 'rokkis' are metaphors then, not only of the potential dangers of both life and writing but are also metaphors of the very doubleness of reference which metaphor can achieve and has achieved in the narrative so far - 'The rokkis clepe I the prolixitee /Off doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall' (18, 1/2). The narrator's difficulty with metaphor at this point, arising from uncontrollable 'doubilnesse', signals the importance of this trope in the poem. It also reflexively points The Quair-author's skill in using metaphor. The Quair-author displays the narrator's anxiety about the controllability of metaphoric writing at precisely the point where he most strikingly reveals the skilfulness of his own metaphoric strategies.

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[1] On this point I agree with Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the Kingis Quair', p.339:

> in his digression on writing at the outset, the narrator establishes a direct connection between the writing of the book and the central issue of governance in the poem. Significantly, he uses the same metaphors to introduce both themes.

At stanza 19 the I attempts another rhetorical beginning to his narrative - an escape from 'doubilnesse' - with an appeal to his muses, another astronomical setting (st. 1 also uses the astronomical topos), and a nature topos (st. 21). The I then recounts how as a youth he was advised to board a ship 'Be see to pas tuke I myn auenture' (22, 7). The ship sets sail (st. 23), and is finally captured (st. 24), and the I imprisoned (st. 25). The close proximity of this passage of the description of seafaring with the previous passage of polysemous metaphoric seafaring is obviously deliberate. The metaphorics of the ship, wind and waves are here shown to correspond intimately with the events of the I's youth. The metaphor of the ship as self or book is here shown to be in mutually confirming relation to the events of the I's experience.

In stanza 18 the metaphorics of seafaring act to articulate the problematics of control in writing. In stanzas 22-23 the literal ship seems to have no problems of control, this ship enjoys 'wind at will' (23, 2) whereas for the I as writer the wind 'is the deficultee/Enditing of this lytill trety small' (18, 3/4). While as metaphors the ship, the sea and the winds make statements about lack of control in both experience and writing, in this passage of literal seafaring the narrative seems to be getting started with purpose and direction. As a metaphor for narrative development the lack of wind in stanza 18 makes a statement about the difficulty of getting started which is mimetically represented in the digressional structure of amplified narrative in the poem up to that point. With the literal ship the narrative, as a continuous sequence of event, seems at last to begin. However, this potential line of narrative development proves abortive. The ship is captured and those on board are taken prisoner. This situation of curtailed narrative development thus occurs both with the metaphors of seafaring - curtailed by their alternative gloss - and the literal description of seafaring (curtailed by the I's capture). The metaphors of seafaring act as a model for the past I's experience. This passage of description of seafaring re-tells the metaphors of seafaring immediately prior to it. Norton-Smith sees this additive and replicatory narrative structure as a flaw of the central dream section of the poem,[1] however, as this example shows it is the very basis of The Quair's poetic strategies. The complex mutually defining relation of narrative and metaphor in these two passages analysed above, typify the nature of the Quair poet's endeavour to explore the relation of experience and its literary representation, and to create a mutually confirming connection between them. As can be seen in these passages the poem is constructed to make the inter-relation between writing, rhetoric, other texts,and how one interprets experience unavoidable.

This inter-relation is shown by the lexis of seafaring which is used throughout the passage. Seafaring is used variously as a metaphor of the dangers of youth and also as a metaphor of the difficulties and possible pitfalls of writing. It is used as a metaphor for control, and its lack, in both experience and writing. Moreover seafaring is also a part of that youthful experience which is being described. By such a deliberate condensation of metaphor and experiential situation, of historical event, description of that event, and a meta-linguistic glossing of the language used in that description, the metaphors of seafaring are shown to have more than a decorative function in The Quair's narrative structure. Metaphor is used here to insist upon the wholeness of The Quair's poetic enterprise, and directs the reader's attention to the relation between experience and the textualisation of that experience, a relation which is emphasised throughout the poem, though perhaps most strikingly in the use of seafaring metaphors in this passage.

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[1] See John Norton-Smith, The Kingis Quair, p.xvi.

The interplay between literal and figurative meanings in The Quair is at its most conspicuous in the passage where the I figure, as prisoner, describes his response to his imprisonment and to the first sight of the lady with whom he falls in love. This passage involves the interplay between the literal and figurative meanings of freedom and thralldom. The prison literally denies the I freedom, while the passage also uses the commonplace metaphor of desire as a binding thralldom to the desired object. This conspicuous interplay signals how metaphor is constitutive of the literal plane of narrative, the prison as narrative place is itself a poetic locus constructed from metaphor.

In the context of erotic desire the prison operates as a metaphoric place of unfulfilled desire, a narrativisation of those barriers which prevent reciprocity between the male lover and the woman he desires. The prison in The Quair is a rationalisation in narrative terms of the conventions of the love complaint. The prison gives those conventions - of uncommunicated and therefore unbeknown and unreciprocated desire - a narrative rationale. Desire cannot be communicated, and therefore remains unreciprocated, because the man cannot speak to the woman because he is imprisoned. The prison is that location from which the love object may be seen, but which prevents communication with that love object; it provides the ideal narrative locus for the articulation of the complaint of I figure in The Quair:

> So by my self this tale I may wele telle,
> For vnto hir that herith nought I pleyne,
> Thus like to him my trauaile is in veyne.
>
> (70, 5-7)

An analogue to this use of the prison as a locus of uncommunicated desire is The Knight's Tale.[1]

In The Quair release from this metaphoric prison occurs with apparent serendipity upon the reception of the message assuring the I of his success in his love affair. The causal sequence of events leading up to this release are not important:

> The quhich treuly efter, day by day,
> That all my wittis maistrit had tofore,
> From hennesferth the paynis did away;
> And schortly, so wele Fortune has hir bore
> To quikin treuly day by day my lore,
> To my larges that I am cumyn agayn,
> To blisse with hir that is my souirane.
>
> (181)

This stanza marks a point of transition in the poem from the past to the present time of the I as writer. Moreover, the message the I as lover receives here effectively dissolves the prison as the metaphoric place of uncommunicated desire, of desire that cannot use signs as messages. The dissolution of the prison as metaphoric place of unfulfilled desire is marked by an elaborately signalled text, an elaborate structure of signs.

The metaphoric nature of the poem's narrative structure is marked out in the whole of this passage (sts. 36-43) by the interplay of the literal and figurative meanings of freedom and thralldom. The I figure begins by pondering the nature and power of love, of which birds are singing in the garden outside his prison cell. For the I the birds represent the physical freedom which he lacks and he begins to equate the freedom the birds enjoy with the liberating effects of love. His physical imprisonment, which until this point has seemed unconnected with erotic desire, shifts easily into the metaphoric imprisonment of love, which results in a personified Love being given executive rights over the lover's freedom or thralldom:

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[1] For differing views of the relationship of The Quair and the Knight's Tale see Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and the Kingis Quair', pp. 322-327; Walter Scheps, 'Chaucerian Synthesis', pp.160-161; and Henry Wood, 'Chaucer's Influence', pp.223-265. Ebin sees the relationship as marking The Quair's differences from Chaucer; Scheps as an indication of The Quair's Chaucerian typicality; while Wood sees The Quair's use of the Knight's Tale as purely mechanical.

> Can I nought elles fynd bot gif that he
> Be lord, and as a god may lyue and regne,
> To bynd and louse and maken thrallis free.
> (39, 1-3)

This passage marks, therefore, the smooth transition of the I figure from his role as inexperienced youth to his role as lover, for he finally promises to serve Love, his lord, 'a wele and wo' (39, 7).

Upon this pledge of fealty to Love, as a cosmic force, the I is provided with an object for his erotic desire by the entry of a woman - 'the fairest or freschest ȝong floure' (40, 4) - into the locus amoenus. The moment of the I's falling in love with this 'floure' is expressed by what C.S. Lewis calls 'beautiful oxymoron'[1] which uses the opposition of thralldom and freedom, 'that sudaynly my hert become hir thrall/For euer of free wyll' (41, 5/6). By stanza 44 the I figure has completely adopted the metaphoric role of lover as prisoner, and calls himself a 'sely presoner' (44, 5).

This fine passage thus constitutes the I's erotic desire from the interplay of literal and figurative meanings of freedom and imprisonment. Desire is not merely expressed by this metaphoric language, it is shown to be constituted by that language. This constitutive process involves the redefinition of narrative place: the prison shifts from being a Boethian prison of the human condition to being a prison of erotic desire. The elaborate interplay between meanings in this passage signals the process by which the I becomes a lover, but also it reveals that desire is not simply, or even mostly, constitutive of relations between individuals it is more importantly constitutive of narrative situation and event. Hence the metaphors of desire in The Quair determine narrative place - the prison - and narrative event, for release from the prison occurs almost immediately upon the transformation of the I's desire from unfulfilled, unknown love to successful, fully communicated love. A change in the nature of the I's desire produces the effective dissolution of the prison as barrier to that desire. It is in this way that metaphor is shown to have a determining relation to narrative in The Quair, metaphor is shown to be constitutive of desire and thus constitutive of narrative structures.

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[1] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p.236.

In The Quair experience, in the form of the past I's adventures, is shown as being integrated into a metaphoric narrative structure. In Barthes' terms the anecdotal is progressively integrated into the plane of writing. The poem's integrative strategies work to neutralise any potential threat to the integrity of The Quair's metaphoric structures, while at the same time drawing attention to their own integrative procedures by signalling moments of potential threat with pun. On the level of causally related narrative event moments of threat to narrative outcome require the intervention of what has been labelled the 'mysteriously meant' at certain crucial points in the plot of the narrative.[1] These points often seem like causal quantum leaps, defying explanation by a naturalistically conceived causally related sequence of events. It is by such moments of 'threat', both on the plane of the anecdote and on the plane of writing, that the Quair-author reveals the danger of writing, and reveals the seams in his poetic construct.

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[1] Alice Miskimin, 'Patterns in the Kingis Quair', p.340.

Pun and wordplay are used in The Quair both to signal the potentially anomalous and also to signal the integration of such potential threats into the very textuality of the poem's 'web of words' itself.[1] So assured are the poem's strategies for the assimilation of the potentially disruptive or anomalous that it displays both the threat and the neutralisation of threat. Moreover the poem hints at subversive meanings - subversive to its 'single significant pattern'[2] - only so that it may display the dexterity of its means of dealing with those meanings.

Such integrative processes may be illustrated by a study of a few examples of the use of pun in The Quair. Such punning occurs in the passage of seafaring metaphors which we have examined above. In stanza 14 the narrator apostrophises his past youth; he likens youth to an unripe fruit and to a nestling bird. The simile of youth as an unripe fruit exploits the image of the immature fruit which is prematurely knocked from the tree by unpredictable gusts of wind. In the next stanza (15) the simile changes to the metaphor of the self as boat enduring the variable winds of Fortune on the voyage of life. The pun of stanza 14, however, suggests an alternative development of the self as fruit metaphor:

> Thou sely ȝouth, of nature indegest,
> Vnrypit fruyte with windis variable.
>
> (14, 1-2)

The pun on 'indegest' suggests that youth, like an unripe fruit, causes indigestion.[1] This pun obviously gives an alternative meaning to the 'windis variable' of the next line.[2] The puns suggest that it is part of youth's 'nature' to produce unpredictable flatulence or belching. This alternative meaning remains as a subversive, and therefore comic, trace throughout the development of the 'windis' metaphor in stanzas 17-18: see particularly st. 17, 4 'to wayte the wynd that furthward suld me throwe'. In these stanzas wind acts as a metaphor for poetic inspiration, that which impels the poet to write. The pun may have been suggested by the image of poetic inspiration as Minerva's exhaltation in

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[1] The phrase is Maureen Quilligan's, see The Language of Allegory, p.25 and p.33.

[2] See Matthew P. McDiarmid, The Kingis Quair, p.48.

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[1] The Middle English Dictionary lists both meanings of 'indegest': 'a) of food undigested... c) of substances; crude, immature; fig. of persons callow'. Like many puns the pun on 'indegest' exploits the literal meaning of a word used in a figurative context. Trevisa's On the Properties of Things, a work the Quair-author may have referred to (see p. 155 above), provides the following observation on the effects of unripe fruit:

> Grene fruyte rawe and nought digeste greueþ bodyes
> and makeþ hem swelle and nameliche bodyes of children
> and of feble folk.

On the Properties of Things, Volume II, Book 17, Capitulum lxxiv (p.964).

[2] Such a double meaning to 'windis variable', though it might suggest a too shocking breakdown of the poem's metaphoric decorum, is not without Chaucerian precedent. One remembers the pun on 'wynd' in the Summoner's Tale; the Summoner tells his assembled audience that the delicate operation of dividing a fart into twelve may only be accomplished

> ... whan that the weder
> is fair,
> Withouten wynd or perturbynge of air.
> (2253-54)

While in the House of Fame, the eagle's discourse on sound as 'nought but eyr ybroken' (765), prepares the way for a punning double entendre on wind, see ll.1595-1601. And when Eolus 'the god of wyndes' (203) blows his trumpet of ill fame,

> ... such a smoke gan out wende
> Out of his foule trumpes ende...
> And hyt stank as the pit of helle.
> (1645-1654)

For a discussion of these puns in the House of Fame see John Leyerle, 'Chaucer's Windy Eagle', University of Toronto Quarterly, 40 (1970-71), 247-265.

Paradisio, canto II, 1.8.[1] If the pun of st. 14 is carried through to this development of the 'windis' metaphor then the need to write can be likened to the pressing need to belch; and the getting-rid of the effects of eating unripe fruit likened to the I's urgent need to put his youthful experiences into writing. The puns on 'indegest' and 'windis' then, serve to give alternative, comic meanings to the issues which dominate the beginning section of the poem, ie. those of the cause and motivation behind the need to write. The pun on 'indegest' gives us an alternative, alimentary, interpretation to the blockages the narrator confronts in trying to process his youthful experiences by writing a poem about them, the blockages of the stop/start structure of amplificatio and digressio. The puns of st. 14, therefore, tend to undercut the elaborate, perhaps over self-regarding, account of the narrator's difficulties in starting writing, an account which dominates the beginning of the poem.

An example of the neutralisation of the anomalous into the integrative structures of the poem occurs in the passage where the I as lover attempts to make the nightingale sing in the garden outside his prison cell (see sts. 54-66). Having fallen in love the I figure proceeds to describe his flower and issue a prayer to Venus for help in attaining success in his love (st. 52). Wishing to create the right ambiance in the garden, as a setting for such a goal, he attempts to persuade the nightingale to provide some song. He tries chiding, reasoning, psychoanalysis - 'Hastow no mynde of lufe? Quhare is thy make?/Or artow seke, or smyte with jelousye?' (58, 1/2) - and bullying, but all attempts fail. Finally the I invokes the wind to blow hoping thereby to inspire the nightingale to sing:

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[1] On the link between inspiration and wind compare the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, 11.5-7:

> Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
> The tendre croppes.

See also Lydgate's 'Ballade at the Reverence of our lady, Qwene of Mercy', in The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, edited by Henry Noble MacCracken, 2 volumes, EETS extra series 107 (London, 1911, reprinted 1962); and original series 192 (London, 1934 (for 1933) reprinted 1961), I, 255, 11.12-14:

> O wynd of grace, now blowe in to my saile!
> O auriat licour off Clyo, for to wryte
> Mi penne enspire, of that I wolde endyte!

The lines are plainly derived from Troilus, Book II, 11.1-10.

> Bot, blawe wynd, blawe, and do the leuis schake,
> That sum twig may wag, and mak hir to wake.
> (60, 6-7)

As mentioned above in the 'rokkis blake' passage (sts. 14-18) the wind acts as a metaphor for poetic inspiration, here the I seems to recall this metaphoric function in his wish to get the bird to sing. Although there is no direct causal connection between invocation and singing, the I's plea seems to work, for the nightingale does indeed burst into song, a song which is used by the I as an accompaniment to his lyric in which he pledges himself to his 'hertis quene' (sts. 62-63).

When birds are first used by the I as a correlative of his perceptions and feelings there appears to be a wide gap between the avian and human systems.[1] The birds are free, the I is not: the birds belong to the harmonious order of the cosmos from which the I appears to be excluded. At this point the gap between the two systems, avian and human (first brought into comparative relation by the simile of stanza 14), almost closes, for the I uses birdsong as the musical accompaniment for his lyric utterance. Earlier in the poem the I is brought to an awareness of love's existence by the birds in the garden outside his prison cell.

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[1] For discussions of the bird imagery in the poem see Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove', and his doctoral thesis 'A Critical Study of the Kingis Quair', pp.158-186.

They sing a song, of which the full text is given, in praise of love's power. Here the I follows this avian model by singing his own lyric utterance inspired by love. At this point, birds are integrated into the I's patterning of experience and into the I's poetic endeavour, after what seemed a blockage to such an integration in the nightingale's silence.

As long as the nightingale does not sing, it occupies an anomalous position in the locus amoenus - the garden of love. The I's attempts to make it sing may be seen as attempts to remove this anomaly and to integrate the nightingale, as a sign of love, into his poetic construct. The bird's anomalous status is emphasised by the inclusion of the Proigne/ Philomene story at stanzas 55-56.[1] Here the literary, inter-textual, associations of the nightingale as a symbol of illicit, potentially destructive desire, are introduced into the poem.[2] Philomene is turned into a nightingale after she has been raped by the jealous husband of her sister Proigne. The introduction of the Philomene/Proigne story at this point in the I's pleading is itself anomalous. The words used to tell the story - 'paynes', 'sufferit', 'teres', 'bludy', 'pites', 'crueltee', 'unknyghtly', 'bereft', 'kythit', 'false and fell', 'gilt' - are all at variance with the tone of the I's love-making and discourse up to that point. When the nightingale does sing, however, its anomalous status disappears and the potential threat to the decorum of the poem's emphasis on the great pleasure of love disappears too, as shown in the I's lyric of stanza 63.[1] The disappearance of this threat is marked by pun, for all the birds take up the nightingale's cue and sing:

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[1] On the Proigne/Philomene story see Carl E. Bain, 'A Critical Study of The Kingis Quair', pp.168-176; see also Wendy Pfeffer, The Change of Philomel: the Nightingale in Medieval Literature (New York, Berne and Frankfurt, 1985), esp. pp.8-13 and pp.213-218.

[2] See, for instance, the use of the nightingale in Marie de France's Lai de Laüstic, where the nightingale becomes a symbol of the doomed love affair between an unhappily married woman and her lover, the bird is finally killed by the jealous husband. On this symbolic use of the nightingale see Carl E. Bain, 'A Critical Study of the Kingis Quair', pp.165-66; see also Wendy Pfeffer, The Change of Philomel, pp.165-168. For a general discussion of the conventional associations of the nightingale see Beryl Rowland, Birds with Human Souls: a Guide to Bird Symbolism (Knoxsville, Tennessee, 1978), pp.105-111.

> 'Wele is vs begone,
> That with oure makis are togider here.
> We proyne and play, without dout and dangere.'
> (64, 3-5)

The pun 'Proigne'/'proyne' ('preen'), actually marks the integration of the nightingale into the textuality of the poem's linguistic structures. The potentially disturbing associations of the Proigne story are here neutralised by this integrational move. 'Proigne' threatens the decorum of the narrative, the pun 'proyne' signals the neutralisation of this threat by wordplay. The 'blockage' to narrative development and the I's desire which the nightingale's refusal to sing constitutes, is released by the act of singing; a release which allows the I his own release - his own lyric articulation of his desire. This narrative structure of blockage and release is paralleled in this passage by the blockage to narrative fulfilment and decorum caused by the Philomene/Proigne digression. As noted above words associated with erotic suffering and illicit desire threaten to overwhelm or clog the narrative at this point. This lexical threat is neutralised by the textualisation of the most dangerous word 'Proigne' by the pun 'proyne'.

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[1] On the importance of the nightingale's song see Carl E. Bain, 'A Critical Study of the Kingis Quair', pp.159-164; the use of the bird's song as an accompaniment to the I's love lyric of stanza 63, marks a nice development by the Quair-author of the nightingale's song as an inspiration to lyricism. See, for example Bernart de Ventadorn's 'Pel doutz chan que.l rossinhols fai', in Bernart von Ventadorn: Seine Lieder, edited by Carl Appel (Halle, 1915), pp. 195-198. For a discussion of the nightingale's song as an inspiration to lyric poets see Wendy Pfeffer, The Changes of Philomel, pp.84-97.

This passage, involving the inter-action of the I figure with the nightingale, is essentially comic. It is this comedy which the inter-textual associations of the Proigne story threaten to destroy. The comedy is one produced by the juxtaposition of the typical hyperbolic metaphors of the I figure with the bathos of his requests to the bird; a bathos reinforced by rhyme:

> Now, suete bird, say ones to me 'pepe'
> I dee for wo. Me think thou gynnis slepe!
> (57, 6-7)

But the comedy is also structural and based on the sense of threat overcome,as I have argued above. The Quair's comedy is one grounded in the process of resolving the anomalous and integrating the potentially disruptive into a single pattern. This particular comic success is marked by the textual integration of Proigne into the verbal structure of the poem by pun.

I shall now turn to an examination of the use of flower imagery in the poem, prior to an examination of the use of joint bird/flower imagery later in The Quair, particularly in Venus's speech to the I and in the message the I receives assuring him of the success of his love.

From her entry into the garden onwards the lady is consistently referred to as a flower. The garden is her place and as such she is in synecdochical relation to it. The garden - the locus amoenus - is the rhetorical place of love. By metaphorising the lady as a flower she is made fully a part of this place. The rhetorical status of the garden is important, for the lady is also shown to be the centre of the I's rhetorical and poetic endeavours; as a flower of rhetoric, in a wholly rhetoricised locus, the lady is not only the goal of the I's desire, she is also the centre and cause of his writing. 'This gardyn full of flouris' (43, 5), is not only the place of love and so full of women, but it is also the place of an available rhetorical and tropical discourse, and hence is full of the flowers - the figures - of rhetoric. The lady is both the centre of the I's conspicuous rhetoric, see for instance the *tour de force* *effictio* of stanzas 46-50, and also part of the rhetorical means by which his experience is narratively constituted.

The lady as flower is integrated into the poem's concern with the nature of how experience means in the passage where Venus explains to the I how flowers signify the value of love to man (sts. 114-119). The specific epithet is shown to be part of a larger meaningful structure. This process of the integration of parts into a meaningful pattern can be seen as basic to the poem's strategies. The poem displays the integration of the past I's experiences and perceptions into the present rhetorical structure of the poem, a structure which gives those experiences meaning.

In stanza 114 Venus uses the word 'flower' as a specific epithet for the I's lady, telling the I that Gud Hope will help him to 'Atteyne vnto that glad and goldyn floure/That thou wald haue so fayne with all thy hart' (114, 5-6). The following stanzas develop the metaphor of the flower into a metaphorics of natural growth processes.[1] Using these processes as metaphors for how Venus operates to make men aware of the value of love, Venus characterises men as negligent and disdainful of her laws. The tears which Venus sheds because of men's neglect of love fall to the ground and cause 'hony flouris' to 'growen vp and sprede' (117, 5). 'Flouris' which in their turn,

> ... preyen men, ryght in thaire flouris wise,
> Be trewe of lufe and worschip my seruise.
> (117, 6-7)

In this passage the significance of both birds and flowers is explained by Venus - the rain causes the birds to stop singing and blocks out 'the lightis in the hevin round' (118, 5). Birdsong has already been seen as significant in The Quair: the birds' song of love first alerts the I to the possibility of love's existence; and the I's attempts to get the nightingale to sing as a necessary part of a landscape of love. In this passage Venus explains the significance of birdsong, or its lack, as a sign of love. The birds sing 'in tokenyng' (119, 1) of the time 'Quhen flouris springis and freschest bene of hewe' (119, 2), it is a time when,

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[1] For a discussion of this metaphorics of growth as it is developed in *The Floure and the Leafe* see Chapter One, section three, pp. 40-45 above.

> ... ay gynnen folk renewe
> Thaire seruis vnto loue, as ay is dewe
> Most commonly has than his obseruance,
> And of thaire sleuth tofore have repentance.
> (119, 4-7)

The lady as flower, together with birdsong, are thus integrated into a metaphoric patterning which reflects a cosmically proportioned meaningful structure. In this way poetic ordering, through the creation of metaphoric structures, is made reflective of non-poetic orderings. The lady is part of Venus's textualised landscape of love, as a flower she partakes of Venus's 'tokenyng' to men.[1] In the conscious textualising of the I's experiences which constitutes the poem, the lady also functions as sign, the central sign of the poem's 'single significant pattern'.

If Venus's concern is to inculcate the necessity of adherence to love's laws in the I figure, the latter's meeting with Minerva involves the exposition of a moral framework in which his erotic desire may be placed:

> 'Desire?', quod sche, 'I nyll it nought deny,
> So thou it ground and set in Cristin wise.
> (142, 1-2)

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1. Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Role of the Reader', p.201, accurately analyses the nature of this landscape as a textualisation of nature:

> Venus's instruction to the narrator emphasises the world as 'takin' or sign. Her description of the universe bound together in a cosmic chain of love stresses things in nature as signs of something else.

Throughout the Venus and Minerva episodes the word 'ground' occurs often. Venus, for instance, explains to the I figure the significance of what happens 'Quhen thou descendis doune to ground ageyne' (115, 1). The ground is, obviously, where flowers grow, and it is the growth of flowers which Venus develops into a metaphor for the abuse or rightful commemoration and observance of love and love's ethos. In his meeting with Minerva the I figure is exhorted to 'ground', that is establish, his desire in Christian morality and virtuousness; see lines 128, 2; 130, 5; 131, 6; 138, 1; 142, 2. Minerva develops this sense of 'to ground' in the architectural image of stanzas 130-131. This image is obviously based on the parable of the house built upon sand,[1] but the architectural image is also familiar from Vinsauf's Poetria Nova, from which Chaucer in Book I, 1065-1071 of the Troilus, borrows the image.[2] The image stands both as a model of the I's amatory endeavour and of the I as writer's poetic endeavour:

> For, lo, the werk that first is foundit sure
> May better bere a pace and hyare be
> Than othir wise, and langere sall endure
> Be monyfald, this may thy resoune see,
> And stronger to defend aduersitee.
> Ground thou thy werk therefore vpon the stone,
> And thy desire sall forthward with the gone.
>
> (131)

By punning on the word 'Ground', the Quair-author is able to confirm the value and central importance of the lady as flower. The Venus passage insisted on the ground as the place where flowers, tokens of the value of love and an inspiration to love, grew. Minerva's exhortations to 'ground' one's desire on a solid basis refer through insistent pun to the very ground where the lady - as flower - is located. The I's response to

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1. Matthew 7. 24-27; I Corinthians 3. 10-17; Ephesians 2. 20-22.

2. See Geoffrey of Vinsauf, The Poetria Nova, edited by Margaret F. Nims (Toronto, 1967), I, ll.44-48, pp.16-17. The Quair's use of 'purpose' (130, 7) suggests Chaucer's translation in the Troilus, Book I, 1.1069. Compare Chaucer's, 'Aldirfirst his purpose for to wynne', with The Quair 'Vnto thy purpose son he sall the lede'.

Minerva's advice, shows that he has fully understood this metaphoric valuation of the lady as a central sign:

> That I declare the kynd of my loving,
> Treuely and gude, withoutin variance,
> I lufe that floure abufe all othir thing.
>
> (139, 2-4)

It can be seen, then, that the use of the specific epithet 'floure' for the lady is not merely a tired conventional mimicry of literary tradition; the Roman de la Rose for example.[1] The epithet of the flower is a fully integrated part of a metaphoric patterning, involving a metaphorics of natural growth, whose meaning is concerned with the confirmation of the value of love and of the lady as central to that love.

Birdsong is a similarly developed motif in the poem. We have seen how birdsong is significant in how the I first perceives love in that he tries to make the nightingale sing. Birdsong is also important in the Venus passage (sts. 114-119). In the Minerva episode counterfeited birdsong operates as a metaphor for the distorted use of signs by those who 'feynis treuth' (134, 2) to beguile 'The sely innocent woman' (134, 4):

> For as the foulere quhistlith in his throte
> Diuersëly, to counterfete the brid,
> And feynis mony a suete and strangë note,
> That in the busk for his desate is hid,
> Till sche be fast lokin his net amyd;
> Ryght so the fatoure, the false theif I say,
> With suete tresoune oft wynnith thus his pray.
>
> (135)[2]

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[1] The most obvious allusion to the Roman de la Rose is at stanza 186:

> And eke I pray for all the hertis dull,
> That lyven here in sleuth and ignorance
> And has no curage at the rose to pull,
> Thair lif to mend.
>
> (186, 1-4)

John Norton-Smith, The Kingis Quair, p.81 states that 'no flower reference is intended'. As William Quinn, 'Memory and the Matrix of Unity', p.351 notes, this seems hard to accept when there are flower references in stanzas 187, 5; 190, 7; 192, 2; and a play on flower in stanza 193, 6-7.

[2] For this metaphor of the fowler and the captured bird compare Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, F. 11.130-139 (G. 11.118-126) and The Temple of Glas, 11.603-605.

This false birdsong obviously defines, by opposition, the value of the true, authentic birdsong which is used as part of significant pattern in The Quair. The fact that the I, when he tries to get the nightingale to sing, has no thought of actually mimicking the birds for his own purposes, confirms the I as an authentic lover. In the next stanza (136) this metaphor of false birdsong as deceit, is characterized by Minerva as an example of 'doubilnesse'; that doubleness which comprises a split between signified and signifier. In stanza 18 the I as writer also uses the term 'doubilnesse' in his gloss of the 'rokkis blake' (st. 17, 1), these rocks are 'the prolixitee/Off doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall' (18, 1/2). 'Doubleness', here, is seen as that unwanted polysemy, that capacity for semantic slippage, upon which a writing venture may break down. Such a polysemous blockage has just occurred in stanzas 14-17, in which 'windis' is glossed as the perils of experience, the inspiration to write and also, in the pun of st. 14, used to liken the instability of youth to the unsettling effects of indigestion. Both the I, in reference to writing and Minerva, in reference to the morality of wooing, complain of 'doubilnesse' which seems to strengthen the analogous relation between the two in the poem and also emphasises the worth of the I as both lover and writer.

The metaphoric patterning of flower and bird imagery in the poem is used to authenticate the nature of the poem's signifying strategies. Minerva inveighs against those who use signs wrongly; those who exploit the split between signifier and signified to deceive. This metaphoric patterning is also constructive in that it is through an awareness of the repetition of certain metaphors throughout the poem that the poem's meaningful structure is signalled. Lois Ebin has noted, for instance, how the seafaring metaphors of stanzas 15-18, recur throughout The Quair; maintaining an inter-relation between writing, desiring and governance -

how to control one's experience. For instance, Venus is referred to as 'Hye quene of lufe, sterre of beneuolence' (99, 1), and in stanza 100 Venus is a 'blisfull hauin' (100, 4) and 'anker and keye of oure gude auenture' (100, 5). Thus Venus acts as a safe harbour, anchor and quay for the I who must endure 'hugë weltering wawis... of lufis rage' (100, 3-4). Minerva, too, refers to God as He 'That in his hand the stere has of ʒou all' (130, 2). The seafaring metaphor, then, acts to signal how the allegory of the I's meetings with Venus and Minerva ought to be read. Their role in relation to the I is defined by the use of the seafaring metaphors. As Fradenburg points out the seafaring metaphor also defines the response the reader should have to the poem:

> And his tong for to reulë and to stere
> That thy defautis helit may bene here.
> (194, 6-7)[1]

The Quair uses the seafaring metaphor, then, to define a whole complex of role-determined relations to the I's experience, to the subjects of writing, reading and desiring and also to issues of governance and controlling one's life.

The locus amoenus introduces new metaphoric possibilities into the poem; the metaphors of birds and flowers. In the poem these metaphors, and their developments (ie. birdsong and growth), are used specifically to valorise the concept of love and to indicate and confirm the ways in which value is signified and should be read. In the passage where the I figure receives the message confirming the success of his love (sts 177-179), the metaphors of birds, flowers and (implicitly) ships are brought together, through the borrowing of the meanings of the dove in biblical symbolism. This metaphoric synthesis marks not only the success of the I amatory endeavour in the poem but also the passage from past experience

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1. See Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', p.183.

to present writing, a passage signalled by the dissolution of the metaphoric place of unsuccessful love the prison.

After he has been placed on the wheel by Fortune, who bids goodbye to the I with the pun 'Fare wele' (172, 6), the I awakens, and troubled by his dream, beseeches God 'That of ȝoure grace I myght haue more tokenyng' (176, 5); some sign that will help him interpret his dream experience. The 'takenyng' he receives brings together all the significant 'takenis' of the poem so far - birds, flowers and ships - for a turtle dove flies through his window bearing a message written in gold on a branch of 'red jorofflis with thair stalkis grene' (178, 2). This message tells the I, now lover and competent reader of signs, of the success of his love for his lady. The message written on flowers, works as a metonym of the lady as flower. The I is being presented with his lady, for he says that the dove 'vnto me the flouris fair present' (179, 6). The dove bearing a branch recalls the biblical story of the flood and Noah's Ark.[1] The I's 'voyage' is at an end; his 'ship' has been brought to a point of reconciliation by a divine providence and he receives a suitable sign of that termination, which as Straus notes works as a point of 'inter and intra-textual thickening', a point where the inter-textual reference of the dove (to the Bible and to Noah's Ark) is added to the intra-textual significance of birds and flowers.[1]

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[1] *The Quair*'s noted use of religious symbolism at certain crucial structural points, for instance at the I's transumption to the Zodiac and here with the bringing of the message, seem to strengthen the deliberateness of the Scriptural allusion. Carl E. Bain, 'The Nightingale and the Dove', p.25 notes,

> the bird which in the *Kingis Quair* is also very like Noah's dove... such references as this may be more apposite to the meaning of the *Quair* than the occasional reference in folklore to doves as emblems of prosperity.

John MacQueen, 'Tradition and the Interpretation of the *Kingis Quair*', *Research in English Studies*, new series 12 (1961), 117-131 (p.127); and Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Role of the Reader', p.203, also identify the biblical allusion to Noah's Ark.

If we accept that the metaphoric patterning of The Quair is used to authenticate the nature of the poem as a signifying and significant construct, then the poem's fiction of textualisation becomes clearer. This fiction of textualisation comprises the fiction of the poem's own writing. The more the poem becomes a completed text, the more the metaphors used in that text act as signs,and the more significant they become the more important writing appears as a means of locating and confirming value and meaning. This fiction of the poem's own writing, a growth of awareness of itself as text, is focused through the figure of the I as present writer. This I figure begins in a state of doubt concerning writing and expresses the difficulties of starting writing. The blockage/release pattern of the rhetorical structuring of amplificatio and digressio is actually mimetic of these expressed difficulties. At the end of the poem the roll-call of thanksgiving by this I expresses a confidence in the meaning of his experience which is directly derived from the patterns constructed by the poem itself. As the poem becomes progressively more a text, and the I experiences are progressively more textualised, then the more authority the I as writer expresses in the value of the significant pattern of those experiences.

While stanza 196 with its reference to God as author who 'all oure lyf hath writt', provides a retrospective cause for these patterns so easily drawn from, or found within, the I's past experiences, at the beginning of the poem explanations of causation are problematic. The I as writer's concern over his inspiration to write is explicitly involved with questions of causation:

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[1] Barrie Ruth Straus, 'The Role of the Reader', p.203. Straus also points out the emphasis on the textuality of the message:

> in the turtle-dove's message these words have been invested with even greater richness by not only being written down for posterity, but by being written down in gold.

> Thought I tho to my self: 'Quhat may this be?
> This is myn awin ymagynacioune...
> It is a bell, or that impressioune
> Off my thought causith this illusioune,
> That dooth me think so nycely in this wise.'
>
> (12, 1-6)

In the metaphors of seafaring which develop in stanzas 15-18, this concern with the cause of the impulse to write is metaphorised as the impelling force of wind. In stanzas 17-18 the wind is glossed as that mysterious force, beyond the self, which directs the writing enterprise, and the I's gloss in stanza 18 describes the lack of wind as 'the dificultee/ Enditing of this lytill trety small'. Stanza 19 is still explicitly concerned with the inspiration behind writing; as the present I as writer begins his task for the third time with an appeal to his Muses.

The I as writer's concern with the cause behind his writing is paralleled by a similar concern with causation in his past experiences. As the I begins to narrate his experiences of seafaring, he ponders on the cause of those experiences:

> Were it causit throu hevinly influence
> Off goddys will, or othir casualtee
> Can I nought say, bot out of my contree,
> By thaire avise that had of me the cure,
> Be see to pas tuke I myn auenture.
>
> (22, 3-7)

However, when imprisoned the I's characteristic verbal activity is that of the Boethian prisoner, questioning and complaining over the relation of divine determinism to the individual's perception of the effect of fortune; for instance stanza 27:

> Quhat schall I seyne, quhat resoune may I fynd
> That fortune suld do so?
>
> (27, 4-5)

or stanza 28:

... Gif God me had deuist
To lyue my lyf in thraldome thus and pyne,
Quhat was the cause that he me more comprisit
Than othir folk to lyve in suich ruyne?
(28, 1-4)

By the end of the poem such issues of causation, in writing and in experience, come together with the former (writing) informing the latter. The I's list of thanksgiving is essentially a definition of cause from effect. The poem typically draws attention to this retrospective, metonymic, effect to cause explanation:

Bot for als moche as sum micht think or seyne,
Quhat nedis me aponn so littil evyn
To writt all this? I ansuere thus ageyne -
Quho that from hell war croppin onys in hevin
Wald efter o thank for joy mak sex or sevin!
And euery wicht his awin suete or sore
Has maist in mynde, I can say ȝou no more.
(182)

This stanza provides an explanation for the necessity of writing but also, as Miskimin describes, punningly refers to the use of significant number in the poem;[1] the I writes the poem - 'mak[s] sex or sevin!' - for joy.

By stanza 194 the status of the poem as object - as a text - is confirmed by a Chaucerian address to the poem, modelled on the narrator's comments in Book V of Troilus and Criseyde.[2] At the beginning of the poem the issue of what caused the I to write was important;[3] by becoming a text this poem, by stanza 194, has a causative influence on its reader:

Go, litill tretisse, nakit of eloquence,
Causing simplesse and pouertee to wit.
(194, 1-2)

Fradenburg has noted how the seafaring metaphors of this stanza, metaphors

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1. Alice Miskimin, 'Patterns in the Kingis Quair', p.352.

2. Compare Troilus and Criseyde, Book V, 1786-92.

3. See Robert M. Slabey, '"Art Poetical" in the "Kingis Quair"', pp. 208-209, notes that 'the poem is, in part, about literary inspiration and its artistic result'. The poem maps poetic process from inspiration to finished text.

involved with issues of control, 'try to maintain their control of the text even in performance'.[1] In a conventional apology topos, the Quair-author, then, confirms the nature of his metaphorics - extending it beyond the text to define the relationship of text and reader - and extending, moreover, a series of causal relations mapped out in the text beyond the text to determine the poem's effect on the reader. At its apparently most naive, therefore, the poem displays its considerable sophistication, signalling its eloquence and wit (in the modern and medieval senses), at the precise moment it denies them.

The Boethian cast of much of the past I's questioning should not, as Ebin reminds us, blind us to the considerable differences between the Consolation and The Quair. Early in the Consolation Philosophy argues with the Boethian persona concerning ends and means and so defines the consolatory strategies of the work as teleological. The dreamer/persona must recover a lost teleology:

> But sey me this: remembrestow that is the ende of thynges, and whider that the entencion of alle kynde tendeth?... And how may this be, quod sche, that syn thow knowest the bygynnynge of thynges, that thow ne knowest nat what is the eende of thynges?
>
> (Boece, Book I, prosa 6, 11.36-49)

What critics have overlooked in their attempts to define the relation of the consolation to The Quair is the nature of The Quair's total structure with regard to the Consolation's teleology. For The Quair contains a narrative of past experience which entails an orthodox Boethian situation, involving the search for an end, within a narrative in which that end is fully known. Less simplistically this narrative frame itself maintains a fiction of the unknownness of its own endeavour; that is the unknownness of the voyage of writing itself. Lady Philosophy makes the point, in the Consolation, that if one sets sail in a sailing boat the wind controls where one goes rather than oneself.[1] For the I as writer in The Quair, the voyage of writing and of experience, are directed, blown, or belched to the same, mutually confirming place at the end of the poem.

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[1] Louise O. Fradenburg, 'The Scottish Chaucer', p.183.

Because of the basic two part narrative structure in The Quair (frame and framed narrative), the issue of divine determinism - a determinism which erupts into the I's experience at certain crucial points (for instance his transportation to and from the Zodiac; the arrival of the dove with the message) - is paralleled by an awareness on the part of the I as writer of the determined outcome of his experiences and of his writing endeavour. Moreover, this sense of an ending gives weight to the rhetoric of amplification in the poem. When the I explicitly marks out a passage as digression from his writing purpose (ie. its progress to its projected endpoint), he implicitly alludes to the planned nature of his writing enterprise. See, for instance, stanza 29 when the I, bewailing his imprisonment, is suddenly reminded of the outcome of his experiences; an outcome which radically transforms the nature of that imprisonment:

> My custum was on mornis for to ryse
> Airly as day. O happy excercise!
> By the come I to joye out of turment
> Bot now to purpose of my first entent.
>
> (29, 4-7)

By use of such rhetoric of digression - 'Bot now to purpose' - the interrelation of writing and experiencing is encoded throughout the text, for the narrator uses such rhetoric to refer both to the known structure and outcome of his past experience (which outcome qualifies how the individual developmental parts of that experience are perceived) and also to the rhetorically amplified nature of his poetic structure. The narrator consistently emphasises the digressional nature of textual structure in the poem, reinforcing an apparent dichotomy between the modalities of treatment and the 'sentence' of the experiential 'mater' of his history:

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[1] See Boece, Book 2, prosa I, ll.101-104.

> Therfore I lat him pas, and in my tong
> Procede I will agayn to the sentence
> Of my mater, and leve all incidence.
>
> (7, 5-7)

Much later in the poem, when the I has finally returned to the ground from Minerva's palace to find himself in a beautiful 'lusty plane' (152, 1), the narrator gives us a three stanza catalogue of all the animals in this parkland. This textualised and ordered nature operates as a rhetorical response (on the plane of writing) to the perceived gap between the I and nature which we have witnessed earlier in the poem (sts 26-28).[1] Rhetoric - specifically here repetitio - is shown to have a purchase on nature; it can order and classify it. Significantly, this rhetorical tour-de-force is signalled by the phrase 'Bot now to purpose' (158, 3; compare st. 29, 7 quoted above). By the use of such digressional rhetoric the Quair-author points to an apparent dichotomy between the plane of experience and the plane of writing only to signal, ironically, the collapse of the one into the other. The narrator's insistence on the separation of experience and writing (witness his distress accruing from the metaphoric slippages of stanzas 14-18) is undercut by the Quair-author's insistence on the close, almost incestuous, relation of the two. In this way The Quair is shown to be not simply about poetic control, as a theme, but to mimetically enact the slippages and mergers which constitute the major issues of poetic control in its very textual strategies.

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[1] John MacQueen, 'Tradition and the Interpretation of the Kingis Quair', pp.123-24, argues that the catalogue represents an ordering of nature which resolves the split between nature and Fortune which occurs earlier in the poem (stanzas 26-28). The catalogue for MacQueen functions as a correlative of the I's progress from despair to well-being; from disorder to regulation.

Lois Ebin argues The Quair is heterodoxically Boethian because the I figure learns to overcome Fortune through the success of his erotic desire. Although the I figure himself articulates this viewpoint,[1] the 'conspicuous emphasis on writing'[2] in the poem should alert us to the only partial accuracy of Ebin's description. For the past I as lover does not so much progress to a point of wisdom where he has control over Fortune (as Minerva advises and Ebin would have us accept), rather he progresses to a point where he merges into the present I as writer/ narrator. It is this latter figure's control over his writing enterprise, displayed in his glossing techniques and his conspicuous rhetoric of digression ('Bot now to purpose'), which subsumes his past experiences and gives them order. This is not to agree, however, with Vincent Caretta who sees the purpose of the poem to display the folly of the I figure precisely because he does not learn to overcome Fortune but rather lays himself open to it.[3] I would rather view The Quair as deliberately concerned with the relation of rhetorical systems of encoding order with the experience it sets out to order.

In The Quair this relation appears fixed and closed. The mutual confirmation of text and experience at the poem's conclusion seems, in its circularity - reflecting the circularity of the poem's fictional time scheme and reflected in the repetition of line 1 in the penultimate stanza - to admit of no doubt. However, the poem's conspicuous display of the integration of the potentially anomalous into this synthesised

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1. See stanza 183. The Quair-author expands the freedom/thralldom oxymoron, in a manner similar to Lydgate's strategies in The Temple, to reveal what has come to be free through being bound by love's 'goldin cheyne', (183, 4).

2. Lois Ebin, 'Boethius, Chaucer and The Kingis Quair', p.321.

3. See Vincent Carretta, 'The Kingis Quair and the Consolation of Philosophy', esp. pp.15-18.

rhetorical and replicatory order, shows the concern of the poem to display the artificiality of this textualisation. Subversive pun such as the one on 'indegest' in stanza 14 also points the need in the poem to bring into juxtaposition the systematic and the subversion of system.

The past I's meeting with Fortune displays just such a juxtaposition: it works as a deliberate comic undercutting of what Ebin would see as the central point of The Quair - the I's mastery of Fortune. The comedy of the past I being shoved onto the wheel of Fortune (recalling the narrator's entry into the garden in Parlement of Foules),[1] subverts the idea of this I figure having learnt through love to overcome Fortune.

In The Quair Minerva's observation that

> Fortune is most and strangest euermore
> Quhare leste foreknawing or intelligence
> Is in the man.
> (149, 2-3)

applies not to the past I but to the I as writer. This latter has a purchase on his experiences which the past I cannot have. While the past I is subject to Fortune,the I as writer can pun at Fortune's expense:

> And thankit be fortunys exiltree
> And quhele, that thus so wele has quhirlit me!
> (189, 6-7)[2]

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[1] Compare The Parlement of Foules, 11.152-154:

> Ferde I, that nyste whether me was bet
> To entre or leve, til Affrycan, my gide,
> Me hente, and shof in at the gates wide.

[2] The homophonicpun might have been suggested by The House of Fame, 11.793-94:

> And ryght anoon thow shalt see wel
> That whel wol cause another whel.

Which Helge Kökeritz, 'Rhetorical Word-Play in Chaucer', PMLA, 69 (1954), 937-952 (p.946), calls 'a fine instance of traductio'. Compare also the striking parallel to the Knight's Tale, 11.925-26:

> Thanked be Fortune and hire false wheel,
> That noon estaat assureth to be weel.

The Quair's use of the homophone marks a definite privileging of the textual over the experiential. Fortune's wheel, an image of mutability and change is 'fixed' by pun: coupled into a textualised relation to good fortune - 'wele'.

The Quair deliberately plays off a fiction of foreknowledge in writing - encoded in the rhetoric of digression and displayed in impressive rhetorical set-pieces, which encode a sense of writerly control, against a fiction of a lack of foreknowledge which culminates in a comic scene which displays the past I's lack of control. The Quair thus provides an intelligent critical reading of the Consolation's teleological strategies. Moreover, although the past I gains success rather by default than by learning, the key scene which effects the transition from the embedded narrative of lack of foreknowledge to the frame narrative of known ends, is the scene when the I learns of his success through an elaborately signalled text. Thus the poem fully confirms the process of textualisation; the transposing of experience and literary convention into a text. The fiction is less one of the past I's education than of the textualisation of that I's experience into a meaningful set of signs.

The poem's interplay of two fictions finally attains a synthesis which derives its finality and confidence from the concrete textuality of the poem. In the final, inclusive and reflexive gesture of the poem all problems of causation are 'solved' by writing as metaphor with God as author. The I as writer's metonymic readings of his past and oneiric experience finally result in a metaphoric similarity being drawn between his activity as writer and God's status as a creator of the cosmos as a structure of meaningful signs. The poem is a fiction of the comedy of such a semantically encoded cosmos in as far as it corresponds to the semiotics of the textual. The outcome of the writing enterprise retrospectively makes all the constitutive, selected parts of the past I's experience mean in one particular way. In this sense the ending of The Quair is a comment on the necessary self-authentication of narrative selectivity; just as the poem's beginning is a comment on the difficulties of starting writing: the difficulty of selection and structuring itself.

At the beginning of this chapter we saw how The Kingis Quair invites many, seemingly mutually exclusive, critical readings. The poem is characterised as both typically and atypically Boethian; an orthodoxly Chaucerian and as strikingly unChaucerian; as thoroughly conventional or markedly original. Criticism has made its goal the demonstration of unity in The Quair, but it seems that there are many, often opposing unities to be found in the poem. William Quinn accounts for the apparent inconsistencies in The Quair, which would allow for such a divergence of critical opinion, by invoking the selectivity of the workings of memory.[1] Quinn's reading usefully focuses attention on the narrator's relation to his 'mater', a relation which is emphasised in the poem, but I would go further than Quinn and see this relation in terms of the poem's thoroughgoing exposition of the writing process: of textualisation and poetic control.

The pleasure of writing, the pleasure of this process of textualisation, is observable at many points in The Quair. The narrator's joy is occasionally marked by pun, and pun also marks the Quair-author's comic strategies in the poem. For the narrator his activity as a writer is more conspicuously present in the poem than his role as lover; despite C.S. Lewis's claim that in The Quair 'the literal narrative of a contemporary wooing emerges from romance and allegory',[2] we see little of the I's love-making. Writing, poetic activity, has more 'reality' in the poem than wooing: significantly one of the past I's few acts as lover is to sing a love lyric (see stanza 63). The poem displaces focus away from the pleasures of erotic desire and towards the almost erotic pleasure of writing; a pleasure displayed both by the narrator, most strikingly in his joyous celebration at the end of the poem, and by the Quair-author in

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1. William Quinn, 'Memory and the Matrix of Unity', especially p.334.

2. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p.237.

his use of pun, comedy and rhetorical set-pieces. The erotic and the verbal collaborate in The Quair in pun and, more importantly, in the condensations and slippages of metaphor. It has been said that 'pun is the first step away from the transparent word, the first step towards the achievement of symbolic metaphor'.[1] Both pun and metaphor work to make language opaque in The Quair; they work to make the process of textualisation a highly visible process in the poem.

My reading of the poem differs radically from readings which see The Quair as a product of extra-textual integrative, or possibly, ironic strategies with regards its literary traditions. For the poem focuses on these integrative modalities within the text; on the difficulties of controlling one's poetic 'mater', and the pleasures which can accrue from that control and its comic subversion. This focus helps us to understand the nature of The Quair's relation to the discourse of poetic control which is mapped out by the use of metaphor in the Troilus and continued in Lydgate's Temple of Glas. The Quair may be seen as a completion of this discourse; a fiction of the pleasure and confidence which may accrue from the textualisation of the 'mater' of convention and experience.

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1. James Brown, 'Eight types of puns', PMLA, 71 (1956), 14-26 (p.18).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ANXIETY OF WRITING IN SKELTON'S BOWGE OF COURTE

The attitude to poetry and writing in The Kingis Quair, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is one characterised by a huge confidence in the use and value of rhetoric. In The Quair, the forms of writing, rhetorical trope, and *topoi* and the structures displayed in poetic number all accurately and usefully describe and confirm the value and meaning of represented experience.

At times The Quair may laugh at such a confident assertion of rhetoric's confirmatory facility, as with its self-conscious use of pun and in the hyperbole of the I's final thanksgiving, but the poem's overwhelming attitude to the status of writing is one of celebration, an attitude to which its puns and hyperboles add rather than detract. The I figure accurately reflects this attitude; The Quair's I finally emerges from the affected timidity of the modesty *topos* to unashamedly display a huge confidence in the patterning of his experience, which is in large part the creation of rhetoric.

This chapter deals primarily with Skelton's Bowge of Courte,[1] which, while in many ways concerned with similar topics to The Quair and using similar metaphoric conventions, constructs a quite different fiction, displaying a lack of confidence in rhetorical form and the signifying powers of language. The poem reveals the unreliability of the signifiers of language, in general, and of the conflicting impulses of various poetic styles in particular.

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[1] All references to The Bowge of Courte are taken from the edition in John Skelton : the Complete English Poems, edited by John **Scattergood** (Harmondsworth, 1983).

My reading of The Bowge emphasises this aspect of the poem and would see the text as a thoroughgoing investigation of the poet's relation to a range of specifically poetic problems. The Quair, in contrast to The Bowge, while acknowledging that wordplay can be subversive, reveals that poetic and rhetorical form can uncover and confirm moral and experiential value and meaning. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which The Bowge explores this relation of poetic form and content, specifically the creation, location and confirmation of meaning by the conventions of linguistic, poetic and rhetorical form.

The Bowge's allegory constructs an environment inhabited by personifications of that linguistic and semiotic doubleness which The Quair explicitly censures.[1] What constitutes the field of reference of this environment is of central importance. Most critics have seen it as the court; the ship acting as a metaphor of the court and sailing as a metaphor of the progress or otherwise of the hopeful courtier.[2] The objective

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1. The Kingis Quair of James Stewart, edited by Matthew P. McDiarmid (London, 1973), st. 18 and st. 136.

2. For discussions of The Bowge as an allegory of court life, see: A.R. Heiserman, Skelton and Satire (Chicago, 1961), pp.14-65; C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth-Century Excluding Drama (Oxford, 1954), pp.134-35; William Nelson, John Skelton : Laureate (New York, 1939), pp.78-81; Maurice Pollet, John Skelton (c. 1460-1529): Contribution â l'Histoire de la Prérenaissance Anglaise (Paris, 1962), pp.52-62; A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (Cambridge, 1976), pp.197-202; and Alan Swallow, 'John Skelton: the Structure of the Poem', Philological Quarterly, 32 (1953), 29-42 (pp.30-31). For critics who argue with this approach see: Stanley E. Fish, John Skelton's Poetry (New Haven and London, 1965), pp.54-81; Judith Sweitzer Larson, 'What is the Bowge of Courte?', Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 61 (1962), 288-295; and Leigh Winser, 'The Bowge of Courte: Drama Doubling as Dream', English Literary Renaissance, 6 (1976), 3-39. For Fish the locus of Skelton's major poems, including The Bowge, is 'essentially interior' (p.54), and thus the dream in the poem offers a psychological map of Skelton's anxiety. Fish also points to The Bowge's interest in poetic issues. Larson's reading of the poem would see The Bowge as essentially a parody of the dream-vision tradition; while Winser argues for the possibility of The Bowge being a court masque.

of this chapter is to demonstrate that this environment also functions with reference to the literary tradition to which the I in the prologue of the poem aspires but in relation to which he feels woefully inadequate. The I as Drede inhabits an allegorical landscape constructed from the very fears of his opening modesty topos; the poem may thus be seen as an investigation of issues raised by these fears, focused through the timid and chary I figure.

While The Quair finally explodes the rhetoric of authorial inadequacy to reveal the confidence in writing at its base, The Bowge makes that rhetoric only too real and entrapping. In The Quair potentially disruptive or subversive polysemy is shown as contained and finally controlled by the poem's own rhetorical strategies, and as made tangible in the (over)confidence of the I figure's final thanksgiving. In The Bowge confidence in such all-pervasive poetic control is lacking. Significantly, both poems address the issue of poetic and rhetorical control through the use of a similar metaphorics; that of the ship and seafaring. As we have seen in previous chapters, this is a conventional metaphorics for the topic of control in both writing/poetics and experience. In this chapter I will argue that unless the conventionality of the ship metaphor, as a metaphor of writing, is recognised an important part of The Bowge's total meaning is in danger of being lost or misunderstood.[1]

This study of The Bowge begins with an examination of the opening stanzas of the poem; for my argument is based on the awareness of the existence of a significant relationship between these stanzas, which together with the last two stanzas of the poem, constitute the 'frame' fiction of the poem, and the 'framed' dream narrative itself. These opening stanzas provide a language for the poem's investigation, through the allegory, of the relationship of literary mode and style to semantic and moral stability and value.

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[1] Skelton's development of the ship as a metaphor of the court in The Bowge may have been influenced by Brant's Narrenschiff (1494) or Locher's latin version Stultifera Navis (1497). As John Scattergood points out (John Skelton p.395), a ship of vices may also be found in Jacquemart Gielée's Renard le Nouvel (1288). For a discussion of the possible relation of the Narrenschiff to The Bowge, see A.R. Heiserman, Skelton and Satire, pp.57-65.

The chapter then proceeds to show how this investigation takes shape in the allegory, and how the poem constitutes not simply a satire on court life but also a series of observations concerning the problematics of writing. In addition, this chapter is concerned to demonstrate The Bowge's awareness of stylistic multiplicity. The personification of Ryotte, in particular, is important with regard to this issue, in that Ryotte is not only a personification of the subversion of morality and court propriety, he is also a personification of a threatening stylistic alternative to the metaphoric conventions of the poem. Ryotte is, therefore, an excellent example of the acute awareness in The Bowge of the non authoritativeness and instability of literary forms as ways of 'fixing' the value of primarily moral meanings. His status as a stylistic alternative threatens the metaphoric decorum of the poem, and he reflects Skelton's experimentation, through stylistic alternatives, with the conventional relationship of certain poetic and rhetorical structures with a prescribed meaning; a relationship which defines poetic and rhetorical convention in the late fifteenth century.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the implication of the issues concerning poetry and meaning examined in The Bowge for the nature of Skelton's poetic, which I would argue, locates its chief excitement in precisely that instability and semiotic doubleness which The Quair, and indeed The Temple of Glas, explicitly censure.[1] This discussion uses additional material from Skelton's Garlande of Laurel which in many ways may be seen as a palinode to the questions raised in The Bowge, and indeed as an attempt to close the particular poetic discourse which The Bowge opens in Skelton's poetic œuvre.

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[1] See the Temple of Glas in John Lydgate : Poems, edited by John Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1966), ll. 166-168 and ll.1243-1256.

The first four stanzas of The Bowge display the I's awareness of the instability of the human condition; against this instability is placed the enduring fame of past masters of poetry. The I continues in the modesty *topos* of stanzas three and four to articulate his apprehensiveness at his attempt to join the ranks of the poetically ept and famous.

The poem continues with this I figure falling asleep and dreaming of joining a ship called 'The Bowge of Courte' which sails under the auspices of Fortune. On board this ship the I, now named Drede, encounters and overhears conversations between several personifications and figures. What he learns and overhears convinces him that his life is in danger, so he jumps overboard. At this point the I wakes up and, after discoursing briefly on the validity of what we experience in dreams, passes the onus for the interpretation of his dream onto the reader.

The first stanza of the poem uses a season *topos*, that of 'autumpne' (1), to make Boethian observations on the instability of humanity's big and little worlds. Autumn, we are told, is the time when the earth is ruled by the moon 'full of mutabylyte' (3), and the sublunar world of humankind reflects this instability in its own condition of 'foly' and 'unstedfastnesse'.[1] Astrological reference is used in The Bowge in quite a different way to The Quair. In the latter poem the Zodiac is a source of stability, of semiotic reliability.[2] In The Bowge astrological reference intimates instability in the conflict between Virgo and Mars; using Mars' preparation for war as a metaphor for approaching winter. Instability appears as a feature of lunar influence. Additionally in this stanza a direct connection is made between the season and the moral condition of humanity; the connection is characterised by the moon 'smylynge halfe in scorne'(5) at the stupidity and moral inconsistency of man. This is a characterisation which establishes the tone of the ensuing allegory, in which some personifications treat Drede with a scorn comparable to that of the moon in this first stanza; see especially Disdayne who 'with scornfull loke mevyd all in a moode' (317), and Dyssymulation who tells Drede:

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[1] Skelton is obviously recalling the seasonal distinctions of dreamlore by setting the poem in autumn. John of Salisbury in Policraticus, Book 2, Ch.XV, observes that:

> During the middle or latter part of autumn, somnia, or dreams, usually tend to disappear while the meaningless insomnia or troubled dreams hold sway when the leaves are falling.
>
> From John of Salisbury's Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers, translated and edited by L.B. Pike (New York, 1972),p.78.

Compare also Vincent of Beauvais, Speculum Naturale, lib. XXVI, capitulum 63:

> Dreams are diversified by the position of the body and in accordance with the seasons; in spring and autumn they are particularly confused, disordered and false.
>
> Translated by W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences (New York, 1926), p.211.

I see no reason to agree with Judith Sweitzer Larson, 'What is The Bowge of Courte?', pp.194-95, that the autumnal opening makes The Bowge a parody of the more typical spring opening. As Derek A. Pearsall notes in his edition of The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies (Edinburgh and London, 1962), p.153:

> The autumn opening is rare compared with the spring opening but seems to have been developed by a few English poets for rather sad and sober poems.

Pearsall also notes the occurrence of the autumnal opening in Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint, see Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems, edited by Frederick J. Furnivall and Sir Israel Gollancz, 2 volumes, EETS extra series 61 and 73 (London, 1892 and 1925), I, 95, 11.1-4:

> After that hervest Inned had his sheves,
> And that the broune season of myhelmesse
> Was come, and gan the trees robbe of ther leves
> That grene had bene....

For other critical discussions of the type of dream in The Bowge see Stanley Fish, John Skelton's Poetry, p.60; A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, p.197; and A.R. Heiserman, Skelton and Satire, pp.32-34.

[2] In The Quair the Zodiac is the place of semiotic reliability, where there is no split between signified and signifier (st.76); and where there is no division between intention or thought and action (st.77). In The Quair astrological reference brings stability; it will tell us the pattern of our lives if only we read it correctly (st.196).

> It is grete scorne to se a mysproude knave
> With a clerke that connynge is to prate.
> (453-454)

In the following lines writing is introduced as offering a stable point of reference both morally and temporally. 'Poetes olde' (9), can write 'full sentencyously' (12), and also write of vice (13) and virtue (14). In addition to the moral stability these poets can offer, poetic fame provides an antidote to the mutability of stanza one, for the I of the poem says of these poets that:

> ... theyr renome and theyr fame
> Maye never dye, bute evermore endure.
> (15-16)

Moreover, and again in contradistinction to those aspects of writing valorised in The Quair, writing is seen as estimable precisely because of its capacity to hide meaning or to render it subtle. The metaphors used of writing in stanza two imply a spatial concept of the written; the written is seen as encoding a series of layers of meaning. Thus in line 10 the 'poetes olde' are praised for writing 'Under as coverte termes as coude be', and as being able to '... touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly' (11). Writing is deemed especially efficacious, in moral terms, when it is

'Dyverse in style' (13), and 'craftely' executed. The 'poetes olde' are, for the I, masterly in their control of writing; their skilfullness enables them to control polysemy and hidden meaning.

If the implication of stanza two is that the 'great auctoryte/Of poetes olde' (8/9) depends upon their control of hidden poetic meaning in the service of morality, then the stanza also provides elements which hint that the link between poetic skill, morality and fame is far from unambiguous. 'Full craftely' in line 9, while obviously meaning 'with sufficient ingenuity or skill', could also mean 'deceitfully'. This latter meaning aligns with the operative metaphors of hiddeness and layeredness in the stanza. Certainly by the time the word 'crafte' is used by Disceyte at line 519, it has gained the implication of deceitfulness; a point emphasised by it being Disceyte who uses the word:

> But to here the subtylte and the crafte,
> As I shall tell you, yf ye wyll harke agayne:
> And whan I sawe the horsons wolde you hafte,
> To holde myne honde, by God, I had grete payne.
>
> (519-522)

This speech by Disceyte also picks up the word 'subtylte', which occurs in the form 'subtylly' at line 11. The adjectives of stanza two have become the substantives of the later stanza (11.519-525); not only has this process of substantification taken place, but also the potential ambiguity of the adjectives of stanza two are realised by the nouns of line 519.

The note of ambiguity in stanza two can also be seen in the variant readings which may be given to the phrase 'some spared not vyce to wrythe' (13). The syntax of this line allows at least two readings. The first that the 'poetes olde' had no compunction in writing about vice; the second that their writing was itself vicious. At the same time as Skelton is making statements about an esteemed poetic tradition which utilizes ambiguity - 'covert termes' and 'subtylte' - the poem itself presents the reader with an ambiguous phrase which tends to undercut that tradition's status as 'auctoryte'. This is of a part with the poem's strategy to progressively uncover the instability and ambiguity of what is set up as, or presumed to be, stable, uncomplex and trustworthy.

Stanley Fish considers the references to subtle and hidden meaning in stanza two as defining an attempt 'to write satire in the fifteenth-century manner'.[1] Other critics have seen these as references to the allegorical mode of writing.[2] However, the striking thing about these references is that they remain unspecific. It is because of this lack of specificity that they may be read as defining the general use of 'doubleness' in poetry; in, for instance, allegory, pun, innuendo, metaphor and ambiguity.

The I of the poem sees the 'auctoryte' of poetic tradition as located in poetic method; for the I 'auctoryte' is a way to counteract the perceived instability and mutability of the human, sub-lunar condition. Skelton reveals that those aspects of literary and poetic method which the I esteems as giving 'auctoryte' increase rather than diminish ambiguity and uncertainty. The I of the poem looks to this tradition as providing stability through enduring poetic reputation;i.e. Fame. Skelton reveals,

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1. Stanley Fish, John Skelton's Poetry, p.61.

2.. See, for instance, Maurice Pollet, John Skelton, p.52:

> Périlleuse entreprise pour un poète de Cour, que de critiquer la Cour! Mais il se sentait soutenu par la confiance qu'il tirait de son indépendance cléricale et par les précédents de la littérature, ce qu'il appelle "la grande autorité des vieux poètes" qui, habilement avaient su exprimeur de salutaires vérités sous le voile de l'allégorie.

And A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, p.197:

> In the brief waking section at the beginning, Skelton introduces himself as a would-be poet, who wishes he could emulate the great allegorical writers of the past.

See also Alan Swallow, 'John Skelton: the Structure of the Poem', p.30, 'in the large, The Bowge of Courte is a typical fifteenth-century allegory, through poetic ambiguity, that Fame itself is a contingent, uncertain and non-authoritative thing. The lesson is the same as Chaucer's House of Fame,[1] but the economy of its encoding, through the self-referentiality of poetic form (that is, that ambiguity occurs when discussing ambiguity) is specific to Skelton's poem and acts as an example of, and a response to, the heightened awareness of rhetorical and poetic form in the fifteenth century.

The humility *topos* of stanzas three and four sets forth the I's felt inadequacy as a writer to emulate the 'poetes olde' in order to achieve long-lasting fame. The *topos* takes the form of advice given to the I by a personification of his own ignorance. Ignorance shows the I that he is not capable of practising the art of poetry; to do so she employs the commonplace fifteenth-century metaphor of writing as a process of illumination:[2]

> And shewed that in this arte I was not sure;
> For to illumyne, she sayde, I was to dulle,
> Avysynge me my penne awaye to pulle
>
> And not to wrythe ...
>
> (19-22)

Skelton is, then, expressing the I's timidity and inadequacy as a poet, in fifteenth-century critical terms. The I feels himself to be an inadequate fifteenth-century poet, for he cannot 'illumyne'. These critical

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1. See Stanley Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry*, pp.55-60, esp., p. 55:

   > For Skelton, and for other poets in this tradition
   > (the authors of *The Kingis Quair*, the *Court of Love*,
   > and the *Court of Sapience*) the model is Chaucer's
   > *House of Fame*.

2. For a discussion of a fifteenth-century poetics of illumination see Lois Ebin, 'Poetics and Style in Late Medieval Literature', *Studies in Medieval Culture : Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, 16 (1984), 263-293; see also Ebin's article 'Lydgate's Views on Poetry', *Annuale Medievale*, 18 (1977), 76-105, which demonstrates that Lydgate was influential in establishing illumination as a dominant metaphor of writing in the fifteenth century.

terms examine what R.O. Payne calls the 'idea/language conceptual model'.[1] In this model the idea, which language signifies, is dressed in, or ornamented by, language. The first three stanzas of The Bowge reflect this conceptual model, with metaphors of dressing, cloaking, covering, uncovering and illuminating. Line 11 especially, explicitly states that writing is a process based upon a split between idea and language -'can touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly'. The allegory of The Bowge entails an investigation of the authority of an epistemclogy and morality based on this linguistic, and poetic, model.

Stanza four, a continuation of the I's humility *topos*, applies the spatial metaphors used of poetry in the poem so far to the poet himself. Success or failure as a poet is described in the spatial terms of hierarchy and layeredness, similar to the spatial metaphors used previously to discuss levels of meaning within a text:

> But of reproche surely he maye not mys
> That clymmeth hyer than he may fotynge have;
> What and he slyde downe, who shall hym save?
> (26-28)

It is through the use of such metaphors that various meanings of The Bowge are inter-connected and signalled. Thus the status of the poet is intimately related to the perception of what constitutes poetic meaning and methodology and the nature of the conceptual model used for the signifying function of language.

Stanza four of the poem addresses the issue of poetic control, of success in the writing enterprise, with failure in writing, ie.. losing control of one's material, imaged as a losing of one's place or footing.

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[1] Robert O. Payne, 'Late Medieval Images and Self-Images of the Poet: Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Henryson, Dunbar', Studies in Medieval Culture: Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages, 16 (1984), 249-261 (p.251).

Conventionally, the ship - which appears in stanza five at the beginning of the I's dream - functions as a metaphor of both poetic and experiential control. In this convention, which we have met in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and the Kingis Quair, the poet/persona's success or failure in writing his poem or living his life or, in the case of Troilus or the Knight in Lydgate's The Temple of Glas, in conducting his love affair, is figured in terms of how well he can steer the ship of the poem, or of life, or of love's course.[1] Concerning the theme of writing the ship operates as a metaphor of the poem, steering as a metaphor of the physical endeavour of writing the poem and the sea as a metaphor of the 'matiere' - of the inter-textual literary tradition of which the individual text is a retelling and a prospective part. Skelton writes with the assumption that his readers will recognise this conventional metaphoric function of the ship, so that the ship may function not only as a metaphor of the court, as its name and the poem's title suggests, but also as a metaphor of the poem and of poetic success or failure, in terms of a previously defined literary tradition.

Up to this point the poem has been primarily concerned with writing and has presented the I as a poet. This I falls asleep, wearied by thinking about his deficiencies as a writer, while lodged at 'Harwyche Porte' (34), which gives an appropriate setting for the ship that appears at line 37.[2]

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1. See Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, 414-420; Book II, 1-7; Book IV, 281-283; Book V, 638-644, and 1815. The Kingis Quair, sts.15-18; st.100; st.194. The Temple of Glas, ll.606-617.

2. A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, pp.197-198, argues that the use of the ship is based on the naturalistic link between the setting - the port - and narrative motif. I would suggest that the ship as a metaphor of fortune and of writing dictates the place of the I's falling asleep.

While no immediate explanation is given concerning the significance of this ship, the I does make a statement at lines 43-44, which suggests a motivation concerning his poetic career:

> But than I thoughte I wolde not dwell behynde,
> Amonge all other I put myselfe in prece.
>
> (43-44)

These lines appear to refer back directly to writing, which has been the explicit subject of the previous stanzas of the poem.

The reader is encouraged to read the ship as a metaphor of the poem and setting sail as a metaphor of beginning to write and the resolve to write, by the conventional, inter-textual significance of the seafaring metaphor. At this point in the poem, then, inter-textual competence would suggest that the ship acts as a metaphor and ascribes a particular meaning to this metaphoric and intra-textual thickening of texture. The dream prologue, by explicitly discussing writing, and the conventional significance of the ship metaphor, combine to suggest that the ship operates as a metaphor of the writing endeavour. Thus when the I in his dream decides not to 'dwell behynde', but to join the ship, the act works as a metaphor for the impulse to start writing; to 'get on' after the irresolve expressed in the modesty topos of stanzas three and four.

The expectations raised by both the intra- and inter-textual metaphoric messages in the poem are, however, denied. The ship is arbitrarily glossed - labelled - by an anonymous 'one' (46) as 'The Bowge of Courte'. By this machinery of the raising and denial of expectation Skelton is making several points.[1]

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1. Stanley Fish, Skelton's Poetry, p.55, remarks on the sense of uneasiness Skelton imparts to his reader by the raising and denial of expectations:

> the audience is lulled by the early introduction of familiar topoi into accepting his poem as one more in a well-defined tradition, only to find its expectations disappointed and the comfort of the reading experience destroyed along with its familiarity.

Firstly, by subverting the reader's expectations of the meaning of the ship metaphor Skelton is revealing the arbitrariness of the connection of the signified and signifier in the allegorical sign. The name given for the ship conflicts with all the signals met so far in the poem as to the meaning of the ship as sign. The reading of the allegory as a satire against the court is wholly based upon the labelling of the ship as 'The Bowge of Court'. Critics who insist that the allegory be read solely as a court-directed satire miss the importance of Skelton's meta-linguistic and meta-poetic concerns:[1] these concerns reveal the poem as an investigation of the untrustworthiness of the relationship of the signified and signifier. Skelton encodes this theme in the naming of the ship; for the basis of the allegory as a court-directed satire is shown as dependent upon an arbitrary act of naming.

The poem is thus not only concerned with the untrustworthiness of the signified/signifier relation in the allegorical and linguistic sign, it also encodes an example of such semiotic complexity in the governing metaphor of the poem - the ship. The ship is not a simple metaphoric equation - ship equals court - for the ship can also refer to the poem and its writing.

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[1] Not all critics see the poem as purely court-directed satire. Stanley Fish sees the focus in the poem as psychological in timbre:

> Skelton's major poems are usually read as satires, but if as I believe, their locus is essentially interior, that classification must be either abandoned or qualified - the battlefield exists in the mind, where the conflict is not so much between good and evil as between a succession of half-goods or greater or lesser evils.
>
> (Skelton's Poetry, p.54)

While C.S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.135, sees the allegory's canvas as much broader, encompassing 'what theologians call "the World" and others "the racket" or "real life" ', and views the poem as filled with a 'Kafka-like uneasiness'. No critic of the poem has identified the centrality of Skelton's poetic concerns in The Bowge.

The status of the ship as establishing the decorum of place in the allegory is therefore brought into question. The reader cannot trust the ship as a metaphor; metaphor is shown to be complex and the relation of signified and signifier within metaphor as arbitrary. If a metaphor is shown to signify two meanings then the form of the metaphor does not wholly validate either of those meanings. In contrast, in The Kingis Quair, the relation of signified and signifier in the metaphoric sign is shown as meaningful and not arbitrary; metaphoric form validates meaning.[1]

Secondly, Skelton is replicating in the poem's central metaphor, the metaphor which describes the boundaries of the place of the allegory's action, the poem's central writing theme of the instability or untrustworthiness of first appearances. What begins by seeming a metaphor concerning writing is given another meaning as a metaphor of the court. This economically leads to Skelton's third point concerning the relation of the poet to the court. A nice point is made in having a metaphor conventionally associated with the fortunes of experience or writing used as a metaphor of the court. The relation of the two is signalled by the use of a common metaphorics; Skelton is, in fact, punning with metaphors.

Writing slides under the court as the referent of the allegory at this point, but throughout the poem the court is not the sole referent of the allegory; so that the writing and written slide out from under the court as the referent of the allegory. This shifting nature of the allegory's reference replicates the poem's subject; the instability and complexity of the signified/signifier relation. It will be useful therefore, to plot the slippages and shiftings which take place.

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[1] In The Quair see particularly the I's interview with Venus who explains how things signify meaningfully (sts. 115-120); and the message which the I receives (sts. 177-179), which brings together the different metaphoric strands in the poem to validate its importance.

The links between the frame and the dream in The Bowge provide the reader with a double set of interpretative co-ordinates for the dream/allegory. The terms used to describe writing in the opening stanzas recur in the dream/allegory as the terms used to describe the court. The poem is concerned, then, both with the immorality and untrustworthiness of a particular set of experiences - specifically those of a claustrophobic court culture based on the competition for power in the form of favour and patronage - and with the moral and epistemological problems of multiple reference, self-referentiality and linguistic instability as displayed in writing.

The I of the poem, soon to be characterised as a personification of the I's fear - Drede, moves from positions of confidence to positions of fear in swift succession. This movement applies equally to when he is making observations on writing as in stanzas two, three and four, and to when he is talking of the favour necessary for the advancement at court (11.127-133). The narrator, the I of the frame and Drede in the allegory, provides a focus for the links between the court and writing reference of the allegory.

At lines 127-133 the I expresses first confidence and then an awareness of the danger which makes this confidence seem ill-founded. He does this by means of the dominant metaphors in the poem so far; the ship and the metaphor of writing/existence as a vertical structure from which one may fall and a layered structure which incorporates different levels of meaning:

> The sayle is up, Fortune ruleth our helme,
> We wante no wynde to passe now over all;
> Favoure we have toughther then ony elme,
> That wyll abyde and never frome us fall.
> But under hony ofte tyme lyeth bytter gall,
> For, as me thoughte, in our shyppe I dyde see
> Full subtyll persones in numbre foure and thre.
> (127-133, my emphasis)

Here metaphors we have first met applied to writing are applied to experience. In stanza two the poets' authority lies in their ability to utilise the layered structure of the 'idea/language conceptual model' of language. In the stanza quoted above the same metaphor of layeredness is applied to existence at court.

In stanza four the I, talking about writing, presents the image of failure in writing as a falling down, or away, from a position to which one has aspired. In line 130 Favoure is seen as that which '...wyll abyde and never frome us fall'. In the above stanza, then, we are again presented with statements of stability, progress and control. These confident statements are undermined by the last three lines the stanza which employ the metaphor of semantic layeredness. Whilst in stanza two the poets' authority lies in their ability to utilize the apparent layered structure of language to say one thing and mean another, in the stanza quoted immediately above the same metaphor of layeredness undermines the I's confidence in the stability of favour - good fortune.

In the allegory, several of the personifications which Drede encounters - the 'full subtyll persones' of line 133 - display aspects of this metaphor of semantic layeredness. The allegory works, then, to investigate the ethico/literary implications of this metaphor for epistemology through the narrativisation of the metaphor. By this I mean that the metaphor of semantic layeredness which is introduced in the beginning stanzas of the poem, and picked up again in the above quoted stanza, provides the metaphoric basis of the allegory. The actions of the personifications in the allegory are based on concepts of hidden meaning and intention. The allegory may be said, therefore, to be a narrativisation of the terms of the metaphor of semantic layeredness used in the prologue. That this metaphor is applied to writing, specifically poetics, and then in the allegory applied to court experience, signals the investigation of literary and poetic issues in the allegory itself.

A particularly striking example of this narrativising of terms used in the prologue is the development of a semiotics of clothing, which results in the metaphor of clothes as text. At line 11 the I observes of the 'poetes olde' that they can 'touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly'. In the dream/allegory the word 'cloke' is narrativised into particular aspects of the dress of several of the personifications. A metaphor for hidden poetic meaning and subtlety is literalised into dress, which functions as a sign of various personifications' readiness to deceive. Thus Drede observes that Favell 'ware on hym a cloke/That lyned was withdoubtfull doubleness' (177/178); of Disdayne that 'His gawdy garment with Scornnys was all wrought;/With Indygnacyon lyned was his hode' (285/286)); of Ryotte, 'Thenne I behelde how he dysgysed was' (351); and of Dyssymulacyon, 'Than, in his hode, I sawe there faces tweyne' (428). The naming of certain parts of clothing with terms such as 'Scornys', 'Indygnacyon', 'doubtfull doublenes', indicates that clothing in the allegory comprises a set of meaningful signs; a text. Clothing becomes progressively textual in The Bowge's allegory, and clothing works as a model of the text with hidden meaning. The allegorising of clothing, by labelling parts of it as signs, signals the function of clothing as a model of the allegorical text.

The textualisation of clothing reaches its peak with the description of Dyssymulacyon's dress on which words are actually written:

> I saw a knyfe hyd in his one sleve
> Whereon was wryten this worde, Myscheve
> And in his other sleve, me thought I sawe
> A spone of golde, full of hony swete.
>
> (433-436)

In this quotation hidden meaning, Dyssymulacyon's intention, is revealed by the word 'Myscheve'. Language is seen as having a disclosing function. For the 'poetes olde', in stanza two, language functioned to hide meaning 'under as coverte termes as can be' (10); as the dream/allegory progresses, however, it is the revelatory aspects of language which are stressed. The writing of the poem plots the shift away from the defining terms of the poetic tradition described in stanza two. This shift is indicated by the growing use of language to reveal and make open, rather than to hide, and it has obvious implications for the status of language and poetry at the end of the poem (see below pp.235-237).

The shift away from a concept of language as hiding meaning to one in which language discloses meaning is but one part of The Bowge's investigation of the specifically linguistic and poetic issues raised in the poem's first stanzas. The I is a poet or at least (at the poem's beginning) a poet manqué.[1] His pronouncements and observations at the beginning of the poem concern writing and define a particular set of attitudes to writing. Moreover, they provide a certain set of metaphors for discussing writing, principally the metaphor of semantic layeredness. The dream/allegory consists in major part, of an investigation of these attitudes and the implications of this specific metaphor, privileged in the poem's opening stanzas.

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[1] Stanley Fish, Skelton's Poetry, p.79, is the one critic who notes the status of the I and Drede as poet as important:

> the purpose of the poem is to consider what becomes the persistent Skeltonic problem - the possibility, for the poet, of moral action.

A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, pp.200-201, is adamant that a split be made between the I as poet in the frame to the dream and Drede in the dream itself -

> the identity he (the I) acquires in the dream, as Drede, belongs to his experience as courtier, not as a poet.

Spearing's insistence is based on the identification of the I in the frame as Skelton himself, and not a poetic persona. Drede personifies the most characteristic features of this persona - his fear and anxiety - as both poet and courtier. The picking up of the specific terms and metaphors of the frame in the dream, emphasise the connections between the allegory and the frame, and not, as Spearing would have it, the discontinuities.

The terms of the I's observations on writing, particularly those of his modesty topos of stanzas three and four, are the determining terms of the exchanges he has, as Drede, with the various personifications he meets in his dream. So, for instance, the I's doubts in his 'connynge' (23) are picked up by Favell whose opening (flattering) gambit is this:

> Noo thynge erthely that I wonder so sore
> As of your connynge, that is so excellent.
> (148-149)

Favell's words are a direct answer to the I's doubts in his own poetic abilities and indicate the nature of the dream/allegory as an investigation of the I's doubts expressed in stanzas three and four. The I at this point, it will be remembered, has already met Daunger who upbraids him for his temerity in wishing to join 'the Bowge', that is for wishing to write and join the ranks of the poetically famous, and Desire, who the I meets next, stands as the personification of the I's own desire for poetic fame.

After Favell's flattering confirmations of Drede's ability, picking up the I's specific worry over his 'connynge' in stanza four, Drede meets Disdayne. Disdayne attacks Drede by reminding him of the self-doubt he expressed in his modesty topos at the beginning of the poem:

> Remembrest thou what thou sayd yesternyght?
> Wylt thou abyde by the wordes agayne?...
> As thou arte, one that cam but yesterdaye,
> With us olde servauntes such maysters to playe.
> (323-329)

Disdayne's words offer a striking reminder of the relation of the dream/allegory to the concerns of the prologue.[1] They function as a fracture in the dream narrative; comprising a reference back by a personification in the allegory to statements made by the I in the waking frame. Skelton is here reminding the reader of the writing reference of the allegory by a reference back to the explicit discussion of writing which occurs in the prologue. The poem thus fractures a traditional generic structure; a fracture which is part of the poem's breaking down of reader expectation. Disdayne at this point is reminding Drede of the self-doubt implied in the modesty _topos_ of stanza three. This entails a breaking of the structural division of the poem into frame and framed dream/allegory, and acts to reassert the themes of the frame within the dream.

This reference back to the frame suggests that the identity of 'us olde servauntes' (329), in the above quotation, has analogy to the 'poetes olde', of line 9. This fracture in the dream/allegory makes retrospectively clear that in joining the ship the I/Drede is not only embarking on a career at court but also entering the poetic tradition outlined in stanza two. The poem thus invokes a poetic tradition then has the I figure enter that tradition; the allegory comprises a voyage into an environment peopled by personifications of that linguistic and semiotic double reference and ambiguity detailed in stanza two. Disdayne's words above remind the I figure, as poet, of his inexperience in handling precisely this type of linguistic double reference and poetic ambiguity. The allegory operates by a double use of metaphor. The ship acts as a metaphor for the court, while court corruption acts as a metaphor for the poetic difficulties of handling complex sign/signified relations such as ambiguity, hidden meaning and extended metaphor itself.

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[1] This reminder of what the I said in the prologue to the dream, confirms that the I/Drede are the same figure, and are, therefore, both poets as against A.C. Spearing's arguments in _Medieval Dream-Poetry_, pp.200-201.

That the I as Drede inhabits an allegorical landscape peopled by personifications of linguistic double reference, and confronts the poetic issue of stylistic alternatives in his encounters with the various personifications, is reflected in the dream/allegory's emphasis on words.[1] Words in the poem are displayed as having a substantial quality. What is said and what is spoken constitute almost wholly the action of the allegory; furthermore allegorical significance is pointed by the emblematic use of language. Disdayne's words in the above quotation makes Drede's words in the prologue, the I figure's modesty _topos_, proscriptive; Drede should 'abyde' by what he said in his modesty _topos_ and not attempt to win Favour; i.e. gain poetic success.

There is further evidence in the poem that words have the status of physical things. The whole nature of the I's enterprise to win Favour depends, as Desire points out, on the use of words:

> Yet I avyse you to speke, for ony drede:
> Who spareth to speke, in fayth, he spareth to spede.
> (90-91)

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[1] On this emphasis on words in allegory generally, see Maureen Quilligan, _The Language of Allegory : Defining the Genre_ (Ithaca and London, 1979), p.15:

> All true narrative allegory has its source in a culture's attitude toward language, and in that attitude, as embodied in the language itself, allegory finds the limits of its possibility. It is a genre beginning in, focused on, and ending with 'words, words'.

Words are here identified as the way of making progress and getting on. The poem maps Drede's voyage as a search for good favour; if we also understand this voyage as a writing endeavour, then the poem itself may be seen as the product of this endeavour. Writing the poem is a way of making verbal progress; Desire's words, see above, make explicit this verbal way of making progress. As revealed in the actions of Favell, Suspycyon et al, words are those actions which can thwart or make stimid Drede's (verbal) progress. Language is both the way of getting on, as the self-reference to the poem's writing reveals, and the way of preventing someone getting on.

Drede's awareness of the words whispered all around him makes trust in words, and therefore progress, impossible. The allegory reveals not only a distrust of court intrigue but also a distrust of language; a distrust which hampers the I/Drede's progress as a poet. The characteristic atmosphere of the allegory is one of paranoia brought to realisation in the conversations which Drede overhears; and the characteristic action is talking, whether confrontational or in whispered asides. Words, then, are the currency of these exchanges. Drede observes of Favell:

> Me thoughte, of wordes that he had full a poke;
> His stomak stuffed ofte tymes dyde reboke.
>
> (179-180)

This provides us with a metaphor for articulation - belching - reminiscent of the pun on 'indegest' in The Kingis Quair.[1] (Both uses of this metaphor are based on the commonplace metaphor for learning as feeding, so that articulation becomes the expulsion of what one has digested, or half-digested.)[2]

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[1] The Kingis Quair, st.14, 1.

[2] See The Kingis Quair, st.7, 3 and 14, 3. For classical and medieval examples of these metaphors see E.R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953), pp.134-136.

The word as entity is of great moment in the allegory of The Bowge; Suspycyon defines himself, his suspiciousness, by questioning Drede about what Favell has said: 'Spake he, a fayth, no worde to you of me?' (204). Harvy Hafter asks Drede, 'But I requyre you no worde that I saye' (276); and Dyssymulacyon reassures Drede, and offers his help against his enemies, by promising to employ words:

> Were I as you, I would ryde them full nere;
> And by my trouthe, but yf an ende they make,
> Yet wyll I saye some wordes for your sake
> That shall them angre, I wolde thereon a grote,
> For some shall wene be hanged by the throte.
> (472-476)

Words in the allegory become things, substantial weapons to be used against others. As in the quotation above, Dyssymulacyon promises to use words against Drede's enemies who will be hanged 'by the throte' - the place from which words are produced. This stress on the word as thing is reflected, of course, in the use of personification itself. The trope of personification treats words as things, but things which also function, to use an Augustinian distinction, as signs.[1] Maureen Quilligan comments on personification allegory that it relies

> on the reification of language itself, a process which involves the animation of nouns and the close scrutiny of the 'things' embedded within words.[2]

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[1] St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, edited and translated by D.W. Robertson Jr (Indianapolis and New York, 1958), Book I, 1-11, p.8:

> All doctrine concerns either things or signs ... I have here called a 'thing' that which is not used to signify something else... There are other signs whole use is in signifying, like words. For no one uses words except for the purpose of signifying something.

[2] Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory, p.115.

Morton Bloomfield has described the grammatical basis of personification as a process involving a narrowing of the noun's range of reference from the general to the specific; 'when we make inanimate nouns animate, we are making deictic (or pointer) nouns out of non-deictic nouns'.[1] This narrowing of semantic range emphasises the word as thing and focuses our attention, as Bloomfield points out, on the actions of the personifications so created. In The Bowge this action is primarily verbal; the various personifications move towards and away from Drede but in the main their important actions involve the use of language. That Ryotte is an exception to this rule, in what he does, or has done, is as important as what he says, is one of the ways in which he marked off from the other personifications. Ryotte's atypicality as a personification in The Bowge is, as I shall argue later, a part of his threat to the metaphoric decorum of the allegory.

If we take the subject of The Bowge to be poetic; involved with the search for a language with a referential and moral stability, the exploration of various poetic styles and the examination of the subject of poetic control, then the emphasis on speech, talking, language and the word in the allegory is an unsurprising aspect of the allegory's investigation of these linguistic and poetic issues.

In stanza two the I identifies a poetic tradition wherein language, specifically 'coverte termes', is the means of achieving morally stable ground. As has been argued this stability, validated by enduring poetic fame, is almost immediately undercut by the ambiguity of line 13. The alternating belief in, and undermining of, the stability achieved through language and poetry, is realised in the allegory in the alternating fawning and plotting of the personifications. Moreover, as readers we are faced with two possible referents for the allegory: court and poetics. These referents alternately slide underneath and over each other in the allegory. The poem's investigation of the stability of linguistic and especially poetic reference is thus made part of the poetic texture itself, as at any one time the allegory may be referring to either the court, poetics or both. The reader thus, to some extent, shares the I/Drede's referential insecurity.

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[1] Morton W. Bloomfield, 'A Grammatical Approach to Personification Allegory', Modern Philology, 60 (1963), 161-171 (p.164). For further discussions of personification see Robert W. Frank, 'The Art of Reading Medieval Personification Allegory', English Literary History, 20 (1953), 239-250; and William C. Strange, 'The Willful Trope: Some Notes on Personification with Illustrations from Piers(B)', Annuale Mediaevale, 9 (1968), 26-39.

Continual reference is made throughout the poem to Drede's status as a poet. The personifications may be seen as embodiments of the I as poet's various attitudes and responses to his poetry. Daunger is not, as in the Roman de la Rose,[1] a personification of woman's aloofness, but of the aloofness of the poetic tradition the I wishes to join; and Desyre is a personification of those very wishes themselves.

The allegory charts Drede's progressive loss of faith in the stability of words and images. Terms used of the 'poetes olde' as praise, such as 'craftely (9), 'coverte termes' (10), 'cloke' (11), 'subtylly' (11), and 'Dyverse' (13), assume in the allegory a perjorative sense used to describe the various personifications; see for instance line 133, 'Full subtyll persones in nombre foure and thre', or lines 158-161, where an adjective describing an aspect of poetic style — 'Dyverse' (13) — becomes a noun naming those who threaten Drede:

> I herde her speke of you within shorte space,
> Whan there were dyverse that sore dyde you manace.
> And, though I say it, I was myselfe your frende,
> For here be dyverse to you that be unkynde.
>
> (158-161, my emphasis)

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[1] See Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, edited by Ernest Langlois, 5 volumes (Paris, 1920), II,3151-3351.

The diversity of style of the 'poetes olde' in line 13, has become the diverse complement of personifications who threaten Drede.

All the personifications are embodiments of a particular aspect of this stylistic diversity, all employing 'hidden meaning', and offering different stylistic alternatives, all of which the potential poet i.e. Drede, finds threatening. Drede as poet is intimidated by language's ability to conceal meaning, to mean one thing and say another, and language's amorality as a medium. I wish now to examine three of the personifications in the allegory, and to determine the particular linguistic and poetic issues explored by Skelton through these figures. I will concentrate therefore, on the figures of Hervy Hafter (230-315); Ryotte (344-413) and Dyssymulacyon (421-497).

Hervy Hafter enters the poem with this description from Drede:

> But as I stode musynge in my mynde,
> Harvy Hafter came lepynge, lyghte as lynde.
>
> Upon his breste he bare a versynge boxe:
> His throte was clere and lustely coude fayne.
>
> (230-233)

Harvy Hafter is, without exception, described by critics as a personification of the swindling at court;[1] hence his name - 'Hafter: a cheat or a fraud'.[2] As with the name of the ship, and the poem's title, this name

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1. On Hervy Hafter see Stanley Fish, Skelton's Poetry, p.72, 'the danger of a purse picking Harvey Hafter is obvious and immediate'; A.R. Heiserman, Skelton and Satire, pp.23-24:

> Harvy Hafter leaps into view with his dice box... this rogue fool jollies and flatters Drede... Harvy Hafter appears there as a representative folly of the court: one need not assume that he had a real-life original.

William Nelson, John Skelton : Laureate, p.79, 'Dread, looking at Harvy the trickster'; Maurice Pollet, John Skelton, p.55, 'Harvy Hafter, lui, est un aigre fin'; and A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-poetry, p.199:

> His third acquaintance is Hervy Hafter (Dodger), an inquisitive gossip, who once more undermines his assurance with 'I praye to God that it maye never dy'.

2. O.E.D., Volume 5, p.18.

does not delimit the full meaning of this personification as sign. While as swindler Hervy fits in well with the allegory as court satire, he also functions as a personification of the amorality of poetics in general, and of metrics in particular.

The description quoted above gives a signal to the writing reference of the personification of Hervy Hafter. The Oxford English Dictionary cites The Bowge of Court as the sole example of the noun phrase 'versynge boxe'. The entry reads: 'of obscure meaning; perhaps connected with verse - to swindle and verser - cheater'.[1] The meanings of this phrase cited in the Oxford English Dictionary fit in well with Hervy as a personification of court swindling. However, 'versynge boxe' seems not unrelated to the use of the word 'verse' in line 244, where the word refers to poetic verse as is made clear by Hervy's reference to scansion in the next line:

> Tell me your mynde, me thynke ye make a verse,
> I coude it skan and ye wolde it reherse.
> (244-245)

Hervy's ability to 'skan' the verse which the I produces suggests that 'versynge boxe' may also refer to Hervy's mechanical skill at metrics. Hervy works, then, as a personficiation of the poet's ability to make verse scan; that is the poet's use of metrics.

The joint reference by Hervy to both court swindling and the mechanics of verse making is strengthened by the pun on the word 'fayne' in line 233 quoted above. 'Fayne' in this line is commonly glossed as to deceive or pretend. However, the word has a more specific descriptive use. This is shown in Skelton's poem 'Agaynste a Comely Coystowne' (1), 11.53-4:

> He techyth them so wysely to solf and to fayne,
> That neyther they synge well prycke song or playne.[2]

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[1] O.E.D., Volume 12, p.145.

[2] In John Scattergood, John Skelton : the Complete English Poems, p.38.

The meaning of 'fayne', from its use here, is clearly a descriptive term for singing, and the word is glossed in this context as meaning, 'to sing with due regard for the accidentals of the score'.[1] This more precise meaning of the word 'fayne' would obviously fit in well with the reference to Hervy's singing abilities in line 233 - 'His throte was clere and lustely coude fayne'. The pun on 'fayne' here, using the word with the sense of to dissemble or to lie (a sense with a particular reference to the deceptions of writing),[2] and also in its more specific, musical sense establishes in the initial description of Hervy Hafter a connection between verse making, singing and deception.

Hervy Hafter makes explicit reference to Drede's status as a poet, who as the I of the frame narrative, is making a poem out of these experiences. Hervy's claim that 'I coude it skan' (245) seems to make his connection with the topic of metrics quite incontravertible. Hervy is thus offering his services as a personification of the mechanics of poetry to a poet. Hervy continues with an allusion to this poet's previous use of verse making at lines 246-249; set, in the spatial terms of the allegory, as Drede having met Hervy before. Hervy allows Skelton to make statements on poetry through a form/content split in that Hervy, as a personification of the mechanics of versifying, comments on Drede's activity in creating poetic form and content. Hervy is, for instance, lost in feigned admiration for Drede's learning; the 'sentence' to his 'solaas', see lines 240-

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[1] O.E.D., Volume 4, p.138; also 'to hum softly'.

[2] See, for instance, the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, 11.735-36:

> Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
> Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.

And The House of Fame, 11.1477-1480:

> Oon seyde that Omer made lyes,
> Feynynge in hys poetries,
> And was to Grekes favorable;
> Therfor held he hyt but fable.

243:

> What thynge is that I maye do for you?
> A wonder thynge that ye waxe not madde!
> For and I studye sholde as ye doo nowe,
> My wytte wolde waste, I make God avowe.

At lines 260-261 Hervy makes explicit reference to Drede's 'connynge'; picking up the I's anxieties in the modesty topos at the poem's beginning:[1]

> Loo, what is to you a pleasure grete
> To have that connynge and wayes that ye have!

Hervy himself, in contrast, is not learned: 'For on the booke I can not synge a note' (255) and, although he can sing, he has no formal knowledge of his scales, and would like Drede to teach him this ability (lines 256-259).

Given this lack of learning it would seem that Hervy represents an untutored style of lyric making, and thus he sings a few lines from his repertoire see lines 235, 252, 253-254 and 360.[2] Hervy represents a stylistic alternative to the learned poetic tradition defined in stanza two of the poem. The implication of Hervy's incredulity concerning Drede's skills is that Drede is too learned a poet to be a (financial) success. Hervy admits that he finds it impossible to make a living:

> For, as for me, I served here many a daye,
> And yet unneth I can have my lyvynge.
>
> (274-275)

The implication being that if he, Hervy as swindler and popular lyric maker, can only make a meagre living then Drede has considerable cause for concern.

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[1] See specially, ll.20-28.

[2] John Scattergood, John Skelton : the Complete English Poems, pp.397-399, notes these lines as either opening lines or refrains from fifteenth-century songs. It is perhaps worth noting that three of these songs refer to nautical subjects (Hervy's songs at lines 252 and 254, and Ryotte's song at line 360). These songs present a similar subject matter, i.e. seafaring, but in a different poetic style. Hervy is, generally, unconcerned with the topic of poetic control signified by the ship as metaphor, see lines 250-251:

> Holde up the helme, loke up and lete God stere:
> I wolde be mery that wynde that ever blowe.

This reading of Hervy Hafter as a personification of poetic facility and of a style of untutored lyric making points the continued awareness of Drede as a poet throughout the allegory; an awareness which results from the repeated connection of the framed allegory and the frame. The I's voiced doubts concerning his ability as poet to gain access to the same morally stable and enduring ground as the 'poetes olde' and, moreover, to retain his position there gain a desperate momentum throughout the poem. These doubts are narrativised into an allegorical landscape peopled by personifications which confront Drede and plot against him, they conspire to make him fall away from the position to which he aspires - the metaphor for the ultimate threat to Drede is to be cast 'over the borde' (308): to be excluded from the principal metaphor of the poem. As an allegory of these fears, and of the poet's search for a stability of semantic reference, the dream does not exclude the satiric thrust against the court, and the dangers of fortune in general. The poem, rather, tightens the inter-relation of these topics by showing how the need for good favour, specifically the court patronage and goodwill of the poem's title, is intimately related to poetic success.

Having left Drede Hervy Hafter falls into conversation with Disdayne. Disdayne indignantly casts Drede in the role of parvenu:

> 'By Cryste', quod he, 'for it is shame to saye,
> To see Johan Dawes, that came but yesterdaye.
> (300-301)[1]

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[1] The reference to 'Johan Dawes' by Disdayne probably likens Drede, and Skelton himself, to a Jackdaw, a bird with a reputation for thievery and mimicry in speech. Drede as poet is no more than a thief and a mimic. The bird was alsoknown as the 'chough' in Middle English. See for instance the story of the emperor and the jackdaw in Higden's Polychronicon, Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis; together with English Translations of John Trevisa and of an unknown writer of the Fifteenth-Century, edited by Churchill Babington, 9 volumes (London,1865-1886), IV, capitulum III, p.307:

> A poore sowter perceyvenge that, informede a dawe to speke in lykewise; whiche was wounte to say to the bridde not willinge to speke, 'Now suche speche and attendaunce is pereschede'. After that, the dawe perceyvenge themperoure to comme by the place of her maister, salutede hym in lykewise.

See also the Parlement of Foules, 1.345, 'The thef, the chough; and ek the janglynge pye'; and Beryl Rowland, Birds with Human Souls: a Guide to Bird Symbolism (Knoxsville, 1978), p.86. 'Daw' may also be glossed as 'simpleton' or 'fool'.

In the course of his exclamations against Drede Disdayne twice refers to Drede being 'in conceyte', see line 302; 'How he is now taken in conceyte' and line 310: 'I wonder sore he is in such conceyte'. While obviously 'conceyte' here refers to what Disdayne thinks of as Drede's high opinion of himself as poet, the word also punningly refers to the ship as a poetic figure; a metaphoric conceit.

The use of conceit in the sense of a poetic figure is certainly current in the fifteenth century. It is used for instance in John Metham's Amoryus & Cleopes (prior to 1449):

> Eke Jon Lydgate, sumtyme monke off Byry
> Hys bokys endytyd with termes off retoryk,
> And halff chongyd Latyne, with conseytys off poetry
> And craffty imagynacionys off thingys fantastyk
> (2192-2195)[1]

In Amoryus and Cleopes 'conseyt' clearly refers to poetic figure, a rhetorical trope. In the poem 'conceyt' is glossed as that which reveals the 'entent off ... inward menyng' (799). Amoryus and Cleopes narrativises this concept of conceit in the episode which concerns the meaning and ownership of Cleopes' 'conseyt', i.e. her favour; the 'conseyt' being the emblem of her love for Amoryus: see lines 793-897.

Metham's use of the word conceit as a figure of poetry, a trope of rhetoric as well as a physical emblem, suggests the currency of the word in fifteenth-century poetry,[2] and also that Skelton is punning on the word in the exchange between Hervy Hafter and Disdayne. Drede is indeed 'taken in conceyte', in that he takes part in the ruling metaphor of the allegory - the ship. Moreover 'taken in conceyte' suggests that the I/Drede as poet has taken up using poetic conceits; so that Skelton is here referring to the I as poet entering the arena of poetic creativity.

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[1] The Works of John Metham, edited by Hardin Craig, EETS, original series 132 (London, 1916), p.22.

[2] For other uses of conceit in the sense of poetic/rhetorical figure see Trinity College, Cambridge, Manuscript, MS R. 3. 19, a fascicular MS of the late fifteenth century. The MS includes a treatise which the rubric describes as:

> a gentylmanly Tretyse ... of conceytis in love vnder
> covert termes off fysshyng and ffowlynge... for
> contemplatiff lovers to rede and vnderstond. (foll.241a)

See also Hoccleve's 'Ballade to King Henry V on his Accession to the Throne, 21 March, 1413', ll.35-36:

> And, lige lord thogh my conceit be smal,
> And nat my wordes peynte fressh and gay.

From Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems, volume I, p.40.

Being a poet, taking part in a poetic tradition, is imaged in the allegory in spatial terms. Becoming a poet is seen as attempting to take up a position in an already inhabited space. The ship works as the defining metaphor of this space. Disdayne's disdain of the I/Drede results in his wishing to evict Drede from the place of poetic productivity, the place of conceits:

> Lete us, therfore, shortely at a worde
> Fynde some mene to caste him over the borde.
> (307-308)

As the ship is the metaphor, the conceit, of the space of poetic productivity, so being cast overboard works as a metaphor for being evicted from that already inhabited space. Additionally, Skelton makes a nice point concerning the moral status of this poetic place, this spatially conceived inter-text, by rhyming 'conceyte' (302 and 310) with 'dysceyte' (313). The notion of the ship as poetic inter-text, or place of poetic creativity both past and present, functions as a 'conceyte', it is also the place of 'dysceyte' against which Skelton, at the end of the poem, in having Drede jump overboard, defines his poetic attitude (see below, pp.235-237).

This reading of the exchange between Hervy Hafter and Disdayne, which emphasises the allegory as a narrative about writing and poetry and which sees the use of pun and rhyme in the passage as signalling these literary and linguistic concerns,[1] is strengthened by the exchange which follows between Drede and Disdayne. For in this exchange, we remember, Disdayne makes explicit reference back to the I as poet's words in the prologue. These words reveal the I's timidity at attempting to gain access to the already occupied space of poetic productivity; words which in fact draw explicit attention to the centrally important subject of writing in the poem as a whole.

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[1] Michael Edwards, 'Exercise in Queneau', Prospice, 8 (1978), 44-50 (p.45), discusses the close kinship of pun and rhyme, 'One may reflect that all rhymes are quasi-puns...to associate words phonetically is also to relate them semantically...the pun, surely, is the rhetorical figure behind rhyming'.

Ryotte's entry into the poem at line 344 threatens to break down the literary decorum of the poem so far.[1] Ryotte is not only a-poetic but also amoral:

> Thou mayste not studye or muse on the mone.
> This worlde is nothynge but ete, drynke and slepe.
> (383-384)

These lines are Ryotte's answer to the Boethian and astrological observations of stanzas one and two. The moral dilemmas of the poem's opening are summarily dismissed. Ryotte makes no secret of his 'disguise' (351), and does not seek moral stability nor the exercise of 'connynge'.

Ryotte also breaks down, in his speech, the ruling structural metaphors of the poem. Ryotte scorns the metaphor of the ship, and its concomitant metaphor of the voyage to gain Favour, and replaces it with a metaphor of movement forward as riding. This metaphor's potential for sexual double entendre signals the breakdown of the moral stability based on 'coverte termes' established in stanza two. Here 'coverte termes' - the sexual innuendo in the verb to ride - subverts 'moralyte' (14), thus giving the lie to the connection made in stanza two between hiddenness and moral intention in writing.

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[1] Ryotte's quite violent contrast to the other figures on the 'Bowge', has been noted by Maurice Pollet, John Skelton, p.55:

> Ryote est tout différent. C'est un viveur, un jouer invétéré, dont le désordre vestimentaire reflête le désordre intérieur de l'âme.

Ryotte's disregard of the ship metaphor takes place within the extended development of this sexual meaning as shown in lines 400-409:

> Now renne muste I to the stewys syde
> To wete yf Malkyn, my lemman, have gete oughte.
> I lete her to hyre that men maye on her ryde;
> Her harnes easy ferre and nere is soughte.
> By Goddis sydes, syns I her thyder broughte,
> She hath gote me more money with her tayle
> Than hath some shyppe that unto Bordews sayle.
>
> Had I as good an hors as she is a mare,
> I durse aventure to journey thorugh Fraunce;
> Who rydeth on her, he needeth not to care.
>
> (400-409, my emphasis)

Riding, here, becomes a metaphor for 'getting on' both financially and sexually. This metaphor replaces the poem's now accepted metaphor of the ship and sailing as an image of the way towards financial reward, progress through life and control in poetry. The ship is quite literally dismissed (line 406) in favour of 'Malkyn, my lemman'. Malkyn becomes the best means of journeying through France, going where no ship can. Ryotte is, then, dismissing one structural metaphor and replacing it with another which promises a quite different narrative development, and a quite different linguistic and poetic style.

Ryotte is not constricted in his movements by the limits of the ship image - 'Now renne muste I to the stewys syde' (400) - Ryotte is not limited by the metaphoric parameters of the dream. He can run and ride and move in disregard of the limits set by the ship, for he doesn't acknowledge the ship as the determining metaphoric locus of the dream's actions. In addition, Ryotte's actions unlike the other personifications are not predominantly verbal. He runs, rides, drinks, gambles, fornicates and pimps. His essence is movement, movement which breaks down the dream's metaphoric boundaries, which are a part of the established metaphoric decorum of the dream/allegory.

Ryotte's 'coverte termes' delight in revealing the obscenity latent in words. His exploitation of the metaphoric layeredness of language subverts morality rather than establishing it. By doing so he adds to the line of argument in the poem which reveals the I figure's progressive distrust of language as a way to achieving semantic and moral stability. Ryotte's blatant ignoring of the ship metaphor, in favour of his preferred metaphor of riding, with its possibilities for sexual innuendo, reflect the undermining both of a theory of the moral stability coming from the exploitation of language's capacity for multiple reference, and also an undermining of the poem's established conventions and decorum.

In stanza two a poetic tradition was alluded to, one which acts as a model for the I's poetic endeavours, and one which had, as we have seen, its own moral ambiguities. The fallibility of a theory which equates carefully crafted poetry with a morally judged stability of reference is revealed by the ambiguities of 'craftely' (9), and of line 13. At this point in the allegory Ryotte introduces an alternative poetic style in which double meanings,'coverte termes', reveal not moral stability but immoral sexual innuendo. Both Hervy Hafter and Ryotte, then, reveal uses of verse and language's potential for multiple reference which contradict the theory, and stylistic assumptions, of the poetic which the I has discussed and privileged in the first stanzas of the poem.[1]

The whole thrust of the allegory of The Bowge is towards an examination of the moral and epistemological bases of poetry; an allegorical extension of the doubts expressed conventionally in the modesty *topos* of stanzas 3-4. The allegory narrativises the doubts in the nature of the writer's ability; the awareness of the moral and semantic instability of linguistic reference and polysemy and the awareness also, of the alternative (non-decorous), uses of various poetic styles, as defined by Hervy Hafter's lyric making and Ryotte's sexual innuendo.

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[1] Hervy Hafter introduces an alternative metaphor for 'getting on', for progress in life; that of gambling see lines 311-315. Life is shown to have no more stability, or fairness, than card trickery.

Drede's description of Dyssymulacyon, and the latter's speech, reveals the poem's awareness of its own allegoric and metaphoric procedures and the awareness also of the insecurities of a knowledge, and a morality, based on such procedures. An aspect of Dyssymulacyon's literalised two-facedness is that it is a representation of referential and poetic doubleness. The description of Dyssymulacyon raises doubts in the very basis of allegory itself.

Allegorical personification relies on an established referential relation between words, as signs, and things or concepts. The particular use made of a personification in an allegorical narrative may have reference back to how we define a particular concept, or how we see that concept in action. The interchange between tenor and vehicle, between abstract and concrete, is a mutually defining one with capacity for re-definition or semantic qualification on both sides.[1] Dyssymulacyon while being an example of the workings of personification also includes qualities which reveal the potential undermining of this very referential basis of allegorical personification.

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[1] Stephen A. Barney, Allegories of History : Allegories of Love (Hamden, Connecticut, 1979), pp.24-25, notes of this aspect of personification:

> a personification points to a unique thing, a class with one member - a personification merges the abstract (and real) and the concrete (and fictional). The merger, secure enough within the fiction, unstabilises the reader's mind as his apprehension is drawn in two directions at once. A skillful allegorist exploits this division.

Part of Drede's description of Dyssymulacyon is as follows:

> Whan that he was even at me almoost,
> I saw a knyfe hyd in his one sleve,
> Wheron was wryten this worde, Myscheve.
>
> And in his other sleve, me thought I sawe
> A spone of golde, full of hony swete,
> To fede a fole, and for to preye a dawe.
> And on that sleve these wordes were wrete:
> A false abstracte cometh from a false concrete.
>
> (432-439)

The writing on each of the two sleeves is of a different kind and each demands a different mode of interpretation, and so act as a model of the two critical responses *The Bowge* demands of its reader. The first word - 'Myscheve' - gains its full meaning wholly within the context of this being a description of a personification of dissimulation. The second phrase - 'A false abstracte cometh from a fals concrete' - while obviously relevant to a description of dissimulation has also a meta-linguistic function; it makes a statement on the referential basis of allegorical personification itself.[1] This second phrase refers not simply to an aspect of dissimulation but also of the signifying relations which signal that we should read 'Myscheve' as an aspect of the behaviour we call dissimulation. The longer phrase refers to how we read allegory and it holds, therefore, implications for how we read the whole allegory and not just this one personification.

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[1] The terms 'abstracte' and 'concrete' are fairly rare in Middle English. 'Abstract' can mean 'to draw out' as in John Metham's *Amoryus and Cleopes*, ll.304-306:

> And O eke ye nobyl deyfid sygnys! abstracte
> From erthly mancionnis to the asuryd fymamente;
> Sum fix and sum revoluying to and fro.

Skelton seems to be using the terms in their grammatical sense; Trevisa's translation of *On the Properties of Things*, refers to an 'abstract' as a quality and a 'concret' as a substance. See *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's translation of Bartholmaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, edited by M.C. Seymour, Gabriel M. Liegey et al, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1975), II, Book 1, capitulum 9, ll.10-13:

> þe novne ben iclepid mene þat haueþ þe manere
> and fourme and significacioun of abstractis but þe
> vse and offys and witnesse of concretis, as *lumen*,
> *sapiencia*, and oþir swiche.

As a device of allegory 'Myscheve' works emblematically; it labels Dyssymulacyon's intention. Line 439, however 'A false abstracte cometh from a fals concrete' has far more than a simple labelling function. The difference between the two phrases is firstly one of scope: 'Myscheve' reveals an aspect of Dyssymulacyon: his effect and his intention. Line 439 reveals that the whole basis of signifying by which Dyssymulacyon operates is false. This line, then, is both descriptive and also a reflection of a far larger doubt in the epistemological status of his signifying role in the allegory.

In addition, the use of the words 'abstracte' and 'concrete', here, imply that this phrase has a meta-linguistic function with implications for allegorical interpretation. Not only, then, does the phrase imply that Dyssymulacyon distorts the signifying process, it also suggests a doubt in the epistemological and moral validity of allegory as a mode of writing. If the 'concrete' itself is false then the 'abstracte' we signify by it will also be false. The use of allegory itself is no validation that what is being signified is true; mode cannot validate message. This is reflected at the end of the poem where the dream, and the written poem can offer the reader no certainty of the value of the poem's content, thus resulting in the I figure's final abnegating gesture - 'Now constrewe ye what is the resydewe' (539).

The structural frame of The Bowge is concerned with writing: its lineage, its importance, its inherent dangers and difficulties and, in the final two stanzas of the poem, its interpretation and worth. The final stanza of the poem makes explicit the whole question of dream interpretation. In this stanza the two alternative responses to the poem allowed the reader are stated: either the experience of the dream/allegory be disregarded 'syth all in substaunce of slumbrynge doth procede' (536), or paid some critical attention because 'Oftyme sundrie dremes be founde trewe' (538). The nature of the link between the outer frame and the content of the framed dream/allegory has importance concerning the value of the poem's 'sentence' or meaning. The reader is enjoined to consider the problematic of dream interpretation within the perspective of the ruling ship metaphorics of the poem.

At the point of the ship's appearance in the poem in stanza six the poem is almost wholly concerned with writing. The ship, as metaphor, seems to confirm and complement this theme. The metaphor is, however, redirected to refer to the court. In the penultimate stanza the writing reference of the ship metaphor recurs. In stanza six the impulse to start writing is metaphorised by the I's resolve to board 'The Bowge of Courte'. In the penultimate stanza it is the impulse to leap off the ship which signals the beginning of writing the poem:

> And as they came, the shypborde faste I hente,
> And thoughte to lepe; and even with that woke,
> Caughte penne and ynke, and wroth this lytell boke.
> (530-532)

The paratactic syntax in this passage suggests a continuity of action by which the dream/waking divide - already fractured by Disdayne's reference back to the I's prologue (323-329) - seem almost incidental. The reader is invited to make the link between the impulse to leap off the ship and the action of beginning to write. The former operates as a metaphor of the latter, and the freneticism of both actions - leaping and writing - is reflected stylistically in the parataxis and seems to add weight to the equation on which such a metaphor is based.

The change in the use of the ship metaphor signals the poem's thematic development. While in stanza six beginning to write was metaphorised as boarding the ship, in this penultimate stanza writing is apparently conditional upon leaving the ship, so much so that the leaving of the ship acts as a metaphor for beginning to write. The earlier use of the ship metaphor relates writing to joining with others and in seeking access to a shared place; the place of writing and the written. The later metaphor sees writing as conditional upon leaving that space. Moreover, this action of quitting is urgent; Drede's life, his success as a poet, depends upon it.[1]

In the dream/allegory the ship, and sailing, act as metaphors of a particular line of poetic development, specifically that defined in stanza two. Ryotte, in breaking this metaphor, replaces the 'coverte termes' of the 'poetes olde', with his own hidden meanings - sexual innuendo. Ryotte offers, then, a stylistic alternative for the poet, an alternative which has nothing to do with the governing metaphor of the ship; Ryotte prefers to ride rather than to sail.

The description of Dyssymulacycn appears to bring into question the referential basis of allegorical narrative itself as a way to a stable system of moral values, such as those implied in the 'auctoryte' of the poets in stanza two. In thinking of jumping overboard Drede is not considering suicide but performing an act of self-preservation. This act represents an abandoning of a particular line of poetic development and a particular concept of poetic decorum and control. Skelton is making a statement here about stylistic choice. Moreover, he is abandoning the concept that certain poetic and narrative modalities involved in allegory automatically ensure the value and moral efficacy of their meanings - a link which the I assumes in stanzas two and three. The use of allegory and other instances of 'coverte termes' does not ensure the value or truth of the meaning of writing. Skelton is thus making a statement of poetic intent, refusing to be hampered by stylistic decorum and conventional rhetorical couplings of form and content. The last stanza's offer to the reader - 'Now constrewe ye what is the resydewe' (539) - is a reflex of this refusal; one more undermining of certainty.

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[1] I disagree with A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry, p.200, who reads Drede's wish to leap off the Bowge as an act of suicide. This poem explicitly states that Drede fears that the personifications will kill him if he stays on board the ship (529), he contemplates jumping in order to save his life. I also disagree with Stanley Fish, John Skelton's Poetry, p.81, who sees nothing of hope in Drede's act.

As a conventional metaphorics for poetic control, the ship and seafaring are shown, in The Bowge, to be too restrictive. Skelton is making a statement about his poetic in The Bowge, for the breaking of stylistic decorum which Ryotte represents and the undercutting of semantic certainty represented in the allegory, especially with Dyssymulacyon are metaphorised in the poem's final stanzas as the impetus behind writing. The poem is written because of these stylistic alternatives, violent contrasts and discovered uncertainties and ambiguities in categories and connections presumed to be certain and stable.

The nature of Skelton's poetic, the definition behind the impulse to write, is to be located in the questioning which takes place in The Bowge as to language's referential capacity; the connection of rhetorical and poetic forms with the moral status and value of specified contents (a connection that could well be said to define the nature of rhetorical and poetic convention in the late fifteenth century); the referential basis of allegory itself and to the nature of success (poetic fame and good favour), in terms of both court and poetry. It could be said, without too meaningless a simplification, that Skelton's poetic oeuvre displays a variety of stylistic experiments, often based on the most violent and audacious of contrasts, which stand as the anthesis to Drede's poetic timidity. It displays, too, the pleasure to be found in poetic diversity revealed in The Bowge in the stylistic and metaphoric alternatives which Hervy Hafter and Ryotte represent. As a statement about poetry Skelton defines his poetic stance against the I/Drede's timidity and in favour of stylistic diversity and semantic and moral instability.

In The Bowge Skelton uses the I/Drede figure to make poetic statements. In The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell Skelton names himself as the poet/persona.[1] The Garlande displays a comic fiction of the poet as (over) confident in his poetic abilities and the rewards accruing from his poetic talents; too high an opinion of what poetic fame is.[2] The Garlande may be profitably seen in conjunction with The Bowge; for both treat of similar themes, poetry and the aspiration to fame through poetry, in a similar structure that of the dream poem.

The Garlande also shares with The Bowge the use of the ship/seafaring metaphorics. Not only does the Garlande's use of this metaphorics, unmistakeably a metaphorics of writing, confirm the use of the ship as a metaphor of poetry in The Bowge, but also its use in Garlande acts as complement to The Bowge offering, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, a palinode to the earlier poem's observations on poetic issues.

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1. Text of the Garlande referred to is in John Scattergood, John Skelton: the Complete English Poems.

2. Stanley Fish, John Skelton's Poetry, p.232, characterises the origin of the Garlande's humour to come from its preoccupation with literary issues:

> of course the lightness of tone which characterises the Garlande of Laurell is possible only because the consideration of real, as distinct from literary, problems is suspended.

I hope that this chapter has furnished enough evidence to show that the marginalisation of literary issues implied by Fish's comment is unhelpful in understanding Skelton's poetic strategies.

The Garlande begins with an I figure, soon to be named as 'Skelton Poeta', preoccupied, like the I of The Bowge, with thoughts of the transitory nature of things. He is 'musynge in my thought/How all thynge passyth as doth the somer flower' (8/9). The Skelton persona falls asleep and dreams of being close to Fame's court. The queen of Fame and Dame Pallas are engaged in debate as to whether Skelton should be allowed into the ranks of the poetically famous: the Quene of Fame argues against saying regally 'we fynde in hym grete lake' (70), and Dame Pallas is in favour, she strenuously defends Skelton against Fame's characterisation of him as 'sum what to dull' (79). Finally the Quene allows the poet a chance if he 'wyll put hymselfe in prease' (239). As a narrative fulfilment of these words, a dream condensation, Skelton immediately finds himself amongst a throng of contenders for entry into the court; Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate appear and speak on Skelton's behalf urging him to press for admittance. To pass the time Skelton discusses poetic issues with Occupacyon, who works as a personification of the poet's engagement with his poetic craft and literary topics.

After a description of the chaotic population of the court Skelton enters a locus amoenus and debates with Occupacyon concerning the 'sentence/solaas' status of literature, and the value of the poems he has produced so far. Occupacyon finally challenges Skelton to write a series of poems to the ladies and gentlewomen of the court. Skelton, a little nervously, agrees and writes eleven stylistically varied short poems which are included within the text. After this virtuoso display of poetic versatility and talent,[1] the triumvirate of Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate escort the poet into the palace of Fame itself.

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[1] Robin Skelton, 'The Master Poet: John Skelton as Conscious Craftsman', Mosaic, 6 (1973), 67-92 (p.75), discusses Skelton's stylistic diversity in the Garlande and argues that through this diversity Skelton exerts claims to be on the one hand 'an expert in established literary forms' and on the other a 'proven innovator' in new stylistic forms, such as the complimentary songs to the ladies and gentlewomen of the court.

The Quene grants Skelton a place in her court and bids Occupacyon recount the poet's credentials, his poetic curriculum vitae which is written in the 'boke'; the reified text of poetic tradition.[1] After a lengthy roll-call of Skelton's works and learning the Skelton persona requests that one of his poems, a work entitled 'Apollo', should be extracted from his collected works. The Quene, however, is unable to accede to this request, for as she explains once something is written in the 'boke', and has been read out in Fame's court, it 'must nedes after in all the worlde about' (1483), and thus cannot be changed. After this refusal the poem rather peters out: Skelton again applies to Occupacyon, that is writes some more poems, and on waking he writes various envoys to his 'litill quaire' (1533).

In The Bowge, as we have seen, the ship works as a metaphoric locus of a poetic tradition; the I persona's joining that ship marks his attempt to become a poet in that tradition. The personifications on board the ship embody the problems and difficulties for a poet working within poetic tradition. The I's relation to these personifications is one of fear, hence he is personified as Drede. Drede's encounters with the various figures on board the ship map out the exploration of the issue of poetic control in the poem: can the poet control the slipperiness of poetic signification or cope with the demands of stylistic multiplicity? In The Bowge, for the I figure, the answer is no: the poem is a fiction of the poet's lack of control; of the poet's fear in the face of the demands of poetry. In The Bowge Skelton uses this fiction to explore the relation of the poet to poetic tradition.

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[1] It is of a part with Skelton's conscious strategy of self-aggrandisement, and his wish to invest poetry with the highest value, that Fame's 'boke' is described so richly. 'The boke' is a deluxe volume, and a highly valuable object in its own right:

> To beholde how it was garnysshyd and bounde,
> Encovered over with golde of tissew fyne;
> The claspis and bullyons were worth a thousand pounds.
> (1163-1165)

Skelton's notion of 'bookness' to use Donald R. Howard's phrase (The Idea of the Canterbury Tales.(Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1976), esp. pp.63-64), is one intimately bound up with his idea of the status of the poet.

In the Garlande ships and seafaring again mark out a metaphorics of poetic control, but this metaphorics is used to approach the issue from a different perspective, from the position of the successful poet. In The Bowge the I figure is a poetic tyro, a novice who fears his ability to control a perceived poetic tradition. In the Garlande the persona is an accomplished poet with a corpus of writing to his credit; an established poetic oeuvre. In the later poem control becomes an issue of the poet's relation to his corpus of writing.[1] Seafaring in the poem works as a metaphor for the mastery of the poetic medium by the poet but control, finally, evades the Skeltonic persona in the Garlande. Skelton's request to have the possibly apocryphal poem 'Apollo' scratched from his poetic record is refused.

There is no extant poem of Skelton's known as 'Apollo that whirllid up his chare' (1471). It seems probable that Skelton is making a specific and joking allusion to what is an uncommonly popular periphrastic line in

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1. The dates of The Bowge and the Garlande remain something of a problem. John Scattergood, John Skelton : the Complete English Poems, p.496, provides a conveniently brief resumé of the position regarding the date of the Garlande:

> In the present state of our knowledge it looks as if Skelton began seriously to assemble the poem in 1495, using some lyrics he had composed earlier. Subsequently he added to it and printed the whole thing in 1523.

If we accept the orthodox date for The Bowge, 1498, this means that Skelton was working on both poems at the same time. However, Melvin J. Tucker, 'Setting in Skelton's Bowge of Courte: a Speculation', English Language Notes, 7 (March 1970), 168-175 (p.168), argues for a date 'eighteen years earlier than the conventional date of 1498'. As Tucker notes (p.168), however, his astrological dating to the year 1480 could simply mean that Skelton used the astrological tables for that year. On the basis of the shared metaphoric discourse of the two poems it is possible to argue that they had been worked on over a fairly close range of time.

late Middle English poetry. Close variations of this line occur in poems by Chaucer, Lydgate, Charles d'Orlêans and also in *The Floure and the Leafe*.[1] As John Scattergood notes the title which Skelton as poet/persona wishes to be 'raised' from Fame's book, a request which marks the virtual end of the narrative proper, is very similar to the line at which Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* is interrupted:[2]

> Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye,
> Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye....[3]

The probable joke is that Skelton wants a title which his reader's would recognise as a poetic cliché scratched from his poetic record, moreover a specific reference to the *Squire's Tale*, suggesting that this is a line where narratives end abruptly, cannot be discounted.

The poem concludes in a series of addresses in French, Latin and English in a rather self-consciously blustering attempt by the poet persona to regain some prestige and dignity after the realisation that poetic control, in terms of an author's control of his completed works, and thus his reputation, is impossible.[4] The *Garlande* comprises a fiction of what Gerald L. Bruns calls the 'closed text' of a print culture as opposed to the 'open text' of a manuscript culture.[1] The closed text, the 'boke' in the Garlande, remains outside the poet's control.

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[1] See *Lydgate's Troy-Book*, edited by Henry Bergen, 4 parts in 3 volumes, EETS extra series 97, 106 and 126 (London, 1906-1935), part I, ll.623-626:

> The tyme of ȝer, whan þe schene sonne
> In his spere was so fer vp ronne,
> Þat he was passid þe sygne of Gemeny,
> And had his chare whirled vp so hyȝ.

Compare Charles d'Orlêans, *The English Poems of Charles of Orlêans*, edited by Robert Steele and Mabel Day, EETS original series 215 and 220 (London, 1941 and 1946 (for 1944) reprinted with bibliographical supplement, 1970), ll.2455-56, 'Whan fresshe Phebus day of Seynt Valentyne/Had whirlid up his golden chare aloft'; and *The Floure and the Leafe*, ll.1-2, 'When that Phebus his chaire of gold so hie/Had whirled up the sterry sky aloft'.

[2] John Scattergood, *John Skelton : the Complete English Poems*, p.511.

[3] *The Squire's Tale*, *The Canterbury Tales*, V, ll.671-672.

[4] Robin Skelton, 'The Master Poet', p.89, argues that in the *Garlande* Skelton creates the persona of the 'Master Poet':

> The Master Poet, according to Skelton, must be omnicompetent, multi-lingual, and self-assertive.

Robin Skelton sees the poem's ending(s) as the culmination of this vindication of the Master Poet.

Similarly to The Bowge the Garlande's allegory is a spatially conceived narrative exploration of poetic issues, especially poetic control and stylistic diversity. In the Garlande the ship and seafaring recur as metaphors of this issue of poetic control. In the spatial terms of the allegory sailing is the way that poets travel to the court of Fame with some being shipwrecked along the way:

> Then to this lady and soverayne of this palace
> Of pursevantis ther presid in with many a dyverse tale...
>
> With, 'Sir, I pray you, a lytyll tyme stande backe,
> And lette me come to delyver my lettre'.
> Another tolde how shyppes wente to wrak.
> There were many wordes smaller and gretter.
> (491-508)[2]

Here, sailing is partly a metaphor for poetic productivity: poets get to the court of Fame by writing, and once there present 'many a dyverse tale' and 'Many wordes smaller and gretter'; and also partly a metaphor, as in The Bowge, of making progress in the world.

When Skelton as poet is called upon to prove his poetic abilities by writing poems to the ladies and gentlewomen of the court, the task is metaphorised in terms of seafaring:

> As a mariner that amasid is in a stormy rage,
> Hardly bestad and driven is to hope
> Of that the tempestous wynde wyll aswage
> In trust wherof comforte his hart doth grope,
> From the anker he kuttyth the gabyll rope,
> Committyth all to God, and lettyth his shyp ryde;
> So I beseke Jhesu now to be my gyde.
> (829-835)

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[1] Gerald L. Bruns, 'The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture', Comparative Literature, 32 (1980), 113-129 (p.113).

[2] Compare the dangers of 'shipwreck' in the writing enterprise as seen in The Kingis Quair, sts. 15-18.

Seafaring at this point works as a metaphor of the issue of mustering and controlling one's poetic talents. On the topic of poetic guidance Skelton has prayed in the previous stanza to Mynerve, 'She to vowchsafe me to informe and ken' (825), and to Mercury, 'Me to supporte, to helpe, and to assist,/To gyde and to governe my dredfull tremlyng fist' (827/8). Finally Skelton as poet puts his faith in God and 'Jhesu' to take him wherever the ship of his poetic skills will drift, as he cuts the 'anker' of dependence on a pagan guide; amounting almost to an anti-control statement.[1]

One of the most striking instances of the ship/seafaring metaphor in the _Garlande_ refers back to _The Bowge_ and uses the metaphor to plot Skelton's development as a poet. Occupacyoun welcomes Skelton to the court of Fame thus:

> Of your acqueintaunce I was in tymes past,
> Of studyous doctryne when at the port salu
> Ye fyrste aryvyd; whan broken was your mast
> Of worldly trust, then did I you rescu;
> Your storme dryven shyppe I repared new,
> So well entakeled, what wynde that ever blowe,
> No stormy tempeste your barge shall overthrow.
> (540-546)

Occupacyoun refers at this point to Skelton's first attempts at poetry- 'When at the port salu/Ye fyrste aryvyd' (541/2)- as ending in his 'worldly trust' having been broken like the mast of a ship. The use of the ship metaphorics here suggests that a direct, self-conscious allusion is being made to _The Bowge_. For in the earlier poem the I/Drede figure does indeed lose all trust in the world as portrayed in the allegory.

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[1] In _The Kingis Quair_ the I figure refers to Venus as the 'anker and keye of oure gude auenture' (st.100, 5).

In this quotation from the Garlande Skelton uses the conventional ship/seafaring metaphorics to allude to The Bowge and to place it in relation to his present position as poet. The conventionality of the metaphor allows Skelton to make reference on an inter-textual level. At this point the Boethian metaphor of life as a voyage through stormy weather is invoked.[1] Occupacyoun, learning and the writing of poetry, provides stability and protection from the storms of harsh existence. This is a continuation of The Bowge's discourse on the purchase learning - 'connynge' - and poetry can gain on the instability of a mutable and treacherous world. In lines 829-835 quoted above, Skelton picks up this metaphor and applies it to the task of writing poetry itself, as does Chaucer in Book 2 of Troilus and Criseyde; it is an application which we have also seen in The Kingis Quair.[2] It will be remembered, too, that some of the many suitors to the Quene of Fame's hand had been shipwrecked en route to the court; failure in writing - failure to reach the place of poetic fame - is metaphorised as shipwreck.

In the Garlande, then, The Bowge's ship metaphors are extended to provide an explicit metaphoric language for the discussion of poetics. These metaphors are used by Skelton to describe his poetic career; his development as a poet from one who was too studious (541), and battered by harsh experience, in The Bowge, to a poet more confident assurance in his poetic talents. His ship, his poetic, is now 'so well entakeled' that Occupacyoun can assure him that 'what wynde that ever blowe/No stormy tempeste your barge shall overthrow' (545-46). The Garlande includes an investigation of the persona Skelton has adopted as a poet throughout his poetic career, assuming that his reader will pick up on his allusion to

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1. See, for example, Boece in The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Book I, prosa 3, 62-67; Book I, metrum 5, 52-54; and Book 2, metrum 3, 13-23.
2. Troilus and Criseyde, Book II,1-7; and The Kingis Quair, sts.17-18.

The Bowge, and his other earlier poetry, through the use of the ship/seafaring metaphor and, based on this assumption, he can allude to the growth in confidence in his poetic talents.

Skelton as poet/persona uses the ship metaphor in his humility *topos* which precedes the virtuoso display of stylistic versatility in the writing of the eleven lyrics to the ladies and gentlewomen of the court. The reflexivity of the use of this metaphor at this point accrues from its use in Skelton's poems and its conventional status in fifteenth-century poetics, and means that Skelton can use it to signal certain rhetorical and comic strategies in the poem. The bankruptcy of the anxieties which the seafaring metaphor expresses in the humility *topos* is revealed by Occupacyoun's earlier assurance that 'no stormy tempeste your barge shall overthrow' (546). In *The Bowge* the allegory is a narrative realisation of the conventions of the I's humility *topos* at the poem's beginning; in the *Garlande* the use of the seafaring metaphor signals the real poetic confidence in conventions and rhetoric at the base of the modesty *topos*, and thus determines the reader's response to Skelton as poet/persona.

Skelton assumes, in the *Garlande*, that his readers will recognise the conventionality and inter-textuality of the ship as metaphor so that he can use it to point his rhetorical and comic strategies. In *The Bowge* recognition of the ship as a conventional metaphor of writing is essential for an understanding of the reference of the dream allegory to writing and poetry. Skelton assumes this recognition on the part of his readers.

The *Garlande* retrospectively confirms *The Bowge*'s metaphorics of writing; by studying the two poems together one can see that Skelton uses this metaphor to map out various aspects of the issue of poetic control. In

The Bowge the persona is one of the poet as novice, embarking on the 'voyage' of a poetic career; in the Garlande the end of that voyage is reached, Skelton achieves poetic fame: the immortality of the 'boke'. In The Bowge the I figure cannot control what happens to him; stylistic diversity, as personified by Ryotte, is perceived as a threat to metaphoric decorum. The Garlande is a fiction of the poet's ability to control his poetic medium, and stylistic diversity is displayed as part of this control and not as a threat to it. The Garlande's seafaring metaphors expand and complete the metaphoric discourse on poetics which Skelton begins in The Bowge, but it shows that while the poetic medium may be controlled the products of that control, once published, pass out of the poet's sphere of determination.[1]

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[1] I would like to take this opportunity to thank Myra Stokes of The University of Bristol, whose kind suggestion that I might find a study of The Bowge of Courte useful furnished the basic idea for the present chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TROPICS OF NAVIGATION - FEMALE SPACE AND MALE DESIRE IN THE ISLE OF LADIES

Perhaps the most telling comment on the marginalisation of the fifteenth-century poem The Isle of Ladies in critical writing on the period is made by Anne Conroy in her doctoral thesis, which is the only full length study of the poem in this century.[1] Conroy notes that when The Isle was removed from the Chaucerian canon in the nineteenth century it 'virtually ceased to attract serious critical attention'.[2] It would seem that the poem has recovered less well from the stigma of not being Chaucer's than poems such as The Floure and the Leafe or The Assembly of Ladies;[3] for until Anthony Jenkins's edition of The Isle[4] the poem had been edited only once this century in a doctoral thesis of 1903.[5] It is unsurprising, therefore, that apart from Conroy's thesis and Jenkins's editorial comments critical studies of the poem have concentrated either on questions of date, authorship,[1] title,[2] or of the poem's historical occasion.[3] To be fair, critics have noted the admixture of love allegory and romance in the poem,[4] and the work's general charm and wittiness,[5] but The Isle still seems to remain largely characterised as insubstantial and of little account.[1]

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[1] Anne Rosemarie Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies: a Fifteenth-Century Chaucerian Poem' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Yale University, 1976).

[2] Anne R. Conroy, The Isle of Ladies, p.11.

[3] The Isle of Ladies was finally relegated to the Chaucerian apocrypha by W.W. Skeat in 1878, see his revised edition of Robert Bell's Chaucer, 4 volumes (London, 1878); see also Eleanor Prescott Hammond, Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual (New York, 1908), pp.141-142 and 429-30 for details. Henry Bradshaw in his famous rhyme test (that Chaucer does not rhyme French substantives ending in -ie(ye) with words ending in -y) had made known that he did not consider The Isle to be Chaucer's, as noted by Richard Morris editor of The Aldine Chaucer, 2 volumes (London, revised edition, 1870), I, appendix B, p.265. See also C.F. McClumpha, 'Chaucer's Dream', Modern Language Notes, 4 (1889), 65-67.

[4] The Isle of Ladies or The Ile of Pleasaunce, edited by Anthony Jenkins (New York and London, 1980), referred to hereafter as The Isle. All references to, and quotations from, The Isle use this edition.

[5] Jane B. Sherzer, 'The Ile of Ladies; Herausgegeben nach einer HS des Marquis von Bath zu Longleat, dem HS Addit. 10303 des Britischen Museums und Speghts Druck von 1598' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Berlin, 1903).

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[1] The date of the poem is not certain. W.W. Skeat, The Chaucer Canon (Oxford, 1900) dates the poem as after 1450. Ethel Seaton in Sir Richard Roos (London, 1961) argues that Roos wrote the poem and she dates it before October 1438, the date when Anne of Woodstock died; Seaton claims that the old woman in The Isle is based on Anne. Both Jane B. Sherzer in her dissertation and A. Brandl, 'Über einige Historische Anspielungen in den Chaucer-Dichtungen', Englische Studien, 12 (1889), 161-186, date the poem at 1420 and connect it with the marriage of Henry V and Katherine of France. In his edition of The Isle Anthony Jenkins suggests a date of c.1475 based on close scrutiny of linguistic evidence in the poem, see Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, pp.13-19.

[2] The poem's title has been subject to some debate. In 1598 Thomas Speght in his first printing of The Workes of our Antient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, named it 'Chaucer's Dreame'. Francis Thynne preferred to keep the title 'Chaucer's Dreame' for the Book of the Duchess and named our poem 'The Temple of Glas', see Francis Thynne's Animadversions upon Speght's first (1598) edition of Chaucer's Works, edited by G.H. Kingsley and F.J. Furnivall, EETS original series 9 (London, 1875), p.30. The poem remained generally known as 'Chaucer's Dream' until the end of the nineteenth century when Henry Bradshaw entitled it 'The Isle of Ladies' in a note attached to one of the manuscripts of the poem (MS Longleat 256), while W.W. Skeat, The Chaucer Canon, p.137, writes that 'the proper title seems to have been 'The Isle of Ladies' which rightly describes it'. This is the title by which the poem is now generally known, despite Anthony Jenkins's argument that the poem names itself 'The Ile of Pleasaunce' at line 2201; see The Isle of Ladies, p.5.

[3] On the poem's historical occasion see, in addition to the commentators listed in note 1 above; G.L. Kitteredge, 'Chaucer's Dreme', Englische Studien, 13 (1889), 24-25. Kitteredge's article is a rebuttal of A. Brandl's theories that the poem was written to celebrate the marriage of Henry V and Katherine of France in April, 1420. See also K.J. Holznecht, Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages (Philadelphia, 1923, reprinted London, 1966), p.88, note 55.

[4] On the mixture of different generic elements in The Isle, see Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies', p.2 who sees the poem as a 'mélange of Chaucerian and un-Chaucerian elements'; Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, pp.48-50; Derek A. Pearsall 'The English Chaucerians' in Chaucer and Chaucerians edited by Derek Brewer (University, Alabama, 1966), 201-239 (p.229); E.G. Sandras, Étude sur Chaucer (Paris, 1859), p.88, 'Le Rêve de Chaucer... une espèce d'intermédiaire entre les lais armoricans et les ditiés allégoriques'; and Ethel Seaton, Sir Richard Roos, pp.145-147.

[5] See Derek A. Pearsall, Old English and Middle English Poetry (London, 1977), p.219.

Anthony Jenkins's approach to The Isle, in the introduction to his edition, involves such a serious misunderstanding of the poem, and yet one which stands as a not untypical example of critical attitudes to fifteenth-century love allegory, that I shall examine its implications in some detail.

For Jenkins The Isle-poet is not in control of his writing:

> He writes as if he is never sure whether he has said all that ought to be said. Yet, beneath the pretty allegories and lumbering style, one hears a personal voice.[2]

It is, moreover, the sense of this 'personal voice' lying underneath, and struggling against, the poem's style and language, which redeems The Isle for Jenkins:

> Where other poets cause their dreamers to wander through a symbolic landscape, listening to authorities talk about love, this writer cannot detach himself from his emotions in order to view love with such objectivity. The delusions of his hope and the reality of his despair burn through his twisting syntax. If for no other reason than that, his work deserves to be better known than it is.[3]

Jenkins's wish to disparage The Isle-poet's style leads him to claim that the poet reveals 'an unmetaphorical turn of mind'[4] and is 'un-bookish in the extreme'.[5] Contrasting The Isle-poet to Lydgate he says of the latter poet's conspicious rhetoricity:

> This is entirely foreign to the simplicity of The Isle of Ladies, whose single-minded and unliterary style creates a greater sense of feeling.[6]

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1. See Derek A. Pearsall, 'The English Chaucerians', p.229:

> The Isle is a flimsy, airy fantasy which is just saved from being blown away altogether by the gentle amusement with which the poet regards his subject, introducing much sly detail in small matters.

2. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.1.
3. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.2.
4. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.30.
5. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.29.
6. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.31.

In opposition to Jenkins's views I shall argue in this chapter that the poem displays great care in the use of metaphor and a complementary awareness of the traditional poetic discourse which employs those metaphors.

In contrast to Jenkins's characterisation of the poem as unbookish, and artlessly full of real, if naive, feeling struggling against conventional modes of expression, Conroy's basic thesis is that The Isle is a very generically conscious text. For Conroy The Isle is a critical examination of the role of the 'Chaucerian lover' in particular, and of complaint poetry in general:

> Both dreams emerge as responses to the contradictions inherent in the role of the Chaucerian lover, who faces a delicate if not impossible task of denigrating himself, while at the same time implicitly criticizing his perfect lady for her lack of pity.[1]

In general, Conroy emphasises an awareness in The Isle of the generic imperatives of complaint which force roles onto characters and therefore determine narrative action. Such a sophisticated generic awareness, which makes the link between the narrator and his dream a means of examining the implications of the conventions of the complaint genre, is quite alien to Jenkins's concept of the poem as naive, unliterary, and rambling. This latter characterisation of the poem inevitably suggests that the relation of frame to dream is one of 'feeling', that the poet is working out his desire for his lady in dream form, and that the dream is a oneiric compensation for waking life. Consequently, Jenkins maintains but a hazy distinction, in his analysis of the poem, between the poet of The Isle and the narrator,as poet, in the text itself; Jenkins's intentionalist reading makes the narratorial fiction a mimesis of the poet's own feeling, which 'burns through' his poetic style.

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[1] Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies', p.32.

I would argue that Conroy's approach to the poem, on the other hand, misemphasises the importance of the genre of complaint in the poem. I consider that the poem concentrates less on the genre of complaint and more on the literary discourse of erotic desire which includes different genres; complaint, lyric, love allegory and romance. This multiplicity of different generic conventions within The Isle suggests that the poem emerges as an investigation of the determining relation of the poetic discourse of erotic desire to the individual narrative, and is not limited to the effect of any one particular generic example of that discourse. However, Conroy's approach, which treats The Isle as a controlled and crafted piece of writing and one in which meaning is created through a dialectic of conventional form and the individual text, is more useful than Jenkins's approach which radically polarizes form and content. Jenkins's reading of the poem would see meaning - as feeling - imprisoned by stylistic ineptitude or naivity.

In this chapter I shall examine the use of metaphor in The Isle. Unlike Jenkins who sees the poem as 'strikingly bare of metaphor',[1] I would argue that the poem consciously uses the conventional metaphors of a discourse of love poetry in order to engage in an exploration of the determining relation of that discourse to the individual text which uses those metaphors. When Jenkins writes of The Isle as unmetaphorical he is, of course, referring to the lack of formal stylistic metaphor in the poem, what Jenkins would call 'verbal fireworks'.[2] This lack of metaphor for Jenkins is part of the Isle-poet's 'avoidance of visual display' which he claims is the 'poet's most characteristic trait'.[3] Metaphor, from such a viewpoint, is typically seen as descriptive; an attempt to fix, by dint of analogy or similarity, a relation between two referents. In this study of The Isle I wish to treat metaphors of erotic discourse as basic, constitutive narrative units and therefore as structural rather than descriptive. Metaphor is not used in the poem to describe male desire, for example, but rather as constitutive of male desire in the narrative. Narrative actions and events are best understood as constructed from the disposition of a range of inherited tropes.

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[1] Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.29.

[2] Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.52.

[3] Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.29.

In The Isle conventional metaphors of the discourse of erotic desire form basic constitutive units of narrative structure; in this way trope may be said to have a determining relation to narrative in the poem. Textual thickenings or condensations of tropical language from erotic discourse occur in The Isle's narrative structure at certain points;moments when the narrative is over-determined by conventional trope. In particular metaphors of imperious male desire intrude into the narrative on certain occasions, and thus determine the nature of narrative progression. For example, the metaphor of desire as sickness/death threatens to prevent the progression of narrative action, i.e. the fulfilment of the prince's sexual desire: this metaphor of desire as death is assimilated into narrative event in the deaths of the queen and the prince; it is an assimilation which threatens an unhappy and premature end to the narrative. Such points of tropical over-determination, I shall argue, are deliberately signalled in the narrative by the use of magic. It is only by magic that such over-determination may be overcome and the narrative allowed to 'progress'. Such an argument imbues the use of magic in The Isle with meta-fictional significance. By the use of magic, as a blatant way out of narrative impasse resulting from an over-determination of narrative by trope, the Isle-poet's attitudes to the conventions of the poetic discourse of erotic desire are signalled.[1]

For Jenkins the relation of the narrator to his dream(s) is affective in nature and based on wish-fulfilment. This affective relation seems also, for Jenkins, to define the link between the Isle-poet and his poem; the narrator/poet works out his erotic desire in his dream. While wishing to maintain a strict division between the Isle-poet and the narrator in the text, I will examine how the affective relation of the narrator to his dream(s) is constructed and used in the poem.

This relation may be seen as defined by a series of tropical operations. The narrator's relation to his dream-narrative is both characterised by metonymic displacement, involving a transposition from waking desire to desire in his dream; and also metaphoric condensation or identification, based on a relation of similarity between those two desires. The narrator, at times quite literally, displaces his unsuccessful desire,[2] into the (eventually) successful desire of the prince in his dream; however, a metaphoric identification is also made between his desire for his lady and the prince's desire for the queen. Both desires are constituted from a shared metaphorics: both narrator and prince share a common male metaphorics and erotics. We shall see that to some extent the narrator's desire stands as a comic counterpoint to the prince's desire in his dream, for the narrator appears as victim, or inept handler, of a metaphorics of erotic desire through which the prince gains his erotic goal. The narrator's attempt to merge dream and waking 'reality', to create a metaphoric identification of dream and waking experience, result in a series of comic displacements which emphasise the separateness of dream and waking frame.

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[1] One of the most interesting discussions of the use of magic in medieval narrative is Helen Cooper's article 'Magic that Does Not Work', Medievalia et Humanistica, 7 (1976), 131-146. Cooper argues that magic is rarely used in medieval romance *qua* magic. Magic is less a preternatural source of wonder and rather a measure of human qualities and emotions; 'the magic object becomes the focus, the measure, and the means of definition of heroic ideals and sublime emotions' (p.135). In The Isle, in contrast, magic is used to point the determining relation of conflicting discourses to narrative, and thus focuses the poem's meta-fictional and meta-discursive strategies. See also Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies',pp.169-170.

[2] For such a literalised dis-placement see the central waking passage in the poem (ll.1301-1349) where the narrator wakes up, quits his smoke-filled chamber and climbs 'a winding stayer' (1313) to another room the walls of which are painted 'full of storyes old and diuerse' (1325) where he again falls asleep and re-enters his dream but in a different place; back on the island rather than on board his lady's ship.

The Isle seems remarkable to me in its blocking out and exploration of a conventional poetic discourse of erotic desire. The narrative action of the dream takes place in an originally exclusive female space. This space is invaded by imperious male desire; a desire which is constituted from metaphors of erotic discourse, metaphors which, in turn, demand certain roles from the women on the island. The women resist these roles, and they are shown to have a greater purchase on the metaphoricity of male desire than the men themselves, but finally the metaphoric roles of that male desire are imposed on the women of the island. The God of Love functions to allow the entry of normative, metaphorically conceived erotic relations into the poem; an entry which effectively neutralises the potential threat to male desire that the women's response is seen to pose. As a document of the state of a literary discourse, and in its awareness of the victimising potential of that discourse for women, the poem is perhaps best seen in the same class as Chaucer's treatment of Criseyde in Troilus and Criseyde. There are several points of similarity between the treatment of the queen in *The Isle* and that of Criseyde in Chaucer's poem.[1]

Anne Conroy would see the characters in *The Isle*'s dream narrative as having a consciousness of their pre-determined roles;[2] roles pre-determined both by the generic imperatives of complaint and the narrator's wish that these characters play out his desire for his lady. This is only partly true, for while the women on the island do have some awareness of the roles that are demanded of them, the knight/prince has no such consciousness of the metaphoricity of his role and actions. In opposition to Conroy, I shall focus in this study on the determining relation of a metaphoric discourse of erotic desire on *The Isle*'s narrative. Unlike Conroy I do not see the poem's reflexivity as centred on the characters' own consciousness of their 'role-playing'; rather these characters are functions of the Isle-poet's strategies to examine the nature and effect of the relation of a poetic discourse of erotic desire to the individual narrative.

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[1] On the relationship between *The Isle* and *Troilus and Criseyde* see Anthony Jenkins, *The Isle of Ladies*, pp.39-43 and Anne R. Conroy, '*The Isle of Ladies*' pp.32-33, p.94, p.149 and p.172. Compare especially *The Isle*, ll.559-566 and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book II, ll.459-66:

The Isle

... 'Allas, what shall I do?
What shall I saye this mane vnto?
Yf he dye here, lost is my name.
How shall I pleye this perilous game?
Yf any thinge be here amise,
Yt shalbe sayd hit rigor is,
Wherby my name enpayer myght,
And like to dye eke is this knyght'.

Troilus & Criseyde

And if this man sle here hym self, allas,
In my presence, it wol be no solas.
What men wolde of it deme I kan nat saye;
It nedeth me ful sleighly forto pleie.

And with a sorwful sik she sayde thrie,
'A, lord, what me is tid a sory chaunce!
ffor myn estat lith now in iupartie,
And ek myn Emes lif is in balaunce.

All citations from *Troilus and Criseyde* are taken from *Geoffrey Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde*, edited by B.A. Windeatt (London and New York, 1984).

[2] See Anne R. Conroy, '*The Isle of Ladies*', p.93; 'the element of conscious role-playing is central to the relationship of the knight and the queen'. I would argue that the role-playing in *The Isle* is not important for what it tells us about character's interiority (as with Criseyde in *Troilus and Criseyde*), but for what it discloses about the determining relation of the discourse of erotic desire to narrative event and action.

The marginalisation of The Isle, which we noted at the beginning of this chapter, has occurred, I think, partly because the poem's relation to conventional metaphors of desire and writing has not been recognised or has been misunderstood as being purely derived from other texts. Jenkins's reading of the poem simply adds to its marginal status, for Jenkins treats the poem's use of convention as detrimental: a constraint on 'feeling'.[1] Conroy limits her study to an examination of the conventions of the complaint genre insofar as they relate to The Isle.

In this study, I will argue that The Isle is not marginal in relation to a fifteenth-century poetic of erotic desire, but rather a thoroughgoing analysis of such a poetic discourse. The poem works within that discourse but also comments on it. The Isle uses a number of different generic markers of this discourse, for instance from romance, allegory and lyric complaint, and it displays a variety of narrative attitudes to that discourse including the parodic, the reflexive and the normative. The poem is, therefore, central to our investigation of the relation of that discourse to the individual text.

The Isle begins with the narrator remembering his dream. One night in May he lay awake thinking about his unrequited love for his lady. 'Halfe on slepe' (22), the narrator dreams and now ponders the significance of his dream and worries about his present lack of ability in writing about it. In his dream he is transported to an island, an exclusively female society, where he becomes the centre of much curious attention. The women decide he must leave, but his expulsion is delayed by the arrival of the queen of the island. She is accompanied by an unknown knight, and the narrator's beloved lady.

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[1] See The Isle of Ladies, p.1:

> Occasionally, in a disarmingly straight-forward phrase or two the poet breaks free. The struggle to say what he want to say within the accepted mode of his times creates a nervous tension which is refreshingly unusual.

The queen tells how, in quest for the magic apples which keep this female society eternally youthful, happy and in good health, she was accosted by the knight now accompanying her. He professed his love for her, although she had never seen him before, and he told her of his plan to keep her with him always. The queen fell sick because of this precipitous proposal, and is only cured by the narrator's lady who administered one of the magic apples, all of which she now possessed (having reached the tree on which they grow before the queen of the island). The knight was perturbed at the queen's reaction to his declaration of love and he, in turn, fell sick and longed for death as an end to his suffering. It is at this point that the narrator's lady had suggested that all three return to the queen's island to resolve the imbroglio.

Back on the island the queen is persuaded to show the still unwell knight some pity, and this she does in the hope that the knight will leave the island. At this moment a huge fleet of ships arrives offshore, and the God of Love, the leader of this armada, comes ashore. He judges that both the queen and the narrator's lady must accept their respective suitors, although he seems less categorical in his judgment concerning the narrator's lady than he does with the queen. Having projected these ideal male/female relations the God of Love leaves the island amid some celebration. The queen and the knight make plans for their wedding while the narrator's lady prepares to leave the island to carry on with her voyage to 'straunge conteryes' (1108). As she does so the narrator runs into the ocean in pursuit of her ship and, half-drowned, is hauled aboard. Half-dead, he excites his lady's pity and she promises him her love.

The narrator, having reached this point of promised fulfilment in his dream, wakes up to find his room full of smoke. Understandably he wishes to quit this room and climbs a 'windinge stayer' (1313) to reach another chamber the walls of which are 'painte/Full of storyes old and diuerse' (1324/25). In this room he wills himself to sleep a second time and he re-enters his dream.

The narrator arrives back on the island at the moment when the queen and the knight are formally betrothed. The knight leaves the island to visit his homeland where he is the king's son, and from where he promises to return with many knights who will marry all the ladies on the island. Ten days are allotted for the return journey, but the knight is prevented from fulfilling this condition by his father's deliberations over, and preparations for, the marriage. When he finally does return to the island he finds that the queen and her ladies have willed themselves to death; fearing the ignominy of the knight's betrayal. Overcome by shame, the prince commits suicide.

At the joint funeral of the betrothed couple, an avian tableau is enacted in which a dead bird is miraculously revived by a magic herb administered by its mate. This cure is repeated on the queen and the prince. Restored to life the queen and prince prepare for their wedding. The narrator's lady returns for the celebration, at which she is betrothed to the narrator.

On the brink of the fulfilment of his desire the narrator wakes up, alone , in his painted room. In despair, he contemplates suicide, but lacking a weapon, he decides that all he can do is hope that his dream will become reality, or that he may live wholly within his dream-world. The poem ends with four stanzas dedicated to his lady, in which he asks for her grace, describes his love-sickness, and pledges that he will always serve her as a devout lover.

The First Dream

In order to examine how metaphor works in The Isle, I shall concentrate upon two passages from the first dream. Firstly the narrator's discussion with the old woman who discovers him on the island (11.173-242); and secondly, the story which the queen tells of her involvement with the knight and including the arrival and judgment of the God of Love (11.369-986).

The first above-mentioned passage may serve as an introduction to how metaphor is consciously used in the poem to determine character role, and to signal the relationship of the narrative to the poetic discourse of erotic desire. The passage uses the image of the ship as a metaphor of desire and discourse, and also the metaphor of the lover as prisoner. It is this latter metaphor with which I shall deal first.

One of the common-place metaphors for the relation of the desiring male to the desired female in medieval erotics is that of the prisoner and gaoler; the man is 'imprisoned' by his desire for his lady [1] while she, by her 'daunger' or unwillingness to return his love,acts as his gaoler.[1] The designation of the woman as gaoler involves a metonymic transfer from the perceived effect of male desire, as self-imprisonment, to 'create' a cause of that effect in the woman as gaoler.

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[1] For examples of the prison of love metaphor see, for instance, The Romaunt of the Rose, in The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957), 11.2766-2768:

> And so for lovers in her wenyng,
> Whiche Love hath shit in his prisoun,
> Good hope is her salvacioun.

See also Raison's oxymoronic descriptions of love at lines 4685-4784, esp. 11.4743-4745. In The Knight's Tale there is some play between the role of lover as prisoner (Palomon) and lover as freeman (Arcite), in this play between roles Chaucer narrativises the commonplace oxymoron of love as both freedom and imprisonment. (See esp. 11.1337-1340.)

In both lyric and narrative this metaphor is used to define the relationship between an individual desiring male and his female desired object. In The Kingis Quair, as in The Knight's Tale, this metaphor determines narrative event, rather than simply defining a relationship between individuals. The prison metaphor, in The Quair, works as constitutive of narrative rather than as descriptive of a relationship between an individual man and woman. This could be termed the super-individual use of metaphor, a use which makes desire not a personally felt emotion but a narrative place; the prison in The Quair acts as a locus of a particular expression of erotic desire. In The Quair, inhabitation of this place of desire pre-dates the I figure's perception of his desire for his lady. The prison acts as a constitutive element of narrative place in The Quair; desire is made a part of narrative structure rather than simply describing an individual's feeling. It is this use of metaphor, which creates from metaphors descriptive of an individual consciousness of erotic desire a narrative environment, landscape or pattern of events, that may serve as a working definition of how meaning is constructed in fifteenth-century love-allegories.

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1. This metaphor of a woman's 'daunger' as imprisonment for the male lover is much used in the fifteenth-century collection of English poems attributed to Charles d'Orlêans edited from The British Museum Manuscript Harley 682, see The English Poems of Charles of Orlêans, edited by Robert Steele and Mabel Day EETS original series 215 and 220 (London, 1941 and 1946 (for 1944) reprinted 1970). See esp. Carole 2, p.154, ll.4608-4611:

   O haue him yet sumwhat in remembraunce
   And helpe him onys at large to skape & goo
   The prison of daunger his cursid foo
   Or he must die in payne and displesaunce.

   See also Roundel 16, p.112, ll.3360-3361, 'That yowre daunger hath me enprisonyd/Longe in the bewte of yowre goodlihed' and the refrain of Ballade 27, p.34, 'As in the prison of grevous displesaunce'.

In The Isle the metaphor of gaoler and prisoner is used to define character role in the meeting of the narrator and the old woman. Moreover the use of this metaphor signals the conscious purchase on the implications of the metaphors of the poetic discourse of erotic desire which is displayed in The Isle. The conventional opening moves of the poem — the May *topos*, the half-sleeping/half-waking lover and the machinery of the dream fiction —— all confirm that we, as readers, are involved in the poetic discourse of erotic desire. Hence the occurrence of the word 'prisoner' in line 183 automatically takes its place in this intertextual poetic discourse; we presuppose 'prisoner' to be a metaphor of the lover from our reading of other texts in this discourse.

The narrator, in his dream, has been mysteriously transported to an exclusively female society. At first he attempts to remain hidden, but he is discovered by an old woman who warns him that he, as a man, will be taken prisoner by the women on the island:

> And else ye mote prisoner be
> Vnto these ladyes here and me
> That han the governaunce of this yle.
>
> (183-185)

The significance of the word 'prisoner' is emphasised by the responses of the women on the island:

> And withe *that word* she gane to smyle,
> And so dyd all the lusty rowte
> Of ladyes that stode her abowte.
>
> (186-188, my emphasis)

Character action signals the reflexivity of linguistic play at this point. The narrator's role as 'prisoner' is fixed by the old woman, an action which demonstrates by its self-consciousness (i.e. the smiles of all the women) the determining relation of a prior discourse of erotic desire to this text. The island's exclusively female space is a *locus* defined and given shape by male desire. The 'magic' qualities of this female space —— its youth, its beauty, and its healthiness —— are precisely those qualities which male desire imbues with value. They are also those qualities which maintain the 'otherness' of female space; its difference from a position of male desire. The old woman is marginalised in such a male encoded female space because she does not share those qualities valued by male desire. The marginality of the old woman to male desire means that she acts to focus the playful manipulation of the conventional discourse of that desire.

Having been defined as a prisoner, the narrator explains that he is innocent of any evil intention and subject to 'ffortunes perueaunce' (194). He is not in control of what happens to him. His perception of powerlessness ends with the narrator accepting the old woman's proffered role as prisoner, and he thus accepts a metaphor of powerlessness and lack of control:

> Here I am you to obeye
> To my power, and all fulfill
> And prisoner byde at your will.
>
> (212-214)

The old woman confirms this role with great pleasure, 'Welcome, prisoner aduenturus/Right glad am I ye haue sayd thus' (219-220).

This exchange signals The Isle's narrative strategy to emphasise the relation of conventional poetic discourse to narrative. The pleasure shown by the women in the designation of the narrator as prisoner accrues from the conscious use of the metaphors of this discourse; it is the pleasure of linguistic play. The passage is wholly concerned with verbal exchange:

with the proffering and acceptance of 'that word'.[1]

In this passage women are shown to have a greater sense of the metaphoricity of discourse than the narrator; an awareness they share with the lady in Alain Chartier's notorious La Belle Dame Sans Merci, a poem which is comparable to The Isle in its giving voice to a woman's reaction to the metaphors of the poetic discourse of male desire.[2] The island's exclusive female space is marked by a heightened awareness of the material, concrete effects of discourse: the women have a greater sense of language qua language. By entering this space the narrator must take on the metaphoric role of the prisoner; a role by which male desire relates itself to the female as desired object. The metaphors of male desire, which describe the individual's perception of desire, are used in The Isle as constitutive of narrative setting.[1] The island is the space of male desire's perception of female alterity. This passage involving the designation of the narrator as prisoner signals this super-individual use of metaphor; that is the use of metaphor as constitutive of narrative setting, event and structure.

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[1] Compare this passage with the 'luf-talk' between lady Bertilak de Hautdesert and Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, edited by J.R.R. Tolkein and E.V. Gordon, second edition edited by Norman Davis (Oxford 1925, second edition 1967), 11.1215-1220:

> For I ȝelde me ȝederly, and ȝeȝe after grace,
> And þat is þe best, be my dome, for me byhouez nede':
> And þus he bourded aȝayn with mony a blyþe laȝter.
> 'Bot wolde ȝe, lady louely, þen leue me grante,
> And deprece your prysoun, and pray hym to ryse,
> I wolde boȝe of þis bed, and busk me better.

Compare also The Book of the Knight of the Tower, translated by William Caxton, edited by M.Y. Offord, EETS supplementary series 2 (London, 1971), capitulo 12, p.27, 11.23-28:

> And thenne I said to her/damoysell I wold wel and leuer be youre prysoner than ony others/& I thenke that youre pryson shold not be so hard ne cruell/as is the pryson of englissh men/and she ansuerd me that she had late sene such one/that she wold wel that he were her prysoner/& I demanded her/yf she wold yeue hym euyl pryson/& she answerd me nay/

Cited by Richard Firth Green, Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages (Toronto, Buffalo and London, 1980), p.117.

[2] See La Belle Dame Sans Merci, translated by Sir Richard Roos in Chaucerian and Other Pieces: Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), esp. 11.325-333, where 'La Dame' tells her putative lover:

> Ladies be nat so simple, thus I mene,
> So dull of wit, so sotted of foly,
> That, for wordes which sayd ben of the splene,
> In fayre langage, paynted ful plesauntly,
> Which ye and mo holde scoles of dayly,
> To make hem of gret wonders to suppose.
> But sone they can away their hedes wrye,
> And to fair speche lightly their eres close.

For a discussion of the status of such 'scoles' of male erotic discourse see Richard F. Green, Poets and Princepleasers, pp.120-125.

The women finally decide that the narrator must leave the island, this decision emphasises The Isle's purchase on the normative operations of the discourse of male erotic desire, and introduces perhaps the most important metaphor in the poem from this discourse — the ship of male desire.

As we have seen in previous chapters the ship emerges as a commonplace metaphor for the desiring male in the poetic discourse of male desire. For the poets of the fifteenth century this metaphor, and the discourse it signals, is made most readily accessible by Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.[2] As we have seen this metaphor is used, as an expansion and transformation of Chaucerian discourse, in The Temple of Glas, The Kingis Quair and The Bowge of Courte.[1] In The Isle of Ladies the ship metaphor emerges as the primary focus of the poem's investigation of the nature and narrative implications of this discourse of male desire.

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[1] On the relation of poetic conventions to the desiring individual see Eugene Vance, 'Mervelous Signals: Poetics, Sign Theory and Politics in Chaucer's Troilus', New Literary History, 10 (1978-1979), 293-337 (p.306):

> Poetic language does not express, by its conventions, the consciousness of the desiring individual, but determines the operations of that consciousness.

In The Isle poetic language, particularly conventional metaphor, is shown less to determine an individual consciousness or collection of consciousnesses (in this I take issue with Conroy's thesis), but rather conventional tropical language is shown to determine the operations of narrative structure itself.

[2] See particularly the use of the ship metaphor in the 'Canticus Troili' of Book I of Troilus and Criseyde, ll.400-420. See Chapter 2, Section I, pp. 92-94 above for a discussion of the ship metaphorics in Troilus and Criseyde.

In his prefatory observations on his dream the narrator tells us that he is not sure how he got to the island:

> Wherfore is yet my ffull beleve
> That some good spirite, that eve,
> By maner of some cureux port
> Bare me where I saw payne & sport.
>
> (27-29)

The old woman, too, wonders how he has reached the island's exclusively female space:

> To se you here vs thinketh marvayle,
> And how witheout boot or sayle
> By any souttyllete or wyle
> Ye get haue entre in this Ile.
>
> (229-232)

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[1] See The Temple of Glas in John Lydgate: Poems, edited by John Norton-Smith, (Oxford, 1966), 11.606-614; The Kingis Quair of James Stewart, edited by Matthew P. McDiarmid (London, 1973), sts. 15-24 and The Bowge of Courte in John Skelton: the Complete English Poems edited by John Scattergood (Harmondsworth, 1983). For other examples of the use of this metaphor in fifteenth-century poems see The English Poems of Charles of Orléans, Ballade 28, p.35, 11.1037-1040; and Roundel 49, p.129, 11.3854-3856 (which lines are plainly derived from the 'Canticus Troili' in Troilus and Criseyde):

> For as the shippe forpossid is this and this
> Right so of loue the hertis arne y-wis
> As now in wele and now in gret penaunce.

See also Skelton's Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, in John Skelton: the Complete English Poems, 11.507-515, 11.540-546, and 11.829-835.

It is obvious that the alternatives the old woman offers for the use of the ship suggest a reference beyond the merely practical issue of literal transport. The words 'souttyllete' and 'wyle' (231) signal the reference of the allegory to the uses of discourse, of poetic language. 'Souttylletes' and 'wyles' are constitutive elements of poetic discourse; the 'tricks' or conceits of rhetoric.[1]

The old woman is thus accusing the narrator of not using the correct means of discourse to infiltrate female space. The narrator has not used the recognised, conventional means by which the desiring male typically travels. In conventional poetic discourse the ship acts as a metaphor for the progress of the desiring male to the female object of desire; the way of 'travelling' from the 'here' of the enunciative male position to the 'there' of the female object of male discourse.[2] Moreover, the ship is a metaphor of discourse; for discourse _is_ the way a male 'I' makes poetic progress towards his female desired object. The ship works as a metaphor for this travelling-by-discourse from male to female _loci_, and also as a synecdoche of that discourse itself. It is this synecdochical reference which is used in both _Troilus and Criseyde_ and _The Kingis Quair_ in order to examine the relation of the narrator/poet to his poem and writing activities.

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[1] On the connection of 'subtilite' to rhetoric see _The House of Fame_ 11.853-859 and _The Legend of Good Women_, F. 11.2546-2547. In 'The Complaint of Venus', 11.76-82 link 'subtilite' with 'endyting'. The phrase 'and full of wiles and subtilite' is used by Fals-Semblant in _The Romaunt of the Rose_, 1.6172 See also the use of 'subtylly' in _The Bowge of Courte_, referring to the operations of language, see esp. 11.8-11. 'Subtylte' is also one of the personifications on board the ship in _The Bowge of Courte_ (1.140).

[2] Anthony Jenkins, _The Isle of Ladies_, pp.162-163 notes the use of 'a magic boat which carries the lovers to each other's lands' in Marie de France's _Lai de Guigemar_ in _Les Lais de Marie de France_, edited by Jean Rychner (Paris, 1966), 11.151-208. See also _Troilus and Criseyde_, Book I, 11.415-418 and Book II, 11.1-7; _The Kingis Quair_, sts. 15-18 and _The Temple of Glas_, 11.606-614.

At this point in The Isle, then, the narrator is being accused of not using the metaphors of discourse; of not using the conventional metaphoric means of approaching, or infiltrating, female space. This example of discursive or metaphoric incompetence in narrative terms may be seen as analogous to the narrator's apology for his incompetence as a poet earlier in the poem. In a thoroughly conventional humility topos the narrator apologises for his 'termes' and begs the reader to ignore his writing:

> Befell me this wonder case
> Wiche ye shall here and all the wise
> As holly as I cane devise
> In playne englishe, evell writton;
> For slepe wrightter, well ye weten,
> Excused is, thowghe he do mise,
> More then on that wakinge is.
> Wherefor, here, of your gentulnes
> I you requier my boysteousnes
> Ye let passe as thinge rude,
> And hereth what I woll conclude;
> And of th'enditinge take the no hede,
> Ne of the termes, so God you sped,
> But let all passe as nothinge were:
> Ffor thus befell as ye shall here.
>
> (56-70)

The narrator invites the reader here to treat language as a transparent access to his story, the events of his dream, by letting 'all passe as nothinge were'. In this humility topos the narrator accuses himself of writerly incompetence, and in a Chaucerian gesture of abnegation asks his readers to 'take the no hede' of his 'enditinge' or his 'termes'; that is his writing and his rhetorical figures. As we have seen in his dream the old woman expresses some surprise that the narrator manages to reach the island without using a ship (i.e. metaphor) or the 'souttylletes' and 'wyles' of discourse. In his humility topos the narrator pleads his writerly incompetence; in his dream he reaches the island without using a ship which acts as a metaphor of discourse.

Allegorical action in the dream refers to the use, or non-use, of poetic discourse. The narrator has reached the island mysteriously without using the discourse of male desire, a discourse in which he pleads incompetence in his humility *topos*.

This example of inter-play between the frame and dream in *The Isle*, that the narrator's incompetence in the use of 'termes' is narrativised as his reaching the women's island without the use of metaphor or rhetoric, suggests the conscious purchase the poem has on the normative use of a conventional poetic discourse of male desire. This inter-play suggests, too, that the poem's allegory, in the first dream, is less concerned with desire itself and more involved with the discourse of desire. Narrative and allegorical strategy in *The Isle* is directed towards the examination of the nature and effect of the conventional discourse of male desire.

The status of the ship as both a metaphor of the desiring self and a synecdoche of the discourse of that desire is partially dependent upon an intertextual awareness of the use of the ship as a multi-referential metaphor in conventional poetic discourse. *The Isle* could be said to make explicit the implied inscription of this discourse in the individual text, an inscription of a text's intertextuality. However, while such an intertextual awareness helps identify the metaphoric use of the ship image in the poem, *The Isle* also explicitly signals the ship as a metaphor of 'manes thowght' at line 1377. I would now like to examine other instances of the use of the ship image in the first dream, as part of our investigation of this image's implications for the poem's reflexive self-consciousness.

With the arrival of the queen, the narrator's lady and the knight, the queen's declared lover, the narrative turns to a re-telling of what has happened to the queen while she has been absent from the island. The queen relates how she found the narrator's lady in possession of the magic apples which ensure the health, beauty and happiness of the island's female society for seven year periods. It is in search of these apples that the queen had left the island. The queen is almost immediately accosted by an unknown knight who professes his love for her and who carries her to his ship. The queen, understandably rather perturbed at this double, unexpected misfortune, falls ill and is only revived by recourse to the curative properties of one of the apples. The knight, in turn, is distressed at his chosen lady's apparent dissatisfaction with his suit and he curses the ship that has brought him to that place. At this point the narrator's lady suggests that all three return to the queen's island in her own ship (11.369-426).

This is a centrally important passage in the construction of meaning in The Isle. In it, metaphors from the poetic discourse of desire, the ship and desire as sickness, are brought together with motifs from romance, particularly the magic apples.[1] The magic properties of these apples confer on the women of the island those qualities which make the female society other to positions of male desire; to use the narrator's term, the island society is 'vncouth'.[2] The qualities of beauty, youthfulness and healthiness define female alterity from a male perspective of erotic desire, they are markers of women's femininity. From a male perspective the maintenance of such an alterity is a source of wonder, and the magic necessary to maintain the integrity of female space reflects the narrator's sense of wonder at the 'vncouth' nature of the island. The Isle's examination of the effect of a conventional poetic discourse of male erotic desire on women's roles, an examination of the sexual politics of discourse, is thus seen to acknowledge a central paradox: magic is necessary to maintain the integrity of a female locus against the incursions of male desire while at the same time it is that male desire which defines the terms within which magic is invested with meaning.

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[1] For a discussion of the use of magic objects in medieval romance see Helen Cooper, 'Magic that Does Not Work'; see also Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, pp.46-47.

[2] See lines 75, 83 and 93. Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies', p.62 notes that 'the "vncouth" nature of the women lies in the excellence which sets them apart for "of godlyhed/they passen all and womanhed" ' (11.89/90). The essential point is that the island is 'vncouth' from a male perspective; the old woman herself, for instance, 'couth so moche good' (174).

In the passage outlined above (11.369-426) the queen of the island fails to gain the apples because the narrator's lady is already in possession of them. This prior possession reflects in narrative event the narrator's perception of his lady's 'daunger ' — her unobtainability. While for the narrator his lady has all the power which male desire invests in the otherness of female space, the queen, who has failed to gain possession of the apples for her subjects, is shown as totally vulnerable to the incursions of male desire. (As we shall see the queen's non-possession of the apples also leaves her island open to the invasions of male desire in the form of the God of Love's armada.)

It is at this moment of vulnerability, when the queen is bereft of the protection of that perception of alterity which the magic apples confer, that the queen is open to the effects of male erotic desire. Hence the queen recounts:

> ... howe my joyes were cold
> Sithe I those apples haue ne might,
> Even withe that, so come this knight,
> And in his armes, of me vnware,
> Me toke, and to his shipe me bare.
>
> (380-384)

In this passage, then, the two narrative events (failure to get the apples; and being subject to abduction by 'this knight') are intimately conjoined – 'even withe that'. In this passage allegorical meaning, which could be understood as meta-discursive meaning, is created by the choreography of movement between male and female space, for the ship functions here as a metaphoric locus of male desire.

At this point the narrative is heavily saturated with metaphoric codes. For clarity I shall quote the passage I wish to examine:

> ... and to his ship me bare,
> And sayd, thowgh he me never had sene,
> Yet had I longe his lady bene,
> Wherefore I shuld withe him wend,
> And he wolde to his lives ende
> My seruaunte be, and can to singe
> As one that had wone riche thinge.
> Tho were my spirites fro me gone
> So sodenlye, everychone,
> That in me appered but deathe.
>
> (384-393)

What, then, constitutes the saturation of literary codes at this point? The ship as a locus of male desire has not only been established earlier in the poem (11.229-232) but is also a commonplace metaphor in a poetic discourse of erotic desire with specifically Chaucerian credentials. The ship image is established as a metaphoric locus of male desire both intrinsically by this text and also intertextually by the inscription of this discourse in the present text. The comedy of love preceding first sight in this passage is a comedy accruing from an intertextual awareness of the norms of erotic discourse; an awareness which occurs in several other texts none of which need necessarily be a specific 'source' for this passage in The Isle.[1] At this point the narrative generates comedy by reference to the larger poetic discourse of which it is a part, and on which it comments.

This discourse is marked as traditional; a discourse of the past. This discourse's pastness is signalled by its conventional nature; that is, its status as custom and as a normative standard against which the present may be compared. See for instance 11.237-239:

> And for ye shall well vnderstand
> The old custome of this lande
> Wiche hathe continewed many yere.

Or 11. 739-740: 'and arme them all in good language,/As they had done of old vsage'. This sense of a historical continuity (enhanced by the time-suspending effects of the magic apples) makes the island a place where the present is intimately connected with the past. Allegorically this connection has reference to the always encoded past in the poetic discourse of erotic desire; an encoded or inscribed past constructed from that discourse's occurrence in a community of other, past, texts. In The Isle female space acts as a locus where both the pastness and presentness of the poetic discourse of male desire are brought together, as they are within each individual text in which such a discourse is used. The pastness of male discourse makes several assaults on female space in The Isle, the most major of which is the invasion of the God of Love's armada. In the passage quoted above (ll.384-393) a large part of the comedy is created from the pastness of male discourse massively outweighing the present narrative moment: the discourse of desire is shown to determine narrative event even though the two lovers have never met before. What is at issue here is not the knight's desire but the determining relation of the conventional discourse of that desire to the narrative. At this point such a discourse is shown to overload the narrative with an erotic significance that the narrative cannot sustain. It is, therefore, precisely the unexpected, contingent and hasty nature of this intrusion of discourse into narrative that points the comedy of the passage.

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[1] For other examples of the desiring male lover falling in love without the knowledge of the female love-object see The Knight's Tale, in which Theseus mocks Palamon's and Arcite's 'pointless' love for Emilye, 'She woot namoore of this hoote fare,/By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare' (11.1809/10). See also The Kingis Quair in which the I's 'flower' remains a metaphorised object throughout the poem, her cognisance of the I's desire for her is unimportant in the poem. It is this exclusion of the woman from the enunciative space of desire which is explicitly parodied in The Court of Love in Chaucerian and Other Pieces: Supplement to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by W.W. Skeat. In The Court of Love the narrator establishes himself as a lover and then looks around for someone to love:

> For what she is, ne her dwelling I not,
> And yet I fele that love distraineth me.
> Might ich her know, that wold I fain, god wot,
> Serve and obey with all benignites,
> So that no wyse I shall her neuer see,
> Than graunt me her that best may lyken me.
> (11.659-665)

The passage continues with the knight employing the commonplace metaphor of love as service; he promises to be his lady's 'servaunte' (389). The knight, moreover, places his discourse of desire in the enunciative framework of lyric utterance - 'and can to singe' (389) - which remains perhaps the most distilled generic form of this discourse of erotic desire. The queen follows with a metaphorically determined response; a sickness which requires the 'cure' of one of the magic apples, administered by the narrator's lady.

The sickness/cure metaphor informs the remedial properties of one of the magic apples. When the metaphor is used of relations between individuals the ability to cure is seen as a feminine attribute: the woman can 'cure' male 'sickness'; that is, female assent, the withdrawing of 'daunger', fulfils male desire.[1] In The Isle this curative facility is transposed - troped - onto a super-individual level, so that the magic apple can cure sickness. This apple and its properties have, therefore, a metaphorically determined narrative function: the administration of this apple can determine narrative event and action.

It is characteristic of The Isle that in several instances metaphors which conventionally define or constitute a male consciousness of desire are appropriated to female space. So it is that at the end of this confrontation of the queen and knight the narrator's lady suggests they all sail back to the island in her ship, conventionally a metaphor of male desire. Additionally, the transposition of curative properties to the magic apple means that it is the narrator's lady who can cure the queen of her distress, rather than a male lover of his 'love-sickness'. In this passage, then, metaphors commonly used to define relationships between a male lover and his desired female love-object are used to define exclusively female spaces and relations.

The narrator's lady's ship is described in direct contrast to the knight's ship which now stands as a locus of failed desire. The knight turns his dissatisfaction concerning his thwarted desire against his ship; the queen tells how:

> That of my woo he was il payed,
> And cursed the shipe hem thether browght,
> The mast, the master that hit wrought.
>
> (414-416)

The knight turns against his ship and its maker, and also with a possible sexual reference to the 'mast' itself. If we extend the referent of the ship metaphor to poetic discourse itself, as has been suggested earlier in the poem (see ll.229-232), then the knight is turning here against those poetic conventions of the discourse of erotic desire which he perceives to have failed him. In contrast to the knight's ship which leaves him 'il payed' - 'dissatisfied'[1] - the narrator's lady's ship leaves both her and the queen very well pleased, for the queen describes it as a ship:

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[1] For an example of the purchase on the metaphoricity of this sickness see La Dame's response to the lover's 'sickness' in La Belle Dame Sans Merci, ll.293-294, 'this sickness is right esy to endure,/My-self and I, me thought, we were y-now'.

Wiche was so wonderfullye wrought,
So clene, so riche, and so arrayed
That we were bothe content and payed.
(424-426)

Not only has a metaphoric locus of male desire been appropriated to female space, but also that appropriation is shown to bring with it great pleasure, in direct contrast - 'il payed' (414), 'payed' (424) - to the dissatisfaction it brings to the desiring man. Pleasure is one of the attributes conferred on female space by the magic apples (see ll.357-368); it is therefore appropriate that the narrator's lady's ship should be a locus of pleasure.[2]

Prior to an examination of the passage in The Isle when the God of Love arrives at the women's island, a key passage which uses the ship as a trope of discourse, I shall examine the queen's response to the knight when she returns to her island. This response involves a major breach in the determining relation of the conventions of the poetic discourse of erotic desire to the narrative; a breach which requires the arrival of the God of Love to be healed.

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1. See M.E.D., part P.1, p.551.

2. It is this pleasure which the narrator hopes will accrue from his dream, see ll.48-50:

Iwis this may no dreme bene,
But signe or signiffiaunce
Of hasty thinge, soundinge pleasaunce.

Female pleasure is shown in The Isle not to be conditional on male desire, whereas male pleasure seeks the women as object of its pleasure.

Back on the women's island the narrator's lady is thanked for rescuing the queen, and the old woman is persuaded to question the knight to find out 'what he desyers, everye dele' (486, my emphasis). After some questioning the knight swoons and lies as dead whereupon the old woman tries to persuade the queen to forgive the knight and escape the blame of his death. The queen is greatly concerned for her reputation, and her thoughts are based closely on the model of Criseyde in Chaucer's poem.[1] The knight revives to issue a complaint which finally persuades the queen to grant him pity, and thus 'cures' his 'diseace' (653). The knight takes this as the queen's declaration of love and immediately recovers, overjoyed. The queen's chief concern, however, is to get the knight off the island, and out of her space, as quickly as possible: 'For her entent was to his barge/Him to bringe agenst the eve' (682/683). The narrator is quick to draw our attention to the queen's dissimulation at this crucial point in the narrative:

> But all in on, to euery wyght,
> Ther was sene connynnge withe estate
> In her, witheout noyse or debate;
> For, save only a looke peteus
> Of womanehed, vndispiteous,
> That she shewed in countenaunce,
> Far semed her hart from obeysaunce.
>
> (672-678)

It is this dissimulation; this lack of congruity between word or look and 'entente', which signals the breakdown of the determining relation between conventional poetic discourse and the specific narrative action of an individual. The metaphorically determined roles of the individual characters at this point in The Isle are breaking down: the queen accepts her metaphorical curative role - 'his lyfe to save' (655) - as a necessary response to the exigencies of a narrative situation. There is a split between this role and the queen's individual intention — 'far semed her hart from obeysaunce' (678) — but it would be unhelpful to over-emphasise the importance of the individual consciousness in the poem. This is not a psychological drama of interiority; we confront the queen's response only in a limited way through the lens of the narrator who has some access to her 'entent'.

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[1] Compare esp. Troilus and Criseyde, Book II,11.459-466.

The significant emphasis at this point in the narrative lies upon the nature and origin of those metaphors which determine action and which structure the narrative. It is at this juncture, when this determining relation of metaphor to narrative appears to be breaking down or lessening, that the God of Love enters the narrative. It is this entry which reasserts both the determining relation of discourse to narrative and also, as a direct consequence, the allegorical nature of the narrative. If a stressing of individual 'entente' signals in Maureen Quilligan's term a de-allegorising of the narrative,[1] then the entry of the sole personification in the poem reasserts the allegorical nature of the narrative. For personification is the most characteristic trope of allegorical narrative.[2]

The God of Love stands as a personification of the conventional poetic discourse of erotic desire; both his status as a personification and the nature of what he personifies act as vital reassertions of this discourse's determining relation to narrative action at this point in the poem. His function in the narrative can be seen as a corrective one. He seeks to re-establish, or repair, the determining relation of metaphor to narrative action and, necessarily to character role, a relation which has been displayed as breaking down with the queen's radical split between word, look or action and 'entent'. In addition, simply by the form of his function as trope - by the God of Love's status as a personification - he works to re-assert the nature of this narrative as an allegory of desire and discourse.

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[1] See Maureen Quilligan, 'Allegory, Allegoresis, and the De-allegorisation of Language', in Allegory, Myth and Symbol, edited by Morton W. Bloomfield, Harvard English Studies, 9 (Harvard, 1981), pp. 163-186.

[2] See Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory: Defining The Genre (Ithaca and London, 1979), p.42, 'personification, one of the most trustworthy signals of allegory'.

The entry of the God of Love into the narrative is marked by a high degree of literary saturation; a remarkable access of the over-coded sign.[1] It is the high saturation of semiotic codes in this passage (11.696-759) which signals the God of Love's function in the allegory. The God of Love's function as a personification of a whole poetic discourse is reflected in the fact that encoded in this passage are all the signs of the most conventional *locus* of such an amatory poetic discourse - the *locus amoenus*.

The God of Love's appearance in the poem also marks a sudden and overwhelming access by male desire to the female space of the island. The signs in this passage have, then, reference both to desire and to discourse, and it is in this dual reference that desire and discourse are figured as inextricably linked in the poem; for the nature of discourse determines the nature and effect of desire. The powerful effects of convention are shown in this passage by comic over-statedness. An example of such over-statedness begins the passage, for the God of Love arrives at the island not in one ship, operating as both a metaphor of male desire and a synecdoche of the conventional discourse of male desire, but with a fleet of 'Ten thousand shippes' (696). This mass of ships overwhelms not only the defences of the island but also deconstructs poetic sign. For the metonymic, contiguous basis of the ship metaphor (the ship carries the desiring male and therefore, by contiguous association, acts as a sign of that desire) is exploded by the number of ships. Synecdochically the ship acts as a sign of the conventional literary discourse of desire. At this point the synecdoche is reversed, the reversal comprising the 'literalization' of this conventional discourse.

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[1] For a discussion of the 'over-coded' sign see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington and London, 1979), pp.19-20.

This 'literalization' is effected by the number of ships which reverses the part for whole basis of the ship's status as a synecdochical sign of a whole discourse: we are presented not with the part but the whole. The massive size of the fleet, then, acts to deconstruct the ship both as a metaphorical sign of male desire and as a synecdochical sign of the conventional discourse of that desire. The size of the fleet removes the ship from the discourse of individual male desire and narrativises the whole tradition, the history, of male desire. This sense of a whole literary past being brought to bear on this narrative present, through the God of Love's fleet,is signalled by the narrator's remarks:

> ... I cone marvell
> From whense myght come so many a sayle;
> *For sythe the tyme that I was bore*,
> Suche a navy *ther before*
> Had I not sene, ne so arrayed,
> That for the syght myn hart played
> Two and for withein my brest
> Fro joye ...
>
> (699-706, my emphasis)

This 'navy' comes from a time prior to the historical limits of the narrator's knowledge and memory and, as a sign - by sheer dint of number - of the overwhelming power of male desire,it causes the narrator much joy.

As mentioned above the fleet is virtually a floating locus amoenus. Until the present point in the narrative this arch-locus of the poetic discourse of love has been absent from the poem. It is significant that at the precise point when a personification of this discourse - the God of Love - enters the poem to re-establish the proper determining function of that discourse with relation to narrative action and character role, the most conventionally typical locus of that discourse is also introduced. The ship sails then are 'full of flowers' (707), and:

> Smale burdes downe from the eyor,
> And on the shippes bordes abowte
> Sate, and songe withe the voice full owt
> Ballades and leyes, right joyouslye.
>
> (714-17)[1]

Flowers and birds are essential features of the locus amoenus.[2] The most important function of birds in the locus amoenus is to sing, either to create the enunciative ambiance of lyric utterance, or to bring lyric discourse explicitly into the narrative. Flowers act both as metaphors of the lady, the object of the male lover's desire, and also of the tropes of rhetoric, the *flores rhetorici*, used in poetic discourse. In *The Kingis Quair* birdsong acts to bring the discourse of love-lyric into the poem, and by so doing it also identifies the garden in the poem as the place of lyric discourse. In *The Kingis Quair* not only does birdsong provide an encouragement for the lover to sing a lyric to his lady (see st.52), but birdsong is itself textualised as a lyric in praise of love (see st.34). In *The Isle* the birds similarly act as a lyric voice in that they sing 'withe voice full owt' (716), but they also represent a more comprehensive generic awareness of erotic desire's lyric discourse, for they sing 'ballades and leyes, right joyouslye' (717), this explicitly signalling the reference in the narrative to the discourse of erotic desire.

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[1] This description of the God of Love's flottila (11.702-718)has several points of resemblance to the description of the ship of Grace Dieu in Lydgate's (attributed) translation of The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man (c.1426), edited by F.J. Furnivall with introduction and notes by Katherine B. Locock, EETS extra series 77, 83, and 92 (London, 1899, 1901 and 1904), 11.21717-21732:

> And whyl I gan me thus compleyne,
> Evene A-myd off al my peyne,
> I sawh, A-myddys off the se,
> A shype saylle towardys me,
> And evene above, vp on the mast
> (Wherfor I was the lasse A-gast)
> I sawh a croos stonde, (and nat flytte,)
> And ther-vp-on A dowe sytte,
> Wheroff I hadde Ioye ynowh.
> And in thys shyp(a-geyn al shours)
> Ther wer castellys, and ek tours,
> Wonder dyvers mansiouns
> And sondry habytaciouns,
> (By resemblaunce and semyng)
> Lych the loggyng off A Kyng.

[2] On the constituent elements of the locus amoenus see Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard R. Trask (London, 1953), pp.195-200; George D. Economou, The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), p.155; Derek A. Pearsall, The Floure and the Leafe, pp.48-52; Derek A. Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World (London, 1973), pp.48-54; and Rosemond Tuve, Seasons and Months: Studies in a Tradition of Middle English Poetry (Paris, 1933, reissued Cambridge, 1974), pp.58-70.

Rhetoric is at its most blatant, its most opaque, in this passage. The rhetorical *locus amoenus*, and the ships which are its vehicles (thus making explicit the status of the ship as a synecdoche of the discourse which uses such *loci*) are only partially integrated into narrative event. This sudden and overwhelming influx of the metaphors of rhetoricity into the narrative is matched with an access of rhetoricity in the narration. The integration of a rhetorical discourse into the narrative is incomplete at this point, the rhetoric is too blatant; it overloads the normative intergrational patterns by which the narrative operates. Discourse is here opaque and insistent, drawing attention to itself as a way of signalling allegorical meaning. On the level of narrative the narrator responds to this invasion with a rhetorical outburst of his own, with a rhetorical *occupatio* on what he is witnessing:

> That you to wright that I ther see,
> Myn excuse is it may not bee;
> Ffor whi the matter were to longe
> To name the birdes and wright her songe.
> (719-722)

The conventional discourse of erotic desire is shown as dominating narrative at this point. This discourse's determining relation to narrative has been shown to be at a low ebb in the passage where the queen attempts to revivify the suffering knight by splitting her 'entente' from her actions and speech. Here that discourse is shown to reassert itself, through an access of rhetoric to the narrative.

The response of the women on the island to the appearance of the God of Love's fleet emphasises the nature of the allegory as an allegory of discourse; of the nature and effect of the relation of language to narrative action. The old woman weeps and fears that the female society of the island will be destroyed. Significantly, this despair leads to a loss of her ability to speak - 'and withe that word her fayled speche' (734). This lack of speech marks the old woman's despair, and is immediately contextualised by the response of the other women on the island; for speech - discourse - is shown as the women's only recourse against this invasion of male desire. The women on the island fight the God of Love's armada with language:

> ... and con conclude,
> Holy at once at the laste,
> That best was shett ther yattes faste,
> And arme them all in good language
> As they had done of old vsage,
> And of fayre wordes make ther shoot.
>
> (736-741, my emphasis)[1]

---

[1] Compare this passage with The Castle of Perseverance (c.1400-1425), in which the four daughters of God defend Humanus Genus against the World, the Flesh and the Devil using flowers; the flowers of rhetoric. See The Macro Plays, edited by Mark Eccles, EETS original series 262 (London, 1969), ll.2210-2214:

> Charyte þat sowre swart,
> Wyth fayre rosys myn hed gan breke.
> I brede þe malaundyr.
> Wyth worthi wordys and flourys swete
> Charyte makyth me so meke.

The psychomachia of The Castle of Perseverance is very much conceived of as a battle of speech. The rhetorical skills of Charyte defeat the rude and coarse speech of Invidia, see ll.2208-2209.

The incongruity of defending oneself with words as objects against an invading navy points the basic 'blocking out' of female and male positions in the narrative. Male desire is assimilated into narrative terms, for that desire is allegorised as the arrival of the God of Love's fleet of ships. The female response to such desire is explicitly labelled as discourse, it is not assimilated into naturalistic narrative terms. Hence the women's action involves the deployment of 'good language' (739) and 'fayre wordes' (741), whereas male desire is shown as encoded in narrative event; ie. the arrival of the God of Love's navy. The references to 'good language' and 'fayre wordes' draw attention to themselves precisely because they are not tropical references to discourse, as are the God of Love's ships, but are direct, non-tropical references to the use of discourse asan entity.

The metaphors of the passage involving the response of the ladies to the arrival of the fleet of ships (735-759) are based on the concept of love as siege; of male desire as an invasion of female space and of language as women's defence. The siege is, however, no contest:

> Avayled them not ther walles of glasse --
> This mighty lord lett not to passe --
> Ne shettinge of ther yattes fast.
>
> (751-753)

The God of Love lands, and enters the island without great resistance and wounds the queen with one of his arrows, with obvious sexual allusion, and heals the sick knight. The God of Love's function as a corrective of metaphoric disharmony and breakdown is quite explicit:

> And for she had so longe refused
> His seruaunte, and his lawes nat vsed,
> He lett her witt that he was wrothe.
>
> (783-785)

The God of Love's siege, then, is mounted to break down female resistance to the metaphorically determined and constituted roles of the conventional poetic discourse of male desire. It is a resistance figured in the distance between the queen's words and her 'entente', and in the exclusive and separate nature of the island surrounded by its 'walles of glasse' (751).

This gap is essentially one between desire and discourse. The queen's desire, her 'entente', does not correlate with her use of language. The God of Love, by wounding the queen with one of his arrows, is aiming to overcome this doubleness by eroticising the queen's 'entente'; by making it specifically a desire for the knight.

At this point the narrative turns to the consolidation of desire by means of discourse. The issue is to secure and make binding the relation of the queen to the role she is to take as the knight's lady. The language of this consolidation is largely contractual and hence legal: 'obligacyon' (890); 'sewertye' (891); 'byll' (920, 931, 937, 943); 'forgeue' (924); 'trepace' (924) and 'counsell' (935). The knight is assured of the success of his suit for the queen in the form of a legally binding contract; a written 'bille'. This bill effects the exchange of the queen's 'intente' (920) from her space to male space. The queen's 'intente', once perceived as a threat to a metaphorically determined role, is now neutralised through its textualisation, for this bill is a written document 'wherin hol her intente/Was writton' (920/921).

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1. The textualisation of female desire of 'entente' into bills is, of course, the subject of the narrative action of The Assembly of Ladies, see The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, edited by Derek A. Pearsall (London and Edinburgh, 1962), esp. ll.540-581; compare also The Kingis Quair, st.82:

> ... there I sawe
> A warld of folk, and by thaire contenaunce
> Thaire hertis semyt full if displesance,
> With billis in thaire handis, of one assent
> Vnto the juge thaire playntis to present.

See also The Court of Love in which the consolidation of the narrator's status as lover involves the use of legal language and the binding of the narrator to follow some twenty statutes, see ll.295-504. The narrator objects to the sixteenth statute which calls upon the prospective lover to 'seven sith at night thy lady for to plese/And seven at midnight, seven at morow-day' (ll.436-437). For a survey of texts which use this motif see William Allan Neilson, The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love (Boston, 1899), pp.168-212.

The bill containing her 'intente' is passed over to the God of Love who reads it three times (937) and then puts it in his sleeve. In the passage when the queen attempts, by dissimulation, to extract herself from a potentially difficult situation with the knight, the narrator, as the most omniscient male desirer in the narrative at that point, has privileged access to her 'entent'. When the queen, in this later passage, has handed over her 'intente', an 'intente' made accessible through being written down, to the God of Love the narrator remarks:

> And in his sleue he put the bill
> Was ther none that knewe his will.
>
> (943-944)

The narrator here has no access to the God of Love's 'will', this lack of access effectively figures the control the narrator feels the God of Love to have over his desire for his lady, and the desire he has concerning his dream (see ll.48-50).

Before leaving this section of the narrative it should be pointed out that the God of Love's involvement with a poetic discourse of love is signalled in one further way. The God of Love's primary concern is with discourse, more specifically tutelage in the rhetorical arts of speaking about love. Lines 950-1042 of the narrative are dominated by various examples of discourses connected with love, and this passage acts as a display and celebratory vindication of love's literary discourse in general and of rhetoric in particular. The God of Love promises to give his judgment on the queen's bill on the following day, in the company of all those:

> That purposed bene to were flowers
> Or of my lustye collours vse.
>
> (952-953)

'Flowers' and 'collours' are, of course, commonplace metaphors for the figures of rhetoric. In the meantime both knights and ladies disperse to either read or to create texts on love:

> And some to reade old romansys
> Hem occupied for ther pleasaunces
> Some to make virleyes & leyes,
> And some to other diuerse pleyes.
> And I to me a romaunse toke,
> And as I readinge was the booke,
> Me thowght the spere had so rone
> That it was risinge of the sonne.
> (973-980)

The God of Love re-appears 'within two oweres' (987) dressed 'all in flowers/Of diverse coloures' (988-89) and his counsellor (a 'servaunt of Love', 1002) delivers the God of Love's decision. This decision, however, for all the suspense built up by the night's delay, is deemed by the narrator wholly secondary to the language in which it is delivered.

This laudatory response to the opacity of discourse is in almost diametric opposition to the narrator's view of his own discourse. In the modesty topos at the beginning of the poem (58-70), the narrator pleads that we, the readers, treat his language - his 'terms' - as transparent. Here (1011-1042) it is the very opacity of language, its rhetorical excellence, that excites the narrator's comment and approbation, for instance:

> And cane his tonge to suche laungauge
> Turne, that yet in all his age
> Hard I never so coninglye
> Man speke, ne halfe so faythefullye.
> (1011-1014)

and:

> Shuche was his conninge langauge new,
> And well accordinge to his chere.
> (1018-1019)

The God of Love's decision itself comes as something as an anti-climax:

> And sayd that prince, that mightye lord,
> Or his depertinge wold accorde
> All the perties ther presente,
> And was the fyne of his entente.
>
> (1035-1038)

The centre of interest at this point is almost wholly on rhetorical accomplishment. For its message is merely a 'rehersal' (1025) of everything that has gone before, including a restatement of those metaphoric corollaries that determine male/female erotic relations:

> And how the syke had nede of leche,
> And who that whole was & in grace,
> He told playnelye how eche thinge was.
>
> (1030-1032)

The God of Love's appearance in the poem's narrative has a great significance as regards the reference of the poem's allegory to discourse. The God of Love acts to correct imbalances in the relationship between the knight and the queen, and to a more limited extent, between the narrator and his lady. This relationship is determined by the metaphors of the discourse of erotic desire, and desire is seen as constituted by these metaphors. Erotic relations are seen, therefore, in terms of these metaphors and their corollaries: the woman remains the other, the corollary, to the determining metaphors of male desire. He is sickness, she is cure; he is penitent, she is grace.

The conventional poetic discourse of erotic desire is one dominated by the tropical operations of rhetorical language. This is shown in _The Isle_ both explicitly in the narrator's praise of the speech of the God of Love's 'counseler' (1011-1042), and implicitly in the use of rhetorical _topoi_ of narration. The importance of rhetoric in the allegory is signalled also by the use of traditional metaphors of rhetorical trope, such as the _flores_ and _colores_ of rhetoric. These metaphors are particularly important in the second dream, where they inform the ending of the queen's and knight's story. The combination of these references to rhetorical trope and the use of magic to construct this ending signals the poem's exploration of the relation of discourse to narrative, a relation which creates narrative impasse; an impasse which is only overcome by rhetorically signalled 'magic'. It is to this machinery of narrative closure that we now turn.

The Second Dream

In the second dream many of the metaphors of the first dream are extended and literalised, by literalised I mean that metaphors are fully assimilated into narrative terms of event, action or plot. In the second dream much of the 'literal level' is constituted from metaphoric patterns established in the first dream. In the two halves of the poem a certain symmetry is established which reminds one of the diptych structure Ryding has identified as important in medieval narrative.[1] To some extent, then, the second dream can be seen as a fulfilment or fixing of metaphoric operations we have identified in the first dream. However, as we shall see there are elements in the second dream which seem to question the neatness of this bi-partite symmetry, elements which signal the reflexive, meta-fictional strategies of The Isle narrative.

Writing is shown in the second dream as a process which fixes and finalises narrative event. We have seen, in the first dream, how the queen's potentially disruptive 'intente' is neutralised by its being written down and presented to the God of Love. This process is couched in legal terminology; the claims of the individual are absorbed into the demands of a super-individual ethos, the laws of the God of Love - see 11.783-784: 'for she had so longe refused/His seruaunte, and his lawes not vsed'. In addition to this use of legal terminology to define the relations of discourse to narrative event and character role, in the second dream this relation is seen in religious terms; this ends with the both legally and religiously binding contract of the knight's (now a royal prince) and the queen's marriage in the 'churche perochiall' (2137). The portrayal of writing in legal and sacramental terms in the second dream is shown most forcefully in the prince and queen's marriage contract:

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[1] William W. Ryding, Structure in Medieval Narrative (The Hague and Paris, 1971), see pp.117-135, see also p.61 where Ryding writes of 'a concern for symmetry and balance in the diptych narrative'.

> This was concluded, writton, and sealed,
> That yt might not be repeled
> In no wyse, but aye be fyrme.
>
> (1367-1369)

This act of putting into writing in order that event be fixed for all time ('but aye be fyrme', 1369), is analogous to the narrator's textualisation of his dream experience in his 'booke' (2213). The narrator as poet puts his dream into writing in order to fix it in memory; in 'remembraunce' (33). This is not simply his personal mnemonic quirk, but rather a fictional representation of the relation of the individual text to the inter-textual poetic discourse of erotic desire. It is this sense of the inscription of his dream experience within a traditional discourse of desire which dominates the closing moves of the poem:

> And yf so be that thou her name finde
> Writton in booke or else vppon wall,
> Looke that thou do as seruaunte trew and kynde
> Thine obeysaunce, as she were there witheall.
>
> (2229-2232)

Thus the imperative of this discourse towards establishing metaphorically determined relations between the male desirer and the desired woman are extended to the relationship between the text and reader; the relationship between the text and a community of male desirers. The reader must become the 'seruaunte' of his lady's name whether 'writton in booke or else vppon wall' (2230).

Thus the imperatives of discourse's metaphorical determination of relations between the desirer and the desired are extended beyond the text to include the reader. The imperatives are to define the reader's relation to the woman he desires. The determining nature of discourse on narrative is analogous to the narrator's demands of the reader in these final stanzas. These stanzas bristle with imperatives to the reader — 'be diligent, awacke, obye, and dread' (2222); 'and yf so be that thou' (2229); 'look that thou do' (2231) — imperatives which attempt to determine the nature of the reader's desire: 'may geve the blisse that thou desyers ofte' (2221; 2228; 2235). In these last stanzas the narrator makes his dream experience an authoritative example of the conventional-proper - discourse of desire and extends its determining control over the (male) reader's desire. This final extension of metaphorically determined desiring relations to the reader — 'do as seruaunte trew & kynde' (2231) — confirms the self-consciousness with which the poem examines the nature of a conventional poetic discourse's relation with an individual narrative.

The function of writing within The Isle, especially in the second dream, is informed by the language of law, of religious sacrament and of commemoration. Event may be remembered, made binding and sacramentalised through writing. The properties of writing are reflected in the narrative events of the second dream: the knight is contracted to marry the queen (in writing), but must first return to his native land. It is there that he is prevented from returning to marry the queen within the allotted ten days by matters of state. The knight (he is prince of this country) remembers his commitment but he cannot fulfil it. Because of this breach of contract the queen and many of her ladies starve themselves to death to escape the shame of the broken promise. Significantly this shame would be one resulting from the use of discourse for the queen and her ladies must beware the 'slaunder' (1670) of '... tales and songes/That by them make culd evell tunges' (1661/1662). Discourse's ability to commemorate is here shown as a disincentive to the fulfilment of narrative desire; for the fear of what 'evell tunges' will disseminate forces the queen and her ladies, and consequently the prince, to commit suicide.[1] These are deaths which threaten to curtail expected narrative outcome, deaths which replace the sacrament of marriage with a joint funeral. This threat to narrative outcome requires the intervention of a magic 'cure' so that the narrative can proceed to its expected, happy, conclusion.

These deaths show discourse's determining relation to narrative event taken to an extreme; to the point where discourse curtails the fulfilment of erotic desire by foreclosing on narrative outcome. The metaphor of desire as sickness/death has been used to define the relationship between the knight and the queen earlier in the narrative. Both the knight and the queen have been in states described as near death (see,for instance,lines 393, 514, 519 and 561). Indeed the queen has had to cope with a situation where the knight might potentially die as a result of her refusal to accede to his imperious erotic desire. In these deaths of the second dream, this metaphor of the sickness/death of desire, more strictly of unfulfilled erotic desire, is literalised by being assimilated into narrative deaths; deaths which thwart the fulfilment of erotic desire in the union of the prince and the queen. The deaths of the prince and the queen in the second dream, therefore, act as narrative realisations of the various metaphors of sickness/death from the discourse of erotic desire which we have met in the first dream.

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[1] Compare Criseyde's lamentation over her lost reputation in Troilus and Criseyde, Book V, 1058-1064:

> 'Allas, of me vnto the worldes ende
> Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
> No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
> O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge;
> Thorugh-out the world my belle shall be ronge!
> And wommen moost wol haten me of alle —
> Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle.

Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies', p.33, sees this scene in The Isle as marking the climax of the Isle-poet's 'misappropriation of Chaucerian models'.

This metaphoric strategy for the generation of narrative is also reflected in the use of magic. In the first dream the curative properties of the magic apples restore the 'dying' queen to health, and are also used to revive the almost drowned narrator when he is hauled aboard his lady's departing ship (1150-1201). In the second dream it is the magic 'erbe' which effects the resurrections of the prince and queen.[1] The metaphor of desire as sickness and its corollary of fulfilment as cure is, in the second dream, assimilated into narrative terms. This assimilation reifies metaphoric cure and thus makes it an object; a 'medicyne more fyne then treacle' (1904). This assimilation also occurs in the first dream, of course, but in the second dream the narrativisation of the metaphors of erotic discourse is so pronounced as to draw attention to the poem's strategies for the creation of allegorical meaning. This strategy may be defined as the use of metaphors which typically determine relations between individual consciousnesses as constitutive of narrative structure. In The Isle the status of the woman as other to male desire is confirmed by the use of magic. For magic takes on, in the poem, those properties which metaphors of the discourse of male erotic desire typically ascribe to the desired woman; the woman's ability to cure male sickness and near death corresponds in The Isle to the properties of the magic apples and the magic herb, both of which have the ability to neutralise potential threats to narrative outcome. The narrator's desire of his dream, makes him ascribe precisely those properties to magic objects in the narrative with which he also invests the female object of his desire. As his lady can cure his sickness and pain of desire (see 2185-2192) so, in his dream, magic objects are able to dissolve potential threat to the narrative fulfilment of the prince's desire.

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[1] Anne R. Conroy, 'The Isle of Ladies', pp.169-170 remarks of the miracle of the marvellous herb:

> Apparently answering only to the demand for a happy resolution, the Isle miracle might seem to contribute nothing to the experience of the poem itself.

I would argue that it is precisely the blatancy of this 'demand for a happy resolution' which signals the use of magic in The Isle to examine the determining relations of the discourse of male desire both to female roles - in that both magic and women in the poem are signalled as 'other' to male desire; and to narrative event - in that narrative impasse, caused by the over-determination of narrative by the tropes of the discourse of male desire, can only be overcome by the use of magic.

Compare the scene of healing enacted by two weasles in Marie de France's Eliduc, see Les Lais de Marie de France, edited by Jean Rychner (Paris, 1966), pp.155-191. In Eliduc a weasle uses a magic flower to revive its dead mate. Eliduc's wife then has the cure repeated upon the dead Guillardon, the maiden with whom her husband is in love. In contrast to The Isle, magic in Eliduc is used as an emotional focus for the quality and depth of Eliduc's wife's love for her husband, for she sacrifices her love for her husband to save the woman he is in love with. Eliduc's similarities and differences with The Isle are noted by Conroy, p.169 and Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.165.

In the second dream the ship, as a metaphorical vehicle of desire is explicitly labelled as symbolic, as having a significance outside the causative patterning of narrative event: the ship is one of 'manes thowght' (1377). This labelling points to the status of the ship as a metaphor of a discourse anterior to narrative but in determining relation to narrative structure and meaning. As a metaphor of such a discourse the ship functions to condense narrative meaning; that is to telescope narrative meaning into non-causative, non-naturalistic detail. This condensation is perhaps best expressed as the result of their being an excess of desire in the second dream, more desire than the narrative can assimilate into causative or naturalistic structures; hence the use of magic at crucial points in the structure of the narrative. This over-loading of narrative by desire, this condensation of desire as meaning, is a result of both the prince's and the narrator's desires reaching for fulfilment in the second dream as the narrative reaches its own end point. This is a desire for a narrative closure conterminous with the fulfilment of sexual desire.

This condensation of desire and meaning may be best illustrated by examining the passage where the knight and his followers belatedly return to the island so that the prince may marry the queen, and his fellows the ladies of the island. It is the preparations for the return journey which delay the prince and his retinue, and thus directly cause the deaths of both the queen and the prince. This passage reveals an excess of desire being brought to bear on the narrative, an excess which causes a breakdown of the narrative's progression to its expected outcome.

In the first dream the meta-textual discourse which determines sexual desire is figured through the fleet of ten thousand ships which herald the God of Love's arrival at the island. The super-individual nature of this discourse of desire is shown by dint of the number of ships, which absurdly overwhelm female resistance. Male desire is troped as a universal monolith dispersed into ten thousand vessels of desire, each vessel a paradigmatic representation of a universal male desire. The metaphoric relation of desire to narrative in the first dream is best characterised as a relation of dispersal and displacement. In the second dream this relation is one of condensation and compression. In this passage in the second dream (1513-1570) some sixty thousand knights travel to the island in just three ships. The reversed proportion of desire to the individual vessel is exact, deliberate and comic. While in the first dream one universal male desire, as personified by the God of Love, is dispersed between ten thousand ships, in the second dream each vessel carries ten thousand desiring men. This sense of reversal, and condensation excites, and is signalled by, narratorial comment:

> At wiche shippinge me thought I lowghe,
> And cane to maruell in my thought
> How ever suche a shipe was wrought;
> For what people that cane increasse
> Ne neuer so thicke might be the presse,
> But all had rome at ther will.
>
> (1560-1565, my emphasis)

The extraordinary nature of this over-loading of a metaphoric vessel makes the narrator laugh; laughter which in Freudian terms results from the extraordinary condensation of desire and meaning in this passage.[1] The dream at this point is, quite literally, over-loaded with desire and meaning (desire is meaning); this saturation of the narrative with erotic meaning is signalled by narratorial laughter.

I should now like to turn to an examination of the passage in the second dream in which the prince's and the queen's deaths are reversed by the use of magic (see 1815-1966). This use of magic is informed, as we have seen, by the metaphoric values established earlier in the poem; in, for instance, the labelling of this magic as cure, a 'medicyne more fyne than treacle' (1904). Both the deaths themselves and the remedy are therefore narrative realisations of metaphoric values from the poetic discourse of erotic desire. The 'cure' for the two lovers' deaths is signalled as determined by metaphor by the conspicuous patterning of the above-mentioned passage with metaphoric allusions to the locus amoenus, which could be described as the arch-locus of the discourse of erotic desire.

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[1] See Sigmund Freud, Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, translated and edited by James Strachey (London, 1960), pp.168-169:

> It is to be expected that in the process of condensation a few of the elements subjected to it will be lost, while others which take over the cathectic energy of the former, will become intensified or over-intensified through the condensation. Thus the brevity of jokes, like that of dreams, would be a necessary concomitant of the condensations which occur in both of them - in both cases a result of the process of condensation.
>
> (My emphasis)

The resurrection of the two lovers is effected by a tableau played out by birds; a tableau which involves the use of a herb that grows, flowers, sets seed and then dies. Birds, flowers and the processes of growth are typical motifs of the *locus amoenus*. They have been used as such in the description of the God of Love's navy in the first dream. In *The Kingis Quair* birds are seen by the I figure as (a sometimes reluctant) aid to his wooing of his lady - his flower. Moreover it is a bird, a turtle-dove, which brings the lover in *The Kingis Quair* the news of his success in his love for his flower.[1] In *The Isle* birds are shown in a similar helpful role, with mysterious and possibly religious origins,[2] in that the avian tableau acts as a narrative model for the revivifying of the prince and the queen.

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[1] *The Kingis Quair*, sts. 177-179.

[2] In *The Kingis Quair*, the arrival of the bird with the message assuring the I figure of the success of his love is surrounded with religious connotation, recalling the biblical story of the dove released from Noah's Ark. This suggests that the whole of the narrator's enterprise in the poem is divinely sanctioned; a suggestion which the narrator makes explicit at the end of the poem, see st. 196. In *The Isle* birds have a sacred significance based on the same biblical story; a bird bringing a 'healing' branch in its beak. Moreover, the resurrections of the prince and the queen excite an explicitly religious response:

> ... for wiche syȝht,
> The people knelynge on the stones
> Thowght they in heuen were, sowle and bones.
>
> (1932-1934)

Significantly, the avian tableau takes place in a church at the funeral of the two lovers, see ll.1812-1814.

The processes of growth on which the construct of the locus amoenus are based may act as metaphors for the growth of erotic desire or for the production of narrative meaning. In The Kingis Quair a part of the garden, a flower, is the metaphor for the I figure's lady while Venus uses metaphors of the growth and dying of flowers to educate this I figure in the decorum of erotic desire.[1] In The Floure and the Leafe, processes of natural growth act as metaphors for the production of narrative meaning in the text.[2] In The Isle natural growth acts as a metaphor for the growth and fulfilment of desire. The 'erbe' grows, flowers and sets seed; this process is analogous both to the progression of sexual desire in the poem and also to the relation of the poem to that poetic discourse by which it is determined and of which it becomes a part.

The seed image is also found in Chaucer as a metaphor of a unit of narrative meaning; a meaning which is dependent on past texts.[3] The cyclical pattern of growth enacted in the avian tableau in The Isle replicates the cyclical nature of the relations of the individual, present text to the past literary discourse of which it is a critical analysis but also a continuation.[4] The bird and growth images of this tableau may then be seen as an example of what R.W. Hanning calls 'poetic emblem'.[5]

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[1] The Kingis Quair, sts. 115-119.

[2] The Floure and the Leafe, ll.4-14 and l.595. For discussions of this metaphorics see Ernst R. Curtius, European Literature, pp.313-315; and R.A. Shoaf, 'Notes Toward Chaucer's Poetics of Translation', Studies in the Age of Chaucer, I (1979), 55-66.

[3] See The Parlement of Foules, ll.22-25; and The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, F ll.66-80.

[4] See R.A. Shoaf, 'Notes Toward Chaucer's Poetics of Translation', p.57:

> As Chaucer knew full well, new corn comes from old fields only because the old fields are plowed under season by season... I am pointing to Chaucer's awareness that every poet must change the past even if and sometimes precisely because he perfectly understands it.

[5] R.W. Hanning, 'Poetic Emblems in Medieval Narrative Texts', Studies in Medieval Culture, 16 (1984), 1-32.

Hanning defines the poetic emblem in medieval narrative as

> a symbolic artifact or character within the narrative that transcends its role as an element of the fiction in which it appears and becomes a powerful comment on the artistic enterprise of its creator.[1]

The avian tableau in The Isle works as such an emblem of the poem's rhetorical and meta-fictional strategies: the text 'grows' out of a poetic discourse which is anterior to it, but it also 'sets the seed' (i.e. creates meaning) by which that discourse is continued. The description of the bird narrative includes references to colours and flowers, references which, I would argue, work as traces of those metaphors of the *colores* and *flores rhetorici* which we have met earlier in the poem. See, for instance, the description of the first bird as 'all full of collors straunge and cointe' (1828), and that of the second bird's action: 'and in his beke, of colours nyne/An erbe he brought, flowerles, all grene' (1863-1864). Such descriptions invite the analogy between the flowering of the herb and the rhetorical/tropical procedures of the text. As the herb must flower to set seed, and hence fulfil its curative function, so the text must use the flowers and colours of rhetoric to produce its effect and meaning.

The Narrator and His Dream

The relation of the narrator to the dream/allegory in The Isle has an importance beyond the simple fiction of wish-fulfilment.[2] The relation

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1. R.W. Hanning, 'Poetic Emblems', p.1.
2. For this argument see Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.1:

> the poem stands apart from other contemporary love-visions due to the strength of the author's emotional involvement in his story.

See also Judith M. Davidoff, 'The Audience illuminated, or New Light Shed on the Dream Frame ofLydgate's Temple of Glas', Studies in the Age of Chaucer, 5 (1983), 103-125. Davidoff argues that all late Middle English dream-vision poems use the 'need-to-fulfilment pattern' (p.107) to relate the dreamer to his or her dream. While I would agree that this relation is important in The Isle, the narrator's emotional involvement with his dream is perhaps less important as an affective fiction and more significant in how it is used to highlight the use of metaphoric language in the poem and therefore to signal The Isle's meta-fictional strategies.

of the narrator to his narrative signals the procedures by which the allegory constructs meaning; the narrator's actions point the nature of the metaphors used as constitutive of narrative structures in his dream(s). When the narrator wakes for the second, and final time, he describes himself as sick and in pain, and attempts to commit suicide:

> And when I wocke and knew the trothe,
> Had ye sene, of verye rothe
> I trow ye wold haue wepte a wecke;
> For never man yet halfe so sike
> Escaped, I wene, withe the lyfe;
> And was for faute that sword ne knyfe
> I find myght, my lyve t'abrege,
> Ne thinge that carued, ne had edge,
> Wherewithe I might my wofull peines
> Haue voyd withe bledinge of my veynes.
>
> (2177-2186)

In this passage the narrator seeks to emulate the metaphorically determined actions he has witnessed in his dream. The 'suicides' of the prince and the queen in the dream act as a model for the narrator's response to his erotic sufferings. The comic nature of the passage depends upon the recognition of the disparity between the metaphorically determined actions of the dream and of the narratorial fiction. The narrator wishes to follow the example of the characters in his dream by responding to thwarted desire with suicide, however he lacks a weapon. His impotence with sword and knife corresponds to the impotence of his sexual desire, and invites analogy to his declared incapacities as a writer (see 59-70). This incompetence signals an established pattern; a pattern of the assimilation of metaphor into narrative, in the dream/allegory. The narrator wishes to use the very processes by which his dream, as allegory, has constructed meaning, that is by the narrativisation of tropical language, to create the desired meaning in his waking experience:

> Whiche to my lady I complayne,
> And grace and mercy her requier,
> To ende my wo and besy fere,
> And me accepte to her seruice
> After her pleasaunce, in suche wise
> That of my dreame the substaunce
> Might turne once to cognisaunce,
> And cognisaunce to very preve.
>
> (2188-2195)

It is the wish fulfilment fiction of the relation of the narrator to his dream which signals the processes by which the dream/allegory's meaning has been constructed. It is this comedy (in, for instance, the narrator's attempt to follow the example of the lovers in his dream and commit suicide only to find he has no weapon to do it) which determines the boundaries of that ambiguity which Pearsall notes in The Isle's response to its encoded generic expectations.[1]

The parodic elements of The Isle's meta-fictional and meta-discursive examinations of the determining relation of conventional discourse to narrative are given focus through the relation of the narratorial fiction of the I as poet and lover to his two dream narratives. It is largely the activity of the narrator, both in and outside his dreams, which point the parodic strategies of the poem. For instance, the passage in which the narrator attempts to follow his lady's ship by plunging into the sea uses the metaphor of the sea as the 'mater' of male desire,[2] and parodically develops this metaphor so that the narrator is, literally, almost overcome, and destroyed, by his desire.

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[1] Derek A. Pearsall, 'The English Chaucerians', p.229.

[2] See, for instance, Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, ll.417 and Book II, ll.5-6.

Parody is used in The Isle as part of the poem's investigation of the conventional poetic discourse of erotic desire. In part parody occurs as a product of the inter-face between different generic manifestations, or expectations, of such a discourse. Romance structures and motifs are brought into juxtaposition with the structures of the dream vision. It is from this deliberate admixture of generic expectations that the Isle-poet begins his examination of the discourse of erotic desire which spans generic categories.

Margaret Rose has written of parody's meta-fictional strategies; of its purchase on literary tradition:

> the critique offered by the parodist extends (while also criticising and changing) a literary tradition, because, as another literary work, the parody itself is a part of the corpus of work against which its criticism is directed.[1]

This double aspect of parody is encoded in The Isle's narrative structure. For the dream narrative progresses, through the blatant and contrived use of magic, to an expected and confirmatory conclusion in the marriage of the prince and the queen. In this way the discourse of male desire is extended and confirmed, with the full panoply of the religious and lay properties of the marriage contract. It is the narratorial fiction, which, at the conclusion of the poem, is the focus of The Isle's critical investigation of its literary traditions. This fiction points the wide gaps between the contrived fictionality of the dream's ending and narrator's experience with his lady. Metaphor and magic are used in the dream(s) to emphasise the fictionality of narrative plot. It is through such moments of emphasis that The Isle's purchase on the conventions of the discourse of male desire is signalled. The Isle-poet uses metaphor and magic as part of his meta-fictional strategies. Moreover, a meta-fictional understanding of the use of parody in the poem, which Rose's definition sees as fundamental to parodic operations, is perhaps more helpful to ascertaining the nature of the parodic elements in The Isle than a view of parody as purely a ridiculing of a literary tradition's use of a conventional poetic discourse.[1] The Isle does not seek to undermine that discourse but rather to examine its determining relation to the individual text.

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[1] See Margaret A. Rose, Parody // Meta-Fiction: an Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction (London, 1979), p.158.

The parody of the narrator's relation to his dream is also signalled by pun.[2] Quilligan has highlighted the use of pun in allegory to signal the essential textuality of the genre.[3] Pun emphasises the opacity of language, focusing our attention on the word as word.[4] In The Isle it is precisely this concentration on the word which the narrator urges us to forego in his modesty *topos* of lines 59-70. Pun blatantly arrests our reading and forces our attention away from the story and towards what the narrator calls 'th'enditinge' (67). While the narrator urges us to let his writing 'all passe as nothinge were' (69), it is the uses of pun connected to *his* desires which actually draw attention to the linguistic patterns in the poem.

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[1] See Norman Blake, The English Language in Medieval Literature (London, 1977), p.166:

> Parody is the ridiculing of a particular turn of expression, work or genre by imitating its characteristic linguistic features and either modifying them slightly or applying them to ridiculous ends.

[2] See Walter Redfern, Puns (Oxford, 1984), p.93:

> Like punning or irony, parody superimposes two levels or schemes of references, so that we hear or see double. Punning is parodic, because parasitical: it needs a target or basis to react against, to work on.

[3] Maureen Quilligan, The Language of Allegory, pp.21-22 and p.33.

[4] See James Brown, 'Eight types of puns', PMLA, 71 (1956), 14-26 (p.18):

> for the pun is the first step away from the transparent word, the first step toward the achievement of symbolic metaphor.

In The Isle pun is most significantly used with the word 'intente' (also 'entente'). As we have seen above, the queen's 'entente', which at first poses a threat to male desire and the allegorical nature of the narrative, is neutralised or made safe, by the demands of the God of Love that the queen should write down her 'entente'. The textualisation of the queen's 'entente' assimilates the word into the textual fabric of the poem, it is no longer an anomaly in the narrative and therefore a threat to the successful outcome of male desire. The full textualisation of the word occurs by pun; by referring to the narrator's 'intent'. The fulfilment of male desire in the poem - marriage, celebration and sexual consummation - all take place 'in tentes'. The potential pun is finally clinched by the narrator:

> And the feast helde was in tentes --
> As to tell you myne intent is
>
> (2063-2064, my emphasis)

Pun has been recognised as closely related to rhyme,[1] we can see such a link in the passage when the narrator's lady accepts the narrator's suit in the second dream, for she too puns on his 'entent':

> And couth consent at youre request
> To be named of your feast,
> And do after your vsaunce
> In obeyinge your pleasaunce;
> At your request, thus I concent
> To please you in youre entent.
>
> (2105-2110, my emphasis)

Such punning emphasises the occurrence of the word 'intent' and therefore draws attention to the textualising procedures by which allegory generates narrative. The progress of the word itself - what's happening to it in the text - signals the way in which allegory creates meaning by drawing attention to the use of words as objects and the narrative as a space in which words as things are located. The word 'intente' is at first seen as a threat to the fulfilment of male desire, is then reified by being textualised (a textualisation which effectively neutralises this threat), and finally points the parodic strategies of the Isle-poet by its transference to the context of the narrator's desire - his 'entent'.

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[1] For a discussion of the close kinship of pun and rhyme see Walter Redfern, Puns, pp.99-101.

The passage which separates the two dreams, when the narrator wakes up for the first time (1301-1345), furnishes another example of how the Isle-poet uses the relation of the narrator to his dream narrative(s) to point the relation of The Isle to the conventional poetic discourse of male desire. When he wakens the narrator describes how his room is full of smoke and how he feels feeble and is 'weate of teares' (1340). He describes how he quits his room, ascends a 'windinge stayer' (1313) to another room in which he remembers his first dream and wills himself back to sleep so that he may re-enter his dream-world.

This passage reminds the reader that this is a dream fiction; a written artifact. The deliberate intrusion of the narratorial fiction into the dream allegory breaks the linear, horizontal narrative with a significant image of vertical movement:

> I ryse and welke, sawght paace and pace,
> Till I a windinge stayer founde,
> And helde the vice ay in my hand,
> And vpwardes sauftelye so can crepe.
>
> (1312-1315)

Moreover, this break leads to a place of 'storyes old and diuerse' (1325) which signals the relation of this text to a paradigm of other texts.

This passage also makes references to the metaphors of the discourse of male desire. When he wakes up, the narrator's room is full of smoke which suggests a comic reference to the common-place metaphor of erotic desire as a fire. This waking section has, then, two references which locate The Isle narrative in relation to a discourse of male desire, which manifests itself in other narratives — 'storyes old and diuerse'. It is the relation of the dream narratives to the narrator that directs the reader's attention to the place of this text in the discourse of male desire, of which The Isle is a critical overview but also a continuation.

When the narrator wakes up for the second, and final, time at the end of the poem he makes a further reference to the stories painted on the wall of his room:

> But when I wocke, all was ceaste.
> For ther was ladye, ne creature,
> Save one the walles old portrature
> Of horsemen, hawkes, and houndes,
> And hurte deare full of woundes,
> Some lyke bytton, some hurtte with shott,
> And, as my dreme, semed that was not.
>
> (2170-2176)

This description invites an analogy to the narrator's mental and emotional state. A metaphoric identification is hinted at between the 'hurte deare full of woundes' (2174) and the narrator's erotic suffering, a suffering which causes him to attempt to wound himself, see lines 2182-2186.[1] Through such metaphoric identifications with past stories the narrator's dream experience takes its place within a community of other, past, stories - 'the walles old portrature' (2172) - moreover the narrator attempts to extend this community of identification into the future by having his readers do 'obeysaunce' (2232) to his lady's name should they find it written either in books 'or else vppon wall' (2230). (See lines 2229-2232 quoted below.) The narrator's attitude to his experience is one of remembrance and commemoration. There is a great emphasis placed on the putting of his dream experience into memory in all the waking sections of the poem,[1] but see particularly lines 1332-1340:

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[1] The reference to wounding may also be alluding to the metaphor of erotic desire as wound, see esp. ll.789-793:

> ... and withe an arrow ground
> Sharpe and new, the quene a woounde
> He gave that pearced vnto the harte,
> Wiche afterward full sore can smarte,
> And was not holle of many a yere.

There is a possible pun here on 'harte' - male deer and heart as a metaphor for the queen's erotic desire.

> All that I dremed had that eve
> Before, all I con reherse,
> Right as a childe at skole his vearse
> Dothe, after that he thinkethe to thrive,
> Right so did I; for all my lyve
> I thawght to haue in remembraunce --
> Bothe the paine and the pleasaunce --
> The dreame, hole as yt me befell,
> Wiche was as ye here me tell.

It is by such moves to place his dream in memory that the narrator hopes to gain a substantial purchase on his dream experience; to fix that experience so that it cannot slip away from him.

Writing is shown in The Isle as the way in which experience is fixed in memory. Writing is shown as itself an act of remembrance, an act which is instated with an almost sacramental value. The language of the final stanzas of the poem defines the nature of the narrator's desire for his lady in similar quasi-sacramental language, hence 'I playne and shreve' (2210); 'requiringe grace' (2211); 'ffor by my trothe I swere' (2213); 'obseruance' (2215); 'obeysaunce' (2219); and 'from the grace of her' (2234). Moreover, these sacramental attitudes to desire and writing are brought together to become the determining metaphor for the reader's response:

> And yf so be that thou her name finde,
> Writton in booke or else vppon wall.
> Looke that thou do as seruaunte trew & kynde
> Thine obeysaunce ...
> (2229-2232)

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[1] See ll.33-35; ll.1330-1340; and ll.2225-2228.

Throughout the narrative writing is seen as that which fixes and stabilises; writing is imbued, as we have seen, with legal and religious force: writing is that medium through which relations are made contractual and binding. Textualisation is shown as the way male desire institutionalises its own erotic imperatives; that which is perceived as a threat, or as an anomaly, to that desire can be made safe by writing. It is writing which effectively encodes male desire into narrative event and action. The narrator's professed inadequacies as a writer mean that he cannot institutionalise his desire in narrative form, his desire eludes him partly because his non-oneiric desire has not got the purchase on the institutionalising properties of writing which male desire is shown to have in his dream. While The Isle finally appears to ratify this institutionalisation of male desire in the dream narratives, through the fulfilment of male desire, it also insistently points to the processes by which that institutionalisation takes place. Principally this pointing occurs through the relation of the dreamer to his dream narratives. It is through the fiction of his desires of his dream that The Isle examines the relation of the individual narrative to the exigencies of a conventional discourse of male erotic desire.

In his concluding comments on The Isle Anthony Jenkins writes:

> Emotionally, then, The Isle of Ladies illustrates a breakdown in medieval allegory. The dream is no longer an adequate way of isolating and working out a personal problem. The poet is unable completely to externalise - and contain - his internal feelings through re-telling his dream.[1]

In this study of The Isle we have seen that the Isle-poet is not working out his personal feelings in his dream, rather he constructs a poetic fiction in which an I narrator, as poet/lover, attempts - with an at times comic over-statedness - to gain fulfilment through, and in, his dream(s).

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1. Anthony Jenkins, The Isle of Ladies, p.65.

The Isle illustrates, then, not a breakdown in the poet's emotional relationship to his poetic fiction as Jenkins argues, but rather the generation of a poem from a conscious and deliberate purchase on normative allegorical expectations. But more than this *The Isle* displays a striking awareness of the inscription of a discourse shared by other texts, in a variety of genres, in the individual narrative. The use of the ship metaphor in *The Isle*, a trope not simply of male desire but also of the discourse of that desire, illustrates well this intertextual awareness. *The Isle* may well stand, therefore, as a comprehensive overview of the use and implications of a poetic discourse, which for fifteenth-century poets was largely mediated through its Chaucerian manifestations.

This overview is focused through the use of the tropes of the poetic discourse of male desire. At first, women are shown to have a greater awareness of the use and effects of the tropes of male desire then the men themselves, and resist the determining relation of these tropes to their roles and actions. However, women's resistance to male desire, figured in their knowing purchase on the use of male trope, is smoothly overcome. Female 'entente' is simply assimilated into narrative terms; it is neutralised by being written down. The smoothness of this defeat of female resistance leads, however, to the narrative being over-determined by male trope, as in the deaths of the prince and the queen. This over-determination requires the use of magic, a magic which ascribes to objects curative properties typically ascribed to women by the tropical operations of male discourse. The comic potential of the relation of male discourse to narrative event is pointed by the narrator's attempts to emulate the metaphorically determined actions of his dream, his response to his dream is shown as a response to the tropes of the discourse of male erotic desire. It is, moreover, through the use of trope that the relation of the narrator to his lady is figured in the poem. The narrator's lady appropriates the conventionally determined metaphoric *locus* of male desire - the ship - and the narrator's desire for her is comically fictionalised as his attempting to follow her ship. Furthermore, the narrator's inadequacy as a lover/writer is signalled by the fact that he has no vessel of his own.

It is through the operations of common-place tropes of male erotic desire, therefore, that the *Isle*-poet focuses our attention as readers on the poem's (not necessarily specific) relation to other texts which also use this discourse. *The Isle* depends, then, on the recognition of these tropes of male desire - both as constitutive of narrative structure, and as creative of points of access, for the reader, to the poem's meta-fictionally and reflexively generated meaning -if its marginal status in critical writing on fifteenth-century poetry is to be reassessed, and its importance as a critical overview of the relation of the conventional discourse of male erotic desire to narrative structure is to be properly understood.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has examined in some detail the implications for narrative of the use of commonplace trope in a range of variously related and analogous texts. A common model for the role of tropical language in narrative would assign trope to either a decorative or descriptive level within the text. In such a model trope may be said to be a function of narrative mimesis: an aid to narrative's relatively simple referential procedures.

But the various qualities of tropical operation discussed in section two of my introduction, and detailed in my studies of individual texts, suggest that trope may also have an unsettling, or problematising, effect on narrative reference itself. In their various investigations of the nature of poetic language's purchase on the world, several of the texts discussed in this thesis exploit trope's ability to make complex simple narrative reference. Thus, the use of tropical signification inscribes within narrative events or situations the very subject of narrative discourse; that subject being the problematic nature of linguistic and poetic referentiality.

It seems that one of the major issues which has emerged as a direct implication of the use of inherited trope in poetic narrative is that of poetic or writerly control. The tangibility of an inherited poetic discourse,inscribed in the individual narrative through the deployment of commonplace trope, implies writing as a problematics of control; as a problematics of the relation of the text prior, intertextually constituted, poetic discourse. This study has traced the emergence of a metaphorics of writerly control in a range of fifteenth-century poems. This metaphorics of navigation would appear to be mediated for fifteenth-century writers by its use in Chaucerian texts, most especially Troilus and Criseyde, where seafaring operates as a metaphor of erotic desire, of the problems of writing and as a Boethian metaphor of the sway of Fortune.

In The Kingis Quair the metaphors of seafaring are used to provide a startling example of the slippage between writing and experience, between the problem of writing and the stuff of narrative 'mater' itself. The Quair is not simply 'about' the problems for reference of language's capacity for tropical multi-referentiality, it also inscribes this problematic in the poem's linguistic texture through such metaphoric slippages and through the use of word-play and pun. In The Bowge of Courte Skelton uses a multi-referential metaphorics of seafaring to discuss the problems of poetic and linguistic reference, while in the Chapelet or Garlande of Laurell navigation is used as an explicit metaphor for the relation of the poet to his craft and also his relation to that intertextual poetic discourse which he continues and of which he hopes to become a prominent feature by achieving 'fame'. In The Isle of Ladies navigation emerges as a metaphor which both plots positions of erotic desire in the poem (and maps out the movements between those positions), and also as a metaphor, or synecdoche, of poetic discourse itself. That the narrator of The Isle is no navigator - indeed he has no ship to navigate - signals his lack of success as a lover and corroborates his rhetoric of inadequacy as a writer. Thus, in The Isle the ship metaphor is used knowingly and often comically as the metaphor in which the closely related discourses of erotic desire and poetics are conjoined.

In these texts, then, a multi-referential metaphor is exploited in several ways, all of which have implications for narrative structure and meaning. As a constitutive element of narrative structure it generates polysemous narrative discourses: narratives which are about poetics and desire, about writing and life at court, about writing and the problematics of experience, about desire and the sway of Fortune. The use of trope thus allows elaborate systems of analogy to be created within texts and also slippages between these analogical discourses.

In Chapter Two we saw that Lydgate works to de-historicise the language of Troilus and Criseyde in his Temple of Glas. Lydgate uses much of the tropical language of the Troilus but that language is cut free from its referential and its historical contexts which work to relativise reference in Chaucer's poem. Chaucer's tropical strategies in the Troilus reveal the incapacity of linguistic and tropical operation to fix or contain experience even (or especially) when it is constitutive of a proverbial, sapiential, discourse which promises just such a hold of language on the world. Because discourse is purified of relativity in The Temple the tropical transformations and transpositions of discourse are able to change experience. In The Temple trope thus has the ability to effect transformations in, and to reconstitute, experience. This is largely because of the divorce of tropical discourse in The Temple from the historical, particularising, context within which similar tropes must operate in the Troilus.

The de-historicising moves of Lydgate's poem focus attention on discourse itself rather than on that to which discourse refers. Consequently Lydgate places great value on the efficacy of discursive processes to change the way in which experience is perceived. This thesis has traced the implications for narrative of this focus on discursive processes and the materiality of language in a particular fifteenth-century poetic. While Lydgate seems to take for granted the efficacy of language to produce changes in experience, other poets, as we have seen, are less sure and address their narrative discourses to an examination of the problematic nature of the relation of language to the world of experience. Skelton, for instance, in The Bowge creates a fiction which takes as its subject a lack of control over poetic language and referentiality, and also a fiction, in the Garlande, of poetic virtuosity - of a control over poetic craft but a lack of determination over poetic reception and reputation.

The poems of this fifteenth-century poetic tradition appear at times to privilege linguistic and rhetorical operations as a means of ordering, or attaining control, on an almost cosmic scale. The narrator in The Quair likens his creativity to the work of God as author - recalling the scholastic metaphor of the world as book - while Stephen Hawes in The Passetyme of Pleasure accords rhetoric a pre-eminent role in the historical progress of humanity to a more judicious order and stability. For Hawes history is divided into ante-rhetorical and post-rhetoricised periods:

> Before the lawe/ in a tumbling barge
> The people sayled/ without parfytenes
> Throughe the worlde/ all aboute a large
> They hadde none order/ nor no stedfastnes
> Tyll rethorycyans/ sounde Iustyce doubtles
> Ordenynge kynges/ or ryghte hye dygnyte
> Of all comyns/ to haue the souerainte
>
> The barge to stere/ with lawe and Iustyce
> Ouer the wawes/ of this lyfe transsytorye.
> (876-884)[1]

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[1] See Stephen Hawes, The Pastime of Pleasure, edited by William Edward Mead, EETS original series 173 (London, 1928 (for 1927)), p.39.

Hawes makes large claims for rhetoric's ability to affect the world (and historical process) similar to Lydgate's praise of rhetoric in The Fall of Princes.[1] On the other hand several texts discussed in this thesis (including The Quair) work to undermine such confidence in language and rhetoric. In particular the fiction of the incompetent or anxious narrator/poet brings to narrative poems an awareness of the dangerous, or pleasurable, polysemy or multi-referentiality of commonplace poetic language. While trope at once gives the potential for the generation of narrative, and the confirmation of meaning, through its ability to simultaneously refer to various discourses, it also has the potential to subvert a single narrative order by its very capacity for multiple reference. In The Quair, while trope works to reveal and ratify meaningful pattern in the narrator's experience, the slippages between alternative meanings of trope, and the exploitation of word-play pull against this meaning and insist on the text as a constructed, contingent, artifact. This insistence places in some doubt the narrator's assertions that he has discovered a metaphorical similarity between his writerly activities and that of God's inscription of meaning in the cosmos.

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[1] See Lydgate's Fall of Princes, edited by Henry Bergen, 4 vols, EETS extra series 121, 122, 123 and 124 (London, 1924 (for 1918)-1927 (for 1919)), III, Book 6, 11.3452-3479; esp., 11.3466-3472:

> Of rethoriciens whilom that wer old
> The sugrid langage & vertuous daliaunce
> Be goode exaumples & proverbes that thei tolde,
> Woordes pesible enbelisshed with plesaunce,
> Appesid of tirauntes the rigerous vengaunce,
> Sette aside ther furious sentence
> Bi vertu onli of prudent elloquence.

For a discussion of Lydgate's valorisation of rhetoric in Fall of Princes and elsewhere see Lois Ebin, 'Lydgate's Views on Poetry', Annuale Medievale, 18 (1977), 76-105.

These texts insist upon the pre-given, intertextual nature of their poetic discourse and upon the relation of the present writing endeavour to a discourse which is seen as having an independent origin in the past. This sense of the independent, inherited nature of discourse emerges as a conventional *topos* in fifteenth-century poems, often times employing the metaphors of navigation as in the Hawes quotation above. Without doubt Chaucer is perceived as instigatory of the crucial historical moment in the transmission of this discourse, as we can see in Lydgate:

> And ffor memoyre off that poete,
> Wyth al hys rethorykës swete,
> That was the ffyrste in any age
> That amendede our langage.
>
> (*Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, 19773-19776)[1]

While, for Dunbar, Lydgate himself is an essential agent in this history of the rhetoricising of poetic discourse:

> ...and Ludgate laureate,
> Your sugurit lippis and tongis aureate
> Bene to oure eris cause of grete delyte ...
> This ile before was bare and desolate
> Off rethorike, or lusty fresch endyte.
>
> (*The Goldyn Targe*, 262-270)[2]

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[1] See *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, Englisht by John Lydgate, from the French of Guillaume de Deguileville*, edited by F.J. Furnivall and Katherine B. Locock, 3 volumes, EETS extra series 77, 83 and 92 (London, 1899-1904), p.527 (lines precede a translation of Chaucer's ABC). See Caroline Spurgeon ed., *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion (1357-1900)*, 4 volumes, Chaucer Society second series 48, 49 and 50, 52, and 55 (London, 1914 (for 1908)-1923), I, 35; and Derek Brewer, ed., *Chaucer: the Critical Heritage*, 2 volumes (London, 1978), I, 51. See also Lois Ebin, 'Lydgate's Views', p.79.

[2] See *The Poems of William Dunbar*, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford, 1979), p.37. All line references to the *Goldyn Targe* are to Kinsley's edition. See also Caroline Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years*, I, 66; and Derek Brewer, *The Critical Heritage*, I, 81.

While the literary tradition in which these poems are located seems, in one sense, a-historical, involving the transportation of narrator figures into non-particularised, idealised places and landscapes, these texts do insist upon the historicity of their particular discourses; they work within the legacy of 'poetes olde'. But more than this, these direct references to the pastness of their discursive spaces have implications for poetic narrative itself. Narrative action itself seems best understood as addressing discursive and meta-discursive issues. Narrative 'space' (opened up in these texts by the structure of frame and framed narrative) becomes the place where discourse, with a perceived historical substance or weight, enters (or sometimes invades) the individual text.

As we have seen, in this fifteenth-century poetic the ship emerges as the most favoured mode of transport for the transmission of conventional discourse into the individual text. The ship is the privileged trope of tropical transposition itself. Another metaphorics for this troping of discourse into the text, one which we have seen operating most exhaustively in The Floure and the Leafe, is that of growth: of the text as a field or garden; of the seed as the virtual meaning of discourse held in suspension; and the flower as the realisation of that virtual meaning in the tropical strategies of each text.

In Dunbar's Goldyn Targe the privileged locus of narrative action is both a place where flowers grow in abundance - a locus amoenus - and a place where a ship arrives. The women who assault the narrator with their arrows of erotic desire arrive at this place by a ship. A whole tradition ('Ane hundreth ladyes, lusty in to wedis/Als fresch as flouris that in May up spredis', 58-59) - a whole discursive past - is thus transported into the narrative and brought to bear on the narrator/dreamer. The assault may, of course, be read as an essentially moral fiction of the defence by the narrator of his chastity against the imperious demands of erotic desire - encoded as the female crew of the ship.[1] However, the eclectic nature of this female crew which includes 'prudent Minerva' (78), 'Dyane the goddesse chaste' (76), and 'My lady Cleo, that help of makaris bene' (77, my emphasis), as well as figures more commonly associated with erotic desire such as Venus, 'May, of myrthfull monethis quene' (82), and Nature herself, suggests that the poem may also be read as a fiction of the defence of the individual text against the exigencies of poetic tradition.[2]

Such a fiction would suggest that the 'targe' itself works as what Robert Hanning calls a 'poetic emblem' that is as a trope of the text itself.[3] Denton Fox has written that 'the Targe deals constantly and explicitly with surfaces'.[4] Both Fox and Lois Ebin have described how the Goldyn Targe's metaphors for the description of nature are also metaphors for a privileged way of writing - both narrative locus (the beautiful field) and text are highly decorated, richly embellished surfaces; they are both 'anamelit' (13 and 257).[5] The 'targe' itself is such a surface, a surface by which the narrator/poet is protected from the insistent demands

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1. For this view see R.J. Lyall, 'Moral Allegory in Dunbar's "Goldyn Targe"', Studies in Scottish Literature, 11 (1973), 47-65.

2. For discussion of the Goldyn Targe as a poem about poetry see Lois Ebin, 'The Theme of Poetry in Dunbar's "Goldyn Targe"', Chaucer Review, 7 (1972-1973), 147-159; and Denton Fox, 'Dunbar's "The Goldyn Targe"', English Literary History, 26 (1959), 311-334 (331-334).

3. See Robert William Hanning, 'Poetic Emblems in Medieval Narrative Texts', Studies in Medieval Culture : Vernacular Poetics, 16 (1984), 1-32 (p.1).

4. Denton Fox, 'Dunbar's "The Goldyn Targe"', p.331.

5. See Denton Fox, 'Dunbar's "The Goldyn Targe"', p.334:

> Dunbar devotes his very considerable poetic energies to fitting words into a meticulously inter-locked pattern and creating a hard and beautiful surface as substantial and as self-sufficient as a piece of enamel-work.

See also Lois Ebin, 'The Theme of Poetry', p.147:

> the poem examines the relationship between the poet and his matter by means of an analogy between the poet and the sun, the world of art and the world of nature.

of poetic tradition. Significantly, the 'targe' is 'Goldyn' (157) which is one of the fifteenth century's commonest terms of praise for the rhetoricised poetic text.[1] In Dunbar's poem the narrative as place is invaded by a sudden, overwhelming access of poetic tradition. This invasion is resisted by the use of a surface - the 'targe' of the poem's title - which operates as a trope of the text itself.

Ironically, by resisting one tradition - a resistence marked by the exploding of one narrative place as the retiring ship fires its guns - the narrator wakes into another. This is the beautiful place of the locus amoenus where flowers - the tropes of poetic discourse - flourish. The Golden Targe fictionalises the attempt to stave off a poetic tradition only to find that the narrative inevitably re-locates itself in another poetic tradition, and as such the poem stands as an apt comment on the often contradictory attitudes to traditional poetic discourse which are manifest in the poems I have discussed in the preceding chapters. Although it is in the nature of these texts to invite ever more reverberative patterns of analogy between their inscribed sense of a past discourse and the presentness of their tropical strategies, Dunbar's explosion of a tradition which is, in effect, a collapse into another tradition, seems a good place to call a halt and to follow the narrator's advice in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women:

> Of so many a story for to make,
> It were to longe, lest that I shulde slake
> Of thyng that bereth more effect and charge;
> For men may overlade a ship or barge
> And forthy to th'effect thanne wol I skyppe,
> And al the remenaunt, I wol lete it slyppe.
>
> (Cleopatra, F. 618-623).[2]

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[1] For a discussion of the word 'golden' as a descriptive term for poetic style in Lydgate see Lois Ebin, 'Lydgate's Views on Poetry', pp.81-84.

[2] Quoted from The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F.N. Robinson, second edition (London, 1957), p.496.

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