

THE SHADOW OF DANTE IN MAURICE SCÈVE'S *DÉLIE*

BY

ALISON BAIRD LOVELL

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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ALISON BAIRD LOVELL

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Date

Mary Ann Caws
Co-Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Michel Beaujour
Co-Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Executive Officer

Francesca Canadé Sautman

Giuseppe Di Scipio

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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by
Alison Baird Lovell

Advisors: Professor Mary Ann Caws (GC)
 Professor Michel Beaujour (NYU)

Scholars generally consider the dizain sequence of the Lyonnais poet Maurice Scève, *Délie, objet de plus haulte vertu* (1544), to be an early example of a French Renaissance imitation of Petrarch's lyric poetry. This thesis adopts the perspective that while Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is an important source for Scève, it belongs to a longer poetic lineage which includes Occitan troubadours, Guido Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri. The thesis presents an original and paradoxical reading of *Délie* in light of the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia* of Dante, whose subtle influence on Scève has been marginalized by the more obvious intertext of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Chapter 1 introduces the topic, including a brief overview of Scève's life and cultural milieu in Lyon, along with a summary of relevant scholarship. In 1547 the Lyonnais printer Jean de Tournes dedicated his edition of Dante's *Commedia* to Scève, praising him in the preface. Chapter 2 discusses union between the poet and his beloved in *fin'amor*, the troubadours whom Dante admired, the treatise *De arte honeste amandi* (*Art of Courty Love*) of Andreas Capellanus, and the *Roman de la rose*. The troubadour rhetorical style *trobar clus* corresponds to Scève's penchant for composing "obscure" poetry; also, the *Délie* exhibits certain conventions of courtly love. Chapter 3 examines the impact of Cavalcanti, Dante's friend and rival, on Ficino's treatise *De amore*, the commentary on Plato's *Symposium* whose Neoplatonist ideas influenced Scève and others in France. Having established the literary background, I undertake the comparative reading of Scève's *Délie* with Dante's *Rime petrose*,

Vita Nuova, and parts of the *Commedia*. I argue that the *Délie* shares common ground with Dante's poetry concerning conceptions of love and themes such as death, virtue and literary purification by fire. Chapter 5 analyzes the poetic relationship between Scève and Petrarch through textual evidence and critical assessments. I argue that Scève's dizain sequence is not as Petrarchan as many have assumed, and differences between the *Délie* and the *Canzoniere* are significant, especially regarding poetic style and morality. Affinities between Scève and Dante do not necessarily accord with Petrarch, and therefore I posit a direct connection between them.

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I non mi vo' scusar s' i' seguo Amore,
Chè gli è usanza d'ogni gentil core.

- Poliziano

Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Délie* (1544, 1564) of Maurice Scève is a meditation in the form of poetry. This does not necessarily imply Christian religiosity or philosophical musings; rather, it is a patterned reflection on certain themes. The patterns take shape both in the themes and in the poetic form: 449 decasyllabic dizains, each of which constitutes a perfect square, plus an introductory huitain. The entire collection is punctuated by 50 woodcuts interspersed at regular intervals with the dizains. Thus the visual alternates with the verbal. In the text of the *Délie*, the advent of the printing press facilitated the visual element of the woodcuts. Scève's meditation centers on yearning, seeking and alternately finding joy and suffering. *Délie* is the polysemic name of the woman the poet adores, but she is not exclusively a conventional Petrarchan or courtly love object: instead, she radiates outward, signifying philosophical, cosmic abstractions and representing throughout the poetry a more diffuse desire for union. She dominates the poet's universe, and the poet desires union with her without Petrarchan guilt.

There are no known manuscripts of the *Délie*, so I have relied upon the critical editions of Gérard Defaux (Geneva, Droz, 2004) and I. D. McFarlane (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1966) which are based upon extant copies of the first edition of 1544, which was printed by Sulpice Sabon for Antoine Constantin at Lyon. Both editions include

variants in the critical apparatus from the 1564 edition.¹ Defaux and McFarlane address the troublesome problems of dizain numbering in these editions, punctuation and typographical errors.² We do not know whether Scève himself revised the 1564 edition, which was printed at Lyon by Nicholas du Chemin. The Defaux critical edition of *Délie* is overall the best available to date.³

It is appropriate to clarify my use of the problematic terms *medieval*, *Renaissance*, *premodern*, and *early modern*,⁴ since they are used frequently, mostly for the sake of convenience (the terms *courtly* and *courtois* will be discussed at length later). I do not intend any negative connotations by the designations “medieval” or “Middle Ages”, nor do I consider the so-called Renaissance to be inherently superior in comparison to the centuries that preceded it. In discussing artistic achievements, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) in his 1550 work *Le vite de' più eccellenti architettori, pittori e scultori* (*Lives of the Artists*) referred to the Middle Ages as *Medioevo*, the decadent period between antiquity and his own time, the *rinascita* (rebirth). The division between the medieval and Renaissance periods is usually inserted somewhere between 1350 and 1500 -- in fact the periods also overlap significantly according to place and context, for instance within the spheres of religion, poetry, rhetoric, scholarship, or science (*scientia*). The Renaissance seen as a significant classical revival through humanistic study developed sooner in Florence than in Paris, London and other places. Some historians distinguish the Renaissance from the early modern period in Europe; however, this is not

¹ I. D. McFarlane, *The Délie of Maurice Scève*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966, p. 93. Defaux, *Délie*, vol. I, ccxxxix-ccl.

² See McFarlane, *The Délie of Maurice Scève*, 93-104. See also Defaux, *Délie*, vol. I, ccxliii-ccxlviii.

³ Cécile Alduy edited a new edition of Parturier's 1916 *Délie* (Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2001). She wrote: “La présente édition reproduit le plus exactement possible l'édition originale, respectée jusque dans ses fautes, sauf le cas d'erreur typographique évidente.” Quoted in Defaux, *Délie*, I, ccxliii, note 3.

⁴ My treatment here of these terms does not do justice to their complexity within scholarship, but I have provided a brief explanation.

relevant for my purposes. The context for the present project is primarily poetics rather than cultural, ecclesiastical or political history.

Major changes – with not necessarily positive consequences -- indeed occurred during the early modern period in western Europe, including the spread of the printing press which made available texts and knowledge of all kinds, the conducting of political relations and warfare, mapping and exploration of unfamiliar lands, religious reform and splintering of the Church, and extensive humanistic study and imitation of authors from classical antiquity. The premodern period also had witnessed significant changes, for example in intellectual culture during the twelfth century. Traditions coexisted with innovations in the early modern period. In sum, as soon as one attempts to structure history into coherent chronological divisions, let alone name them, the classifications promptly break down under scrutiny. Still, with the above caveats in mind, I shall use the medieval and Renaissance labels, mostly for discussions of poets, that previous scholars have bequeathed to us, while excluding a progressivist hierarchy of historical periods. While there are indeed characteristics that separate medieval from Renaissance poetry, as will be demonstrated, it is important to recognize that these divisions are fluid and relative; there is also continuity. François Villon and Charles d'Orléans were writing after the death of Petrarch, yet the former two are considered medieval, whereas the latter is generally viewed as a Renaissance poet.

I shall summarize here the main argument of this thesis. A great deal has been made in Scève criticism of the influence of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* on Scève's *Délie*.⁵ There is no doubt that Petrarch is an important source for Scève, and *Délie* has been called the first Petrarchist collection of lyric poems to appear in French. Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is composed

⁵ E.g. JoAnn DellaNeva, *Song and Counter-Song: Scève's Délie and Petrarch's Rime*, 1983.

of 366 lyric poems, of which 317 are sonnets. The *Olive* (1549 and 1550) of Joachim Du Bellay is the first Petrarchist sonnet sequence in French (following Petrarch's choice of the sonnet form for most of the poems in the *Canzoniere*). Two main currents of Scève criticism may be discerned with respect to poetic predecessors: one emphasized the French (native) Rhétoriqueur tradition, and the other encompassed Italian, Petrarch and/or the Petrarchist tradition (e.g., Chariteo, Serafino, Bembo among Italian poets).

I would like to develop a critical reading of Maurice Scève's *Délie* using as a structural mode the rhetorical figure of paradox, in which a common or orthodox belief (the critical view that Scève's lyric poetry is Petrarchist) is contradicted by a statement expressing an unusual insight that might surprisingly be true (Scève's poetry is not very Petrarchist, and furthermore, the poetry of Petrarch's predecessor Dante is more important for the *Délie* than commonly believed). A paradoxical approach is apt on the critical level, since certain perspectives regarding Petrarch have dominated Scève studies. In general, scholars have employed diverse readings of Scève that do not necessarily concur. The question of Petrarch's poetry as a source for the *Délie* is not currently a subject of intense debate. But I believe that a re-examination of the issue is in order, on a larger scale than a few pages in an article or a footnote. Revisionist studies of Petrarchism within the context of English poetry are under way, and likewise it is useful to re-examine critical assumptions on the French side.

The first chapter in this thesis covers relevant critical perspectives on my topic, as well as a brief consideration of Scève's life and the cultural climate in Lyon. Chapter 2 establishes the medieval courtly background in poetry as relevant for the *Délie*, and as an important prelude to the discussion of Dante and Scève. Chapter 3 examines Cavalcanti's conception of love and his impact on Ficino, whose treatise on love, the commentary of Plato's *Symposium*, was important for the Lyonnais humanists, including Scève, who studied

Neoplatonism. Also, themes such as virtue are analyzed in the poetry of Scève and Dante. In Chapter 4, I will compare common ground between Dante in the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*, and Scève in the *Délie*, including textual analysis of passages. Chapter 5 revises common critical assumptions about Scève and Petrarch, and contains a critique of DellaNeva's study *Song and Counter-Song* (1983).

Scève's poetry contains hidden meanings and is written in a hermetic manner; this is an appropriate setting for paradox. Paradox was a common rhetorical device in sixteenth century literature, as evidenced by the writings of Rabelais and *The Praise of Folly* of Erasmus, among many others. Rosalie Colie demonstrated admirably in *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton UP, 1966) the extent to which paradox was a Renaissance tradition whose use encompassed both theology and philosophy, as well as providing a structure for entire treatises and for poetry. Paradox also functioned as a rhetorical figure of discourse within a larger work. An author might use paradox to handle contradictions and puzzles of logic, to undermine orthodox beliefs or statements, or to hint at hidden truths that could not be articulated plainly due to the limits of language. It is especially in the last case that paradox functions with respect to the treatment of love in Scève's *Délie*.

Following convention (an essential factor in any paradoxical statement), I shall treat the poetry of Dante and the troubadours as medieval, and likewise Petrarch will be placed under the Renaissance rubric, although many elements of his *Canzoniere* are borrowed from medieval lyric. Furthermore, I intend to show that the roots of certain aspects of the sixteenth century, pre-Pléiade lyric poetry of Maurice Scève are medieval, which could be interpreted as a *rebirth* from origins closer and more recent than ancient Greece or Rome. The common critical view that labels Scève a Petrarchist poet, with the implication that

Scève was not medieval, but instead was in the avant-garde of Italian-influenced Renaissance poets in France, is one that I would like to counter with a paradoxical statement based upon the importance of Dante for reading Scève's lyric poetry. Another layer of the paradox brings Scève closer to Petrarch's case, in that he too was a "Renaissance" poet who relied on medieval sources. The courtly love tradition extends from the Middle Ages to be manifest in Renaissance verse, including the *Canzoniere* of Petrarch. I shall argue that while certain topoi in Petrarch's poetry are certainly an important resource for Scève, the *Canzoniere* and the *Délie* are also significantly different concerning the style, treatment of love, morality, and overall structure. The latter text is syncretic and uses many sources through imitation, yet it is also original, as critics such as V-L Saulnier⁶ have observed from close study. Cynthia Skenazi comments:

On assiste chez Scève comme chez d'autres écrivains de son temps ... à une superposition de discours qui, plusieurs siècles plus tard, nous paraissent difficilement compatibles. On tenterait en vain de réconcilier des perspectives mutuellement exclusives ou d'attribuer à l'auteur une position tranchée : un tel choix risquerait de simplifier et de fausser la signification de l'ouvrage. Tout l'intérêt de la *Délie* réside précisément dans le syncrétisme parfois déconcertant d'éléments issus de traditions diverses.⁷

How could we reconcile the diverse currents of Neoplatonism with Petrarchism, with rhétoriciens, with evangelistic readings, with ancient Roman sources, all of which coexist in Scève's *Délie*? With this caveat in mind, I will demonstrate that certain writings of Dante form some of the strands with which Scève wove his dizain sequence. I do not assert that Dante exerts a more important influence on Scève than Petrarch (which would be absurd),

⁶ Verdun-L. Saulnier, *Maurice Scève, ca. 1500-ca. 1560* (2 vols, Paris: Klincksieck, 1948-49)

⁷ Cynthia Skenazi, *Maurice Scève et la pensée chrétienne*, 10.

but that Dante nonetheless constitutes part of the tapestry of sources, along with Petrarch (who was profoundly influenced by Dante). Furthermore, I will show that Scève is not as Petrarchist as we might assume, and to that end we shall examine certain medieval poetry.

We would do well to remember that Petrarch and Scève were love poets in the broader perspective of the courtly love tradition, which provides the underlying pretext and mode to write the love poetry in the first place. I do not imply that love, courtly or otherwise, is the true motivation for any author to compose what we call love poetry; that would be absurd and misleading (the intentional fallacy is to be avoided). The notion of the poet's sincerity dates from nineteenth century romanticism and would be anachronistic in this context for our understanding of medieval and Renaissance poetry. The principle of *imitatio* which prevails during the Renaissance renders irrelevant the question of the sincere intentions of the writer. Rather, we will discuss the longstanding *convention* of the courtly lyric poetry in question, which involves the poet-persona addressing a real or imaginary lady. This convention evolved over several centuries in medieval and Renaissance Europe and was an essential underpinning of love lyric.

The human faculty of the imagination makes it possible to produce -- or at least read -- literature, including poetry. Perhaps it is appropriate then for courtly love to be considered imaginary, as a creation of the mind using language. We shall see that to read a book about love is to link the idea of love with reading literature, whether poetry or stories: this is what Dante showed in the fifth canto of the *Inferno* with the episode of Paolo and Francesca;⁸ and Peter Abelard (1079-1142) claimed in his autobiographical *Historia calamitatum* that he and Héloïse were also inspired to sexual desire while reading books. In other words, the desire exists as evoked in the poetry: it comes about through the act of reading, which requires

⁸ Cf. John Freccero, *Dante and the Poetics of Conversion* (referring to *Inferno* 5, among other cantos) : "Eros and poetry are inseparable on a journey that strains both to their limit" (194).

abstraction and imagination.

Pernette Du Guillet (1520?-1545), the young Lyonnais woman who supposedly inspired the Scévian character Délie, reflected in the following dizain upon the indispensable role of the lady in the courtly love dynamic :

A qui plus est un Amant obligé :
 Ou à Amour, ou vraiment à sa Dame?
 Car son service est par eulx redigé
 Au ranc de ceulx qui ayment los, et fame.
 A luy il doit le cueur, à elle l'Ame :
 Qui est autant comme à tous deux la vie :
 L'un à l'honneur, l'autre à bien le convie :
 Et toutesfois voicy un tresgrand point,
 Lequel me rend ma pensee assouvie :
 C'est que sans Dame Amour ne seroit point.⁹

In this dizain, Pernette plays with the companion roles of Love personified, and the beloved. She demonstrates that the Lady plays an essential role on the courtly stage, even if exclusively in the poet's imagination, or as a social game to exchange witty compliments within the literary salon. Even if we understand that courtly love had little to do with real social structures and the daily roles of women in history, we see that it existed in the realm of ideas and the imagination, because it emerged in subtle forms of expression, such as poetic language. Love in the courtly context, and indeed in Pernette's dizain, becomes an allegorical character with an individual will and power over the mortals who love and are loved, just as the god of love had been for classical and medieval poetry -- in particular the thirteenth century *Roman de la Rose*. The pursuit of love, according to Pernette's dizain, is as worthy as the pursuit of fame and glory; “eulx” could refer to the Dame, Amant and Amour, or it could refer to an unspecified broader courtly community. Love is conceived as faithful service based on the medieval feudal model of master (masculine Dominus or Seigneur, and the corresponding feminine Domina, Domna, or Dame) and loyal, obedient subject such as

⁹ Pernette Du Guillet, “A qui plus est un Amant obligé,” in *Poètes du XV^e siècle*, p. 235.

a knight or vassal. A metaphor commonly used to discuss courtly love in the Middle Ages, derived from Ovid and used by Andreas Capellanus in his treatise, was that one in love was serving in Love's army, with Cupid heading the hierarchy above the women; the men owed these women absolute fealty in any case.¹⁰ One cannot adequately serve two masters. The vocabulary in the dizain reflects the hierarchy of the feudal dynamic: *obligé*, service, *ranc* (*rang*), *doibt* (the verb *devoir*, meaning both to owe and to be obligated to do), and *honneur*. When faithful service is rendered, both master and servant acquire or maintain honor, each through fulfillment of one's role. They are thus bound together, as the etymology of the cognate verbs *to obligate* (En.) and *obliger* (Fr.) indicate: Latin *ob+ligare*, to bind, to owe.

But is the service owed to the Lady, or to Love? To whose will should the lover submit? The dizain poses these very questions and provides a response, as in a dialogue. The lady leads the lover to “bien”, and the lover in turn owes his soul to her. Contrary to the medieval Ovidian love tradition, Pernette asserts the triumph of the Lady in this situation, which, she claims, reassures her. If the lover submits to the will of the Lady, then he must do what she wants, rather than what he believes Love is directing him to do. The Lady's will manifests itself more directly through her own expression communicated to the Lover, than the more abstract will of “Love”, which exists only within the Lover, yet is identified as an external, allegorized force. Pernette in her poem chooses the Lady's will, such as her own, over the will of a masculine abstraction, Cupid, which is expressed usually through the mouth or pen of a man.

Dante essentially comes to the same conclusion: he realizes that the god of love is consubstantial with the lady, or more precisely *his* lady. In Ch. 24 of the *Vita Nuova*, Amore, who has been Dante's interlocuter and guide, tells Dante that Beatrice resembles himself,

¹⁰ See John Jay Parry, trans, *The Art of Courtly Love*, Introduction, p. 5.

saying, “E chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamerebbe Amore per molta simiglianza che ha meco” [And who wishes subtly to consider would call Beatrice Love for the great likeness she bears to me] (VN 24:5). Following the imaginary exchange, Dante writes in a sonnet, “quell’ha nome Amor, sì mi somiglia” [that other is named Love, so like me is she] (VN 24:9, sonnet line 14). The poet then launches into an elaborate justification, invoking the authority of Aristotle and classical Roman poets, for himself to address Love as if he were a person with a physical body. In any event, Amore renders himself irrelevant, and Beatrice takes precedence after this point in the text.

Evidently courtly love provided a set of conventions for dialogue and interaction to take place between men and women about human love and desire (in a heteronormative context), whether or not consummation of the desire ever took place. Even if the men did most of the talking, as it were, still women were necessary participants : Pernette and her fellow Lyonnaise Louise Labé used their pens well (and no doubt their voices, which are now lost to the past).

Troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel were highly esteemed by early Italian poets from the Sicilian school to the *dolce stil novo*, a movement which, broadly conceived, included Dante and Petrarch; the love conceits they established endured in vernacular poetry across several centuries and regional borders. Dante’s *Rime petrose*, *Vita Nova* and *Commedia* all furnished material that Petrarch used in elaborating his *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi*. Petrarch rarely mentioned his illustrious predecessor by name in his writing, but echoes of Dante are found in Petrarch’s verses, as Marco Santagata, Sara Sturm-Maddox and others have shown. Martin McLaughlin, in his comprehensive survey *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford, 1995), demonstrates the relevance of Dante for literary discussions of the period by devoting his first chapter to Dante, and the second to his successor Petrarch.

There are significant differences between Petrarch and Dante, ranging from language to the religious connotations of the beloved lady. Our view of Scève's appropriation of the Petrarchan model in fact incorporates a longer tradition which precedes Petrarch. I will attempt to sort out what is innovative in Petrarch and what relevance that innovation holds for a reading of Scève, and to what extent Scève adapts what is common to Petrarch and others before him (e.g., the unattainable lady to whom the poetic persona subordinates himself and seeks *merci/mercede/merzè*). We cannot be absolutely certain of exactly what Scève read and what had great intellectual impact upon him, but I will show that he read Dante's poetry. Scève was probably acquainted with earlier troubadour and Italian lyric poetry as well, at least through references to it in Dante's and Petrarch's poetry.

I argue that the case for Petrarch's poetic influence upon Scève requires the following nuance: while Petrarch's name was the most famous, still he incorporated sources available also to Scève, as one among many love poets, rather than functioning as a monolithic or exclusive model for Scève. Dante also exerted an influence on Scève. The elevation of the beloved woman is an essential aspect of courtly love, the *stilnovo* poets, and Dante and Petrarch. This idealization of the lady was parodied, and the prolific Petrarchist imitations throughout Europe, of diverse quality, no doubt invited such parody. Scève employed a variety of poetic and rhetorical devices with conscious deliberation. Petrarch's preoccupation with unrequited love, memory and awareness of the inner self are much more elaborately developed than most previous poets, but the seeds had been planted long before. (Petrarch's humanistic readings of ancient Roman sources constitutes a shift away from medieval allegory, but that is another question, well beyond the scope of this thesis.) Some of what we recognize in Scève's poetry as being appropriated from Petrarch's poetry is found elsewhere before Petrarch (as I will show). Furthermore, the *Délie* incorporates

philosophical, allegorical, and mythological motifs not found in Petrarch.¹¹ Certain critics conclude that Scève appropriates for his own purposes only some aspects of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.¹²

The literary relations between France and Italy were anxious, mutually influential and fluctuating back and forth between regions from the thirteenth through the sixteenth century. From the troubadours to the *Roman de la Rose* and the tales of chivalry of Celtic and Breton origin, Italy read and absorbed a body of French texts and stories. Then Dante, Petrarch, Neoplatonists and humanists exerted influences in turn upon French readers, especially after the rise of the printing press. Nationalist ambitions and the lust for glory at times impinged upon literary endeavors in both lands as elsewhere.¹³ Although Dante's influence on subsequent Italian literature has been significant, he suffered (as it were) at the hands of certain critics or has been ignored altogether in certain times and places (including France and England) over the centuries, especially outside Italy. According to Jacques Peletier du Mans (1517-82), a member of the Pléiade, Petrarch is superior to Dante as a poet by virtue of his sonnets.¹⁴ The French historian Étienne Pasquier (1529-1615), in his *Recherches de la France* (1560s), attacked both Dante and Petrarch as having stolen their art from the Provençal poets.¹⁵ This attitude was part of an anti-Italian backlash which developed during the second half of the sixteenth century in France.¹⁶

¹¹ William W. Kennedy, "The Unbound Turns of Maurice Scève," in *Creative Imitation: New Essays on Renaissance Literature in Honor of Thomas M. Greene*. Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts, 1992, p. 67.

¹² Cf. Dorothy Coleman, Doranne Fenoaltea, Terence Cave, William W. Kennedy.

¹³ E.g. Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*; Du Bellay, *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*; Ronsard, *La Franciade*.

¹⁴ Jacques Peletier du Mans, *Art poétique*, 1555, Livre II, Ch 4, Du sonnet : « Desquels [les Italiens qui ont écrit des sonnets] le plus excellent a été François Pétrarque ». Dante had written sonnets as well.

¹⁵ Étienne Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, livre VII, Ch 4 : « Tellement que les Italiens emprunterent de nos Provençaux plusieurs belles pieces qu'ils transplanterent dedans leur vulgaire ». See also *Recherches*, livre VII, Ch 6 on Italian poets.

¹⁶ See Henry Heller, *Anti-Italianism in France* (2003).

The patterned praise, desire, and suffering for the beloved woman, while highly elaborated in Petrarch's poetry, did not originate with him. Likewise the tension between erotic desire for the woman and Christian morality was present in poetry long before Petrarch put verse to paper. Theologians would condemn the woman in accord with this Christian morality – as a sexual being, she allegedly tempted men to sin and was vulnerable to corruption, being descended from Eve, who is responsible for the post-lapsarian state of all humans according to the Church. This version of misogyny did not apply to more popular literature, such as *farves* and *fabliaux*. Each poet responded differently to the inevitable polarity of erotic desire and conventional moral virtue, analogous to body/soul, which has broad meaning in a Christian context, and not a pagan one: this distinguishes ancient Roman love poetry from extant love poetry of French and Italian regions dating from the twelfth century onward. The Church associated erotic passion outside marriage with sin and evil, and a virtuous, respectable woman was not supposed to be tainted by unbridled sexuality. This “taint” emerged in other subtle ways: certain language was common both to the cult of Mary and to courtly love; mystics employed sexual metaphors to articulate ecstatic union with the divine; so that sexual themes and love themes cannot be separated neatly. The most obvious case of the channeling or sublimating of adoration for a woman into a religious impulse has been devotional poetry for the Virgin Mary, as a poetic manifestation of praise for the woman in which the religious sentiment tended to crowd out everything else. I respectfully disagree with the late, erudite Gérard Defaux, who claimed that we can substitute Mary for *Délie*¹⁷ and who seemed to disregard the presence of the erotic in Scève's poetry, poetry which is *not* exclusively of a devotional or evangelical nature. Although Defaux did not seem to acknowledge this, Marian poetry could manifest erotic

¹⁷ Gérard Defaux, « (Re)visiting *Délie* : Maurice Scève and Marian Poetry », *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 :3 (Autumn 2001), 700.

traces; in other words, the Virgin Mary herself may be eroticized in a devotional poem. The eroticism in the *Délie* is not an allegory for Christian adoration, however, even if it was in Marian poetry.

I return to comparing Dante, Petrarch and Scève in light of the erotic/moral polarity. Dante in sum sublimates erotic desire into spirituality with Beatrice, who becomes a celestial guide in his vision of Paradise. Petrarch self-consciously seeks poetic greatness through the very name of his beloved Laura and struggles with guilt about his persistent love for both his lady and laurels, for which his character Augustine berates him in the dialogue of the *Secretum*. Furthermore, in the very last poem of the *Canzoniere*, a long canzone, Petrarch renounces altogether his love for Laura in a supplication to the Virgin Mary. In Scève we find neither Petrarchan guilt nor *predominant* Christian spirituality surrounding the Lady, but a quest for ecstasy through contemplation of Délie's perfection, and longing for fulfillment through union. While Petrarch laments unrequited love, Scève expresses ineffable love.¹⁸ Both Beatrice and Laura die in their youth, an event which divides each poet's work respectively into two parts and highlights the poet's memory of his lost lady; but Délie does not die in the course of Scève's poetic sequence. Beatrice evolves from being a beautiful girl whom Dante adores in the *Vita Nuova*, to functioning in the *Commedia* as a spiritual guide in upper Purgatory and Paradise, akin to Lady Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.

Petrarch may be considered an important late example of courtly love poetry. Petrarch's sonnets in his *Canzoniere* were widely imitated in Europe; this imitation in France and in England occurred *after* the publication of Scève's *Délie*. Concerning the lyric genre, Scève wrote dizains, not sonnets or chansons. Concerning topoi and the broad poetic

¹⁸ See Jerry C. Nash, *The Love Aesthetics of Maurice Scève*, 1991, 1-2.

subject of love, we shall define and consider courtly love, which has been much debated and examined by scholars ever since the medievalist Gaston Paris coined the term *amour courtois* in 1883. We will then turn to the Italians who so admired and imitated the troubadours as their predecessors that some wrote poetry in Provençal (e.g. Sordello).

The rhetorical style *trobar clus* developed by the troubadours established a model that I will compare with the hermetic quality of Scève's poetry. The early Sicilian and Bolognese schools, as well as Dante in his canzoni called the *Rime petrose*, also participated in this long poetic tradition involving hidden meaning inscribed within a difficult text.

There is historical evidence in the dedicatory preface that Scève read Dante in the 1547 Lyon printed edition of Dante's *Commedia*, which was dedicated to Scève by Jean de Tournes. Also, the 1545 printed edition, dedicated to Scève as well, of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi* (the latter a Dantesque work which catalogues illustrious troubadours) contained "Donna me prega", Cavalcanti's most important poem. Jean de Tournes lauded Scève in his preface to the former's 1547 edition of Dante for helping to render the Florentine poet more accessible; he also noted that Petrarch hence would be somewhat in Dante's shadow.¹⁹ Scève was quite familiar with both Dante and Petrarch, each of whose poetry includes lists of illustrious troubadour poets.

The most pertinent question is how much Scève's poetry bears the imprint of Dante. Paul Ardouin offers tantalizing hints, upon which he does not elaborate: that Scève's poetry resembles Dante's more than Petrarch's, and also that it echoes that of the troubadours.²⁰ In

¹⁹ « dal soave & misurato dir di M. Francesco Petrarca, giunto or sia a un poco piu erto & adumbrato sono d'il Fiorentin Poeta, M. Dante Alighieri ». See V-L Saulnier, *Maurice Scève (ca. 1500-1560)*, I, p. 325, where the Preface's text is reproduced in full.

²⁰ Paul Ardouin, *Maurice Scève, Pernetle Du Guillet, Louise Labé : l'amour à Lyon au temps de la Renaissance*. Paris : Nizet, 1981. Ch 7, pp. 35, 39.

Ch. 4, we will explore textual evidence concerning Dante's *Commedia* in the *Délie*.²¹ A comparison of Dante's *Vita Nuova* with the *Délie* will reveal common ground as well.

Scève may have studied law at an Italian university,²² and as an intellectual and poet, he would have read Dante's poetry there if not in his native Lyon, a city replete with Italian books and culture. Copies of Dante were conserved at Blois, Fontainebleau and elsewhere in private libraries, some with lavish illustrations.²³ Since Italians considered the Provençal troubadours to be literary ancestors of Dante, Scève could have encountered their manuscripts as well in Italy, if not at Avignon or Toulouse. The academy of the *Jeux floraux* was located at Toulouse, in which prizes were awarded for poetry in Occitan until 1513, and still Occitan poetry was presented at the Games throughout the sixteenth century.²⁴

One other aspect of Scève's poetry which I want to investigate is that of mysticism. This is a project that I intend to develop further after the thesis, for it will lead me far afield into the disciplines of psychology, religion, and philosophy. Mysticism may be understood in the context of love poetry as the spiritual experience of transcendent union between two persons, which results in ecstasy, perfection, bliss, or harmony (as opposed to transcendent union with the divine, which generates similar descriptions in some cases). The lyric poetry represents a non-narrational attempt to express that longing and experience in words. I think Dante in certain passages was a mystical poet;²⁵ Petrarch was not. I will draw on the work of Michael Sells to analyze the language of so-called mystical poetry in Scève and

²¹ There are structural aspects of Scève's *Microcosme* that echo Dante's *Commedia*: each work constitutes an ambitious, comprehensive project of scientific poetry in three parts with a theological subtext.

²² Perhaps at Bologna or Pavia, as was the mode for young men of Lyon. See V-L Saulnier, I, 29. Bertrand Guégan was convinced that Scève studied in Italy, but Saulnier was doubtful due to lack of evidence.

²³ *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, article "Francia" by Remo Ceserami, vol. III, p. 30.

²⁴ John Charles Dawson, *Toulouse in the Renaissance, Part I: The Floral Games of Toulouse*. New York: Columbia UP, 11.

²⁵ Many Dante scholars do not necessarily agree with Dante's poetry being qualified as mystical.

perhaps other writers.²⁶ In the present thesis, mysticism will be discussed very briefly in Ch. 2. Cynthia Skenazi (1992) has written admirably of Scève's readings of Paul and Erasmus, while making a case for Christian thought in *Délie* and in Scève's *Microcosme*. The *Microcosme* appears to be a text of evangelical inspiration. Spirituality there is, even in the *Délie*, but we need not relegate it automatically in the latter work to Christian religiosity. Jerry Nash has written on the "ineffable" in Scève's poetry as part of a long epistemological tradition.²⁷

The poetic *persona*, both of the poet and of the addressee, is an aspect of Scève's poetry that I would like to emphasize from the outset. We cannot know for sure whether there was a real woman who was a model for *Délie* -- although Pernet Du Guillet has been put forth as a plausible candidate -- just as we cannot be certain about Petrarch's Laura or Dante's Beatrice. No mortal woman with human frailties could possibly fulfill such poetic visions of the feminine. We can speak of allegory and symbols, of historical extrapolation and finding the key to the identity of the woman, a prospect that has tempted many, including Scève himself (with respect to the tomb of Petrarch's Laura). Yet the poetry is not only a product of historical circumstances and of social forces; it is also the result of the imagination and mental labors of the poet. It would reduce the achievement of any great writer to assert that all texts are merely language products, or that a text can be understood principally through the author's biographical information along with historical and social context. The image of the woman in the poetry I shall be discussing is complex, and I want to acknowledge and accommodate that complexity in my study. Likewise the "je" and "io" in the poetry in question is not the same as the historical person writing the verses. It is a

²⁶ Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (1994).

²⁷ Jerry C. Nash, *The Love Aesthetics of Maurice Scève*, 1991. Nash writes that he takes a phenomenological approach. He counters the common critical view that *Délie* expresses more suffering than transcendence.

mask (the nouns *person*, *personality*, *personne*, etc. being derived from the Latin *persona*), and I strive to understand it as such.

In Scève's lyric sequence, the symbolism of the name of Délie is complex, and interpretations vary about which facet of the name should prevail. The name Délie does not appear to correspond to the exact historical identity of any woman known to Scève, although the case has been made convincingly for Pernette Du Guillet as one source of inspiration.²⁸ The classical Roman name Delia is an epithet of Diana, one of three ancient names for the moon (D. 176), the other two being Selene and Hecate. Scève alludes to the triple moon goddess, and to Diana as the virgin huntress (D. 131) and Actaeon, her admirer and prey (after Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). Prior to Scève, both Dante and Petrarch referred to the story of Diana and Acteon in their poetry as well. Scève's poetic persona considers himself in certain dizains to be the hunted (cf. D. 159). His love is impossible if Diana spurns all (male) lovers. Perhaps this is one reason the love becomes somewhat platonic and sublime: Délie is the "object de plus haulte vertu", as the full title of Scève's dizain collection indicates. The name Delia is found in the ancient Roman lyric poetry of Tibullus. In the verses of both Tibullus and Propertius -- whose Cynthia evokes the moon -- we find the idea of a *magicus nodus*, a magic knot binding the lover to the beloved.²⁹ This leads us naturally to yet another interpretation, in which the name *Délie* contains the French verbs *lier* and *déliar*, to tie and to untie. Scève's poetry engages in wordplay involving these verbs to illustrate the tie that binds the poet to his beloved (e.g., *Délie/deslie* in D. 250). The semiotically rich name of Délie also echoes the middle French words *délié* (delicate), *délive*, *déli(c)t* (with an amorous connotation), *déliter*, *délecter*. Scève in a Latin poem uses the word *delitia* alongside the name:

²⁸ See Saulnier, Ch. 8.

²⁹ Dorothy Coleman, *Maurice Scève, Poet of Love: Tradition and Originality* (1975), 130.

“mea nam Delia delitiae est.”³⁰ The name Délie also forms an anagram for *l'idée*, a Neoplatonic term that emphasizes the perfection of the lady in Scève's dizains. This version, originally from La Croix du Maine, reduces the character to an abstract Platonic archetype,³¹ whether the idea is of a woman (“l'idéal féminin” as Brunetière claimed of Délie), or of an asexual, universal idea itself. According to Étienne Pasquier, Délie was a pseudonym for a mistress of Scève³²: “[Scève] se mettant en butte, à l'imitation des Italiens, une Maistresse qu'il celebra sous le nom de Delie”.³³ Finally, the name Délie may be interpreted as a *senhal*, a secret name which the lover uses to refer to his beloved. The *senhal* was used by Provençal poets to hide the lady's true identity. The name of Petrarch's *Laura* functioned as a *senhal* as well.

The courtly tradition, perhaps more than a set of images or figures of language, provides common ground for Dante and Scève, as well as among other figures in the history of medieval and Renaissance poetry, as we shall see. It is useful to assess what Scève assimilates from Dante's work, and what appears to be his own. Evidently it is difficult to untangle the web of borrowings and intertextual echoes.

Let us survey relevant aspects of Maurice Scève's life and his cultural milieu in Lyon. Biographical details of Maurice Scève's existence are rather scant, and much is uncertain.³⁴ Some aspects of Scève's life bear mentioning nonetheless because of relevance for his poetry and probable influence on his intellectual development. Lyon was a sophisticated city with

³⁰ Quoted in Coleman, p. 120: “Delia si laetis blandum mihi ridet ocellis: / Non mirum: mea nam Delia delitiae est.”

³¹ Saulnier, 147.

³² Saulnier, 147.

³³ Estienne Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, Book VII, Ch. 6 (“De la grande flotte de poètes que produisit le Regne du Roy Henry deuxiesme, & de la nouvelle forme de Poësie par eux introduite”).

³⁴ I have relied upon the work of Albert Baur (1905) and especially V-L Saulnier (1948-49) for Scève's biographical information.

Italian merchants, printers and intellectuals who did not need to worry about repression from an institution such as the Sorbonne in Paris; there was no university in Lyon at the time. The Scève family was noble and affluent in Lyon, wielding considerable influence; along with privileged social and economic status, the family furnished Maurice Scève with the education and later the leisure to engage in humanistic pursuits. Scève evidently learned Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish and possibly Occitan.³⁵ He obtained a university degree before 1540, most likely in law, and perhaps in Italy (Bologna, Padua or Pavia, as was common for privileged young men of Lyon). Scève's name was not found on university rosters at Avignon, so his degree was not acquired there, although he spent time in Avignon.³⁶ We do not know what happened in his life during the years 1520-1530.³⁷ Perhaps Scève spent time in Italy, but we have no record of it. It was in 1533 that he "discovered" the tomb of Petrarch's Laura in Avignon. This incident linked Scève's name in a public manner with that of Petrarch, but contributed little to the development of Petrarchism in France among the literati. Petrarchism was already present in France before 1533, and the *tombeau* incident was viewed as a *fait-divers*, whereas the publication in Lyon of Alamanni's *Opere toscane* in the previous year was far more influential.³⁸

Scève frequented fellow poets and humanists in Lyon such as Étienne Dolet. Scève would have learned about books and ideas whose echoes later appeared in his work either in the course of his education, or later through other Lyonnais intellectuals and printers both French and Italian. Since a dominant writing mode at the time was one of imitation, we may surmise what Scève would have read from a source study of his extant oeuvres.³⁹ On the

³⁵ Saulnier, *Maurice Scève (ca. 1500-1560)*, vol. I, 30.

³⁶ *ibid*, 29.

³⁷ *ibid*, 34-35.

³⁸ *ibid*, 48.

³⁹ *ibid*, 30.

other hand, this approach has limits, as Saulnier observes, in that Scève also has the habit of being his own source.⁴⁰ Scève encountered currents of neo-Platonism, Evangelism, late scholasticism, neo-Latin and love poetry, a blend of the old and the new. If Scève's lyric poetry is syncretic, it reflects the diverse intellectual currents of the sixteenth century, often Italian in origin. Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) in Florence had translated into Latin the works of Plato (1484) and Plotinus (1492), rendering them accessible to those who could not read Greek. Ficino also translated the philosophical sections of the *Corpus hermeticum*. Italian poetry circulated in printed editions such as Alamanni's *Opere toscane*. Scève also witnessed Christian mystery plays, processions during festivals such as Mardi gras, and the court Entrées (the Court was often in Lyon in the years 1525-1540). Saulnier writes of Scève, "Le Moyen-âge l'imprègne, jusque dans ses goûts populaires, mélange d'épaisseur et de mystique."⁴¹ The medieval culture still very much present in the first half of the sixteenth century included written texts as well as visual and theatrical manifestations. The coexistence of Christianity, ancient pagan sources and folk traditions, with its merging of religious and philosophical themes, was a sign of cultural ferment similar to the syncretism, say, of the late Roman Empire. Pagan doctrines were revived during the early modern period (e.g. Platonism, stoicism, skepticism, Pythagorean number theory, hermeticism, natural magic, and so forth) in the course of (re)reading the ancient Greek and Latin texts. Cicero, for example, became an ancient model for Renaissance rhetoric as well as combining various philosophical doctrines. Likewise Scève seemed to wander among the thickets of ideas, cultivating whatever suited his purpose for the dizain at hand, rather than exclusively following one way, whether poetic (such as Petrarchan) or religious (Christian). Scève

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 70.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 33.

blended without trying to reconcile the divergent systems and references; they simply coexisted in the poetic space of the text, divided into small epigrammatic units.

In his encounters with Clément Marot, Scève would find that his fellow *blasonneur* possessed an extensive medieval background and interest, as the editor of the *Roman de la Rose* and Villon's poetry. With the *Déplorable fin de Flamete* (1535), Scève translated a contemporary Spanish *roman* by Juan de Flores, a sequel to Boccaccio's *Fiammetta* written two centuries earlier, in 1343-44. *Flamete* contains themes of courtly love and medieval chivalry. Scève writes in the “Epistre proemiale” that love is an art to be learned (presumably from books as well as direct experience), and of “la mienne expérimentée tourmente d'amours, que j'avais proposé vous manifester, pour vous apprendre [...] comme bon et expert marinier en la naufrageuse mer d'amour.”⁴² Scève calls love a cruel tyrant and seeks to use the tale of *Flamete* to instruct his readers to “cauteleusement aymer ... et saignement desaymer,” admitting that his best years passed in service to love. While this may be only a conceit on the part of Scève as translator in his first literary publication, still it serves as a point of departure. We also see the initial use of the motto found also in *Arion* (1536), and similar to that in *Délie*: “souffrir se ouffrir”. In the latter work it becomes “Souffrir non souffrir.” The truism of courtly love that *amour* produces suffering is already evident from the “Epistre proemiale” of *Flamete*. Once again, love is defined in terms of loyal service, as the hero Grimalte submits himself to the lady *Flamete*. Gilbert Gadoffre argues in *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes*⁴³ that the ideology that heroic exploits brought glory for *chevaliers* was transferred to humanist scholarship, and perhaps this applies to Scève with *Flamete*.

⁴² Maurice Scève, *Oeuvres complètes*, éd. Pascal Quignard, 425.

⁴³ Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle dans la France des humanistes : Guillaume Budé et François I*, Geneva : Droz, 1997, p. 83.

Some scholars speculate that Scève took vows in the lower orders of the Church; if so, it is not evident from *Délie* itself. Saulnier comments:

On ne saurait s'étonner que Dieu soit absent de *Délie*: Dieu ne brille pas non plus en majesté dans les madrigaux amoureux de tel homme d'Eglise comme l'aumônier Saint-Gelais. Et la curiosité et le respect des choses religieuses s'attesteront, précis, dans les *Psaumes* [et] dans *Microcosme*.⁴⁴

For a member of the clergy to compose poetry does not imply, that all the verses therefore will be doctrinal or moralistic. Many writers and poets were also priests or lay clergy.

In any event, Scève dedicated his life to letters rather than to the expected diplomatic, military or ecclesiastical career. There is no known record of his having held a municipal or court appointment in Lyon. Scève never married and spent some years in solitude. At least once he retired to Ile-Barbe (in the northern vicinity of Lyon, on the river Saône), either to a monastery or the residence of his brother-in-law Mathieu de Vauzelles.⁴⁵ Scève was not interested in public life and cultivating a persona among his peers; he was introverted and reserved, even as his high standards and erudition earned him the praise of his colleagues. Marcel Raymond has written that Scève was “insoucieux du grand public” (unlike Ronsard and others).⁴⁶ Nicolas Bourbon once qualified Scève as “addictus Deo”, although V-L Saulnier remarks that the god in question might as well be Apollo as the Christian divinity.⁴⁷ In sum, the epithet “addictus Deo”, the essentially solitary and quiet life without evidence of self-promotion as a poet, the dedication to writing, the hermetic poetry of *Délie*, and the Biblical material treated in *Microcosme* all indicate a preoccupation with

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 36.

⁴⁵ Scève probably retired to l'Ile-Barbe several times between 1536 and 1549. See Saulnier, 131.

⁴⁶ Marcel Raymond, *L'influence de Ronsard sur la poésie française (1550-1585)*, Geneva, 1927, reprinted 1965. Quoted in Coleman, 45.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 35 and note 79.

spiritual matters on the part of the poet. He is not dogmatic or pedantic in *Délie*; instead, his concerns surely evolve as reflected by his writing, from the early *Flamete* to *Délie* to *Microcosme*.

By 1536, Maurice Scève's name was known in Lyon, and he was part of a fluid circle of intellectuals interested in poetry and humanism, the *Sodalitium Lugdunense*. This circle involved students informally apprenticed to their teachers, and maintained ties with women such as Louise Labé and Pernette Du Guillet, and apparently articulated ideals of courtly (polite) conduct with respect to their *belles amies savantes*. This included the poet committing himself in an “alliance” of *amour chaste* to one inaccessible lady in order to praise her (Visagier and Des Périers even went so far as to dedicate themselves to a nun). The circle did not exclude in practice a variety of social relations ranging from intellectual exchange to seduction to banter.⁴⁸ Codes of *courtoisie* were present, however, as ideas, even if only on the level of an amusing game. Social rituals of the literary salons provided a structure for men and women to interact through roles, in this context using poetic preciousness and wit. We shall see shadows of this *courtoisie*, without the *badinage galant*, in Scève's *Délie*. Scève most likely encountered Pernette Du Guillet, the alleged inspiration for the character of *Délie*, in a pedagogical context: he was her teacher. Their encounter and involvement would have occurred within the years 1536-1543; this corresponds to the likely dates of Pernette's life, 1520? to 1545.⁴⁹ Scève by this time was writing dizains that were to be published later in the *Délie*.

⁴⁸ On the subject of the *Sodalitium Lugdunense*, Saulnier notes: “L'appétit du beau savoir et de la droite conscience, celui qu'ils affirment le plus volontiers, n'exclut, en effet, ni le goût de l'amour (an amour courtois, sans doute, mais également sensuel), ni le plaisir du bien-boire et de la plaisanterie facétieuse.... [C]e sont relations qui vont du baiser à l'alcôve” (116).

⁴⁹ Saulnier, 151.

Let us examine critical views of the *Délie*, ranging from the sixteenth century to the present time. This leads to an analysis of recent scholarship on Scève which is relevant for my project. No book-length comparative study of Scève and Occitan love poetry, or of Scève and Dante, has ever been done. We shall see that various scholars recently have alluded to the poetic tradition that precedes Petrarch in light of Scève's *Délie*, but almost no one pursued the matter beyond brief general statements.

According to V-L Saulnier, Scève's name was seldom mentioned from the time of his death until the nineteenth century. During that time, several clichés arose concerning Scève: he was obscure, a precursor of the Pléiade, and his masterpiece was *La Saulsaye* or *Microcosme* rather than *Délie*. Aside from the fame that Maurice Scève achieved during his lifetime, it is only in the twentieth century that the poet has been acknowledged as a major poet who, according to Saulnier, had anticipated the Pléiade group by quietly applying the same poetic principles later promoted by the Pléiade (especially Joachim Du Bellay in his treatise *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*, 1549).⁵⁰ In a passage listing the faults of each of his French predecessors in poetry (Marot, Heroët, Saint-Gelais and Scève), Du Bellay alluded indirectly to Scève : « Quelque autre voulant trop s'eloingner du vulgaire, est tumbé en obscurité aussi difficile à eclersir en ses Ecriz aux plus Scavans, comme aux plus Ignares » (*Deffence* 2.2.46-48). Nonetheless, these predecessors were models despite Du Bellay's ambivalence, as his sonnet 62 of the *Olive* reveals.⁵¹ Du Bellay includes Scève in a canonical list of illustrious poets, each identified by his city (with Florence standing in for Petrarch) or, for the French poets, the river near his birthplace. However, Du Bellay considers himself superior to the French poets, including Scève: "Encor' dira que la Touvre, et la Seine, / Avec' la Saone arriveroient à peine / A la moitié d'un si divin ouvrage » (*Olive* 62, 9-11). Du Bellay claims to

⁵⁰ Quoted by V-L Saulnier, 543. See Du Bellay, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, Champion, 2003), vol. I, p. 50.

⁵¹ See William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), 115-16.

surpass his fellow French poets and to achieve poetry worthy of both Petrarch and the ancients. Dante is not mentioned in Du Bellay's configuration, which probably reflects the impact of Bembo's judgment favoring Petrarch for poetry in the *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525).

In the *Deffence et illustration*, Du Bellay exhorts French poets to imitate the ancients, and to elevate and enrich the French language as the Italians had done with their language. He praises the sonnet and wants to discard medieval French forms like the rondeau and virelai. A member of the Pléiade circle of poets, Du Bellay was the author of the love poetry collection the *Olive* (1549), which is truly the first Petrarchan *sonnet* sequence in French, as opposed to Scève's much longer dizain sequence. According to Saulnier, Scève had anticipated the Pléiade group by quietly applying the same poetic principles later promoted by the Pléiade.⁵² On love poetry, Saulnier writes that the Pléiade owed to Scève "toute son initiation amoureuse."⁵³

In contrast to the *Art poétique françois* of Thomas Sébillet, the *Deffence* advocated the use of classical models, avoidance of medieval forms like the rondeau and virelai, and the writing of elevated verse worthy of immortality, all of which may be found in *Délie*.⁵⁴ Furthermore, on love poetry, Saulnier writes that the Pléiade owed to Scève "toute son initiation amoureuse."⁵⁵ Pontus de Tyard, a Lyonnais like Scève, was greatly influenced by the latter in his love poetry. Pierre de Ronsard eclipsed Scève while replacing the dizain used in *Délie* with the sonnet form. Valéry Larbaud remarked that most of the sonnets of Ronsard have an air of Scève's dizains, with four verses too many.⁵⁶ While Ronsard's

⁵² V-L Saulnier, 543.

⁵³ Saulnier, 543.

⁵⁴ Saulnier, 540.

⁵⁵ Saulnier, 543.

⁵⁶ Larbaud, *Domaine français*, quoted in V-L Saulnier, Ch. XXI, note 57, Vol. II, p. 253.

sonnets do not always resemble Scève's dizains, still, Scève was a predecessor of the Pléiade. The poetics of the Pléiade circle were not as revolutionary as Du Bellay or Ronsard might claim.

Even in the sixteenth century, Charles Fontaine considered Scève "hautain et obscur".⁵⁷ In Book VII of the *Recherches de la France* (1596, 1621) Étienne Pasquier contributed even more to the establishment of the critical view of Maurice Scève as an obscure writer:

Se mettant en butte, à l'imitation des Italiens, une Maitresse qu'il celebra sous le nom de Delie, non en sonnets, (car l'usage n'en estoit encore introduit) ains par dixains continuels, mais avecques un sens si tenebreux & obscur, que le lisant je disois estre très-content de ne l'entendre, puis qu'il ne vouloit estre entendu. . . . [Selon Du Bellay] il avoit banny l'ignorance de nostre poësie : et toutesfois la verité est qu'il affecta une obscurité sans raison.⁵⁸

Pasquier dismisses Scève's obscure style by claiming that the poet did not want to be understood. Perhaps this is somewhat true, as certain dizains or passages in *Délie* still have not been fully elucidated, despite the abundance of scholarship and critical editions in recent years.

According to La Porte, Scève contributed significantly to the passing of French poetry "de la barbarie médiévale à la lumière moderne," Scève combatting what La Porte called "ceste monstrueuse ignorance poétique".⁵⁹ This illustrates sixteenth century post-Pléiade views of medieval lyric forms more than it does historical advancements in poetics.

⁵⁷ Saulnier, 544-45 and Ch. XXI, note 61.

⁵⁸ Étienne Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, Livre VII, Ch. 6.

⁵⁹ Maurice de La Porte, *Epithètes*, 1571, quoted in Saulnier, p 544, and note 60 of Ch. XXI.

In any event, Scève's poetry combined characteristics of both medieval and Renaissance poetry, Italian and French, old and new.

We skip a few centuries, during which Scève's *Délie* was seldom mentioned.⁶⁰

Eugène Parturier in 1916 published the first modern critical edition of *Délie*, which contained notes attributing many borrowings from both Petrarch and the Petrarchist poets – one might come away with the impression that Scève was a mere plagiarist. Parturier wrote, “La *Délie* est le plus obscur de tous les recueils pétrarquistes. On chercherait en vain, même en Italie, une poésie plus énigmatique, sauf peut-être quelques pièces particulièrement artificielles de Dante et de Pétrarque ».⁶¹ Parturier again mentioned Dante and Petrarch together to point out that Scève, like those earlier Italians, alluded to events in his work to indicate when the poems were composed.⁶² French critics such as Henri Weber later countered the Italian imitation theory by emphasizing the native French poetic tradition for Scève, particularly the Rhétoriqueurs. Saulnier comments on Scève's judicious use of Petrarch as a resource (this quote is embedded in a discussion of Leone Ebreo's dialogues):

Est-ce à dire que Scève, “pétrarquiste » tant qu'il souffre, se soit contenté de coiffer son développement pétrarquiste d'un couronnement platoniste, à la mode française d'eniron 1540 ? Non. Pas plus que son « pétrarquisme » n'est pur ni servile – et il en sera reparlé à propos des sources textuelles – son achèvement en amour pur n'est d'obédience platoniste. Ici et là, il s'inspire de modes, mais sans servage.⁶³

This assessment seems accurate to me. We will examine at length in Chapter 5 the complex issue of the influence of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* on Scève's *Délie*.

⁶⁰ Sainte-Beuve mentions Scève in his *Tableau historique et critique de la poésie et du théâtre français du XVI^e siècle* (1828).

⁶¹ Parturier, *Délie*, xiii. Quoted also in Minta, 39.

⁶² Parturier, *Délie*, x.

⁶³ Saulnier, *Maurice Scève*, I, 249.

Aside from Italianist scholars (whose purview does not include Scève) examining the works of Petrarch and Dante in depth, I have found few references in Scève scholarship on Petrarch's debt to Dante or to the troubadours. These do not tend to develop the consequences of those debts for an assessment of Scève's poetry in relation to Petrarch, nor do they explore Scève's poetry in direct relation to Dante or to the troubadours. While each of the *respective* issues I raise in this thesis with regard to each poet - Maurice Scève, Dante and Petrarch (it is difficult to discuss here either Dante or Petrarch without the other coming to mind) - has been explored repeatedly by scholars, no one as of yet has put the picture together, and certainly no one has done a comparative study of the poetry of Scève and Dante.

For example, Nancy Frelick, whose book *Délie as Other: Toward A Poetics of Desire in Scève's 'Délie'* (1994) presents a Lacanian and poststructural reading, alludes to Dante's episode of Paolo and Francesca in Inf. 5.⁶⁴ She cites the episode in order to remark on the irony inherent in Scève's search for *béatitude* (D3, 10) in hell (this dizain is discussed later in my thesis). Frelick comments: "The reference to Hell in the last line [of D3] serves as a reminder that the creation of a cult based on earthly love can lead not only to perpetual torment but to eternal damnation." This is valid only in a Christian perspective, which is not compatible with the code of courtly love, nor (as we shall see) with the *Délie*. The Lyonnais poet does not conclude his poetic sequence with eternal damnation. The poet-lover's suffering is not a moral crisis; he is *aux Enfers* not because of a transgression, but because of love-sickness, passion, and being apart from his beloved.

Frelick extends her comparison with Dante to the last three dizains of the *Délie*, in which she contrasts Délie as pagan with Beatrice's Christian guide who, unlike Virgil, can

⁶⁴ Frelick, *Délie as Other*, 29.

gain access to Paradise. Frelick identifies the ambiguous immortality in the last dizain as being framed in pagan terms: it does not embrace absolute eternity, but is relative to the world's existence and nature: "Tant que ce Monde en soy demeurera, / Et qu'on aura Amour en reverence" (D449, 3-4). Certainly this is not a Christian statement, especially since Amour does not signify Christian charity or virtue. Délie cannot lead the poet to immortality, according to Frelick, who writes that "Scève's persona stays in the world that is characterized by Virgil in the *Commedia*."⁶⁵ However, we may interpret the above lines of D449 in a *literary* perspective (as opposed to a religious or pious perspective, in the way that Petrarch concluded his lyric sequence), meaning "the poetry [and therefore the love between Scève and Délie which is enshrined within it] will endure as long as it is read by people in the world". Stories and poetry survive because they are transmitted in oral or written form.

The classical legacy which the humanists prized - including the Latin poetry of Roman figures like Virgil - was preserved and transmitted in the fragmentary written form of literature [letters, Lat. *litterae*, f. pl.]. The poetry and love that it evokes survives through textual memory. According to Michel Beaujour, Dante's *Commedia* as an allegorical narrative progresses toward a goal in time and space, and its "places" constitute memory-spaces as well as a structure of *lieux*.⁶⁶ This makes Dante's text a discursive memorial of a visionary experience. For Scève, who records his love for Délie in his sequence of epigrams, death is forgetfulness, oblivion, *mortel Letharge* (D449, 10). The *Délie* does not have the same progression as the *Commedia*, but still it is a textual memorial, symbolized by the *flamme si sainte* (D449, 1).

Scève was a reader of love poetry, and he contributed to that tradition which would endure, as the contributions of other writers had endured to be read by him. That is the

⁶⁵ Frelick, *Délie as Other*, 117.

⁶⁶ See Michel Beaujour, *Miroirs d'encre, rhétorique de l'autoportrait* (Paris, Seuil, 1980), 31.

form of eternity which Scève sketches in D449, not in the form of a Petrarchan Christian conversion or Dantesque Christian pilgrimage/journey to God, but through textual transmission by reading and in memory. The sacred flame in the dizain's first line, "Flamme si sainte en son cler" symbolizes love and memory. While Frelick frames the ambiguous immortality of D449 in terms of Dante's Christian hierarchy, in which Délie is lower than Beatrice because the former cannot enter heaven, I would argue that we should not assess the poem within a Christian hierarchy that it does not espouse. We shall see that allusions to Dante's *Commedia* appear in a fragmented way in the *Délie*, but without Dante's orderly hierarchy. In other words, Dante might have relegated Délie to the pagan Virgil's level, but Scève has other concerns and should be interpreted in his own right; he did not intend to place Délie in a hierarchy analogous to the one Beatrice inhabits. Like Dante in Par. 33, Scève does not really tell us what happened at the highest point of ecstasy, since language is inadequate, but he indicates, like Dante, that there was ecstasy, and that light was present (at least as a symbol). It is true that it is not a Christian vision, but that does not mean it is not spiritual (non-Christian/pagan signifies earthly, limited and inferior only according to a Christian worldview).

The scholar whose territory paralleled that of my project the most was Stephen Minta in his study *Love Poetry in Sixteenth Century France* (a misleading title). Minta briefly traces the development of courtly love in the troubadours to Petrarch and to Petrarchism in France, which leads to a study of the poetry of Marot and Scève. He discusses how the Pléiade deviates from the medieval tradition of courtly poetry, which displays continuity through Guillaume de Machaut, Charles d'Orléans, Clément Marot, and Maurice Scève. Minta acknowledges the complex maze of themes and influences which are difficult to

isolate.⁶⁷ He emphasizes that the reader “should be alive to the nuances of the courtly tradition,”⁶⁸ and he allies himself with Marcel Françon (and against Parturier) in being cautious about labeling French poetry like Marot’s as “Petrarchan”.⁶⁹

Jacqueline Risset, who has written on both Scève and Dante,⁷⁰ commences her book on Scève by distinguishing his dense style from the *langages* of Dante and Petrarch: Scève’s poetry “semble toujours sur le point d’atteindre sa conclusion, de révéler son secret, mais qui renvoie toujours au-delà”.⁷¹ Risset goes on to compare *l’usage scévien* to Dante: « l’opacité suscitée par les noms chez Scève n’est pas seulement l’effet de l’excès des connotations qui dispersent l’identité, mais signifie aussi, comme chez Dante, l’ancrage à une réalité qui renvoie à l’‘hors-texte’, au ‘monde’, dans lequel sont compris l’éphémère et la contingence. »⁷² Risset observes that Scève is close to Dante and the stilnovo poets in their inquiry into love “selon l’angle le plus vaste, le plus *cosmique*”.⁷³ This is not valid for the Petrarchist poets, as Risset points out. She also compares Scève’s taste for the *devises* with that of the troubadours.

In the introduction to his 2004 critical edition of the *Délie*, Defaux⁷⁴ mentions Occitan lyric and the *trobar clus* style as part of the genesis of Scève’s text (which will be discussed in the following chapter). Defaux writes:

Il conviendrait peut-être de regarder plutôt vers l’occitan et de ne pas oublier le rôle que, par l’intermédiaire de Pétrarque, et de Dante derrière Pétrarque, par

⁶⁷ Stephen Minta, *Love Poetry in Sixteenth Century France*, 1977, 1.

⁶⁸ Minta, 23.

⁶⁹ Minta, 26.

⁷⁰ See Risset, *Dante écrivain, ou l’intelletto d’amore* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), *Dante: Une Vie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), *L’anagramme du désir, sur la Délie de Maurice Scève* (Paris, Fourbis, 1995). See also her French translation of Dante’s *Commedia*, *La Divine Comédie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1985-90).

⁷¹ Risset, *L’anagramme du désir*, 11.

⁷² Risset, *L’anagramme du désir*, 22.

⁷³ Risset, *L’anagramme du désir*, 40.

⁷⁴ Defaux, *Délie*, I, xvi.

l'intermédiaire aussi d'humanistes comme Pietro Bembo, la lyrique provençale a pu jouer dans la longue et sinueuse genèse de la *Délie*.

While I wrote on these matters independently before 2004, I am glad to see that at least one established scholar views the tradition in a similar perspective with respect to the *Délie*. No one previously did a close textual comparative study of the writings of Scève and Dante, despite the significance of this gap in scholarship (perhaps because Dante is difficult, and also the scholarship on Dante is quite vast).

JoAnn DellaNeva's 1983 book *Song and Counter-Song* reads the *Délie* as a noncomic parody (from the Greek *parodia*, a song sung beside) of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, and asserts that Scève established a counter-genre. She studies the poetry in its relation to the *Canzoniere* including the Apollo-Daphne myth and the structure of each work. DellaNeva calls that text a "sacred" model, which renders Scève's reading of it a scriptural exegesis. My position will be shown to differ from DellaNeva's on many points, for which see Chapter 5. The work of other critics I discuss according to the relevance of my subject in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2: Courtly Love Lyric, Dante, and Scève

This chapter presents essential background for a reading of Maurice Scève's *Délie* in light of Dante and the Italian poetic tradition which precedes Petrarch and Renaissance Neoplatonism, a lyric background which has both direct and indirect bearing on Scève's lyric poetry. This background includes thematic conventions of courtly love stemming from the Occitan troubadours, and the manifestation of one rhetorical mode within troubadour lyric poetry, that of *trobar clus*. Scève's *Délie* belongs in the context of a poetic continuum which stems from the twelfth-century Occitan troubadours, to the *dolce stil novo*, to Dante and Petrarch. The *Délie*'s poetic background does not begin and end with Petrarch and love poets of Roman antiquity (Propertius, Tibullus, Catullus, Ovid). There are also significant distinctions to be made between the singers of *fin'amor* and the works of Dante, Petrarch, Scève, and others who came later. One distinction concerns the oral transmission of the troubadours' performance of the poem as a song, as opposed to a predominantly manuscript form.¹ Scève's lyric sequence was architecturally structured and anchored in textual form on the page, to be read and absorbed visually, including the emblems.²

Defining courtly love, even asserting that it existed, has given rise to contentious debate. The medievalist Gaston Paris in 1883 had coined the term "amour courtois", an expression unknown in the Middle Ages, although it pinpointed an ideology which was manifested in both *romans* and lyric poetry as an outgrowth of chivalric codes. Robert

¹ If the poem transmitted orally is not written down, it is lost to posterity unless it survives in the living memory of people.

² For an analysis of the architectural structure of the *Délie*, see Doranne Fenoaltea, *Si haulte architecture: The Design of Scève's Délie*, Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1982.

Briffault argued that the troubadours sought sensual passion and expressed that in their lyrics; only later did the cult of chaste love and idealization of women develop.³ D. W. Robertson⁴ denied the existence of courtly love in an article in 1968 and instead spoke of “idoltrous passion”, asserting that courtly love was sentimentalized by the Victorians.

There was a gap between poetic and rhetorical practices and historically documented social behavior. I shall employ the term *courtly love* here to designate a set of *conventions in poetry* for addressing the subject of love, not a socio-historical phenomenon as part of courtly society. It is interesting to see the diversity of scholarly approaches to troubadour lyric: in Italy, it contributes to the study of early Italian literature, in England it is considered as an aspect of medieval France, in France it is studied as a regional phenomenon, and in the United States it is seldom studied except for its universal appeal, for example as part of comparative literature programs.⁵

This is not to imply that *fin'amor* poetry developed independently in isolation in southern France and is the ultimate source of western love traditions. Courtly love constitutes a thematic thread that links the poetic practices of the abovementioned poets. The Italians including Dante and Petrarch were indebted to the troubadours, and Scève in turn read them and perhaps troubadour lyric as well. The devotional cult of Mary also may be compared with certain conventions of courtly love. Defaux (2001) drew an analogy between the *Délie* and Marian poetry (poetry which involves praise of an idealized divine lady in a proper religious context). It seems useful to examine Scève's dizains in light of courtly

³ See Robert Briffault, *The Troubadours*. Bloomington: Indiana University P, 1965. Pp. 102 ff.

⁴ D. W. Robertson, “The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts” (1968), in *Essays in Medieval Culture*, 1980.

⁵ For an overview of scholarship on the troubadours, see Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, eds., *The Troubadours: An Introduction* (1999), Introduction, 1-7.

love as part of a lyric tradition common to Dante, Petrarch and Scève. This will establish the underpinnings for a fruitful comparative discussion of the poetry of Scève and Dante.

The troubadours flourished in Poitou, Gascony, and (later) Provence from around 1100 to 1270, then were in decline until about 1350. Occitan courts from the twelfth century onward were centers of political and social life; they began to cultivate refined behavior, in which women played a key role. Wandering (male) minstrels or *joglars* praised women in their songs, which were lyric poems performed orally, sung as music. Troubadours praised courts where intelligent conversation and civilized behavior were evident, and denounced boorish behavior elsewhere. The Provençal term *fin'amor*⁶ -- refined or pure love, as opposed to *fol'amor*, dangerous and mad love -- reflects this desire for refinement. *Fin'amor* draws attention away from social rank and society to focus on the intensity and purity of inner feeling; the word *fin* suggests the refining of metal.⁷ We shall see that the imagery of refining substances in conceptions of love is common to the poetry of Scève and Dante.

In a socio-historical context, Herbert Moller in an article in 1959 raised the possibility that poems and songs praising women were an indirect consequence of migration patterns and a shortage of women in the population who were accessible to mercenaries and other men. Maria Rosa Menocal⁸ reminds us that Arab love poetry contributed to the development of Occitan courtly love poetry, which moved into southern France from Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus) and later, Arabic Sicily at the court of Frederick II with the *Scuola siciliana* whence emerged the first known sonnets of Giacomo da Lentini, and whose poets later influenced the *stilnovisti* in Italy. Menocal has suggested that the Arabic verb *taraba*

⁶ *Fin'amor*, *fin* + *amor* which was feminine; the gender of *amor* was unstable through the sixteenth century.

⁷ Sarah Kay, "Courts, Clerks and Courtly Love," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (2000), 85.

⁸ Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*.

might be the etymological origin of the Occitan verb *trobar*.⁹ Another more commonly held theory is that *trobar* corresponds to the Latin *invenire*, to find, come upon, from which we derive the English verb *invent*.

It is anachronistic and ultimately a misunderstanding of the genre to attempt to assess the “sincerity” of the poet’s verses. We cannot take the words literally and assume the poet is relating real events or genuinely felt sentiments. The troubadours produced poems within a structure and according to evolving codes, frequently on the subject of love: lauding the chosen lady, usually married and inaccessible, for her beauty, her nobility, perhaps her virtue, and other qualities. The poet often sought to be ennobled and exalted by his love for the lady; perhaps he sought an adulterous liaison with her, and perhaps the love was unrequited. He might have to perform heroic feats to win her favors. He waited and doubted and hoped, appealing to his lady’s generosity by voicing his sweet suffering, and the poet’s anticipation provided the material to generate verses in which the situation was not resolved, but played on and on. The troubadour was an actor who perfected the artistic illusion of the love dilemma through the song, according to Paolo Cherchi.¹⁰ Each poem was an oral performance. Although it is in a textual framework, the poetic persona of Scève likewise perpetuates his sweet suffering in the love situation throughout the sequence of dizains of the *Délie*, as Petrarch among others did in his *Canzoniere*.

According to the medieval courtly code - in a literary, not a social context - which Petrarch and Petrarchist poets adapted for their purposes, the lover subordinated himself to the beloved lady and commits himself to faithfully honor her wishes and commands, just as a serf would in the service of a feudal lord. The poet might also serve the god of love who

⁹ Menocal, x-xi. This view is not universally accepted, and the etymology of Arabic verb roots is complex and subject to dispute.

¹⁰ Paolo Cherchi, *Andreas and the Ambiguity of Courty Love*, 70.

could appear as an allegorical character, as he does in Cavalcanti and Scève. In the first part of the *Roman de la rose*, the initial author Guillaume de Lorris has the narrator dream that he is compelled to serve the god of Love, who is represented as a medieval *grand seigneur*. The Provençal title with which troubadour poets would address the lady was the masculine “Midons” (meaning *my master* or *my lord*). As soon as this hierarchical and symbiotic relationship is established between the poet and his lady, the poet frequently subverts it with laments, persuasion, or flattery to obtain the lady’s favors. There is tension between incompatible ideals, courtly and Christian: the courtly dynamic tends to point to adultery since the Lady is usually married, as against Christian morality (discussed at length in Ch 4) which dictates that an honorable Lady is not supposed to be unfaithful to her husband nor must sexuality freely dominate in her. Thus courtly love poetry may acquire an aura of secrecy, which only inflames the poet’s forbidden desire, as a vehicle to generate his verses; furthermore, if the poetry is destined only for noble souls capable of love, then that draws another veil of secrecy over the poem, which requires deciphering by the reader. Poets grappled in diverse ways with the tension between conflicting courtly and Christian ideals, and this colors the poetry they wrote. For Dante, love and virtue were compatible, and in the *Commedia* Dante elevated Beatrice to the heavens, where she dealt with her pilgrim sternly; thus the adoration of the lady occurs in a divine context, rather than a human one.

Denis de Rougemont in *L’amour et l’occident* (1938, 1956) distinguished between the feudal code and the courtly chivalric code, which sometimes came into conflict. An example of this occurs in the legend of Tristan and Iseut, as for example when Mark’s barons defend his honor and are called “férons”, although they were being loyal to their king and serving him well.¹¹ By contrast, Tristan betrays his king by having an affair with his betrothed, and

¹¹ Denis de Rougemont, *L’amour et l’occident*, 31-33.

Iseut betrays Mark as well, yet they are not condemned for their deceit. The code of *amour courtois* undermines the feudal code in the story. Petrarch has no concern with jealous husbands because Laura is utterly chaste and he has virtually no rivals (save in one instance the sun god, discussed later, in Chapter 5). Petrarch also speaks of no other women except the Virgin Mary, especially in the supplication to her in R366. Scève adheres to the courtly code and does not concern himself with the fact that he would be committing adultery with Délie when her husband is mentioned (D161).

The main difference between love for the ancient Romans and love for the medieval troubadours and trouvères was that love was not only a matter of unbalanced excess or obsession, sexual passion which could lead to madness. According to most medieval love poets (except Guilhem de Peiteus, or Guillaume IX of Aquitaine), love was also a source of joy, glory, and uplift for the lover: his love ennobled him and if the lady accepted his service and attentions, it could even benefit him socially.

Petrarch participated in the tradition of lyric love poetry *fin'amor*, up to a point as we shall see. He elaborated a much longer sequence of mostly sonnets (317 out of 366), developing a more refined and restricted language than previous poets had done, and introducing other elements as well (for example, frequent figures of antithesis, omission of other medieval lyric forms in favor of the sonnet and canzone, the introspective self, guilt and regret, memory, vainglory, and so forth). It has been observed that to “invent” the genre of the *canzoniere* (an Italian version of the Occitan *chansonnier* collections), Petrarch eliminated the prose commentary in Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, leaving the poems to remain.¹² On the other hand, many of the motifs that we recognize in Scève's love poetry as “Petrarchist”

¹² Robert Durling cites C. S. Lewis on the point that Petrarch eliminated prose commentary to “invent” the *canzoniere* genre; see *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 9-10. Sara Sturm-Maddox reiterates the same point from C. S. Lewis (cited in Durling's Introduction) in “Transformations of Courtly Love Poetry: *Vita Nuova* and *Canzoniere*,” in *The Expansion and Transformations of Courtly Literature* (1980), 132.

(such as the *innamoramento*, the symbolic significance of the eyes and vision, the heart, the arrows that wound the poet-lover, seeking *mercede/merci*, the Lady's unwillingness or indifference, and so forth), do not in fact originate with Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Petrarch's sonnets attracted numerous imitators, and the *Canzoniere* became the most important model for lyric love poetry in Renaissance Europe, for which Petrarchist verse evolved into a mode that functioned to amuse sophisticated courts in a sort of game that could be played again and again. Scève in my opinion does not belong in that category of Petrarchists. His verse is serious and earnest, hermetic, Neoplatonist, morally distinct, and manifests other non-Petrarchist concerns. Scève precedes the Pléiade circle of poets in France and is notoriously difficult to classify, aside from the evident historical place with the Renaissance group of poets in Lyon that included Pernette Du Guillet and Louise Labé.

There are echoes in Scévian poetry of the courtly love tradition on several levels: the topoi concerning praise of the beloved woman and suffering of the loyal poet who vows to be her vassal, idealization of the *dame*, the importance of *l'oeil* and *le regard*,¹³ both the poet's gaze upon the lady, a contemplation which causes him to love her, and the power of the lady's gaze. The moment of falling in love is sudden and overwhelming. Also, the lyric non-narrative pattern of repeated evocation of certain themes, the waiting and secret and solitude, and links between poetry and music figured in Scève's poetry.¹⁴ In a 1988 article, Philippe Ménard¹⁵ examined Scève in light of courtly love as an inspiration, enumerating pertinent aspects which I included in the above list. Ménard mentioned the connection

¹³ Cf. Andreas Capellanus, the *Roman de la rose*, etc.

¹⁴ Besides the fact that troubadours sang their compositions as musical performance rather than reciting them aloud, more theoretical and symbolic aspects are explored in James Seymour Helgeson's study of Scève and music as divine harmony, *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève* (Droz, 2001). By the early sixteenth century in France, music and poetry were commonly viewed as distinct.

¹⁵ Ménard, Philippe. "L'inspiration courtoise dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève," in Antonio Possenti and Giulia Mastrangelo, eds. *Il rinascimento a Lione*. 2 vols. Rome : Ateneo, 1988. 751-66.

between love and death, a major Scévian theme, in the *Délie* as compared with the poetry of the late twelfth-century trouvère Gace Brulé, who wrote of love “en mourant vif”.¹⁶

According to Peter Dronke,¹⁷ the medieval love poets were preoccupied with the relation between human and divine love. Dronke cites Al-Farabi (c.875-c.950), who wrote commentaries on Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws*,¹⁸ as providing an idea of union between active and possible intellect in which man was fulfilled through finding his essential nature. Though Al-Farabi disagreed with the idea of Plotinian mystical union with the One, for him the Neoplatonic One, linked also with the Aristotelian First Cause, represented the highest level in his cosmic hierarchy of pure intelligences. The union was not a duality or exclusion of the physical, corruptible, material existence, but was a true unity which incorporated earthly experience.¹⁹ For love poets, the idea of unity consisting in the divine union of many represents a solution to the problem of human/divine love: the discrepancy between human and divine can be accommodated through unity-in-diversity. In Plato’s *Timaeus*, which was available in incomplete translation during the twelfth century, the *Anima mundi* mediated between unity and diversity. The Candida Rosa in Dante’s *Paradiso*²⁰ was the culmination and union of the figures in Paradise; this included the union of lover and beloved. Beatrice then, besides being Dante’s beloved lady according to courtly tradition, also exalted and guided the poet, leading him to God. This contrasts with Petrarch’s renunciation of his love for Laura in the *Canzoniere*, for whom there is no ultimate union or ecstasy. Scève writes in D449 which concludes the collection: « Aussi je voy bien peu de difference / Entre l’ardeur, qui noz coeurs poursuivra, / Et la vertu ». Here divine purity is fused with earthly desire,

¹⁶ Ménard, 753.

¹⁷ See Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, vol. I, 2nd ed. (1968, 1999), 74-75. Dronke quotes a passage from a twelfth century Latin translation of Al-Farabi’s *De intellectu et Intellecto*.

¹⁸ Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1990, 109.

¹⁹ Dronke, *Medieval Latin*, I, 74.

²⁰ For an analysis of the symbolism of Dante’s Rose, see Giuseppe Di Scipio, *The Symbolic Rose in Dante’s Paradiso* (Ravenna, Longo, 1984).

both of which figure in Scève's conception of love with respect to Délie. The yearning for the beloved is identified with the yearning for divine union (this idea is found in Sufi writings as well, along with metaphors of love including the mirror, passing through fire, the intertwined themes of love and death, and alchemical transformation into gold).²¹

According to Dronke, ideas like the *Anima mundi* provided a means for the medieval love poets to attain transfiguration through their love, rather than rejection (in other words, sexual fulfillment would be possible as a worthwhile end to seek and attain, and not morally forbidden). In the *Roman de la rose*, Jean de Meun writes that without the "deliz qui les atrait, » people would not reproduce and thereby preserve Nature's creation through regeneration.²² This presents a different argument, based upon the idea that all in nature is good, but it has a similar goal: to render sexual union morally acceptable. According to Jean de Meun, paradise would not be a place where sexual fulfillment is banned (as expressed through the discourse of Genius, "le prêtre").

²¹ In Sufi tradition, the man who falls in love with a woman or girl is interpreted in stories and poetry (such as in Rumi's allusions to "the beloved") as being an initial or base manifestation of the yearning for God. Human union reflects divine union, and can be a stage on the path. Longing for the human, earthly beloved (one person for another) is really the longing for the Eternal Beloved. Human love is preparation or training for divine love. Sufi mystics articulated a longing for union using the language of human love (see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1975, p. 5). The seeker must undergo a process of purification in order to approach the divine (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 134). For example, there is a tale by the twelfth century Persian mystical poet and Sufi master Fariduddin Attar (born c.1136) of a pious Sufi teacher named San'an, who falls madly in love with a (much younger) Christian girl, who spurns him. After he renounces his religion and all social convention, a voice tells him, "One must be burned in the fire of love to be worthy of seeing the Eternal Beloved. Name and position have no value in the creed of Love. Before one can behold the Truth, the dust of existence must be cleansed from the mirror of the soul. Only then can one see the reflection of the True Beloved in the mirror." See Mojdeh Bayat and Mohammad Ali Jamnia, *Tales from the Land of the Sufis*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 1994, 48-80. Ibn 'Arabi wrote love verses to a beautiful Persian lady he met at Mecca while on the *hajj* [pilgrimage], and he later interpreted his own verses in a mystical sense; the device was common among Sufi poets (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 264). Images of lovers (or their hearts) burning in the fire of love is a commonplace among Turkish and Persian Sufi poets, according to Annemarie Schimmel (see *I am Wind, You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 1996, 177). The Sufi poets also employ alchemical metaphors of turning base metals into pure gold (Schimmel, *ibid*). Obedience through love is complete surrender to the Beloved, according to the Sufis, and death means the annihilation of individual qualities, the lifting of the veil (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 135). For this reason Sufi mystics like Hallaj welcomed death, because it implied reunion with God. There are interesting parallels with the lyric love poetry of stilnovists, Dante, and Scève.

²² Dronke quotes the passage from the *Roman de la rose*, 4403-20 (in the 1992 edition of *Livre de Poche/Lettres Gothiques*, ed. Armand Strubel, which is based on BN 12786 and BN 378, it is lines 4399-4416). Jean de Meun qualifies the human race as "estre devin". See Dronke, *Medieval Latin*, I, 81.

Neoplatonism and even Christian liturgy (such as the allegorized Song of Songs) contained what Dronke called “fantasies of love-unions”, such as that of Nous-Sophia and others. Humans were to aspire to a mystical marriage (*hieros gamos*) in imitation of the divine union as an initiation. The hermetic text *Asclepius* contains a passage about reproduction:

For each sex is full of fecundity, and the linking of the two or, more accurately, their union is incomprehensible. If you call it Cupid or Venus or both, you will be correct.

[God] devised and granted to all things this mystery of procreation unto eternity, in which arose the greatest affection, pleasure, gaiety, desire and love divine. One should explain how great is the force and compulsion of this mystery, were it not that each individual already knows from contemplation and inward consciousness.²³

The *Asclepius* passage goes on to describe the copulation of a man and a woman as being an act of mystery which brings forth divinity in each person.²⁴ The act is done in secret to protect the lovers from the irreverent, ignorant, scornful, or disapproving public. These allegorized instances of sexual union are metaphors for spiritual union: sexual union is interpreted to signify spiritual union, which in turn is illustrated through sexual metaphors. We see this with the Church’s iconography of the bride and bridegroom: Christ (*sponsus*) is united with the Virgin Mary or the Church, either of which are placed in the role of *sponsa*.²⁵ Nuns are also “brides of Christ”. For Dante, Beatrice might fulfill the rôle of divine *sponsa* in relation to the poet-lover whose pilgrimage culminates in reunion with her in Paradise. By

²³ Dronke quotes this passage from *Asclepius*, in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (Paris, 1945), ed. Nock and Festugière, 20-21. I have quoted from Brian Copenhaver’s edition, *Hermetica* (Cambridge, 1992), 79.

²⁴ Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 79.

²⁵ See Peggy Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth Century France*, 56 ff. Twelfth century Marian commentaries on the Song of Songs identified Mary as both mother and bride of Christ (p. 59).

the same token, Scève's poet-persona seeks divine union with Délie. This does not conform to orthodox Christian doctrine which holds that human love is mutable and flawed, whereas divine love is eternal.²⁶ Erotic pleasure (aside from the necessity for procreation) has no place in the Christian conception of divine love, which is relegated to *caritas* - save through the occasional sexual metaphor.

Besides the passage in Asclepius, a medieval example of an erotic encounter described in sacred or religious terms is found in the *Chevalier de la Charrete* of Chrétien de Troyes, in an adulterous scene with Lancelot and Guenevere:

et puis vint au lit la reïne,
 si l'aore et se li ancline,
 car an nul cors saint ne croit tant.
 ...
 Au lever fu il droiz martirs,
 tant li fu gries li departirs
 car il i suefre grant martire. (4651-53, 4689-91)

[and then he came to the queen's bed, and worships and bows down before her, for there is no holy relic in which he has greater faith ... When he rose he was just like a martyr, so sorry was he to leave since it makes him suffer such great martyrdom.]²⁷

Therefore the connection between religious and erotic language used to evoke various types of union can go in either direction: religious language in an erotic scene, or erotic language in a spiritual experience. Like the troubadours, Scève blended religious and erotic imagery in his love poetry.

The use of ambiguity and coded language is common to both Scève and *fin'amor* poetry, best exemplified by the style of *trobar clus*. *Trobar clus* is the Provençal term for closed, hermetic, enigmatic verse that requires exegesis by the few who must be initiated in order to decode the poetry. It is the opposite of *trobar leu*, or verse that is easily understood

²⁶ See Dronke, *Medieval Latin*, I, 93.

²⁷ Quoted in Sarah Kay, "Courts, Clerks and Courtly Love", in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (2000), 82.

and accessible to everyone who listens. The troubadours Raimbaut d'Aurenga and Giraut de Bornelh debated the merits of *trobar clus* and *trobar leu* in an extant *tenso* (dialogue in verse). *Trobar clus* is related to *trobar ric*, which seeks richness of language and expression;²⁸ either style may be viewed today as obscure and requiring effort to understand, especially for the (post)modern reader. The troubadours generally were not explicit about which style they employed in any given song, nor did they all use the same terminology, and it is difficult for scholars to classify individual works. However, several troubadours are known for employing what we call *trobar clus*, such as Marcabru (*avant la lettre*), Jaufré Rudel, Arnaut Daniel, Guilhem de Cabestanh, and Raimbaut d'Aurenga. *Trobar clus* incorporates the notion that poetry ought to be a secret revealed only to an elite few who know how to appreciate it properly, because the masses will never understand or value it; so runs Raimbaut's argument. In the same *tenso*, use of a *senhal* (or sign, signal, such as a secret name) is made for Raimbaut: it is Linhaure or Lignaura.

How is this framework relevant for the poetry of Maurice Scève? First of all, the dizains of Scève's *Délie* have often been considered to be obscure, ambiguous and hermetic, almost from the time of publication, and ever since Pasquier (1529-1615) had mentioned Scève in his *Recherches de la France* (1560s). Those attributes recur frequently in Scève criticism. Even the dizain form itself may be regarded as architecturally closed, hermetic, self-contained. Like any poetry described this way, it depends on the resources of the reader and whether one has access to the keys necessary to decode it. But poetry without any ambiguity might no longer be as interesting if everything within it is explicit and evident. Thomas Greene comments: "Poems are commonly located near the border of the

²⁸ René Nelli and René Lavaud, *Les Troubadours*, vol. 2, « Le Trésor poétique de l'Occitanie », 633-34.

ineffable.”²⁹ Here is a visual analogy: like the technique in late Renaissance painting of *sfumato*, the blurring of lines along color and shade boundaries that creates the effect of depth, particularly in a depiction of the eyes, the accomplished use of linguistic ambiguity in poetry evokes profound ideas and emotions, without explicating them openly. The reader is engaged to participate in the paradoxical act of sharing and knowing the secret, through recognizing clues and generating meaning. Scève has been compared with Mallarmé, another famously hermetic poet with an attitude similar to that of Raimbaut concerning the poetry’s *destinataire*: that it be understood only by the few who know. According to Jerry Nash, Scève’s difficult language represents not a barrier but a stage for the reader to pass through, moving from fragmentation to reintegration in the harmonious order of the universe.³⁰

Scève employed the name Délie, which has been decoded in several ways by critics: as an anagram for *l'idée* in a platonic reference; as Delia, the moon; to refer to the verb *délier*, to untie; and as Pernette Du Guillet, who was Scève’s pupil and who supposedly had an affair with him. The poet’s persona is in effect tied with Délie. The use of coded or secret language, including the *senhal*, is common to the troubadours, Scève and Petrarch. Also, Scève uses *devises* (mottoes) such as “non si non là” and “souffrir non souffrir », which generate diverse possible interpretations. Jacqueline Risset has pointed out that use of the *devises* is common to the troubadours as well, such as the “Mesjau-no-jausitz” [je suis joyeux—non joyeux] of Bernard de Ventadour.³¹ Since we do not have extant treatises or letters in which Scève explains and analyzes his works, the reader is left to provide these

²⁹ Thomas Greene, “Rescue from the Abyss: Scève’s Dizain 378,” in Mary Ann Caws, ed. *Textual Analysis*. New York: Modern Language Association, 1986.

³⁰ See François Rigolot, who cites Nash in “Cinq paroles intelligibles: À propos de Scève l’Obscur », in Jerry C. Nash, ed. *A Scève Celebration, 1544-1994*. Saratoga, CA: Anna Libri, 1994, p 56 and note 6. (Rigolot cites Nash from *The Love Aesthetics of Maurice Scève: Poetry and Struggle*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991).

³¹ See Risset, *L’anagramme du désir*, p. 64 and note 65.

interpretations from the poetic text itself. The *devises* augment the enigmatic quality of Scève's work.

Courtly love was a locus for the unresolved tension between two conflicting forces: erotic passion and moral virtue (we could line up the polar oppositions reason and folly as well). As an ideology it underpins much western literature dealing with love from the twelfth century onward, in diverse manifestations where one or the other opposition dominates; such literature includes Andreas Capellanus's problematic treatise on courtly love, *De amore*, as well as the first part of the *Roman de la rose*, Dante, Petrarch, Scève, and many others. Philosophical and medical definitions of love - as an illness whose only cure is the lady's presence or favors - are indispensable here as well. Moral virtue was principally the domain of the Church, and its religious dogma, and the Church condemned sexual passion as dangerous, evil, destructive. Erotic passion was a threat to social stability and the institution of marriage. The *Roman de la rose* nonetheless glorifies erotic love. The courtly relation was present in the *Roman de la rose*, though it was subverted in the second part by the anti-courtly discourse (such as that of Genius, lines 19509-20671), the passages denouncing marriage, and the poem's "logical" conclusion, the plucking of the rose. The legends of Tristan and Lancelot explore adulterous love.

Despite the Church's position on sexuality, expressions of the human sexual impulse still emerged in poetry -- disguised, sublimated, molded into something acceptable, or more rarely, acknowledged outright. Courtly love undermined the official arrangements of marriage and social status, not only due to the prospect of a married lady's having a suitor who disregarded the socially validated marriage arrangement, but also because the poet's entering into a secret agreement with a lady rendered him more fit for social and possibly moral advancement (according to the belief that the lady would have an ennobling effect on

the poet-suitor). This goes back to Rougemont's distinction between feudal and courtly code. Of course the secret is part of the convention: there is no secret when one sings openly to an audience about one's beloved. Centuries later, in the context of the history of scribal and print culture, publication of the poetry belied the conventional secret. The play was engaged with the alternating actions of hiding and revealing, as in a game.

Before the publication of *Délie*, Scève participated in the poetic competition of the *blasons*, (apparently) organized by Clément Marot, and Scève won in 1536 with his *Blason du sourcil*. The *blasons* satirized courtly love poetry, especially the *contre-blason* which heaped insults rather than praise upon a woman's specific body part. I mention the *blasons* because they constituted a late manifestation of the poet's fixation upon the woman's body, without the philosophical apparatus involving love and virtue. Eros prevailed and so did parody.

Let us turn to the subject of troubadour textual evidence. Today 95 principal *chansonnier* manuscripts are extant containing troubadour and trouvère songs, manuscripts produced between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century, as follows:³²

- 19 from the Occitan region
- 14 from Northern France
- 10 from Catalonia
- **52 from Italy** (majority of manuscripts)

It is significant that the majority of *chansonnier* manuscripts were in Italy since the Italians considered their poetry to be indebted to troubadour lyric.

Let us consider the reception of the troubadours in sixteenth century France. While manuscripts of troubadour lyrics were in the hands of private collectors and monastic

³² Gale Sigal, "Troubadours, Trobairitz and Trouvères," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, v. 208, 1999.

libraries, the book the *Lives of the Troubadours*, *Les Vies des plus célèbres et anciens poètes provençaux* of Jean de Nostradame (1507-1577), who was the younger brother of the well-known physician-astrologer Michel de Nostredame, or Nostradamus -- was not printed until 1575, about 30 years after *Délie* was published. The *Vies* text of Nostredame contained errors, fictionalized accounts and even contrived troubadour verses. By the same token, the late thirteenth to fourteenth century Provençal *vidas*, or biographies of the troubadours, were also accounts that contained historically inaccurate information. The *vidas* served as an indirect source for Nostredame's *Vies*, mediated through Italian versions. According to the *Proesme* (preface) of Nostredame, recounting the lives of the troubadours recalled the past renown of Provence. The work served the interests of powerful families of the region, who could count the illustrious poets among their ancestors. Jean de Nostredame's sources included the Italian writers Bembo, Speroni and Castiglione, as well as the commentary of Vellutello on Petrarch, which furnished ideas about the nobility of the Provençal language and mentioned troubadours by name.³³ These Italians are authors Maurice Scève read as well, and Vellutello's commentary of the poetry of Dante and Petrarch identified the troubadours. Italian poets esteemed the Provençal troubadours as predecessors in part because of Dante and Petrarch, and those two poets did in turn because of the transmission from the *Scuola siciliana* to the *stilnovo* poets. Their reputations as illustrious poets, along with ideas about courtly love conventions, circulated in Italy into the sixteenth century. We saw that during Scève's lifetime, Lyon was a crossroads of French and Italian culture, brimming with Italian merchants, booksellers and printers. Jean de Nostredame borrowed from the Italians the idea for his *Vies des poètes provençaux*, of which other versions had been published previously in Italy : for example, Mario Equicola summarized doctrines of love from the troubadours in

³³ Chabaneau and Anglade, eds. *Vies des plus célèbres et anciens poètes provençaux*, Paris, H. Champion, 1913, Introduction, 142.

a work first written in Latin in 1495 and translated into Italian.³⁴ Antonio da Tempo included 13 biographies of the troubadours in his treatise *Libro di natura d'amore*.³⁵

In order to illustrate the importance of the troubadours as poetic ancestors for Dante, let us consider the following: Dante honors Arnaut Daniel in his *Commedia* as a character (toward the end of Purg 26) who addresses Dante in Provençal, and whom Guido Guinizzelli qualifies as “il miglior fabbro del parlar materno” (Purg. 26, 117) when he presents him to Dante. Bertran de Born and Sordello (Sordel) appear as well, in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* respectively. In Dante’s Latin treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante mentions troubadours and their poetry in the language of *oc* (Occitan) and quotes two lines in Provençal from Giraut de Bornelh. However, Dante suppresses the fact that Sordello composed in Provençal rather than Italian. According to Marianne Shapiro, Dante, like Brunetto Latini, acknowledges the artistic qualities of each vernacular language: “French excels in prose and narrative romance; Provençal is the most complete instrument of lyric expression; but Italian is already the language of the sweetest and most subtle lyric poets.”³⁶ For his part, Petrarch in the *Trionfi*, part IV of the *Triumphus cupidinis* (composed in *terza rima* in imitation of Dante) lists troubadours by name. In the *Canzoniere* Petrarch quotes Arnaut Daniel (Arnaldo Daniello) in Occitan (R70, 10). Concerning the transmission of *trobar clus*, stilnovo Italian poets such as Guittone d’Arezzo adopted troubadour techniques.

Let us examine a stanza from troubadour verse. The following passage is the first stanza of a *canço* of Guilhem de Cabestanh³⁷ (chevalier from Roussillon, fl. 1212), who

³⁴ Chabaneau and Anglade, *ibid.*

³⁵ Chabaneau and Anglade, *ibid.*

³⁶ Marianne Shapiro, *De vulgari eloquentia: Dante’s Book of Exile*, Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1990, 6.

³⁷ From Nelli and Lavaud, *Les troubadours*, tome II “L’oeuvre épique”, 116-17.

practiced *trobar clus* style.³⁸ A *canço* has 5-6 stanzas plus an envoi. This stanza illustrates the *innamoramento* as we would anachronistically call it.

Lo jorn qu'ie-us vis, dompna primeiramen,
 Quan a vos plac que-us mi laissezz vezer,
 Parti mon cor tot d'autre pessamen
 E foron ferm en vos tug mey voler ;
 Qu'aissi-m pauzetz, dompna, el cor l'enveya
 Ab un dous ris et ab un simpl'esguar ;
 Mi e quant es mi fezes oblidar. (1-7)

[Le premier jour, Dame, que je vous vis,
 Quand il vous plut de vous montrer à moi,
 J'éloignai mon cœur de tout autre image :
 Tous mes vouldoirs s'affermirent en vous ;
 Votre sourire, un regard tendre et doux,
 Ont mis en moy tel désir, ô ma Dame,
 Que j'oubliai moi-même et l'univers.]

In this stanza, the poet's persona is as if struck by the sight of the lady, and his heart and will succumb to her. His desire is so strong that it overwhelms him and he loses himself due to the lady's glance and smile. Henceforth he depends upon her favor. The universe has narrowed to the two characters in the poem who now share a clandestine pact, as the poet sings it. The poem's argument is commonplace because the motif has been taken up by countless other poets since, among them Scève, to whom we now turn.

In D16, Scève evokes the god of love, Amour, who commands him to love his lady, Délie, whom he calls "Maîtresse" (line 1). He writes: "Délie ingénieuse / Du premier jour m'occit de ses beaux yeux" (line 10). This accords with D1 which compares the fatal power of the lady's eyes with that of the basilisk. It is as if the lady has slain the poet with her beautiful eyes, and thus she is associated with death. Her gaze is powerful and inspires the poet's love, just as in the stanza quoted above. This motif is common in courtly lyric. In D27 Scève writes of forgetting himself, just as Guilhem de Cabestanh had done : « un doux

³⁸ See Nelli and Lavaud, II, p 634.

obli de moi qui me consomme » (line 10). Like Guilhem, Scève also loses himself through the encounter with the lady.

Si je vois seul sans sonner mot, ne dire,
 Mon peu parler te demande mercy :
 Si je paslis accoup, comme plein d'ire,
 A mort me point ce mien aigre soucy :
 Et si pour toy je vis mort, ou transy,
 Las comment puis je aller, et me mover ?
 Amour me fait par un secret pouvoir
 Jouir d'un cœur, qui est tout tien amy,
 Et le nourris sans point m'appercevoir
 Du mal, que fait un privé ennemy. (D244)

The poet-lover silently hopes to obtain *merci* from his lady. He exhibits the symptoms of love in accord with courtly code: he is pale and quiet, between life and death (“pour toy je vis mort”), between joy and suffering in his secret love. His lady is both friend and enemy, as shown by the opposition of the rhyming words *amy/enemy*. Love rules him, both granting power and causing him *souci*. McFarlane reminds us that *aigre* which modifies *souci*, according to the *Dictionnaire Huguet*, means *vif, violent*, and that *privé* means “gentle”. The poet-lover lives only to love, which is the origin of the *secret pouvoir* which love bestows on him. Gérard Defaux compares certain passages in this dizain with Petrarch, e.g. « si je vois seul » with « Solo e pensoso » (R35, 1), and « si je paslis » with « pallido o magro » from R264.61.³⁹ But these are commonplaces of courtly lyric which date from at least the twelfth century (as well as from ancient poetry). Not only are they not original to Petrarch, but Scève would have encountered them in other readings as well.

Ce mien languir multiplie la peine
 Du fort desir, dont tu tiens l'esperance :
 Mon ferme aymer t'en fait seure et certaine,
 Par long travail, qui donna l'assurance.
 Mais toy estant fière de ma souffrance,
 Et qui la prens pour ton esbatement,

³⁹ Defaux, *Délie*, vol. II, note to D244, p. 286.

Tu m'entretiens en ce contentement
 (Bien qu'il soit vain) par l'espoir, qui m'attire,
 Comme vivantz tout d'un sustantement
 Moy de t'aymer, et toy de mon martyre. (D248)

This dizain emphasizes the lover's feudal service to the lady which expresses his love. He languishes under the burden of false hope for an end to his desire (a desire which is not chaste either, precisely like the desire which the troubadours expressed in their lyric), waiting for the lady to grant her favors. The *long travail* proves the lover's loyalty and reassures the lady in her power over him, his "martyre" sustaining her. The dynamic is unequal, and the lover is subordinate, bound to be faithful no matter what the circumstances. The *ferme aymer* of line 3 echoes Marot (*ferme amour*).⁴⁰ Emblem 8, whose motto "Après long travail une fin" corresponds to D248, reinforces the courtly ethos of the poet's love for Délie. The poet's "Long service" (D438, 3) presents a similar conception of love. The sacrifice is total, as the motto in Emblem 17 shows, "Pour aymer souffrir ruyne".

The troubadours sought what they called *melburamen*, a term which extends to ethical and aesthetic categories, meaning plenitude or expansive growth, which can be interpreted in cosmic or erotic terms; it signifies *l'extase amoureuse* or *la saisie de la mort*.⁴¹ It was not based on a Neoplatonic schema, but a human affirmation.⁴² Scève was in accord with the troubadours in this.

Bernart de Ventadorn wrote:

Aquest'amors me fier tan gen
 Al cor d'una doussa sabor:
 Cen vetz muer lo iorn de dolor
 E reviu de ioy autras cen.
 Ben es mos mals de bel semblan,
 Que mais val mos mals qu'autre bes ;

⁴⁰ Defaux, *Délie*, vol. II, note to D248, p. 291.

⁴¹ See Risset, *L'anagramme du désir*, 66.

⁴² Risset, *ibid*, 66.

E pus mos mals aitam bos m'es ;
 Bos er lo bes apres l'afan. (*Vers*, 4th of 7 stanzas plus an *envoi*)

[Cet amour me blesse le coeur
 D'une saveur si gente et douce
 Que si, cent fois par jour, je meurs
 Cent fois la joie me ressuscite.
 C'est un mal de si beau semblant
 Que je le préfère à tout bien ;
 Et puisque le mal m'est si doux
 Quel bien pour moi après la peine !]

This stanza is very similar to what Scève expresses in D65 and elsewhere in the *Délie*, with the heart's wound, sweet suffering, and *les mortz*, the repeated deaths.

The dizain below contains parallels with the *Roman de la rose*:

Peu s'en falloit, encores peu s'en fault,
 Que la Raison asses mollement tendre
 Ne prenne, apres long spasme, grand deffault,
 Tant foible veult contre le Sens contendre.
 Lequel voulant ses grandz forces estendre
 (Aydé d'Amour) la vainct tout oultrément.
 Ne pouvant donc le convaincre aultrement,
 Je luy complais un peu, puis l'adoulcis
 De propos saintz.⁴³ Mais quoy ? plus tendrement
 Je l'amollis, et plus je l'endurcis. (D420)

This dizain presents the futile struggle between reason and the senses within the poet-lover, the subtext being his persistent desire for Délie which defies reason. Raison and Sens are allegorical figures engaged in battle, but Sens easily dominates, particularly with the support of Amour. The poet attempts to use “propos saintz” (if that is the correct reading) to satisfy reason – a religious reference, but the effort is fruitless. As a sort of microcosmic *psychomachia* compressed in a single brief poem, this dizain is inscribed in the allegorical tradition of the *Roman de la rose*, after the allegorical poem *Psychomachia* (“battle for the soul”) by the Christian Latin poet Prudentius (348-after 405 CE), which describes the war between

⁴³ Defaux substitutes « propos *sainctz* » for *sainctz* in D420, line 9.

the virtues and vices. In the *Roman de la rose*, as in D420, the allegorical figure of Raison is defeated, love triumphs, and the lover carries on his pursuit. In both the *Roman de la rose* and D420, a sexual undercurrent pervades the verses: the terms *long spasme*, *prendre*, the opposition between verbs *amollir* and *endurcir* (a masturbation theme?), the adverbs *tendrement* and *mollement*. It is as if Sens seduces Raison as well as enjoying a victorious conquest, perhaps just as Scève would prefer to vanquish *Délie* rather than the reverse. In any case, as a devoted courtly lover, Scève attests to *Délie*'s triumph over him, as elsewhere in numerous dizains of his collection. In the *Roman de la rose*, the lover triumphs with the aid of both Amour and Venus, who shoots a flaming arrow between the towers which represent the woman's thighs, bringing forth desire in her (look at the passage, compare with dizain).

The *Roman de la rose* is part of the heritage common to courtly love (it contains courtly and anti-courtly passages, corresponding mainly to the two respective parts of the work – Jean de Meun's part brings the situation to its logical conclusion), Dante, Petrarch and Scève. The lover's desire, along with the struggle between reason and sensuality, would be mediated through Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. However, an ethos of Christian moral disapproval concerning erotic love, which is soundly defeated through argument in Jean de Meun's second part of the *Roman de la rose*, figures in the *Canzoniere* and constitutes a significant departure from both the *Roman de la rose* and courtly codes of love. Defaux compares D420 to Petrarch's R211, in which we find the pairing of sens/raison: "regnano i sensi, et la ragion è morta" (line 7). However, this is one-sided since there is no interaction between Laura and Petrarch, whereas there are encounters elsewhere (according to the poetry) between Scève and *Délie*. In both poems, R211 and D420, there is an interior battle between reason and the senses. However, if we examine the entire sonnet R211 in light of

Petrarch's ultimate renunciation of his love for Laura, we perceive the poet's moral stance reflected in his designation of Hope as treacherous and deceitful:

Voglia mi sprona, Amor mi guida et scorge,
 Piacer mi tira, Usanza mi trasporta,
 Speranza mi lusinga et riconforta
 et la man destra al cor già stanco porge ;
 e 'l misero la prende et non s'accorge
 di nostra cieca et disleale scorta :
 regnano i sensi et la ragion è morta ;
 de l'un vago desio l'altro risorge.
 Vertute, Honor, Bellezza, atto gentile,
 dolci parole ai be' rami n'àn giunto
 ove soavemente il cor s'invesca.
 Mille trecento ventisette, a punto
 su l'ora prima, il dì sesto aprile,
 nel laberinto intrai, né veggio ond' esca. (R211)

[Desire spurs me, Love guides and escorts me, Pleasure draws me, Habit carries me away; Hope entices and encourages me and reaches out his right hand to my weary heart, and my wretched heart grasps it and does not see how blind and treacherous this guide of ours is; the senses govern and reason is dead; and one yearning desire is born after another. Virtue honor, beauty, gentle bearing, sweet words brought us to the lovely branches, that my heart may be sweetly enlined. One thousand three hundred twenty-seven, exactly at the first hour of the sixth day of April, I entered the labyrinth, nor do I see where I may get out of it.]

At first, this sonnet appears to exude courtly values: the lady possesses the attributes of *vertute, onora, bellezza*, and gentle demeanor, which the poet-persona praises. He commemorates the date he saw Laura, who is not named. But certain vocabulary in the sonnet contradicts this courtly veneer: a pagan labyrinth is not pleasant (the monstrous and lethal Minotaur lurks somewhere inside, and the hero can escape only by slaying it), and a Christian labyrinth would not lead to Laura, but to God or to salvation through penance. *Misero, cieca, disleale*: these terms, like *laberinto*, convey fear, doubt and ambivalence. Where the senses reign, Petrarch's persona is unhappy and unfulfilled; he does not exult in them or welcome them, since only spiritual (not physical, sexual) joy is morally permissible. Hope is

identified only as treacherous and deceptive, not as a positive attribute. This departs from courtly code, for a faithful, waiting lover would not tend to express such sentiments in his poetry. Let us compare Petrarch's sonnet R211 with a Scévian dizain:

D'elle puis dire, et ce sans rien mentir,
 Qu'ell' a en soy je ne sçay quoy de beau,
 Qui remplit l'oeil, et qui se fait sentir,
 Au fond du coeur par un desir nouveau,
 Troublant à tous le sens, et le cerveau,
 Voire et qui l'ordre à la raison efface. (D410, 1-6)

This dizain also presents the motif of reason defeated by love, along with the opposition *sens/raison*. At the same time there is a joyous celebration of the lady's beauty, which recalls troubadour and stilnovo poetry.

D65 presents erotic aspects :

Continuant toy, le bien de mon mal,
 A t'exercer, comme mal de mon bien :
 J'ay observé pour veoir, ou bien, ou mal,
 Si mon service en toy militoit bien.
 Mais bien congneus appertement combien
 Mal j'adorois tes premieres faveurs.
 Car, savourant le jus de tes saveurs
 Plus doux asses, que Sucre de Madere,
 je creuz, et croy encor tes deffameurs,
 Tant me tient sien l'espoir, qui trop m'adhere. (D65)

This dizain opens with wordplay reminiscent of the Rhétoriciens: the inversions “bien de mon mal” and “mal de mon bien” express the truism of the paradoxical nature of love as causing both pleasure and pain. Here it is comparable to the troubadour love-illness whose only cure may be dispensed by the lady. The polar opposites bien/mal are central in this dizain, *coincidentia oppositorum* (Defaux, note to D65). The sweetness and favors which the lady could (and previously did) dispense are contrasted with the pain she currently causes. The lady whom Scève addresses, as always with the familiar “tu” pronoun, perturbs him and yet functions as a source of “bien” for the poet-lover. His love is unrequited, but hope

clings to him (line 10). The lady is both illness and cure for him (a commonplace of courtly love lyric). She could bring him joy and good things – “bien” - but she chooses instead to bring him “mal”. In other words, the poet serves her, hoping for favors, and seeks *merci* from his chosen lady, in the courtly mode. The dizain also takes an erotic tone, especially if “mon service en toy” is interpreted as such, along with “savourant le jus de tes saveurs” from line 6. Although he regrets it since the subsequent absence is so difficult to bear, the lover longs to experience the sweetness of previous encounters with Délie, while the true nature of those encounters remains hidden from the reader.

The troubadours’ conception of love constituted a shift from the classical definition of love from antiquity. That is, love was not only a dangerous passion that muddled the mind which was supposed to strive for balance and reason, but instead, for the troubadours, love became an ennobling sentiment which exalted them through adoration of the beloved lady.

In effect the *Roman de la rose* details the elaborate conquest of the lover for his rose, allegorical representation of the lady and her sex. Guillaume de Lorris in the first part sets forth the courtly ideal of the lover and his mission, which does not appear likely to come to fruition in seduction of the lady. The second, much longer part by Jean de Meun, concludes with the lover plucking the rose with the aid of the arrows of Venus, which represented desire kindled within the lady’s body by the lover’s advances. The love as conceived in the *Roman de la rose* was not morally condemned in its pages, and therefore it was scandalous.

Scève expresses his courtly devotion to Délie:

Celle pour qui je metz sens, et estude
A bien servir, m’a dit en ceste sorte :
Tu voys asses, que la grand servitude,
Où l’on me tient, me rend en ce point mort.
Je pense donc, puis qu’elle tient si forte
La peine, qu’a le sien corps seulement,

Qu'elle croira, que mon entendement,
 Qui pour elle a coeur, et corps asservy,
 Me fera dire estre serf doublement,
 Et qu'en servant j'ay amour deservy. (D142)

Scève indicates his total devotion to Délie, as a serf who must faithfully serve the *Dame* (here the *seigneur* is a *dompna* [domina], female instead of male). Scève uses the words “honneur” and “seigneurie” in relation to Délie in D146, 1-2. His faithful service deserves the reward of the lady’s favors; Scève plays on the etymology of *serf/servant* and *asservy/deservy* to claim double service, to *coeur* and *corps* (he provides, but also he needs the provision of love).

There are several pairings to emphasize the double service: *sens/étude*, *coeur/corps*, *servant/deservy*.

We have seen the poetics of courtly love as an important part of the background for comparing Scève’s *Délie* and Dante’s poetry - particularly the *trobar clus* style in Provençal. Scève becomes a courtly love poet in this context. The subsequent publication of the *Vies* of Jean de Nostredame in 1575, on the Provençal troubadours, shows the transmission from Italy of their legacy and constitutes a revival in France. This is borne out by the transmission of ideas and themes via the far-reaching legacy of courtly love conventions. The chain is established both in France and Italy: from the troubadours to the *Scuola siciliana*, to Dante and the *stilnovo* poets from whom Petrarch emerges, and indirectly through Scève’s reception of Dante and Petrarch.

Chapter 3: Cavalcanti, Ficino, and Scève

As part of the background to the present comparative study of the poetry of Scève and Dante, this chapter will examine how the writings of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) and Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1259-c. 1300) are woven into Marsilio Ficino's theory of love, in Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. Ficino (1433-1499) had translated the *Symposium* into Latin between 1462 and 1468, and he composed his treatise *De amore* in 1467, revising it in 1474. After analyzing Ficino's views on love, we will compare certain elements common to the lyric poetry of Cavalcanti and Scève: the themes of death and of Aristotelian *spiriti*, as well as a partial discussion of the theme of virtue in Scève and Dante, which will be concluded in the following chapter.

My treatment of Dante's vast work can address only certain aspects of it which hold relevance for Scève, which I shall specify. I reiterate that in discussions of love poetry by Scève, Dante, Cavalcanti and Petrarch, I want to avoid the so-called biographical fallacy: whatever the allusions and implications in the poetry, it does not follow that we should conclude that the poet was "really" in love, or that the poetry reflects actual events or the poet's true thoughts and intentions. Aside from sketchy historical evidence, we have only the texts as transmitted, and I am providing a reading of the love poetry qua poetry, not as part of the poet's life, inner or otherwise. The poetry of each author is composed within a form and genre, and it follows certain conventions. The love expressed within that form is like a fiction: in a way it is irrelevant whether the poet actually felt anything. What matters is the expression of sentiments by means of the poetry and its use of language, imagery, and symbols. Readers understand and interpret the linguistic signs, and thus generate meaning

from the poetry in their own minds. They might identify with emotions or perceptions, to which the poet alludes in the verse, to the degree that they recognize such things from their own experience or knowledge. Love lyric is not linear narrative, but it can portray experience in a fragmentary or cyclical pattern. The poetry is a linguistic and textual construction, and all meaning is produced in the mind; thus we may categorize the love poetry as imaginary or fictitious: it does not claim historical validity or “truth”.

Scève, Cavalcanti, and Dante – both in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Commedia*, although in the latter the poet’s tone is light at times – display an earnest tone of high seriousness. This tone distinguishes their respective works from the *Canzoniere*, whose tone, rather, is sophisticated, urbane, elegant: the text as a self-contained system or a game. Aldo Bernardo remarks, “For Petrarch it was the glitter and beauty of the surface of poetry that mattered most.”¹ Petrarch’s poetry is not hermetic, obscure, difficult, hinting at the unsayable, as is the poetry of Scève, Dante and Cavalcanti. Interpretation and knowledge are required to understand the poetry’s most profound meaning. Dante writes:

O voi ch’avete li ‘ntelletti sani,
 mirate la dottrina che s’asconde
 sotto ‘l velame de li versi strani. (Inf 9, 61-63)
 [O you possessed of sturdy intellects,
 observe the teaching that is hidden here
 beneath the veil of verses so obscure.]²

And Cavalcanti writes in the envoi of “Donna me prega”: “assai laudata sarà tua ragione / da le persone c’hanno intendimento: / di star con l’altre tu non hai talento” [your argument will be greatly praised by those persons who have understanding: You have no desire to be with the others] (XXVII, 73-75).³

¹ Aldo Bernardo, “Petrarch’s Attitude Toward Dante,” *PMLA* 70 (1955), pp. 497-98.

² Translations of quotes from Dante’s *Commedia* are by Allen Mandelbaum.

³ The English translation of Cavalcanti is by Lowry Nelson. His bilingual edition, *The Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, essentially reproduces the Favati-Contini text established in 1960.

On the other hand, Petrarch's verse is more open, displayed with linguistic virtuosity for the reader: *trobar ric* rather than *trobar clus*. Scève's poetry is more uneven, less polished than Petrarch's. Dorothy Coleman writes of Scève, "His poetry will be hard and rough, not blurred or indefinite. It will not flow smoothly as Petrarch's does."⁴ Besides revealing a sense of yearning along with suffering and exaltation through love, all is meticulously arranged in the *Canzoniere* – dates, poem numbering, themes, imagery, symbols, language. Topoi become almost rhetorical flourishes to enhance the poems. One may argue that all texts are self-contained, arranged constructs of language, and we can never assess with certainty the "seriousness" of any author. Nevertheless Petrarch developed a stylized mode with its tropes and stock themes, that was well suited to imitation (first in Italy during the Quattrocento, and subsequently elsewhere) through the later lyric poetry, often sonnets, of the early modern period, termed Petrarchist poetry. Laura is associated with the *lauro*, the laurel tree and laurels of poetic greatness. She represents also Petrarch's ambition and vanity, and so the poet shifts from earnest yearning outward (toward another) to closed self-referentiality (himself).

Laura is forbidden not only because she is inaccessible to the poet, whose eloquently expressed love is unrequited; Laura is forbidden also because his loving her so obsessively endangers Petrarch's soul, since he is supposed to focus on loving God instead of Laura/poetic glory (according to Petrarch's *Secretum*, the imagined dialogue between himself as Franciscus and Augustine, who berates him for his misguided love). Love-yearning is conveyed, but it is entwined with guilt that is absent in Dante and Scève. Theologically induced guilt about one's desire is beyond the scope of courtly love, which does not condemn adultery.

⁴ Coleman, *Maurice Scève, Poet of Love*, 51.

The cycle of the *Canzoniere* concludes with a renunciation and prayer to the Virgin Mary, like the end of the year whose number of days corresponds to the number of poems plus one (366); then the cycle can begin again. Délie's death does not figure in the poems, as those of both Beatrice and Laura do respectively. Laura's death divided the *Canzoniere* in two parts, as Pietro Bembo's 1501 edition for Aldus Manutius first emphasized, and the second part was thus elegiac. We might view Dante's love progression as a spiral upward, while Petrarch's moves in a downward spiral, leading to pain, despair, and ultimately, renunciation. Then the cycle begins anew. Scève's spiral moves vaguely upward, but is painful as if he were struggling in purgatory. The progression is not systematic; nevertheless, in the midst of the poet's wandering, an ascent may be discerned.

Dante and Scève as poet-characters devote themselves without worrying about damnation for it, as far as we can tell from the texts. Scève characterizes Délie as "Constituée Idole de ma vie" (D1,10) without apparent concern for the theological implications. Dante condemns a version of his former poetic self via the adulterous courtly lovers Paolo and Francesca in the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, as we shall see; but this does not interfere with Dante's sustained adoration of Beatrice as a blessed creature, both in the *Vita Nuova* and later in the *Commedia*. Any damnation within Scève's dizains stems from love-suffering and isolation from his beloved during this life, as opposed to dread of future judgment for sins committed. Scève writes:

De composer à toute repentence,
 Je ne l'ay veue encor, ne toy congneue
 L'erreur, qui tant de coulpe m'imposa :
 Sinon que foy en sa purité nue
 Causast le mal, à quoy se disposa
 Ton leger croire, et tant y reposa,
 Que ton coeur froid s'y mit totalement :
 Dont je n'ay en moy conclu finalement
 Puisque ma vie on veut cruellement
 Pour autrui faulte offrir à penitence. (D34)

The Christian framework in this dizain – la foi, la repentance, la pénitence – is arranged to express metaphorically the poet's lament of unrequited love. Scève cannot pinpoint what he did to render himself culpable. "Le mal" seems to signify a wound or hurt rather than evil, although as religious vocabulary it also fits with the context. The poet's only "erreur" having been to faithfully love Délie, he is condemned to suffer *not because it is immoral or sinful to love her*, but because she does not respond to his appeals. This reader interprets "à toute repentance" from the essential line 8 as referring to himself more than to Délie, because in the following lines it is Scève's own life that is offered in "penitence". It is possible that *toute* refers to both parties, in a syntactically ambiguous phrase typical of Scève.⁵ My understanding is that Scève resolved to write the poetry as an expression of (futile) repentance for that steadfast love which brought him much anguish, although he considers himself innocent. His indictment of Délie for cruelty is counterbalanced by his deferential gesture of penitence to her. Meanwhile Délie's indifference to his anguish is identified with perfidy, in contrast to Scève's fidelity in love. It is as if Scève intended to purge himself of the love through the composition of poetry. Yet this intention is not borne out by the work's subsequent development: the love is not purged away. Petrarch's R207⁶ has been identified as one source for this dizain: "Così di ben amar porto tormento / et del peccato altrui chaggio perdono - / anzi del mio" [Thus from loving well I gain torments, and I ask to be pardoned for another's crime; rather for my own] (R207, 79-81).⁷

The love of each poet for Beatrice and Délie respectively is not presented as being dangerous for salvation, but only for the potential to suffer the inevitable longing while still

⁵ Joukovsky reads line 8 to mean that Scève will repent even if it is for another's transgression; McFarlane reads it to mean that the poet will accept Délie's repentance. Defaux cites Petrarch and Ovid as sources in D34, and indicates that Scève adopts a strategy of repentance.

⁶ English translations of Petrarch's *Rime* are by Robert Durling.

⁷ Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D34.

on earth. Dante does not manifest worry, as Petrarch does with respect to Laura, that his love for Beatrice is blasphemous, verging on sinfulness through idolatry, lust or vanity.

Dante even writes in the *Vita Nuova* of other women who serve as “screen” ladies (“schermo de la veritade”, VN 5:3) to disguise the identity of the one he truly loves. Since Dante relates that some time later gossip arises due to one screen lady, and Beatrice publicly withholds her greeting from him, the pretext of the screen ladies must have been successful indeed. The subsequent marriage and children of the historical Dante apparently did not perturb the author while he professed love for Beatrice in his writing.⁸

Dante as young poet-lover states at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, following a vision, that he resolves not to write about Beatrice until he finds the worthiest way to speak of her: “io vidi cose che mi fecero proporre di non dire più di questa benedetta infino a tanto che io potessi più degnamente trattare di lei” (VN 42:1). This has been interpreted as prefiguring Dante’s writing about Beatrice in the *Commedia*. Dante’s desire, expressed in the *Vita Nuova* through the vehicle of courtly love, is later sublimated to spiritual adoration towards Beatrice as a celestial figure in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*.

Dante’s views on love are not monolithic: from the *Vita Nuova* (1294) to the *Petrose* lyric poems (1296) to the four *trattati* (out of a projected fifteen in all) that comprise the unfinished *Convivio* (1304-7) and to the *Commedia* (c. 1304 until the year of Dante’s death, 1321), there is a broad range of expression about love. In the *Convivio*, Lady Philosophy

⁸ Morality tends to get tangled up with cultural norms, at times far removed from human behavior in practice, even (or perhaps especially) by those who profess the doctrine but whose actions at times are inconsistent with its intent. Any avowed Christian, after the example of Jesus, ought to be aware of the importance of treating people with decency, including women (allegedly God’s creatures – ecclesiastical misogyny aside). It is tempting to speculate about whether Dante kept separate in his mind the life with his wife and children from his inner life, as it were, with Beatrice. One is reminded of Augustine who, for the sake of his professional ambitions, including an upcoming socially advantageous marriage, dismissed his Carthaginian concubine to return to Africa after 15 years with him (*Confessions*, Book VI, 25). Augustine expressed no concern for her situation, only for his own lust (he promptly replaced the concubine) which in retrospect he condemned as sinful. And Petrarch’s misogyny toward real women is documented. It lends the love poetry an air of the fantastic when there is such inconsistency between lived experience and textual rhetoric about women.

triumphs rather than Beatrice, and thus matters of the mind prevail over those of the heart. This is inconsistent with Beatrice's roles both in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Commedia* respectively, and it has given rise to speculation among scholars to explain it.⁹ Dante writes of his own poems in Book I of the *Convivio*: "Temo la infamia di tanta passione avere seguita, quanta concepe chi legge le sopra nominate canzoni in me avere segnoreggiata; la quale infamia si cessa, per lo presente di me parlare, interamente, lo quale mostra che non passione, ma virtù sia stata la movente cagione" (1.2.16). This statement about virtue probably influenced Ficino's *De amore* treatise, because we find a similar emphasis on virtue in his formulation of the nature of love in that text.

At the other end of the spectrum of Dante's views on love is the subtle erotic passage in the second poem of Dante's four canzoni written to a "donna pietra" (stony lady) known as the *Rime petrose*, in which Dante imagines having the young lady, who is dressed in green, in a meadow surrounded by high hills:

ond'io l'ho chiesta in un bel prato d'erba,
innamorata com'anco fu donna,
e chiuso intorno d'altissimi colli" (RP 2, 28-29).

While this inaccessible lady is never identified with Beatrice, it signifies that at that point, Dante as a poet is not averse to expressing desire for love which has nothing to do with divinely sanctioned charitable Christian love or asexual adoration. While the outcome of the

⁹ See Richard Lansing's article and bibliography on the *Convivio* in the *Dante Encyclopedia*; for example, Pietrobono and Nardi suggested that Dante later revised the *Vita Nuova* ending to accommodate the *Commedia*, and that Dante's professed love for philosophy in the *Convivio* constituted a sort of heretical straying from the true path, which could account for the *selva oscura* image at the beginning of the *Inferno*. Lansing writes, "It should be stressed that in the *Convivio* Dante never explicitly sets reason in opposition to faith or philosophy against theology. His goal ... is forever one of synthesis, of bringing together, or at least correlating, diverse systems of thought" (p. 230). However, according to Corti, the inconsistencies are insoluble. It seems to me that scholars must acknowledge and accept the variation they see from one work to another. A poet like Dante or Scève is not composing theorems, scholastic arguments, or theological doctrines. To attempt to force each work to conform to a continuous schema is to invite misinterpretation. Philosophers and poets evolve in their work, as has been observed many times; they also try things out. To take only one example, how could the violence expressed in the fourth canzone of the *Rime petrose* ever be reconciled with Dante's condemnation of lust in *Inf.* 5?

imagined scene is left unsaid within the poem, the erotic desire is implicit, not sublimated or disguised as some other sentiment. Nor does Dante express guilt for his love here. The *Petrose* poems are perhaps closer to Cavalcanti's definition of love (discussed below) than any other of Dante's works.

According to Maurice Valency, the stilnovists (and by extension Petrarch as well) produced poetry that was more private, elitist and exclusive than that of the troubadours.¹⁰ The stilnovist poet praises the lady in more hyperbolic terms than does the troubadour poet, whose persona is more timid. Cavalcanti claims that the Provençal *mezura* is useless against the power of love: "solo Amor mi sforza, / contra cui non val forza – né misura" (I, 43-44).¹¹ Valency comments, "To the fever of the flesh succeeded the fever of the mind... It was perhaps inevitable that the stilnovist poets in their attempt to treat their subject matter with the calm rationality of the philosopher should at once fall into the sphere of the mystic" (235). The tension between passion and reason manifests itself in the phenomenology of love in the *Délia*, as we shall see.

Petrarch's opinion of Dante constitutes an important episode in the history of Dante reception leading up to Scève's time, during the first half of the sixteenth century. Petrarch wrote in a Latin epistle¹² to his friend Giovanni Boccaccio about a certain popular unnamed poet (Fam. XXI, 15, written between 1353 and 1361):

[There is] a fellow countryman of ours who is popular for his poetic style but doubtless noble for his theme; ... an opinion [is] ... insidiously and maliciously circulating about my opinion of this poet. [Being exiled from Florence, this poet]

¹⁰ Maurice Valency, *In Praise of Love*, 234-35.

¹¹ Quoted in Valency, p. 235, from Cavalcanti's poem "Fresca rosa novella".

¹² Aldo Bernardo discusses this letter in his article "Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante", 488 ff.

began devoting himself all the more vigorously to his literary pursuits, neglecting all else and desirous only of glory. In this I can scarcely admire and praise him too highly ... his talent and style, the best of its kind, ... must always raise him far above contempt. There is a second accusation leveled against me: I never owned a copy of his book, although from early youth when one usually longs for such things I enjoyed collecting books.¹³

Petrarch devotes an eloquent passage (which in a modern printed edition fill five and a half pages) to a discussion of what he ironically calls in the same letter a “trifling matter that I should never have taken so seriously.” Let us examine this letter’s meaning more closely. The author vigorously denies that he felt envy for the unnamed poet, who is obviously Dante Alighieri, and yet Petrarch reveals a profound preoccupation with his poetic predecessor, whom he had met once when he was a young child. The ambitious Petrarch cannot denigrate Dante openly; such a move would seem a sacrilege against a renowned literary and intellectual icon. Petrarch would appear resentful of Dante’s undeniable accomplishments. However, Petrarch claims in this letter to avoid owning a copy of the *Commedia* in order to prevent imitation, as if it would contaminate his own writing, which he wanted to stand on its own merits. He seeks to put Dante behind him, as if he were only part of an early stage in Petrarch’s development as a poet: “At that time I too was devoted to the same kind of writing in the vernacular; I considered nothing more elegant and had yet to learn to look higher, but ... I could scarcely escape becoming an unwilling or unconscious imitator.” Through a series of backhanded compliments, Petrarch attempts to put distance between his own work and that of Dante: he “had yet to learn to look higher,” implying that there were better poetic models and goals to come; the earlier Florentine poet was

¹³ Francesco Petrarch, *Familiars*, XXI, 15, trans. Aldo Bernardo.

“doubtless” noble for his theme (as if the matter were uncertain); “I can scarcely admire and praise him too highly”; “his talent and style, the best of its kind” (the label “its kind” relegates the poetry to a separate category and renders it irrelevant, as if it cannot compete openly for merit). Raising the poet “far above contempt” does not necessarily imply lofty admiration on the part of Petrarch. The accusation that Dante was “desirous only of glory” may be applied also to his accuser. Petrarch asserts that he does not scorn this poet, to whom he “would readily grant the palm for vernacular eloquence,” [the verb is in the conditional, rather than present indicative “I grant” – there is no palm actually granted according to the passage]. We know that Petrarch considered eloquence in Latin to be superior to vernacular eloquence, evident in the crowning of Petrarch as poet laureate at Rome in 1341 for the Latin epic *Africa*). Petrarch scorns the praise of Dante by the vulgar, ignorant masses, calling them “silly admirers” and “the common herd” who “befoul with their stupid mouths” Dante’s verses; he writes, “I congratulate myself, on the contrary, that I am free from [such popular recognition].” He denies envying Dante or any other poet: “Who indeed could excite envy in me, who do not envy even Virgil?” Petrarch apparently focuses on vernacular eloquence and style in evaluating Dante’s *Commedia*, to judge from his epistle and his own vernacular poetry, the *Canzoniere* is an Italian model of excellent style (again with the emphasis on the glittering surface). Aldo Bernardo believes that Petrarch, even until the end of his life, considered Dante to be a “vernacular stylist”.¹⁴ Dante and Petrarch both admired Virgil, but for different reasons: Petrarch’s admiration stemmed primarily from a stylistic and aesthetic appraisal of Virgil’s poetry, and Petrarch cast doubt on the magical and prophetic powers attributed to Virgil during the middle ages.¹⁵ Both Dante and Scève may be distinguished from Petrarch for the last poet’s great emphasis on

¹⁴ Bernardo, “Petrarch’s Attitude Toward Dante,” 493.

¹⁵ See Bernardo, “Petrarch’s Attitude Toward Dante,” 496 ff.

vernacular style (this is not to claim that Petrarch favored empty versification, for he denounced it).¹⁶ For Petrarch, poetry is essentially formed with meter, fiction, eloquence and allegory.¹⁷ It has been observed that Scève's poetry is uneven, some dizains being stronger achievements than others.¹⁸ Scève's poetry lacks the Christian underpinnings of either Petrarch's *Trionfi* or Dante's *Commedia*, the former containing an imitation of the latter. On Dante and Petrarch in their handling of style and meaning, Aldo Bernardo comments:

The allegory of the *Triumphs* represents an actual reversal of that of the *Comedy*. Dante ... produces a surface which is simple but an underlying meaning which is extremely complex. Petrarch takes abstract concepts (Love, Chastity, Death, Glory, etc.) and personifies them in order to convey a clearly defined intellectual and moral significance which in turn may or may not reflect spiritual implications. This produces an effect contrary to Dante's.¹⁹

Petrarch's literary prejudice toward Dante is due in part to his approach to style and allegory, which differs from that of Dante.

Petrarch's epistle provides an instance in the history of literary imitation, as well as a glimpse of Petrarch's anxious regard for Dante as a poet, evident from the irony which pervades the text. The epistle also documents one assessment of Dante's poetry by an influential figure (without mentioning Dante's name directly, as Petrarch rarely did), whose work was not universally admired in evolving literary climates in the years following his death. As Petrarch's highly refined language, suitable for courtly discourse, set the standard across Europe through the fashion for sonnets, Dante's poetry was eclipsed to some degree,

¹⁶ See Bernardo, "Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante," 498 and note 26.

¹⁷ Petrarch, *Fam.* X, 4, cited in Bernardo, 498.

¹⁸ For example, see McFarlane's Introduction to his critical edition of the *Délie*: "all is not Benedictine here, indeed there is much small beer; still, this is not in itself a disadvantage, for this very inequality provides an excellent schooling for those who are training their sensibility" (p. 5).

¹⁹ Bernardo, "Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante," 516.

except in Florence, where he was venerated as a civic hero. Dante's *Commedia* continued to be copied, printed and read in many editions: for example, in 1477-78, it was printed in Venice, Milan and Naples.²⁰ In 1481, Niccolò della Magna published twelve hundred copies of the *Commedia* in Florence with Landino's commentary, the first illustrated printing, and this edition dominated the reading market until 1544, when Vellutello's commentary appeared.²¹ Dante's *Commedia* was first translated into French by Laurent de Premierfait, the secretary of the Duc de Berry, in 1409. During the reign of François I, there were copies of Dante in private library collections at Fontainebleau, Blois, Paris, and elsewhere. In France, writers such as Jean Lemaire de Belges, Marguerite de Navarre and Symphorien Champier read Dante with interest.

In her meticulous book *Commentary and Ideology* (1993), Deborah Parker focuses on the reception during the Renaissance of Dante's *Commedia* through the study of Renaissance Dante commentaries such as those of Landino, Daniello and Vellutello. It is unfortunate that the book title bears the misleading subheading "Dante in the Renaissance", because Parker's subject is far narrower than that, and the book does not offer a summary, even by way of introduction, of the reception of Dante's ideas or poetic practices (whether limited to the *Commedia* or not).

The question of which poet was superior, Dante or Petrarch, was debated in literary circles in Italy in the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento.²² Similar debates on which of two figures was the greater existed among proponents of Plato and Aristotle, and Michelangelo and Raphael in painting. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio formed a Tuscan triad of the strongest vernacular writers in Italian. Boccaccio admired both Dante and Petrarch; he gave

²⁰ Corinna Salvadori, "Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento", in *Dante Metamorphoses: Episodes in a Literary Afterlife*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003, 67.

²¹ Salvadori, "Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento", 63.

²² Carlo Dionisotti, ed., Pietro Bembo, *Prose della volgar lingua*, book II, p. 176, note 1.

the first *lectura Dantis* in 1373, and wrote a treatise praising Dante as poet-hero (*Trattatello in laude di Dante*, c. 1351-55).²³ The problem in judging Dante lay with the Latin question, whether poets using the vernacular could equal the achievements of classical poets such as Virgil. Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) concurred with the early Dante commentator Benvenuto da Imola (c. 1338-90) that whereas Petrarch produced greater prose (*maior orator*), Dante produced greater poetry (*maior poeta*).²⁴ The biography by Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), *Vita di Dante* (1430s) contrasted with the one written by Boccaccio (both were in Italian, not Latin), and Bruni's became the standard version. Lorenzo de' Medici commented that theorizing on the vernacular was useless; its greatness would have to be proven by the excellence of examples in the *volgare illustre fiorentino*.²⁵

Pietro Bembo's Aldine edition of the *Commedia* (1502) altered the experience of reading Dante: based on a manuscript belonging to Bembo's father (a manuscript based on codices that had belonged to Petrarch and Boccaccio), *Le terze rime di Dante*, as the edition was entitled, suppressed all commentary, used new punctuation, and removed the trappings of Dante's Florentine identity that had accrued during the Quattrocento.²⁶ Dante became an "Italian" poet (Trissino's label, *italiano*). In 1525, Bembo in his *Prose della volgar lingua* suppressed Dante, preferred Petrarch, and retained the pair Petrarch and Boccaccio as the finest vernacular models:

Perché, recando le molte parole in una, quando si farà per noi a dar giudicio di due scrittori, quale di loro più vaglia e quale meno, considerando a parte a parte il suono, il numero, la variazione, il decoro, e ultimamente la persuasione di ciascun di loro ... potremo sicuramente conoscere e trarne la differenza. E perciò che tutte queste

²³ David Wallace, article "Boccaccio, Giovanni" in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, 101.

²⁴ Salvadori, "Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento", 45.

²⁵ Salvadori, "Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento", 52.

²⁶ Salvadori, "Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento", 69.

parti sono più abondevoli nel Boccaccio e nel Petrarca, che in alcuno degli altri scrittori di questa lingua ... essi sono i più lodati e di maggior grido ... niuno altro così buono o prosatore o rimatore è ... come sono essi.²⁷

This judgment carried weight, although it did not end the debates between the Dantisti and Petrarchisti. Editions of Petrarch's poetry abounded following Bembo's assessment.²⁸ Some years later in France, Joachim Du Bellay likewise suppressed Dante and cited only Petrarch and Boccaccio in his treatise *La deffence et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549). Only a year before, Sébillet had retained Dante's name in his treatise *Art poétique françois* (1548).

After the Aldine editions of Dante in Venice in 1502 and 1515, modifications in the printing of the *Commedia* pertained to commentary. Between 1520 and 1544, only three editions of the poem were printed, all with commentary. Two were introduced in Lyon, not in Italy.²⁹ The editions of Dante's *Commedia* printed by Jean de Tournes and Guillaume Rouillé set the standard for roughly thirty years.³⁰ One clue about Scève's possible views of Dante is found in the dedicatory preface of Jean de Tournes, in his 1547 edition of Dante's *Commedia* with abbreviated commentary of Cristoforo Landino (whose commentary mentions Cavalcanti). Jean de Tournes praised Scève in the preface for his contribution to the reading and interpretation of Dante: "dal soave & misurato dir di M. Francesco Petrarca, giunto or sia a un poco piu erto & adumbrato sono d'il Fiorentin Poeta, M. Dante Alighieri ; (...) mi a guida il principal suo interprete."³¹

²⁷ Pietro Bembo, *Prose della volgar lingua*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti, Milan, TEA, 1966. II, 19 (pp. 174-75). I apologize for all the ellipses, but Bembo's sentences are interminable.

²⁸ Parker, 145.

²⁹ Deborah Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance*, 145-46. See also Brian Richardson's index of Italian editions, 1470 to 1600, in his *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy*, 1995, 242-50.

³⁰ Parker, 146.

³¹ Preface of Jean de Tournes to his edition of Dante's *Commedia* (Lyon, 1547), reproduced in V-L Saulnier, *Maurice Scève, c.1500-c.1560*, I, 325.

The shadow of Dante Alighieri lurks in the Neoplatonic background of Maurice Scève's poetry - not because Dante was a Neoplatonist, but because Ficino's treatise *De amore* is indebted to Dante's *Convivio*. It was Cristoforo Landino, the Neoplatonist and commentator of the *Commedia*, who probably suggested that Ficino use the *Convivio* as a model.³² Dante, for his part, discusses virtue as well as love in the *Convivio*, and Ficino adopts his view that the intellectual virtues are superior to the moral ones, although the latter are better known; Ficino also explains human individuation in a way that is similar to Dante's.³³ Several of Ficino's colleagues at the "Academy" besides Landino were active Dantists.³⁴ The Florentine circle of Platonists admired Dante, but they sought Platonic concepts in Dante's writings, thus misunderstanding him at the same time that they contributed to his renown.³⁵ Both the *Convivio* and the *De amore*, after Plato's *Symposium*, described a gathering in the name of philosophy to discuss the cosmic nature and meaning of love. Dante cited Plato by name (as "Plato" or "Platone") 15 times in the *Convivio*, although the text of the *Symposium* would not be available in Latin until Ficino translated it from the Greek. Dante and Petrarch were familiar with Plato only indirectly, through the mediation of the available texts of Seneca, Cicero, St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Latin Neoplatonists such as Servius, Macrobius and Boethius (whose *Consolation of Philosophy* served as a model for Dante's *Convivio*). Plato's *Timaeus*³⁶ was available in Latin in Dante's time, and Dante cited it in the *Convivio*. Besides Plato's *Symposium* viewed through the lens of Plotinus' interpretation, the chief models for Ficino's *De amore* were Dante and Cavalcanti; it was conventional before Ficino's time to write one's own treatise in the form of a commentary

³² Sears Jayne, ed. and trans. *A Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, p. 11.

³³ Jayne, p. 28, note 6.

³⁴ Jayne, p. 28, note 6.

³⁵ See A. J. Festugière, "Dante et Marsile Ficin », in *Bulletin du Jubilé, Comité français catholique pour la célébration du sixième centenaire de la mort de Dante Alighieri*, 1922, pp. 535-43.

³⁶ An incomplete Latin translation and commentary by Calcidius.

on some other work.³⁷ The *De amore* became the model for the Renaissance genre of the *trattato d'amore*, the treatise on love.

Let us clarify the meaning of Platonism and Neoplatonism. Platonism, according to the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, signifies the teachings of Plato, with Plato as the direct source. Neoplatonism comprised the subsequent modification and systematization – for example, the emphasis on hierarchical structure of the soul's spiritual ascent - by thinkers such as Plotinus and Proclus. During the Renaissance, the distinction between Platonism and Neoplatonism was not recognized: Ficino relied upon Plotinus as a faithful interpreter of Plato's philosophy. In the *De amore*, Ficino was not simply reproducing Plato's conception of love from the *Symposium*, but the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato's conception, especially from *Enneads* III, 5, which Ficino translated and commented.³⁸

Whereas Plato's texts do not form a closed, logical system or a strictly consistent body of doctrine, certain themes recur, such as the dualism between the senses and the intelligible, between body and soul, between physicality and the ideal forms which cannot be perceived directly through the senses. The ancient duality between body and soul found in Plato's writing (as well as the Plotinian version of the trinity which included the unknowable godhead) was adopted by Christian thinkers and has informed western thought ever since. Paradoxically, for Plato the immaterial forms are considered to be more real than their physical manifestations, which are mere shadows of the model they imitate. At the intersection of philosophy and poetry, we find the contemplation of higher or extraordinary states, which may lead to a philosophical reflection upon the attributes of the soul and ideas

³⁷ Jayne, p. 11.

³⁸ Al Wolters, "Ficino and Plotinus' 'Treatise on Eros,'" in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, p. 189.

(forms). In this respect, Platonism³⁹ correlates well with the writing of poetry, which requires an inner mental and emotional life, usually demanding a laborious process of composition, and until the modern era, assimilation as well into a recognizable tradition (against which André Breton and the Surrealists rebelled), in order for the poet to produce the verses. Contrary to this model of poetry composition, divinely inspired frenzy, also mentioned in Plato (in the *Symposium*, *Ion*, *Phaedrus*, and the *Laws*) was transmitted as *furor poeticus*, a condition the true poet was supposed to attain on occasion. The Neoplatonist Landino claimed that Dante was inspired by “divino furore”.⁴⁰ The experience of being in love, like that of poetic inspiration by the muses, can constitute a higher state. Although Platonism (and likewise Neoplatonism) cannot be said to have directly caused or inspired love poetry, its principles relating to transcendent states, wisdom, friendship, love, and the nature of the soul appealed to writers after Ficino of both love poetry and mystical poetry, because they were consistent with the yearning for exaltation and the desire for union that love poetry frequently expresses, whether the yearning is directed toward an individual or God. Plato’s interest in elaborate myths as vehicles of philosophical ideas (e.g., the cave in *Republic* VII, or the chariot of the soul in the *Phaedrus*) helps to account for the Neoplatonists’ intense development of allegorical approaches to literary and philosophical texts, such as microcosm-macrocosm correspondences.⁴¹ Diverse conceptions of love are set forth by the speakers in Plato’s *Symposium*, among them homosexual desire (for Alcibiades toward Socrates, as well as the desire of men for young boys). However, we shall

³⁹ Plato himself banned poets from the Republic, due to what he considered their corrupting and distorting influence. However, the Neoplatonist Plotinus argued that artistic (including poetic) imitation transcends the world of appearances and imitates divine truth directly (*Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, article “Platonism and Poetry” by O. B. Hardison).

⁴⁰ See Salvadori, “Dante in the Florentine Quattrocento”, 46. It is found in a section of Landino’s “proemio al commento dantesco” devoted to Dante’s “furore divino”.

⁴¹ Robert Durling, article “Neoplatonism” in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, p. 641.

see that Ficino, the Christian priest who coined the expression “Platonic love”,⁴² does not include any sort of carnal desire in his definition of exalted love which approaches the divine. Still, Neoplatonic thought influenced Petrarchist and other Renaissance poetry, merging with the courtly lyric tradition. Ficino’s theory of love influenced Marguerite de Navarre, Antoine Héroët, and others in France when French translations of Ficino’s *De amore* appeared (by Symphorien Champier in 1503, and Gilles Corrozet, 1542, incomplete translations; by Jean de la Haye, 1546, the complete treatise).⁴³ A. J. Festugière writes, « À ce langage amoureux dérivé des chansons courtoises correspond maintenant une philosophie [qui remonte à] Platon ».⁴⁴

One example of the cross-currents of Neoplatonism and courtly lyric, evident in Ficino’s *De amore*, and subsequently in Scève’s *Délie*, is his description of the power of the eyes and sight in the phenomenon of falling in love (II, 6 and 7). Plotinus names the soul’s particular kind of perception in love “horasis” (seeing), and the purpose is spiritual union in beauty, as Plato has Diotima explain to Socrates. Plotinus writes:

Love [as Hypostasis] ... exists to be the medium between desire and that object of desire. It is the eye of the desirer; by its power what loves is enabled to see the loved thing. But it is first; before it becomes the vehicle of vision, it is itself filled with the sight; ... for desire attains to vision only through the efficacy of Love, while Love, in its own Act, harvests the spectacle of beauty playing immediately above it” (Enn. III, 5, 2).⁴⁵

⁴² See A. J. Festugière, *La philosophie de l’amour de Marsile Ficin*, Ch. 2, and Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*, Ch. 3, “Ficino”, esp. p. 47.

⁴³ Festugière, 28.

⁴⁴ Festugière, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna.

Sight is both the literal function of the person experiencing love, by means of the faculty of seeing, and also the metaphor for inner perception of ideal beauty. In Plato, Plotinus and Ficino, the sight of the beloved is not described as a potentially destructive “accident” as Cavalcanti calls it in “Donna me prega” (see citation below). Nor is it described as a “grand coup” like a deadly arrow, or the piercing gaze of the mythical basilisk, as we find in the initial dizains of Scève’s *Délie* (this might have been borrowed from a line of Marot, or from *La belle dame sans mercy* of Alain de Chartier (lines 73-76).⁴⁶ However, Scève writes that the sight penetrates “en l’Ame de mon Ame” (D1, 6), which corresponds approximately to a Neoplatonic context (line 6 in D1 has been identified with a passage in the *Dialogo d’amore* of Leone Ebreo).⁴⁷ Dizains 1 and 13 begin with “l’oeil”, emphasizing the power of the eye’s function. Dizain 424 mentions the eyes, virtue, beauty, body and soul; thus the essential Neoplatonic elements are present. And yet, is the poem truly Neoplatonic?

De corps tresbelle et d’ame bellissime,
Comme plaisir, et gloire à l’Univers,
Et en vertu rarement rarissime
Engendre en moy mille souciz divers :
Mesmes son oeil pudiquement pervers
Me penetrant le vif du sentement,
Me ravit tout en tel contentement,
Que du desir est ma joye remplie,
Le voyant l’oeil, aussi l’entendement,
Parfaicte au corps, et en l’ame accomplie. (D424)

The poet praises the beauty and perfection of Délie’s attributes, which include her virtue, body, and soul. Délie’s cosmic beauty and perfection bestows both pleasure and glory on the universe: this is consistent with Dante’s praise of the celestial Beatrice. But Délie’s gaze, while “pudique”, is also “pervers” (from the Latin *pervertere*; turned aside from its natural course, with a possible connotation of vice). We may understand that her eye is direct and

⁴⁶ See Defaux, *Délie*, vol. II, note to D1, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Leone Ebreo, *Dialogo d’amore*, 3, trans. Pontus de Tyard, « Quand doncq l’ame spirituelle (qui est coeur de nostre coeur et ame de nostre ame ...), etc. » See Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D1, p. 14.

roving, rather than coy. Délie's gaze has a powerful effect on the poet, which is hardly confined to a spiritual or intellectual realm: *pénétrer* and *ravir* are not Neoplatonic verbs, especially when juxtaposed with "ma joye remplie", "sentement" and "desir". It is Délie's gaze that penetrates and ravishes the poet, not merely his gaze perceiving her beauty. His response includes disquiet ("mille souciz divers") and joy transposed into desire. Presumably, their eyes meet, which implies that understanding passes between them ("Le voyant l'oeil, aussi l'entendement," line 9). The vocabulary of D424 combines the Neoplatonic with the erotic. The poet alludes to love which does not lead only to joy, exaltation, and contemplation. The dizain cannot be labeled as consistently Neoplatonic, although if the definition of a Neoplatonic poem is broad enough, it qualifies.

What Cavalcanti, at times Dante, Petrarch and Scève all express, each in his way, concerning the phenomenon of love, is the devastation of the experience. This is virtually absent in Ficino's *De amore*, which emphasizes beauty and transcendence without the human consequences. Ficino equates love with zeal, piety, and worship of the divine.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, Dante's love for Beatrice in the *Commedia* is closer to the Ficinian model than that of Scève for Délie, although the *Délie* is a more Neoplatonic work than the *Commedia*.

Ficino's interpretation of Guido Cavalcanti's canzone "Donna me prega" exerted a profound influence on subsequent readers of the poem.⁴⁹ Thus two very different theories of love crossed paths. Cavalcanti enriched his poetry by incorporating material from logic, science and philosophy. He used Aristotelian technical vocabulary in order to define love as part of the doctrine of matter dominated by necessity.⁵⁰ Dante in turn enriched his poetry

⁴⁸ Ficino, *De amore*, VII, 15.

⁴⁹ Ciavolella, p. 43.

⁵⁰ See Maria Luisa Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages*, Ch 3, pp. 71 ff.

with tremendous encyclopedic knowledge, but the *Commedia* was theologically oriented, whereas Cavalcanti's poetry was not.⁵¹ Ficino wrote in the *De amore* that Guido Cavalcanti was a philosopher of love through his poems (VII,1), indirectly referring to Cavalcanti's canzone "Donna me prega". Paul Oskar Kristeller observes:

Ficino's speculation on love was foreshadowed ... by the old Provençal and Tuscan lyric to which he himself consciously refers. In this respect the explicit quotation of Guido Cavalcanti in the *De amore* is of great importance, and in other points also the influence of the old poets is clearly visible in Ficino. The physiological theory concerning the genesis of love which makes the so-called spirit pass from the heart of the beloved person through its eyes to the eyes and the heart of the lover and the whole technical language of love which exchanges the Souls of the lovers and transforms them into each other ... are evidently taken from poetry and developed into a more precise system.⁵²

Both Kristeller and Festugière observe Ficino's debt to earlier vernacular love lyric. The Neoplatonic conception of love between two persons according to Ficino served as another vehicle for the transmission of the troubadour and stilnovo tradition, albeit in distorted form, as Massimo Ciavolella has demonstrated (previous scholars failed to note the distorted reading of Cavalcanti's doctrinal canzone).⁵³ Ficino seeks to assimilate Cavalcanti's explanation of the nature of love with the Socratic model from Plato's *Symposium*. Ficino mentions the dichotomy between sensual lust and divine love (as contemplation) found in Cavalcanti's "Donna me prega". However, Ciavolella⁵⁴ points out that Ficino does not

⁵¹ See Ardizzone, 10.

⁵² Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, p. 287.

⁵³ See Massimo Ciavolella, "Ficino's Interpretation of 'Donna me prega', in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, pp. 39-48.

⁵⁴ Ciavolella, pp. 42-43.

conclude with Cavalcanti and the latter's previous commentators that love, far from the realm of reason, leads the lover to melancholy and destruction. Instead Ficino, borrowing from Egidio Colonna's commentary on "Donna me prega", employs the simile of the sun's rays illuminating shadows to represent poetic love which leads to perfection: the rays stand for physical beauty of the body, as opposed to the metaphysical beauty of the divine. The Florentine Neoplatonist emphasizes contemplation of divine things and sidesteps the Cavalcantian *ereos* or erotic melancholy, as well as a philosophy of love associated with sensual appetite, danger and death. The preferred love for Ficino is asexual, universal, clearly delineated, purged of the body's dark passions. Ficino writes of the "bestial or voluptuous life" as if the two adjectives were equivalent (VII, 1), which in his schema they are. Erotic sensuality plays no part in the Ficinian model of love, which thus diverges both from that of Cavalcanti and of many troubadours. If it involves libidinous desire, it constitutes lust and is therefore vulgar and dangerous because it can lead to madness, which makes a man like a beast. Such a condition cannot be love. The form of madness for divine love is an illumination of the rational soul with four possible levels, the lowest of which is poetic madness, and the highest, love-madness⁵⁵ (Ficino follows Plato's *Phaedrus* with the distinction between two main types of madness, degraded and divine). The role of the senses of smell, taste and touch in love as the perception of beauty is denied by Ficino in his commentary on the first speech (I, 4); he insists that love pertains "only to the intellect, to seeing and to hearing." In *De triplici vita* (*Three Books on Life*) I, 7, Ficino asserts that the sense of touch is the most estranged from intellect of all the senses. On the other hand, Cavalcanti characterizes love as follows: "non razionale, ma che sente, dico" [not the rational do I

⁵⁵ Ficino, *De amore*, VII, 13 and 14.

mean, but the sensory] (XXVII, 31). Ficino denies the erotic dimension of love experienced through the other senses, preferring transcendence, as when he writes:

The eye perceives that light of the body. If the eye alone recognizes, it alone enjoys. Therefore the eye alone enjoys the beauty of the body. But since love is nothing else except the desire of enjoying beauty, ... the lover of the body is content with sight alone. Thus the desire to touch is not a part of love, nor is it a passion of the lover, but rather a kind of lust and perturbation of a man who is servile” (II, 9).

We may contrast Ficino’s position on the senses with Scève’s dizain 41 :

Le veoir, l’ouyr, le parler, le toucher
Finoient le but de mon contentement,
Tant que le bien, qu’Amantz ont sur tout cher,
N’eust oncques lieu en nostre accointement.
Que m’a valu d’aymer honnestement
En sainte amour chastement esperdu ?
Puis que m’en est le mal pour bien rendu,
Et qu’on me peult pour vice reprocher,
Qu’en bien ayment j’ay promptement perdu
La veoir, l’ouyr, lui parler, la toucher. (D41)

Scève adapts Marot’s five points of the “gradus amoris”.⁵⁶ The poet expresses bitter disillusionment toward the established rules for *chaste amour*, in which the lover’s goal is the Neoplatonic “bien, qu’Amantz ont sur tout cher” (line 3). Scève followed the appropriate convention (aimer honnêtement, bien aimer) and lost, obtaining neither the good nor love, but only pain. Loving well – that is, loving according to Ficino - implies giving up the pleasures of the senses, as well as avoiding interaction which could lead to an accusation of vice. The dizain is framed by the list of the first and last lines, of four physical functions by which we apprehend the world around us: sight, hearing, speech, and touch; first, as abstract functions, and in the last line for the purpose of a personal exchange, presumably with Délie, although she is not named. The sense of touch, mentioned last in lines 1 and 10, evokes the

⁵⁶ Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D41. See Marot, « Fleur de quinze ans, etc. »

desire lovers yearn for. The word for lovers, “Amantz” is capitalized, indicating the mythic importance of the group, as a heritage and tradition (cf. the parade of illustrious lovers in Petrarch’s *Trionfo d’amore* and in Canto 5 of Dante’s *Inferno*). The adverb *chastement* may refer also to the allegorical Chastity (Latin title, *Triumphus pudicitie*, Italian *pudicizia*) of Petrarch’s second *Triumph*.

Ficino writes that according to Pausanias in the *Symposium*, contemplation of the body must be accompanied by contemplation of the higher beauty of the Soul, the Mind, and God; the lover must admire and love the abstract beauty more strongly; otherwise the love is improper.⁵⁷ Cavalcanti, by contrast, did not view the lover as desiring only to piously contemplate and revere his beloved as one would a statue of God,⁵⁸ as Ficino indicates for the lover. Cavalcanti claims that love is identified as such because of the pleasure it produces: “e ’l piacimento che ’l fa dire amare” [and the pleasurable that makes it called love] (XXVII, 14). Ficino sublimates the sensual aspects that contribute to an erotic experience: he discusses pleasure (*voluptas*) in conjunction with the return to the Good, emerging from love and beauty.⁵⁹ Ficino states that God is at the origin of all beauty, and that “bodies are the shadows of souls and minds” (II, 3). The body’s beauty is always relative or flawed; in contrast, Scève’s poetry emphasizes the beauty and perfection of Délie’s body, beauty and form. For Ficino, the body’s physical beauty is limited and temporary; he maintains that beauty and the body are different (*De amore*, V, 5). But for Scève, Délie’s beauty is perfect, including her body. Ficino explains that in the circle of God, goodness is at the center and beauty, the ray emanating from God, forms the circumference. Divine beauty kindles the ardor of the soul (II, 4). Ardor is displaced from

⁵⁷ Ficino, *De amore*, II, 7, p. 54.

⁵⁸ Festugière, p. 33.

⁵⁹ Ficino, *De amore*, II, 2 et passim. He writes, “Love ... beginning from Beauty, ends in Pleasure.”

the material body to the immaterial spirit. Even Urania, the celestial epithet of Venus mentioned by Pausanias to represent divine love according to Ficino, finds its etymological origin in the myth⁶⁰ that Aphrodite was born from the foam of Uranus' castrated genitals falling into the sea (certainly a sexual reference). But Ficino avoids this association and mentions only that Venus Urania was born of Uranus, without any mother (II, 8). While this particular passage of Ficino is faithful to Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium*, Ficino's commentary disagrees with Pausanias in other respects.⁶¹

The idea that the individual will is overwhelmed by the experience of love is common to *fin'amor* and Neoplatonic systems, among others. According to Neoplatonism, human love is a small manifestation of the greater cosmos, like a flash whose origin is the divine light. The individual will is subject to the vast cosmos. First the soul and then the body is penetrated by a ray, according to Ficino (*De amore*, VI,10). The ray produces love, and it shines out through the eyes and penetrates the eyes of another, awakening the appetite. In the *Symposium*, Plato mentions the senses and sight as functioning in love: the lovers meet and are struck by one another (192b, in the speech of Aristophanes). Thus on this point Platonism is in accord with the tradition of courtly love, concerning the importance of the eyes, the moment of seeing the other, and the consequent innamoramento. Ficino likewise comments on this in the *De amore* (II, 6 and 7), interpreting

⁶⁰ This story is discounted in the encyclopedic *Mythologie* by Félix Guirand (Larousse, 1937) as the origin for Aphrodite's name, based on the Greek word for foam. In any event, according to the *Theogony* of Hesiod (fl. 700 BCE), Aphrodite is born from the dismembered genitals of Uranus (188-206), whereas in the *Iliad* of Homer (fl. 750 BCE) Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and Dione (Book 5, 370-417).

⁶¹ E.g., see Plato's *Symposium*, 180d – 185c. According to Pausanias, Aphrodite Urania presides over the love for boys, which he considers more noble than the love for women. An erotic expression of love is still acceptable for Pausanias, though not for Ficino. Pausanias says that any action is not good or bad in itself, but it depends on how it is done: 'If an action is done honorably and properly, it turns out to be honorable ... Love is not in himself noble and worthy of praise; that depends on whether the sentiments he produces in us are themselves noble' (*Symposium*, 181a). Contrast with Ficino: "If anyone, through being more desirous of procreation, neglects contemplation or attends to procreation beyond measure with women, or against the order of nature with men, or prefers the form of the body to the beauty of the soul, he certainly abuses the dignity of love. This abuse of love Pausanias censures" (*De amore*, II, 7).

it as sight of the divine beauty. He writes, “When the beauty of a human body **first meets our eyes**, our intellect ... worships and esteems it as an image of the divine beauty, and through this is often aroused to that.” [emphasis mine] (II, 7). Love is defined as the desire for beauty (I,4), and involves the soul’s return to God.

According to both Plato and Plotinus, a human being can choose between earthly (physical) love and divine love: desire for the body causes descent, while desire for the ideal (spiritual) beauty brings ascent, and the soul’s eventual reunion with God. Perception of the body’s physical beauty, while impermanent and limited, represents the first stage in the perception of beauty, which at a more advanced level approaches the divine and metaphysical, the Platonic synthesis of the good and the beautiful. Goodness and beauty fuse the moral with the aesthetic ideal, and draw one toward God. Ficino uses the metaphor of the hook for beauty, implying, as Kristeller wrote, that “the beauty of things is the lure by which the Soul of the lover is led to God.”⁶² Beauty evidently was a positive attribute for Renaissance aesthetes, who created a virtual cult of it.

Petrarch’s love for Laura departs from this Platonic schema in that Laura’s beauty, although it inspires love in the poet’s heart, also leads him to risk eternal damnation as a Christian, particularly through the dangerous vice of vanity (which has nothing to do with Laura herself, and everything to do with the poet). Instead of exalting him, Laura’s inaccessible beauty causes Petrarch guilt and woe, both before and after her death. By contrast, for both Plato and Ficino, in loving the beautiful (without lust), one draws closer to the good.

In the *De amore* commentary to Speeches VI and VII, Ficino explains love in medical terms according to the blood’s condition and the four humors. Love is akin to an illness:

⁶² Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, p. 268.

Ficino writes on the enchantment to which lovers are subject, following Musaeus (*Hero and Leander*), that the cause and origin of the illness is the eye.⁶³ This conforms to medieval theory about how love arises, in which the sight of the beloved gives rise to an image in the lover. According to Ficino, the blood, like the spirits, is thin and clear, warm and sweet in youth (Ficino seems mainly to consider only male lovers in his treatise). Lovers are melancholic for the following reasons: the lover's soul is devoted to constant thoughts of the beloved, so the body becomes dry and wan for lack of heat, and this affects also the digestion.⁶⁴ The spirits, produced in the heart and consuming the thinnest blood, fly to the image of the beloved in the lover's imagination. The blood becomes impure, thick, and black; and black bile is produced, resulting in melancholy. Ficino does mention women – for example, to relate a medical observation from Aristotle unrelated to love, but relevant for the discussion of blood and spirits: that menstruating women will soil a mirror with drops of blood from their gaze, due to the spirit in the blood's vapor.⁶⁵

In the *Délie*, Scève's poetry does not adhere to the roles for the senses and pleasure set forth in the *De amore*. For Ficino, if the pleasure is divinely sanctioned, it does not emerge from the appetitive faculties. In the course of discussing how God governs things by threes, Ficino introduces the triad Pulchritudo, Amor and Voluptas: "Love starts from beauty and ends with pleasure."⁶⁶ Love mediates between beauty and pleasure, after Plato in the *Symposium*, "love is desire aroused by beauty".⁶⁷ In Ficino's view, love is supposed to

⁶³ Ficino, *De amore*, VII, 10.

⁶⁴ Ficino, *De amore*, VI, 9.

⁶⁵ Ficino, *De amore*, VII, 4.

⁶⁶ "Amor igitur in voluptatem a pulchritudine desinit." Ficino, *De amore*, II, 2. See Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, 43. Wind discusses Ficino in the context of the medal of Pico della Mirandola which carried the inscription with the three Graces as figures of Pulchritudo, Amor and Voluptas. These are not exact significations for the three Graces of ancient Greek myth, who according to Hesiod (*Theogony* 907-9) were Aglaia (Radiance), Euphrosyne (Joy), and Thalia (Flowering).

⁶⁷ Wind, 46.

consist of a desire for contemplation, not for embrace; otherwise it is an abuse of love.⁶⁸

But Scève writes:

Or si le sens, voye de la raison,
Me fait jouir de tous plaisirs aultant,
Que ses vertus, et sans comparaison
De sa beauté toute aultre surmontant,
Ne sens je en nous parfaire, en augmentant
L'hermaphrodite, efficace amoureuse ? (D435, 1-6)

Scève initially refers indirectly to the physical senses of sight and hearing, the means by which one engages in reasoned discourse with the intellect (this is quickly dispensed with). Sensual experience coexists with the perception of beauty and virtue. This dizain fuses the Ficinian lexicon (reason, virtue, beauty, love) with sexual allusions (jouir de tous plaisirs), particularly the reference to the monstrous and fascinating hermaphrodite. The hermaphrodite would be the logical result of combining a man with a woman in (heterosexual) union - the two joined in one flesh, as expressed by the verb *parfaire* (to perfect, to complete, to finish). Sperone Speroni in his *Dialoghi* (Venice, 1542) discusses contemplation of “l’Hermaphrodito amoroso” when the lover perceives the merits of loving by means of the intellect, rather than the senses.⁶⁹ Perhaps this line distantly recalls the androgyne myth of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, since the reference to Diotima is present here as well. Despite the alternating emphasis on intellect and the senses, the entire enterprise unfolds at the abstract level of intellect, through signifying words in the text, both Ficino’s treatise and the poetry of Cavalcanti and Scève.

Although I esteem and admire A. J. Festugière’s work, my interpretation differs from his concerning the degree to which the *Délie* is a Neoplatonic text that conforms to Ficino’s love doctrines. Festugière writes of Scève: « Il est de ceux en effet chez qui se retrouve, de la

⁶⁸ Ficino, *De amore*, VI, 9, pp. 121-22.

⁶⁹ Scève, *Délie*, ed. Joukovsky, note to D435, p. 379.

façon la plus complète et la plus fidèle, la doctrine du *Commentaire*. ... Dans leur fond, leurs symboles, et dans l'ordre même de leur progression, les dizains de la *Délie* semblent tout inspirés de ses théories.»⁷⁰ While there are definitely important Ficinian elements in *Délie*, Scève also includes in his conception of love sensual experience and physical beauty that inspires erotic desire. In addition, we shall see that the Cavalcantian perspective informs “les morts” of which Scève writes. Sensual pleasure and virtue for Scève are not mutually exclusive. This distinguishes Scève from both Ficino and Petrarch (who was not a Ficinian Neoplatonist). Festugière takes the example of the introductory huitain (which he erroneously calls a dizain), claiming that Scève contrasts Venus and Cupid with Love in order to establish a parallel between carnal pleasure and divine love.⁷¹ The huitain of Scève begins:

Non de Venus les ardentz estincelles,
Et moins les traictz, desquels Cupido tire :
Mais bien les mortz, qu'en moy tu renouvelles
Je t'ay voulu en cest Oeuvre descrire. (1-4)

However, this does not correspond to Ficino's Neoplatonic schema, in which Venus presides over more than one type of love, and Cupid (here not necessarily identical to Eros of the *Symposium*)⁷² has a long literary history outside Neoplatonism. Ficino places the highest grade of divine love under the sign of Venus (*De amore* VII, 14), and both the vulgar and the exalted types of love defined by Pausanias in the *Symposium* still come under the purview of Venus (the latter, of Venus Urania). When Scève alludes to servitude as in D12 (“Heureux service en libre servitude”, line 10), it is a characteristic of the feudal relations of

⁷⁰ Festugière, 94.

⁷¹ « Le dizain [sic] liminaire de l'ouvrage, dédié par le poète ‘à sa Délie’, témoigne déjà de l'influence ficinienne. Car, opposant Vénus et Cupido à l'Amour, la volupté charnelle à l'amour divin, Scève affirme que ce dernier amour dont il est embrasé fera le sujet de ses vers » (Festugière, 95). Scève est bel et bien embrasé par l'amour divin, mais cet amour n'exclut pas justement la volupté charnelle. C'est pourquoi l'amour scévien n'est ni complètement ficinien ni tout à fait pétrarquiste.

⁷² Greek and Roman deities were not properly recognized as distinct until Johann Winckelmann (1717-68).

courtly love (e.g., when the lady is addressed as *midons*), not Neoplatonic love as Festugière identifies it.⁷³ Festugière writes of Scévian love: “Cet amour est toujours chaste. La seule contemplation de Délie suffit au poète.”⁷⁴ We see from D41 above, and D428 where jealousy is expressed, as well as evidence from other dizains, that this is not the case. On the other hand, the way Scève links death with love is in part Ficinian, except that for Scève and other poets,⁷⁵ “la mort” may have a sexual connotation meaning climax (*la petite mort*) which it does not for Ficino. Also, Ficino does not refer to death in the plural (nor does Petrarch, for that matter), as Scève does repeatedly (e.g., “les mortz, qu’en moy tu renouvelles”). We shall return to that later.

In D439, alongside the Platonic reference to Diotima (Dyotime) as his teacher, Scève writes of a *phantasme* of pleasure:

Bien que raison soit nourrice de l’ame,
 Alimenté est le sens du doux songe
 De vain plaisir, qui en tous lieux m’entame,
 Me penetrant, comme l’eau en l’esponge.
 Dedans lequel il m’abysme, et me plonge
 Me suffoquant toute vigueur intime.
 Dont pour excuse, et cause legitime
 Je ne me doibs grandement esbahir,
 Si ma tressaincte, et sage Dyotime
 Tousjours m’enseigne à aymer, et hair. (D439)

Scève indicates the powerful effect that *imagined* pleasure (*doux songe*) exerts upon his senses: it saps him of “vigueur intime” (another erotic reference) and ensnares him. Scève seems to identify Délie by the epithet of Diotima in this dizain. Diotima in the *Symposium* did not teach Socrates to hate, but to love, so it does not come from that text. But Speroni

⁷³ Festugière, 96.

⁷⁴ Festugière, 98.

⁷⁵ One is reminded of Marot’s poem “Jouissance vous donneray”.

mentions love and hate, which Defaux identifies as the source for this line.⁷⁶ Ficino's view, to which Scève alludes in the dizain's opening line, is insufficient for the poet: he cannot deny the "vain" pleasures of the senses, despite his intentions. In both D435 and D439, as elsewhere, the word "sens" is used, and "raison" is mentioned as if to remind the poet of the proper focus, yet the theme of the senses recurs in the verses. Délie would be Scève's Diotima as one of her many metamorphoses (like Délie as Hecate, Dictynna, Diane/Artemide, etc), guiding and instructing him in the ways of love, though not with the same lessons that the *Symposium's* Diotima provided to Socrates. Scève writes of Délie in a periphrasis, « Incessamment travaillant en moy celle, / Qui à aymer enseigne, et reverer, » (D436, 1-2). In the *Symposium* - as well as in Ficino's commentary on it - love for another person does not involve reverence, which for Christians is reserved for God. However, reverence is bestowed upon the beloved lady by the courtly lover. Délie/Dyotime is a constant presence inside Scève, teaching him how to love, although she does not necessarily reciprocate his love for her.

Line 10 of D439 recalls "Odi et amo" (Carmen 85) of Catullus - rather than Ficino or Plato - and the love-hate topos in which the beloved is both enemy and friend, love being described in terms of conflict between war and the desire for union. D197 mentions « Douce ennemye, en qui ma dolente ame / Souffre trop plus, que le corps martyr » (1-2). Petrarch writes, « vo' che m'oda / la dolce mia nemica anzi ch'io moia » [I wish my sweet enemy to hear me before I die] (R125, 44-45). Petrarch's rhetorical claim that he is dying is used to gain Laura's attention. Of course the poet is being ironic, for the death of either the poet or his persona in the verses would preclude more poetry writing. It is suffering that is articulated through figures of death, rather than a straightforward or literal death, which

⁷⁶ Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D439, pp. 473-74. Defaux quotes Speroni: « & come esser possa, che alcuna volta la cosa amata, amando, odij & voglia male al amante. »

would spell the end of the individual who articulates the poem. Scève's dizain explores the internal turmoil between his desire and suffering with the vacillation between life and death.

D43 treats of love and hate together with a series of oppositions, and manifests classical inspiration from Roman poets:

Moins je la voy, certes plus je la hays :
 Plus je la hays, et moins elle me fasche.
 Plus je l'estime, et moins compte j'en fais :
 Plus je la fuys, plus veulx, qu'elle me sache.
 En un moment deux divers traictz me lasche
 Amour, et hayne, ennuy avec plaisir.
 Forte est l'amour, qui lors me vient saisir,
 Quand hayne vient et vengeance me crie :
 Ainsi me faict hayr mon vain desir
 Celle, pour qui mon coeur tousjours me prie.⁷⁷

The adjective *vain* (line 9) here seems to signify unfulfilled or unsuccessful desire, rather than desire that verges on sinful, or desire which strays from the morally correct way. The poet despises his desire, because it causes frustration and suffering, arising despite his *hayne* and need for vengeance. The expression of violence and passion in the dizain is similar to that of Cavalcanti's poetry, and of Dante in the fourth canzone of the *Rime petrose*: "non sarei pietoso né cortese, anzi farei come orso quando scherza / (...) io mi vendicherei di più di mille" [I would not be pitying or courteous, I would be like a bear when it plays, ... I would take vengeance more than a thousand times] (70-73).⁷⁸

Ficino, however, banishes violence and passion as aspects of divine love. He writes that one person cannot hate another person, but only vices, just as one part of the created world cannot despise another part; this is demonstrated with a tortuous discussion of why fire and water abhor each other (*De amore*, III, 2). (It works as doctrine, but not as psychology.) For Ficino, hate arises if an image which passes into another's soul does not

⁷⁷ Ovid, *Amores* III, 2, 34-37, and Marullus, *Epigrammata* IV, 29 (F. Joukovsky, note to D43, pp 233-34).

⁷⁸ English translations of the *Rime petrose* are by Robert Durling.

correspond to its ideal Form; the soul is displeased, and the image is regarded with hate as being ugly (*De amore*, V, 5). Thus hatred is defined in terms of correspondences.

The following two lists in parallel columns compare Ficino's description (from VII, 1) of the two types of love, according to his reading of Cavalcanti's "Donna me prega". I have provided the titles according to Ficino's evaluation of each type, and listed the English translations for his terms from the passage:

BASE LOVE

sense appetite
body
love inclined to senses

lust
particular beauty of a single body
love drives man down to the
"bestial or voluptuous life"
troubled by many passions
most people experience

HIGH LOVE

intellect
reason
love remote from body
in the will, another love arises which is "very
foreign to commerce with the body"
contemplation
universal beauty of the human race
love raises man up to angelic or contemplative
life
free from perturbation
few people experience

In closing his interpretation of Cavalcanti's version of love, Ficino writes that it is because most people are seized by the first type of love that Cavalcanti "dismisses the latter in a few words, and is more prolix in explaining the passions of the other" (VII, 1). If one examines "Donna me prega," even without the complex scholastic apparatus which overshadows the poem and echoes throughout its vocabulary, the first observation to make is that Cavalcanti is not contrasting two different types of love as if they were polar opposites, as Ficino implies in his explication. Two types of love, vulgar or earthly and exalted, are explained in the speech of Pausanias in Plato's *Symposium*, which Plotinus and later Ficino both interpret in their commentaries. To the two types of love correspond the two manifestations of Aphrodite (called Venus in Ficino), also vulgar and heavenly.

If we examine only the first few lines of the canzone “Donna me prega,” we find in reference to love (amore) the adjectives “fero” and “altero” as well as the noun “accidente” and the polysemic verb “sentire”, which may signify hearing, understanding, and/or feeling:

Donna me prega, per ch'eo voglio dire
d'un accidente che sovente è fero
ed è sì altero ch'è chiamato amore :
sì chi lo nega possa 'l ver sentire! (lines 1-4)

[A lady bids me, and so I would speak
Of an accident that is often unruly
And so haughty that it is called love:
Would that he who denies that were able to feel its truth!]⁷⁹

From the outset, Cavalcanti identifies love as being beyond the realm of reason. This opening contains a general statement about love, not about one inferior type of love (the vulgar sensual one involving lust for a particular body). According to Cavalcanti, human life is buffeted by the winds of the passions and desires – but such passions can bring exaltation.⁸⁰ Love is located in the sensitive soul rather than intellect, and is thus the irrational phenomenon par excellence.⁸¹ The sensitive soul is central to Cavalcanti's theory of happiness; what gives pleasure (diletto) is satisfaction of the body's desires. For Cavalcanti, the intellect does not generate happiness. The pleasure of love for human beings consists solely in its darkness - that is, its sensuality.⁸² However, love, while “fero”, is also “altero” – not degraded or vulgar. This conflicts with Ficino's conception of love. Ficino has teased out two polarized groups of characteristics of the love experience (gleaned from Cavalcanti, Plato and Plotinus) and retained the preferred aspects, while rejecting the others. On the human level, it is really “what should be” rather than “what is”, but still Ficino deals with it as “what is” according to his treatise. In other words, he inserts theory cemented into

⁷⁹ Cavalcanti, translated by Lowry Nelson.

⁸⁰ Ardizzone, 5.

⁸¹ Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. Marcello Ciccuto, note to poem XXVII, p. 116.

⁸² Ardizzone, 9.

doctrine. In any event, the characteristics in both lists of Ficino are found in the lyric poetry of Cavalcanti, Petrarch and Scève, and to a certain degree in Dante (in certain passages).

One can understand how certain lines of “Donna me prega” would resonate with Ficino, for example “non ha diletto ma consideranza” [it (love) does not have pleasure but rather contemplation] (XXVII, 27). Also, in a rather obscure line of the same poem, “E non si pò conoscer per lo viso” [and (love) cannot be known by sight] (XXVII, 63). But if we consider Cavalcanti’s poem overall, along with the rest of his extant work, distinctions are evident.

In 1527 an anthology of Tuscan poets including Cavalcanti’s “Donna me prega” was published in Florence by Bernardo di Giunta, *Sonetti e canzoni di diversi antichi autori toscani in dieci libri raccolte*. This book (nicknamed “la giuntina”), along with commentators on Dante, contributed to the transmission of Cavalcanti’s poetry in the sixteenth century.⁸³ The “giuntina” anthology was printed in the Lyon edition of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi* of 1545 dedicated to Scève by Jean de Tournes.⁸⁴ This demonstrates that Cavalcanti was known and read at the time, not only by Scève but by other poets and intellectuals of Scève’s milieu.

Scève, like Cavalcanti, uses the word “accident” to describe love, in D337: « Veu que Fortune aux accidentz commande, / Amour au Coeur, et la Mort sur le Corps » (1-2). This passage correponds remarkably well to Cavalcanti’s definition of love, though not to Ficino’s. It may constitute an intertextual connection with “Donna me prega”.

The central role of the *Dame* in the courtly context is swept aside by Ficino: since love is no longer sexual, love can mean friendship, a matter among men, so that women are

⁸³ Lowry Nelson, *The Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti*, Introduction, xxxii.

⁸⁴ A copy (which I have examined) of the Jean de Tournes edition of Petrarch, Lyon, 1545, with woodcuts, in 16mo, is conserved at the Folger Shakespeare Library. It includes the *Rime*, *Trionfi*, and the “Giuntina” anthology of Italian lyric poems by other authors such as Dante and Cino da Pistoia.

no longer essential (according to a heteronormative relation – the pagan Greeks of the *Symposium* freely discussed and no doubt engaged in homosexual copulation, but the fifteenth century ecclesiastic Ficino does not advocate this any more than he advocates heterosexual copulation). Ficino writes that women “catch” men easily, but that men catch men still more easily, since they are more alike; there follows a series of explanations according to the humors. But Ficino seems concerned only with love from the men’s perspective, and seems to believe that divine love occurs only between men (with the possible exception of illustrious mythical or legendary women). Cavalcanti’s doctrinal poem, in accord with courtly convention since the troubadours, presents as its *raison d’être* the request of an unnamed lady to the poet, that he speak of love (“Donna me prega, per ch’eo voglio dire,” etc). Elsewhere he praises a lady in cosmic terms, as Scève might do nearly two and a half centuries later: “vedra’ la sua virtù nel ciel salita” (XXVI, 20). This line is comparable to Dante’s lines about his celestial Beatrice. But Ficino discards the convention of the lady’s courtly rôle, being elevated above the poet who praises her. Instead, the divine aspect is displaced from the lady to the male lover, who then loves another male’s beautiful soul; this retains the spiritual realm developed by the stilnovisti, but otherwise Ficino’s Platonic love contrasts with *fin’amor* and stilnovo love lyric. Neoplatonic Renaissance poets combined various elements from both systems, however.

In a section of the *De amore* (II, 8) which bears examination for its position with respect to courtly love, Ficino distinguishes between simple love and reciprocal love. Yet he speaks only of the nonsexual love between men which he has outlined earlier as being ideal. Thus the sublimation of erotic passion is total. Stripped of its sexual and emotional elements, falling in love is a relatively tame and safe affair indeed: what does it mean then that that lover is completely dead if the beloved does not return the love? Does one die of

unfulfilled desire for friendship? (The two cannot come to know each other well unless friendship is present). If the unrequited love is akin to friendship, defined only as divine, virtuous, nonphysical and without passion, then isn't it rather strange that the Platonic lover should die from it? Even Montaigne, who was devastated by the real death of his close friend Étienne de la Boétie in 1563, survived and continued to write and to function, and their alliance constituted reciprocated love which might fit Ficino's model. Ficino writes that whoever loves dies. He mentions Orpheus (whose beloved was the nymph Euridice), who called love "bittersweet", and who sang about the tragic lot of lovers (II, 8). The description of love as bittersweet (*doux-amer*, *dolce-amaro*, etc) is a commonplace in love lyric. Scève mentions death as a relief from suffering : « La Mort, seul bien des tristes affligez » (D45, 10). In D71 cited below, he addresses death as "doulce Mort". Dante writes in the canzone "Io son venuto al punto de la rota" : "se 'l martiro è dolce, la morte de' passar ogni altro dolce" [if the suffering is sweet, the death must surpass every other sweet] (64-65).

Why is love associated with death? Suffering and illness in general, both of which can be fatal, are associated with death, and symptoms of falling in love are likened to fever and diagnosed as medical illness (especially melancholy, excess of black bile). Sexual climax, as reflected in the French expression "la petite mort", can resemble death throes. Ecstasy is usually preceded by some sort of crisis or distressing circumstance, at least as mystics relate their experiences. All of these are destabilizing and perhaps violent in the ordinary scheme of existence. But it does not fully explain the significance of death in the conception of love. Death is by definition extreme. Cavalcanti expressed terror at the strength of the lady's beauty which could overwhelm him: "sol par che Morte m'aggia 'n sua balia. (...) s'i' la sguardasse, ne morria" [It seems only that Death has me in its power. (...) if I glanced at her, I would die of it] (XXXI, 17 and 24).

Poetic affinities between Cavalcanti and Scève emerge through dark motifs of love and death. For Cavalcanti, we have seen that love not only exalts but it also brings dangerous passion which lies outside the domain of reason. Cavalcanti writes in “Donna me prega” that one is brought closer to death when one loves: “di sua potenza segue spesso morte” [death often follow’s on love’s potency] (XXVII, 35); and, “per sorte, non pò dire om ch’aggia vita” (XXVII, 40).

Scève invents a dialogue in D71 between the poet and Death:

Si en ton lieu j'estois, ô doulce Mort,
 Tu ne serois de ta faulx dessaisie.
 - O fol, l'esprit de ta vie est jà mort.
 - Comment ? je voy. — Ta force elle a saisie.
 - Je parle aumoins. — Ce n'est que phrenesie.
 - Vivray je donc tousjours ? - Non : lon termine
 Ailleurs ta fin. — Et où ? - Plus n'examine.
 Car tu vivras sans Coeur, sans Corps, sans Ame,
 En ceste mort plus, que vie, benigne,
 Puis que tel est le vouloir de ta Dame.⁸⁵

The poet demonstrates that he is completely under Délie’s power, and her power must be significant since she can command life and death for him. She takes his heart, body and soul, so that only a sort of shadow could remain. Death becomes her minister, doing her bidding. He addresses Scève as “fol” (like fol’amor, l’amour démesuré, beyond reason), and tells the poet that he is already dead, in accord with Ficino’s statement that whoever loves dies, particularly from unrequited love, which this dizain seems to identify. Yet even this death is preferable to life, if the life were bereft of Délie (line 9). The words “fol” and “phrenesie” - contrasted with the verb examiner, which Death orders the poet to cease doing - underscore the mad passion in Scève’s love.

⁸⁵ F. Joukovsky identifies this dizain with Petrarch’s R358, but aside from the adjective “dolce” to qualify “morte” within the same sonnet, D71 and R358 are quite different: R358 is not a dialogue but a monologue addressing death. Petrarch laments Laura’s death which brings the poet’s own death closer because of grief: “Non po far Morte il dolce viso amaro, / ma ’l dolce viso dolce po far Morte” (R358, 1-2).

Ficino's answer to the question of why love and death are linked is intriguing but insufficient: it is because the lover's attention is always turned to the beloved, rather than onto himself. Ficino says:

But in reciprocal love, there is only one death, a double resurrection. For he who loves dies in himself once, when he neglects himself. He revives immediately in the beloved when the beloved receives him in loving thought. He revives again when he finally recognizes himself in the beloved, and does not doubt that he is loved. O happy death which two lives follow! (II, 8).

And so the lovers attain union, the two become one. However, death in this schema appears to be manageable, safe, temporary. This is inconsistent with examples of tragic lovers from myth, literature and art, not to mention the human experiences of actual lovers, whether death is symbolic or literal.

In a passage which echoes medieval ideas about the rules of love (such as certain passages in Andreas Capellanus' treatise *De arte honeste amandi* [*Art of Courtly Love*] and the *Roman de la rose*), Ficino articulates every spurned lover's wish, gender notwithstanding: "Who would deny that a man who is loved is a murderer, since he separates the soul from the lover? ... Therefore, out of justice itself, whoever is loved ought to love in return. But he who does not love his lover must be held answerable for murder. No, rather a thief, murderer, desecrator" (II, 8). Ficino further justifies this view by claiming that likeness generates love, for the lover's soul becomes like a mirror of the beloved. Ficino's law of reciprocal love gains currency in subsequent Neoplatonic love poetry. Of course this presents a nightmare for anyone who receives unwanted attention, however. Love is only given freely; it cannot be constrained. The ladies in the dialogues of Andreas's treatise discuss the topic and provide witty *répliques* to such an unworkable notion if carried out to

its logical conclusion. In Scève's time, Pernette du Guillet provides her own *réplique* in Epigram 35 of the *Rymes*:

Si j'ayme cil, que je debvrois hayr,
 Et hays celuy, que je debvrois aymer,
 Lon ne s'en doit autrement esbayr,
 Et ne m'en deult aucun en rien blasmer.
 Car de celuy le bien dois estimer,
 Et si me fuict, comme sa non semblable :
 Mais de cestuy le plaisir trop damnable
 M'oste le droict par la Loy maintenu.
 Voila pourquoy je me sens redevable,
 A celuy là, qui m'est le moins tenu.⁸⁶

Pernette argues that she is not to blame if she hates one whom she should love, and she prefers to be bound to the one who is not bound to her (*tenu* can signify debt or devotion), rather than the one to whom she is bound by law (this refers to her husband as opposed to her lover). The first quatrain of Pernette's dizain acknowledges the unpredictable, unmanageable nature of one's affections and the choice of the one on whom they are bestowed, which does not always follow social convention. The "Loy" may be read as the Ficinian law of love or that of legally sanctioned marriage. Pernette asserts her prerogative to choose the one on whom to bestow her love, as opposed to being constrained by rules, social or otherwise. On the other hand, for Dante (in the *Vita Nuova* and *Rime petrose*), Petrarch and Scève, such a law as Ficino's reciprocal love would support their eloquent pleas as devoted poet-lovers.

If we adopt Ficino's distinction between simple and reciprocal love, we find that death may be a consequence of either kind of love: the former, due to the proverbial broken heart; the latter, because the love is forbidden or destroyed by external circumstances, such

⁸⁶ In the 1545 Lyon edition of Jean de Tournes, this epigram is printed as distinct from those that follow, whereas in the 1546 edition, all 12 epigrams are printed as one poem with a consistent subject entitled "Autre elegie par dixains et huitains". See Françoise Charpentier's edition (Gallimard, 1983) of the *Rymes* of Pernette du Guillet, note to Epigram 35, pp. 177-78.

as war or societal convention. Other works, like *Les confessions d'un enfant du siècle* of Musset or Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, explore how lovers can destroy each other and themselves. We return to the idea of the devastation of the experience as a cause of the link between love and death. Perhaps the lovers cannot realize their goal of union; they remain two individuals in body and mind. In order for rebirth, resurrection or union to occur, something must be destroyed, for transformation to occur. Passion can be a destructive and overwhelming force, and many, including Ficino, found it disturbing. There is a combination of pain and pleasure, love and hate, harmony and conflict (*concordia discors*). Many of Scève's dizains manifest these ideas.

Fin'amor poetry – along with medieval and Renaissance courtly love poetry - represents the experience of love in spite of oneself by means of the topos of the god of love, which has been a truism since antiquity. Amo(u)r, perhaps capriciously, wounds his prey, unsuspecting mortals with his arrows which cause one to fall in love with another. This allegory expresses the sense of inevitability and destabilizing loss of self-control when one falls in love, because the lover does not choose rationally. In this scenario the lover is dominated by passions rather than will and reason - even one so esteemed as the accomplished scholastic philosopher Abelard, to take a medieval example. The ancient Greeks were wary of the passions, which they considered dangerous because they could lead to destruction and madness. Like dreams, mystical experiences, and poetic frenzy, the passions exist outside the domain of reason and logic.

The theme of death gradually emerges in thirteenth century Italian love poetry. Cavalcanti and Dante were writing during the time of the stilnovo poets, who built upon the Sicilian poets of the early thirteenth century, who in turn had borrowed from the Provençal troubadours. Dante and Cavalcanti may be considered stilnovo poets, as well as Petrarch a

generation later, although the term *stilnovo*, like that of courtly love, is only a convenient label and does not apply evenly to all the relevant poets at all times.

Our present ideas about the Florentine *dolce stil novo* movement were shaped in large part by Dante, mainly in his *Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*), in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, and in canto 24 of *Purgatory* (the second canticle of the *Commedia*), through the discourse of the contemporary poet Bonagiunta da Lucca (c. 1220-1296). In Purg. 24, Bonagiunta explains that the god of Love (Amore), dictates to the poet, rendering his poetry legitimate and true because it comes from Love. The idea of poetic inspiration by Love is a truism of courtly love lyric, although Dante articulates it in specific terms, and identifies himself as belonging to the *stilnovo* group, more clearly than anyone had previously. According to Mario Marti in the entry “Stil nuovo” in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, not only the idealization may be expressed in verse that is *dolce* (sweet), but also death, anguish, and fear may be expressed with *dolcezza* as well. Cavalcanti accomplishes this as a *stilnovista*, although the sentiments themselves at times are not *dolci* at all. The line from Scève, “ce mien doulx tourment” (D. 114), uses the French word for sweet in describing the poet’s torments. This illustrates the commonplace paradox of sweet suffering, (bittersweet, as I mentioned earlier): one desires the object of love and at the same time finds the experience unbearable.

The lyric poetry of both Cavalcanti and Scève manifests the theme of death within the scope of the phenomenology of love. For Cavalcanti and Scève, death frequently menaces at the threshold just beyond the love-suffering which destabilizes them, along with a fear of loss of individual identity. There is a condition that distinguishes Dante and Petrarch from Cavalcanti and Scève. The poetry of the latter two evokes for the reader an imagined involvement over time with the lady, favors likely having been granted, and the suffering emerges from that circumstance as well as from longing, rather than from lament

about an involvement that never was. The poet is not merely admiring her from afar, his longing unrequited, as occurs in Petrarch's poetry: in other words, it is all in the imagination, or as Gordon Braden has succinctly put it, "In Petrarch, nothing happens."⁸⁷ In the poetry of Cavalcanti and Scève, there are clues of the turbulence and torments of a love affair. In Dante's fourth canzone of the *Rime petrose*, a violent sexual scene is imagined as taking place between the poet and an unnamed lady. In the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*, there is no mention of a consummation between Dante and Beatrice. Fulfillment of sensual desire is not indicated in Petrarch's poetry either, although the longing is expressed. Such fulfillment cannot be assimilated with Laura's virtue and inaccessible status, whereas many of Petrarch's later followers were less preoccupied with virtue in love poetry altogether.

The constructions of meaning which refer to death are more disturbing in Cavalcantian verse than in the refined and sophisticated Petrarchan verse. Although Petrarch frequently refers to "morte" as a theme, it is used more as a rhetorical device than to evoke intense emotion. For example, he writes of a new composition he is preparing: "S' Amore o Morte non dà qualche stroppio / a la tela novella ch'ora ordisco" [If love or death does not cut short the new cloth that now I prepare to weave] (R40, 1-2). The death theme in the verse of Cavalcanti and Scève is a more serious preoccupation than in Petrarch, intrinsic to love, and not developed for the purpose of textual eloquence. In Dante's *Rime petrose* and *Inf.* 5, we encounter the idea that amorous passion is linked to death, but in the latter text, it is accompanied by moral condemnation as well, since the figures are damned in hell, in the circle of the lustful. For Scève, love transcends even death, although the suffering evoked is intense; he writes: "Qu' Amour a joint à mes pensées vaines / Si fort, que Mort jamais ne l'en deslie" (D. 22). In this dizain, the poet denigrates himself and at the

⁸⁷ Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance*, 24.

same time asserts eternal union with Délie, even as he wanders among the shades of the dead. In D194, Scève addresses a Délie who is not satisfied to let her virtue shine for the world, but she is surrounded by tombs of the dead who were sacrificed to appease her as if she were an ancient Greek goddess, such as Hecate (one of Délie's lunar metamorphoses, representing dark night with the new moon):

N'as tu horreur, estant de tous costez
Environnée et de mortz, et des tombes,
De veoir ainsi fumer sur tes Aultez
Pour t'appaiser, mille, et mille Hecatombes ? (D194, 6-10)

Cavalcanti writes of love's power in "Donna me prega": "Di sua potenza segue spesso morte" [Death often follows on [love's] potency] (35). Elsewhere in his lyric poetry, Cavalcanti evokes love that initially is pleasant and exhilarating but quickly leads to pain and despair. In a sonnet, he writes: "nel fero loco ove ten corte Amore" (V, 4), and still in the same sonnet, of other people who inform him, "Fatto se', di tal, servente, / che mai non déi sperare altro che morte" [You have become a servant of hers, so now you must expect nothing but death] (V, 13-14). Cavalcanti indicates that he has become subordinated to the lady (who is not named or otherwise identified), and his fate is already sealed. The lady has enormous power over the poet-lover, the power to give life or death, and he cannot withstand it. Gianfranco Contini has characterized the Cavalcantian conception of love this way: as "amore come vita-morte" (life-death or a living death).⁸⁸ Cavalcanti writes, "c'ha volta Morte dove assai mi spiace" (she [Fortune] has directed Death to where it galls me greatly).

Scève writes in the initial huitain cited earlier, "les Mortz qu'en moi tu renouvelles / Je t'ay voulu en ceste Oeuvre descrire" (lines 3-4). *Les morts* is in the plural, indicating that the experience is a pattern. Elsewhere Scève identifies Délie as "celle en qui mourant je vis" (D.

⁸⁸ Gianfranco Contini, *Letteratura italiana delle origini*. Florence: Sansoni, 1976. "Guido Cavalcanti", p. 159.

7). The poet lives and dies repeatedly, living because Délie wants him to, in order to love and suffer, the suffering overwhelming and extinguishing him. This is a strange paradox of symbiosis between the two characters, similar to Cavalcanti's "vita-morte". Scève writes:

Et me tuant, a vivre il me désire,
Affin qu'aimant autrui, je me désaime.
Qu'est-il besoin de plus outre m'occire,
Vu qu'assez meurt, qui trop vainement aime? (D. 60)

The recurrence of "les Morts" expresses this as well. It is his love for the lady that renews his life, or indirectly, the lady renews the deaths in him. Petrarch refers often to death in the *Canzoniere*, and in one sonnet, to "morti" (plural), but the usage is not the same: "mi vedete straziare a mille morti" [you see me torn asunder by a thousand deaths] (R44, 12). There is no erotic connotation, but a straightforward analogy with death in war, specifically defeat by Love's arrows.

The *spiriti* (spirits) were vehicles that represented emotions, faculties, or life-energy. It was the Aristotelian *pneuma* (meaning breath, and whose Latin equivalent was *spiritus*), located in the heart, which was the locus of contact between body and soul.⁸⁹ Cavalcanti was the first Tuscan poet to draw this image from the philosophy of Aristotle and Galen and apply it to poetry.⁹⁰ Dante also made use of them, initially in the *Vita Nuova* in referring to the "spirito di vita"; and Petrarch less so: for Petrarch, the *spiriti* tended to carry a lighter meaning, such as signifying a sigh or a word of praise. In Cavalcanti's verse, a *spirito* can arrive, signifying the onset of a mood or emotion, or depart, indicating the poet feels he is near death. Cavalcanti writes, "Amore ruppe / tutti miei spiriti a fuggire" [Love put to rout all my spirits] (9, 13-14). There are occurrences in Scève's *Délie* of Cavalcantian *spiriti* in the

⁸⁹ John Freccero, "The Firm Foot on a Journey without a Guide," in *Dante and the Poetics of Conversion*, 41.

⁹⁰ Massimiliano Chiamenti, "The Representation of the Psyche in Cavalcanti, Dante and Petrarch: the Spiriti." *Neophilologus* 82: 71-81, 1998. p 72.

plural, translated as *les esprits*: for example, “Bien qu’en ce corps mes faibles esperits / Ministres soient de l’aure de ma vie / Par eulx me sont mes sentements periz” (D. 379). In the first dizain of *Délie*, Scève writes, « vivant le corps, l’esprit desvie » (D1, 8). The verb *desvier*, from the Latin *deviare*, in medieval Latin *deviatio* (diverge from the path), also signifies “to die”, des-vier; the verb might come from Marot.⁹¹ The *esprit* here is the life-force, and the innamoramento almost destroys it.

The repeated evocation of death serves as a vehicle for the poet to express a range of suffering caused by the longing for union with the lady, and the intensity of the passion. The only final death to be found in this realm is the silence beyond the last page of the last poem, after the quill has been laid to rest. Only in the imagination, first of the poet and then later of the reader, does the idea of death come forth repeatedly and acquire tremendous symbolic force beyond mere extinction of the body. The prospect of the poet’s death demonstrates the magnitude of his love for the lady: it threatens his very existence.

Initially, Scève refers in his dizain collection to the perfection of Délie’s body, a delight for the gods, and with cosmic significance:

Car de tout bien, voyre es Dieux desirable,
Parfeit un corps en sa parfection,
Mouvant aux Cieulx telle admiration,
Qu’au premier oeil mon ame l’adora (D2, 5-8).

The French root of “perfect” (from the Latin *perfectus*) is repeated in line 6 through the terms *parfeit* and *parfection*, emphasizing both the sense of a work completed, as well as the highest possible value, perfection. The perfection is such that the heavens are moved to admire it; Délie could represent the full moon in this context, although she is compared also

⁹¹ Marot, “Deploration de Florimond Robertet”, line 298, « ains que le corps desvie », quoted in Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D1, p. 14.

to Pandora at the end of the dizain, which indicates that she is a (human) woman as well with a beautiful body. In *Délie*, as McFarlane puts it, the theme emerges of “perfection in the beloved being so exalted that the power of reason (*conseil*) is useless.”⁹²

This overcoming of the individual will in the presence of love is comparable to the words of Dante, for example in *Purg.* 30 when Beatrice appears, veiled:

sanza de li occhi aver più conoscenza,
per occulta virtù che da lei mosse,
d'antico amor sentì la gran potenza. (37-39)

[though my soul,
now she was veiled, could not see her directly,
by way of hidden force that she could move,
I felt the mighty power of old love.]

And again in *Paradiso*, at the end of canto 33, Dante alludes to love as a cosmic force, though in a different context:

ma già volgeva il mio disio e'l velle,
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,
l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle. (Par 33, 143-45)

[My desire and will were moved already — like
a wheel revolving uniformly — by
the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.]

Dante's desire and will are not his own in this concluding passage, but are balanced and under the influence of a divine vision which comes to him in a flash, and whose content the poet does not reveal, since words, the instruments of reason, would be insufficient.

Cavalcanti writes in a passage on how the soul is moved by love, which reminds one of Scève:

Io veggio che negli occhi suoi risplende
una virtù d'amor tanto gentile,
ch'ogni dolce piacer vi si comprende ;
e move a loro un'anima sottile,
rispetto della quale ogni altra è vile (XXV, 11-15)

⁹² McFarlane, ed, *The Délie of Maurice Scève*, Introduction, p. 39.

[I see that in her eyes shines
 A strength of love so noble
 That every sweet pleasure is there perceived;
 And it directs toward them a delicate soul
 In comparison to which all others are base]

Scève alludes to the limits of reason in the context of the highest things, which are found in love, and in Délie:

Tout jugement de celle infinité,
 Où tout concept se trouve superflus,
 Et tout aigu de perspicuité
 Ne pourroyent joindre au sommet de son plus. (D166, 1-4)

Mental cleverness, according to this passage, will not reach the goal, as if it were an elusive mountaintop (such as Petrarch's Mount Ventoux). In another dizain, Scève writes of reason's irrelevance at the sight of Délie, although reason might rule in other domains:

Mais quand ton front je revy pacifique,
 Sejour treshault de toute honnesteté,
 Où l'empire est du conseil arresté
 Mes songes alors je creus estre devins. (D367, 2-6)

The terms "songes" and "devins" (foretelling or revealing through insight) do not belong to the realm of reason, but contrast with it: at the border of reason lie dreams, visions and passions. The perfection of Délie, like the perfection of Beatrice, induces an irrational response of adoration and wonder. Even the following dizain, structured to be a parody of a logical syllogism, exhorts one to admire and adore Délie's perfection. Paradoxically, the poetry is indeed an articulation in words - not in a strictly analytical format, but instead employing allusion and other kinds of figurative language.

Mais si Raison par vraye congnoissance
 Admire en toy Graces du Ciel infuses :
 Et Graces sont de la Vertu puissance,
 Nous transformant plus, que mille Meduses :
 Et la Vertu par reigles non confuses
 Ne tend sinon à ce juste devoir,
 Qui nous contraint, non seulement de veoir,

Mais d'adorer toute perfection :
 Il faudra donc, que soubz le tien pouvoir
 Ce Monde voyse en admiration. (D182)

Reason itself is subordinated to Délie; true knowledge and understanding leads to admiration of her. Délie manifests the divine graces, probably the three Graces who attend to Venus (the reference to Medusa is consistent with a mythological interpretation). Gérard Defaux writes of D182:

L'Amant se rend compte ici que la seule certitude rationnelle à laquelle il puisse aboutir est qu'il a raison d'aimer Délie. Impuissante à étouffer en lui la voix du désir, la raison est en revanche d'une efficacité parfaite quand il s'agit de justifier le culte qu'il voue à son idole. Conclusion évidente : si la raison veut se faire entendre, être écoutée, respectée, il faut qu'elle se mette au service de la passion.⁹³

Reason in the service of passion – this undermines Defaux's theory of Délie as a figure for Mary.⁹⁴ Defaux also writes in the introduction to his recent edition of *Délie*: « Comme chez les troubadours, c'est chez Scève le feu de la passion amoureuse qui constitue la poésie dans son essence même. » Scève repeatedly expresses desire for Délie as a woman, wanting to be her lover. How could we identify Délie with Mary, when Scève writes (in the same dizain 367 cited above):

Mes songes lors je creus estre devins.
 Car en mon corps : mon Ame, tu revins,
 Sentant ses mains, mains celestement blanches,
 Avec leurs bras mortellement divins
 L'un coronner mon col, l'autre mes hanches. (D367, 6-10)

Clearly this refers to a sensual embrace, while blended with spiritual terms (Ame, céleste, divin). It is an embrace involving body and soul. Or rather, the soul is envisioned as being

⁹³ Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D182, p. 224.

⁹⁴ Gérard Defaux, « (Re)visiting *Délie* : Maurice Scève and Marian Poetry », *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 :3 (Autumn 2001), 700.

embodied and thus possessing hands and arms capable of an embrace. Earlier in the dizain, the poet refers to the long month spent without Délie. The dizain is not addressed to a Marian figure, but to an imaginary lover. In the sixth line, “songes” refers to erotic dreams.⁹⁵

From death and passion we now turn to the concept of virtue. Virtue is a major theme in Scève’s poetry, as evidenced both by the *Délie* title’s subheading, “obiect de plus haulte vertu”, and by the frequency with which the term is used in the text, 47 times (plus another 15 times with linguistic variations, such as the plural, adjectival and adverbial forms of *vertu*). First, let us glance at the etymology. The French term *vertu*, like the cognate Italian *virtù* (with trecento Italian variants *virtude*, *virtute*, *vertù*), derives from the Latin *virtus*, which like *virilis* is formed from *vir* (man). The approximate Greek equivalent is *areté* (excellence, virtue). *Virtus* for the ancient Romans is an attribute of a man, good character manifested through actions: valor, strength, force, bravery, courage, excellence.⁹⁶ The epic hero embodies virtue and is admired for it. A parallel use of the virtue concept evolved to imply the intrinsic quality of a thing – what makes a man worthy also becomes an identifying characteristic: thus in alchemy, a substance’s “virtues” determine its identity, classification and uses. This meaning extends also to the locutions/expressions, “by virtue of”, “en vertu de” (par le pouvoir de, according to the Petit Robert), and “in/per virtù di” (in forza di, Zingarelli). Virtue signifies power and essence whether literal or figurative. The virtue of a thing is what constitutes its value; virtue is a specific capacity.⁹⁷ The word’s most common secular meaning passes into French (and Italian): the word *vertu*, recorded from the year 1080

⁹⁵ This is the F. Joukovsky reading of that line (see notes to her *Délie* edition).

⁹⁶ See A. E. Andrews, *Latin Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 1998.

⁹⁷ André Comte-Sponville, *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues* (*Petit traité des grandes vertus*, Paris, PUF, 1996), trans. Catherine Temerson, New York : Henry Holt, 2001, 2.

onward,⁹⁸ points to a man's bravery and strength (later encompassing wisdom and mental qualities).

In Plato and Aristotle, as well as in Thomas Aquinas and others, the concept of virtue typically contains a moral connotation, defined in reference to good and evil, with virtue being the means to attain happiness as the quest for *the good*. The four "cardinal virtues", also secular, are courage, justice, prudence, and temperance. According to Aristotle and his successors, one must attain all four virtues in order to manifest them perfectly (unity of the virtues), and this implies practice of them, not merely possession. Virtue is associated with the idea of perfection, an impossible but appealing human ideal. Indeed, in Dante's *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*, as well as in Scève's *Délie* we find virtue linked with *perfection*, in accord with the attributes of Beatrice and Délie respectively.

The concept of virtue shifts within the context of Christianity, though it continues to mean a positive quality of human character, associated with the good. The three essential Christian virtues imply not warrior valor, but instead are faith, hope and charity (from Paul's epistle, 1 Corinthians 13:13). Women are candidates for these virtues. However, women are not conventional human models for the highest secular or worldly virtues, beyond the traditional Christian cardinal virtues; these are reserved for men. Even Mary, who certainly embodies faith, hope and charity, as well as modesty for Christians during the 12th-16th centuries, is subordinated to Christ in the Christian hierarchy. Mary does not typically function as a masculine model in worldly affairs for secular virtue, which signifies strength of character and a set of values contrasting with faith, hope and charity. With respect to women, virtue becomes an attribute associated with sexual chastity and modesty (which women might defend valorously, and would be considered heroic for doing so). By the late

⁹⁸ *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1967, 1994. Entry "vertu".

middle ages, the treatise of Philippe de Mézières appeared, *Le livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage* (ca. 1385-89) and the *Livre des trois vertus* (1405) - the sequel to the *Livre de la cité des Dames* - of Christine de Pizan; both texts concern women. Bourgeois and upper-class women were almost never independent and isolated, but instead were part of a family structure, as well as functioning within a social hierarchy. Social, cultural, legal and religious expectations limited women's choices (along with men's to some degree) and their ability to function as individuals. Women were part of a greater whole and were expected to conform within the hierarchy. The notion of a woman author (like Christine de Pizan and Pernette du Guillet) seemed radical. A woman's "virtue" (chastity if she was unmarried, sexual faithfulness to the husband if she was married, and ideally, modesty all along the way) reflected on the dignity and pride of the dominant men in the family (father, husband, et al.) as well as the family status as a whole. If the woman transgressed sexual boundaries, not only was her reputation affected if the event became known, but also that of her clan. In such a climate, with variations depending on the cultural environment and time period, secrecy flourished.

Virtue in a courtly context was tied with nobility, but a nobility of character rather than social class. A person had more control over character than designation in the social hierarchy. The virtuous of character were considered to be the most fit for love. Virtue was linked with *courtoisie*, and the greeting was the first sign indicating courtesy was present.

During the sixteenth century in France virtue was conceived as a moral quality of character worthy of praise through humanist epideictic rhetoric, after Cicero and Quintilian, and the proper subject of literature.⁹⁹ Jacques Peletier du Mans in his treatise *Art poétique* (1555) held up Virgil's *Aeneid* as a model. Virtue in a man accorded a nobility that shone for

⁹⁹ Ullrich Langer, *Vertu du discours, discours de la vertu*, 11-13.

all others to imitate, and this informed the literary project. According to Scipion Dupleix (and Francesco Piccolomini),¹⁰⁰ moral action should be guided by “honesteté” and “bien séance” - although these two could be inconsistent with one another and bring about contradictory outcomes. Thus in France the medieval “seigneur” evolved to become the “honnête homme”, both creatures of the court and, in historical terms, the elite of society. In Italy the *cortegiano* of Castiglione was more concerned with appearances and performance than with inner virtue. However, André Comte-Sponville has argued that politeness and good manners are the gateway to the other virtues, although politeness is but a representation of virtue, rather than intrinsic virtue itself (there is no difference between seeming polite and being so).¹⁰¹

With the etymology and connotations of “virtue” as background, let us return to the concept of virtue in the lyric poetry of Dante, Petrarch and Scève. What does *vertu* signify in the *Délie*? In Scève’s poems, *vertu* encompasses a range of meanings with roots in classical, neoplatonist, and courtly/stilnovo sources. Virtue signifies the ideal, the pure, the perfect. Virtue is the stated object of the poet’s desire, desire for erotic and spiritual union with the beloved lady - although he cannot himself *become* virtue, an abstraction. Instead the poet can produce or give birth to something of virtue, which recalls the speech of Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium* (203c to 212b). According to Socrates, mediated through Diotima, love is compelled to engage in reproduction in beauty, which provides a means to attain immortality. This reproduction may involve the physical body (producing children) or the soul. It is true virtue (Gk. *arete*) that is produced in beauty, according to the *Symposium* (212a). Scève gives birth to the poetry, which is named *Délie*. It is she who embodies virtue, as well as the collection of poems. Yet the separation between Scève and *Délie* (as

¹⁰⁰ Langer, op. cit., 14.

¹⁰¹ See Comte-Sponville, op. cit., Ch 1, 7-15.

mostly inaccessible lady, and as text) precludes synthesis between them. A lover cannot physically become his beloved (nor his text) save in the metaphors of union to be carried out in the imagination. Meanwhile there are still two physical bodies envisioned according to the text, and there is erotic desire for Délie as a beautiful lady.

Scève was in the habit of designating virtue in the sense of intrinsic quality, the intense essence of a thing, its very core, by repeating the concept as one inside another, in a sort of *mise en abyme*: *âme de mon âme, vie de ma vie, vertus de sa vertu*, and so forth. This could express through language the Neoplatonic microcosm/macrocosm correspondence (the individual soul, for example, is part of the universal soul).

The advantage of the Neoplatonic system for the poet, as we have seen, was that it sublimated erotic desire, which was ultimately manifested on the physical, earthly level, shifting desire to the higher level of the soul, whose beauty does not fade with time. It also sidestepped the negative stigma of adultery, which the Church officially frowned upon as incompatible with salvation; Dante acknowledged this by relegating the adulterous lovers Paolo and Francesca to the second circle of hell (*Inf.* 5). This has been viewed as a condemnation of his earlier self, in the *Vita Nuova* for the way Dante loved Beatrice. Thus it is significant that Dante-pilgrim faints upon hearing Francesca's recounting of her story. Dante's earlier *Vita Nuova* took a more positive view of falling in love, though no consummation ever takes place between Dante and Beatrice.

How can virtue-as-chastity coexist with the erotic? In the imaginary context of the poetry, virtue can *inspire* desire: desire for the lady, desire for closeness and union, desire to attain the ideal. Logically it is a paradox, for a lover cannot seduce a lady who remains chaste, since the chastity will be eliminated in the process. The air of forbidden temptation and necessary secrecy enshrined in courtly love contributes to the erotic desire.

Dante seeks to remove the human, earthly, sensual aspect of love through purification in Purgatory. Virgil explains to the pilgrim, “Amor sementa in voi d’ogne virtute / e d’ogne operazion che merta pene” (Purg. 17, 104-5) [Love is the seed in you of every virtue / and of all acts deserving punishment]. Each human being is supposed to use free will to choose good actions. It is significant that Dante uses *amor* from courtly love rather than the more Christian *carità* to discuss love. Based on the passage, *amor* can lead to good or evil. In any case, Dante and Scève both establish a strong link between love (as *amour*, *amor*) and virtue (*vertu*, *virtute*). Michel Beaujour writes that while the medieval *miroir encyclopédique* leads the individual to model himself on Christ (to choose the good), « [il] encode une ambivalence, et la nécessité d’un choix: il évoque le risque inhérent à toute destinée humaine orientée vers le salut ».¹⁰² Dante’s *Commedia*, as an allegorical *miroir*, demonstrates to readers the risks of their choices, through characters such as Francesca and Paolo in Inf. 5, in contrast to the perfection of Beatrice.

We see the lady’s virtues praised in Cavalcanti’s verses, for example in sonnet IV : “a le’ s’inchin’ ogni gentil vertute, / e la beltate per sua dea la mostra” [every noble virtue inclines toward her, and beauty displays her as its goddess] (lines 10-11). The sonnet is a public laudation of the inaccessible lady, as worship rather than seduction, and it concludes that “we” (her admirers, those around her) are not worthy or blessed enough to know her.

If the desire is never consummated (as with Dante and Beatrice, and Petrarch and Laura), then the poet can draw upon an endless resource to generate the love poetry, in which an amorous involvement never plays out as a narrative across time: it begins, but does not end unless cut short by death (again, as with Beatrice and Laura, who die, still chaste and virtuous, in the course of the respective sequences). Although Délie is associated with the

¹⁰² Beaujour, *Miroirs d’encre, rhétorique de l’autoportrait*, 35.

virgin huntress Diane/Artemis, she is also envisioned as married and in bed with her husband (D161). This renders the notion of chastity symbolic and figurative for Délie. Délie is not a naïve, innocent young girl. The poet expresses jealousy and an anti-marital stance in keeping with courtly love: “Vyole amour par ce lien injuste” (D161, 7). The marital bond, conventional both for the Church and for society, exerts a stabilizing force that Scève undermines in this dizain. Paradoxically, the legitimate bond of husband and wife becomes “injuste” and an abomination, whereas the secret, subversive bond between the lovers is the proper one according to Love.

Courtly love accommodates the idea of adultery: the legends of Tristan and Isolde, and of Lancelot and Guinevere, serve as paradigms of medieval romance for courtly love. And as Andreas Capellanus claims in the *De arte honeste amandi* (*The Art of Courthy Love*), true love cannot exist within marriage, but must be pursued outside that institution (part VI, seventh dialogue). The god of love, according to Andreas, demands that a lady should embrace the golden mean between the extremes of rejecting every potential lover, and accepting all who seek her love. Jean de Meun also takes a negative view of marriage, in the second part of the *Roman de la rose*. What therefore is virtue in a courtly milieu? It rests upon the values of chivalry, whose conception of marriage reveals a dubious veneer of Christian morality at best. Fidelity is displaced from the marital bond to the pair of lovers, which implicitly undermines marriage. It is essentially a system of non-Christian origin. Here virtue is close to the ideal of *courtoisie*, whose rhetoric becomes increasingly sophisticated and codified from the middle ages to the Renaissance – it culminates in the *Cortegiano* of Castiglione, and carries through to the idea of the aristocratic gentilhomme of classicism. The nobles are supposed to serve as models for all society (en principe). The lady is praised

as virtuous, but her virtue cannot be carried too far, or she will spurn her hopeful poet-lover, as Laura does with Petrarch.

Let us examine the full title of Scève's work, *Délie objet de plus haulte vertu*. *Délie* manifests "highest" virtue. The substantive "objet" points to the goal for the poet to attain, which is simultaneously *Délie* and virtue. The title in the 1544 edition of *Délie* did not contain a definite article, appearing as DELIE / OBIECT DE / PLUS HAVLTE VERTV.¹⁰³ Thus, in keeping with the poet's tendency to dense, polysemic richness of language, *Délie* could refer to both the lady, and also metonymically to Scève's dizain sequence about her - in other words, the lady's virtue along with the poetry's virtue. Thomas Hunkeler writes: "Le recueil scévien est en effet construit à l'image de la dame: c'est à sa dureté que répond la dureté des epygrammes, c'est à sa vertu que répond la vertu de l'oeuvre."¹⁰⁴ Besides efficiently summarizing the correspondence between the work and the lady, Hunkeler also juxtaposes *vertu* with *dureté*, which are indeed linked in the poetry of both Scève and Dante. In the second of the *Rime petrose*, Dante writes: "la sua bellezza ha più vertu che petra" [her beauty has more power than a precious stone] (line 19). The metaphor of the precious stone is similar to Guido Guinizzelli's passage about love in his canzone, "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore":

Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende
come vertute in petra preziosa

[Love's fire catches in the noble heart,
Like the power of a precious stone]

Dolcezza, a quality both of poetic style and of the lady - may be juxtaposed with bitterness or sorrow, but we also find it in opposition to what is hard (*durus*, *dur*, *duro*): the

¹⁰³ Thomas Hunkeler, *Le vif du sens: corps et poésie selon Maurice Scève*, 237.

¹⁰⁴ Hunkeler, *op. cit.*, 237.

lady's refusal of the poet who loves her is hard. The poetry of Dante's *Rime petrose* (stony rhymes), and Scève's "durs Epygrammes" (line 6 of the initial huitain), are characterized also as hard. Dorothy Coleman writes, "The *facilità* and *dolcezza* that Petrarch had in writing lyric poetry stands at the opposite pole from Scève's *durs Epygrammes*. . . . [B]y being *dur* Scève was deliberately turning away from the *dolcezza* of Petrarch and the Petrarchists, and using the Roman term [*durus*] to mean the seriousness of the poet of high-style love."¹⁰⁵

In book 6 of the *Aeneid* Virgil writes of hard [*durus*] love and death. The Sibyl describes a section of the Underworld: "quos durus amor crudeli tate peredit" [those whom harsh love destroyed with cruel death] (6, 442).¹⁰⁶ Dante echoes this in his development of the circle of the lustful, as when he writes, "ch' amor di nostra vita dipartille" [(shades) departed from our life because of love] (Inf. 5, 69). We shall see that Dante demonstrates in Inf. 5 that love brings harsh consequences indeed.

The hardness of the poetry of Dante and Scève also signifies the difficulty of interpretation, heir to the Provençal *trobar clus* style, and contrasting with Petrarch's *dolce* style. Dante in the *Rime petrose* refers to the hardness of his mind: "la mente mia ch'è più dura che petra / in tener forte imagine di petra" [mind harder than stone to hold fast an image of stone] (1, lines 12-13). Petrarch's evocation of hardness is more plaintive: he makes himself a Niobe figure, as if he were a weeping statue. He writes: "pietra morta in pietra viva / in guisa d'uom che pensi et pianga et scriva" [a dead stone on the living rock, like a man who thinks and weeps and writes] (R129, 51-52). In the last poem of the *Canzoniere*, he describes himself as "un sasso d'amor vano stillante" [a stone dripping vain moisture] (R366, 111-12).

¹⁰⁵ Dorothy Coleman, *Maurice Scève, Poet of Love*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in the bilingual edition by Durling and Martinez of *Inferno*, canto 5, note to line 69.

The incipit of the Dante's fourth *petrosa* canzone expresses the intention to be harsh: "Così nel mio parlar voglio esser *aspro*" [my emphasis]. For his part, Petrarch writes: "Però ch'Amor mi sforza / et di saver mi spoglia, / parlo in rime aspre e di dolcezza ignude" [Since Love forces me and strips me of all skill, I speak in harsh rhymes naked of sweetness] (R125, 14-16). Petrarch renders explicit his rhetorical use of "aspro" – because Love deprived the poet of his skill (this is evidently ironic). These examples reveal a dissociation between *amore* and *dolcezza* in love poetry, and instead the shift to *asprezza*.

Scève refers to his hardening, in more than one sense (again there is an erotic subtext, lines 7-10).

Toutes les foyz, que sa lueur sur Terre
 Jecte sur moy un, ou deux de ses raiz,
 En ma pensée esmeult l'obscure guerre
 Par qui me sont sens, et raison soubstraictz.
 Et par son teinct Angeliquement fraiz
 Rompt ceste noise à nulle aultre pareille.
 Et quand sa voix penetre en mon oreille,
 Je suis en feu, et fumée noircy,
 Là où sa main par plus grande merveille
 Me rend en marbre et froid, et endurcy. (D358)

Délie in her incarnation as the cool moon throws down her rays and destabilizes the poet, whose violent inner struggle (l'obscure guerre, la noise) between his reason and passion is renewed. Délie also has a human body, whose voice and hands affect the poet as well: the voice causes him to burn, and the touch of her hand turns him to cold marble.

For Dante in the first *Rima petrosa*, the hard, cold marble is located within the lady's heart. He addresses his poem in the envoi:

Canzone, or che sarà di me ne l'altro
 dolce tempo novello, quando piove
 amore in terra di tutti li cieli,
 quando per questi geli
 amore è solo in me, e non altrove?
 Saranne quello ch'è d'un uom di marmo,
 se in pargoletta fia per cor un marmo. (RP1, 66-72)

[Song, now what will become of me in that other sweet fresh season, when love rains down on the earth from all the heavens, if through these freezings love is only in me and not elsewhere? It will be with me as with a man of marble, if in a tender girl there is a heart of marble.] The hardness and coldness of the marble is likened to the hardness of the lady's heart, as well as being associated with endurance over time (the English terms *endurance*, *endure*, and *during* are cognates of the French *dur*, *durété*, all having descended from the Latin *durus*, *duro*), and by extension eternity which like stone is unyielding, unchanging, absolute. In D125, Scève also locates hard marble within the lady, using tomb imagery : “Ensevely long temps soubz la froideur / Du Marbre dur de ton ingratitude (D125, 1-2).

The initial mention of virtue in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (R2, 5) refers to Petrarch's own, rather than that of Laura, at the moment of the innamoramento: “Era la mia virtute al cor ristretta” [my vital power was concentrated in my heart]. However, Petrarch attributes virtue as *onestade* to Laura. One example is from R29, which refers to “onestade” (chastity) in the seventh stanza, before the stanza that mentions virtue. The attributes of *onestade* and *vertù* are joined in the personage of Laura (which paradoxically precludes amorous involvement with the poet-lover). R29 reveals a double meaning: “qual cella è di memoria in cui s'accoglia / quanta vede vertù, quanta beltade / chi gli occhi mira (...)” [what cell of memory is there that can contain all the virtue, all the beauty that one sees who looks in her eyes (...) ?]. Petrarch's praise of Laura's beauty and virtue is manifested only because the poet is able to perceive them; and his own memory is great enough to retain those attributes in order to write about them, despite the rhetorical claim of inadequate ability to do so, since all words (*le signifiant*) would be reductive of what they are supposed to signify (*le signifie*). This has not prevented Petrarch from praising Laura (and himself in the process) in his poems: indeed his memory and his pen evidently are equal to the task of writing about her. Unlike Scève, whose use of

vertu is strongly associated with Délie rather than himself, Petrarch frequently uses virtue to refer to his own strength, or an inherent quality.

In conclusion, we find that Scève's *Délie* has been identified by many critics as bearing Neoplatonist influence. However, we must acknowledge the limits of this interpretation. When it comes to the expression and validation of erotic desire, Scève diverges from Ficino in the latter's rejection of "volupté", and instead is closer to the troubadour poets and to Dante's earlier work. Scève also diverges from Petrarch in the latter's guilt stemming from his excessive love. His love is not as dark and lustful in nature as in Cavalcanti, but it does approach death. Despite the prominence of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* as a Renaissance model for lyric poetry, Ficino thus incorporated the work of Dante, Cavalcanti and earlier poets into his influential *trattato d'amore*. The resulting syncretism, which joined the Provençal love tradition with the Neoplatonic system, was then read by successive love poets including Scève and the Petrarchists. Virtue was a concept common to all these figures, although used in different ways. Festugière writes, « Ainsi se fit une fusion entre les goûts et les sentiments des seigneurs et des dames et la doctrine ficinienne. »¹⁰⁷ Scève's conception of love fuses elements common to Dante, Cavalcanti, Petrarch and Ficino.

¹⁰⁷ Festugière, 37.

Chapter 4: Dante and Scève

When Maurice Scève read the *Canzoniere* of Francesco Petrarca, he was reading poetry which manifested the profound influence of Dante, particularly the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*.¹ If we say that Scève's *Délie* imitated Petrarch's sequence of love poems, then Dante was being read indirectly in the shadows of Petrarch's text, in addition to Scève's own direct reading of Dante's texts. This is not to deny the importance of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* for Scève's *Délie*; clearly the overall influence of Petrarch on Scève's *Délie* is more important than that of Dante. Petrarch and Dante shared a common heritage, however. My purpose is to nuance the discussion of Petrarchan elements and to clarify the question of Italian poetic sources in the *Délie*. In this chapter, in order to develop a modified reading of the *Délie*, we shall examine passages in the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*, two key texts of Dante, as well as, very briefly, the *De vulgari eloquentia*. I will demonstrate the ways in which the shadow of Dante emerges in the *Délie*. Scève's references are stripped of the hierarchies that Dante imposed, so that we find purgatory juxtaposed with death, blessedness in hell, and pain in heaven. This seems to be Scève's way of expressing the paradoxical love experience in his poetry, in which categories are mingled and emotions fluctuate. This is comparable to the classical treatment of bittersweet love, love being the domain of Eros who sows a type of madness in the lover's heart.²

¹ Besides the criticism of scholars such as Sara Sturm-Maddox and Marco Santagata, Paolo Trovato in his book *Dante in Petrarca : per un inventario dei dantismi nei Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Florence: Olschki, 1979) catalogues specific phrases and borrowings from Dante. See also Robert Durling's helpful introduction to his bilingual edition, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics* (1976).

² For a brief summary of the function and purview of Eros for the ancient Greeks (subsequently appropriated and adapted by the Romans), see the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, entry "Eros". For a more interesting analysis of the deity, including consideration of the transmission of the ancient understanding of Eros to later historical

Petrarch's poetry achieves an extraordinary rhetorical beauty using tropes to express the kind of love adapted from the courtly model. The text of the *Canzoniere* is self-contained and perfectly arranged, designed and articulated. Petrarch revised the poems and rearranged their order in the sequence during his entire adult lifetime. The text forms its own restricted (elite? rarified?) universe, just as Dante's *Commedia* does (though the cosmic context of the latter work looks outward more than does the *Canzoniere*). The *Canzoniere* constructs an impeccable temple to itself. But the text is enclosed in the tower of its own rhetoric; the passions for the lady become eloquent constructions. The love poetry about the unattainable woman, composed in (mostly) sonnets, was expressed with highly refined language and a set of clever, versatile tropes suited for formulaic reuse, and it spawned countless imitations and intertextual references. On the other hand, the *Délie* was not as unified, not as coherent, not as smooth, not as consistent or restricted in its range of references, not as carefully arranged (according to Saulnier, the dizains roughly follow their order of composition),³ obscure rather than lucid, impenetrable rather than accessible. Who could imitate the *Délie* with success?⁴ The *Délie* could not be easily duplicated or adapted by other poets and poetasters. Although the Pléiade poets no doubt learned a great deal from Scève, their poetry took other directions. The conception of love differs between Petrarch and Scève, although both draw upon the courtly tradition. The *Délie* contains hints of mystical union, or at least the longing for it, in addition to the standard repeated expressions

periods like the Renaissance, see Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros: the Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (HarperCollins), 1997. See also Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (1986).

³ See Saulnier, *Maurice Scève*, 217.

⁴ Scève did inspire imitators such as Guillaume de La Tayssonnière, Claude de Taillemont and Philibert Bugnyon. Du Bellay's brief sonnet sequence the *Olive* (1549), as well as the *Erreurs amoureuses* (1549) of Pontus de Tyard, show Scève's influence (e.g.: « Mon oeil peu caut beuvant alterément / D'une beauté l'amoureuse douceur, / Glissantement m'attira dans le coeur / Le doux venin d'aggreable tourment » (*Erreurs*, Book 3, sonnet 32, 1-4). But this does not begin to compare with the vast number of diverse imitations which Petrarch's *Canzoniere* generated. A successful imitation by definition usually diverges from the original text. The *Délie* was not to everyone's taste. The *Rymes* (1545) of Pernette Du Guillet, printed by the same Jean de Tournes in Lyon, proved more popular than the *Délie* at the time, going through four editions.

of persistent desire for the lady, and vacillation between hope and despair that the poet's love will be requited, which characterize love lyric since the troubadours. Scève's purpose and concerns were not the same as those of Petrarch. This observation is legitimate not because we can know the authors' intentions, but because we perceive that the textual productions are quite different.

The *Délie* contains explicit references to the three locations of hell (as *Enfer* in D77, 11, 324; *Enfers* in D3, 445), purgatory (*Purgatoire*, D125), and paradise (*paradis*, D58, 149, 240, 314, 324, 409). Although the direct references to paradise are the most numerous of the three stages, this does not imply that the poet-lover attains paradise or is in a state of bliss during a significant portion of the sequence. To attain paradise with *Délie* is the ultimate vision and goal, but it seems evanescent and chimerical. I shall posit here that of the three places, hell, purgatory and paradise, it is purgatory, the transitional mean between two extremes, where there is suffering (as toil) and yet the promise of bliss to come, that lends itself best to the metaphorical state of the poet-lover in the *Délie*.

Scève scholars such as Cynthia Skenazi, Gérard Defaux and Lance Donaldson-Evans have examined the Christian and spiritual references in the *Délie*, and developed interpretations accordingly. Skenazi prudently writes: "Parler de la pensée chrétienne de Scève ne suppose pas nécessairement que son oeuvre soit théologique et que la *Délie* soit une allégorie religieuse".⁵ She goes on to assert that « de la *Délie* au *Microcosme*, le poète lyonnais fait le récit d'une aventure spirituelle qui s'intègre dans un contexte christocentrique profondément marqué par la lecture de saint Paul. »⁶ While I agree wholeheartedly with the first statement, the second statement is more valid for *Microcosme* than for *Délie*. In fact, the case for Dante's influence would be easier to make with regard to *Microcosme* than to *Délie*.

⁵ Cynthia Skenazi, *Maurice Scève et la pensée chrétienne*, 9.

⁶ Skenazi, 9.

But I find *Délie* both more interesting and more important as a text, and the present study focuses on influence through love lyric rather than through religious poetry.

The “spirituality” which we perceive in the *Délie* cannot be identified as exclusively Christian; this contributes to its enigmatic quality. It draws upon currents of hermeticism, mysticism (including medieval mysticism), and Neoplatonism – currents which were not necessarily treated as discrete topics in the syncretic Renaissance. While Biblical intertexts are present as in so many sixteenth century writings, as Skenazi comments, “tout au long de la *Délie*, le religieux ne cesse de se mêler à l'érotique, de le doubler, de l'envahir. Amour sacré, amour profane ... ». ⁷ In the *Délie*, the duality is dissolved: the model for *amour* incorporates the erotic, instead of excluding it. Even if we speak of love in terms of a sacred/profane opposition, the presence of both types of love in the *Délie* undermines a reading that is “christocentrique” as Skenazi argues.

While the importance of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* for the *Délie* is apparent (to be discussed at length later), in terms of “spirituality” Scève is closer to Dante than to Petrarch. This is in part because Laura for Petrarch cannot be a gateway to salvation, as Beatrice is for Dante. Laura may be identified as a projection of Petrarch's own mind, his obsession with renown and poetic glory (ultimately not for his lyric poems of the *Canzoniere*, but for the Latin epic *Africa*). Laura is not incorporated into a vision of Petrarch's salvation, as Beatrice is transfigured for Dante. Laura is absolutely unattainable for Petrarch, not because she is a goddess or a divine figure in Paradise, but because Petrarch is not supposed to be obsessed with her in the first place: for the poet who invented her, she incarnates the poet's illicit desire, the gateway to the sins of vanity and pride. Hence there is guilt for desiring her, although no sinful act of consummation has taken place; the Christian guilt is nourished by

⁷ Skenazi, 10.

the poet-persona's impure state due to original sin. Petrarch's desire itself is dangerous, as any passion is for its power to unbalance and pull down its subject to the depraved animal level (in contrast to exalting the noble part of oneself through charity). Petrarch is supposed to love God with all his devotion, not Laura.

In the premodern and early modern eras, the realm of sexual desire and eroticism was often conflated with the problem of women, by the men who generated church doctrines. Christian thought on women and sexuality was not monolithic or always consistent, but it frequently ranged from ambivalent to hostile. Beliefs about purity and cleanliness (the opposite of pollution), accompanied by the sacred/profane polarity, informed Christian ideas about the value of sexual abstinence and virginity. Despite some debate about the soul and what would happen at the last judgment, on earth at least, woman's place was generally inferior to that of man.⁸ As Stephen G. Nichols put it, "Marriage and literature had a great deal to do with the cultural status of women in medieval literature. ... Marriage, like literature, is mimetic, a symbolic representation of the political order."⁹ Women and marriage were constant threats to the "holiness of the Christian (male) vessel".¹⁰ The emergence of the doctrine of the immaculate conception and the preoccupation with Mary's virginity, original sin (with Eve being denounced, along with all women, for succumbing to temptation), and the idea that sex even within marriage is for the purpose of procreation rather than pleasure - all these and other examples reveal a discomfort with the existence and expression of sexual passion. It was pointed out that Jesus never married, and Jerome claimed that "Christ and Mary were both virgins, and so

⁸ For one discussion of views on women according to the New Testament, see the essay of Judith L. Kovacs, "Women in the New Testament," in Morton Smith and R. Joseph Hoffmann eds., *What the Bible Really Says*, HarperCollins, 1989, pp. 213-227. For one analysis of ecclesiastical views on women, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (1980), Ch. 2, "Theology, Mystical and Occult Writings", pp. 6-27.

⁹ Stephen G. Nichols, "An Intellectual Anthropology of Marriage in the Middle Ages," in *The New Medievalism*, p. 70.

¹⁰ Nichols, 79.

consecrated the pattern of virginity for both sexes”.¹¹ Attempts were made to impose celibacy and to forbid marriage among the clergy (although flagrantly disregarded by some) from the fourth century onward, notably in 1075 by Gregory VII (Hildebrand), in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council, and in 1545 at the Council of Trent.¹² Canon law notwithstanding, evidently lust could be so strong that it overwhelmed one’s love for God,¹³ and thus human passion, even if for a moment, could dominate over piety and devotion. It would be sacrilege to love another person more than God the Creator, as well as to revere a human being more than the deity. Sex, though necessary for reproduction, was considered a threat to the hegemony and stability of the church, and therefore it had to be managed and limited. Chastity and obedience were imposed on women (as nuns) more strictly than on men in the church hierarchy. The danger of sexual passion was identified with women, not only because they were objects of temptation for men, but also because women, as daughters of Eve, were weak creatures and susceptible to temptation themselves.

For Christian authorities, union in sacred and divine love was to take place through metaphysical means, rather than through sexual expression in the body, which was defined as a corrupt container for the low passions including lust; this was adapted by the early church from Manichean and Gnostic beliefs about the physical body. The erotic was excluded from the model and viewed as a temptation to sin. This was reinforced through Christian faith and buttressed by theology. The Apostle Paul mentions the saying “the two shall become one flesh” (I Cor 6:16) [*Vulgate*: erunt ... duo in carne una] in the context of a man with a prostitute, advocating instead for men to become one with God in spirit, rather than in flesh. The physical union is denounced as impure, and the appropriate union is

¹¹ Vivian Green, *A New History of Christianity*, 1996, rev. 1998, p. 10.

¹² For a history of church rulings on ecclesiastical celibacy, see the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, article “Celibacy of the Clergy” by Herbert Thurston.

¹³ See Wayland Young, *Eros Denied*, Ch. 17, pp. 197 ff.

spiritual, in God. Variations on this view concerning the erotic expression of love are found in Augustine, Tertullian, Jerome, Thomas Aquinas, and others.¹⁴ Paul recommends celibacy: “It is well for a man not to touch a woman” (I Cor.7:1) [*Vulgate*: de quibus autem scripsistis bonum est homini mulierem non tangere]. In Book 2 of the *Confessions*, Augustine writes of his youthful erotic adventures, and of following his impulses to sate his lust. The French tradition of the fabliaux and the clerical corruption which was satirized in so-called popular literature developed in opposition to such views, but here I have referred mainly to the official doctrines, not secular texts or actual practices. The irony for the Church was that erotic expression emerged through metaphors for spiritual union with God, produced by mystics (such metaphors were not unique to the Christian tradition, as we see for example in Sufi writings) and nuns who were instructed that they were “brides of Christ”. There was Biblical precedent in the ecstatic Song of Songs, despite ecclesiastical efforts to allegorize away the erotic content of that poetry.

The *Canzoniere* is Augustinian in its confessional aspect, which emerges in the first and last poems of the collection. Petrarch’s love for Laura is circumscribed within a time past, with reflection on the evolution of the poet-persona in the meantime, accompanied by renunciation of desire and apparent anxiety for his salvation. In *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine contrasts cupidity or selfish desire [cupiditas] with charity [caritas]: misguided lust versus Christian love which draws the human closer to God. Charitable love does not admit sexual or erotic manifestations as valid. In the *Délie*, eroticism is not condemned as “profane” love; it is a persistent part of the definition and expression of the poet’s love for Délie. It is not repressed or forbidden as such, as it is in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. Petrarch, like

¹⁴ Reay Tannahill notes in her book *Sex in History* (Chelsea, MI: Scarborough House, rev. ed. 1992) that Paul, Augustine, Tertullian, and Jerome exerted the greatest influence over Christian ideas about sex; these four men had led full sexual lives before being converted to celibacy and subsequently duly expressing revulsion for their past sins (p. 141).

Ficino, cannot accept the erotic as a valid, legitimate component of love, a means to higher union, or a manifestation of the divine. In this Petrarch follows Augustine, whose writings exerted enormous influence on him. Augustine's model of love conflicts with the medieval courtly model.

John Freccero interprets Dante's encounter with Beatrice in *Purgatorio* as a confessional experience. Unlike Augustine's confession of the theft of the pears in the *Confessions*, Dante's confession and redemption centers on love. Freccero writes:

Whatever the nature of his guilt, it is represented here in erotic terms, but inscribed within a penitential context – Beatrice was once the occasion of his sin and is now its judge – as if to suggest that Eros is here redeemed rather than condemned. ... Eros [is] now domesticated and transformed into that amalgam of Christian and cosmic love which is distinctively Dantesque. This insistence on the recuperability of his erotic past distinguishes Dante's confession from virtually all others in the Christian tradition.¹⁵

In other words, Dante's erotic desire is sublimated, except for traces of the old flame of love that stubbornly remain. Despite his general condemnation of erotic lust in Inf. 5, Dante does not renounce Beatrice, as Petrarch does with Laura; instead, he transforms the nature of his love. Scève's love also evolves throughout his poetry, becoming more spiritual.

The idea of erotic love as a means to higher union circulated during the Renaissance, perhaps through the visual arts more openly than in written forms.¹⁶ The medieval genre in Latin and vernacular languages, the *alba*, is the song about the departing lover at dawn after a night of lovemaking. Regardless of the attitudes of the clergy, certain poets chose to

¹⁵ John Freccero, "Introduction to Inferno", *Cambridge Companion to Dante*, pp. 177-78.

¹⁶ See Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1958, 1968), especially Ch. IX and X. See also Jean Seznec, *Survival of the Pagan Gods* (1953).

articulate erotic sentiments, while others did not. Although Petrarchist language and themes became commonplaces in Renaissance vernacular love poetry, many poets were less reticent about expressing erotic desire than Petrarch had been (e.g., Gaspara Stampa, Angelo Poliziano, Maurice Scève, Louise Labé, Pierre de Ronsard, et al.). Treatments of the erotic might range from repression and denial to allegory, to sublimation, or to celebration.

Whatever the church fathers had decreed, all the medieval and Renaissance French and Italian poets in the context of this discussion were Christian, and religious ideas were present in their imaginations and in their figurative language as commonplaces. This is not to say that Petrarch was more Christian than Scève (that is impossible to measure or to determine); however, we can say that Petrarch cannot reconcile his love for Laura with his religious beliefs and fear for his salvation, and this causes anxiety which is evident in his canzone R366, a supplication to the Virgin Mary and a renunciation of his love for Laura. I do not know whether this is ironic or not; the prayer comes at the end of the cycle, which is one year, and thus the cycle can begin anew. But to judge from the evidence of the *Secretum* dialogue and the letter recounting his ascent of Mt. Ventoux (Fam. IV, 1), as well as other epistles, it seems that Petrarch truly grappled with these issues. In the *Délie*, the poet's love is not necessarily reciprocated, but erotic love is one manifestation of the poet's love for Délie. This ultimately precludes an interpretation that identifies Délie with Mary (which Gérard Defaux claimed, as mentioned previously). We may contrast Petrarch's ultimate renunciation of Laura with Dante in Purg. 30 (as previously cited) in the earthly paradise, when Virgil is about to take his leave and Beatrice appears, veiled:

per occulta virtù che da lei mosse,
d'antico amor sentì la gran potenza. (37-39)

[by way of hidden force that she could move,
I felt the mighty power of old love.]

In the sacred space of paradise, with the closeness of God and the angels, the moment calls for piety, modesty and humility. Even so, Dante boldly writes that his response to the presence of Beatrice is that of a resurgence of love, expressed as *amor* rather than *caritate* (charity, a word used only five times in the *Commedia*, compared with *amor/amore*, used 162 times). The *amor* of Dante is reinforced by the words *virtù* and *potenza*, all three having secular connotations, signifying power or strength (as opposed to an emphasis on Christian virtue or charity). Moreover, when Dante encounters Beatrice, she rebukes him as a jealous goddess would. The young girl of nine from the VN has grown into a courtly *domina*. This passage could serve as an example of what makes Dante's work exciting, and why the *Commedia* was never relegated to the realm of pious devotional literature. Dante, like Scève, does not entirely purge away the erotic, despite passing through Purgatory with its flames that purify lust; the erotic returns "per occulta virtù".

While the *Commedia* imposes a tripartite structure which Dante the pilgrim explores in stages, Scève rearranges moments from various stages like fragments, alluding to hell, purgatory and paradise, which he employs without a schematic hierarchy in the *Délie*. For example, Scève writes: "Doncques espere avec deceue envie / Aux bas Enfers trouver beatitude" (D3, 9-10; see below for a complete citation of this dizain). These lines recall Dante's *Commedia*, folding that long poem up into the polar opposites of the condensed last Scévian verse with *Enfers* and *beatitude* (whose etymology is shared with the name Beatrice). Paradoxically, the poet-lover finds *beatitude* in the midst of the *Enfers*. This dizain is placed near the beginning of the collection, where it frames the poetic discourse to come, and where *beatitude* refers to *Délie*. The terms *Enfers* and *beatitude* together constitute a reordering of Dante's hierarchy: for Scève, *Délie* is present even in his interior hell, unlike Beatrice who is in Paradise.

In the unfinished Latin treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* (composed ca. 1303-5),¹⁷ Dante sets forth a defense of the “illustrious” [illustre] vernacular, asserting the primacy of poetry over prose. According to Marianne Shapiro, Dante presents the vernacular as “exiled” like the poet himself.¹⁸ Long before the Florentine Neoplatonists including Ficino studied him, Dante declares that the rational part of the human soul, the highest and most noble part, seeks the good. For Dante, love for Beatrice is not excluded from the schema of the good. In Book II, Ch. 2 of the DVE, Dante quotes Provençal and stilnovist love poets as models, after establishing that love is a worthy [dignum] subject for poetry. To the three aspects of the soul - vegetative, animal and rational – correspond the three things the soul seeks, which are the useful [utile], the pleasurable [delectabile], and the good [honestum]. Dante goes on to say that the three most important goals of these respective categories are well-being [salus], love [venus] and virtue [virtutem]; thus these are the most important subjects for noble treatment in vernacular poetry. In treatments of love, the appropriate emphasis is to be placed on ardor [amoris accensio]. There is no indication here that ardor in love is negative or sinful, for in courtly tradition it is not. As an appropriate example of love poetry, in the DVE Dante cites Provençal verses of Arnaut Daniel, the troubadour who practiced *trobar clus* and who addresses Dante the pilgrim in Provençal at the end of Purg. 26. Scève emphasizes repeatedly in the *Délie* both the good [le bien] which he seeks, and virtue [vertu], which he perceives in the figure of Délie herself, *object de plus haulte vertu*. The word that most

¹⁷ For Dante’s text, I have relied on the bilingual edition of Steven Botterill, ed. and trans., *Dante, De vulgari eloquentia*, Cambridge UP, 1996. For scholarship on the DVE, consult Marianne Shapiro, *De vulgari eloquentia: Dante’s Book of Exile*, Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1990. Shapiro’s book also contains an English translation of the DVE, but without the original Latin text. For this reason I consulted Botterill’s bilingual edition.

¹⁸ Shapiro writes: “Since the “illustrious vernacular” migrates from one shelter to another, it carries the baggage of a generous vernacular culture and moves freely within the confines of the Romance ‘idiom’.... The substantial unity of the Romance vernaculars endured and penetrated throughout *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradise*.” (DVE, *Dante’s Book of Exile*, 5-6)

frequently occurs in *Délie* (after common grammatical articles and prepositions) is *bien*: 192 times. Scève also seeks to attain *vertu* through the refining of his poetry, for which the subheading would signify also *Délie*, meaning the collection of lyric poems, the book being the object of highest virtue. Both meanings with regard to Scève's *Délie* are in keeping with Dante's principles laid out in the DVE.

Steven Botterill, in the introduction to his edition of Dante's DVE, quotes a statement of Barbara Reynolds from her Penguin edition of the *Vita Nuova*, calling it a "piercing insight". Reynolds writes, "The *Vita Nuova* is a treatise by a poet, written for poets, on the art of poetry." This places both the DVE and the VN in the same category, and has implications for our readings of the poetic sequences of both Petrarch and Scève.

The *Vita Nuova* (henceforth VN), written between 1292 and 1295, was Dante's first literary work, and circulated in manuscript form within his circle of friends. Since manuscript copies of works continued to be disseminated well after the spread of printing in Europe, we may surmise that VN manuscripts were available in Lyon during the 1520s and 1530s, as part of the Italianate culture there. The publication in 1527 of the "Giuntina" edition of Italian lyric, called "rime antiche", included the 31 poems of Dante's VN as well as those of other poets. We recall that the "Giuntina" was included in the 1545 edition of Petrarch dedicated to Scève by Jean de Tournes in Lyon. Therefore we may be sure that Scève was familiar at least with the lyrics of the VN, if not the entire text.

The VN is autobiographical, and it belongs to the medieval Provençal tradition of the *vidas* and *razos*; it contains both prose and poetry (as a *prosimetrum*), and passages of literary (self)criticism in which Dante glosses his own poetry. It is dedicated to Guido Cavalcanti, whom Dante identifies as "primo di li miei amici" (VN 3.14). At its outset, Dante identifies the VN as "a book of memory before which little could be read". Inscribed

in its pages is the memory of his love for Beatrice, and his spiritual journey through that experience. Dante writes, *Incipit vita nova* (1.1): the narrator's life is transformed by his encounter with Beatrice, his *innamoramento*. Dante first mentions her using the epithet “la gloriosa donna de la mia mente” (2.1), before the passage in which Dante discusses the *innamoramento* itself. The concept of suffering is absent from the text at this early point, although we may understand from the adjective “gloriosa” that Beatrice is already dead, residing in heaven, as well as being present in the poet’s mind as a memory.¹⁹

Petrarch for his part places a sonnet to initiate his *Canzoniere* which emphasizes memory just as Dante does. However, the memory of Petrarch's poetic persona is full of regret, shame, disappointment and past suffering from his love for Laura:

Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
 di quei sospiri ond’io nudriva ‘l core
 in sul mio primo giovenile errore
 quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono,
 del vario stile in ch’io piango et ragiono
 fra le vane speranze e ‘l van dolore,
 ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
 spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.
 Ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto
 favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
 di me medesmo meco mi vergogno;
 et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è ‘l frutto,
 e ‘l pentersi, e ‘l conoscer chiaramente
 che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

[You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first youthful error, when I was in part another man from what I am now:

for the varied style in which I weep and speak between vain hopes and vain sorrow, where there is anyone who understands love through experience, I hope to find pity, not only pardon.

But now I see well how for a long time I was the talk of the crowd, for which often I am ashamed of myself within;

and of my raving, shame is the fruit, and repentance, and the clear knowledge that whatever pleases the world is a brief dream.]²⁰

¹⁹ On the implication of “gloriosa” see Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova*, 7.

²⁰ For citations from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, I have reproduced the English translation of Robert Durling (1976).

Petrarch opens with: “Voi ch’ ascoltate in rime sparse il suono” (line 1),²¹ the *canzoniere* being a songbook genre after the troubadour collections. The emphasis here is on the telling of the sad tale (albeit in a fragmentary, cyclical format, the lyric sequence, rather than a novella or a prosimetrum) for an audience or community. Petrarch overtly places himself at the center as the textual performer singing his lover's complaint. For his suffering the poet-narrator hopes to obtain pity, and perhaps forgiveness as well, from the listener/reader: “Spero trovar pietà, non che perdono” (R1,8). Forgiveness - and with it the hope for salvation - ultimately comes from God, for perceived transgressions. While Petrarch appeals to the exclusive, elite circle of readers, he scorns the people (“popol tutto”, R1,9) who he claims view him as a “favola” (fable or subject for gossip). This vulgar, ignorant audience is distinguished from those few who are entreated to look favorably upon Petrarch's love-suffering. In this way Petrarch is likened to the *dolce stil novo* poets who had intellectual pretensions and pursued aristocratic tastes, though they wrote in bourgeois Florence.²² The stilnovo poets along with Dante, Petrarch and Scève were not beholden to wealthy patrons, and this granted them a certain independence concerning the content of their poetry. Does Petrarch include himself among those who are pleased by illusory, foolish things, fleeting dreams: “quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno” (R1,14)? Sighs, solitary shame and regret are evidently the fruits of his love, rather than joy or union. Since Petrarch never published his *Canzoniere* collection in his lifetime, not even poetic glory *for that work* was imminent. He considered Latin poetry superior to the vernacular.

As for Scève, in the introductory *buitain* of the *Délie* he seeks to distinguish himself from other poets writing about love:

²¹ See the beginning of Ch. 5 for a fuller discussion of Petrarch's R1.

²² On this characteristic of the *stilnovisti*, see Maurice Valency, *In Praise of Love*, 205-6.

Non de Venus les ardentz estincelles,
 Et moins les traictz, desquels Cupido tire :
 Mais bien les mortz, qu'en moy tu renouvelles
 Je t'ay voulu en cest Oeuvre descrire.
 Je scay asses, que tu y pourras lire
 Mainte erreur, mesme en si durs Epygrammes :
 Amour (pourtant) les me voyant escrire
 En ta faveur, les passa par ses flammes.

This is followed by the motto “Souffrir non souffrir”. The verb *souffrir* in *moyen français* (middle French), from Latin *sufferre* (sub+fero), besides meaning “to suffer” (the English cognate) or “to undergo”, can also mean “to permit” or “to accept”. In any case, the negation divides the verb infinitive which is repeated, and at the same time the verb is presented with its contrary, forming a polarity or oxymoron: the tension of opposites. Since the verbs are in the infinitive, we do not know whether they refer to Scève, Délie or anyone else. This form of wordplay might illustrate the bittersweet nature of love which combines pain and joy, with suffering that plays out and fades, only to return. A similar pattern is reflected by Scève’s use of the Promethean myth, and of the theme of renewed deaths. In formal terms, the text is composed as *staccato* rather than continuous lines of verse, a dizain sequence containing finite units strung together, each with its own opening and closing lines. Yet the reader’s eye is drawn to the next dizain, which provides continuity.

In the initial poems of the *Délie*, we find a series of Dantesque echoes. In the above *huitain*, Scève announces his intention to write in his love poems of renewed deaths, “les mortz, qu'en moy tu renouvelles” (line 3), instead of the commonplaces by which love is conventionally identified: the erotic desire caused by Venus (“ardentz estincelles”, line 1), and the arrows (“les traictz”, line 2) of Cupid. (Scève does write of Cupid's arrows as well, but in doing so, he manages to avoid a “hackneyed” manner, as McFarlane put it.) Scève dedicates his work to Délie, with the possessive in the third person: à *sa* Délie”, not “à *ma* Délie”. He also uses the second person indirect pronoun, the familiar “te”, as the *destinataire*

(to Délie? to the reader? to himself? it is an instance of the well known Scévian obscurity): “je t’ay voulu ... descrire” (line 4). Perhaps the poet writes with awareness of his distinct persona created by the verses, as the one who addresses “sa” Délie. No doubt the poet writes with the understanding that the work will be published (as *Délie* was from 1544); thus the work is composed with a broader audience in mind, although we understand from the tone that the poet-persona reveals private, intimate sentiments about his love. Scève's poetic persona addresses his appeal primarily to the lady, and to his audience of readers only indirectly (perhaps they are voyeurs more than a community of readers).

Scève writes in the same huitain that Amour witnessed his composition and refined his poems - identified as epigrams – with flames. Thus personified Love is mentioned in reference to the poetry itself which is the result of Scève's love for Délie, rather than Love being named as the catalyst for Scève's own *innamoramento*. Love, in the way of Plato's *Symposium*, allows Scève to reproduce in beauty, giving birth to the poetry. At this point love presides over the literary creation, rather than the *innamoramento*. Délie is the dizain collection, refined in the flames of love.

We saw in Ch 3 that the “objet de plus haulte vertu” for Scève to attain is *Délie*, at once the eponymous name for the dizain sequence and the beloved lady, so that the virtue signifies both Délie the lady and the poet's own work (or Délie as a literary creation). By the same token, Dante in the VN “actualizes the identification of love and poetry, whereby the woman is the perfect image of the loved one and the perfect allegory of poetry”, according to Giuseppe Di Scipio.²³ Likewise Délie is Scève's perfect loved one and allegory of poetry as “dur” and “de plus haulte vertu”.

²³ Giuseppe Di Scipio, *The Presence of Pauline Thought in the Works of Dante* (1995), 22.

Amour is distinguished from *Cupido* in Scève's *huitain*, perhaps as a means to separate poetic composition from human passion, though in the concept of *fureur poétique* or divine inspiration, the two are fused into one experience. Whether Scève implies here that he is inspired by love is not clear; however, it is clear that love burns away the impurities of the *poems*, making them hard ("durs Epygrammes", line 6). This brings to mind labor more than inspiration, though if Love is present, then Love also provides the motivation to compose. Scève states in the *huitain* that what he seeks to describe is *les mortz*, but the entire phenomenon is due to love (*Amour*). The metaphor for composition is borrowed from the metalworking forge. The metaphor is present in alchemy, in which impurities are burned away until the pure substance remains.

Guido Guinizzelli from Bologna (1230?-76), whom Dante considered his poetic father and the first *stilnovo* poet, used two metaphors, fire and precious stone, to discuss love in his best known canzone, "Al cor gentil reppaira sempre amore". Here is the second stanza, which contains 10 lines:

Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'apprende
 come vertute in petra preziosa,
 che da la stella valor no i discende
 anti che 'l sol la faccia gentil cosa ;
 poi che n'ha tratto fòre
 per sua forza lo sol ciò che li è vile,
 stella li dà valore :
 così lo cor ch'è fatto da natura
 asletto, pur, gentile
 donna, a guisa di stella, lo 'nnamora.

[Love's fire catches in the noble heart,
 Like the power of a precious stone
 Whose potency does not descend from the star
 Until the sun makes it a noble object:
 After the sun has drawn out
 Everything base with its own force,
 The star confers power on it.
 In such a way, a lady,
 Like the star, transforms the heart

Chosen by Nature and made pure and noble.]²⁴

Guinizzelli likens the power of love to that of flame and of a precious stone. In the same canzone, Guinizzelli uses the word *vertute* again (the first usage occurring in line 2), when he insists that only a person of noble heart, “a vertute” [disposed to virtue] (line 38), is worthy of love - as opposed to one of noble birth. Thus in one seminal poem, he plants tropes about love that are developed later by both Dante and Scève. Petrarch for his part, following Dante, mentions Guinizzelli as an illustrious poetic predecessor in the *Trionfo d'amore*.²⁵ Guinizzelli uses fire and heat to symbolize the coexistence of love and nobility in the heart: “prende amore in gentilezza loco / così propriamente come calore in clarità di foco” [love takes its place in true nobility as rightly as heat in the brightness of fire] (lines 8-10). Concluding the same canzone, Guinizzelli - unlike Dante and Petrarch - refuses to be condemned for the presumption of falling in love and idolizing the lady more than God; Guinizzelli argues that the lady resembled a heavenly angel, and therefore “non me fu fallo, s'in lei posi amanza” [it's not my fault if I fell in love with her] (line 60). Guinizzelli was a lawyer, after all.

Guinizzelli employs stone imagery in his poem twice: with “petra preziosa” (line 12), and with “adamàs del ferro in la minera” (line 30, translated as “diamond in a vein of ore”). In the first case, the stone is purified and suffused with value by the heat of the sun (fire), and in the second, it is hidden, but is revealed by mining. Though not mentioned explicitly in the canzone, precious stones were prized for their quality (virtue) of hardness. Guinizzelli indicates in the second stanza, cited above, that the noble heart is purified by the lady (his

²⁴ The English translation is taken from Robert Edwards, *The Poetry of Guido Guinizzelli*, 20-25.

²⁵ Petrarch writes, “Ecco i duo Guidi che già fur in prezzo,” (TC IV, 34) [Here were both Guidos, held in high esteem]. The two Guidos are Guinizzelli and Cavalcanti. Petrarch echoes Dante in Purg. XI, 97-98: “così ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido / la gloria de la lingua » [So did one Guido, from the other, wrest the glory of our tongue]. See notes to Petrarch's TC (Mondadori, 1996), pp. 190-91.

love for her constituting her power over him). As we saw earlier, Dante develops the analogy in the *Rime petrose* between the hardness of verses and the hardness of stone, in response to the hardness of his stony lady's heart. It is Dante in Purg. 26 who adapts the idea of refining the *poet* in fire, and by logical extension refining the *poetry* in fire, by mentioning the poets who inhabit the seventh terrace in the circle of the lustful. The poets must enter the flames to be purified. It has been interpreted as Dante's way of correcting his predecessors, as poets do with one another's art.²⁶ Dante pays tribute to Guinizzelli's poem "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore" in the VN (Ch 20), and in Inf. 5 with deliberate distortion through the words of Francesca da Rimini. Dante refers to Guinizzelli in Purg. 11 and 26. In the *De vulgari eloquentia* he called Guinizzelli "maximus Guido" (DVE I, 15.6), but Dante clearly intended to surpass him. We shall return to the literary theme of purity through flames later in this chapter.

There is no shame, regret or appeal for pity in a public and rhetorical way in Scève's opening lines as we find in those of Petrarch. The reader instead has the impression of witnessing an intimate moment inscribed in the verses. The reality is the converse: it is the *Délie* which was printed and disseminated, and not the *Canzoniere* during the author's lifetime. Later the texts of both the *Canzoniere* and the *Trionfi* were printed and widely read in Europe.

In Scève's huitain, *les mortz* could also imply erotic climax or intense suffering (such suffering is developed in the *Délie*), but it could also denote an experience so overwhelming that it virtually annihilates the personality, in the way that Semele was burned to cinders by the sight of the divine Zeus. (Semele is mentioned twice in the *Commedia*, in Inf. 30 and Par. 21, but not in Petrarch's poetry.) In Scève's *huitain* it is the poetry, rather than the mortal

²⁶ Harold Bloom, T.S. Eliot and others have written on the struggles poets have with the achievements of their predecessors. Scève has been interpreted as correcting Petrarch's errors, which also incorporates a pun based on the use of "jeunes erreurs" of D1 and Petrarch's "giovenile errore" of R1; e.g., Terence Cave, "Scève's *Délie*: Correcting Petrarch's Errors", in *Pre-Pléiade Poetry*, 112-24.

body, which is subjected to the flames. Coleman writes of Scève's *buitain*, "The poem is not Christian at all".²⁷ Scève opens his sequence with a tone that utterly contrasts with Petrarch's in the *Canzoniere*.

Besides the poetry, the body also is burned up from the intensity: "Car telle ardeur le coeur en a receu, / Que le corps vif est jà reduict en cendre" (D13, 5-6). McFarlane comments, "The lady's grace will penetrate his heart and reduce his body to ashes, and ultimately the lofty virtues of Délie will – and perhaps especially after physical separation – bring the poet back to calm and spiritual elevation" (33). As we have seen, in D367 Scève alludes to Délie's arms as "mortellement divins" (line 9) when they embrace the poet-lover, bringing both death and immortality.

At the end of the first dizain, we are told that Délie for the poet is the "Constituée Idole de ma vie" (D1,10). Délie is placed above the poet, much as Beatrice is elevated by Dante. Beatrice is considered miraculous, as one who came from heaven: "venuta / da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare" (VN 26, 7-8)²⁸ (this may be inspired by *stilnovo* hyperbolic praise of the beloved lady). Scève hints that Délie also is miraculous and from heaven: "[on] la diroit descendue des Cieulx" (D44, 8), the poet-lover "admirant sa mirable merveille" (D7, 6). However, Beatrice for Dante in VN 24 becomes a *figura Christi*,²⁹ whereas in my reading Délie for Scève does not (nor does Laura for Petrarch, though he mourns her death). The idolatrous way in which Dante wrote of Beatrice in the VN probably would have been scandalous for its sacrilege at the time, had the text been accessible to readers beyond Dante's own circle of fellow poets.³⁰ Whereas Scève's form of "idolatry" employs aesthetic,

²⁷ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 25.

²⁸ Quoted in Giuseppe Di Scipio, *The Presence of Pauline Thought in the Works of Dante*, 19.

²⁹ See Di Scipio, *The Presence of Pauline Thought in the Works of Dante*, 16.

³⁰ See Robert Pogue Harrison, "Approaching the Vita Nuova", in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 35-36. See also Charles Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova*, 3-5. Singleton points out that in the late sixteenth century, Dante's use of terms like "salute", "gloriosa" and "beatitudine" in reference to Beatrice were considered so

mythological and Neoplatonic references, Dante's version, both in the VN and in the *Commedia*, persistently compares Beatrice with Christ, identifying her as Dante's salvation (*salute*). Cavalcanti used "salute" as well, in reference to an unnamed lady, but in a negative construction. In sonnet IV, which begins, "Chi è questa che vèn", Cavalcanti expresses wonder: "non si pose 'n noi tanta salute, / che propriamente n'aviàn canoscenza" [never was such beatitude granted us / That we could really have knowledge of her] (lines 13-14).

In the opening section of the VN, when Dante first encounters Beatrice (whose name's etymology is linked with It. *beatitudine*, from *beato/a*, happy and blessed), his *spirito animale* says to Dante in Latin, "Apparuit iam beatitudo vestra," [Now has appeared your beatitude] (VN 2,6).³¹ Dante's *spirito naturale* in response begins to weep, lamenting the suffering to come (VN 2,7). This expresses what we would now call emotional devastation (as mentioned previously). The early moment of beatitude immediately brings about sorrow, rather than joy as one might expect. Scève's initial experience of the innamoramento likewise is not joy and exaltation, but devastation - "l'Esprit desvie" (D1, 8), even as the body lives. Scève writes toward the end of the poem collection, "Amour au sort de mes malheurs insere, / Affoiblissant mes esperitz plus forts » (D398, 3-4). He expresses the overwhelming experience of love which brings both joy and sorrow, with the same trope of the personal "spirits". Scève, like Dante in the VN, combines the two contrary sentiments blessing and suffering, in D3:

Ton doux venin, grace tienne, me fit
Idoltrer en ton divin image
Dont l'oeil ignoramment meffit
Pour non preveoir à mon futur dommage.
Car te immolant ce mien coeur pour hommage

blasphemous that in the 1576 Florence edition of the *Vita nuova*, those words were changed to "quiete", "graziosa" and "felicità" respectively. However, Scève's writing three decades earlier in Lyon of adoring Délie as "idole de ma vie" (and so forth) apparently passed without incident.

³¹ Apparently the Dantean spirits are in the habit of speaking Latin.

Sacrifia avec l'Ame la vie.
 Doncques tu fus, ô liberté ravie,
 Donnée en proye à toute ingratitude :
 Doncques espere avec deceue envie
 Aux bas Enfers trouver beatitude. (D3)

In this dizain, Scève justifies his idolatry of Délie by emphasizing her grace (surely this is not Christian grace, either, for otherwise it would verge on blasphemy), which is also “doux venin” (the Petrarchan “dolce veneno”, R152, 8), poisoning him. Such strong language would be ill suited to a context of Christian piety. Add to this the use of “dieux” in the plural and “Pandora” in D2, and the evidence becomes still more convincing. It would be sacrilegious for a man to worship a mortal woman as if she were a goddess: Scève is her lover, and he does not write of such intense erotic desire for her as the Virgin Mary, as if it were a metaphor for religious fervor. For his part, Petrarch, always careful with his language, never mentions “inferno” except once in the *Triumphus cupidinis* (Triumph of love), in a mythological reference to Orpheus following Euridice into hell.

A further parallel with Dante's VN occurs in the same dizain 3, which refers to Scève's heart being immolated: “Car te immolant ce mien coeur pour hommage / Sacrifia avec l'Ame la vie” (D3, 5-6).³² Scève balks at the prospect, due to the likely ingratitude of Délie which would render the sacrifice a great waste. D163 provides a *suite* to D3, in which Délie seems to accept Scève's sacrifice out of compassion, more than to respond in kind to his passion (“celle grand' passion,” line 7). His heart is tied up, but the knot now can be loosened. He concludes the dizain, “Tu me receus pour immolée offrande” (D163, 10). Petrarch does not use any form of the verb *immolare* in his Italian poetry.

Defaux compares Scève's use of the immolation motif to a scriptural passage from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, I Cor. 5.7 which mentions Christ immolated (Latin

³² In their editions of *Délie*, neither McFarlane nor Joukovsky explain the heart immolation or “béatitude” in their notes on D3.

immolatus).³³ In Christian liturgy Jesus is likened to the sacrificial lamb, but the passage in D3 does not conform well with Christian theology, because then Scève the poet-lover himself would be implied as divine, a Christ figure, and why would the immolation of his heart be necessary for Délie? She does not need to partake of divinity, since she is already like a goddess, nor does she need to be saved like Christ's disciples. The rôles are reversed here compared with the Eucharist, unless the dynamic is reduced to a generic sacrificial offering. Otherwise Délie would be a stand-in for God, to whom the sacrifice, perhaps a self-sacrifice, is dedicated. With the medieval development of the Marian cult, Christians prayed to Mary, but they were not supposed to sacrifice either themselves or animals to her. Furthermore, the central Christian ritual of the Eucharist was not celebrated in honor of Mary.

In D1 Scève writes of "piteuse hostie" (line 9), implying that the sacrifice of his spirit and soul is still insignificant and inadequate before Délie's greatness. A plausible way to interpret the poem is to understand that Scève employs language and symbols *borrowed* from religion (*hostie, sacrifier, immoler, coeur, âme*) as *metaphors* in order to articulate the experience of love. This vocabulary infuses the poetry with intensity and vividness. It should not be confused with religious poetry. Furthermore, it fits quite well with pagan or folklore versions which present episodes of sacrifices symbolizing great love or offered to the divinity in order to obtain some desired result. Certainly the dynamic of sacrifice is present in certain love poetry including Scève's D3. Even if it faintly recalls the sacrifice of Jesus, we should remember that the theme of ritual sacrifice is not unique to the Christian religion, and the syncretism typical of the period is present in Scève's poetry. Prometheus, to whom Scève refers in D77, and the phoenix mentioned in other dizains and illustrated in the eleventh emblem (which precedes D96), accompanied by the motto "de mort à vie", are pagan figures

³³ See Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D3, 5, p. 19.

of sacrifice and renewal, the cycle of death and life. If Christian texts were the exclusive or even dominant source of the figurative language in the *Délie*, then the poetry appropriately would be classified as devotional or theological poetry, which it is not. It is a sequence of love poems to a lady (not the Virgin Mary), with a rich variety of sources.

The heart immolation passage in D3 has a parallel in Dante's strange dream vision in the VN in which Love, holding Beatrice in his arms, induces her to hesitatingly eat ("dubitosamente") Dante's flaming heart (VN 3.5-7). Dante does not use the verb "immolate" here, but instead "mangiare" twice (VN 3.6). However, a sacrifice involves immolation, and the underlying purpose is often to provide a form of sustenance as well as to placate the deity. Love, presented as a lord, dominates the scene to which Dante is a witness. The lady ingests the lover's heart as a token of his love and total devotion to her. The heart is flaming because Dante is burning with love for Beatrice. This love, like Scève's "ardeur", is to be purified later in purgatorial flames. In the sonnet "A ciascun' alma presa e gentil core" which recapitulates the episode of VN 3, Dante writes that after Beatrice was made to consume the flaming heart, Love turned away weeping: "appresso gir lo ne vedea piangendo" (line 14). This grief corresponds to Scève's expression of devastation at the *innamoramento*:

L'oeil, aultresfois ma joyeuse lumiere,
 En ta beaulté fut tellement deceu,
 Que de fontaine estendu en ryviere
 Veut reparer le mal par luy conceu.
 Car tel ardeur le coeur en a receu,
 Que le corps vif est jà réduit en cendre :
 Dont l'oeil piteux fait ses ruisseaulx descendre
 Pour la garder d'estre du vent ravie,
 Afin que moyste aux os se puisse prendre,
 Pour sembler corps, ou ombre de sa vie. (D13)

The heart literally burns up from tremendous heat and the body is reduced to ashes.

Thereafter the body is but a shadow, perhaps fit only for the second circle of hell. Only the

water of tears hold together the ashes to keep them from scattering entirely, and water cools fire. A version of the Prometheus myth of the creation of humanity says that Prometheus used his own tears rather than water to form the bodies of mortals.³⁴ Scève develops the commonplace contrast between burning fire and cooling tears elsewhere, for example in D302, in which Amour, weeping just as he does in Dante's VN 3,³⁵ induces "ma Maistresse" to weep also, and he gathers the tears in a sponge to offer as relief to the poet-lover: "Voicy, dit il, pour ton ardeur estaindre" (D302, 7). But instead of cooling water, the poet receives more fire: "En lieu d'humeur flammes elle rendit" (D302, 10). In another dizain, Scève writes of his heart wounded by the power of Délie's gaze: "l'oeil, qui fait à mon coeur si grand' playe" (D5, 10). This also reinforces the heart's immolation mentioned in D3. The heart is wounded, burning up, immolated – in other words, it is consumed by love of Délie.

The heart episode in Dante's VN represents the phenomenon of love in terms of the physical body as it was understood, because the heart is the seat of the passions, the spirits reside there, and the life force of the lover is transferred to the beloved. There may be a sexual interpretation to Dante's vision of Beatrice consuming his heart, which, along with the vision at the end of the VN, together manifest the progression from sensual love to spiritual love, and from uncertainty to conviction.³⁶ D3, Ch. 3: it is an intriguing but perhaps meaningless coincidence that both episodes are placed in the third division of the respective works.

The immolation and/or ingestion of the heart within a situation involving lovers is a commonplace of medieval legend. According to Marcello Ciccuto,³⁷ the conceit of the

³⁴ See section on Prometheus in Félix Guirand, éd., *Larousse mythologie générale*.

³⁵ Dante writes that Amore appears as "uno signore di pauroso" (VN 3, 3), rather than as a child, "l'Enfant" (D302, 5) in this dizain of Scève. Dante's characterization is close to Cavalcanti's (see Ciccuto's note 26, p. 94 of VN), as well as to the god of love in the *Roman de la rose*, where he appears as a *grand seigneur*.

³⁶ Michelangelo Picone in his article "Vita Nuova", in *The Dante Encyclopedia*, p. 874.

³⁷ Ciccuto's notes to the passage in Ch. 3 are found in Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, BUR, Rizzoli, 1984.

ingested heart is of Celtic origin, and it appears for example in the *Tristan* of Thomas, and in the *Roman du Chastelain de Couci*. It was also linked with troubadours³⁸ such as Sordello (lamenting the death of Blacatz) and Guillem de Cabestanh (in his *vida*, it is his heart that is cooked and served to his beloved by the jealous husband).³⁹ Boccaccio used it in the *Decameron*, both in the story of Ghismunda and Tancredi (IV, 1), and in the tale of the two knights and the one's unnamed wife (IV, 9); in each story, love gives way to violence and brutal death. All tragic lovers are reunited in death. Before the time of Ficino and Neoplatonic ideas about lovers dying and being reborn in one another, medieval tradition produced more visceral images of the lover's heart being ingested by the beloved lady to illustrate a definition of love involving consumption and nourishment, leading to death, or following death – in Dante's text it takes the form of a dream, and thus is real and yet unreal. It is the ultimate sign of devotion: literally, sacrifice of one's heart to the lady.

A possible Biblical source for the respective episodes in D3 and in Dante's VN about eating the heart may be found in the book of John. Jesus says to the people, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"⁴⁰ [*Vulgate*: caro enim mea vere est cibus et sanguis meus vere est potus. qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in illo].⁴¹ The text essentially proposes cannibalism/anthropophagy, although with the understanding that the act of ingestion was conducted using bread and wine, and thus was symbolic and not literal (though the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation insists that through a mysterious miracle, the bread and wine become the flesh and blood of

³⁸ See Tommaso Casini's notes to Ch. 3 in his edition of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, Florence, Sansoni, 1968, pp. 11-12.

³⁹ Elizabeth W. Poe, "The *Vidas* and *Razos*", in *Handbook of the Troubadours*, 185.

⁴⁰ Biblical translation is from the RSV, 1946, 1971 for the New Testament.

⁴¹ In the Vulgate, the verses are John 6:55-56.

Christ). When the disciples are baffled at Jesus' words, murmuring among themselves, "durus est hic sermo" (John 6:61 in the Vulgate), Jesus directs them in how to interpret his words, telling them to heed the spirit rather than the flesh. The point for our purpose is that the consumption of another's flesh is presented as a way to bring about eternal union between the two bodies: the two become one flesh, and one abides in the other. This idea is transposed to the situation of lovers, for which the act of ingesting a beloved's heart symbolizes the love between them, and forges a special bond that is manifested *in the flesh*. The bond might be forged in death (if one ingests the other, especially the heart, then death is present). As for Scève, D3 presents the sacrifice in the context of a sequence of love poems, and Scève expresses his devotion to the lady and their special bond. As in Dante's VN, the heart immolation is both real and unreal. The heart is believed to be both the seat of passionate love, and central to the life of the body; thus Dante's life force is transferred to Beatrice, just as that of Scève is absorbed by Délie.

Although Scève's lyric poetry does not possess a narrative structure, still a motif emerges in *Délie* of the poet on a journey, wandering, in a state between life and death. Dante's self-conscious storytelling opens with a dark scene not involving not water but a forest, the well known *selva oscura*, in which the path was lost: "la diritta via era smarrita" (Inf 1, 3). Dante writes, "la verace via abbandonai" [I abandoned the true path] (Inf 1, 12). Therefore the pilgrim wandered. The first canticle of Dante's *Commedia* invokes death and suffering, terrifying to retell: "Tant è amara che poco è più morte" (Inf 1, 7). This is followed by the gradual ascent to exaltation in the course of the latter two canticles, but in the first part, Dante the pilgrim is frequently overwhelmed by what he witnesses and experiences, and comes close to death himself while surrounded by death. The shades in

hell are the living dead: they can move and speak with Dante, who is a living soul passing through the place, yet they are like trapped shadows.

Scève alludes to death and wandering in the underworld. He discusses both his tomb (D447) and Délie's tomb (D175).

Comme Hecaté tu me feras errer
Et vif, et mort cent ans parmy les Umbres :
Come Diane au Ciel me resserrer,
D'où descendis en ces mortelz encombres :
Comme regnante aux infernalles umbres
Amoindriras, ou accroistras mes peines.
Mais come Lune infuse dans mes veines
Celle tu fus, es, et seras DELIE,
Qu'Amour a joint à mes pensées vaines
Si fort, que mort jamais ne l'en deslie. (D22)

It is as if Délie banishes the poet-lover to wander in the underworld among the shades, and then brings him up to heaven to be with him, in accord with the moon's phases (Diana as the full moon, Hecaté as the new moon, with total darkness). She determines whether he experiences joy or suffering. Despite separation in the physical body, she is present inside him because of his love, and thus they are united even beyond death (a sentiment repeated in the last dizain of the collection). In Dante's Hell, time is determined by the phases of the moon. The pilgrim Dante wandered among the shades, figuratively speaking dead yet not dead (just visiting).

Just as the way is hazardous for Dante in his visionary journey, Scève likewise mentions the danger of the path of his love journey: "Car sa vertu par voye perilleuse / Me penetrant l'Ame jusqu'au mylieu" (D436). The *voye perilleuse* is reminiscent of the *rocher de la vertu* (the woodcut illustration on the title page of the 1544 edition of the *Délie*), surrounded by water. The *rocher* visually might also recall the mountain of Purgatory, whose summit for its climbers is virtue. The mountain of Purgatory is a solitary island surrounded by water, accessible only by boat.

The hazardous journey is both interior and exterior (that is, worldly or otherworldly travel), undertaken by a “pilgrim”. Scève writes, “Le Pelerin, son voyage accomply, / Retourne en paix, et vers sa maison tire » (D396, 3-4). The pèlerin, it could be argued, might be any pilgrim visiting a holy shrine such as Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela, or the Holy Land for that matter. But for a learned poet and humanist who read Italian, whose pilgrimage was the most well known from European vernacular poetry at this point, and the most adventurous of all? It was Dante’s journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. Rest eludes Scève, in contrast to the workman or the pilgrim who heads home. In the same dizain, he writes : “Et moy suant à ma fin grandement, Ne puis ne paix, ne repos d’elle avoir » (D396, 9-10). Scève’s journey unfolds without a guide, unless we consider Délie or Vertu to guide him (“Par les vertus de sa vertu guidées », D2, 3, though here it is not the poet himself who is guided, but apparently Nature in creating Délie). Unlike Dante, Scève is not permitted to successfully complete his “pilgrimage” (understood in a broad sense). In Ch. 41, toward the end of the VN, Dante writes of the pilgrim and “spirito peregrino” as one whom Love draws upward; he says that in contemplating Beatrice’s excellence, he is exalted beyond his own intellect. In a sonnet which prefigures the *Commedia*, he writes:

vede una donna, che riceve onore,
e luce sì, che per lo suo splendore
lo peregrino spirito la mira. (VN 41, 6-8)

[he sees a lady, who receives honor,
and so shines that, because of her splendor,
the pilgrim spirit gazes upon her.]

Scève too is a sort of *peregrino spirito* who ascends to contemplate his lunar goddess whom he loves: “Et me pers tout en son divine image” (D397), and “Mon ame en Terre (un temps fut) esprouva / Des plus haultz Cieulx celle beatitude” (D305, 1-2).

Near the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*, Beatrice descends into Limbo to call upon Virgil to guide Dante in his journey:

Io ero tra color che son sospesi,
E donna mi chiamò beata e bella,
tal che di comandare io la richiesi. (Inf. 2, 52-54)

[I was among those souls who are suspended;
a lady called to me, so blessed, so lovely
that I implored to serve at her command.]

Furthermore, Beatrice tells Virgil that she is motivated by love: “amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare” [Love prompted me, that Love which makes me speak] (Inf. 2, 72). And Virgil answers Beatrice not by her name, but by the epithet “Donna di virtù” [Lady of Virtue] (Inf. 2, 76). The entire encounter between Virgil and Beatrice is inscribed within courtly love, despite Virgil's classical origin: the Roman poet becomes a vassal of the lady, with an emphasis on the lady's beauty and virtue, the lady requests a task of the man in her service, and love motivating not only the stilnovist poet, but even the lady to speak. This passage is consistent with the way Dante writes of Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*, even with the contrasting scene of limbo at the threshold of hell. Beatrice was the “donna di virtù” for Dante, just as Délie was for Scève. Scève evidently serves his lady at Love's command: “Je preferoys à tous Dieux ma Maistresse, / Ainsi qu'Amour le m'avoit commandé » (D16, 1-2).

Like Guinizzelli, Dante and Petrarch, Scève occasionally employs imagery of wandering at sea, as in the following dizain:

Comme corps mort vagant en haulte Mer,
Esbat des Vents, et passetemps des Undes,
J'errois parmi ce Gouffre amer,
Où mes soucys enflent vagues profondes.
Lors toy, Espoir, qui en ce point te fondes
Sur le confus de mes vaines merveilles,
Soubdain au nom d'elle tu me resveilles
De cest abysme, auquel je perissoys :

Et à ce son me cornantz les oreilles,
 Tout estourdy point ne me congnoissoys. (D164)⁴²

Petrarch's sonnet R189 of the *Canzoniere* has been set forth as a source for D164 because of the common imagery of death at sea to represent despair in love. But upon close examination, we find that the two poems are quite different.

Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio
 per aspro mare, a mezza notte il verno,
 enfra Scilla e Caribdi ; et al governo
 siede 'l signore, anzi 'l nimico mio.
 A ciascun remo un penser pronto et rio
 che la tempesta e 'l fin par ch'abbi a schermo ;
 la vela rompe un vento humido eterno
 di sospir', di speranze e di desio.
 Pioggia di lagrimar, nebbia di sdegni
 bagna et rallenta le già stanche sarte,
 che son d'error con ignorantia attorto.
 Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni ;
 morta fra l'onde è la ragione e l'arte,
 tal ch'incomincio a desperar del porto. (R189)

[My ship laden with forgetfulness passes through a harsh sea, at midnight, in winter, between Scylla and Charybdis, and at the tiller sits my lord, rather my enemy; each oar is manned by a ready, cruel thought that seems to scorn the tempest and the end; a wet, changeless wind of sighs, hopes, and desires breaks the sail; a rain of weeping, a mist of disdain wet and loosen the already weary ropes, made of error twisted up with ignorance. My two usual sweet stars are hidden; dead among the waves are reason and skill; so that I begin to despair of the port.]

Whereas Petrarch creates an allegorical scene in which a ship in a winter storm at sea cannot reach the port, Scève develops the image of a *corps*e floating on the waves, perhaps after a shipwreck (though such an event is not directly evoked). Hope is mentioned, but in divergent ways by each poet: in Petrarch's sonnet, Hope contributes to the ship's damage (as the destructive wind of a tempest, as opposed to the necessary sea wind in fair weather which moves the ship by filling the sails). Hope is one of three elements composing the

⁴² Nathalie Dauvois has analyzed D164 at length; see her article in *Dix études sur Maurice Scève*, 183-90.

wind which fills the sails so that they rip or become unmoored. Perhaps the “tempesta” in R189 is inspired by Dante’s “tempesta” evoked in Inf. 5 to describe the whirlwind which buffets the lustful: “come far mar per tempesta, / se da contrari venti è combattuto” [like the sea beneath a tempest, when it is battered by opposing winds] (Inf. 5, 29). In Scève’s dizain, Hope rouses the corpse by filling his ears with the name of Délie, thus reviving the floating body, which is Scève himself. Délie’s name is not mentioned explicitly in this dizain (nor is that of Laura named in R189). No tempest is mentioned, no Scylla and Charybdis (anywhere in *Délie*), no rain, no strong winds in D164. Petrarch correlates the ship’s oars with guilty thoughts; the wind in his sails, with sighs and hopes and desires; the rain, with tears. His two guiding beacons, Laura’s eyes as familiar signs of comfort, are absent. Petrarch’s customary skills including reason reason fail him, so that he despairs of a solution. By contrast, Scève opens his dizain by comparing himself to a corpse floating on the waters subject to the wind and waves, bereft even of a ship. His worries or cares fill the waves. The sea imagery gives way to the *Gouffre amer* and the *abysme*, both infernal images filled with death (the many deaths which Scève announced at the outset of his dizain sequence: “*les mortz* qu’en moy tu renouvèles”). We are not presented with a series of allegorical parallels creating the navigation scene of a ship in trouble, as in Petrarch’s sonnet 189. The poetic personae of both Scève and Petrarch express their turmoil, unable to find their way; this involves certain marine metaphors, but the poems’ differences outweigh their similarities.⁴³ Scève’s language reflects a preoccupation with wandering, being lost, confused and trapped in an abyss: the verbs *vaguer*, *errer*, *périr*; and the words *ébat*, *étourdi*. The pair of cognates *fonder* (“toy, Espoir, qui ... te fondes,” line 5) and adjective *profondes* (modifying *vagues*) emphasize the depth of the

⁴³ In their notes, Joukovsky and Defaux, following Dauvois, refer the reader of D164 to Petrarch’s R189, especially the first stanza. McFarlane refers the reader to Henri Weber’s *Creation poétique*, p. 206. Parturier cites R189 and R235. But again, how Petrarchan is dizain 164?

abyss. Scève loses himself, as if drowning: “point ne me congnoissoys”(line 10). The loss of consciousness is comparable to Dante’s at the end of Inf. 5. It represents a loss of reason and clarity; the poet no longer knows himself; he is displaced, confused. In Inf. 20, Dante refers to the “sommersi” (line 3), those who are submerged (in the Eighth Circle). All the shades in hell could be described as submerged, since they are inside the earth. Each time Délie refuses to grant Scève her *mercy* or *bien*, he plunges downward.

D393 evokes a tempest of the passions, and thus may be compared also with R189.

Je voys, et viens aux ventz de la tempeste
De ma pensée incessamment troublée :
Ores à Poge, or’ à l’Orse tempeste,
Ouvertement, et aussi à l’emblée,
L’un apres l’aulture, en commune assemblée
De doubte, espoir, desir, et jalousie,
Me foudroyantz telz flotz la fantaisie
Abandonnée et d’aydes, et d’appuys.
Parquoy durant si longue phrenesie,
Ne povant plus, je fais plus que ne puis. (D393)

Scève does not use the image of a boat as Petrarch does, but the phantasmagoric interior tempest rages, with enumeration of desire, hope, and doubt.⁴⁴ However, “L’un après l’aulture, en commune assemblée” recalls the shades buffeted by the infernal tempest in Inf. 5, which are transfigured from characters to abstract emotions. Otherwise the Scévian turmoil and despair correspond to the condition of the Dantean tempest of the lustful, the latter of which may be read as an allegory of the turmoil of erotic desire.

Scève's poetic collection contains echoes from all three canticles of Dante's *Commedia*, but in a limited, fragmentary and non-narrative form. It is as if in the *Délie* the poet-lover drifts from one state to another without finding stability: the love experience evokes by turns hell, purgatory and paradise, the poet-lover being at the mercy of Délie and his own turmoil. This instability contributes to the paradoxical and ephemeral qualities of

⁴⁴ Henri Weber discusses D393 in the context of R189 in *La création poétique*, p. 205.

the dizain sequence. We recall the lines of Scève already cited, “Doncques espere avec deceue envie / Aux bas Enfers trouver beatitude” (D3, 9-10). The verb *espérer*, while consistent with *envie*, is juxtaposed with the word *déçue* (derived from the verb *décevoir*), the effect of which creates a contradictory motion: there is simultaneous uplift and descent, toward heaven and toward hell. These movements are reinforced in line 10 of D3, which juxtaposes *bas Enfers* with *beatitude*. The poet-lover paradoxically can find contentment or ecstasy in an unexpected place, the hell of love-suffering. Both terms, *Enfers* and *beatitude*, carry religious connotations, the latter deriving from ecclesiastical Latin, *beatitudo*. Yet the situation with Scève and Délie does not unfold in a Christian context, but rather in a courtly love context, where love-suffering becomes a truism, in which the lover experiences strong emotions including joy, anger and sadness. The religious references in Délie appear to serve as metaphors; otherwise certain dizains would be downright blasphemous, extolling idolatry. Still in the same dizain, charmed by the lady's “doux venin” (a Petrarchan oxymoron, after *dolce veneno* in R152), the poet-lover begins to develop his long cycle addressed to Délie, “idolatrer en ta divine image” (D3, 2).

In other dizains, Scève again refers to *beatitude*, which in D152 is rhymed with *servitude*, the latter accenting the courtly dynamic of the lover's fealty, bound to obey his lady as *domina*:

Je sens le noud de plus en plus estraindre
 Mon ame au bien de sa beatitude,
 Tant qu'il n'est mal qui la puisse contraindre
 A delaisser si doulce servitude.
 Et si n'est fiebvre en son inquietude
 Augmentant plus son alteration
 Que fait en moy la variation
 De cest espoir, qui, jour et nuict, me tente.
 Quelle sera la delectation,
 Si ainsi doulce est l'umbre de l'attente? (D152)

Scève reaches for fulfillment in imagining the ecstatic end of his desire for Délie (lines 9-10). These lines endow the dizain with an erotic subtext and undermine the religious connotation of the term *béatitude*. Petrarch expressed a similar sentiment in the canzone R264 about the anticipation of greater pleasure in the future, which is a probable source for line 10 of D152. However, Petrarch's line takes as the point of departure for the comparison his earthly desire which is happy in its ills, "mal suo qua giù sì lieta" (line 51). This is placed in the context of an asexual, spiritual heaven after death, not an erotic encounter: "quanto fia quel piacer, se questo e tanto?" [what will that pleasure be, if this is so great?] (R264, 54). We recall Dante's line in one of the *Petrose canzoni*, though it is not constructed as a question: "se 'l martiro è dolce, la morte de' passar ogni altro dolce" [if the suffering is sweet, the death must surpass every other sweet] (64-65). Petrarch strips away the erotic subtext, but Scève restores it in his own version of the line, in D152. Scève also uses the adjective "doulce", similar to Dante's "dolce".

In the same canzone, Petrarch calls his desire for Laura "falso dolce fuggitivo" [false fleeting sweetness] (line 28) and "ardor fallace" [deceiving flame] (line 45). For Petrarch, beatitude cannot involve union with Laura, either on earth or in heaven, whereas for Dante with Beatrice and yet more so for Scève with Délie, beatitude accommodates at least the shadow of erotic desire with union, despite attempts to purge it from the poet or his poetry. Whereas Scève adapts certain phrases of Petrarch as we see in the example above, a significant distinction emerges between Petrarch and Scève in the underlying framework of beliefs about love.

Scève again pairs *béatitude* with *servitude* in rhyme, adding *ingratitude* in D305:

Mon ame en Terre (un temps fut) esprouva
Des plus haultz Cieulx celle beatitude,
Que l'oeil heureux en ta face trouva,
Quand il me mit au joug de servitude.

Mais, las, depuis que ton ingratitude ... (D305, 1-5)

Again Scève juxtaposes language suited to describe paradise with that for suffering in hell.

One moment he soars to the heights, and the next plunges to the *gouffre amer*. In D69 he writes of being “plongé au Stix de la melancolie” (line 1). The river Styx figures in Dante’s *Inferno*, as one would expect.⁴⁵ In Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* it occurs once in reference to Charon, in a periphrasis of his death: “ch’i non tema del noccher di Stige” [so that I may not fear the ferryman of Styx] (R58, 13). In D370 the reader finds the same set of rhyming words *béatitude/servitude/ingratitude* as above, but in a slightly different order. The word placed first in the rhyme is *béatitude* in both dizains, and the other words descend from that, creating a downward plunging movement that is reinforced in D370 by “cheute au fons”.

De mon hault bien toute beatitude
Est cheute au fons de ton ingratitude :
Dont mes espritz recourvrantz sentement,
Fuyent au joug de la grand servitude
De desespoir, Dieu d’eternel tourment. (D370, 6-10)

With line 10, we recall Dante’s inscription on the gates of hell, “lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch’intrate” (Inf. 3, 9). The poet feels burdened as a shade in hell with the torment of despair. Elsewhere Scève despairs, questioning attainment of the good (the verb he uses is *pénétrer*) : “Or que seroit à penetrer au bien, / Qui au parfaict d’elle jamais ne fault?” In the context of the rest of the dizain, it seems to me that what he means by “parfaict” is Délie’s image, thus, the good which is always true to her image, or which does not degrade her image (?). At the end of the dizain, Scève writes of being lost in Délie’s image: “Et me pers tout en sa divine image” (D397, 10). Elsewhere he states that she is reflected in him (both in his memory and through his poetry about her). He calls his memory “mes tristes Archives” where he keeps

⁴⁵ The river Styx [Stige] is mentioned in Inf. 7, 108 ; 9,80 ; 14, 116.

his pain “en l’obscur” (D192). He considers himself to reflect her image, which therefore she should not destroy:

Et ce divin, et immortel visage
Non seulement les hommes brule, et gele
Mais moy aussi, où est ta propre image. (D230, 8-10)

One mythological figure who represents the destructive power of the image is Medusa.

Dante, Petrarch and Scève all refer to her by name in their poetry.

Just as Scève's vision in D228 is presented as taking place inside him and yet encompassing the entire universe, so in D77⁴⁶ the poet alludes to Prometheus to evoke his personal agony, which is manifested also in universal terms. The earliest mention of Prometheus the Titan is from Hesiod's *Works and Days* (fl. ca. 700 BC); Hesiod associated the name *Prometheus* with foresight, contrasting it with that of his brother *Epimetheus* (thinking after the fact). The extant play *Prometheus Bound*, attributed to Aeschylus and perhaps part of a trilogy, survived in medieval manuscripts. But Scève would have been more likely to know of Prometheus from Latin authors such as Cicero, Lucretius, Ovid, Propertius, and others who wrote of Prometheus. Petrarch mentions Prometheus once in his Latin epic *Africa* (Book 7, line 554), though not in the *Canzoniere* or *Trionfi*. Prometheus has represented a prophet, a defiant genius, an inventor, a creator and defender of humanity who brings fire and civilization to human life, and one who reveals secrets and suffers for it. In the Christian era, Prometheus was interpreted as a figure for Christ, suffering on behalf of humanity. Thus Prometheus, a pagan character, acquired a moralized Christian aspect and was assimilated into the post-antiquity canon of mythological figures.

⁴⁶ François Rigolot and François Cornilliat have commented on this dizain: see Rigolot, *Le texte de la Renaissance* (1982), pp. 175-76, and Cornilliat, “Dizain LXXVII” in *Dix études sur la “Délie” de Maurice Scève* (1987), pp. 49-56.

The dizain is as follows:

Au Caucasus de mon souffrir lyé
 Dedans l'Enfer de ma peine éternelle,
 Ce grand desir de mon bien oblyé,
 Comme l'Aultour de ma mort immortelle,
 Ronge l'esprit par une fureur telle,
 Que consommé d'un si ardent poursuyvre,
 Espoir le fait, non pour mon bien, revivre :
 Mais pour au mal renaistre incessamment,
 Affin qu'en moy ce mien malheureux vivre
 Prometheus tourmente innocemment. (D. 77)

Scève presents himself as symbolically exiled to the Caucasus (a wild, remote place where Prometheus, punished by Zeus, was chained and attacked daily by an eagle which devoured his liver; according to myth, after a long time Herakles killed the eagle with an arrow). The geographical location *Caucasus* and the name *Prometheus* frame the dizain and form a pair. But if Prometheus is a figure for Scève the lover, then why does he refer to Prometheus in the third person, when his torment is described in the first person? We cannot interpret the dizain and its mythological references too literally, or the sense breaks down. François Rigolot writes of D77, “La continuité discursive et narrative se trouve mise en échec par des entorses multiples à la grammaticalité : suppression des mots-liens superflus, accentuation des mot-signes indispensables, valorisation de la substantivité du lexique.”⁴⁷ The infinitives of the verbs *souffrir*, *poursuivre*, *vivre* and *revivre*, used as substantives by Scève, destabilize the subject's identity, rendering the dizain an enigmatic textual abstraction. The adverb *incessamment* makes sense, but the adverb with which it rhymes, “innocemment” does not, except perhaps that Prometheus or Scève is punished although innocent - not guilty - of a crime. He is compelled to chase Délie (“ardent poursuyvre”, line 6) but finds only exhaustion. According to François Cornilliat, Prometheus is the “figure de

⁴⁷ F. Rigolot, *Le texte de la Renaissance*, 176.

l'humaine condition amoureuse"⁴⁸ – experiencing repeatedly a sort of death and rebirth of hope. If Scève identifies himself with Prometheus, then he is divine, and associated with the Pandora myth. Pandora is cited in D2 as an epithet for Délie: “Comme de tous la delectation / Et de moy seul fatale Pandora” (D2, 9-10). On the other hand, if Scève’s persona is mortal, then he is comparable to Epimetheus whom Prometheus warned about Pandora. Pandora, whose name means all-gifted, is given to Epimetheus, with disastrous consequences. Despite her gifts, she is presented in myth as the source of man’s woes. This is apt for the poet’s amatory lament.

Although the name Prometheus is not found in Dante's *Commedia* or *Vita nuova*, his terrible fate is consonant with the idea of a hell where souls are condemned to be punished in eternity. The souls possess the shadow of a physical body only for that purpose: physical torments that ordinarily would destroy a live body are possible only if the body is renewed continuously, just as the liver of Prometheus grows back each night for the eagle to devour it the next day. In that vein, Scève mentions in D77 “mort immortelle” and “peine éternelle” which form the rhyme of lines 2 and 4. The crime is loving and desiring, essentially without fulfillment, and the punishment is the same. The “Aultour” is the bird that preys on Scève the poet. This bird represents his own desire that torments him repeatedly, with such intensity that it is as if he dies, yet he does not, so that the suffering repeats itself, hence his “mort immortelle”. Instead of his body, an organ such as the heart or liver, it is Scève’s spirit that is consumed: “Ce grand désir [...] ronge l'esprit par une fureur telle” (D77, 3-5). Since *l'esprit* is immaterial, it cannot be consumed like a bodily organ, yet that is the comparison that Scève develops. His love is nourished by hope, which in turn causes more suffering (lines 7-8), so that he is between life and death, and no redemption may be

⁴⁸ F. Cornilliat, in *Dix Études*, p. 52.

envisaged. Hope causes his “esprit” to grow back like Prometheus' liver, and the cycle begins anew. The repetition of an experience, and another version of “mort immortelle”, is “les mortz, qu'en moi tu renouvelles” from the dedicatory huitain of *Délie* (line 3).⁴⁹ F. Cornilliat writes, “Il n'est donc pas étonnant que [ce] dizain ... fasse véritablement un sort à l'histoire de Prométhée, en dépit de l'attraction réciproque, déjà codée en pétrarquisme, entre l'histoire du Titan et le motif des morts incessantes.”⁵⁰ Cornilliat is following the note in Parturier which mentions the Petrarchist poet Chariteo as an inspiration for D77. Chariteo conflates the medieval motif of the lover's heart being consumed, with the Promethean myth of the liver devoured nightly by the eagle:

Mi mena Amor, che si nutrisce e pasce
 Del mio cor, che rinasce
 Et cresce ogni hora assai più che non manca
 Devorato di quel bramoso augello ...⁵¹

It is the poet-lover's heart that is repeatedly devoured by the bird, “augello”; however, Chariteo does not specify that it is a bird of prey, but only that the bird is “bramoso”, desirous or covetous. Instead of being an eagle (aquila) sent by Zeus for punishment, the bird seems to serve Amor. While D77 might be inspired in part by Chariteo's poem as Parturier claims, Prometheus is never named in the *Canzoniere* or *Trionfi*, which calls into question the notion that Prometheus imagery should be considered Petrarchist.

The other reference in *Délie* to the name Caucasus is in D149:

Et Helicon, ensemble et Parnasus,
 Hault Paradis des poetiques Muses,
 Se demettront en ce bas Caucasus :
 Où de Venus les troys fainctes Meduses
 Par le naïf de tes graces infuses
 Confesseront (toutefoys sans contraincte)
 La Deité en ton esprit empraincte

⁴⁹ F. Cornilliat writes of D77, “une évidente illustration des “mortz, qu'en moy tu renouvelles” (op. cit., 51).

⁵⁰ F. Cornilliat, in *Dix études*, p. 52.

⁵¹ *Délie*, éd. Parturier, D77, note 2, from Chariteo, Percopo edition, II, 28, canzone 2.

Thresor des Cieulx, qui s'en vont devestuz
 Pour illustrer Nature à vice astraincte,
 Ore embellie en tes rares vertus.

Helicon and Parnassus, evoked together as the ideal places for poetry, where the Muses reside, are contrasted with the Caucasus, where Nature is forced to manifest vice (line 9). According to McFarlane, the three *fainctes Meduses* are in fact the three Graces (“fainctes” because they use their transformative power for good, not evil such as turning mortals to stone). The three are attendants of Venus who will descend, abased,⁵² to the Caucasus. There is a parallel between this passage and D182: « Et Graces sont de la Vertu puissance, / Nous transformant plus, que mille Meduses » (lines 3-4). The “bas Caucasus” is contrasted with “Hault Paradis”, which form an opposition. The Caucasus could simply mean the ordinary, corrupt world, “bas” by comparison with Paradis and les Cieulx. But surely the adjective “bas” is there for a reason, especially because the Caucasus according to classical tradition referred to a mountainous region. Helicon and Parnassus are mountains as well. The inversion of a mountain, however, is a valley or pit. The mountain of Purgatory in the *Commedia* is the spatial inversion of Hell, a cone underground with Lucifer at the bottom and, conversely, Paradise beyond the top of Purgatory. The Graces do not properly belong in a forsaken place, but they descend there, the way other exalted creatures do.

The theme of the lover in hell is a literary commonplace which serves to emphasize the poet-persona’s suffering (if he is the lover) or the sad plight of lovers in general who defy social convention. The episode of Paolo and Francesca from canto 5 of the *Inferno* has long

⁵² McFarlane notes for “se demettrent” (line 3), that according to the Cotgrave dictionary, the verb “se démettre” has the nuance of humiliation.

attracted copious commentary.⁵³ Inf. 5 contains a moral condemnation of chivalric romance which inspires the adultery of Paolo and Francesca, adultery for which they are condemned to whirl around in the eternal storm of the lustful. Dante the poet is primarily preoccupied with courtly love in *Inferno* 5, and as a Christian he condemns its adulterous, subversive nature, since the characters are found in hell. However, the intrigue of the lovers' story draws on the question of their innocence or guilt, considering the author composing the poetry which grants their existence. Dante's ambiguity stems in part from the mild condemnation, since the lovers are located in a shallow circle (the second of nine circles), just below Limbo where illustrious pagan writers reside, and their punishment and suffering are not as acute as those of others in lower circles. In Dante's system, *luxuria* (It. *lussuria*), lust, was the least serious of the capital sins,⁵⁴ and the first level of personal and individual sin (below the pagans in Limbo). Furthermore, Dante himself had composed poetry that comes under the rubric of courtly love, both in the *Vita nuova* and in poems collectively known as his *Rime*. Dante's ambiguity also stems from the question in the canto of whether Francesca or Love bears responsibility for the adultery. Parallels emerge with Scève's poetry in several ways: the emphasis on memory and longing; the compelling nature of the desire; the recurrent theme of hardness (*dure, duro, durus*), both in love and in interpreting textual meaning; the problem of adultery; and the conflict between passion and reason. The lover's suffering in the *Délie* implies a kind of private hell, though it is not hierarchical or external. But through suffering comes purification, as in D434. Scève is subjected to a kind of involuntary ascesis, though elsewhere in the *Délie* he uses terms that imply the opposite, such as the verb *jouir* and the noun *plaisir*.

⁵³ I have relied mainly on the notes of Chiavacci Leonardi (Mondadori), Durling and Martinez (Oxford), and Singleton (Princeton) for key passages of the *Commedia*.

⁵⁴ See *The Dante Encyclopedia*, article "Lustful" by Virginia Jewiss, 577-78.

In the fifth canto, Dante the pilgrim sees the shades of Paolo and Francesca in the whirlwind, and is instructed by Virgil to call to them in the name of love, which will compel them to speak. Thus, even in hell, there is love, even if it is only a memory. In a different context, love (through divine justice) is also mentioned on the gates of hell (“il primo amore”, Inf. 3, 6) – and “primo amore” is cited again at the end of *Paradiso* (32, 142) as a vision of light that Dante is compelled to contemplate. Divine love might seem to be inconsistent with the idea of hell, in which people are tormented in eternity without hope of redemption (unlike Purgatory). But it infuses the place with absolute moral finality.

Dante calls to the couple as would a kindred soul, and his call is so compelling - “sì forte fu l’affettüoso grido” (Inf. 5, 87) - that they come to him. It is Francesca who tells their story; Paolo only weeps. Dante has Francesca’s shade echo the line from Guido Guinizzelli’s canzone, cited earlier, “Al cor gentil reppaira sempre amore” [Love always repairs to the noble heart], particularly the line “Foco d’amor in gentil cor s’apprende” (line 11). Francesca employs a triple anaphora of Amor – Amor - Amor (lines 100, 103, 106), which introduces each *terzina*. She begins, “Amor, ch’al cor gentil ratto s’apprende” [Love, that can quickly seize the gentle heart] (Inf. 5, 100). This is modified by Dante (corrected) with the addition of *virtue*, through Virgil’s parallel statement in canto 22 of *Purgatorio*: “Amore, / acceso di virtù sempre altro accese / pur che la fiamma sua paresse fore” [Love that is kindled by virtue, will, in another, find reply, as long as that love's flame appears without] (Purg. 22, 10-12). Francesca alludes to the rules of courtly love outlined in the dialogues of Capellanus’ *De arte honeste amandi* [*The Art of Courthy Love*], among which the obligation that one who is beloved must respond to appeals of a lover (similar to that taken up by Ficino in the *De amore*), and no one can withstand the power of love. Francesca says to Dante the pilgrim, “Amor, ch’a nullo amato amar perdona” [no one is released from

loving] (Inf. 5, 103). She believes that she is not entirely responsible for her actions. It is a confrontation between the rules of courtly code and those of Christian morality, and the dominant position is evident. Dante presents it as a conflict between passion and reason. It is love as lust that causes the couple to act as they did, to succumb to their desire. Dante implies that indulgence in lust, the logical end in the courtly dynamic, is its damning feature. That surrender disrupts the established social and moral order. At the canto's close, Dante the pilgrim faints upon hearing Francesca tell her story, which indicates the episode's significance (as well as the gap between Dante the author and Dante the pilgrim/character). The pilgrim's loss of reason is analogous to the condemned couple's moment of surrender to their adulterous desire.

Barolini has pointed out that the diction in Inf. 5 is an inverse reflection of Inf. 2: thus *talento* refers in Inf. 2 refers to Beatrice's desire to save the pilgrim (81), whereas in Inf. 5 *talento* means the lovers' desire.⁵⁵ In Inf. 2, *disio* signifies Beatrice's desire to return to heaven (71), or to the pilgrim's desire to move forward on his journey (136), whereas in Inf. 5 *disio* occurs four times and means physical passion; likewise *anima* (Inf. 2, 58) becomes *animal* (Inf. 5, 88), when each lady Beatrice and Francesca respectively address Dante the pilgrim. During the journey from hell to paradise, courtly love is not abolished, but it is purified. We shall see that love-desire is transfigured, but not totally absent from *Paradiso*.

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil writes of love, "quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit" [those whom harsh love destroyed with cruel death] (Book 6, line 442).⁵⁶ In a pagan context, where there is no salvation or forgiveness, this is harsh indeed for the lovers, who may be conceived as tragic figures. In Dante's *Commedia*, the lovers' condemnation is situated in a Christian framework. The sin of lust (often adulterous or otherwise morally unacceptable) is

⁵⁵ See Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, 10-11.

⁵⁶ Quoted in the bilingual edition by Durling and Martinez of *Inferno*, canto 5, note to line 69.

punished through one's relegation to the realm of hell. Dante echoes Virgil's line in his development of the circle of the lustful, as when he writes, “ch' amor di nostra vita dipartille” [(shades) departed from our life because of love] (Inf. 5, 69). Courtly love is implicated, and Dante seems to reject the possibility of lovers to act based upon their passions. Longing and desire must be sublimated and directed toward an appropriate object, which Dante renders divine - meaning Beatrice.

In Virgil's line from the *Aeneid* cited above, we encounter the adjective *durus*, in the topos of harsh love. We have seen that this attribute of harshness was used by Scève in the introductory huitain, with “durs Epygrammes”. Dante used it in several contexts: for the unyielding lady of the *Rime petrose*, and for the corresponding harshness which Dante attributes to his own verses. Figurative harshness can signify the tough exterior which must be penetrated in order to reach the treasure within - like the *substantifique moëlle* at the heart of the dog's bone, according to Rabelais in the prologue to *Gargantua* - whether the treasure is love or exalted understanding (in extracting the meaning from lines of poetry, it might be understanding *about* love).

In the *Inferno*, Dante uses the verb *durare* (to endure) in the inscription on the gate at the entrance to Hell : “e io eterno duro” [I endure eternally] (Inf 3, 8). Interestingly, the word *duro* occurs just after the word love, *amore*: “Fecemi la divina podestate, / La somma sapienza e 'l primo amore” [My maker was divine authority, the highest wisdom, and the primal love] (Inf 3, 5-6). The juxtaposition in the passage of love and eternal punishment, perhaps strange for modern readers, sets the tone for the situation of the lovers encountered in Inferno 5. The *primo amore* is not the same kind of love as the love in which the tragic lovers indulged. We might say that the lovers in the circle of the lustful turned away from the *primo amore*, distorted it, and therefore find themselves there without hope of redemption.

Suffering (“l’eterno dolore”, Inf. 3,2) is mentioned as well on the inscription of the gate of hell. One could interpret passage as follows: love, death and suffering endure in poetry. The Dantean text above the entrance functions as an initiation of sorts – not in the first lines of the first canto, but in the third canto: here begins hell proper. Dante uses the term “duro” again when he asks for Virgil’s help in understanding the inscription on the gate: “Maestro, il senso lor m’è duro” (Inf. 3, 12). This is analogous to the Biblical passage (John 6) concerning the words of Jesus cited earlier, “durus est hic sermo”. According to John Freccero,⁵⁷ Dante creates a pun in this line with the word *senso*, which conflates both the meaning and the letter of the text itself on the gate. And Dante describes the gate as having a “colore oscuro”, *oscuro* reinforcing by means of the physical attribute the notion of “duro” as being impenetrable in meaning. Dante the pilgrim needs the guidance of Virgil to penetrate the hardness of the words written on the gate (the entire scene is created within a text which Dante the author composes, furnishing all responses and interpretations by all the characters).

In the *Délie*, Scève frequently plays with imagery of light and shadows, associated with reason and passion, hope and despair. When light and understanding cannot penetrate the situation, it is obscure and opaque: “Et ma pensée offusquer en tenebres” (D200, 10). Just as Scève the lover struggles with shadows and obscurity, the reader of the *Délie* must penetrate the obscure style of the poet’s dizains to reach the hidden meaning. Likewise Dante, an admirer of Arnaut Daniel and his *trobar clus* style, expects the reader to exert an effort to comprehend the meaning of his poetry, due to the lofty nature of Dante’s message. Petrarch’s *dolce* style, while rich and elegant, does not present a barrier of obscurity that hinders the reader from understanding.

⁵⁷ See Freccero, “Infernal Irony: The Gates of Hell,” in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (1986), esp. p. 99.

Renato Poggioli in his essay on *Inferno* 5⁵⁸ points out that the name Francesca means “French”, and the character was an avid reader of the medieval French romances, including the Arthurian narrative of Lancelot and Guinevere. Francesca is the dominant member of the couple, the only one of the two who speaks to Dante; Paolo only weeps. Poggioli writes, “Dante's scorn is not directed toward Paolo as a separate person, but toward what he stands for; and as such it involves all men who, like him, are the slaves, rather than the masters, of love.”⁵⁹ The broader society usually subordinated women to men, and courtly love's elevation of the lady runs counter to that tendency; thus Dante's handling of the Paolo and Francesca episode reacts also against the courtly ideal of the beloved woman ruling over the lover. Love is conceived as service, and exemplified by Lancelot, Tristan, the lover in the *Roman de la rose*, and troubadour lyric. Francesca explains, “Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse” [a Gallehault indeed, that book and he who wrote it, too] (Inf 5, 137).⁶⁰

Francesca and Paolo, having been murdered by Francesca's husband and Paolo's brother Giovanni Malatesta (called Gianciotto, crippled), are buffeted by the hurricane in the second circle of hell along with the other sinners of their kind. Thus Francesca tells Dante that love led them to one death: “Amor condusse noi ad una morte” (Inf 5, 106). The *Amor* in this line forms part of Francesca's triple anaphora and appeal to love, as mentioned. The lovers are united in death, but not in the usual way. Dante links love and death, but without ecstasy or blissful eternal union. Instead there is only punishment for the fleeting moment of illicit pleasure. Paolo and Francesca do not seem to experience eternally the same desire that brought them there. In other words, they do not lust forever without fulfillment, which

⁵⁸ Renato Poggioli, “Paolo and Francesca,” in *Dante: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Freccero, pp. 69. Reprinted from *PMLA* 72, 3 (June 1957) as “Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno*.”

⁵⁹ Poggioli, op. cit., 72.

⁶⁰ By the time of Dante, Gallehault had come to mean a go-between for lovers, and thus one complicit in facilitating others to sin. Boccaccio calls his *Decameron* a Gallehault in this context.

could be another sort of punishment, akin to that of Tantalus with his hunger and thirst; perhaps Dante rejected this because one can take pleasure in lusting. Dante presents Paolo and Francesca as having taken their forbidden pleasure in that moment while reading the Lancelot romance, acting upon the impulse brought about by a dangerous fiction. Now, that desire and pleasure are finished forever; Paolo and Francesca long only for peace, which is denied them. The endless storm is an example of Dante's "contrapasso",⁶¹ in which the punishment suits the sin committed: the storm corresponds to the passion which overwhelmed the lovers, in an example of analogous retribution as inscribed on the gate of hell. Francesca, no doubt wistful for that unattainable peace, says to Dante the pilgrim: "se fosse amico il re de l'universo, / noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace" [if He who rules the universe were friend to us, then we should pray to Him to give you peace] (Inf. 5, 91-92). Despite the harrowing of hell in which Christ triumphs over Satan and death and brings certain souls up to heaven (mentioned by Dante in Inf. 4, 52-63), there is no discernable hope for Francesca, despite her human appeal as a tragic character.

Courtly love convention exalts the woman and by extension her lover - often the poet who praises her in the case of troubadour lyric poetry - both through renown and through improvement of his character (since love exerts a positive effect on one who loves). However, Dante implies that Francesca, by contrast, brought about her own downfall and Paolo's by her adulterous temptation, which was triggered by the romance reading. Desire compels Francesca, and she sins; Dante condemns human weakness which results in the triumph of desire over the will. The moral condemnation is clearly stated: ("dannati i peccator carnali, / che la ragion sommettono al talento" [they are damned because they sinned within the flesh, / subjecting reason to the rule of lust] (Inf 5, 38-39). For Dante the

⁶¹ From Inf. 28, 142. See *Dante Encyclopedia*, article "Hell" by Teodolinda Barolini, p. 476.

issue is the surrender, which must be resisted. The punishment of the storm is not sexual, but it represents forces beyond their control. The lovers are united in their fate, their punishment, but it is hardly the eternal union lovers long for. Here love leads not to life but to death; not to salvation, but to damnation. The texts of the Arthurian romance tradition and courtly love are implicated in Dante's condemnation, emphasizing the problem of the function of reading such texts.

Even Dante himself is seduced momentarily in Purg. 19 by a siren, the "femmina balba" (Purg. 19, 7) whose stench awakens the pilgrim when her true nature as an "antica strega" is revealed by Virgil, at the request of her opposite, "quella onesta", and this breaks the spell. The siren symbolizes the three vices of avarice, gluttony and lust, which are revealed to be putrid and deceptive.⁶² In accord with the teachings of St. Paul, the passage emphasizes the weakness of the flesh which is due to the senses.

Sceve presents his own version of the tempest of the passions in D160:

Estes vous donc, ô mortelz esbays
De si estrange, et tant nouvelle chose ?
Elle a le Ciel serainé au Pays,
Pour mieulx troubler la paix en mon coeur close.
Et son doulx chant (si au vray dire l'ose,
Et sans me plaindre il me faille parler)
A tranquillé la tempeste par l'air
Pour l'envoyer prendre possession
En ma pensée, et là renoveller
Ma tempestueuse, et longue passion. (D160)

Hell exists as an inner state, seeming to locate itself in the poet-persona's heart and mind, rather than an exterior physical location. The tempest is likewise internalized, rather than being expressed as a literal condition of extreme weather, as Dante describes in Inf. 5. Scève addresses unnamed mortals (readers? fellow lovers? the dead?) to recount an extraordinary event in which Délie - who is not named but implicit - transfers the tempest from the

⁶² See Di Scipio, *The Presence of Pauline Thought in the Works of Dante*, 234-35.

outside world to the poet's own mind, in order to renew his enduring passion for her. This is followed directly by the dizain in which Scève expresses his jealousy toward Délie's husband (D161, cited below). Scève even resolves (apparently without success) to abandon love and resume the use of reason: "Fuyant Amour, je suivray la Raison" (D179, 10).

The theme of adulterous love and its consequences is common to the episode of Paolo and Francesca from *Inferno* 5, and to the poetry of Homer and Scève, among many others. Although Dante did not read Homer directly and his cultural and religious milieux were quite different, still he must have been familiar with the main lines of the Troy story, which was well known in the middle ages, including the Ares and Aphrodite episode recounted (as that of Venus and Mars) by Ovid.⁶³ Referring to the adulterous lovers Ares and Aphrodite in the well-known episode of Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Amilcare Iannucci⁶⁴ points out that it is Apollo who denounces the couple. Apollo presides over poetry and reason, which may be marshaled in order to recount and denounce irrational, destructive acts of passion such as the divine adultery recounted in Homer. The stability of marriage is disrupted by adulterous passion: Homer develops this both in the divine sphere, among the gods, and among mortals with Menelaus, Helen and Paris. The result is social and emotional upheaval both on Olympus and on earth, and what is resolved with laughter in heaven must be purged through violence on earth (the Trojan war).⁶⁵ Scève, who frequently draws upon classical mythology, mentions Venus in twelve dizains, plus the introductory huitain, which begins, "Non de Venus ...". Mars is mentioned in two dizains, and both names together occur in D109:

Mars amoureux voulut baiser ma Dame,

⁶³ See Iannucci, op. cit., p. 96.

⁶⁴ Amilcare Iannucci, "Forbidden Love: Metaphor and History (*Inferno* 5)", in *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives*, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁵ Iannucci, op. cit., p. 95.

Pensant que fust Venus sa bien aymée.
 Mais contre luy soubdain elle s'enflamme,
 Et luy osta son espée enfumée.
 Quand je la vy en ce poinct estre armée.
 Fais, dy je lors, de ceste Cymeterre,
 Que je descende avec mes maux soubz terre.
 Va : ta demande est, dit elle, importune.
 Car j'en veulx faire à tous si forte guerre,
 Qu'aucun n'aura sur moy victoire aulcune. (D109)

Délie shows a fierce spirit, so fierce that she claims with bravado that there will be no one left to challenge her, since she will destroy them all in battle. Both Scève and Délie are shown to have strong passion in them. In D109 the poet requests that she send him to the underworld, that is, to hell. It seems that he is asking her to put him out of his misery. He plays on the word *Cymeterre* which is close to “cimetiere” and which also contains “terre”, as if perhaps to imply that his world is already dead, like a cemetery. In *moyen français*, a *cimeterre*, from It. *scimitarra*, is a type of sword with a curved blade (scimitar).

Although Délie is often identified with the virgin Artemis/Diana, she cannot be in the dizain cited below. Scève's love is identified as adulterous when it emerges that Délie is married, as in D161 where he expresses jealousy:

Seul avec moy, elle avec son partie:
 Moy en ma peine, elle en sa molle couche.
 Couvert d'ennuy je me vouldre en l'Ortie,
 Et elle nue entre ses bras se couche.
 Hà (luy indigne) il la tient, il la touche :
 Elle le souffre : et, comme moins robuste,
 Viole amour par ce lyen injuste,
 Que droict humain, et non divin, a faict.
 O sainte loy à tous, fors à moy, juste,
 Tu me punys pour elle avoir meffaict. (D161)

Scève is tormented by being apart from Délie, who is in bed with her husband in a very human scene, in contrast to the image of the goddess who commands the weather in the previous dizain 160. Scève is alone in hell, without even the company of a partner likewise condemned. He does not consider the marriage legitimate, although society does. Divine

law is fair to all else but the poet-lover, who has a genuine (divine) bond with Délie through his love for her. The marriage bond violates the law of love, to which Scève is subject. He is punished, condemned although she is the one who committed the so-called crime of marrying the husband (who is dismissed as “indigne”). The fault is transferred to her, and he would like to believe she is not happy with her husband, but this does not equal in scale the hell of his own deprivation. Whereas the couple Paolo and Francesca are punished together for their adulterous transgression, Scève is not even able to be with his beloved, and suffers alone. Like the couple at the moment of their surrender (though not after they are condemned), Scève exhibits a total lack of contrition, displacing the adulterous transgression from himself (vis-à-vis Délie’s marriage) to the husband (according to the rules of love). In both Inf. 5 and *Délie*, the husband is silent and absent, only imagined for his rôle which is that of an obstacle to love. Scève, like Dante, is a spectator, but both are greatly invested in the unfolding drama. Dante implicitly compares his love for Beatrice to the love of Paolo and Francesca, and surely this is what causes him to faint. Délie, like Francesca, is dominant over her lover, although it is Scève who writes the poetry that creates and evokes her, just as Dante does with Francesca (whose lover, we have seen, is an anonymous everyman). While Scève does not *morally* condemn himself, he does find himself in a figurative hell. Dante likewise does not condemn *himself*, even as he condemns lust in general, as well as relegating other poets to the refining, reforming flames of Purgatory. The domination of Délie over the poet-lover is so strong that she is the source of both his suffering and his relief, through hope. In *Paradiso*, Dante writes that Beatrice leads him “di bene in meglio” (Par 10, 38).

Dante, who does not write of any amorous involvement between himself and Beatrice in his extant poetry, condemns those lovers who did succumb to passion: Semiramis, Tristan and Iseult, Helen and Paris, and others whose shades Dante sees in the

second circle. Petrarch likewise does not write of erotic involvement with Laura. Scève's writing as a lover about Délie (rather than about an unnamed woman, as in Dante's *Rime petrose* – although the lady's name may be regarded as a *senhal* in any case) thus constitutes a departure from the poetry of both Dante and Petrarch. Most of the verses about the beloved lady by all three poets are concerned with longing, however, rather than the turbulence of a love affair (of which the Roman poets Propertius, Catullus and Ovid wrote). The study of the human heart is pursued through introspection. Only Scève explores an involvement with the beloved (dialogue versus monologue), though it is still couched in symbolic language and mythical context.

Petrarch denounces love as servitude, shifting between service to love and service to the lady, in the *Triumphus cupidinis*. Scève seems to protest less vehemently about servitude, focusing mainly on his own situation as poet-persona, rather than on illustrious legend. Love for Petrarch brings down the man, defeats him, captures him (lovers are described as prisoners), destroys his independence and heroism:

Qual è morto da lui, qual con più gravi
leggi mena sua vita aspra ed acerba
sotto mille catene e mille chiavi. (TC, I, 85-87)

[Some of his captives die forthwith; and some
More pitilessly ruled, live out their lives
Under a thousand chains and a thousand keys.]⁶⁶

For Petrarch the hell of love is akin to a prison. Petrarch catalogues the heroic figures laid low by their women, such as Hercules, Holofernes, and many others.

D125 combines the Dantesque themes of the lady's hardness being like marble from the *Rime petrose*, discussed earlier, with mention of Purgatory. Délie is accused of being more

⁶⁶ The translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi* is from Ernest Hatch Wilkins (1962).

cruel than the experience of passing through Purgatory, and he imagines a condemnation by her ingratitude as confinement to a marble tomb: “Ensevely long temps soubz la froideur / Du marbre dur de ton ingratitude” (D125, 1-2). Délie’s stony ingratitude is akin to the stony unresponsive lady in Dante’s canzoni. The Purgatory in this dizain is harsher than Dante’s conception of Purgatory, which was more optimistic than conventional portrayals.⁶⁷ In this dizain, pain far outweighs hope.

In D228 Scève writes of his simultaneous pleasure and suffering in contemplating Délie, although she is not named in the dizain:

Tout en esprit ravy sur la beaulté
De nostre ciecle et honneur, et merveille.
Celant en soy la douce cruauté,
Qui en mon mal si plaisamment m'esveille,
Je songe et voy; et voyant m'esmerveille
De ses doulx ryz, et excellentes moeurs.
Les admirant si doucement je meurs,
Que plus profond à y penser je r'entre :
Et y pensant, mes silentes clameurs
Se font ouyr et des Cieulx, et du Centre.

Scève's response to Délie is one involving wonder: *il est ravi, émerveillé, il songe, il admire*. There is also clarity: *il voit, il s'éveille, il pense*. Délie embodies the courtly ideals of *la beauté, l'honneur, les moeurs*, and the charm of *les ris doux*. Scève's contemplation becomes so intense that it is as if he loses consciousness (“je meurs”, line 7), so that he goes even deeper into the rêverie or *fantaisie*. The antithetical pairings of douce-cruauté, silentes-clameurs, and éveille-meurs emphasize the double nature of the poet's contemplation, between wakefulness and a dream state. The mystical vision exists across the threshold of either state of being. On the one hand, the poet-lover shouts, causing an incoherent cacophony – to express passion? frustration? joy? it is not clear from the dizain. On the other hand, his entire vision is experienced in contemplative silence (line 9), in his mind. The cruelty (line 3) of Délie is

⁶⁷ See the Introduction of Durling and Martinez in their bilingual edition of Dante’s *Purgatorio*, esp. 9-10.

hidden away, unlike the other attributes of beauty, charm and manners which disguise it. But despite the pain (mal), the poet-lover knows pleasure. An erotic undercurrent may be discerned here, as evidenced by the verb “je meurs” aligned with the adverb *doucement*. The last line of the poem has never been fully explicated. Parturier (1916) associates Scève's use of the term *centre* with his use of it in D330 (“Au centre heureux, au coeur impenetrable”, etc), but McFarlane is dubious of this interpretation. The center of the earth is implied, McFarlane points out, but he does not take it further. The center of the earth according to Dante is the location of hell, and the opposite of hell is heaven, *les cioux*. The *clameurs* of Scève, however silent they may be, are heard in the realms of heaven and hell, here juxtaposed and perhaps combined (which could be comparable to the middle ground of purgatory). A center also could imply a circumference, meaning a circle.

Virtuous love and virtuous poetry, with virtue implying purity, are linked frequently. When Dante the pilgrim meets Statius in Purgatory, in canto 22, Virgil speaks to Dante about love arising from virtue, in the passage cited earlier: “Amore, / acceso di virtù, sempre altro accese, / pur che la fiamma sua paresse fore” [Love that is kindled by virtue, will, in another, find reply, as long as that love's flame appears without] (Purg. 22, 10-12). The love is directed toward the quality of virtue, which is compared to a flame within the person. Virtue will find a response in kind if it gives an outward sign that may be recognized. The immediate context in this discussion is the love between male poets, but the link between love and virtue occurs in a courtly context as well, between lover and beloved lady, in the poetry of Dante and others. The love is evoked by the poetry, and thus it is given existence through the vehicle of the poetry. Virtue is a necessary quality for the Lady to be deserving of the poet's attentions, and likewise the poet must be virtuous in order to be worthy of

loving the Lady. Dante strove to love Beatrice in the right way in the VN, realizing at the end that he had to find the right way to speak of her in order to be worthy.

The name “Delia” occurs once in Dante, in Purg. 29, 78, in a cosmic reference: “il cinto di Delia” [Delia’s girdle or belt] meaning the moon’s halo. Delia is Diana, the moon, so called because she was born on the island of Delos. Dante refers again to her as the daughter of Latona (who is Leto, mother of Diana and Apollo):

così cinger la figlia di Latona
vedem talvolta, quando l’aere è pregno,
sì che ritenga il fil che fa la zona (Par 10, 37-39).

[just so, at times, we see Latona’s daughter
circled when saturated air holds fast
the thread that forms the girdle of her halo]

In this passage, the glow of the moon’s aura is likened to a girdle whose “thread” we perceive. The light of the aura surrounds (encircles) her, like a belt. Who knows whether these passages in Dante contributed to Scève’s choice of the name for his beloved. Dante’s context for “il cinto di Delia” is a procession in which candles are carried whose flames leave a glow in their wake, and that glow contains the colors of the rainbow. The association of Delia with the moon and with light that shines in darkness (like candlelight) is consistent with Scève’s *Délie*, in which light or flame frequently is contrasted with *ténèbres*. Scève enigmatically evokes the concept of being belted, in the sense of being surrounded (one meaning of the verb *ceinturer* was *entourer*) :

Ceincte en ce point et le col, et le corps
Avec les bras, te denote estre prise
De l’harmonie en celestes accordz,
Où le hault ciel de tes vertus se prise. (D173, 1-4)

It is plausible that Scève’s use of the word “ceincte” with respect to *Délie* was adapted from Dante’s phrase “il cinto di Delia”. Already manifesting divine light (the moon’s aura) and divine music (the harmony of the spheres), heaven also values *Délie*’s virtues, which

harmonize with the *celestes accordz*. *Les bras* signify Délie's arms as well as the "arms" (or horns) formed by the crescent moon, in a passage similar to that in D367, which concludes with an erotic image, "L'un coronner mon col, l'autre mes hanches" (line 10). The poet evokes the idea of being surrounded and embraced by Délie in several aspects, via music and celestial harmony, the light of the moon, as well as her body. However, the embrace in a joyous divine place becomes elsewhere a trap or knot for the poet-lover in a miserable forsaken place; hence it is dangerous, but the poet cannot extricate himself.

Scève, like Dante, presents an image of the poet as a smith; here the poet's heart and body contains the forge:

Quand Titan a sué le long du jour,
 Courant au sein de sa vielle amoureuse,
 Et Cynthia vient faire icy sejour
 Pour donner lieu la nuict tenebreuse,
 Mon coeur alors de la fournaise umbreuse
 Ouvre l'Etna de mes flammes ardentes,
 Lesquelles sont en leur cler residentes,
 Et en leur bruyt durent jusques à tant,
 Que celle estainct ses lampes evidentes,
 De qui le nom tu vas representant. (D356)

The reference to Titan (the sun) and to Cynthia (the moon) will be discussed in the next chapter. In dizain 356, Scève develops the image of his body as the industrious forge, like that of Hephaistos [Vulcan], that emits flames and sparks at night (cf. the preceding dizain D355, "Le feu de nuict en mon corps transparent, / Rentre en mon coeur couvrant mainte estincelle ... Ma flamme sort de son creux funebreux, / Où est l'abysme à mon cler jour nuisant). His passionate desire burns through the night like the legendary Sicilian volcano, until Cynthia extinguishes the stars and night turns to day. The forge is also the site for making things (metaphorically, for making poetry), a source of heat and energy. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the Demiurge who created the material world and human beings was like a *fabbro*. Dante and the stilnovi poets had developed *fabbro* imagery that brought about hard and

perfected verses. Dante evokes the *fabbro*'s forge and Vulcan (Hephaistos) in Inf. 14, 52-57. Virgil had alluded to Vulcan (*Aeneid* 8, 422) and in the same passage to Aetna as the location of his forge (*Aeneid* 8, 419). Dante's love poets were purified in the purgatorial fire so that they and their verses would become pure; he performed a sort of editing and correcting of his poetic predecessors. In Par 2, 128, Dante compares God to a *fabbro* (through the discourse of Beatrice, who corrects and teaches Dante the pilgrim in the passage):

Lo moto e la virtù d' i santi giri,
come dal *fabbro* l'arte del martello [emphasis mine]

[The force and motion of the holy spheres
must be inspired by the blessed movers

Thus the metaphor of the smith's forge and tools is extended to divine creation as well as to the poet's labors of composition. By implication, making poetry is divine. Dante refers to Mt. Aetna by name in his Latin eclogues.⁶⁸ Petrarch names Aetna in the *Triumphus Pudicitie* (line 26), and in R41 mentions only Vulcan (whose forge was located under Mt. Aetna). However, there is no comparison in these Petrarchan passages to the poet as *fabbro* or creator working in fire, as we have in Dante and Scève.

Beyond the rhetorical claim of the poet's inadequacy to describe and praise Laura sufficiently, Petrarch in the text of the *Canzoniere* did not dwell on the process of *making* the poetry as a craft, as Dante consciously had done in the VN, alternating prose commentary with the poems (essentially sonnets and canzoni) and developing a kind of manual or workbook for the composition of love poetry following the (so-called) love experience. For Dante, as for Scève, the love and the creation of the poetic work are consubstantial. The process of creation is divine work (as exemplified by the Christian God or the Platonic Demiurge). Thus the poet through his labors approaches the divine, as Dante ascended the

⁶⁸ See Tusiani, trans. and Di Scipio, ed., *Dante's Lyric Poems* (rev. ed.), Egloga II, line 27 ("Ethna") et passim.

many levels to reach the divine light in Paradise (by composing the *Commedia*), and as Scève's poetry was purified in love's flames. The flame, representing the love for Délie and poetry about her, will endure for as long as the world will, according to D449: "Flamme si sainte en son cler durera".

For Petrarch, the love for Laura is manifest in the work of poetry, but by contrast, the labors are hidden, the sources disguised, and the concern is only for the polished, finished result (and the fame and accolades symbolized by the laurel). It is beautiful poetry, but brought forth in shame since the poet's love which gave rise to it is sinful, necessitating the penitence and confessional aspect of the *Canzoniere*. Petrarch's *announced* model is Apollo, who as a god does not struggle in creating poetry: the Muses, under Apollo's purview, are the source of inspiration. Petrarch labored for many years to perfect his lyric poetry, but he did not style his poetic persona as a *fabbro*. Also, his allusion to Vulcan related only to the smith god's forging of Cupid's arrows which struck Apollo and Daphne, not to the labor of his poetic compositions (again, with the emphasis on inspiration, not striving to produce the work).

Scève writes in the initial huitain of *Délie*: « Amour (pourtant) les me voyant escrire / En ta faveur, les passa par ses flammes » (9-10). Scève writes his poetry for and about Délie (creating her as a literary character in the process), praising her in the hopes of winning her favor. All this is done in the presence of the god of love, and the poetry is purified by his flames just as the poet is seared by the flames of his love for the lady. The poetry, like the love it describes, achieves immortality as well through love's refining flames. In Dante's Purgatory, love refines the souls, preparing them for entry into Paradise: "l'amor che qui raffina" (Purg. 8, 120). Fire purifies the lustful souls (*lussuriosi*) in the seventh terrace of Purgatory (25). Paradoxically, the fire that produces dangerous passion (ardor akin to lust)

gives way to the fire that burns away lust, resulting in purity and virtue. The flames of passion are purified through the hard work of poetic refinement, like the soul striving to prepare to enter heaven, purged of flaws. One thinks of the smith working amid red heat, beating the piece of metal until it takes the right shape, or burning away impurities in alchemy to attain perfection – perfection of love, perfection in the verses. Dante compares the composition of poetry to the work of the *fabbro* (Purg. 26, 117), referring to Arnaut Daniel. At the closing of Purg. 26, Arnaut exhorts Dante in Provençal to remember his suffering (“dolor”), and he looks forward to future joy (“lo joi”). Then he disappears into the flames: “Poi s’ascose nel foco che li affina” [Then, in the fire that refines, he hid] (Purg 26, 148). The refining flames of love and of poetry give way in the *Délie* to the “flamme si sainte” of the last dizain.

Scève associates Délie’s virtue with pure gold :

Car ta vertu de trop meilleur alloy,
 Qu’Or monnoyé, ny aultre chose exquise,
 Te veut du Ciel (ô tard) estre requise,
 Tant approchante est des Dieux ta coustume. (D23, 3-6)

At the dizain’s conclusion, the poet mentions her “saint feu” which will burn for posterity. Dante has Beatrice explain to Dante the pilgrim one’s virtue in terms of grades of substances, referring to the moon and its spots, and also to the body by analogy: “Virtù diverso fa diversa lega / col prezioso corpo ch’ella avviva” (Par 2, 139-40) [diverse virtue makes diverse alloy with the precious body it quickens].⁶⁹ Each virtue is like a different alchemical substance; in the *Commedia* the qualities are ranked, with the best being closest to God. By the same token, since Délie’s virtues are of such high quality, heaven covets her.

⁶⁹ Translation of this passage is adapted from Singleton, quoted in Rachel Jacoff in “An Introduction to Paradiso”, *Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 212.

The metaphor of love as a searing flame that consumes the lover is a commonplace from antiquity, and is found in the poetry of Dante, Petrarch, Scève and many others. In Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Virgil evokes the passion of Dido for Aeneas in terms of flames, “a wound or inward fire eating her away” (IV, 2-3); the flame of Dido's desire, once kindled, continued to burn (IV, 76) and led to her death. Dido figures in emblem 13 of *Délie*, and in the corresponding lines of D114: “Croire faudra, que la Mort douce soit, / Qui l'Ame peult d'angoisse delivrer (9-10). The suffering is so acute, without remedy, that death, normally a cause of fear, becomes a relief from the suffering. The subtext being sexual desire, release from it through “la Mort douce” could also imply *jouissance* (the word “jouissance” is used in the last line of D377, as the anticipated reward for loyalty). When Scève asks Délie for death by Mars’ stolen scimitar in D109, he seeks relief again.

Petrarch also uses the commonplace imagery of burning fire to illustrate his love, for example in R207, but the fire does not purify him or lead to ecstasy (while passing through agony): « Di mia morte mi pasco et vivo in fiamme » [I feed on my death and live in flames] (line 40). Petrarch’s love leads to suffering from unrequited love, and his ambivalence and ultimate renunciation mark it as negative, leading ultimately to damnation in a Christian moral schema. In R264, mentioned earlier, Petrarch calls the flame of his love for Laura a falsehood, prefiguring R366. Here is the passage in full:

Ella l'accese, et se l'ardor fallace
durò molti anni in aspettando un giorno
che per nostra salute unqua non vene,
or ti solleva a più beata spene
mirando 'l ciel che ti si volve intorno
immortal et adorno;
ché dove del mal suo qua giù sì lieta
vostra vaghezza acqueta
un mover d'occhi, un ragionar, un canto,
quanto fia quel piacer, se questo è tanto ? (R264, 45-54)

[She set it afire, and if the deceiving flame has lasted many years, awaiting a day that, luckily for our salvation, will never come, now raise yourself to a more blessed hope by gazing at the heavens that revolve about you, immortal and adorned ; for if down here your desire, so happy in its ills, is satisfied by a glance, a talk, a song, what will that pleasure be, if this is so great?]

Petrarch is urging himself already to renounce his love for Laura, and instead to place his hopes in salvation and the more permanent (and morally correct) divine joy of heaven. Here it is the “ardor fallace” that endures (the verb *durare*). A few poems later the reader learns of Laura’s death, which marks the major division in the *Canzoniere*.

In the first canto of Dante’s *Commedia*, Virgil prefigures the pilgrim’s imminent journey through Purgatory as follows:

e vederai color che son contenti
nel foco, perché speran di venire
quando che sia, a le beate genti. (Inf 1, 118-20)

[and you shall see those souls who are content
within the fire, for they hope to reach –
whenever that may be – the blessed people.]

Purgatory is identified as the place where souls are purified by fire, as they are in the seventh terrace, where the poets are found. In the same way but in a different context, Scève suffers the flames hoping to attain his beatitude, Délie, as well as to achieve excellent poetry. The refining process can be painful, as Virgil tells Dante in Purgatory while Dante fearfully contemplates the purifying flames; Virgil explains that here there can be torment, but not death (Purg 27, 21). For Scève, whose poet-lover extinguishes himself only symbolically in the course of the dizain sequence, there is likewise torment but not death, and the ultimate result is good. The implied meaning in both texts is that love conquers death.

Scève repeatedly associates Délie with cosmic harmony. Celestial harmony involves the metaphysical “music” of the spheres, which is imitated on earth in inferior form according to Platonic theory. *Concordia discors* signifies the encounter of opposites which

results in harmony, a central theme of the *Délie*.⁷⁰ Order coalesces out of disorder, union from disparate elements. While the structure of Scève's dizain sequence does not consistently reflect progression in numerical order from the first dizain to the last, still, there is an overall progression of sorts, with *concordia* ultimately emerging as the state of being toward the end of the sequence. Likewise Dante's *Commedia* is structured, more hierarchically and symmetrically, to progress from chaos and darkness to harmony, order, light and perfect virtue. In Dante's heaven there is harmonious music, both emanating from the celestial bodies, and sung by the blessed souls there:

Diversi voci fanno dolci note;
così diversi scanni in nostra vita
rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote. (Par 6, 124-26)

[Differing voices join to sound sweet music
so do the differing orders of our life
render sweet harmony among these spheres]

Whereas Dante refers to the harmony among many souls, Scève focuses on the dynamic between himself and *Délie*, after referring to divine harmony in general:

Tes doigtz tirantz non le doulx son des cordes,
Mais des haultz cieulx l'Angelique harmonie,
Tiennent encor en telle symphonie,
Et tellement les oreilles concordes,
Que paix, et guerre ensemble tu accordes
En ce concert, que lors je concevoys :
Car du plaisir, qu'avecques toy j'avoys,
Comme le vent se joue avec la flamme,
L'esprit divin de ta celeste voix
Soubdain m'estainct, et plus soubdain m'enflamme. (D196)

Even here, the initial idea of *les mortz* is evoked, with renewal and extinction repeated. Hints of ecstasy, defined at times as musical harmony, appear in certain dizains such as in this quatrain:

Leuth resonant, et le doulx son des cordes

⁷⁰ See James Helgeson, *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève* (2001), esp. Introduction.

Et le concent de mon affection,
 Comment ensemble unyment tu accordes
 Ton harmonie avec ma passion ! (D344, 1-4)

And ecstasy is to follow the poet-lover's preparatory process of refinement (*travailler*), according to the first line cited below. Like Beatrice with Dante, Délie teaches Scève:

Incessamment travaillant en moy celle,
 Qui à aymer enseigne, et reverer,
 Et qui tousjours par sa douce estincelle
 Me fera craindre, ensemble et esperer,
 En moy se voit la joye prosperer
 Dessus la doubte à ce coup sommeilleuse.
 Car sa vertu par voye perilleuse
 Me penetrant l'Âme jusqu'au mylieu,
 Me fait sentir celle herbe merveilleuse
 Qui de Glaucus jà me transforme en Dieu. (D436)

Joy transforms the poet into a god. This dizain strays far from orthodox Christian theology, unless we were to interpret "celle" as Mary and the "joye" as Christian grace. Still, to explicate how the lover turns into a god would be difficult by means of an orthodox Christian hermeneutics. Defaux insists that "La délection est spirituelle."⁷¹ Defaux finds that Scève's source for the Glaucus reference (which is found in Ovid's *Met.* 13, 898 ff, as Defaux mentions) is Tullie's praise of a Titian painting.⁷² Glaucus is not found in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, though he is briefly cited in book 2 of the *Triumphus cupidinis* (no doubt after Ovid), but reduced to an impersonal mythological reference, without any relation to Petrarch's poet-persona. However, here is Glaucus in Dante's *Paradiso*:

Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei
 qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l'erba
 che 'il fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi. (Par. 1, 67-69)

[In watching her (Beatrice), within me I was changed
 as Glaucus changed, tasting the herb that made
 him a companion of the other sea gods.]

⁷¹ See Defaux, *Délie*, vol. 2, note to D436, p. 470.

⁷² See Defaux, *Délie*, vol. 2, note to D436, p. 470-71.

This passage is closer to the meaning in Scève's D436 than the Tullie commentary, because Dante is transformed only in the presence of his beloved Beatrice, "nel suo aspetto". Both poets taste the herb and compare themselves in transformation to Glaucus who became divine (a sea god). As Di Scipio points out, Dante cannot directly claim to become a god, which would be blasphemous; so the poet draws a comparison.⁷³ Scève on the other hand writes quite directly, "jà me transforme en Dieu". This implies that he is not as concerned about blasphemy (or idolatry of Délie). Whereas Dante becomes a Christian Glaucus, Scève becomes like the pagan mythological figure. Directly following the passage cited above, Dante uses a neologism, the verb *trasumanare* (Par. 1, 70), to signify "to pass beyond the human" (to transcend).

Dante writes:

... se corpo in corpo repe,
accender ne dovria più il disio
di veder quella essenza in che si vede
come nostra natura e Dio s'unio.
Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede. (Par 2, 39-45)⁷⁴

[if body enters body,
then should our longing be still more inflamed
to see that Essence in which we discern
how God and human nature were made one.
What we hold here by faith, shall there be seen,
not demonstrated but directly known,
even as the first truth that man believes.]

Beatrice and Dante the pilgrim enter the sphere of the Moon, described as *l'eterna margarita* (Par. 2, 34). The moon turns out to be cloud-like rather than solid dense matter (according

⁷³ Di Scipio, *Pauline Thought*, 255.

⁷⁴ This passage is cited in Di Scipio, *Pauline Thought*, 259.

to Dante, the moon gives off some of its own light, besides receiving light from the sun).⁷⁵

The “corpo” passage refers to light entering water (an abstract analogy based in *scientia*) without any displacement, but if we examine the surrounding vocabulary, a subtext emerges: *corpo in corpo repte* [*recepte/ riceve*, receives], *accendere*, *disio*, *essenza*, *nostra natura*, *s’unio*. The episode may be interpreted as hinting at a *hieros gamos*, a divine union (discussed previously in Ch. 2). Driven by the fire of longing for pure essence, Dante and Beatrice reunite in a divine place, without material displacement. At the same time their nature and God were united (literally, they “united themselves”). The words *disio* and *accendere* belong to the vocabulary of love-passion, though they have been used in a religious context (such as by mystics). Even if Dante did not intend any direct allusion to union in human *amore* as opposed to only-spiritual Christian *caritas*, the subtext is present through Dante’s chosen language (which surely is no accident). Dante elsewhere in *Paradiso* uses the word *carità* to refer to love. In Par. 3, 71 and 77, the nun Piccarda Donati (who did not keep her vow of chastity, which is why she is located in the sphere of the moon) mentions *carità* twice; she explains to Dante that “virtù di carità” (Christian spiritual love) calms the will so that souls do not long for more bliss than what their assigned place affords them. However, Dante in this scene describes Piccarda thus, just before she responds to his query: “ch’arder pareva d’amor nel primo foco” [like one who burns with love’s first flame] (Par. 3, 69). *Amor* is never far from Dante, even in Paradise. Dante indicates that he made his journey in soul and body,⁷⁶ so it is not exclusively a *spiritual* union in Par. 2. In any case, medieval allegorical readings posited multiple levels of exegesis.

⁷⁵ See Singleton, *Paradiso*, 2. *Commentary*, Par. 2, p. 43 (in note 32, Singleton cites *De Monarchia* III, 4, 17-18, for Dante’s statement that the moon emits its own light).

⁷⁶ For passages in the *Commedia* which prove that Dante made his journey in soul and body, see Di Scipio, *The Symbolic Rose in Dante’s Paradise*, 24-25. Dante’s vision is a Pauline *visio corporalis* (25).

This passage parallels Scève's longing to be united with Délie, who, as a goddess of the moon, can take different forms (human and celestial). In other words, Délie could be with Scève the poet-persona in her divine domain of the moon. It is plausible that Scève's reading of this passage contributed to his ideas in characterizing Délie. Scève uses *marguerite* (D255, 7) in alluding to Venus as a sea goddess who is still pure, "En volupté non encor esgarée" (line 3). The pearl is analogous to the full moon in its beauty and roundness. In another dizain, Scève writes of the union of one *corps*:

Les elementz entre eulx sont ennemys,
 Movantz tousjours continuelz discors :
 Et toutefois se font ensemble amys
 Pour composer union de ce corps. (D392, 1-4)

Like Dante, Scève employs a discourse based on *scientia* in order to discuss love (in this case, love as a conflict akin to the tension among the four elements; Délie's disdain for the poet-lover induces him to compare her to Eris, goddess of Discord from Hesiod's *Theogony*). Whereas Dante succeeds in his *spiritual* union with Beatrice, Scève's success in union does not occur in this dizain. The dizain illustrates the ancient topos, adopted by early modern writers, of *concordia discors*, mentioned above.⁷⁷ Heraclitus defined love as "harmonia", claiming that from conflict - the tension of opposites - comes harmony, and all is done through discord. In D392 as well as D447, the relation between Scève the poet-persona and Délie reflects this idea, through the material elements. The final result will be harmony, as Dante also indicates in *Paradiso*.

In D4 Scève refers to the Empyrean:

Voulant tirer le hault ciel Empirée
 De soy à soy grand' satisfaction,
 Des neuf Cieulx a l'influence empirée

⁷⁷ For an analysis of Scève's use of *concordia discors* and musical themes in his poetry, see Helgeson, *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève* (Geneva, Droz, 2001).

Pour clorre en toy leur operation (D4, 1-4).

In his critical edition of the *Délie*, Defaux refers to Dante in the notes to D4 as a source for both “Empirée” and “les neuf Cieulx”. The nine spheres, with the sun at the center, originated with Pythagorean cosmogony (McFarlane). Defaux disputes McFarlane’s interpretation of *empirée* in line 3 as “weakened”, and I would concur that it does not make sense in the passage. According to the Dictionnaire Huguet, the verb *empirer* can signify “altérer”, but *empirée* might imply that the nine heavenly spheres manifest in *Délie* (in this context, a divine creature) while they are under the influence of the Empyrean. According to Defaux, Pantin posited that *empirée* was used in its etymological sense (fire): “le ciel a enflammé l’influence des neuf cieulx”.⁷⁸ In any case, the logical source for this dizain is Dante’s *Commedia*.

The Empyrean according to Dante (based on Aristotle’s physical system, imposed on a Platonic model) was the outermost of the concentric heavenly spheres (Empyrean, from Greek *empyrios*, meaning fiery).⁷⁹ Each cosmic body, including the moon and planets, occupied its own sphere. The Empyrean was immaterial, whereas the Primum Mobile was the greatest material body, spinning within it (see Dante, *Convivio* 2.3.3-7). The Neoplatonic conception of the Empyrean was that of divine reality as light, consciousness, and the fire of love.⁸⁰ Dante uses the word *empireo* once, in Inf. 2, 21, in the context of Aeneas being chosen as father of Rome, and the pagan empire would become the (Christian) heavenly one. Dante enters the Empyrean sphere in Par. 30, where he experiences the flash of light and sees the *Candida rosa*. Beatrice is with him.

⁷⁸ Defaux, *Délie*, II, note to D4, p. 20.

⁷⁹ See Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante’s Comedy*, The American Academy of Religion, New York: Oxford UP, 2005, 15-35. See also *The Dante Encyclopedia*, article “Empyrean” by Christian Moevs, 341-42.

⁸⁰ Moevs, *The Dante Encyclopedia*, 341.

While the conclusion of the *Délie* is only somewhat Dantesque (except for the general commonplace theme of enduring love in eternity, facilitated by the poet's writing), the conclusion of the *Canzoniere* is still more Dantesque, because Petrarch, like Dante, ends with a supplication to the Virgin Mary for salvation, even using the words "vera beatrice" (R366, 52).⁸¹ The prayer in Par. 33 is pronounced by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. According to Dante, Beatrice is present with the other saints (Par. 33, 38) and he does not feel the need to renounce her. While Laura is also in heaven, Petrarch (to judge from canzone 366) feels he must give up his sinful love for her, so he shifts his focus from Laura to the Virgin Mary.

The last dizain of Scève's poetic collection is a far cry from Petrarch's concluding canzone and prayer. Here is Scève's poem:

Flamme si sainte en son cler durera,
Tousjours luisante en publicque apparence,
Tant que ce Monde en soy demeurera,
Et qu'on aura Amour en reverence.
Aussi je voy bien peu de difference
Entre l'ardeur, qui noz coeurs poursuyvra,
Et la vertu, qui vive nous suivra
Oultre le Ciel amplement long, et large.
Nostre Genevre ainsi doncques vivra
Non offensé d'aucun mortel Letharge. (D449)

In this dizain, Scève fuses erotic desire with virtue : *ardeur* (located in the heart, while one is alive) and *vertu* (which endures eternally, beyond death). He adheres to the courtly model of love, singing the praises of his lady who will be remembered in his verses. The fusion of love and virtue is also Neoplatonic. It may be interpreted as the synthesis of *eros* and *agape*. This is a modification of Dante's evolution in love from *eros* to *agape*. McFarlane comments in the introduction to his critical edition, "Much is made of the influence which *Délie* can have by her virtue on that of other mortals and especially the poet himself" (41). He adds

⁸¹ Petrarch uses the adjective "beatrice" elsewhere as well, in R72 and R191; in R191 the poet uses the word to refer to his own thoughts of Laura (thus, to himself).

that through Délie's absence, the poet attains greater calm and greater *vertu* (42). My position differs from that of Skenazi and Donaldson-Evans, who posit a conversion to the spiritual life in this final dizain; Skenazi speaks of conversion as part of "une expérience religieuse" (40).⁸² If we read a Christian conversion in the *Délie*, a lineage to Dante may be readily discerned through the *Commedia*. If we were to read a Petrarchan conversion, then we would have to interpret Scève's dizains as containing a renunciation of his passion for Délie, instead substituting a non-erotic, charitable, spiritual love. Such an interpretation would distort what is in the text, if applied too vehemently.

Instead of the Petrarchan laurel, Scève substitutes the juniper, which is also evergreen. The juniper (le genièvre) also evokes the love of Lancelot⁸³ for Guinevere (their love story being the chivalric text that induced Paolo and Francesca to indulge their desire). The term "mortel Letharge" probably comes directly from Petrarch, "mortifero letargo" (*Trionfo del tempo*, 75), but as usual, Scève alters the context and the overall sense; "mortifero letargo" occurs in a passage unrelated to Laura or to love; it is about the passage of time obliterating human achievements.⁸⁴ Scève responds to the Petrarchan *letargo* passage by asserting that the juniper, symbol of love between the poet and Délie, will live forever; by extension, the poetry (*Délie*) will endure despite time's passing, untouched by the oblivion of Lethe.

In addition to the Petrarchan phrase "mortifero letargo", a textual echo that conforms with the sense and context of Scève's Letharge in D449 is found in Purg. 26, spoken by Guinizzelli:

⁸² See Skenazi, *Maurice Scève et la pensée chrétienne*, 40-44, and Donaldson-Evans' article, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling".

⁸³ Henri Weber, *La création poétique*, 201.

⁸⁴ The source proposed for Petrarch's "mortifero letargo" comes from Horace, *Serm.* II, 3, 145: "lethargo grandi est oppressus ..." See Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino, eds, *Francesco Petrarca, Trionfi, rime estravaganti, codice degli abbozzati* (Mondadori, 1996), note on p. 490.

Tu lasci tal vestigio
per quel ch'î' odo in me, e tanto chiaro,
che Leté nol può tòrre né far bigio. (Purg. 26, 106-8)

[Because of what I hear,
you leave a trace within me – one so clear,
Lethe itself can't blur or cancel it.]

Like Guinizzelli, Scève will protect the memory from oblivion. For Dante, through the words of Guinizzelli, poetry (traces of writing) should be read and transmitted through the traces of imitators. A *vestigio* (footprint) is made during an encounter, and the *vestigio*, or *les vestiges* of Délie are clearly delineated, as the impact on the lover in Scève's poetry. Also, Beatrice encourages Dante and Statius to drink from the waters of Lethe (Purg. 33, 96) and Eunoe (Purg. 33, 127), as a final purification. Thus the memory of experience is obliterated, and they are filled only with memory of the good. Scève takes Guinizzelli's position (created by Dante the poet) and opposes the induced oblivion of Dante the pilgrim.

For Petrarch, the desire for Laura is vain in any case, and so is the consequent suffering ("le vane speranze e 'l van dolore," R1, 6). In R366 he blames the causes of his love, which are "Medusa e l'error mio" (R366, 111). But for Scève, the desire and suffering are not in vain: the flame represents their love, whose virtue will live on in memory (inscribed in the poet's verses) for as long as the world is as such and love is revered. This is an affirmation, rather than an abnegation as we find in Petrarch. Scève the poet-lover is inscribing his love for Délie in the illustrious tradition of great loves, a tradition which includes the legendary Lancelot, Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura, and many others immortalized in poetry. The *flamme si sainte* and *luisante* is the flame of love which shines for others as an example, incorporating ardor and virtue even after the body's demise. Scève ends his dizain collection with a final image of flame: "ton saint feu, qui à tout bien m'allume, / Resplendra à la posterité" (D23, 9-10). Just as the poet-lover burned with love

for Délie, the fire in her honor would commemorate her as well as representing his poetry “à la posterité”.

Chapter 5: Scève and Petrarch

Scève's *Délie* often has been called the first French *canzoniere* (recently by Gérard Defaux and François Rigolot),¹ and critics identify Scève as one of the first important poets in France to manifest a Petrarchan influence. The *Délie* typically has been classified under French Petrarchist poetry, and my analysis in this chapter nuances this classification. First we must establish what Petrarchism is understood to be, first in Italy and subsequently in France. Why begin with Petrarchism, rather than with Petrarch? Petrarchism was a European phenomenon, and my discussion will move from the general to the particular. Then we will determine whether Scève's dizain sequence falls into the category of French Petrarchist poetry, and whether such a label is truly accurate for the *Délie*. In so doing, we will compare the *Délie* and the *Canzoniere* including particular passages.

Petrarch's love poetry stemmed from the courtly tradition and *dolce stil novo*, but it differed from both movements as well.² For example, some troubadour poets sought *la joye/joi* of union with the beloved, whereas the stilnovo poets did not. The medieval *alba* genre, the song of regret of lovers parting at dawn after a night of passion, was incompatible with Petrarch's poetry about Laura, despite the fact that in his *Triumphus amoris*, many legendary lovers were presented.

As we saw in Ch. 2, the (male) *fin' amor* poet sang to win his lady's favors, to persuade her of his worth, and to confer glory upon both her and himself. The code of *fin' amor* emphasized the importance of the *innamoramento* and the eyes and sight of the

¹ See Defaux, ed., *Délie* (Geneva, Droz, 2004), vol. 1, Introduction, xi. See also François Rigolot, *Poésie et renaissance* (Paris, Seuil, 2002), 143.

² See Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (1969), Ch 1.

beloved, meaning the poet's gaze upon the lady - a contemplation which inspired love - as well as the power of the lady's gaze. The *amour de lonh* of the troubadour Jaufré Rudel focused on faith, memory and the image of the lady in the poet's mind. Some poets announced that they were motivated by the god of love, as Petrarch does in the incipit "In quella parte dove Amor mi sprona" from R127. Others claimed to sing as a lament to express their suffering caused by unrequited love. The poet entered into a relationship of loyal service - sometimes to the lady, and sometimes also to the god of love, as a vassal serves and obeys a feudal lord; this was depicted in the *Roman de la rose*, when the god of love appeared to Amant as a grand seigneur.³ Petrarch similarly refers to love as "mio signor" (R70, 8).

The courtly poet hoped to obtain from the lady *merci* (Provençal and Italian variants of the word existed – *mercé*, *mercede*, *merzède*, etc) and this was close to the *merci* sought from God or the Virgin Mary in prayer, as well as the mercy sought from the enemy when one was overwhelmed in battle. The poet was subordinate to the lady both by the courtly code and by the love he bore her. The relationship between the poet and lady usually did not evolve, for then the code would be altered and a narrative would ensue. As Maurice Valency and Paolo Cherchi have pointed out, the static, non-progressive nature of the courtly relation between poet and lady allowed for infinite, cyclical variations on the theme of longing, hoping and despairing for love, like an endless refrain. Petrarch adapted this pattern in the *Canzoniere*.

Petrarchism,⁴ meaning the composition of lyric poetry under the influence of Petrarch (usually in sonnets), is understood in relation to the *Canzoniere* more often than to

³ Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman de la rose*, Part I, lines 1878 ff.

⁴ E. H. Wilkins distinguished Petrarchism in the broadest sense from the more restricted Petrarchism relevant for this discussion, within a timeframe ranging from the late fourteenth century until about 1600. See Wilkins,

the *Trionfi*, although the *Trionfi* were printed and read at least as often as the *Canzoniere* (in 1470 and in Bembo's 1501 edition of Petrarch, the two works were printed together).

Besides Renaissance poetry, the *Trionfi* also influenced other arts such as painting and *ballets de cour*.

Petrarchist poetry typically presented a sequence of short form lyric love poems professing praise and longing for an unattainable, beloved, idealized lady. The well known tropes and themes of Petrarchist verse included the following, which became commonplaces:

- antitheses such as fire/ice and sweet/bitter, which expressed the juxtaposition of the lover's joy and suffering due to the lady's unresponsiveness or inaccessibility
- inner conflict, doubt and insecurity about whether the lady returned the poet's sentiments
- wordplay and symbolism based on the lady's name
- importance of the *innamoramento*, including the encounter's time and place
- the poet's love remaining despite the passage of time
- apostrophes to the lady
- description and praise of the lady's physical beauty and attributes, which were stereotypical rather than unique or individual (blond hair, white skin, pearly teeth, and so on).

"A General Survey of Renaissance Petrarchism," in *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch* (1955), 280-81. Quoted in Stephen Minta, *Petrarch and Petrarchism* (1980), 9.

Renaissance Petrarchist poetry may be identified by these characteristics, but they were also present in earlier courtly lyric and stilnovo poetry.⁵ Petrarch's poetry of the *Canzoniere* and *Trionfi* became a vehicle for the transmission of established medieval poetic practices in an elegant style. Dante's poetry cast a shadow over Italian Petrarchism as well as Petrarch's own work, since some so-called Petrarchist practices were to be found in Dante, besides Petrarch having been influenced directly by Dante. What then further identifies Petrarchism? An imitation of Petrarch's language, style, and extensive articulation of the poet's conflicted emotions and passions (often through antithesis) would seem to be in order. Petrarch inspired poets in Europe to strive to achieve elegance in their evolving vernacular languages to approach classical ideals. Beyond these factors, the impact of Petrarch's lyric love poetry may be explained perhaps only by resorting to value judgments: it was good, and appealed to readers.

Petrarch and subsequent Petrarchist poetry participated in the Renaissance cult of beauty, particularly feminine beauty. This aesthetic sensibility as manifested in literary forms had deep roots from the twelfth century or earlier. Before the growth of Ficinian Neoplatonism, Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio⁶ all contributed to this cult of beauty. One example of this is Dante's allusion in VN 6,2 to his list (now lost) of the 60 most beautiful women in Florence.

Despite Petrarch's medieval roots, in general Petrarchism stemmed from readings of Petrarch's Italian poetry rather than from the poets who preceded him. Petrarchism also was mediated by the translations and imitations of other poets in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. Petrarchism did not reproduce all the aspects of Petrarch's poetry; figures like

⁵ Stephen Minta writes, "He [Petrarch] gave to the European tradition no new lyric forms. He was not even responsible for the invention of the 'Petrarchan' conceits which abound in literary histories" (2-3). See *Petrarch and Petrarchism: The English and French Traditions*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1980.

⁶ Boccaccio in the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* (1341-42) and the *Amorosa visione* (1342, second redaction 1355?).

antithesis were more easily imitated and reproduced than other features. Associating one's poetry with that of Petrarch, through a recognizable reference or technique, increased one's prestige: it was like a stamp of admission to participate in the tradition.⁷ For a few poets, Petrarch was another kind of resource as well. While he does not quite identify the *je ne sais quoi* of Petrarch's appeal, Stephen Minta comments:

The significance of Petrarch does not, then, lie in the area of themes and images.

Indeed it is difficult to talk about his significance in a general way at all, though it is clear that he played a major part in the dissemination of the sonnet-form and of the lyrical sequence.... for a host of minor poets, Petrarch acted as a model to be imitated and, for a few gifted poets, as a source of inspiration, an example of what could be achieved in the field of serious love poetry.⁸

The Latin title of Petrarch's lyric collection, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, which only later became known as the *Canzoniere*,⁹ reflected the fragmentary nature of the work, despite its coherence and unity as a carefully ordered sequence. It is thus rather anachronistic to call the *Délie* a French *canzoniere*; the name also echoes the medieval Provençal *chansonniers* which antedate Dante and Petrarch. The title *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* corresponds to the Italian name *Rime sparse* (scattered rhymes), whose words occur in the opening line of the first sonnet, "Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono" (R1, 1). Although Petrarch's lyric sequence was dear to him, since he continuously revised and reordered it from the 1330s until his death in 1374, officially he considered it to be of minor importance (Latin poetry being superior). The collection presents a fictional chronology, for the ordering of the

⁷ See Stephen Minta, *Love Poetry in Sixteenth Century France*, 72.

⁸ Minta, *Petrarch and Petrarchism*, 14.

⁹ The title *Canzoniere* was used to identify Petrarch's RVF only from the late fifteenth century in Italy. In France, the work is known as the *Sonetti e canzoni*, or *Cose vulgari*, following Bembo's 1501 Aldine edition of Petrarch's RVF and *Trionfi*. See Emanuela Scarpa, « 'Canzoniere' : per la storia di un titolo », *Studi di Filologia Italiana : Bollettino Annuale dell'Accademia della Crusca*, 1997, pp. 107-9. This point and the Scarpa article are cited by Alduy in "Scève et Pétrarque : 'De mort à vie', p. 157, note 1.

poems derives from artistic principles.¹⁰ Petrarch's 366 lyric poems include 317 sonnets, and the rest are canzoni, ballads and other lyric forms with varying structures.¹¹

In the book *Pétrarque et le pétrarquisme* (1998) from the PUF « Que sais-je? » series, Jean-Luc Nardone writes: « Pétrarque est un homme nouveau. Premier poète lyrique, premier homme moderne, premier humaniste ... il bouleverse la conception de l'amour poétique ... la belle aimée peut devenir plus réelle, plus humaine ... » (21-22). This critical view of Petrarch's achievement has been commonplace for decades, but it is misleading. We shall see that Petrarch's beloved was not more “real” or more “human” than the female literary characters in other love poetry. Petrarch was hardly the first talented lyric poet, of course. Consider the following statement: “He employs traditional themes of love's tyrannical domain, the lady's superiority and remoteness, and the lover's distressed state of mind.”¹² This quote concerns not Petrarch, but Guido Guinizzelli. The critical statement illustrates the continuity between Petrarch and earlier lyric poets. Another example is Guinizzelli's use of antithesis:

di ghiaccio in foco e d'ardente geloso;
tanto m'angoscia 'l profondo pensare
che sembro vivo e morte v' ho nascoso.¹³

[From ice to fire and from burning to envy ;
Deep thought so torments me
That I seem alive and conceal death.]

Guinizzelli uses fire and ice, as well as life/death motifs in speaking of love. Scève's use of antithesis, like that of the troubadours, is different from Petrarch's: in Petrarch's poetry there

¹⁰ Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, 10.

¹¹ The poetic forms in the *Canzoniere* are as follows: 317 sonetti, 29 canzoni, 9 sestine, 7 ballate, 4 madrigali.

¹² *The Dante Encyclopedia*, article “Guinizzelli” by Rinaldina Russell, p. 466.

¹³ Guinizzelli, sonnet 9, « Ch'eo cor avresse, mi potea laudare », trans. Robert Edwards.

is “une contradiction apprivoisée, harmonisée, dissoute (selon les traces du dolce-amaro pétrarquien).”¹⁴ Scève’s contradictions coexist in tension.

Robert Durling summarizes Petrarch’s relationship to the lyric tradition that precedes him:

Petrarch’s themes are traditional, his treatment of them profoundly original. From Propertius, Ovid, the troubado[u]rs, the *Roman de la rose*, the Sicilians, the dolce stil novo, Dante, Cino da Pistoia there comes to him a repertory of situations, technical vocabulary, images, structures. Love at first sight, obsessive yearning and lovesickness, frustration, love as parallel to feudal service; the lady as ideally beautiful, ideally virtuous, miraculous, beloved in Heaven, and destined to early death; love as virtue, love as idolatry ... the god of love with his arrows ... Conceits, wit, urbane cleverness; disputations and scholastic precision; allegory, personification; wooing, exhortation, outcry; praise, blame; self-examination, self-accusation, self-defense; repentance and the farewell to love. These elements of the world of the *Rime sparse* all exist in the tradition. Petrarch’s originality lies in the intensity with which he develops and explores them, in the rich ... synthesis of divergent poetic traditions, in the idea of the collection itself.¹⁵

Some of the elements listed in the passage above were adapted by Petrarchist poets and became part of the stock of commonplaces in lyric poetry and love sonnets throughout the Renaissance. Durling goes on to emphasize Petrarch’s reading of Dante: the way Petrarch used the troubadour material was shaped by Dante’s example. Dante writes in the VN of how he strove to render a sonnet intensely moving for his readers: “acciò che più paresse

¹⁴ See Risset, *L’anagramme du désir*, 64 and notes 66 and 67; Risset relies on Hans Staub, *Le curieux désir* (1967), Gianfranco Contini, *Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca* (1964, in his edition of the *Canzoniere*), etc.

¹⁵ Robert Durling, *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics* (1976), Introduction, 9.

pietoso, proposui di dire come se io avessi parlato a loro” [so that it would appear all the more moving, I resolved to write as if I had spoken to them] (VN 40, 5). This illustrates Horace’s goal for poetry of *movere* from the *Ars poetica*. The goal of moving his readers, which Dante seeks to achieve in his writing, is also evident on every page of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. Even the number of poems Petrarch chose to include in his cycle was not original. For example, the *Livre de l’Ami et de l’Aimé* [in Catalan, *Libre d’Amich e Amat*]¹⁶ of the poet-theologian Raymond Lull (c.1232 - c.1315) contained 366 *versets* which corresponded to the days of the year.

Stilnovo poets frequently attributed extravagant or divine qualities to the lady being praised. Laura goes to heaven after death, but she does not rule in heaven as a divine figure the way Beatrice does. While Petrarch praises and idealizes Laura, she is not a quasi goddess like Beatrice. Cavalcanti’s poetry does not conform strictly to the characteristics of the *stilnovo* movement, but in general if the lady is considered virtuous, then she is also unattainable, and the love becomes impossible and unreal. The poet’s lament then is not that of a lover involved in an affair, but that of a distant admirer: this is Petrarch’s position.

Let us turn to Petrarch’s views on literary imitation: Petrarch cited Quintilian and Seneca in his *Familiars* letters on *imitatio*.¹⁷ He believed that writers should imitate more than one author, selecting here and there as bees gather pollen and transform it into honey (Seneca); that writers should disguise their models by altering the words used; and that imitation was to be done moderately, counterbalanced by originality – the writer should develop an individual style, with an ideal of *similitudo* rather than *identitas*, which would

¹⁶ Lull’s text forms part of the *roman Blanquerne* [*Blanquerna*]. See Raymond Lulle, *Livre de l’Ami et de l’Aimé*, trans. Patrick Gifreu, Orphée, La Différence, 1989 (bilingual edition). According to Frederick C. Copleston in *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (1952, rev. 1972), pp. 172-75, Lull also wrote of universal harmony, mathematical symbolism and the unity of knowledge (*scientia*). These ideas were espoused also by Dante in his *Commedia*. Lull was profoundly influenced by Sufi literature (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 7-8).

¹⁷ For this section, see Martin L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Ch. 2 “Petrarch”, pp. 22-48.

approach the models too closely. The *Canzoniere* was not copied and circulated as a whole during his lifetime, but for many years Petrarch revised and reordered his private sequence of vernacular love poems. Despite Petrarch's own ambivalence toward Dante, and despite his seeming intention to limit it,¹⁸ Dante's influence has been discerned in Petrarch's Italian poetry (as discussed earlier). In cinquecento Italian literary debates, we saw previously that Pietro Bembo considered Petrarch's poetry to be superior to Dante's (see *Prose della volgar lingua*, 1525, Book 2, Ch. 20, quoted previously), and this view was influential.

Petrarch's lyric poetry made an impression on several generations of Italian poets, including his contemporary and admirer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-75), and later, Cariteo (the Catalan Benedetto Gareth, 1450-1514), Antonio Tebaldeo (1463-1537), Serafino Aquilano (1466-1500), Jacopo Sannazaro (1457-1530), Matteo Boiardo (1441-94) in the *Amorum libri*, Pietro Bembo (1474-1547), Angelo Poliziano (1454-94), and Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-92). As a purist and reformer, Bembo considered the Petrarchan style of poets like Serafino to be ornate and affected.¹⁹ The poetry of Panfilo Sasso (1454-1527), Serafino, Cariteo and Tebaldeo was suited for court entertainment.²⁰ The conceits emphasized by Serafino, Cariteo and Tebaldeo constituted one strain of Petrarchism that influenced writers in France and elsewhere. Followers of Bembist Petrarchism included Luigi Alamanni (1495-1556) who was exiled from Florence and obtained patronage in France, Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), and baroque writer Giambattista Marino (1569-1625), another Italian who spent time at the French court. Cariteo composed in the

¹⁸ We saw previously that Petrarch claimed in a letter to Boccaccio (Fam. XXI, 15) not to have owned a copy of Dante in his youth; he went on to say that he avoided reading Dante for fear of being drawn into his (inevitable) influence.

¹⁹ See article « Serafino Aquilano » in Peter Bondanella et al., eds., *Dictionary of Italian Literature* (revised and expanded ed., Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1996), 538-39.

²⁰ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, 26.

Dantesque *terza rima* (used also by Petrarch in the *Trionfi*). Serafino and others used the 8-line *strambotto* form in addition to sonnets. In the sequence of mostly sonnets *Endimione* (1506) Cariteo praised a woman called Luna, a name which has obvious parallels with the lunar symbolism of Délie.

Bembo and Lorenzo il Magnifico are interesting cases for the present study because their lyric poetry is marked by their readings of Cavalcanti, Dante (notably the VN), and Petrarch. Bembo demonstrates this in the *Asolani* (1505), and Lorenzo in his *Rime* and *Comento ad alcuni dei suoi sonetti*. Both the *Comento* and the *Asolani* are composed in a form combining prose and lyric verse like the VN (the former also recalls the *Convivio*). In accord with the position explicated in Dante's DVE, Lorenzo further enhanced the prestige of the Italian language by assembling what is considered to be the first anthology of Italian verse, the *Raccolta Aragonese*. The *Raccolta*'s prefatory letter, as well as the *Comento* prologue, justified Lorenzo's use of the Tuscan vernacular for aesthetic reasons (political strategy was a factor as well). Lorenzo also wrote Italian poetry in a broad variety of genres (in some poems, such as sonnet 65 from his *Rime*,²¹ with a sensuality that contradicted Petrarch's *pudeur* in his own poetry). The situation of Lorenzo's Florentine circle confirms that Dante's work was still being read alongside Petrarch's, despite Petrarch's fame and influence on Renaissance love lyric. Besides Petrarchism, under the influence of Ficino, Neoplatonism developed in Italy and was discernible in the work of Bembo and Castiglione.

Clément Marot and Mellin de Saint-Gelais popularized the sonnet form in France. Marot and others preceded Scève in France by bringing greater awareness of Petrarch's writings to the court of François I. By this time, Ficinian Neoplatonism began to influence lyric poetry along with Petrarchism in France. Along with such new currents, Marot

²¹ The sensuality in Lorenzo's sonnet 65 is qualified as "inconceivable chez Pétrarque" by Jean-Luc Nardone in *Pétrarque et le pétrarquisme*, 37.

contributed to the interest in the *Roman de la rose*: in 1526, Marot published an adaptation of the *Roman de la rose*. He also probably wrote the first sonnet in French. Concerning one resource (besides Guido Guinizzelli, see below) for Petrarch's use of antithesis in articulating his love for Laura, there is a long passage in the *Roman de la rose*, at the beginning of Jean de Meun's part, in which love is defined and described. The passage contains a continuous series of antitheses which fill 66 lines (4290-4355). The *Roman de la rose* was one of the most frequently copied texts of its kind in the middle ages, and was read by both Dante and Petrarch.

Jean Festugière in *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin* acknowledges the lineage of love lyric, both French and Italian currents, stretching from the troubadours to Renaissance poets, which in the latter group blends with Neoplatonism after Ficino:

À vrai dire, cette poésie amoureuse n'a pas subi l'influence que de la seule philosophie platonicienne. La conception de la femme qu'on y trouve, l'état d'infériorité de l'amant à l'égard de sa Dame, les *circonstances* de leur amour, le langage qu'ils emploient, la subtilité des métaphores, la préciosité du style, tout cela vient de Pétrarque ainsi que des Strambottistes italiens et, par eux, des troubadours et des trouvères du Moyen Age. Il reste beaucoup de traits de l'*amour courtois* chez les poètes comme dans les petits traités amoureux et les romans du seizième siècle.

Au surplus, ce n'est pas seulement grâce à Pétrarque et aux Italiens que la théorie de l'amour courtois est encore goûtée en France, à cette époque. On n'y avait point cessé de lire le *Roman de la Rose* ...²²

A few years after the publication of *Délie*, Thomas Sébillet notes Scève's use of the dizain in his treatise *Art poétique françois* (1548, one year before Du Bellay's réplique in the

²² Festugière, *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin* (Paris, 1941), 2.

Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise, 1549). Sébillet writes: “Le dizain est l’épigramme estimé premier, et de plus grande perfection”. Some dizains of Scève, like the sonnets of Petrarch, Ronsard and others, were set to music.

Five years after the publication of Scève’s *Délie* in 1544, Du Bellay’s *Olive* (1549) and Pontus de Tyard’s *Erreurs amoureuses* (1549)²³ appeared. These two texts are early French *canzonieri* composed in sonnets. Although Pontus de Tyard’s poems are sonnets, the lines are in decasyllables like Scève’s dizains, making the short form poems of the *Erreurs* a cross between those of Petrarch and Scève; in other words, the poems blend the formal characteristics of Petrarch’s sonnets and Scève’s dizains.²⁴ (Other sonnets of Pontus de Tyard are in alexandrine verse.) Olivier Millet has catalogued the poems of Petrarch that Du Bellay imitated directly in his *Olive* sonnets.²⁵ Petrarchism abounds in Pléiade poetry, including that of Ronsard. Du Bellay wrote his poem of 26 stanzas “Contre les Petrarquistes” (notably not in sonnets but in a traditional French form) in reaction to the fashion. This poem is an excellent example of anti-Petrarchism.

In “Contre les Petrarquistes”, Du Bellay, denouncing the Petrarchist idiom, mentions heaven and hell which by this point have become clichés to emphasize the joy and suffering of love:

Mais cest Enfer de vaines passions,
Ce Paradis de belles fictions,
Deguizemens de noz affections,

²³ In a sonnet from the first book of Pontus de Tyard’s *Erreurs amoureuses*, one finds a Dantesque passage: « Mon esprit, las d’estre en prison mortelle, / Cherche aux Enfers, en Terre et Ciel, secours » (I, 48, 7-8).

²⁴ Jacqueline Risset remarks that “Pontus de Tyard a distendu en sonnets l’étoffe compacte des dizains, sa langue n’est pas travaillée mais ornée ; du ton de l’affirmation il retourne – ou régresse – à la plainte pétrarquiste. » See *L’anagramme du désir*, 66.

²⁵ See Olivier Millet, “Du Bellay et Pétrarque, autour de l’*Olive* », in *Les poètes français de la renaissance et Pétrarque*, Geneva : Droz, 2004, 253-266. At the end of his essay, Millet lists each *incipit* of Petrarch with the corresponding sonnet from the *Olive*, 35 in all.

Ce sont peintures vaines (lines 57-60).²⁶

Du Bellay implies that the love-passion is vain, just as Petrarch had qualified it but for a different reason – here not as a moral condemnation, but leading to futility. Both the joy and the suffering expressed in the Petrarchist poetry are fraught with delusions. In scathing opposition to conventional notions of virtue and courtly devotion, Du Bellay writes : « Le plus subtil, qu'en amour je poursuis, / S'appelle jouissance » (lines 135-6). In the same poem, Du Bellay also asserts the French origins of Petrarch's love poetry with a nationalistic bent:

Noz bons Ayeulx, qui cest art demenoient,
 Pour en parler, Petrarque n'apprennent,
 Ains franchement leur Dame entrenoient
 Sans fard ou couverture :
 Mais aussi tost qu'Amour s'est faict sçavant,
 Luy, qui estoit François au paravant,
 Est devenu flatteur et decevant,
 Et de Thusque nature. (lines 145-52)

Du Bellay implies that Petrarch appropriated his art from his own poetic “ancestors” (are the ancestors the troubadours whom Petrarch cites in the *Trionfi*? the authors of the *Roman de la rose*? Du Bellay in the *Déffence* does not think highly of medieval French lyric). Du Bellay indicates that Petrarch's poetry contained artifice which was absent from the French poets; by developing such artifice, he deviated from his models. Thus, the fawning and false qualities of Petrarch's verses are not native to France (Avignon and the Vaucluse) but to Tuscany (Petrarch's region of origin). Du Bellay seems to be fed up with “foreign” influence contaminating the development of French poetic prestige, as poets veer off in precious and irrelevant directions (e.g. “mignardant”, line 127). “Contre les Petrarquistes” reveals Du Bellay's reading of the *Délie* and scorn thereof, in references such as the Caucase (line 93)

²⁶ Quote is taken from Floyd Gray, ed. *Anthologie de la poésie française du XV^e siècle* (2nd ed.), Charlottesville, VA : Rookwood Press, 1999. See 202-7.

meaning Prometheus, who is not named by Petrarch, whereas we have seen that Scève alluded to him in D77. The last line ends with “la plus belle Idée” (208), which could refer to the anagram of Délie as *l’idée*. Finally, “de Thusque nature” echoes “ce Thuscan Apollo” (D417, 6). This constitutes a parody of Scève’s apparent imitation of Petrarch. However, parody aside, Du Bellay and other Pléiade poets considered the *Canzoniere* a worthwhile model in general for the composition of vernacular love poetry. Their Petrarchist imitations are more evident than those of Scève in the *Délie*. Unlike Scève, Du Bellay and Ronsard pillaged the *Canzoniere* for themes, figures of speech and turns of phrase at the rhetorical level.²⁷ In “Contre les Petrarquistes”, where the *Délie* was relegated to the circle of *les pétrarquistes*, and in the *Deffence*, Du Bellay never wholeheartedly endorsed the *Délie* as a serious French poetic model.

Petrarch’s canzone R70 pays homage to various poets at the end of each stanza: the troubadour Arnaut Daniel (with a canso line quoted in Provençal attributed to him in many manuscripts), whom Dante had admired and also quoted in Provençal (Purg 26, 140-47), Cavalcanti, Dante, and Cino da Pistoia. For the last “quote” at the end, which happens to be the incipit of R23, Petrarch cites himself, as the culmination of the lineage.²⁸ Furthermore, as we know, in the *Triumphus cupidinis* (Triumph of Love, IV, 32-57), Petrarch catalogues esteemed love poets: Dante, Cino da Pistoia, Guittone d’Arezzo, the two Guidos (Cavalcanti and Guinizzelli), the Sicilians, Jaufré Rudel, Arnaut Daniel, and other troubadours. This encomium is evidence of the roots of Petrarch’s vernacular lyric poetry. Petrarch spent

²⁷ Terence Cave, “Maurice Scève’s *Délie*: Correcting Petrarch’s Errors”, 116.

²⁸ Even this structure is not entirely original: Peire d’Alvernha’s “galerie littéraire” poem, a *serventès* which begins, “Chantarai d’aquestz trobadors”, devoted a stanza to each of twelve fellow troubadours, commenting in a lively tone mostly on their flaws; the poem culminates with himself, of course, as “majestres es de totz” (stanza 14).

many years in Provence: Avignon (1326-37) and the Vaucluse (1337-53). Scholars of Petrarch such as Gordon Braden have written on the *fin' amor* background in Petrarch. Examples of Petrarch's use of courtly values and vocabulary (*onestate* and *cortesia*) occur in R23 among others, where the poet imagines the virtuous Laura in heaven:

... lei che 'l ciel onora,
ov'alberga onestate et cortesia,
et dov' io prego che 'l mio albergo sia. (R37, 111-12)

[her whom Heaven honors, in whom virtue and courtesy dwell, and where I pray
that I may dwell.]

In the *envoi*, the poet tells his canzone to convey to his lady the message (without touching her hand) that he will come quickly to her:

Non la toccar, ma reverente ai piedi [i.e., non toccare la mano della donna]
le di' ch' io sarò là tosto ch'io possa (R37, 118-19)

[do not touch it, but reverently at her feet tell her that I shall be there as soon as I
can]

Although he addresses his poem as “canzone” (song, a musical sound), the image is a textual one: the poem is written on a piece of paper (or vellum) that the lady would hold in her hand to read, but the poet instructs it to stay at her feet instead, as if even her hand were too intimate a contact for the physical material containing the poem as an object to touch, let alone for the poet to be able to touch her hand (a case of Petrarch's *pudeur*). The means of transmission has shifted from troubadour singing to reading a text, albeit aloud, and thus *cantare* and *canzone* have become mere figures of speech echoing an earlier tradition in the verses.

Petrarch developed a “conception de l'amour poétique,” as Nardone puts it, but he relied upon courtly tradition. As mentioned, the *Trionfi* were written in *terza rima* in imitation

of Dante's *Commedia*, and Laura in the *Triumphus aeternitatis* (the sixth and last Triumph) is closer to Dante's divine figure of Beatrice than to the Laura of the *Canzoniere*:

E tra l'altre leggiadre e pellegrine
 beatissima lei che Morte occise
 assai di qua dal natural confine! (TE 85-87)
 (...)
 se fu beato chi la vide in terra,
 or che fia dunque a rivederla in cielo! (TE 144-45)

[And among all the rare and beauteous ones
 Most blessed she, who long before she came
 To the bound that nature sets was slain by death.
 (...)
 If he was blest who saw her here on earth,
 What then will it be to see her again in heaven!]²⁹

The conclusion of the *Triumphus aeternitatis* is a vision of Laura in heaven and the poet reunited with her. He never gets there, as Dante does to meet Beatrice.

The *Canzoniere* reveals the stamp of Dante's *Vita nuova*. Petrarch's poetic output in sonnets was copious, but Laura was more an ideal than a flesh-and-blood woman with feelings (despite Nardone's claim). We never know Laura, but only Petrarch's poetic persona who is in love with a mysterious lady bearing that name, and who is most preoccupied with himself in the verses. As for Petrarch being the first modern man, let us consider one perspective, that of Timothy Reiss, concerning that assessment.

In Part 2 of *Mirages of the Selfe* (2004), Reiss points out that well-meaning translators have frequently distorted the meaning of Petrarch's original languages, particularly in Latin. For example, the Latin word "animus", translated by Aldo Bernardo as "mind and heart", does not have the connotation of individual interiority that the English terms possess.³⁰ Thus we may read Petrarch through our own "modern" (post-romantic) filter. Even if

²⁹ Trans. E. H. Wilkins.

³⁰ See Reiss, *Mirages of the Selfe*, 304.

Reiss's views are controversial, still it is worthwhile to strive for greater awareness of our critical assumptions and "filters" when we read medieval and early modern texts. The human situation in the world in Petrarch's time (and in Dante's as well, for that matter) did not include a stable "self" as we understand it: people were expected to fulfill rôles and maintain their place in the social hierarchy. Letters were composed according to rhetorical conventions, as opposed to spontaneous impulse. People adjusted their behavior and actions to fit appropriately with the context, and identified themselves with a group, a community, the family clan, a city; one was not a person in individual isolation. This was why exile was such a severe punishment, because it deprived a person of identity and place (Dante and Petrarch's father Ser Petracco were exiled from Florence in 1301 for belonging to the political alliance of the White Guelfs). Reiss writes: "People experienced themselves as being crafted, molded or fashioned into their humanity, working and being worked to become *humanior*, made so by and in their surroundings" (353). This does not make Petrarch a "modern man" as Nardone claims.

Petrarch observed the changeable nature of fortune, of people's taste and preferences over time (Fam. X, 5: 2.314, 2.79).³¹ Rôles, types, and exempla transcended individual persons. As for Petrarch's lyric poetry, the forms and tropes are conventional; the cycle follows the liturgical year, and important dates are carefully arranged; the fragments are collected, gathered into a whole from which the *persona* (Latin for "mask") emerges. Or rather, the present persona is contrasted with the persona of the past, as evoked in the opening poem (quoted below in full): "quand' era in parte altr' uom da quel ch' i' sono (R1, 4). Petrarch's collection, while ostensibly containing love poems, is also concerned with the passage of time and with a quest for eternity which is the resolution of all fragmentation.

³¹ Reiss, *Mirages*, 306.

However, as Reiss remarks, Petrarch, unlike Dante, never achieves a sense of eternity: “He never does so because of his overwhelming sense, constantly repeated, of being materially caught, in life, in a material body” (346).³² Earthly love is the very mark of the soul’s bodily imprisonment (R81, R86).³³ Laura thus *prevents* Petrarch from attaining the divine, instead of being a vehicle for it, as Beatrice is for Dante, and as Délie is for Scève. For this reason Petrarch renounces Laura in R366, and attempts to shift his unrequited devotion to the Virgin Mary instead. It is a profoundly religious event which takes place in the text at the point of R366. R1 and R366, the first and last poems of the collection, reduce and circumscribe the poet’s love for Laura, elsewhere an overwhelming experience of unrequited passion, to a sin and a “breve sogno”.

Laura for Petrarch belongs to the category of the forbidden according to the Church, representing what he should not do but does, after Augustine (e.g. in the *Confessions*) and St. Paul (from Romans 7:15). Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* illustrates the *contemptus mundi* topos (in R1, scorn for the common people; denial of earthly, sensual love), and is a departure from the courtly code of love, which subverted the ecclesiastical position (outlined previously). Both Dante in the VN and Scève in their respective ways adhere to the courtly code ultimately more than Petrarch does. Unlike Dante with Beatrice, Petrarch cannot find a way to synthesize Christine doctrine with his desire for Laura; hence his guilt and final penitential prayer.

The prologue of R1 is also an epilogue, as the collection comes full circle in R1, with its themes of regret and memory. Dante’s literary persona does not regret loving Beatrice; instead, his love evolves. It seems to me that the way to reconcile this with the condemnation of Paolo and Francesca in Inf. 5 is to keep in mind that, first, the

³² Reiss, *Mirages*, 346.

³³ Reiss, *Mirages*, 346.

condemnation is ambiguous (they are in a shallow circle, and Dante is sympathetic to their plight), and second, Dante seems to imply that while the couple did not go about loving in the right way, the poet is not condemning love altogether (that would implicate his own poetry, including that in the VN). Dante judges their lust to be a perversion of love (as Virgil explains in Purg. 17).³⁴ Through the condemnation in Inf. 5, Dante reacts against Guido Guinizzelli's ethics as espoused in his poem "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore",³⁵ which he has Francesca use to justify her behavior with Paolo, and for which she is confined to the circle of the lustful. Dante demonstrates that there are levels of development in love, and he advanced beyond the VN when he vowed to find the right way to love Beatrice (and write about her), through the levels inherent in the structure of the *Commedia*. The love poets who appear in Purgatory are not condemned, but pass through the fire to be purged, just as Dante's poetic persona is purged, to be reunited later with Beatrice. While the imaginary characters (Francesca and Paolo) are condemned, the poets who create them are not, but instead are purified in Purgatory and ultimately destined to reach heaven.

However, for Petrarch's poetic persona there is no Purgatory with respect to his love for Laura. It is condemned in absolute terms, as if he were like Francesca but at a point prior to the sinful act of carrying out his forbidden desire. Augustine condemned lust in the *Confessions*, but *after* he had experienced everything already - not while having been celibate. Petrarch follows Augustine's views on the power and deceptiveness of the images of desire, and on the instability of man's nature: thus his poetic persona wanders in the labyrinth of his own illusions.³⁶ Robert Durling comments: "In [Petrarch's] view sexuality is not a source of

³⁴ Virginia Jewiss, article "The Lustful" in the *Dante Encyclopedia*, 577.

³⁵ Rinaldina Russell, article "Guido Guinizzelli" in the *Dante Encyclopedia*, 466.

³⁶ Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems, Introduction*, 20-21.

integration but of disorder, and the Augustinian answer to it is denial.”³⁷ Petrarch never married, and the *Canzoniere* does not deal with adulterous love, unlike much courtly lyric (the poet-lady relation frequently being adulterous by definition). Thus in the *Canzoniere* the poet’s love for the lady is forbidden only for religious reasons, which drives the conflicted sentiments which Petrarch develops to great effect. Other barriers to union with the beloved are the poet’s love being unrequited, and the lady’s death, perhaps due to the Black Death of 1348, if Laura ever lived.

Laura is chaste, and the relation between Petrarch and Laura, if one can be said to exist, is stripped down to the binary: the poet and the lady (who is absent), with the intercessor of Love. In Dante’s VN there are screen ladies³⁸ and Love, but Dante does not have rivals for the attention of Beatrice. Nor does Petrarch, except for the poem where the poet conquers the sun as a rival (R115); Laura rebuffs the poet otherwise. The entire relation unfolds in the poet’s mind and memory. By contrast, Scève has a rival who excites his jealousy: Délie’s husband (D161). This courtly dynamic of the adulterous love triangle is not in the *Canzoniere*.

To underscore the importance of the gaze in the phenomenon of falling in love, let us consider the matter from the other side of the religious fence, so to speak: the gaze leading to temptations to be avoided by monks. The *Rule of St. Augustine*³⁹ was an influential set of guidelines for monastic life which dates from c. 397. It is one of the oldest rules extant for governing western Christian monastic life. As a reader of Augustine’s works,

³⁷ Durling, *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems, Introduction*, 20-21.

³⁸ In the VN Dante the character/narrator paid attention to other ladies in order to disguise his love for Beatrice; these ladies served as a “screen” for the true object of his love.

³⁹ See *The Rule of Saint Augustine: Masculine and Feminine Versions*, trans. Raymond Canning. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996.

Petrarch was probably familiar with the text. He most likely took vows in the lower orders. Also, Petrarch's brother Gherardo became a Carthusian monk in 1342. The passage cited below comes from Ch. 4 of the *Rule of St. Augustine*, "Safeguarding chastity and fraternal correction" :

4. Although your eyes may chance to rest upon some woman or other, you must not fix your gaze upon any woman. Seeing women when you go out is not forbidden, but it is sinful to desire them or to wish them to desire you, for it is not by tough or passionate feeling alone but by one's gaze also that lustful desires mutually arise. And do not say that your hearts are pure if there is immodesty of the eye, because the unchaste eye carries the message of an impure heart. And when such hearts disclose their unchaste desires in a mutual gaze, even without saying a word, then it is that chastity suddenly goes out of their life, even though their bodies remain unsullied by unchaste acts.

5. And whoever fixes his gaze upon a woman and likes to have hers fixed upon him must not suppose that others do not see what he is doing. He is very much seen, even by those he thinks do not see him. But suppose all this escapes the notice of man - what will he do about God who sees from on high and from whom nothing is hidden? Or are we to imagine that he does not see because he sees with a patience as great as his wisdom? Let the religious man then have such fear of God that he will not want to be an occasion of sinful pleasure to a woman. Ever mindful that God sees all things, let him not desire to look at a woman lustfully. For it is on this point that fear of the Lord is recommended, where it is written: *An abomination to the Lord is he who fixes his gaze* (Proverbs 27:20).

These admonitions address the same subject of the much later *fin'amor* and Petrarchist love poems which focus on the looks passed between (prospective) lovers, while the *Rule* forbids monks to gaze upon women or meet their gaze. Women are believed to be sinful and dangerous because of the sexual temptation they represent for the monks. Desire is impure and leads to sin. This passage contains the essence of the anguished repression and guilt which underlies the tensions in the *Canzoniere* concerning Petrarch's love for Laura. Petrarch sired illegitimate children, and like Augustine, he was not celibate all his life, though celibacy was an ideal which fit his religious sensibility. As a learned cleric, Andreas Capellanus might have been familiar with the *Rule* passage at the time that he composed his *De arte honeste amandi* (*Art of Courty Love*), writing a lengthy description of what happened when a man saw a woman and began to lust after her in his heart.⁴⁰ Petrarch fights the sensuality of this kind of love, but he never manages to sublimate it, whereas Dante does.

McFarlane claims that Scève could not avoid writing in a Petrarchan mode, a mode which had become fashionable in Italy from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was becoming more popular in Lyon.⁴¹ Many of Scève's neo-Latin colleagues introduced Petrarchan themes into their volumes of verse published in 1533-38.⁴² McFarlane sums up Scève's "undisputed" borrowings from Petrarch, the most important Italian poet for Scève, as "discreet and effective; they link *Délie* with the tradition";⁴³ and the number of "undoubted textual reminiscences" is modest. Eugène Parturier in 1916 had published the first modern critical edition of *Délie*, which contained notes attributing many borrowings

⁴⁰ *The Art of Courty Love*, trans. J. J. Parry, pp. 28-29. Passage quoted in Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, p. 18.

⁴¹ I. D. McFarlane, *Délie*, 23-4.

⁴² *ibid*, 24.

⁴³ *ibid*, 26.

from both Petrarch and the Petrarchist poets – one might be left with the impression that Scève was a plagiarist. French critics such as Henri Weber later countered the Italian imitation by emphasizing the native French poetic tradition for Scève, particularly the Rhétoriciens.

According to McFarlane, Joseph Vianey and Parturier had overstated the case for Petrarch's influence on Scève in the *Délie*. He rightly points out that we must distinguish between the *fonds commun* and clear-cut borrowings for which precise sources can be cited.⁴⁴ The reference to Petrarch is clear from the *Délie*'s opening and closing dizains, but the imitation is never slavish and extensive; instead, such framing indicates that Scève is participating in the established lyric tradition. McFarlane emphasizes balance in “the measure of Scève's dependence on, and independence from, the Petrarchan tradition”, and that “Scève at no time borrows wholesale from Petrarch”.⁴⁵

McFarlane's critical assessment of the *Canzoniere*'s influence on the *Délie* differs from that of JoAnn DellaNeva in her book *Song and Counter-Song: Scève's 'Délie' and Petrarch's 'Rime'* (1983), which is a reading of Scève's *Délie* as a noncomic parody (*parodia*, Greek, meaning “a song sung beside”) with respect to Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Since then, DellaNeva has written articles along similar lines about Scève,⁴⁶ as well as the imitative practices of other Renaissance poets. No scholar before DellaNeva had done a book-length study of the rôle of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in the *Délie*. It had been studied and summarized in articles or brief chapter sections by Terence Cave, François Rigolot, Doranne Fenoaltea, and others (most recently by Cécile Alduy).⁴⁷ I critique her book in the section that follows because the

⁴⁴ McFarlane, 25.

⁴⁵ McFarlane, 36 and 37.

⁴⁶ E.g., “The S(c)evered Intertext: Playfully Imitating Petrarch in the *Délie*. *Romance Quarterly* 40:4 (Fall 1993), 195-203.

⁴⁷ Most recently, the issue was synthesized in an essay by Cécile Alduy, “Scève et Pétrarque : ‘De mort à vie’, in *Les poètes français de la renaissance et Pétrarque* (Geneva, Droz, 2004), 157-170.

process of distinguishing my views from those of DellaNeva allows me to develop a comparative analysis of certain aspects of the poetry of Scève and Petrarch, contributing to the assessment of whether Scève's poetry is "Petrarchan".

DellaNeva, referring to the Introduction to his 1966 critical edition of *Délie*, writes: "McFarlane thus restored the *Rime* to its rightful place as the chief source of Scève's poetry and relegated borrowings from the Petrarchist poets to a role of relatively minor importance" (13). But McFarlane also writes that the borrowing must be *reduced* to its proper proportions (in this he revises the views of Parturier and Vianey),⁴⁸ and that Scève borrows primarily from Petrarch rather than from the Italian Petrarchists like Serafino. This is the context for the statement "Petrarch is, in Scève's eyes, the major Italian poet" (26). McFarlane writes of Scève's "comparative lack of dependence" (28), and that we would do better to speak of Scève's Italianism: "Saulnier agrees that at this time there was nothing in France which could be called pure Petrarchism, and this is true of the *Délie* as well; what might more properly be stressed is its Italianism."⁴⁹

DellaNeva emphasizes Scève's imitation in *Song and Counter-Song*, referring to Petrarch as his "poetic master" (14 et passim) and writing, "Scève displays his *deference* towards his master while demonstrating the *differences* between them" (32, emphasis is the author's). Deference?⁵⁰ The *Rime* become a "sacred text" (30, 49) with which Scève engages in "scriptural exegesis" (30). This writer disagrees with such an interpretation of Scève's

⁴⁸ See McFarlane, pp. 23 and 28.

⁴⁹ McFarlane, 28, note 2.

⁵⁰ Based on her footnote 16 (*Song and Counter-Song*, Ch 2, p. 34), DellaNeva seems to have borrowed the deference/difference idea from Claude-Gilbert Dubois, whom she cites concerning Telemachus, a literary character (Odysseus' son) in the *Odyssey* (not an *author* imitating another author). Dubois writes of Telemachus as an archetypal imitator, « [une] imitation déferente, bien que différentielle », in his article « Imitation différentielle et poétique maniériste, » in the *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 51 (1977), 44. I defy anyone to find a deferential *tone* toward Petrarch in Scève's *Délie*. Scève alludes to him, but any honor bestowed is subtle because it occurs through the fact of the allusive mention, never through direct praise or what the text *says* about Petrarch (which all told is relatively little).

connection with Petrarch, and it constitutes a departure from McFarlane's position.

However, DellaNeva later contradicts her "sacred text" statement ten years later in a 1993 article about Scève and Petrarch when she writes: "Clearly Scève, like Ronsard, did not view his Italian precursor's text as a *sacred* entity to be handled reverently; rather, he appears to take Petrarch at his word, treating the Italian's text as a collection of 'fragments'" (emphasis mine).⁵¹ Concerning a certain dizain with an allusion to Petrarch, DellaNeva says in *Song and Counter-Song*, "D417, however, develops a different theme that is, in fact, inspired by a difference source" (34).

Dorothy Coleman⁵² considered Petrarch of even lesser importance for the *Délie* than McFarlane (she was more concerned with the ancient Roman love poets); yet DellaNeva writes, "This rehabilitation of Petrarch as the master to whom Scève turned for material is evident in the work of Dorothy Coleman, who identified new Petrarchan sources in the *Délie* and, what is more, analyzed their function within the imitative poem" (14). However, Coleman argues that Scève diverges from the *dolcezza* of Petrarch and the Italian Petrarchists and instead chooses to be *dur* in his poetry.⁵³ Coleman also writes, "Sensual satisfaction (excluded by both Petrarch and the Petrarchists almost by definition) is not excluded in Scève.... The duality of *Délie*'s nature – chaste and carnal at the same time – is the basis of the cycle's structure and the themes that Scève is exploiting branch out from this central position."⁵⁴ She goes on to observe that there is no human encounter between the poet and Laura,⁵⁵ and that "Religious images are going to be inherent in Petrarch's *canzoniere* whereas they are not in Scève or Propertius and the moral evaluation of Petrarch's experience in love

⁵¹ DellaNeva, "The S(c)evered Intertext", 199.

⁵² Coleman, in *Maurice Scève, Poet of Love: Tradition and Originality* (1975), *An Illustrated Love 'Canzoniere': The Délie of Maurice Scève* (1981), as well as in two articles.

⁵³ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 50.

⁵⁴ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 28.

⁵⁵ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 29-30.

is totally different from the other two poets.”⁵⁶ DellaNeva does not seem to consider this significant distinction in moral positions between Petrarch and Scève to be important, unlike Coleman and others since (including this writer).

DellaNeva analyzes Scève’s imitation of Petrarch in D388, asserting that Scève’s use of the adjective “amer” in referring to Petrarch points to “the lover’s severe moral stance and to his unripe age, [which] thus shows that he is aware of the fact that youth and sinful behavior are closely associated from the start of the *Rime*” (29). Any intelligent reading of Petrarch’s first and last poems of the *Canzoniere*, R1 and R366, will garner the observation about youth (the link between youth and sinful behavior being a cliché of which the Church was all too aware – in fact, its being a cliché was due to the Church’s moral stances on sex and women). Therefore we may safely assume that Scève, regardless of whether it is reflected directly in his poetry, understood Petrarch’s linking of youth and sinful behavior in R1. The point is that Scève did not duplicate this with his own poetic persona in the *Délie*, although he refers to Petrarch’s in D388:

Ce doux venin, qui de tes yeux distille,
M’amollit plus en ma virilité,
Que ne fait onc au Printemps inutile
Ce jeune Archier guidé d’agilité.
Donc ce Thuscan pour vaine utilité
Trouve le goust de son Laurier amer :
Car de jeunesse il aprint à l’aymer.
Et en Automne Amour, ce Dieu volage,
Quand me voulois de la raison armer,
A prevalu contre sens, et contre aage. (D388)

While Scève does at times find himself in the dilemma of being torn by the conflict between reason and passion, as DellaNeva rightly states, Scève’s position is *not* that of Petrarch: unlike Petrarch’s persona with regard to Laura, Scève’s persona is not burdened by guilt and the pervasive sense that his erotic desire for Délie is *morally* forbidden, even if the poet is

⁵⁶ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 30, note 1.

intimidated by Délie's *vertu*. The word *amer*, though it alludes to Petrarch, has a different connotation (as is usually the case in Scève's poetry) with regard to the poet himself, from the laurel's bitterness for Petrarch's own verse; D388 transmits no sense of sinfulness associated with Scève's love, however *amer* it might be. It is simply absent from the text. Scève differentiates his own case from Petrarch's in D388: Petrarch finds his unrequited love bitter later in life (having fallen in love while young); by contrast, Scève falls in love later in life (at age 36) against "sens", "raison" and "aage".

It is not likely, without misreading the text (as Parturier was found to have done), that one will find *strong* intertexts with Petrarch or Petrarchist poets, nor do they appear in the *majority* of Scève's dizains. I found DellaNeva's reading of the *Délie* to be rather reductive as well as fraught with internal inconsistencies. For example, she undermines her own case by stating, "the *Délie* participates in many traditions at once, and no single interpretation can pretend to do justice to the complexities of this work" (14). Nonetheless, she dismisses previous critics such as Saulnier, Weber, Parturier and Vianey on the basis of the "methodological weaknesses of their arguments" (13). This is unfortunate, since frankly Saulnier's critical work on Scève presents a greater contribution than DellaNeva's. How different should an "imitative" work be from its source before we call it divergent, another literary production altogether? DellaNeva seeks to justify the label of noncomic parody by defining it in the wake of Russian Formalist theory, to wit: "such a work conforms to its formal features, but subverts its codes, deviates from its norms and disrupts its *vraisemblance*" (12).

Let us compare some features of the two texts in question:

Canzoniere:

366 poems in Italian

Délie:

450 poems in French

317 endecasyllabic sonnets	449 decasyllabic dizains
the rest in lyric forms (canzone, etc)	plus one introductory huitain
no illustrations or emblems	50 emblems with accompanying mottoes
time structured with the liturgical calendar	? allusion to phases of the moon
division in 2 parts, in vita/in morte di Laura	Délie does not die
Laura does not marry	Délie marries
text unpublished (manuscript form)	text printed in Lyon, 1544 ff
renunciation in last poem	no renunciation of love
Laura (lauda, laurels, poetic glory, immortality)	Délie (triple moon goddess, Neoplatonic anagram of <i>l'idée</i> , play on <i>déliar</i> , Delia)
sun symbolism	moon symbolism
love for Laura unrequited	union occurs between poet and Délie
not directly Neoplatonic	Neoplatonic
inspired tremendous imitation	rarely imitated, though rather influential
courtly tradition manifest	courtly tradition manifest

If these may be considered the formal characteristics of each work, then the *Délie* cannot be said to “conform” consistently to the main formal features of the *Canzoniere*. The most significant difference in form between the two texts concerns Scève’s choice to use the epigrammatic dizain rather than the sonnet, the dizain forming the tight unit of a 10x10 structure for each poem. Scève did not intersperse chansons, rondeaux or other lyric forms with the dizains, nor did he reproduce Petrarch’s number of poems or the liturgical year. Also, Délie’s name is derived primarily from the mythological rather than the botanical (unlike the *Olive*, in which Du Bellay adopts the *olivier* instead of the Petrarchan laurel, as an alternate symbol of glory from antiquity).⁵⁷ In sum, only with a broad and superficial definition of the Petrarchan idiom, whose features we saw are not original to Petrarch, can we accurately call the *Délie* Petrarchan: it is a long sequence of short love poems to an inaccessible lady, with exploration of the poet’s interiority, and a few (in proportion to the large number of dizains in total) textual borrowings.

⁵⁷ Minta, *Love poetry*, 46.

DellaNeva asserts that R1, R264 and R366 provide structural pillars for Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in the confessional aspect of the work.⁵⁸ In comparing the structure of Scève's *Délie* to it, she alludes to D1 and D449. But this succeeds only superficially, because the *Délie* is not penitential, nor does it posit a Christian conversion. D1 and D449 contain allusions to Petrarch and thus frame the collection, but there are no "pillars" of a genre different from the dizain interspersed to provide a structure, as R264, R366 and other canzoni function as structural pillars in the *Canzoniere*. R1 is a sonnet, so in terms of genre it does not belong in the same grouping as the collection's canzoni. Ernest Hatch Wilkins had established that before Petrarch, it was customary to keep different genres separate (e.g., canzoni, ballate, etc) in the Provençal and Italian manuscripts. From Dante's VN, Petrarch derived the idea to place canzoni as structural nodes or pillars at varying intervals among the short poems.⁵⁹ The structural symmetry of the *Canzoniere* recalls the VN. Scève's *Délie* is a *canzoniere* only insofar as it constitutes a collection of short form love poems (again, not in sonnets). Scève does not use other poetic forms in his collection, whether French or Italian (besides the introductory *huitain*, which is only a minor departure from the dizain).

Besides the broad conception of genre (as lyric sequence), the similarities between the *Délie* and the *Canzoniere* appear mostly at the level of individual poems, rather than through the overall sequences as a whole: for example, D235-D236 in relation to the canzone R126 "Chiare fresche e dolci acque", or the sonnet R35 "Solo e pensoso" in relation to D224 and D226.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the textual reminiscences recall more than one source: the Diana and Actaeon myth, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (book 3) which was read by

⁵⁸ *Song and Counter-Song*, 89 ff.

⁵⁹ Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, 11.

⁶⁰ JoAnn DellaNeva has explicated the intertextuality of these poems in two articles, respectively: "Image and (Un)likeness: Mirroring Other Texts in Scève's *Délie*" (in *A Scève Celebration, 1544-1994*, 43 ff) for D235-D236 and R35; and, "The S(c)evered Intertext: Playfully Imitating Petrarch in the *Délie*" (1993), 195 ff, for D225-D226 and R126.

Dante, Petrarch and Scève, presents the scene of Diana bathing in the spring waters. Scève's use of *liqueurs* ("L'image d'elle en vos *liqueurs* profondes", D235, 8, emphasis mine) recalls the Latin "liquido" of the Ovidian passage⁶¹ rather than Petrarch's language. Also, Scève's "ondes" (D235, line 10) recalls Ovid's "unda".⁶²

Scève evokes the charms of Délie's body, including her "seinz precieux" (D236, 7), as Petrarch did of Laura in R126 with "angelico seno" (line 9). DellaNeva rightly points out Petrarch's use of the adjective "angelico" as adding a religious connotation to the description, which counters the sensuality.⁶³ This is an intertext, and an imitation if we qualify that the sensuality of Scève's language is a significant distinction from Petrarch's text: "angelico seno" and "seinz precieux" are far apart as evocations of the lady's body-as-landscape. And unlike DellaNeva, I find that Scève's use of religious or spiritual vocabulary (such as *ciel*, *divin*, *sacré*, *adorer* and so forth) is not necessarily Petrarchan at all.⁶⁴ We recall R366 to the Virgin Mary, and that Scève does not repent and fear damnation for idolatrous, obsessive, sensual love. Some of Scève's spiritual vocabulary might be linguistically similar to Petrarch's, but the meaning develops in a different moral context, less devotional (less Christian?) in tone than that of either Petrarch or Dante. DellaNeva claims that Scève "follows Petrarch's initiative" (83) in being "tempted by the sin of idolatry"; yet for Scève idolatry is no sin. Scève idolizes and adores Délie, as he announces at the outset of his dizain collection. He writes, "Je preferoys à tous Dieux ma Maistresse / Ainsi qu'Amour le m'avoit commandé" (D16, 1-2). There is no indication that it is sinful for him, as it is for Petrarch. Scève does not follow Petrarch's initiative in this. Petrarch's use of religious

⁶¹ "Hic dea silvarum venatu fessa solebat / virgineos artus liquido perfundere rore." (Met. 3.163-64)

⁶² Met. 3.200, the moment when Actaeon sees the image of himself with horns reflected in the water: "Ut vero vultus et cornua vidit in unda."

⁶³ DellaNeva, "Image and (Un)Likeness", 48.

⁶⁴ DellaNeva writes, "The nexus of religious vocabulary in R126 ... finds a counterpart in D235-236 ... without always resorting to exact translation." See "Image and (Un)Likeness", 49.

imagery even in his love poetry fits with a Christian worldview, whereas Scève's does not – it could be branded as idolatrous or blasphemous to equate Délie with a moon-goddess, to “adore” her both spiritually and sensually, as when the poet writes of her as “Constituée Idole de ma vie”. Coleman comments on Petrarch's love: “There is an awareness that love is sinful: to record one's *errore* is therefore to take a Christian attitude to love which is totally different from that of either Propertius or Scève.”⁶⁵ She adds, “We can see how completely Scève departs from Petrarch in his treatment of the fragile relationship between two people in love. Quite apart from the way Scève expresses the experience, the orientation and attitude are totally different from Petrarch.”⁶⁶ Concerning Petrarch's use of “morte” and “morti”, it does not have an erotic connotation, whereas in Scève's poems *les mortz* do.

DellaNeva writes, “Scève began ... to write a sequence of love poems that would outshine the work of the French master of the age [Marot] by reverting to the even greater authority of the Italian poet” (18). But if Marot had already translated some sonnets of Petrarch, then why would Scève diverge from the growing trend for sonnets, if he wished only to ride on Petrarch's coattails to poetic fame in France, as it were? From what we know, Scève lived and wrote quietly; he did not chase after poetic glory the way Petrarch or Ronsard did, for example. Of course he wished for his poetry and love for Délie to become immortal (D449), but the link between poetry and immortality is a commonplace from Greek antiquity. Scève used Petrarch as a point of departure, entered into dialogue with his work, and composed something substantially different. Is the *Délie* only a “rewriting of the *Rime*”⁶⁷, created in response to that text, as DellaNeva claims that Scève's readers recognized

⁶⁵ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 29.

⁶⁶ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 30.

⁶⁷ *Song and Counter-Song*, 19.

it as such? Let us not forget that the *Délie* “participates in many traditions at once”. There is imitation, translatio, invention, and reworking of topoi in the text. There is also much in the *Délie* that is not in the *Rime*.

DellaNeva goes on to identify the *Rime* as an “encyclopedic text”⁶⁸, which shows a misunderstanding of the meaning of *encyclopedic*. The word *encyclopedia* (from the Greek “enkuklios+paideia”) literally means “teaching around” or a circle of instruction. Early modern encyclopedism signified a way of assembling and organizing knowledge, and connecting its parts (an example is the lack of clear separation between the disciplines of theology and “science” [scientia] in the early modern period, which scholars would not endorse today). Petrarch’s sequence is a rich text, and it is a source for style, language and topoi of love poetry, but its purpose and genre are hardly encyclopedic. Dante’s *Commedia* may be qualified as encyclopedic in terms of medieval learning, but Petrarch’s *Rime* are not. In any case, the word is anachronistic when applied to Petrarch or Dante: the term *encyclopaedia* was coined by fifteenth century humanists who misread their texts of Pliny and Quintilian.⁶⁹ The roughly corresponding medieval versions would be the *florilegium*, *summa*, or *speculum* (such as the mid-thirteenth century *Speculum maius* of Vincent de Beauvais).⁷⁰

DellaNeva claims that Scève’s allusion in D388 to Petrarch as love poet “differs considerably” from the allusions of earlier rhétoriqueur poets like Marot or Jean Lemaire de Belges. Here again are the relevant lines:

Donc ce Thuscan pour vaine utilité
Trouve le goust de son Laurier amer :
Car de jeunesse il aprint à l’aymer (D388, 5-7).

⁶⁸ *Song and Counter-Song*, 22.

⁶⁹ William N. West, *Theatres and Encyclopedias in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2002), 2.

⁷⁰ Michel Beaujour (among others) has commented on the medieval *speculum* as an encyclopedic genre, and of the *Speculum maius*. See Beaujour, *Miroirs d’encre, rhétorique de l’autoportrait* (1980), 30-35.

This passage contains an allusion and remark about Petrarch, but it does not praise him except by implication through the act of mentioning him. We may contrast this with Jean Lemaire's line "bon Petrarcque, en amours le vray maistre."⁷¹ It is Jean Lemaire who openly calls Petrarch "master", and not the discreet Scève. By comparing the allusions of the rhétoriqueur poets to "the mention of Homer's name by medieval poets who never read his work", DellaNeva implies, following Minta,⁷² that they might not have read Petrarch's poetry. While this is plausible for minor poets, it is certainly invalid for Marot. *Someone* in France had to first read Petrarch's Italian poetry, at least in part or with partial understanding, and Petrarch spent many of his adult years writing while residing in Provence, not in Florence or Rome. DellaNeva concludes that until the time that Scève composed his poetry, previous references (including those of Marot) invoked Petrarch as "an authoritative representative of tradition and not as a unique poetic personality" (26). However, the French poet who first *translated* a few sonnets of Petrarch, and who spent time in exile at the court of Ferrara in 1535-36, was not Scève but Marot; we have no concrete evidence that Scève traveled to or lived in Italy, though both Marot and Scève evidently were perfectly capable of reading and understanding Petrarch's *Rime* in the original Italian.⁷³ The assessment of the Rhétoriqueur poets, including Marot, by both Minta and DellaNeva - who derives her point from his work - illustrates the late Gérard Defaux's statement (even coming after the publication of François Cornilliat's 1994 book on the Rhétoriqueurs, *Or ne*

⁷¹ Jean Lemaire de Belges, from *Temple de Vénus*, line 6. Quoted in F. Joukovsky's edition of *Délie* (Garnier, 1996), note to D388, p. 357.

⁷² Minta, *Love Poetry in Sixteenth Century France* (1977), 72-76.

⁷³ A French translation, by Vasquier Philieul, of Petrarch's *Rime* was not printed until 1548. Concerning Marot's *Chant des visions de Pétrarque*, Jean Balsamo writes: "Il offrait, pour la première fois, une traduction qui voulait être littérale et complète. La version témoignait d'une parfaite compréhension du texte italien et il semble peu probable que le poème français eût été composé à partir d'une traduction antérieure due à un autre que Marot, tant il rend compte de l'original, en termes poétiques.... L'initiative du travail revenait toujours au roi, qui en avait donné l'ordre au poète." See Balsamo's article, « Marot et les origines du pétrarquisme (1530-1540) », in *Clément Marot 1496-1996* (Paris : Champion, 1997), 326.

mens), that « Clément Marot est encore aujourd'hui un poète largement méconnu. »⁷⁴ In a footnote citing Stephen Minta, Franco Simone, Mia Cocco and C. A. Mayer, DellaNeva acknowledges the lack of scholarly consensus for her position concerning Marot: “The question of Marot’s use of the Petrarchist idiom in his own poetry remains a thorny one”.⁷⁵ This is inconsistent with her statement, cited above, in the text of *Song and Counter-Song* (26). Coleman, by contrast, observes that Scève’s adaptation of classical themes is closer to Marot in the 1530s than to the “showy experimentation with tradition” of the Pléiade poets, but that Scève “differs from Marot in the *durs* aspects of his poetic technique.”⁷⁶

There is nothing wrong with incorporating medieval and Renaissance, French and Italian sources together within an assessment of the poetic influences on either Marot or Scève: for the latter, this includes Dante, Petrarch, the *Roman de la Rose*, and Alain Chartier, among others. It need not be an either/or proposition, if accurate, just as the distinction is artificial between “medieval” and “Renaissance” scholarship. Marot and Scève were working before 1549 - the year of Du Bellay’s *Deffence et illustration* and the impact of his judgments on the reputation of both pre-Pléiade poets - and long before Pasquier’s *Recherches de la France* (1590s). By 1549 and with the rise of the Pléiade poets, sonnets were becoming a popular form in French poetry, and literary tastes were shifting. But if Scève were to consider anyone to be a poetic “master” from whom to learn and perhaps to surpass, it would be his fellow French contemporary Marot, whom he met in Lyon when Marot associated with the *sodalitium lugdunense* in 1538 (if the two had not met earlier). Again, Scève made the aesthetic choice of dizains for his sequence, rather than sonnets. Marot contributed significantly to

⁷⁴ See Gérard Defaux, article “Marot”, in Michel Simonin et al., eds, *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises, le XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Livre de Poche « La Pochothèque », 2001, p. 796.

⁷⁵ DellaNeva, *Song and Counter-Song*, note 4 to p. 26.

⁷⁶ Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 53.

the development of French Petrarchism. Both Marot and Petrarch, for different reasons, influenced Scève's poetics.

DellaNeva implies that Scève draws upon a single text, that of Petrarch (22), and that his text is of overwhelming importance for the *Délie*. In an extravagant psychoanalytical interpretation of the Scève-Petrarch relation, embedded in an analysis of D417 and R208, she writes:

The Frenchman reverently describes his literary master as the incarnation of Apollo, the god of poetry himself, and solemnly proclaims the immortality of his love story. But this apparent deference merely masks a more profound desire to overthrow the previous literary dynasty and to subvert all that it has created. In this situation, the filial relationship between master and imitator has gone awry; in its most extreme form, the hostility of the emulating poet manifests itself as an uncontrollable urge to annihilate his model, to kill the literary father with whom he vies for the love of the same muse. (37)

Here is the dizain in question:

Fleuve rongéant pour t'attitrer le nom
De la roideur en ton cours dangereuse,
Mainte Riviere augmentant ton renom,
Te fait courir mainte rive amoureuse,
Baignant les piedz de celle terre heureuse
Où ce Thuscan Apollo sa jeunesse
Si bien forma, qu'à jamais sa vieillesse
Verdoyera à toute eternité :
Et où Amour ma premiere liesse
A desrobée à immortalité. (D417)

It is Petrarch, not Scève, who establishes himself as an incarnation of Apollo and a poet laureate. Scève identifies Petrarch that way only because Petrarch develops this identity in the *Canzoniere*, and it is recognizable to readers of Petrarch. Terence Cave points out that "Scève, in the last two lines [of D417], sets his own love next to Petrarch's, he makes no

reference to his *poetic* powers, and I do not believe any is implied: indeed, his rejection of such an obvious opportunity should, I think, be taken as significant” [author’s emphasis]. This illustrates Scève’s discretion and subtlety. Scève’s reverence is lavished on the river Rhône, which the poem apostrophizes. “Liesse” (*joie*) in line 9 echoes “liesse” in D413, line 6. There is *translatio* from Avignon to Lyon, which the same river Rhône courses through (joining the Saône in Lyon). The passion of the flowing waters is described to symbolize the passion of the poet’s love; the dizain, like D413, has an erotic subtext (as DellaNeva, following J. Risset,⁷⁷ points out).

Cosmological references are common to Scève, Dante and Petrarch. Let us revisit the first quatrain of Scève’s dizain 356:

Quand Titan a sué le long du jour,
 Courant au sein de sa vieille amoureuse,
 Et Cynthia vient faire icy séjour
 Pour donner lieu la nuit tenebreuse (D356, 1-4)⁷⁸

“Titan” has been interpreted to mean both Tithonus and Titan,⁷⁹ both of whom are associated (in different ways) with the cyclical change between night and day. According to DellaNeva,⁸⁰ either interpretation is plausible (whereas only one is logically possible), but in the case of Scève’s “Titan” as Tithonus (which she privileges in *Song and Counter-Song*), the myth of Aurora and Tithonus is used in a strange way to evoke a lunar dawn. Cynthia in any case is the moon, and when she emerges, the reunion of the mythical lovers symbolizes the

⁷⁷ Jacqueline Risset, *L’anagramme du désir : Essai sur la Délie de Maurice Scève* (1971), 41.

⁷⁸ The Aurora-Tithonus myth, as interpreted in D356 and in Dante’s *Purg.* 9, 1-3, are discussed in DellaNeva, *Song and Counter-Song* (1983), 62. DellaNeva bases her argument on Grandgent for the obscure Dante passage as being a lunar dawn. In Purgatory, where Dante-pilgrim was located, it was about 8:45 pm, while in Italy it was 5 am at that moment.

⁷⁹ In the notes to D356, 1, Parturier identified Scève’s “Titan” as Tithonus, emphasizing the literary vogue for referring to the change from night to day as Aurora leaving her mortal companion’s bed. McFarlane corrected this, claiming a conflation of two deities named Titan, and interpreted Scève’s Titan as the more ancient god Titan, whose consort is Terra. DellaNeva indicates that both are possible, but if Scève’s reference is to Titan and not Tithonus, then the Dantean passage she quotes from *Purgatorio* 9 is unrelated to it.

⁸⁰ See DellaNeva, *Song and Counter-Song*, 60-63.

cosmic transition from day to night: the liminal moment of sunset and moonrise occurs at dusk. DellaNeva cites a passage from the *Commedia* to compare with D356. To indicate the hour, Dante alludes to what DellaNeva considers to be a lunar dawn, following Grandgent et al., in an equally baffling passage that opens Purg. 9:

La concubina di Titone antico
già s'imbiancava al balco d'oriente,
fuor de le braccia del suo dolce amico (Purg 9, 1-3)

[Now she who shares the bed of old Tithonus,
abandoning the arms of her sweet lover,
grew white along the eastern balcony]

Petrarch for his part also mentions Tithonus: “O felice Titòn, tu sai ben l’ora / da ricovrare il tuo caro tesoro” (R291, 5-6). Petrarch’s Aurora is used in the *Canzoniere* as a *senhal* for Laura, and he puns on her name *l’Aurora/Laura ora* in the same sonnet R291, lines 1 and 4.⁸¹

The Rhétoriqueur poets commonly referred to the sun as “Titan”, following Boccaccio’s *Genealogy of the Gods* (*Genealogiae deorum gentilium libri*), and this makes the most sense for the “Titan” passage in D356; “sa vielle amoureuse” is Titan’s consort the sea, into which the sun plunges at the end of the day (*vielle* could mean “she loved him long”).⁸² DellaNeva does not indicate that she consulted notes in other editions of the *Commedia* to see whether they concur with Grandgent, whose interpretation followed that of E. Moore (1887). Singleton presented the arguments for both sides of the Aurora debate in his *Purgatorio* edition (vol. 2, *Commentary*, 1973).⁸³ The authoritative Mondadori critical edition of Dante’s *Commedia*⁸⁴ mentions the alternate interpretation of the lunar dawn (“l’aurora lunare”, *Purgatorio* 9, note to lines 1-9, p. 285). But considering the way Dante used mythological references, and he

⁸¹ See notes to R291 in Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. Marco Santagata (Mondadori, 1996), pp. 1155-56.

⁸² See note to D356 in Joukovsky edition of *Délie* (1996) which builds on McFarlane’s notes (1966).

⁸³ See Singleton, Purg. 9 in *Commentary*, 175 ff.

⁸⁴ Dante’s *Commedia*, 3 vols., ed. Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, Mondadori, 1994.

would not have diverged from Virgil's version of Aurora,⁸⁵ the lunar dawn version is discounted as "non ammissibile". Furthermore, there was Biblical precedent in the way Dante used *concubina* for Aurora as wife (uxor), not mistress, in the sense of *compagna di letto*. Therefore, while Dante, Petrarch and Scève all participated in the broader tradition of referring to mythical deities in a cosmic context, DellaNeva's comparison of "Aurora and Tithonus" (really Titan the sun) from D356 with the Dantean passage and with the Petrarchan sonnet, while understandable, is unfortunately probably invalid. Titan cannot then constitute an "inversion" of Petrarch's sun imagery in this case, as DellaNeva claims, since in D356 Titan signifies the sun, not the moon. Petrarch's reference might have been inspired by Dante's passage, however, since both poets clearly refer to the myth of Aurora and Tithonus. In D356, as in the preceding D355, Scève refers both to dawn and to dusk, and in D356 to sun and moon. This is no longer a question of inversion of "Petrarchan" imagery.

While it is true that Scève's poetry, with an unusual degree of understatement for the time, refers to Petrarch twice and to no other poet, in D388 and D417 (through antonomasia rather than direct naming: "ce Thuscan Apollo", etc), this does not suffice to render Scève a devoted and faithful Petrarchist – or even to infer that Scève wanted to destroy Petrarch's legacy. We must balance the interpretation of such references with a consideration of what Cécile Alduy has described as "l'écart fondamental" within a range "de l'identification à la différenciation": Scève distinguishes himself from his predecessor "tout en s'assurant un statut d'égal et de compétiteur".⁸⁶ This is a more accurate interpretation of Harold Bloom's theory of poetic rivalry from *The Anxiety of Influence*, which DellaNeva mentions in *Song and Counter-Song* (14).

⁸⁵ Virgil, *Aeneid* 4, 584-5 and 9, 459-60; *Georgics* I, 447.

⁸⁶ Alduy, 158.

During a discussion of Scève's final dizain of the *Délie*, D449, DellaNeva states:

"Scève sees no need to transcend his desires, to transform his passion into a mystical experience which will lead to eternal salvation; instead, he is content to achieve worldly fame and enjoy earthly pleasures until the end of time."⁸⁷ Yet even death will not separate the lovers, according to Scève. My interpretation differs from DellaNeva's in that Scève's poetry contains indications of a mystical *love* experience, which does not imply denial or repression of the erotic aspect (so the love cannot be strictly Christian); Petrarch's love experience is not mystical, nor is his renunciation and petition to the Virgin Mary to grant him salvation. As Reiss stated, Petrarch is imprisoned in the body (with respect to earthly love). Petrarch does not succeed in transcending his desire for Laura, nor does he seek to transform his love for her into a mystical experience which will lead to eternal salvation. He believes that his love for Laura *prevents* him from attaining eternal salvation. Dante, on the other hand, transfigures his passion for Beatrice and attains a mystical experience (culminating in silence during Par. 33); he writes of *luce eterna* and *vivo lume* that is akin to the *flamme si sainte*, both symbolizing divine love that humans evidently can reach, for Dante and Scève bear witness to it. Scève is not content only with "worldly fame" and "earthly pleasures"; again, I find this reductive. Scève never gives up the physical, sensual, human aspects of love, so paradoxically the love both transcends and is embodied through the passion of desire; there is both exaltation and plunge to the depths.⁸⁸ Immortality is divine, and the love that Scève sought to evoke in his hermetic poetry was not merely about the pleasures of love (as certain ancient Roman love poetry was). It was more serious and ambitious than that. Dante and Scève did not renounce or regret the love for the lady, because its path led to divine love.

⁸⁷ DellaNeva, *Song and Counter-Song*, 97.

⁸⁸ For an analysis of themes of the body in Scève's poetry, consult Thomas Hunkeler, *Le vif du sens: corps et poésie selon Maurice Scève* (Droz, 2003).

This is where Petrarch as a poet significantly parts ways with them; he would never equate *ardeur* and *vertu* within love (from D449), but Dante would (as we saw in Ch. 4). *Ardeur* has nothing to do with Christian piety or religious zeal either. Dante in Par. 33 uses similar vocabulary that commonly functions to describe human love in lyric poetry, such as *l'ardor del desiderio*, *il dolce*, and *amor* (Par 33, lines 48, 63, and 145, the last line of the *Commedia*).

Dante also uses a verb of alchemy, *distillare* :

quasi tutta cessa
mia visione, e ancor mi distilla
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa. (Par 33, 61-63)

[my vision almost fades completely, yet it still distills within
my heart the sweetness that was born of it.]

The distillation (here, of the vision's sweetness) is an alchemical process that brings out a substance's virtues or essential qualities. The process is comparable to that of purifying and refining poetry, to which both Scève and Dante allude, as we have seen. Scève uses the verb *distiller*, also with the importance of sight for the poet-lover, in the opening line of D388, as we saw: "Ce doux venin, qui de tes yeulx distille".

In the conclusion of *Song and Counter-Song*, DellaNeva observes that the structural differences between the lyric collections of Petrarch and Scève are significant: "the fixity of the *Délie* ... serves to contrast with the fluidity of Petrarch's poetic sequence" (101). She goes on to say that Scève "refuses to accept the organizing principles, thematic developments and stylistic features so clearly defined in the Petrarchan prototype. One possible explanation for Scève's deviations from Petrarch's established norm may be based on the strikingly different world views embraced by Petrarch and Scève" (101). This structural difference between the two texts becomes "inversion" and "counter-genre", so as to preserve the alleged strong connection between them. The governing premise from the beginning of *Song and Counter-*

Song that the *Délie* allegedly conforms to the *Canzoniere*'s "formal features" has been cast aside.

One might wonder at this point why I have taken the trouble to point out some of the problems with DellaNeva's book. There are two main reasons. My case for Dante's poetry as part of the literary background for Scève's *Délie* must take into account the rôle of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in the *Délie*, which she treats in her book, the only full-length study of the topic. Dante is Petrarch's (post-classical) major predecessor for love lyric. The second reason is that her book is cited incessantly: any post-1983 discussion of Scève and Petrarch mentions this work, including all the recent critical editions of *Délie*. In his 2004 critical edition of the *Délie*, Defaux classifies her work with that of the *travaux fondateurs* of Scève criticism: Rigolot, Cave, Fenoaltea, Donaldson-Evans and Skenazi.⁸⁹ Therefore *Song and Counter-Song* is a major point of reference on a major subject in Scève criticism. The book analyzes a work that was composed in the 1530s-1540s, during which the doctrine of *imitatio* dominated poetry.

Incidentally, after various database searches, I found no book reviews of *Song and Counter-Song*, so I cannot compare my views with those of others; statements here are entirely my own. Whether other scholars agree with DellaNeva's book or not, they cite it frequently in a neutral manner to refer to specific issues or individual dizains, if not the entire general topic of Petrarch's influence on Scève. I have tried to demonstrate that we need to be cautious about *relying* on *Song and Counter-Song*, because at times it is flawed and inconsistent.

Let us consider an alternative perspective of *Délie* as un-Petrarchan. Joseph Pivato in an article (also from 1983) went so far as to call the *Délie* "un-Petrarchan" and hermetic.

⁸⁹ See Defaux, *Délie*, I, xxxix and note 39.

Pivato traces the *Délie*'s designation as a Petrarchan text back to Parturier and Vianey (1916 and 1909, respectively). Pivato situates the *Délie* in the hermetic tradition which transcended regional borders, and compares Scève's use of "dur" (as in *durs Epygrammes*) with Quintilian's "aspera et dura" and Dante's "aspr' e sottile". Pivato disagrees with McFarlane who denies that Scève followed an "aristocratic hermeticism" as other Neo-Latin poets of his time did.⁹⁰ Pivato writes, "Notwithstanding Parturier who tends to regard *Délie* as Scève's attempt to reproduce the *Canzoniere* in French, it is apparent that the Lyonnais poet is not blindly imitating the Petrarchan models. Scève is aware of the traditions he is using and combining, and he consciously modifies them to his own artistic purposes."⁹¹

The incomplete, disjointed quality of the form of Petrarch's sequence corresponds to the poet's fluctuating sentiments toward Laura, and at the same time contrasts with the consistent smoothness of Petrarch's style. This smooth, polished style is not imitated by Scève. Horace in the *Ars poetica* wrote, "Brevis esse laboro / obscurus fio" [I labor to be concise, I become obscure] (lines 25-26)⁹² and this did not become Petrarch's practice but Scève's, using the condensed epigrammatic form of the dizain. Where Petrarch's style was smooth and charming, Scève wove together condensed thought and argument. Within such a close-knit structure, Scève's images revolved around the rhetoric of thought and argument; they contrasted with Petrarch's rhetoric of style which functioned to please the reader.⁹³

In the first sonnet of the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch announces his intentions for the whole collection. Petrarch edited and carefully organized his poems over many years, so that the

⁹⁰ McFarlane, Introduction, 1. Quoted in Pivato, "Maurice Scève's *Délie*: UnPetrarchan and Hermetic," *Studi Francesi* 79 (1983), 17.

⁹¹ Pivato, 17.

⁹² Quoted in Dorothy Coleman, *Poet of Love*, 12-13.

⁹³ Joseph Pivato, "Maurice Scève's *Délie*: UnPetrarchan and Hermetic." *Studi Francesi* 27:1(79) (1983 Jan-Apr), 19.

sequence does not follow the order of composition. The first sonnet contains a reflection that has developed only after much time has passed. Let us examine the poem again:

Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
 di quei sospiri ond'io nudriva 'l core
 in sul mio primo giovenile errore
 quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'i' sono,
 del vario stile in ch'io piango et ragiono
 fra le vane speranze e 'l van dolore,
 ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
 spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.
 Ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto
 favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
 di me medesmo meco mi vergogno;
 et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,
 e 'l pentersi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente
 che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

(You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart during my first youthful error, when I was in part another man from what I am now:

for the varied style in which I weep and speak between vain hopes and vain sorrow, where there is anyone who understands love through experience, I hope to find pity, not only pardon.

But now I see well how for a long time I was the talk of the crowd, for which often I am ashamed of myself within;

and of my raving, shame is the fruit, and repentance, and the clear knowledge that whatever pleases the world is a brief dream.)⁹⁴

According to this initial sonnet in his collection, Petrarch hopes to obtain pity and forgiveness (from the reader, from God, and perhaps from himself) for the suffering his incurable love has caused. This rhetorical stance implies that the poet intends to persuade the reader that his love has indeed involved tremendous suffering, which merits attention, pity and pardon as for one who has sinned, in the Christian confessional context in which Petrarch places his love for Laura. The *pietà* and *perdono* of R1, line 8 are similar to the traditional *merçé/mercede* which the troubadours would seek from the beloved lady, and not from the listener/reader (the former, when the poetry is transmitted *à l'oral*). However,

⁹⁴ English translation is by Robert Durling (1976).

Petrarch does not seek pity and forgiveness from Laura herself, according to R1: the exchange is not between poet and lady, nor is it addressed to the reader about the lady. Instead, the poet seeks a certain response from his reader about his own past, which has transformed him “in parte” (line 4). The first sonnet frames this desired response, and in subsequent poems the poet evokes his conflicted love for the lady in elegant language. The words *core*, *errore*, *dolore* and *amore* (lines 2, 3, 6, and 7) rhyme and conceptually fit together in the Petrarchan schema. If they were arranged in a circle, the logic would reflect the movement of the poetic sequence as a whole: love is ignited in the poet’s heart, he errs, straying from the path, and he suffers, but the unrequited love remains, and the cycle begins anew. There is no progression or union with the beloved, however, unless we include the poetic production which both generates and results from the “cycle”.

The repeated use of the adjective “vane” in line 6, along with the verb “vaneggiare” (line 12), as well as the word “vergogno” emphasizes the poet’s guilt, shame and sense of transgression that ends in futility. There is irony, for another end result of the poet’s love, besides shame and futility, is the poetry, introduced by the sonnet in question, which Petrarch composed and edited. Furthermore, we know about Laura only as she is evoked in the poems, not as a biographical or historical certainty. As I mentioned earlier, the name Laura, symbolizing the poet’s quest for fame, functions like a Provençal *senhal* to disguise the lady’s true identity. Likewise we may regard the shame consequent of that love as existing, likewise, only as it is evoked in the poems. That said, Petrarch struggled with his love for Laura, as well as with his thirst for glory, which are linked metonymically through the wordplay Laura/lauro in the *Canzoniere*. Petrarch gains fame only at the expense of love: he loses the lady, but wins the laurel.⁹⁵ In the *Secretum* dialogue, which takes place between

⁹⁵ Terence Cave, “Maurice Scève’s *Délie*: Correcting Petrarch’s Errors,” 117.

Augustinus (representing Petrarch's favorite author) and Franciscus (who stands in for Petrarch), the author's guilt emerges in a different context: despite Augustine's disapproval, Franciscus in the course of his life has been unable to renounce his love for Laura. The love which is the principal subject of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is cast in a moral context of transgression and sin: the poet loves, although the love is both forbidden and unrequited. He persists, although he must give up loving her and instead focus on his devotion to God.

Petrarch, like Dante before him, is trying to find his way out of a "dark wood" of past errors, as we see in R1 ("primo giovenile errore", line 3).⁹⁶ Dante writes in the opening canto of the *Inferno*, "la verace via abbandonai" (Inf. 1, 12), referring perhaps to his youthful "errors" recounted in the VN (his behavior with Beatrice, and the screen ladies). Petrarch believes that he abandoned the true path, and strayed by loving Laura to excess. Dante used the word "errore" several times in each canticle of the *Commedia*, to signify both lack of proper understanding and wandering (etymologically these definitions are related, for they spring from the same Latin root, the verb *errare*).

We have seen that such shame and concern for repentance is absent from Scève's poetic collection. We find anguish and suffering, yet of a different nature – for example, "Ainsi Amour, perdu à nous / rendit vexation, qui donne entendement" (D 94). Instead of blaming himself, the poet here places responsibility for suffering upon the personified figure of Amour, whose affliction of "vexation" leads to understanding, presumably after introspection. Dizain 94 may be compared with Dantean poetry in its use of metaphors involving ships and arriving safely home. Scève's line quoted above reveals a resolution of inner conflict through understanding, which contrasts with Petrarch's schema.

⁹⁶ Robert Harrison, in his article on the VN, writes: "[Dante] was forever trying to find his way out of a "dark wood" of past errors", in the *Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 35.

Let us examine in turn Scève's first dizain, the second poem in the collection (after the huitain which begins "Non de Venus..."). The dizain contains the well-known Petrarchan reference to "jeunes erreurs" which has been compared with Petrarch's "giovenile errore" in the sonnet R1.

L'Oeil trop ardent en mes jeunes erreurs
 Girouettoit, mal cault, à l'impourveue :
 Voicy (ô paour d'agreables terreurs)
 Mon Basilisque avec sa poignant' veue
 Perçant Corps, Coeur, et Raison despourveue,
 Vint penetrer en l'Ame de mon Ame.
 Grand fut le coup, qui sans tranchante lame
 Fait, que vivant le Corps, l'Esprit desvie,
 Piteuse hostie au conspect de toy, Dame,
 Constituée idole de ma vie. (D1)

Despite the Petrarchan veneer of the "jeunes erreurs", Scève's dizain diverges far from the Petrarchan model of penitential soliloquy⁹⁷ in R1. The *jeunes erreurs* occurred *before* he encountered Délie, when all youthful wandering ended and his life thereafter focused on her (starting from the *coup* of the *innamoramento* symbolized by the piercing glance of the Basilisk). The love exists after the *jeunes erreurs* take place, and loving Délie, while at times painful, is not an error, moral or otherwise. This contrasts with Petrarch's *primo giovenile errore*, which signifies the time when he loved Laura in futility. *Erreurs* is in the plural, analogous to Dante's "screen ladies" in the VN, whom Dante abandoned to focus exclusively on Beatrice.

Time is significant for Petrarch, as R1 makes clear; for Scève in D1, time does not bring the same evolution in the poet-persona as it does in Petrarch; he loves across time, and the verb tenses reflect events which lead to a sort of eternal present: *fait* and *desvie* are in the present, whereas the others are set in the past (*girouettoit*, *vint*, *fut*). Scève inverts

⁹⁷ Terence Cave, "Scève's *Délie*: Correcting Petrarch's Errors," 115.

Petrarchan themes in D1 and D449: Petrarch began with one (*errore*) and ended with many scattered (rime *sparse*), whereas Scève began with many (*jeunes erreurs*) and ended with one (Délie, union, immortality); with Petrarch the movement is toward breakdown and oblivion (as he tries to forget Laura), but with Scève the text's movement is toward coalescence. Terence Cave comments on D449, saying that Scève's love for Délie "will be remembered without a trace of penitential doubt. The *Délie* flamboyantly corrects Petrarch's errors by celebrating the triumph of love over time."⁹⁸ In R1, Petrarch glosses his own text, condemning youthful error, and scatters his words for the *moral* benefit of his readers and himself.⁹⁹ Scève's introductory huitain admits that the reader might find "mainte erreur" (another Petrarchan echo with a very different sense), but this refers to his poetry, not the moral rectitude of his love. The poetry was produced under love's watch and refined in love's flames, according to the huitain, and thus it became a sequence of "durs Epygrammes" that would endure.

Concerning the sources for Scève's use of the basilisk in D1, in *La belle dame sans mercy*, the Basilisk appears ("qui occient les gens des yeulx"), which is taken up by Marot, who writes, "Le basilic occist les gens des yeulx".¹⁰⁰ Petrarch in R135 compares his lady to a dangerous wild creature (through periphrasis), whose eyes if met can cause death in the viewer: "l bel viso santo / et gli occhi vaghi fien cagion ch'io pera / di questa fera angelica innocente" [that her lovely holy face and desirous eyes will cause my death to come by this angelic innocent wild creature] (R135, 43-45). But in this case the French passages are closer to Scève's use in *Délie* of the Basilisk. The Petrarchan passage lacks the intensity of

⁹⁸ Cave, "Scève's *Délie*: Correcting Petrarch's Errors," 116.

⁹⁹ See Cave, 115.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Defaux, *Délie*, vol. 2, notes to D1. Chartier, *La belle dame sans mercy*, vv. 73-76. Marot, *Le Balladin*, v. 183. Defaux also mentions the Petrarchan passage R135, 31-45 as being the most important for D1 ("et surtout Pétrarque"), and Doranne Fenoaltea's article, "Three Animal Images in the *Délie*," BHR 1972, 418-422.

D1, in which Délie is not characterized as an angelic innocent creature, but as a potent and irresistible danger.

“Hostie” indicates Scève’s status thenceforth as an unwitting sacrificial victim in a ritual of worship beyond his control. There is no sacrifice motif in R1. In line 8, *l’esprit desvie* indicates that Scève’s version of straying from the path is very different from that of Petrarch, and is not a moral or Christian straying: the spirit *deviates* from the body, which survives the great blow of the *innamoramento*, which is to the inner life rather than to the outer physical being. A spirit separated from the body implies a state of death. The path, which the poet-lover did not choose deliberately but was compelled to follow, is indicated by the power of the lady’s glance. It is a sweet slaying (*agreables terreurs*, *Idole de ma vie*), and unlike a conventional battle in that the body is left intact but the spirit is struck.

During a discussion of Scève’s hermeticism, Pivato¹⁰¹ cites a sonnet of Guido Guinizzelli, “Lo vostro bel saluto e ‘l gentil sguardo”, which alludes to the *innamoramento* in terms similar to those of Scève in D1. Here is Guinizzelli’s sonnet:

Lo vostro bel saluto e ‘l gentil sguardo
che fate quando v’encontro, m’ancide;
Amor m’assale e già non ha reguardo
s’elli face peccato over merzede,
ché per mezzo lo cor me lanciò un dardo
ched oltre ‘n parte lo taglia e divide
parlar non posso, ché ‘n pene io ardo,
sì come quelli che sua morte vede.
Per li occhi passa come fa lo trono,
che fer’ per la finestra de la torre
e ciò che dentro trova spezza e fende :
remango como statua d’otono
ove vita né spirto non ricorre,
se non che la figura d’omo rende.

[Your lovely greeting and the gentle gaze
You give me when I meet you kill me:

¹⁰¹ Pivato, 24. Pivato cites Guinizzelli’s sonnet to make a point about the effect of the lady’s greeting on the lover, but the sonnet also contains affinities with Scève’s D1.

Love assaults me and still is unconcerned
 Whether he does me good or ill,
 For he shot an arrow through my heart's center
 That cuts one part from the other and divides the whole:
 I cannot speak since I burn in great pain
 Like a man who sees his own death.
 It passes through my eyes, like a thunderbolt
 That strikes through a tower window
 And shatters and splits what it finds inside.
 I stand quietly like a brass statue
 With no life or spirit flowing,
 Filling out the bare shape of a man.]¹⁰²

The poet-lover is struck by the blow of the lady's glance, however *gentile* it may be. His heart is split by love's arrow (the blow passes through the eyes to the heart), and death is close; his spirit, his body and soul are threatened by the intensity of the event, just as Scève evokes it. The poet becomes a hollow statue, his spirit having been struck a blow. Guinizzelli employs the language of war: *lanciò un dardo, taglia e divide, quelli che sua morte vede* (when soldiers are mortally wounded), *la figura d'omo rende* (the moment of death), and most importantly, the lady's glance "m'ancide", as "Amor m'assale". In R291, Petrarch echoes exactly Guinizzelli's phrase, also in line 3 of his sonnet: "*Amor m'assale ond' io mi discoloro ...*" (emphasis mine) [Love assails me, and I turn pale] (R291, 3).

One argument for the imaginary nature of Petrarch's beloved Laura lies in Petrarch's solitude; he never married, probably having taken vows, and his treatise *De vita solitaria* is "unyieldingly misogynistic"¹⁰³ – between the *De vita* text and his guilt manifested in the *Secretum* and *Canzoniere*, Laura's identity, from the perspective of the psychologically plausible, was probably unreal (one of Petrarch's close friends, Giacomo Colonna, doubted Laura's existence). Though we must not infer biography from the lyric poetry in question,

¹⁰² Guinizzelli (poem 6), trans. Robert Edwards.

¹⁰³ Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance*, 16.

we can retain relevant historical background including biography to support an interpretation of the poetry. Petrarch sired illegitimate children whose mother(s) are unknown to history. Dante was married and had children, although his wife was not with him in his exile; his love for Beatrice apparently did not lead to an involvement with her. We do not find such vituperative misogyny in the writings of Dante or Scève as we do in Petrarch. Can one write love poetry and be a misogynist? Certainly, though it would be an act of powerful irony (perhaps satire). Can one experience profound love with a woman and be a misogynist? Perhaps, though unlikely, and the misogynist would have to keep separate categories in his mind for beliefs, lived experiences, and ideals which would be inevitably inconsistent. We have only the poetry; we do not know what the poets were thinking, or their intentions. But we can recognize what is psychologically convincing or persuasive in a text. If Petrarch despised most real women, then even if Laura were a real person who existed in history, still Laura's character was evoked in the poetry according to lofty ideals that exist only in the imagination. One might counter that Beatrice and Délie also were unreal and idealized, but they are more interesting and more developed *as literary characters* than Petrarch's Laura; the poet-personae interact with them. Such indications are psychologically plausible, and thus we validate them in the reading. One could speculate that Laura the historical person would never live up to Petrarch's ideals, so the result of real involvement would be disillusionment and disappointment. But this observation does not advance us in a reading of the *Canzoniere*. Petrarch the historical person wrote misogynist statements; his poet-persona in the *Canzoniere* has no interaction (according to the text) with the lady he loves, and he never attains his desire. He ultimately renounces his love for her because it is sinful (although he never acted on his desire). These conditions do not apply to Dante or Scève, based on what

we know from their respective texts. Perhaps all these male poets were misogynistic about the women around them, but the other distinctions are still valid in their works of poetry.

In any case Petrarch prefers the unreal woman to the real, and everything takes place in the poet-persona's mind and heart (as it were). Regardless of lived experiences, Scève's conception of love as developed in the poetry is *more* moderated by experience than Petrarch's (while Délie is still adorned with mythological and symbolic aspects). In the *Canzoniere* there is greater distance between the poetry and lived experience; it is more solipsistic. For example, Scève writes in D196: « Car du plaisir, qu'avecques toy j'avoys » (line 7), or « ton sein délicieux » (D408, 6). Petrarch never wrote such lines, unless it was pleasure from an imagined scene – and he did not evoke erotic pleasure as Scève did.

Scève and Petrarch wrote of the lady as warrior and love as war. This topos is found for example in the allegory of the *Roman de la rose*, near the conclusion of the second part of Jean de Meun, Amant, with Venus' indispensable help, storms the fortifications where the rose is imprisoned and attains his desire. The scene is described like a strategic attack, planned and carried out with tactical support from allies. Roman love poetry presents the erotic theme of one-on-one combat. Aphrodite and Ares (Venus and Mars) are lovers, and one conception of love involves the synthesis of opposites. Eros/Cupid assaults his victims – who are chosen deliberately or frivolously as targets - to strike with his arrows (bows and arrows being weapons for hunting and battle). There is mortal risk in love, according to such models. Cavalcanti's poetry contains this view of love, as does that of Guinizzelli. Dante imagined a violent scene between the lover and the stony lady in the second canzone of the *Rime petrose*, which exerted a significant influence on Petrarch, as Durling showed.¹⁰⁴ Scève alludes to his “guerre” (e.g. D408, 8 and D446, 7), like Petrarch's “guerra” in R164 et

¹⁰⁴ See Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 9. See also Durling and Martinez, *Time and the Crystal*.

passim; he refers to his state as being one of war (R164). Also, in “Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra” (R134), Petrarch evokes his struggle, which is entirely one-sided. D309 describes a different sort of battle at close quarters:

Plus pour ébat, que non pour me douloir
 De toujours estre en passions brulantes,
 Je contentois mon obstiné vouloir :
 Mais je sentis ses deux mains bataillantes,
 Qui s’opposoient aux miennes travaillantes,
 Pour mettre à fin leur honneste desir.
 Ainsi, Enfant, comme tu peulx saisir,
 Et (quand te plait) hommes, et Dieux conquerre :
 Ainsi tu fais (quand te vient à plaisir)
 De guerre paix, et de celle paix guerre. (D309)

In this dizain, a “Petrarchan” topos, love as war, is used in a most un-Petrarchan manner. Scève apostrophizes the child-god Cupid, demonstrating the latter’s universal power through the example of a scene he bases upon frivolity and play (ébat) rather than from long pent-up desire. A sex act may be interpreted as violent or frenetic activity followed by calm, and this is one sense of the paix/guerre opposition. Cupid takes pleasure in subjecting his victims to love as alternating between peace and war. If love is conceived as conquest, then the goal is victory, not war’s opposite, peace. The “peace” in this context is the quiescence of the conquered and the absence of struggle, not contented peace. Peace can also signify sexual satiation. We infer that the poet-persona in D309 achieves victory. The rhymed vocabulary reflects the war waged: conquerre [conquérir]/guerre, as well as désir/saisir/plaisir and brûlantes/bataillantes/travaillantes. Scève justifies his “honneste” desire as legitimate. The owner of the “deux mains” is not named, and perhaps we should not assume it is Délie in this dizain (though it seems likely).

Both Dante and Petrarch emerged from a tradition of vernacular love poetry which includes the troubadours, whose lyrics were sung or recited aloud as part of an oral culture: poetry was linked with music, and the sound was an important component in the experience.

Petrarch's traditional *canzone* form, and terms such as *cantare* and *suono*, which appear repeatedly in his verses, reflect an acute awareness of the sounds of the poetry and the words, or lyrics. Witness the opening of canzone R23:

Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,
 che nascer vide et ancor quasi in erba
 la fera voglia che per mio mal crebbe,
 perché *cantando* il duol si disacerba,
canterò com'io vissi in libertade
 mentre Amor nel mio albergo a sdegno s'ebbe.
 (...)

 che volendo parlar, cantava sempre,
mercé chiamando con estrania voce (R23, 1-5 and 62-63, italics mine)

[In the sweet time of my first age, which saw born and still almost unripe the fierce desire which for my hurt grew – because, singing, pain becomes less bitter – I shall sing how then I lived in liberty while Love was scorned in my abode (...) I sang always, calling for mercy with wondrous voice]

The idea that the poet sings (*canta*) to express his sentiments is a convention, within Petrarch's textual composition of the poem. Petrarch sings (on paper, that is) in hopes of winning *mercé* from Laura: he uses the word three times in this poem 23 (and elsewhere in the *Canzoniere*). Scève alludes to the same convention in several dizains, for example, “par chansons tristesse / Se tourne à joye” (D239, 4-5); and in dizain 18:

Qui se delecte à bien narrer histoires
 Perpetuant des haultz Princes les gestes :
 Qui se triumphe en superbes victoyres,
 Ou s'enaigrist aux Satyres molestes,
Qui chante aussi ses amours manifestes,
 Ou se complainct à plaisamment descrire
 Farces, et Jeux esmouvantz Gentz à rire.
 Mais moy : je n'ay d'escire aultre soucy,
 Fors que de toy, et si ne sçay que dire,
 Sinon crier *mercy, mercy, mercy.* (D18) [my emphasis]

In this dizain, the references to *les farces et les jeux* (line 7) are clearly medieval in origin, although they are still part of French popular culture in the sixteenth century. Likewise line 5 “*Qui chante aussi ses amours manifestes*” refers to poets who gave an oral performance

of their poetry before an audience, a medieval custom, although this is a sixteenth century text that was printed and intended to be read. The topos of the lady's "merci" (line 10) is indispensable to the troubadours, Dante and Petrarch, as well as Scève. In D18 the poem's argument sets aside eloquence, praise and traditional forms of expression (all the while containing the negation in the fixed form of a rhyming dizain). Scève employs a *recusatio*, just as he does in the introductory huitain of *Délie* ("Non de Venus les ardentz estincelles," etc). Gérard Defaux suggests that the "mercy" reference in D18 line 10 is inspired by *La belle dame sans mercy* of Alain Chartier (1424), and Scève would have encountered the topos frequently in Italian verse as well.

In Petrarch's R126 the concept has a Christian flavor, in which the poet hopes that his lady will intercede in heaven for him through her love: "Amor l'inspira / in guisa che sospira / sì dolcemente che *mercé* m'impetre et faccia forza al cielo" [Love will inspire her to sigh so sweetly that she will win mercy for me and force Heaven](R126, 35-38, emphasis mine). Petrarch will obtain *mercé* from the lady not in terms of her granting him her favors, but in Christian terms, so that his soul will not be condemned to hell for eternity for his sins. This is certainly not the sense of Scève's use of *mercy*.

Both Petrarch and Scève participated in a poetic *fonds commun* of themes, devices and topoi which were transmitted via the troubadours, stilnovo poets, Cavalcanti, and Dante. While Petrarch exerted a significant influence upon Scève, Scève also distinguished himself from his illustrious precursor and drew upon other resources as well. The *Délie* diverges frequently from the *Canzoniere*, particularly concerning the status of erotic desire in the conception of love. Cécile Alduy in her essay on Scève and Petrarch points out the paradox of comparing the two lyric sequences: "[La *Délie*] participe à bien des égards à la liquidation

et de la poétique, et de la philosophie morale des *Rime sparse*. »¹⁰⁵ Critical views have advanced and shifted since the time of DellaNeva's 1983 book *Song and Counter-Song*. Perhaps Scévian critics tended to overlook the longer tradition in part because Petrarch presented himself as a classically oriented humanist who broke with the middle ages, and in part because Petrarch's influence on Renaissance poetry was enormous. In any case, Scève scholars continue to generate diverse readings of *Délie*.

¹⁰⁵ See Alduy, 157 ff.

CONCLUSION

I have presented a reading of the *Délie* as a text in the shadow of Dante's poetry, using the background of courtly love as a set of poetic conventions (not as a social code). The *Délie* contains classical, Neoplatonist and French influences (*La belle dame sans mercy* and Marot, among others) as well as intertexts with the *Canzoniere*. While Petrarch was in certain ways an innovator, in his refined language and highly developed reflections on the self within the lyric genre, most aspects that constitute "Petrarchism" are not original to Petrarch. Because the courtly love relation between poet and lady (or knight and lady) was adulterous and thus subversive as well as being a convention, it was both an established literary conceit and socially forbidden since it undermined the stability of marriage. The secrecy required discretion, hence the use of coded or secret language, including the *senhal*.

We have traced the development of the lineage of love lyric from the Occitan troubadours to the *dolce stil novo* poets and Cavalcanti, Dante and Petrarch, to Scève. Why was it necessary to establish this background before undertaking a comparative reading of Dante's VN and *Commedia* with Scève's *Délie*? It enriches our understanding of the poetic context - the traditions and ideas which circulated and evolved, and which we recognize in Dante, Petrarch and Scève. Without this understanding of the poetic background, a comparison of Scève and Dante, or of Scève and Petrarch for that matter, would be limited and prone to misinterpretation, because one might not distinguish between the tradition and individual attributes.

Scève participated in the literary imitation which was *de rigueur* in his time. The shadow of Dante emerges in the *Délie* through direct and indirect means. Dante and Cavalcanti were resources for Ficino's *De amore* commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, which

Scève read. At the textual level, Dante's shadow emerges through the language, as well as through broader ideas and themes, such as advancement by means of purification, the path leading to the lady (Beatrice, *Délie*). We have seen that Petrarch differs from both Scève and Dante in this and other respects, despite the continuity of *imitatio*. Since Scève read other poets besides Petrarch, the Scève critic needs the relevant literary apparatus to read the *Délie* well. I have tried to demonstrate that this apparatus includes Dante's *Rime petrose*, *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia*, as well as Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (and *Trionfi*).

Poetry has long served as a vehicle for exploring ideas and experiences about love. Classical authors had considered love-passion to be dangerous not because sex was inherently evil or morally questionable, but because the passion was excessive and disruptive: it led to trouble (disorder, disharmony, and possibly madness). For the ancients, love did not refine and exalt as it did according to the code of *fin'amor*. Scève adopts the Dantesque and *stilnovo* idea of refinement and purification of the poetry. This process of refinement includes both the character of the poet-lover, and the composition of poetry itself. Love is likened to trial by fire, but the intense suffering produces hard and well-wrought poetry, as well as leading to union with the beloved.

Courtly love poetry exhibited tensions between erotic passion and moral virtue, and Scève and Petrarch handled those tensions differently in their respective sequences. While the feudal code, an organizing principle of the social hierarchy, was not particularly Christian,¹ we have seen that the moral code with respect to women was aligned with Christian doctrine. The concepts of submission and fealty to one's master were transferred to the relation with a beloved (a female *midons*, or *dompna*). Since the medieval courtly

¹ I mean that the feudal code and social hierarchy (as well as human foibles) precluded the universal and consistent practice of the ethics, humility and generosity taught by Jesus. Of course, it depends on one's definition of a "Christian", and we must bear in mind what the definition would have been for feudal society.

relation is not part of the conception of love in classical literature, we have examined the courtly poetic tradition and the *Délie* for clues to the poetic connection between Scève and Dante. It is in the courtly love dynamic (which like Dante does not banish *amor* or the flame of love on the human level), rather than Christian theology, that we find the paradoxical answers: whereas Dante and Scève as love-poets adhere to the courtly model, Petrarch's renunciation of his obsessive love in the *Canzoniere*, in accord with Christian morality, deviates from that model. Scève's choice to participate in the hermetic tradition through *trobar clus* also resonates with certain poetry of Dante, though it must be said that Dante's style is more often lucid than obscure. However, we see that under scrutiny, Dante's poetry also contains rich and hidden meanings which must be discerned from the text's apparent sense, and this "hardness" of verse is similar to Scève's poetic practice.

Is Petrarch's collection the one text which exerts a greater degree of influence than any other single text on the *Délie*? Perhaps. However, this perception in itself does not determine what that degree of influence is, nor does it render Scève a "Petrarchist" in the way that other poets who imitate Petrarch are labeled. The best answer I can provide to the question, "Is Scève a Petrarchist poet?" is a qualified "somewhat" and "in certain respects". Ronsard and Du Bellay (in the *Olive* sonnet sequence) wrote French poetry that was far more Petrarchist than that of Scève. My perspective accords more with that of Pivato and McFarlane than with DellaNeva or Parturier. Scève and Petrarch are distinguished by morality, tone and temperament; one emphasizes substance, the other style. Scève's goal is not eloquence. Petrarch was writing within a tradition, and at the same time was providing the longest and most eloquent, polished manifestation (culmination?) of that tradition with his sequence of mostly love sonnets.

A paradoxical reading of the *Délie* in light of Dante's poetry illuminates our understanding of that text's Italian poetic background, a background in which Petrarch is not the only Italian figure, nor does he compose his poetry *ex nihilo*. Thus both Petrarch and Scève, each emphatically in his own way, wrote within the long literary shadow cast by Dante. I have deconstructed the commonplace critical assessment that Scève was a French Petrarchist poet. Medieval courtly love poetry, and especially the troubadour rhetorical mode of *trobar clus*, was an important precursor for the lyric poetry of Scève and Dante. Through the work of this thesis, for the first time the presence of Dante's poetic shadow has been identified in Scève's *Délie*. Scève adapted to the fragmentary form of the dizain sequence the Dantesque notions of interior hell, purgatory and paradise from the *Commedia*, but without Dante's hierarchical structure of those three "places". Even more than for Dante with respect to Beatrice, Scève's three kinds of experiences (as well as suspense in Limbo) focus relentlessly on his love for Délie; Scève is not attempting to place her in a Christian heaven, but in the vast (pagan) cosmos. Interpreted broadly, love is conceived as a journey and an awakening, with cyclical death and suffering leading to life through renewal and joy. Scève's "journey" is not exactly like Dante's, except on the level of poetic composition and refinement. Scève's metaphorical journey is inserted into the poetic structure of the sequence of short form poems; both journeys lead to poetic immortality and transcendent love. As he does with Petrarch, Scève borrows bits and pieces from Dante, and invents as well. Scève does not engage in extensive imitation of Dante in the *Délie*; many structural and thematic aspects of the *Commedia* are absent, so that *just as with Petrarch's poetry*, the scholar must identify certain passages and themes to compare, because the imitation is limited with respect to both Dante and Petrarch. The close comparative reading is better accomplished in the presence of the poetic background that I have established.

Most of Scève's dizains are filled with longing and the suffering of separation from his beloved, rather than with fulfillment. This differs from Petrarch's continuous lamenting which leads only to renunciation. If Petrarch brought woman back down to earth after Dante elevated her to the heavens (De Sanctis),² then Scève exalted her again within the cosmos, without renouncing earthly love with her; earthly love led to divine love, as it had for Dante. It required purification, but did not involve renunciation of the poet's love for the lady. While Scève would belong among Dante's *fedeli d'amore* (VN), Petrarch, despite his claim to be the tradition's culmination according to R70, ultimately would not belong among them, since his loyalty was inconsistent and finally broken.

² Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, Introduction, 7.

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