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Pernette du Guillet| A woman poet in the male poetic tradition

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Pernette du Guillet: A Woman Poet
in the Male Poetic Tradition

by
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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Pernette du Guillet was a member of the sixteenth-century group of French poets known as the *Ecole lyonnaise*. She was the author of the *Rymes*, a collection of love poetry consisting of sixty epigrams, five elegies, two *épîtres*, and ten *chansons*, most of which were published six weeks after her early death in 1545 at the youthful age of 25. The *Rymes* are largely an account of the evolution of her nine-year love relationship with the renowned poet Maurice Scève, whose *Délie* she inspired. Her poetry reflects the four major literary influences prevalent in Renaissance Lyons: the courtly love theories, Marotism, Petrarchism and Neoplatonism.

The aim of this thesis is to examine how Pernette du Guillet introduced certain modifications into her poetry which are at variance with convention. The introductory chapter is a brief account of the life of Pernette du Guillet and of the various editions of her work. The four poetic traditions which defined the conventions of the time are examined in the second chapter. In the third chapter, Du Guillet's writing is studied for its variance from these traditions, from the point of view of style and content. In the final chapter, particular attention is given to narrative point of view.

Analysis of narrative point of view reveals how Pernette du Guillet at times reverses the traditional male and female roles. Sometimes she speaks as the beloved lady; sometimes she assumes the more active role of the lover, making open declarations of love. Du Guillet does not seem ill-at-ease in the male poetic tradition. Rarely does she find it necessary to avoid revealing her sex in her work. The surprise readers might feel at hearing a woman's voice is at times softened by Du Guillet's use of a playful tone. The form and theme of the *Rymes* generally correspond to the poetical practice of her time, which was largely influenced by Petrarchism and Neoplatonism. However, Du Guillet's individuality may be seen in the way she adapts and combines these various conventions in order to express her very personal experience.
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CHAPTER I

THE BIOGRAPHY OF PERNETTE DU GUILLET;
EDITIONS OF THE RYMES

Biography of Pernette du Guillet

Pernette du Guillet was the author of sixty epigrams, five elegies, two épîtres and ten chansons, which were collected and published posthumously as the Rymes. As a major figure of the Ecole lyonnaise, a group of poets that flourished in mid sixteenth-century France, Pernette du Guillet associated with its major theoretician, Maurice Scève, renowned author of the Délie: Object de plus haulte Vertu and with Louise Labé, who wrote Débat de Folie et d'Amour.

The principal theme of the Ecole lyonnaise was love, which Du Guillet treated in a personal manner, although the style and content of her poems show the influence of the four major literary traditions of her time: the conventions of the courtly love ideal, Marotism, Petrarchism and Neoplatonism.

The form and themes of the Rymes generally correspond to the poetical practice of her time, but Du Guillet's individuality may be seen in the way she adapts and combines literary conventions in order to express her very personal experience. The object of this thesis is to examine how Pernette du Guillet introduced certain modifications into her poetry which are at variance with convention. The study of
narrative point of view will reveal that the *Rymes* are interesting today because they are representative of a woman's perspective in Renaissance Lyons.

Little is known about Pernette du Guillet's life. Born around 1520, she became ill early in 1545 and died on July 17 of the same year—probably from the plague—at the youthful age of 25.¹

The biographical information generally included in the various editions of Du Guillet's *Rymes* published up to the twentieth century is usually based on Antoine du Moulin's now celebrated prefatory letter "Aux Dames lyonnaises" in his initial edition of her poetry, published just six weeks after her death.²

Du Moulin presents Pernette du Guillet as an extremely virtuous young woman who was particularly accomplished for her years:

...celle vertueuse, gentile, et toute spirituelle Dame D. Pernette du Guillet...[nous laissa] ce petit amas de rymes... pour tesmoignage de la dexterie de son devin esprit... veu le peu de temps, que les Cieux l'ont laissée entre nous, il est quasi incroyable comme elle a peu avoir le loisir, je ne dy seulement de se rendre si parfaitement assurée en tous instrumenz musiquaux...et tellement, que la promptitude, qu'elle y avoit, donnait cause d'esbahissement aux plus expérimenteres...³

She played the lute and was thoroughly familiar with the literature of


her time. She spoke Italian as well as French and had a fairly sound command of Latin. She may have known Spanish, too, and had begun to study Greek. Du Moulin believed Pernette du Guillet's example could inspire other women to similar virtue and to accomplishment in letters, which would in turn reinforce the growing literary reputation of the city of Lyons:

...[Les Rymes] vous peust non seulement recreer, mais faire honneur à vous, Dames Lyonnaises, et vous faire priser en maintes contrées...elles pourront inciter quelcune de vous, ou d'ailleurs, et l'animer aux lettres, pour participer de ce grand et immortel los, que les Dames d'Italie se sont aujourd'hui acquis...

Antoine du Moulin's preface to the Rymes is an indication that it was fairly extraordinary for a woman of the bourgeoisie to write.

Pernette du Guillet has been identified as the woman Scève was addressing in the Délie. Joseph Buche, basing his judgment on similarities between Du Guillet's poems and those of the Délie and on the fact that she names Scève several times in her Rymes, offered this interpretation in 1904. Virtually all critics have accepted Buche's hypothesis. According to this interpretation, Pernette du Guillet would have met Maurice Scève in the spring of 1536, when he was already 35 and she only 16.

It is rather difficult to draw precise autobiographical elements

4Ibid., pp. 3-4.
out of the Rymes—except that Du Guillet suffered from jealousy at one time and that her behavior may have aroused gossip and possibly slander. The identification of Pernette du Guillet with the Délie has led, however, to much speculation concerning her life.

One should, of course, be cautious as to the validity of information gleaned in this fashion: "Most often the confusion of autobiography and poetic fiction has simply resulted in fanciful speculation about the lives of the poets," one scholar states. According to others, however, the Rymes are to be read as "a poetic journal intime of Pernette’s nine-year love relationship with the famous poet of La Délie," and careful "...analysis demonstrates that Pernette’s uniqueness lies in the fact that her creative works were not merely an exercise in poetic eloquence, but a true reflection of her relationship with Scève...". Still another states the plausible view that, just as Scève "related the evolution of his love" in the Délie, Du Guillet "told her side of the story" via her poetry.

As a result of the identification of Pernette du Guillet with the Délie we understand that this blond-haired, blue-eyed woman had a cer-

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tain reputation for physical beauty, although such a description of her may simply have been in accordance with Petrarchan convention. In his introduction to her works in the edition of the Pléiade, A.-M. Schmidt relates the various stages in the liaison between the two poets. In Schmidt's view, Scève was at first "insistent", but Du Guillet was able to free herself and maintain a certain distance from him without causing him to give up hope. Two years after the beginning of their friendship, Pernette du Guillet's family arranged her marriage to a certain "Monsieur du Guillet". Scève, at first bitterly jealous, gradually became reconciled to his loss when he realized that, in spite of their marriage, Pernette du Guillet and her husband were basically indifferent to each other.

Du Guillet and Scève were able to continue their meetings. Although she tested him and is thought to have "tried his patience", she managed to persuade him that dissatisfaction of physical desire was a guarantee of spiritual advancement. Schmidt believes that Du Guillet did not stoop to appeasing Scève's desire, though she may have given in on one occasion. Schmidt readily admits that her unfaithfulness to her husband cannot be proven definitively, but he believes that public suspicions alone would have been sufficient reason for the slanderous attacks against her.

Pernette du Guillet's chastity in her relationship with Maurice Scève has been contested by some but defended by many. Du Guillet, far from being virtuous, was a courtisane, one critic concluded, basing his

case on conclusions he drew from a study of documents concerning Louise Labé:12 Another believes that, on the contrary, there are no facts which should lead us to reject Du Guillet's own insistence on her chastity:

Dans ces vers d'amour [dans les Rymes] il n'est fait allusion qu'à la science, c'est l'amour de tâte d'une jeune femme dominée surtout par l'intelligence, et il n'y a rien qui doive nous faire douter de ces protestations de chasteté imprimées par l'intermédiaire du mari et dont l'éditeur lui-même répond.13

It seems most plausible to situate Pernette du Guillet at some middle point between chastity and promiscuity. This is what A.-M. Schmidt has argued, but to say that Du Guillet "succumbed" (céder) to Scève's demands14 is a value judgment that does not give Du Guillet much credit for assuming the responsibility for her actions. A close reading of the Rymes encourages adoption of the opinion that "for Pernette a principal enjoyment of desire is sexual"15 as shown by the opening lines of Epigram 12:


Le Corps ravy, l'Ame s'en esmerveille
Du grand plaisir, qui me vient entamer,
Me ravissant d'Amour, qui tout esveille
Par ce seul bien, qui le faict Dieu nommer. (Epig. 12, vv. 1-4)

It seems unlikely that the above could have been written by a woman who simply "gave in" to her lover's demands, only to feel guilty about it later. The most plausible explanation is that she was seeking to define the relationship between love and physical satisfaction, and rapidly concluded that lovers should try to overcome sensual desire in favor of "higher" pursuits.

Pernette du Guillet was able to benefit from Maurice Scève's interest in her, on spiritual and intellectual levels, and learn much about poetry from him. Her intellectual background might, however, have preserved her from being caught off-guard in love, and gave her the means to maintain originality in her writing.

Editions of the "Rymes"

The original edition of the Rymes, compiled by the editor Antoine du Moulin and published in Lyons in 1545 by Jean de Tournes, appeared just six weeks after the death of the poet. Her husband had found the verses among her belongings and had taken them to Du Moulin, who imposed a certain logical order upon them. It has since been discovered that four of her poems had been set to music and published several years before her death. This information is important, as it can lead us to suppose that Du Guillet might have had publication as an

eventual goal for her other poems. Writing for a public audience as opposed to writing for personal satisfaction alone or for a restricted circle of friends or other poets has particular implications for the selection of narrative point of view as a major focus of this thesis.

Three other editions of the *Rymes* were published in the sixteenth century. The identical editions of 1546 and 1547, both published in Paris by Jeanne de Marnef, were less faithful to the original than the fourth sixteenth-century edition. They included ten poems which resembled those of Du Guillet, but which were by anonymous authors or by authors who only initialled their work. The 1552 edition, published by Jean de Tournes in Lyons, was closer to the initial edition of 1545 and included three more poems which were authentic.

It was the fate of the *Ecole lyonnaise* to be rapidly forgotten after the sixteenth century, primarily due to its excessive obscurist orientation. As far as Maurice Scève was concerned, this was because of the obscurity of his style and not because of the subject matter of his works: newer generations of poets and readers preferred a clearer style. Pernette du Guillet, Maurice Scève and Louise Labé were unknown to authors of the seventeenth century. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that their works began to be re-edited.¹⁷

The three nineteenth-century editions of the *Rymes* lack authority, containing many typographical errors and omitting several lines. The edition of 1864 was superior to those of 1830 and 1856 because it was based on the original edition. All three editions were published in

Lyons and are often quoted as they were the only editions since the sixteenth century.

In the twentieth century, Albert-Marie Schmidt re-edited almost all of Du Guillet's poems in his anthology *Poètes du XVIe siècle*, published in the *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* collection in 1953. The 1968 edition by Victor E. Graham is, however, the most useful edition for scholars today as it is a critical edition containing many notes, and because it follows the classification system proposed for the *Rymes* by V.-L. Saulnier in the authoritative study he devoted to Pernette du Guillet in 1944.  

CHAPTER II

THE POETIC TRADITION AND POETRY OF HER TIME

Life in Renaissance Lyons:
Geographical Situation and
Cultural Life

Pernette du Guillet was, like most writers, a product of her times and milieu. The fact that her environment was a flourishing cultural and intellectual center for both French and Italians alike during the Renaissance must have stimulated her intellectually, encouraged her literary endeavors, and furnished her with an appreciative audience.

Lyons, a city of about 55,000 inhabitants in the sixteenth century, was of the utmost strategic importance and was one of the largest centers of international commerce in Europe. The advantageous geographical location of Lyons, situated at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers and on the frontier of the Dauphiné and Savoy, made the city a crossroads for merchants and armies. Lyons was the port of entry for Italian commerce headed for the north of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Burgundy. By the sixteenth century the French kings had authorized four commercial fairs a year which were among the largest in Europe. There were few obstacles to commerce, and Lyons gained a reputation for excessive luxury.
Because Lyons constituted a powerful stronghold against foreign enemies, and because of the wealth of its citizens, the kings of France granted numerous privileges to the city. Under their protection, Lyons had freed itself of ecclesiastical rule and was to a large extent self-governing. As a result, there was enormous liberté de pensée in Lyons, as compared to the situation in Paris, where intellectuals were subject to the control of the Parlement and the Sorbonne.

A large Italian colony established itself in Lyons during the fifteenth century. It was composed of financiers from Florence, who were renowned for their love of Beaux Arts and letters; of wealthy merchants; and of industrial entrepreneurs, who made Lyons a center for goldsmiths, makers of musical instruments, and silk manufacturers.

The Wars of Italy, which began in 1494, were beneficial to the city of Lyons, although they impoverished the rest of France. The fact that the French court settled in Lyons was of capital importance. Charles VIII (1483-1498) used the city as the base of his operations. Under Louis XII (1498-1515) the court was more often in Lyons than in Paris, and during the reign of François I (1515-1547) the court settled there for years at a time.

The royal court became the center of the vie mondaine of Lyons. Magnificent festivities and celebrations in which the whole city participated were given in honor of the kings; and in spite of the wars the city remained prosperous. The wars were actually a new source of riches and of social and intellectual stimulation for the inhabitants of Lyons. François I multiplied the commercial relations with Italy, and the number of Italian merchants and financiers residing in the city
increased. New ambitions grew among the Lyonnais as a result of the contact with Italy. Houses and clothing styles began to follow Italian fashion. The hitherto hard-working bourgeoisie of Lyons, to which Pernette du Guillet belonged, learned to enjoy its accumulated riches and began to refine its tastes in the arts and in literature as it discovered the joyful, luxurious life-style from across the Alps.

Women in Lyons enjoyed a privileged position as opposed to in other French cities. Called upon to preside over the festivities of elegant society, they strove to be worthy hostesses, imitating the model of the ideal woman described in Castiglione's *Cortegiano.* Male literary figures encouraged the literary pursuits of their female companions.

It was therefore the direct contact with the exuberant Italians which prepared the people of Lyons for the Renaissance, rather than the scholarly study of literary works (as was the case of the Renaissance in the north of France). Italianism had a greater influence on worldly society in Lyons than humanism, and the Renaissance took hold in Lyons more rapidly and more completely than in any other place in France: "...la Renaissance [à Lyon] n'était pas une simple mode, mais une

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2 Ibid., p. 88. "...les frères entraînaient leurs sœurs, et les amants leurs maîtresses vers la terre nouvellement découverte: la Renaissance de la beauté, de la poésie et de la science." Examples of women who developed a taste for poetry, in addition to Pernette du Guillet, include Sibylle and Claudine Scève, Maurice Scève's sisters; Catherine de Vauzelles, sister of three famous brothers; Jeanne Gaillarde, Clément Marot's friend; and Jacqueline Stuard, who exchanged poems with Bonaventure Despériers.
affaire de coeur et d'esprit." Publishing houses, which were established in Lyons as early as 1473, were also an important factor which contributed to the emergence of the Renaissance spirit in the city.

The cultural life in Renaissance Lyons may have been dominated by the new ideas and life-style resulting from the contact with the Italians, but older, medieval traditions continued to exert influence on the writers of the times. Two medieval literary traditions which defined some of the conventions Pernette du Guillet is following or reacting to in the Rymes will now be examined.

The Medieval Literary Tradition:
Courtly Love and Rhetorical Tendencies

Milieu in which the courtly love ideal developed; general characteristics of the convention. What eventually was to become the tradition of courtly love was first expressed in the literature of the aristocratic, chivalric society of the Middle Ages. It appeared at the end of the eleventh century in Languedoc in troubadour poetry.

Courtly love was an ideal capable of seducing a certain segment of society, and women in particular, but the ideal did not necessarily reflect the reality of that society as a whole. Indeed, the "convention itself was a literary fiction to compensate for a real state of affairs in which it [society] was a man's world and a violent one at that."

Ibid., p. 1.

The most fundamental principle of the courtly love convention was the complete devotion of the lover to his lady. In addition, there were four characteristics associated with the ideal: humility, courtesy, adultery and the elevation of love to the status of a religious cult.\(^5\) To foster this courtly cult a code of love was developed, establishing what could be called the "rules of the game." The lover was always abject, and in spite of his faith in Eros, who could subjugate the beloved, love for him was a despairing, tragic emotion. He had to learn to be patient and discreet—to love and suffer in silence—and to submit to the lady's every whim, even to the point of acting against his honor and reason. Obedience to the lady and acquiescence in her rebukes were the lover's major virtues.

The lover sought perfection in order to please his beloved. He had to demonstrate his worth through a show of strength and heroism. His devotion to his lady manifested itself through the accomplishment of great deeds, and he usually had to submit to a series of tests and overcome several obstacles in order to prove his loyalty. The service of love was closely patterned after the service a feudal vassal owed his lord, or, to phrase it more metaphorically, the lover was expected to honor the god of love in the same manner as he accomplished the rites of worship towards God.

In spite of all the lover's trials, the courted lady often remained impassive. She was eventually supposed to choose the most worthy of her suitors, however, and a final rewarding of the lover was

not entirely out of the question: "parting at dawn" poems attest to the existence of this possibility. True love was sensual, but, as noted above, also illicit. Courtly love poems normally addressed another man's wife, and the lover's fiercest enemy was not the beloved's husband but another rival. True love was generally incompatible with marriage for several reasons which will be discussed below. All of this remained, of course, in the literary domain, and did not reflect the reality of life in society.

Societal conditions conducive to the development of the courtly ideal. The origin of the content of courtly love literature has been attributed to Ovid, to the cult of the Virgin Mary, and to Arabic poetry in Spain. Celtic and Byzantine influences also have been suggested. The social conditions of feudal society which favored the development of the courtly ideal are of interest in clarifying its context. It was the civilization of Provence, which, being more gentle than that of Northern France, enabled the troubadours to elaborate the conception of courtly love. The Crusades had introduced the South to the splendors of Oriental civilization, with its emphasis on female sensuality, and, consequently, women in Provençal society had greater importance than in the North. As the feudal system began disintegrating towards the end of the Middle Ages, the hereditary nobility became more closed, and with the end of the Hundred Years' War (1453) came the opportunity to develop a vie mondaine, and with it a growing need for a new literature which could be appreciated by this new elite civilization. Courtly love

poetry was thus a form of rejection of the brutal mores of feudal society, and was the result of a need to compensate for a crude reality. In the literary domain, the courtly ideal was both an outgrowth of the *chansons de geste*, which celebrated the exploits of great warriors, and a reaction against this earlier literature. 7

In his introductory chapter on courtly love in *The Allegory of Love*, C.S. Lewis states that although the Church may be seen as the catalyst for softening the brutality of life in general, the medieval Church did not actually encourage reverence for women. Lewis believed that the cult of the Virgin may actually have come about as an out-growth of the courtly love ideal. 8

Lewis refers to the society of the times more in order to explain the form of the courtly love ideal than to explain its origins. He asks us to imagine a typical Provençal court, consisting of a few women and many men. For most of the men, marriage would have been out of the question, and the lady of the court would have been the only source of courtesy and refinement. Lewis further proceeds to elucidate the four characteristics of courtly love in their connection with life at his imaginary Provençal court.

The humility of the lover would have been natural insofar as the beloved was necessarily a feudal superior. Their relationship was a continuation of the pre-existent relationship of the vassal and his lord. Courtesy was emphasized because the lady, by her position in the

7 Ibid., p. 45.
society, was the arbitress of manners and would have to have been approached on her own terms. Adultery, on the other hand, was a characteristic of the courtly love ideal because, apart from the courted lady's married state, and given the utilitarian nature of marriage (Virtually all marriages were marriages of interest and were frequently dissolved when that interest changed), loyalty in love was not only impossible but contrary to that part of the code of love which required the lady to reward the most worthy of her suitors. In marriage she had no choice but to obey her husband, whatever his merits or lack thereof.

A striking feature of medieval sentiment was the cleavage between Church and court. For the Church, passionate love between husband and wife constituted a form of adultery. And although the sexual act itself might be seen as innocent, desire was morally evil, for it weakened reason and caused one to lose sight of God. The development of a religion of love did not emanate from Christianity in general nor from Virgin worship in particular, but was a result of the parody of real religion. It emphasized the antagonism between the two ideals of courtly love and love of God, and was partly due to the transference of the vassal's allegiance from his lord to the lady of the court and to the imitation of the mock-religion found in Ovid. The religion of love was not an indication that human passion had become colored by religious emotion; quite to the contrary, the "more religiously the lady is addressed, the more irreligious the poem usually is." But the religion of love could become itself a serious religion, and the

9 Ibid., p. 21.
two extremes of seriousness or complete lack of it are indications of
the width and complexity of the tradition. The courtly love ideal
could provide a temporary escape from religion or it could be recon-
ciled with Church teachings. In any case, male affections, which in
earlier times had been attached either to the relationship between lord
and vassal or to the Church, had now found a new center of gravity--
an ideal beloved. Two theoretical works detailed the rites of this
worship.

Theorists of the courtly love ideal: Ovid and Capellanus. Although
the influence of the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.-A.D. 17?) was stronger in
the North of France than in Provence and cannot be held responsible
exclusively for the birth of courtly love, his *Ars Amandi* did have a
significant influence on writers down through the centuries and was a
resource for many ideas in the development of various aspects of the
courtly love ideal. It would seem that much medieval love poetry can be
explained by the formula "Ovid misunderstood". The very same conduct
Ovid recommended perhaps only ironically in this treatise on the art of
seduction was taken seriously by most writers in the courtly tradition.

Andreas Capellanus wrote a theoretical treatise in Latin prose
early in the thirteenth century entitled *De Arte Honeste Amandi*. It is
a valuable resource for understanding the characteristics of the theory
of love as they existed in the mind of the general public of his time.
In this work it is clear that courtly love was not Platonic: its aim
was the realization of tangible results. The source of love was, how-

\[10\] Ibid., p. 11. \[11\] Ibid., p. 8.
ever, in accordance with Platonic doctrine, visual beauty; and, as in
Platonism, love was the source of all goodness in the world. In this
treatise, love was a state of mind and there were rules to be followed
by those who entered into its service. The lady was under the obliga-
tion to admit the most worthy of her suitors to her favor, regardless
of her own fancies. The man in turn was held to secrecy in the love
relationship.

The ethos of courtly love in general was probably responsible for
a softening of the marriage relationship in the late Middle Ages and
early Renaissance. Affection between spouses was considered possible,
although love was not. Jealousy was the essence of love, and men could
hardly be jealous of beings they possessed as they did their wives.

Capellanus tried to resolve the incompatibilities between Christ-
ianity and courtly love. The lover was supposed to show ordinary piety
and reverence for the saints. Love itself was a sort of religion in
that it was capable of advancing the lowly to "true" nobility and was
equally as capable of humbling the proud.

At the end of his treatise, however, Capellanus does what many
writers of the courtly tradition were to do after him: he recants.
Love, in his view, is always the source of goodness in this world, but
worldly good is different from the values of eternity. Although con-
formity to the code of courtly love is better than leading a base life,
it is still not as good as seeking heavenly values. Young men were
advised to study the doctrine of courtly love in order to acquire the
means of abstaining from it. They were encouraged to reject the code of
courtly love in order to please God, as it would be impossible for them
to please God if they were in the service of the god of love.

**Literary expressions of the courtly love ideal.** Troubadour poetry, the _romans bretons_, the works of Chrétien de Troyes, and the _Roman de la Rose_ all exemplified the conventions of the courtly love ideal.

Troubadour lyric poetry first spread through the South of France, rapidly gained Italy and was introduced in Florence, where Guido Cavalcanti, a friend of Dante, perpetuated the style. In Italy, troubadour poetry developed into what is known as _dolce stil nuovo_, a style which influenced Dante, who attempted to reconcile the ideals of courtly love with Christianity. The current of both the troubadours and the stil-novists influenced the poetry of the _Ecole lyonnaise._

Cultivated people of the sixteenth century were also familiar with the story of _Tristan et Iseult_. In it they found many of the great themes of passionate love: the suddenness of its birth, the irreversible fatality of its hold, and the magical force of destiny which makes the couple love until death.

But the 'Bible' of courtly literature in its most complete ethical and esthetic expression is the _Roman de la Rose_. The first part of it, composed around 1230 by Guillaume de Lorris, is a code of courtly love and the most relevant portion for this thesis. It is allegorical poetry: it gives a personified and independent life to feelings, qualities, faults, and the ages of life. Its story is presented in symbolic form. Allegory succeeds here because, as C.S. Lewis insists, thirteenth-century readers "could not easily grasp the reality of moods and emotions without turning them into shadowy persons."\(^{12}\) In addition,
allegory was an accepted genre of the times.

Guillaume de Lorris' allegorical segment of the Roman de la Rose deals with the quest of a lover (the poet), who sets out to conquer the Rose, which represents the young woman with whom he has fallen in love. Its central plot constitutes a code of courtly love. The lover is made to follow a long, difficult path in order to merit the lady's affection and be worthy of her love. Along the way he is aided by accomplices or hindered in his progress by adversaries and by obstacles he must surmount. The whole poem is presented in the form of a symbolic dream, which the poet hopes will turn out to be prophetic.

True to allegorical tradition, in the Roman de la Rose the role of the hero has been reduced to the function of a narrator: the reader looks through the hero's eyes, rather than looking at him. The allegorical figures which represent various moods or aspects of the lady's personality have the effect of removing the heroine from the story as well. The Rose, as Lewis suggests, no longer represents the lady herself but her love. The two basic conflicts in the poem are between lover and beloved and between the lady and herself.

Set in a garden, the poem describes a lover gazing into a fountain in which the rosebud (the beloved's eyes) is reflected. Once struck by the arrows of Love, this lover receives instruction in the duties he will have to perform and the pains he will have to suffer, a test which Pernette du Guillet will imitate with her own lover, Scève, in the Rymes.

The imprint of the past was very strong in Lyons. This is demon-
strated by the "goût persistant pour l'allégorie." The *Roman de la Rose* also was to have an enormous impact on following generations of writers because of the ensuing "Quarrel of Women" and the later "querelle des deux amies", which both also dealt with the question of the best form of worldly love, a debate which preoccupied many authors for centuries to come.

**Continuations of medieval tradition: the "Grands Rhétoriquers" and Clément Marot.** At the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth at the Courts of Burgundy and France there was a group of poets known as the Great Rhetoricians. Jean Molinet was the principal theoretician of the group, and other members included Jean Marot (father of Clément Marot) and, later, Jean Lemaire de Belges. This group took its inspiration from Homer and cultivated a taste for mythology. They were loyal to the allegorical tradition of the *Roman de la Rose*, and they were generally more preoccupied with form than with sincerity of expression.

The poets of Lyons, in the sixteenth century, did not reject this legacy of the Middle Ages. The influence of the Rhetoricians can be seen in the tendency of the *Ecole lyonnaise* to make enigmatic allusions, to moralize in a complicated style, and to create "rimes qui sont comme des jeux de mots."

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Jean Lemaire de Belges, who helped rejuvenate this art through his 
*Art de rhétorique* in 1521 influenced the *Ecole lyonnaise*, and Pernette 
du Guillet in particular:

Jean Lemaire marqua son époque par des ouvrages parfois re- 
marquables. Il n'est pas impossible que le goût du travail 
bien fait, brillant et finement sculpté, ait impressionné 
Maurice Scève. Pernette du Guillet paraît s'être montrée 
sensible au talent de Jean Lemaire.\(^\text{16}\)

Clément Marot (1496-1544) is a literary giant of the era who used 
both the older poetic forms and the new forms of the Renaissance to open 
new horizons in France. Marot cultivated traditional genres such as 
*rondeaux*, *ballades* and *chansons*, and retained the complexities of his 
predecessors, the Rhetoricians. He used many artificial poetic devices 
such as laborious *rimes calembours*, *rimes équivoquées*, *fins de vers 
en écho* ("à sa corde s'accorde"), *rimes batelées* (repeated at the cesura 
of the following line) and *rimes renforcées* (the rhyme of the cesuras).\(^\text{17}\)

In this respect some remnants of Marotism are still found in the poetry 
of the *Ecole lyonnaise*.

As *valet de chambre* of Marguerite de Navarre and later valet for 
her brother, the King François I, Marot wrote many *pièces de circon-
stance*. It was the fact that Marot was a court poet which helped him 
go beyond the style of the Great Rhetoricians.

According to V.-L. Saulnier, Marot’s influence was everywhere 
around 1540, and yet it was in its atmosphere that the Platonistic


\(^\text{17}\) André Lagarde et Laurent Michard, *XVIe Siècle* (Paris: Bordas, 
current began to make its inroads. The two literary giants of the first half of the sixteenth century, Marot and Maurice Scève, were clearly independent spirits. In one scholar's words, "si nous croyons aux relations amicales, nous ne pensons pas que Marot ait jamais rien pu apprendre à Scève ni Scève à Marot, ils étaient comme l'eau et le feu." But, as for Pernette du Guillet, she was influenced by both, though never adopting Marot's frivolous attitude towards love. As one critic puts it:

En ce qui concerne Pernette du Guillet, elle s'intéressa aux marotiques dont on voit mal le souvenir chez Scève. Cette influence, il est vrai, se manifesta dans le mode de présentation de ses épigrammes ou de ses chansons, sans qu'elle adoptât jamais la théorie générale de l'amour, chère à Clément Marot.19

**Petrarchism: The Dominant Poetic Tradition of the French Renaissance**

**Petrarchan conventions.** The Italian poet and scholar Francesco Petrarch (1304-74) exerted considerable influence on European literature with his *Canzoniere*. In poems addressed to his beloved Laura, Petrarch elaborated several literary conventions which comprised a "system" which largely replaced the earlier chivalric love traditions. Petrarchan conventions were to remain in vogue until their rejection by Enlightenment writers, who no longer found them viable, and were eventually replaced by Romanticism in the nineteenth century. Some aspects of

Petrarchan tradition are still felt today, as evidenced by the lyrics of popular songs. French poets of the Renaissance were deeply affected by Petrarchan subject matter and stylistic devices. Maurice Scève and the other poets of the Ecole lyonnaise were among the first to adapt Petrarch's conventions into French verse.

Petrarchan love was based on an inescapable paradox—the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. Petrarch's Laura was both a real woman whose perfect physical beauty solicited the poet's desire and was a symbol of spiritual perfection. She was therefore unattainable. The attitude of the poet oscillated between "restrained wooing and distant admiration" as he constantly attempted to achieve and maintain his equilibrium. The dominant tone of his work was one of melancholy and resignation, but he did manage to maintain the delicate balance between his sensual desires and his spiritual aspirations—a position his followers and imitators usually found untenable.

Petrarch had assimilated several medieval love traditions and conventions which his own system was to replace. The conventions of Petrarchan love poetry were based on one fundamental precept which they shared with earlier traditions, to wit, the placement of the woman on a pedestal. Through this strategem, "we are introduced to a world in which women dominate, [and are] seen through the eyes of men who languish and adore [them]." But unlike in the earlier chivalric traditions the Petrarchan elevation of women is more equivocal.

21 Ibid., p. 2.
Whereas in troubadour poetry the possibility of physical union of the lovers is strongly suggested, in Petrarch this allusion is extremely veiled. The lover in troubadour poetry generally laments "the withholding of favors which might be granted". In the dolce stil nuovo, however, the beloved had become a symbol of the divine and was now unattainable. Within this tradition, love was considered a virtue and when the lover embarked upon the pursuit of such a chaste good it necessarily excluded physical satisfaction and made the lover's lament futile.

In this respect Petrarch is situated about half-way between the troubadour and the dolce stil nuovo traditions because, for him, love was no longer defined uniquely as a pursuit of the good, but rather as a passion, and a sinful one at that. He was therefore striving constantly to balance passion and a desire for purification. In his lovers there was always a fundamental conflict between the spirit and the flesh, between hopeless devotion and the knowledge that the lover could never escape his fate, despite his desire to do so.

Petrarch's style in the treatment of his subject matter is reflective of the basic paradoxes involved in such a conception of love and captures the delicate balance of opposites involved in this stylistic tour de force. The Italian poet employed intellectual argument, contrastive imagery, and a great number of antitheses and oxymora to express these fundamental conflicts. A typical example of such an antithesis would be "I burn in winter and in high summer freeze", and

22 Ibid.
a clear example of oxymoron would be the expression "lovely agony".  

Other Petrarchan cases of these poetic devices are:

heat-cold, flame-ice, peace-war; the candle (the beloved) which attracts the moth (the lover); the salamander (the lover living amid the flames of his passion); the hooked fish (the lover); the sun (the beloved)...

Petrarchan themes may be classified into three basic categories:

1 External: praise of the lady; the lady's accomplishments; objects belonging to the lady; celebration of the place of the lovers' meeting; meeting the beloved in dreams.

2 Internal: the nature of love; relations between lovers; the effects of love; rejection of the beloved; death motifs.

3 Love as a cosmic phenomenon.

This is a convenient division of Petrarch's poetic work because it is simple yet comprehensive. In the first category, praise of the lady furnished the basic subject matter of Petrarch's poetry. In his work there were three conventional ways of praising the lady's beauty: through metaphorical description, through mythological association, or through expressing its effect on the lover. Praise of the lady, which was designed to insist upon her physical and spiritual perfection, included above all praise of her physical attributes, which were lauded in superlative, hyperbolic terms. It was typical for an entire poem to be devoted to just one feature of the beloved, and the metaphors soon

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23 Ibid., p. 6.  
24 Ibid., p. 7.  
25 Ibid., pp. 8–9.
became codified. The lady's hair, which was always blond and brighter than gold, had ensnared the lover; her lips were redder than coral or sweeter than those of Venus; her cheeks were a combination of lilies and roses; her teeth were whiter than pearls; her skin was warm snow; her eyes out-shone the sun.

The lady's accomplishments were praised as well as her beauty. Her talents were also lauded, and in this case especially her musical abilities. The poet also often wrote about objects that his beloved possessed, for example her ivory comb, which was luckier than he because of its proximity to the beloved. The place where the lovers had first met or where they would habitually meet occupied a prominent position in the lover's poetry, even if only in dreams. For Petrarch, dream meetings were with the dead Laura, but for later Petrarchists dream meetings took place while the lady was still alive. This was the only acceptable way they could envisage the final sensual consummation of their love. Consequently these dreams, or visions, served as a sort of "safety valve" for the lover's increasing frustration. This eventually led to the theme of the difference between illusion and reality.

Themes concerning the nature of love and relationships between lovers were of highest importance in Petrarch's poetry. The nature of love was typically expressed by dualisms. Love was a mixture of pleasure and pain. The lady was seen as a "sweet enemy", and her pursuit was compared to the waging of a war. Hence the frequency of military imagery. Love was considered both a freedom and a servitude—the service to the lady being the highest form of freedom but one which ironically led to enslavement. Hence the prison imagery. These dual-
isms were to become commonplaces for later poets.

The effects upon the lover of the first meeting with the lady or the effects of being in her presence were frequently quite extreme. The lover’s hair could stand on end, he could lose weight, suffer insomnia, break into a cold sweat, or be overcome by fever. His tears caused rivers to swell and could even nourish him for a month. His sighs of unfulfilled longing served as messengers of his love. Indeed, he believed the lady had stolen his soul through a glance or an embrace, and imprisoned it in her own body. In general, the lover’s senses were disoriented and he would lose his individuality. This led to the notion of the lover as a "walking corpse" or to a nautical imagery in which the lover was described as a ship tossed about on the waves of the sea, this due, of course, to his total loss of self-possession.

The lady was perceived as omnipotent. Just as her presence could turn the night into day and her absence the day into night, she had power over the life and death of her suitor. Indeed, an encouraging look was enough to bestow life on the poet, whereas rejection caused him to lead a miserable existence—a literal living death.

The paradox of death in life and life in death could be adapted to suit Christian doctrine, an implicit trait of Petrarchan doctrine too. The dead are alive because they are in the Paradise of eternal life, whereas the living are dead because this world is a living death.  

Death-wishes became common in Petrarchistic poetry, although Petrarch never chose suicide for himself because he did not believe it

26 Ibid., p. 20.
could end his suffering, and because he clearly adhered to the anti-suicide position of the Church.

Petrarchism also contains a strong tendency toward a sado-masochistic relationship between lovers. The beloved and the lover are rarely on the same emotional level, and there is never any possibility of reciprocated love. The Petrarchan lady is hard-hearted and cold. The man alone suffers the adverse effects of lovesickness, whereas the lady remains untouched by his passion, and even enjoys his pain. On the other hand, the lover was generally a willing sufferer, who conceived of no alternative but to persevere. Although later poets have their heroes sometimes able to temporarily renounce love—usually if they can convince themselves of the unworthiness of the lady (especially if she has succumbed to their demands)—Petrarch himself never did and continued to rail at love itself, but never at his beloved.

It should be noted that Petrarch had been influenced by Neoplatonism. His poetry clearly betrays this influence. In Neoplatonic thought, love is a cosmic phenomenon influencing the universe and manifesting itself in nature. From this view, several interpretations resulted. Either nature was perceived as reflecting the passion of the lover, or the beloved was so powerful that she was able to command nature itself. Love was seen as transcending nature and as capable of bringing about effects contrary to nature. For example, the beloved was often able to remain as cold as ice in the presence of her admirer, a fire which, on logical grounds, should have melted her. Love as an independent cosmic force could create "a world entirely of its own, in
which the lover must live, cut off from the natural world".27

Influence of Petrarchism in early sixteenth-century France.
Petrarch had developed a new idiom for love poetry and had followers
and imitators even in his own time. It was mostly his contrasting
imagery, his antitheses and oxymora, which at first attracted these
followers, and less so the spirit of his work. His imagery and
stylistic devices, due to their great flexibility, were the qualities
which largely ensured his popularity and imitation. The subsequent
free imitation of Petrarchan language, despite a few abuses and
excesses, generally led to a great outburst of creativity, particularly
in France in the mid-sixteenth century.

Outside of Italy it was Baldassare Castiglione's Cortegiano of
1528 which was to have the most influence. His was "the high Neopla-
tonic vein of serious petrarchism, which admits of no final satisfaction
except that which can be derived from purifying and high-minded
frustration. The lady must never yield."28

The first Petrarchan influences in France came via Serafino and
his group. Serafino (1466-1500) exploited Petrarch's resources without
adopting his idealized context. His fairly frivolous works were set to
music and thus became a vehicle by which Petrarchism eventually con-
quered Europe.

The poets of the Ecole lyonnaise combined a Neoplatonism derived
from Ficino and Bembo with stylistic devices elaborated after the
fashion of Serafino and Cariteo, whose verses were representative of
"an uncommitted art suited to court life and court entertainment".29

27Ibid., p. 21.  
28Ibid., p. 115.  
Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes* are, in most instances, far from frivolous. Her poetry is permeated with the elevated tone and subject matter of the Neoplatonists, although she does make some use of Petrarchistic conventions. The Neoplatonists who influenced the *Ecole lyonnaise*, and Pernette du Guillet in particular, will be discussed in the next section.

**Platonism**

French writers of the Renaissance were greatly influenced by the views of the Greek philosopher Plato (427?-347 B.C.) too, though relying more heavily on his followers and commentators for clarification than on Plato himself; this due mainly to their minimal knowledge of Greek. Plotinus (A.D. 205?-270?), was their principal Latin source, but his work was also made known in France through the translations, summaries and commentaries of Marcilio Ficino. Ficino's *Convito*, a treatise which appeared in French in 1546, crystallized most of the interest in Plato's doctrine of love, although Leon Ebreo's (also known as Leon L'Hebreu or Leo the Jew) *Dialoghi d'amore* was almost as influential as Ficino's *Convito*. Additionally, French writers drew inspiration from Benivieni's *Canzona di amor celeste e divino* and Pico della Mirandola's accompanying commentary on it.

The themes which attracted French poets most in Plato were his doctrines of beauty and of human love, two anchors of courtly love theory. Plato's cosmology interested them insofar as it defined the relationship between man and the universe. Thus, as one writer so aptly
puts it: "Plato's cosmography is the handmaid of his ethics."\(^{30}\)

In Plato's cosmological scheme, God, in his goodness, created the cosmos out of the four elements—earth, air, fire and water—, establishing what is later referred to as a "discordant harmony", a musical echoing of the movements of heavenly bodies.

God then infused the World-Soul throughout the cosmos. According to Ficino, the soul was, therefore, "in varying degree the appanage of each created thing", human or non-human. \(^{31}\) The function of the World-Soul was to vivify the universe, and the World-Soul was responsible for maintaining the cosmos created by God. This function was also variously attributed to God himself, to love, to peace, or to nature by later writers, just as some of these writers held these lesser creative principles responsible for bringing an order out of chaos in the first place. In Stoic doctrine too, fire was the unifying power of the universe. Vergil attributed the quality of fire to the human soul, and "it was a Neoplatonic doctrine that the human soul was a tenuous fire". \(^{32}\)

The culminating act of creation was the establishment of human souls. Souls, according to Plato, all came into being simultaneously at the moment of creation and were fixed in number. This view, of course, contradicted Christian doctrine, although St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and other Church Fathers had incorporated other aspects of Platonic teaching into their dogma and considered Plato in some respects a Christian prophet.


\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 3.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 24.
For both Plato and Ficino, the soul was the principle of movement and was itself in constant motion. Before its terrestrial birth, the human soul circled the universe in the company of the gods and was seen as a combination of intelligence, spirit and appetite. Intelligence was personified as the driver of a chariot; spirit, a docile white horse; and appetite as a recalcitrant black steed. Later writers used the white horse as a symbol of virtuous love and the black one as a symbol of carnal love—the charioteer symbolizing reason, and trying to overcome the turbulent, irrational element represented by the black horse.

Platonism also considered life and earthly objects as only dim reflections of a higher and purer reality. Physical objects were but impermanent representations of the perfect models they were patterned after. These perfect models existed in the mind of God, and their highest form was the trinity of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. It was thought that before its incarnation the human soul had received knowledge of the Perfect in its voyage around the cosmos in the company of the gods, but that upon its incarnation it had forgotten this knowledge. The soul moved, therefore, in an effort to find completion. Its purpose was reunion with God. The eternal preoccupation of every part of the universe was to seek fulfillment in the sphere one degree higher than its own, in an effort to ascend to its original state in closest proximity to godliness.

In the Phaedrus, Plato describes how earthly beauty could set reminiscence in motion and enable the soul to begin its journey back to its reunion with God and to the perfect bliss found in the Ideas of Truth, Goodness and Beauty.
It is at this point that Plato's cosmological scheme and his doctrines of beauty and human love join together. Plato insisted on the purity of love. Love was a spiritual movement of the human soul which transcended the feeling for an individual and caused the soul to rise to a contemplation of the Ideal. The image which conveyed the idea of this process was the ladder-of-love, or a series of steps which the lover could embark upon. The lover and the beloved served as guides to each other in their quest for a higher reality. In true love too, the lover is constantly trying to perceive and enjoy that beauty which lies beyond the temporal realm and to which his intellectual faculty leads him.\(^33\) As Merrill and Clements state,

\[\ldots\text{love is defined as the desire for rebirth in beauty. But the object of the truest love is that Beauty which lies in the world of the Ideas, and in whose nature beautiful human forms, beautiful souls, beautiful human relations and bodies of knowledge all participate in rising degree.}\(^34\)

It is in the *Symposium* that Plato describes the steps on the ladder-of-love. Beginning in his youth, the lover should begin to contemplate beautiful forms, first just one and then several others, so that he may begin to see that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit,\(...[he should] recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms \(...\text{the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the things of earth as steps along}\]

\(^33\)Ibid., pp. 61-62. \(^34\)Ibid., p. 60.
which he mounts upward for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is.\textsuperscript{35}

The first step on the ladder-of-love was therefore the development of a sensitivity to beauty in another human being. Finally, through a synthesis effected by intuition, the lover could gain a glimpse of the principle of reality in its purest forms: Ideal Beauty, Goodness and Truth. The lovers were to guide one another in this quest.

In his \textit{Symposium} Plato develops another myth which touches on the doctrine of love—that of the Androgyne. In accordance with this myth there were once three sexes, all double beings: there was a double man, a double woman, and the half-man and half-woman Androgyne. These creatures were so powerful that they menaced the authority of the gods. To put an end to this threat, Zeus cut them in half and created the men and women we know today, who were weaker than the original double beings. They were unhappy in their divided state and their goal in life became the constant quest for reunion with their "other half".

Originally, Plato glorified the male homosexual friendship above all other forms of human love: the males who had been part of the severed double males were considered more manly than those originating from the Androgyne. Likewise the women who had been double female beings desired only feminine relationships. The two halves of the Androgyne were scorned and thought to be inherently promiscuous. This

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 61.
situation was reversed in the later Middle Ages under the influence of the Church, which glorified male-female relationships on natural, procreative grounds and reduced homosexuality to a perversion.

In Renaissance writing, allusions to the Androgyne are frequent, and the quest for the "other half" of the integral being is sometimes used as justification for infidelity in love relationships, an interpretation Pernette du Guillet definitely rejects as the next section of this thesis will reveal.

Another Platonic myth, that of Anteros, served to illustrate the mutual and reciprocal nature of ideal Platonic love. According to this myth, Venus had wondered why her son Eros, the god of love, did not grow. She was told by Zeus that he would grow if he had a brother, so she gave birth to a second Cupid, Anteros, the god of love-in-return. As a result, Anteros was usually conceived of as an ally of Eros, although occasionally the two were viewed as competitors or foes. But most often Anteros was depicted as Eros's ally because he ensured the reciprocity of lovers' sentiments. Some Renaissance writers confused Anteros with a third Cupid, Lyseros, who was actually the dissolver of unrequited love.

Nearly all of Pernette du Guillet's poems which take the relationship between lovers as their theme draw heavily on the elevated quest for purification characteristic of Neoplatonism. Pernette du Guillet's Rymes show more evidence of Neoplatonic influence than the works of the other members of the group of poets known as the Ecole lyonnaise, who will be discussed in the next section.
The "Ecole lyonnaise"

Although the use of the term "école" is contested by some critics when referring to Maurice Scève, Pernette du Guillet, and Louise Labé, there is little doubt that much of their poetic doctrine was held in common. We know also that Pernette du Guillet was probably a student of Scève's, that she was close in age to Louise Labé, and that Louise Labé had read the poetry of Maurice Scève.

Maurice Scève (1510?–?) was born between what V.-L. Saulnier calls "deux bandes": between 1500—the "bande" of the printing press, and 1525—the "bande" of François I, the epoch of the Italian revelation and the flowering of Marot. Europe was then under the influence of the humanists: Erasmus, Budé, and Lefèvre d'Etaples. 36

The printing industry gave the people of Lyons access to Classical and Italian literature, which was to be the foundation upon which literature in Lyons was based. Printers from Germany worked to diffuse the ideas of the Reformation, but it was Symphorien Champier (1469–1539), who oriented the intellectual community towards the discovery of the texts of antiquity, and who initiated what is considered the first period of littérature lyonnaise. In 1503, Champier published his La Nef des Dames vertueuses, in which there is a culte de la femme, a certain "feminism", which would inspire later writers in Lyons.

Maurice Scève was the initiator of a transitional poetry: he was the link between Marot and Ronsard, and in his works the reader finds both medieval elements and a more modern, realist point of view. 37

36 V.-L. Saulnier, Maurice Scève, p. 17. 37 Ibid., p. 204.
Scève was, however, "avant tout obscur, et d'une obscurité voulue." Scève's hermetism was a result of his desire to escape the reproach of simplicity through being unintelligible to the uneducated. He accomplished his wish through the use of scholarly allusions, rare words, neologisms, and through a complicated metaphysics of love. He was a "savant dont la pensée est claire pour les savants...[il] ne s'est pas soucié du lecteur ordinaire." Pernette du Guillet's Rymes differ from Scève's poetry on this point: she always strove for clarity in her ideas and in her style. If her poetry would have interested only an elite group, this was due to the elevated nature of her ideals.

Maurice Scève's taste for emblems and symbols is evidence of medieval influence. His sentiment for nature, his fidelity to his province and his celebration of the beauty of the countryside around his native Lyons is, however, an aspect of his poetry which is rarely found in the poetry which served as his model: it expresses sincerely felt impressions. Nature and celebration of the region around Lyons are almost totally absent from Pernette du Guillet's Rymes.

Scève was not a precursor of humanism, and was not, in fact, directly touched by it. Neither was he a precursor of Neoplatonism in France, being an imitator of the Italians rather than of the Greeks or Latins. Pernette du Guillet's sources of inspiration seem more indebted than Scève's to these two currents of thought. Scève's poetry

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38 Joseph Aynard, Les Poètes Lyonnais, p. 16. 39 Ibid., pp. 25-26. 40 Ibid., p. 28. 41 Ibid., p. 34. 42 Ibid., p. 44.
is more Petrarchistic than Du Guillet's, but Scève knew Dante's *Divine Comedy* and was possibly closer to Dante than to Petrarch:

Aussi bien dans la conception de son oeuvre, que dans son expression spirituelle, Maurice Scève, par l'élévation de sa pensée et par la splendeur de ses images, rejoint l'auteur de la *Divine comédie*. Pour ces raisons...nous estimons que le créateur de *Délie* est plus près de Dante que de Petrarch.

Major works by Maurice Scève include *Arion* (1536), an elegy on the death of the dauphin François, son of François I; *Délie* (1544), which in addition to being a series of love poems addressed to Pernette du Guillet contains many historical allusions and fifty emblems related to the text; *Saulsaye* (1547), which Celebrates Scève's love of the countryside and which was written after the death of Pernette du Guillet; and *Microcosme* (1562), a philosophical poem in which it was Scève's intention to produce a "work of science" rather than a work of art, and which makes him the first French writer to speak of music as a conscious, scholarly admirer of this art. Ideally, he wanted to summarize all the knowledge of his times: astrology, geometry, and mathematics, combining the credulity of the Middle Ages with the universal curiosity of the Renaissance.

Maurice Scève seems to have written nothing during the last years of his life, and other writers no longer refer to him in their works. He probably died around 1567, and there is speculation that he had converted to Protestantism. Scève, who at first had been admired by

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43 Ardouin, L'Amour à Lyon, p. 39.
other poets, was abandoned by them when the taste for symbolism and obscurity was lost.\textsuperscript{46} Maurice Scève did, however, inspire Pontus de Tyard, Joachim du Bellay, and Ronsard, who honored him in their poetry and respected his reputation as a \textit{savant}. Their definitions of the role of the poet as a superior, divinely inspired being were similar.

Louise Labé, who was born sometime between 1520 and 1525 and was therefore about the same age as Pernette du Guillet, was perhaps the first poet in Lyons in whom the spirit of the Renaissance was clear. Her works were untainted by the obscurity, the allegory, and the overemphasis on subtility characteristic of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{47}

Louise Labé took her inspiration from Italian literary models. She was not an imitator of Maurice Scève, although she was familiar with the \textit{Délie}, and, far from following Scève in his obscurity, was not at all abstract. Louise Labé's works were quite dissimilar from Pernette du Guillet’s \textit{Rymes} as well, both by their style and by their inspiration. Labé was much more Petrarchistic than Du Guillet, and much less interested in Neoplatonic views.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 77. \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 66.
CHAPTER III

PERNETTE DU GUILLET AT VARIANCE WITH POETIC TRADITION

Pernette du Guillet was influenced by contemporaneous literary currents in vogue in Lyons, most particularly by Marotism and courtly love. Of Italian poetic traditions, she owed less to Petrarchism than to Platonism.

In response to the question "What is the nature of love for Pernette du Guillet?" V.-L. Saulnier categorizes it as "humanist love", thus distinguishing it from "l'amour mondain des Marotiques, de l'amour pétrarquiste de Délie, de l'amour platonicien de Héroët, de l'amour sensuel de Louise Labé."¹ According to Saulnier there are three steps in the elevation of love to a humanistic ideal. At first Du Guillet "plays the game" of courtly love, in a purely formal and mondaine way. Then, when she is touched by certain aspects of love which cause her to suffer, her reactions evoke memories of a Petrarchistic love, which find expression through a discussion of "les deux visages de l'amour". Finally, unwilling to remain in a state of uncertainty, she resolves her conflict in favor of the satisfaction (contentement) which can be gained by a humanist love inspired by knowledge (science). Under

Saulnier's plausible scheme, such a humanistic search for knowledge differs from the Platonic quest in that Du Guillet's preoccupation is the humanist's traditional concern for the mind rather than the knowledge of the soul which is sought by the Neoplatonists. Whereas in Platonism the final goal was always divine love, the humanists' ambition was the assurance of an immortal life. In Saulnier's view, Du Guillet would belong to the latter group because her references to God are few and "n'ont qu'une valeur d'ornement poétique".  

But notwithstanding Saulnier's theory, it may be more accurate to describe Du Guillet's Rymes as highly personal rather than humanistic. Initially, Du Guillet did imitate conventions of Petrarchistic love and incorporated Neoplatonic ideals in the Rymes, but she gradually came to views distinct from these traditions. Her personal view still differed from that of the humanists, however, because she added the element of psychology to the empirical, scientific, occult world of the humanists.

In support of the interpretation that Du Guillet's poetry was above all personal, another scholar points out that she invariably incorporated references to herself and to her relationship into her poetry. In addition, the reader develops "the feeling of being enclosed in the

2 Ibid., p. 70.
4 Ibid.
poet's private world, into which the reality of the external world rarely intrudes", due to the repeated occurrence of the same words and phrases, together with the abstractness of the language.\(^6\) Indeed, one of the major unifying elements of the *Rymes* is the recurring image of light and science. This is a humanist concern, but Du Guillet "molds and refashions the convention she has inherited so as to create a form which is distinctly and peculiarly her own."\(^7\) Readers develop the impression that the *Rymes* are the true expression of Du Guillet's feelings rather than imitation of poetic convention, humanist or otherwise, especially in her more mature work.

As a fledgling poet, on the other hand, Du Guillet is indebted to literary tradition. This chapter will be a discussion of the extent to which Du Guillet conformed to convention or transformed it in accordance with her own purpose.

**Variations on the Courtly Love Ideal**

By the sixteenth century, the ideal of earlier courtly love had been modified to the extent that the submission of the lover had now become less patient. This trend is visible in Du Guillet's work as well. Scève appears to have been more insistent than patient, as evidenced by Du Guillet's frequent need to reason with him in an attempt to convince him to adopt her conception of the nature of true love. For example, she needs to convince him to let her be the judge of his happiness, which can only be accomplished if he becomes more reasonable rather than passionate in his demands:

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 54. \(^7\)Ibid., p. 31.
Il [Dieu] m'a donné raison, qui a pouvoir
De bien juger ton heur, et ton sçavoir.
Ne trouve donc chose si admirable,
Si à bon droict te desiront de veoir
Le Corps, l'Esprit, et l'Ame raisonnable. (Epig. 16, vv. 6-10)

Du Guillet's own attitude is not one of blind submission: she wants to love on her own terms.

Complete devotion of the lover to his lady was the principal tenet of the courtly love ideal. Pernette du Guillet adheres to this attitude to the extent that she promises to remain forever loyal to Scève:

Te promectant m'acquiter pour l'amande,
Non d'un seul jour, mais de toute ma vie (Epig. 19, vv. 5-6)

Her expectation that Scève remain faithful to her, rather than courting other women, is further indication of Du Guillet's acceptance of this element of the courtly convention.

The nature of love in the Rymes also largely conforms to the four characteristics of the courtly love ideal discussed above: humility, courtesy, adultery and the religion of love. Du Guillet's humility in relation to Scève is based on her recognition of his intellectual and literary superiority, and perhaps as well upon the possibility that he came from one of the richest families in Lyons and therefore would have been her social superior as well. Humility usually takes the form of self-deprecation. In poems in which Du Guillet wishes to praise Scève's accomplishments, she describes herself as less knowledgeable and less talented as a writer than he. Epigram 6 is an example of this attitude:
Par ce dizain clerement je m'accuse
De ne sçavoir tes vertus honnorer,
Fors du vouloir, qui est bien maigre excuse:
Mais qui pourroit par escript decorer
Ce qui de soy se peult faire adorer?

............................

Preste moy donc ton eloquent sçavoir
Pour te louer ainsi, que tu me loues! (Epig. 6)

Courtesy in the tradition of the courtly ideal appears when
Du Guillet makes her case for women as arbitrators of manners, as in
Chanson 5, where she encourages women to uphold standards of morality
in relations between the sexes.

The fourth characteristic, adultery, appears as a minor theme in
Du Guillet's Rymes. An example of a veiled reference to the conflict
in loyalties she suffered occurs in Epigram 35, where Du Guillet ex­
 plains that she feels more devotion to "celuy là, [son amant, non pas
son mari] qui m'est le moins tenu".

Other traces of the courtly love tradition in the Rymes include
several references to the service amoureux and the possibility of
reward of the worthy. In Epigram 21, for example, Du Guillet creates
an entirely original role reversal: it is now she, the lady, who serves
the man. Furthermore, she would refuse the reward which would nor­
mally have been granted the serviteur. She wants no "final satisfac­
tion" because such an admission would signal the end of desire and the
end of lasting pleasure:
Si le servir merite recompense,
Et recompense est la fin du desir,
Tousjours vouldrois servir plus qu'on ne pense,
Pour non venir au bout de mon plaisir. (Épig. 21)

In Chanson 2, Du Guillet returns to the notion of reward and once again reverses the roles of the courtly love tradition. It is she who should be rewarded, rather than the man, and once again this desired reward is not physical. This time it is a reciprocation consisting of "true" love which she seeks. The entire song is a sort of reproach to Scève, who has not rewarded her merits. These include the fact that she conceals her suffering, never complains, and has promised him eternal loyalty, all qualities expected of the lover in the courtly tradition. Ultimately, as in the case of these lovers, Du Guillet hopes that her dévouement will be recognized. She believes that by claiming him as her own she is rewarding him and expects him to reciprocate this love:

Quand vous me voyez tousjours celle,
Qui pour vous souffre, et son mal cele,
Me laissant par luiy consumer,
Ne me debvez vous bien aymer?
Quand vous voyez, que pour moins belle
Je ne prens contre vous querelle,
Mais pour mien vous veulx reclamer,
Ne me debvez vous bien aymer? (Chanson 2, vv. 5-12)

In another poem, the master-servant relationship so characteristic of courtly love is rejected. In true Platonic tradition, the poet refuses all inequality in the relationship and also seems to reject any role reversal which would place Scève in the position of master. Assuming the role of the "lady", she now insists that she should be the one to control the relationship by dispensing the reward of her love to
a lover who continues to adore her and who is an incarnation of Platonic Good. Du Guillet believes in complementarity in the love relationship. In her own case, she is the source of virtue and Scève is the source of knowledge. This conception leaves no place for a master-servant relationship. Epigram 28 illustrates Du Guillet's attitude on this point:

Si je ne suis telle que soulois estre,  
Prenez vous en au temps, qui m'a appris  
Qu'en me traitant rudement, comme maistre,  
Jamais sur moy ne gaignerez le prys.  
Et toutesfois, vous voyant tousjours pris  
En mon endroit, vostre ardeur me convye  
Par ce hault bien, que de vous j'ay compris,  
A demeurer vostre toute ma vie. (Epig. 28)

Elegy 2 ponders the question of the limits to the service the lady should require of her suitor. It is based on the myth of Acteon, who was changed into a deer and devoured by his own hounds after having observed Diana bathing. In like manner, Du Guillet imagines herself as powerful as the goddess, but, unlike in the legend, does not wish to inflict the same kind of harsh punishment upon her lover. After playing with the idea of transforming him into a serf (instead of a Cerf), she decides to renounce her control over him so that he will be free to immortalize them both through his poetry. The point here is that she does not want her lover to serve her directly. Du Guillet's attitude is highly original: the "implication is that if the lover is enslaved by love he will not be able to write poetry—an interesting reflection
on the whole poetic tradition of the servitude of love."\(^8\) Here are the pertinent lines from this elegy:

O qu'alors eust l'onde telle efficace  
De le pouvoir en Acteon muer,  
Non toutesfois pour le faire tuer,  
Et devorer à ses chiens, comme Cerf:  
Mais que de moy se sensist estre serf,  
Et serviteur transformé tellement  
Qu'ainsi cuydast en son entendement,  
Tant que Dyane en eust sur moy envie,  
De luy avoir sa puissance ravie.  
    Combien heureuse, et grande me dirois!  
Certes Deesse estre me cuyderois.  
Mais, pour me veoir contente à mon desir,  
Vouldrois je bien faire un tel deplaisir  
A Apollo, et aussi à ses Muses,  
De les laisser privees, et confuses  
D'un, qui les peult toutes servir à gré,  
Et faire honneur à leur hault choestar sacré?  
Ostez, ostez, mes souhaitz...  
...il ne m'appartient point.  
Laissez le aller les neuf Muses servir,  
Sans se vouloir dessoubz moy asservir (Elégie 2, v. 28-48)

Pernette du Guillet's use of mythology is clear and discreet, as evidenced by Elegy 2 above. The allegorical legacy of the Middle Ages, however, held a very small place in her poetry. Elegy 3, La Nuict, is Du Guillet's only full-fledged allegory. In this poem she has imagined a dream world in which she is alone in the middle of the night. This world is peopled with hideous monsters and with three Dames: Vaine gloire, Ambition and Shame, who veil all understanding and paralyze free will. They represent phantoms people create to disguise their baser desires. This poem would be thematically and stylistically unlike

the main corpus of the Rymes were it not for the ending. A fourth
personification, Jour, arrives upon the scene. Jour is the clairvoyant
soul, free and bathed in light, which dissipates the mad, unhealthy
illusions. This links Elegy 3 to the main body of the Rymes, because
Jour is the allegorical figure Du Guillet uses to refer to the poet
Maurice Scève in several of her poems. Thus she shows originality by
once again incorporating personal elements concerning her relationship
into what would otherwise have been impersonal, fairly awkward allegory.
In this way Du Guillet goes beyond simple imitation of the medieval
tradition. In the next section we will discuss how Du Guillet differ­
ed from the second medieval tradition, that of the Rhetoricans.

Variations on the "Grande Rhétorique" and the Marotiques
Unlike the pedantism of the Great Rhetoricians and Marotic tradi­
tions, Du Guillet’s rhetoric is light, witty and unpedantic. Her
common sense and grace are consistently foreign to the tradition of the
Great Rhetoricians. She opts instead for higher meditations.

The tradition of the Rhetoricians only furnished her with a con­
text; she considered its subject matter too vapid. She borrowed some
of its procedures and forms—the débat, the récit anecdotique, and the
responsif—, but nothing more.

Du Guillet elevates the debate procedure by asking questions
concerning the doctrine of love:

A qui est plus un Amant obligé
Ou à Amour, ou vrayement à sa Dame? (Epig. 24, v. 1-2)

Or qui en a, ou en veult avoir deux,
Comment peult il faire deux Amours naistre? (Epig. 25,
v. 1-2)
Du Guillet usually gives serious conclusions to these witty compositions:

Soit que par esgalle puissance
L'affection, et le désir
Debattent de la jouyssance
Du bien, dont se veulent saisir:
   Si vous voulez leur doict choisir,
   Vous trouverez sans fiction,
   Que le désir en tout plaisir
Suyvra toujours l'affection. (Epig. 27)

Some of Du Guillet's earliest poems resemble the pièces de circonstance and the récits anecdotiques of the Rhetoricians. One example is Epigram 40, in which she uses a play on words to minimize the importance of Scève's frequentation of another woman:

Et au partir luy dit: callimera! [Bonjour!]
Lors souspeçon en mon cœur myt grand noyse,
Doubtant qu'il dist d'elle: qu'il l'aymera! (Epig. 40, v. 8-10)

A third borrowing from the Rhetoricians, the technique of the pièces responsives, was employed to a much greater extent by Pernette du Guillet. Epigrams she composed as responses to certain dizains in the Délie are of most interest here. For example, Epigram 13, which begins "L'heur de mon mal, enflammant le désir/Feit distiller deux cœurs en un devoir" is in answer to Scève's dizain 136: "L'HEUR de nostre heur enflambant le désir/Unit double ame en un mesme povoir". The subtle differences in the two poems are indicative of the basic differences in the two poets concerning the nature of love and desire.

Pernette du Guillet's debt to the Marotiques was fairly heavy concerning certain specific details. She also borrowed the technique
of certain genres. She cultivated these genres less, however, as she became more experienced at her craft and more openly expressive of her personal feelings. Du Guillet owes most to Clément Marot and to his followers when it comes to form, but the variety of verse forms found in the *Rymes* distinguished her from her contemporaries. She avoided monotony by her alternation of pieces of four, five, eight, ten or twelve lines, and by her use of lines composed of eight, ten or twelve syllables. As Saulnier states:

Dans le groupe lyonnais, Pernette mérite la première place dans l'invention des rythmes variés...Maurice Scève n'a connu que le dizain et le sonnet, exceptionnellement le huitain: Louise Labé, que le sonnet. Scève, Louise Labé, Héroët, n'emploient que le décasyllabe ou quelquefois l'alexandrin. ...C'est au contraire ce qui distingue Pernette: la variété des formes strophiques et métriques.9

Just as Pernette du Guillet gave proof of independence in relation to the Marotiques and her contemporaries in Lyons, she remained apart from another major literary convention of the time: Petrarchism.

**Variations on Petrarchism**

There are very few precise reminders of the Italian Petrarchistic poets in the *Rymes*. The few striking images and significant details of Petrarchism which Du Guillet did incorporate into her poetry were most often used in a way which was diametrically opposed to Petrarchan methods and ideals. Du Guillet's use of several Petrarchistic images, taken from a sonnet by Cariteo, show how she imitated her teachers.

Epigrams 2, 4, 8 and 20 all develop images found in Cariteo: the coming of dawn; light at midnight and the light in the mind which enables her to see better than the sense of vision; the idea that the poet is a divine spirit placed by the gods in a mortel body; and the fact that the poet's (Scève's) mind astonishes the world. Du Guillet takes these characteristic Petrarchistic images and incorporates them into poems which do not even deal with the same themes. She combines Cariteo's images with those of other poets and with her own ideas. In addition, what she left by the wayside is also an indication of her originality. Characteristically, she leaves out everything which touches on physical beauty, while retaining psychological, picturesque, and poetic elements. Her manner of adapting other poets to her own purposes is a mark of talent and originality, especially in such a young poet:

Ces procédés attestent un sens déjà très fin de la poésie, chez une toute jeune poétesse; ils témoignent d'un goût et d'une discrétion qu'on ne trouve pas souvent chez les poètes du XVIe siècle.\(^\text{10}\)

In true Petrarchistic fashion Pernette du Guillet praised her lover's personal qualities and accomplishments. When praising his person, however, she insisted on his spiritual aspect rather than on his physical appearance. She made limited use of the three characteristic Petrarchistic techniques for praising the beloved: metaphor, mythological association, and description of his effect upon her. She showed a preference for straightforward, logical discourse instead. The fact that Scève was a renowned poet added weight to her praise of

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 49.
his extensive knowledge and literary accomplishments. Her praise of such a worthy man therefore went beyond mere convention.

Du Guillet's association of Scève with Apollo was particularly apt. Apollo was the god of light and the director of the Muses, and Scève had been responsible for Du Guillet's intellectual enlightenment and for guiding her poetic endeavors. Here is the epigram in which Du Guillet first associates Scève with Apollo:

Esprit celeste, et des Dieux transformé
En corps mortel transmis en ce bas Monde,
A Apollo peulx estre conforme
Pour la vertu, dont es la source, et l'onde.
Ton eloquence, avecques ta faconde,
Et hault seavoir, auquel tu es appris,
Demonstre assez le bien en toy compris:
Car en doulceur ta plume tant fluante
A merité d'emporter gloire, et prys,
Voyant ta veine en hault stille affluante. (Epig. 4)

Jour (Day) is the essential metaphor Du Guillet employs with reference to Scève. A darkness-at-noon paradox opens Epigram 2 in typical Petrarchistic fashion. Then the appearance of Scève in Du Guillet's life provoked her intellectual awakening. His coming is described as the arrival of dawn, which interrupts Du Guillet's intellectual night:

La nuict estoit pour moy si tresobscure
Que Terre, et Ciel elle m'obscurissoit,
Tant qu'à Midy de discernir figure
N'avois pouvoir, qui fort me marrissoit:
Mais quand je vis que l'aube apparoissoit
En couleurs mille et diverse, et seraine,
Je me trouvay de liesse si pleine
(Voyant desjâ la clarté a la ronde)
Que commençay louer à voix haultaine
Celuy qui feit pour moy ce Jour au Monde. (Epig. 2)
One scholar states that although Epigram 2 is an expression of the conventional idea that absence of the loved one is night and his presence day, Du Guillet uses the theme in an individual way. Conventionally, absence brought pain and presence brought joy. Pernette du Guillet goes further by suggesting that "the loved one's presence brings perception, the ability to see clearly, not just light but enlightenment."\(^{11}\)

The Petrarchistic conception that the beloved is powerful enough to command nature appears several times in the Rymes. As in Epigram 2 above, in Epigram 8 Scève is once again capable of lighting up Du Guillet's mental night:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Jà n'est besoing que plus je me soucie} \\
\text{Si le jour fault, ou vienne la nuit,} \\
\text{Nuit hyvernelle, et sans Lune obscurcie:} \\
\text{Car tout cela certes rien ne me nuit,} \\
\text{Puis que mon Jour par clarté adoulcie} \\
\text{M'esclaire toute, et tant, qu'à la mynuict} \\
\text{En mon esprit me faict appercevoir} \\
\text{Ce que mes yeulx ne sceurent oncques veoir. (Epig. 8)}
\end{align*}\]

Likewise, in Epigram 20, nature waited for Scève's collaboration before completing Du Guillet:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Car m'esbauchant Nature s'efforça} \\
\text{D'entendre, de veoir pour nouvelle ordonnance} \\
\text{Ton hault sçavoir...} \quad \text{(Epig. 20, v. 5-7)}
\end{align*}\]

Another illustration that the admired man is as powerful as nature is the fact he has control over life and death:

In many poems Pernette du Guillet speaks of the effect Scève produced upon her. In Epigram 1, Scève has restored her to life. Before meeting him she had lived without consciousness: "Restée suis sans sentyment de vie." His arrival led her to the consideration of elevated values: "...me cause l'imagination/A contempler si haute qualité." In Epigram 5 he has encouraged her to pursue knowledge and change herself completely:

Je fuiray loing d'ignorance le vice,
Puis que désir de me transmuer as
De noire en blanche... (Epig. 5, v. 7-9)

Du Guillet is undoubtedly transformed by the absence or presence of her lover, but she never suffers the loss of identity which befell the lover within the Petrarchistic convention. She remains true to herself and is unwilling to compromise her ideals. As she matures, she becomes more demanding and tries to convince Scève to adopt her view of friendship.

The Petrarchistic combination of pain and pleasure appear in the Rymes. "L'âme et le coeur de Pernette ne présentent pas toujours la même image de la sérénité. Lectrice de Petrarch et de ses imitateurs, notre poétesse connaît bien le thème de 'l'Amour à deux visages' et elle avoue loyalement souffrir de ce manque d'unité," one critic says of her Chanson 1:12

Je voy les uns fort contents,
Les autres pleins de souffrance:
De ceux là les rys j'entens,
De ceux cy la douleance:
Ces deux passions j'apperçoy
Regner toutes deux en moy.
   Je rys du bien, où je tens
En tresgrand' resjouyssance:
Et pleure...

(Chanson 1, v. 7-15)

Suffering in Du Guillet's poetry is not always, however, inherent in the love relationship itself because she is generally happy in love. Pain is more often a result of outside interference. Du Guillet suffers from jealousy when she suspects she has a rival. A whole series of poems deal with this theme. Du Guillet openly admits to jealousy, as in the following epigram:

Si descharger je veulx ma fantasie
Du mal que j'ay, et qui me presse fort,
On me dira que e'est la jalousie
(Je le scay bien) qui faict sur moy effort. (Epig. 36, v. 1-4)

It is also typical of the Petrarchistic convention that Du Guillet, in the role of the lover, suffer in silence and be the only member of the couple to bear the suffering. This role is, however, unconventional for the lady within this tradition:

En lieu du bien que deux souloient pretendre,
Je veulx le mal toute seule porter:
Puis que malheur ainsi me veult surprendre,
Il est besoing qu'aprenne à supporter.
   0 foy, amour, plaisir, se contenter,
Ce n'est moyen de mon mal subvertir.
Helas, j'ai bien cause de regretter
Ce qui souloit en deux se despartir. (Epig. 44)

The above epigram shows as well that the love relationship was normally
happy and reciprocal.

Chanson 8 is one of many which exemplify the classic Petrarchan conflict between passion and purification. Although some of the vocabulary is Petrarchistic (doulx martire), the spirit of the poem is not. In Du Guillet's poetry the process of purification is usually conceived in Neoplatonic terms:

Car quand Amour à Vertu est uny,
Le cœur congoit un désir infiny,
Qui toujours desire
Tout bien hault et sainct,
Qui de doulx martire
L'environne, et ceinct.
Car il luy engendre
Une ardeur de veoir,
Et toujours apprendre
Quelque hault scavoir:
Le scavoir est ministre de Vertu,
Par qui Amour vicieux est batu... (Chanson 8, v. 25-36)

Elegy 2 is another example of the quest for purification, this time by the intermediary of water. It is also an example of Petrarchistic use of a dream-world in order to give greater freedom to the expression of sensuality than would otherwise be possible. The elegy begins with a wish:

Combien de fois ay-je en moy souhaicté
Me rencontrer sur la chaleur d'esté
Tout au plus prés de la clere fontaine,
Où mon desir avec cil se pourmaine (Elégie 2, v. 1-4)

The poet then imagines herself nude and is curious to discover her lover's reactions. But if he decides to touch her she will throw a few drops of water in his eyes:
It is obvious that the tone of Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes* differs from that of serious Petrarchistic poets in that happiness and satisfaction dominate. Insofar as Du Guillet is happy in love and that love is mutual, she is not a Petrarchistic poet. Her deepest concerns correspond to those found in Neoplatonic philosophy, which seems to be her true religion.

**Variations on Neoplatonism**

In her effort to understand and define the nature of love, Pernette du Guillet quite naturally turned to the Platonic myths which had been popularized in Lyons through the works of Ficino, Castiglione, Bembo and Ebreo. The deep influence Ebreo's *Dialogues* exerted on the *Rymes* is evidenced in details such as the use of terms such as vertu, savoir, grace, âme, esprit, raison and corps which retained the meanings Ebreo had given them. The pure, chaste love Du Guillet calls "friendship", to which she opposes amour (a vulgar passion), is reminiscent of Antoine Héroët's *Parfaicte Amie*. Friendship, in Du Guillet's context, was pure, noble, chaste, exclusive and lasting--

whereas passion was blind and ephemeral.\textsuperscript{15}

Neoplatonism made itself felt on nearly every page of the \textit{Rymes}. It may be found in the paraphrasing of Platonic ideals and in the poet's "preference for discursive reasoning over Petrarchan palpitation."\textsuperscript{16} Du Guillet made several allusions to androgynous union and to Neoplatonic notions of progression in love toward higher ideals. The exaltation of reason to the detriment of its enemy, physical desire, was also a characteristic theme of her work.

For Du Guillet love is awakened when she is confronted with the superior knowledge and goodness she perceives in Scève. In Epigram 17 she states explicitly that beauty was not the cause of her affection for her lover. In this she was not a strict Neoplatonist. The distortion effected by Du Guillet, that of seeing the lover as "a creator of moral virtue before aesthetic beauty...makes her a Platonic heretic, for in epigram 17 she says that virtue, not beauty, is the primordial value."\textsuperscript{17} Thus Du Guillet's ideal is perhaps more elevated than was customary within the convention. Here are the relevant lines of Epigram 17:

\begin{quote}
Je suis tant bien que je ne le puis dire,
Ayant sondé son amitié profonde
Par sa vertu, qui à l'aymer m'attire
Plus que beauté... \textsuperscript{(Epig. 17, v. 1-4)}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 68.


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 113.
In Epigram 19, Du Guillet repeats that it is her lover's virtues, grace and knowledge which have attracted her:

accepter le vouloir
De qui tu as la pensée ravie
Par tes vertus, ta grace, et ton savoir. (Epig. 19, v. 8-10)

Platonic good and knowledge reappear in Epigram 43, where they are used to explain Du Guillet's contentement, her satisfaction in love.

In this epigram, we notice several other Neoplatonic concepts: the sense of vision is of primary importance; ideal good is lasting; there is the notion of the Neoplatonic ladder: "de tous les heurs c'est le commencement":

Je n'oserai le penser véritable
Si ce n'estoit pour un contentement,
Qui fait sentir, et voir ce bien durable
Par la douceur, qui en sort seulement.
   De tous les heurs c'est le commencement:
   Je n'ose tesmoing le savoir estimable.
   Est ce le bien qu'on dit tant incroyable?
   Je ne le croy, et le sçay seurement. (Epig. 43)

This image of a path, steps or a ladder is found in several of Du Guillet's poems to express the idea of elevation:

Travaillant ainsi,
Tenir droit la voye
D'immortel soucy.
Si donc il veult en si hault lieu monter
Qu'il puisse Amour, et la Mort surmonter (Chanson 8, v. 52-56)

Leaving behind the lowest rung of the ladder in order to ascend to a higher enjoyment of ideal love is implicit in Du Guillet's insistence
on overcoming physical desire. Unlike true Neoplatonists, however, Du Guillet does not provide for more than one degree on the ladder: there appears to be only one step to spiritual/intellectual fulfillment.

In Du Guillet's view love must be purified and the lover serves as a guide, just as in Neoplatonic tradition. Scève's writings serve as her guide to rejecting ignorance in favor of the pursuit of knowledge in the epigram which contains two anagrams of Scève's name:

\[
\text{Puis qu'il t'a pleu de me faire congnoistre,}
\text{Et par ta main, le VICE A SE Muer,}
\text{Je tascheray faire en moy ce bien croistre,}
\text{Qui seul en toy me pourra transmuer (Epig. 5, v. 1-4)}
\]

The role of guide, which Scève is able to assume in his capacity as a humanist scholar, becomes an essential component of God's plan for his creation's search for perfection. Du Guillet is dependant on Scève to help her become complete:

\[
\text{Sçais tu pourquoy de te veoir j'euz envie?}
\text{C'est pour ayder à l'ouvrir, qui cessa,}
\text{Lors qu'assembla en me donnant la vie,}
\text{Les differentz, où après me laissa.}
\text{Car m'esbauchant Nature s'efforça}
\text{D'entendre, de veoir pour nouvelle ordonnance}
\text{Ton hault sçavoir, qui m'accroist l'esperance}
\text{Des Cieulx promise, ainsi que je me fonde,}
\text{Que me feras avoir la congnoissance}
\text{De ton esprit, qui esbahit le Monde. (Epig. 20)}
\]

Just as Scève was the guide who revealed to Du Guillet the meaning of the Platonic abstractions, in a more ordinary sense of the word he guided her "through the mysteries of poetic creation". The first

\footnote{Cottrell, "An Adventure in Ideal Love," p. 561.}
relationship between Scève and Du Guillet was, in fact, that of teacher and student. She was his pupil before becoming his source of inspiration, and it was through contact with him that she "se laissa tenter par la séduction de l'art poétique."  

Du Guillet puts Scève's role as a guide to a rather surprising use in Epigram 34. She uses his success in this role in an attempt to convince him to remain faithful to her instead of frequenting other women with whom he obtains less promising results on this score:

Mais avis m'est que ton sainct entretien  
Ne peut si bien en ces autres empraindre  
Tes mots dorez, comme au cueur, qui est tien. (Epig. 34, v. 8-10)

Alternatively, it is Du Guillet who plays the guide for Scève. She wants him to follow her guidelines. She wants to convert him to her elevated conception of love; she believes she knows what is best for him, and she leans on the authority of God to prove it:

Il [Dieu] m'a donné raison, qui a pouvoir  
De bien juger ton heur, et ton sçavoir.  
Ne trouve donc chose si admirable,  
Si à bon droit te desirent de veoir  
Le Corps, l'Esprit, et l'Ame raisonnable. (Epig. 16, v. 5-10)

Du Guillet believed that lovers were predestined to be together. In this she was within Neoplatonic tradition. Already in Epigram 1 her lover is "celuy qui m'est promis". In Epigram 48 he is "né pour estre sur moy maistre". In Epigram 4, Neoplatonic cosmology makes an appearance: the lover is an "Esprit celeste, et des Dieux transformé/

19 Ardouin, L'Amour à Lyon, p. 8.
En corps mortel transmis en ce bas Monde". Allusions to the myth of the Androgyne appear in three chansons. In Chanson 3, the lover is held responsible for half of the friendship:

Du bien j'ay eu la jouyssance,
Dont il m'a donné congoissance
Pour m'asseurer de l'amitié,
De laquelle il tient la moytié. (Chanson 3, v. 7-10)

The allusion is clearer in Chanson 4:

Heureuse destinee
En mon heur apparoit,
Ne sçaichant femme née
Qui peult, ne qui sçauoit
Eviter la moytié
De sa noble amytie. (Chanson 4, v. 43-48)

In Chanson 5, Pernette du Guillet makes highly original use of this myth by criticizing the way men have used it to justify infidelity:

Se voulantz excuser,
Que leur moytié perdue
Peult ainsi abuser
Tant qu'elle soit rendue (Chanson 5, v. 13-16)

Du Guillet began this chanson by alerting women to the fact that they do have power to control the behavior of men to some extent. Women should insist on morality in the relationship between the sexes. They should not believe men who try to convince them that women are by nature unfaithful:

Dames, s'il est permis
Que l'amour appetisse
Entre deux cueurs promis,
Faisons pareil office:
Lors la legereté
Prendra sa fermeté.
S'ilz nous disent volages
Pour nous en divertir:
Assurons noz courages
De ne nous repentir,
Puis que leur amytie
Est moins, que de moytié. (Chanson 5, v. 1-12)

This was a highly original use of the myth of the Androgyne in that Du Guillet turned a typical, though frivolous, Neoplatonic interpretation of it against men who tried to make use of it for their own purposes.

In Ficino's Neoplatonic theory perfect love was reciprocal. Although affection was mutual, this did not imply that each partner contributed the same things to the relationship, or even viewed it in the same way. Both Du Guillet and Scève complain at times that the other does not share his/her love: "cette apparente dissension vient de la double nature de l'amour. Ils s'aiment d'amour mutuel, mais différemment." Du Guillet believes each lover should feel that the other has something of equal value to give: Scève is the source of knowledge and she of chastity. Thus she saw herself and Scève as "complementary opposites", due to her "relatively humble intellectual stature and her passion for chastity". She wants both lovers to obtain lasting satisfaction, as she shows by her use of the plural in the last lines of Epigram 13, where she is addressing the god of love:

Fais donc aussi, que nous puissions avoir
En noz espritz contentement durable! (Epig. 13, v. 7-8)

Earlier in this same epigram she asks that both lovers be made to feel bound by the same sense of duty: "Feit distiller deux cueurs en un debvoir". This is further indication of her desire for reciprocity in the relationship.

Love seems to have given Du Guillet some rights over her lover in Epigram 23. She at first excuses herself for the demands she is about to make, but she feels it is her duty to demand what is rightfully hers, what love and faith have given her, despite her disclaimer. She feels he belongs to her:

Je puis avoir failly par ignorance,  
Cela me fault, maugré moy, confesser:  
Mais que je prenne en moy telle arrogance,  
Que dessus vous je m'osasse avance:  
Je vous supply ne me vouloir penser  
Si indiscrete à faire mon debvoir.  
Bien est il vray que je tasche à avoir  
Ce qui m'est deu, quoy qui en ait esmoy:  
Car si Amour, et foy ont ce pouvoir  
De vous donner, vous estes tout à moy. (Epig. 23)

It is as if Du Guillet has matured and gained more confidence in herself. She now feels that her lover owes her his fidelity. Curiously enough, the fact her lover attracted other women seemed natural to her, although she did not like it. She may have tried to explain away his infidelity in order to lessen her pain. In any case, she said the attraction other women felt for Scève was natural because of the enlightenment he could bring to those who came in contact with him. In Epigram 39, Du Guillet repeats the sun metaphor to explain this attraction:
Car de ses rayz à toutes fait lumiere,
Veu qu'elles ont d'ignorance la nuité (Epig. 39, v. 5-6)

Scève also moves about like the sun:

............... il peut partout aller,
Par une mode au Soleil coustumiere:
Lequel l'on voit monter, et devaller,
Tournant revoyer sa region premiere. (Epig. 39, v. 1-4)

His return to his point of origin may signify he will always come back to her, a thought which must have reassured her.

The process of purification that love must undergo in the Rymes is not as elaborate as that expressed by Neoplatonic theoricians. Indeed, the only major step towards purification consists of overcoming physical desire—of learning to prefer friendship to more common love.

Du Guillet never expresses the idea that the object of love should be left behind in favor of higher or more general objects of contemplation.

The fundamental conflict between body and soul is evident very early in her work. The body is an impediment to the improvement of the mind:

Comme le corps ne permect point de voir
A son esprit, ny sçavoir sa puissance:
Ainsi l'erreur, qui tant me faict avoir
Devant les yeux le bandeau d'ignorance,
Ne m'a permis d'avoir la connoissance
De celuy là... (Epig. 11, v. 1-6)

In the following poem, however, Du Guillet seems to have accepted the role the body can play in initiating the soul to love. But she immediately feels the need for ascension toward a higher type of love which necessitates renouncing sensual pleasure. This renunciation is what will lead to a longer, more perfect life for the lovers:
Le Corps ravy, l'Ame s'en esmerveille
Du grand plaisir, qui me vient entamer,
Me ravissant d'Amour, qui tout esveille
Par ce seul bien, qui le fait Dieu nommer.
   Mais si tu veulx son pouvoir consommer: [perfect; complete]
Fault que par tout tu perdes celle envie:
Tu le verras de ses traictz se assommer,
Et aux Amantz accroissement de vie             (Epig. 12)

Critical interpretations of Epigram 12 have been highly controversal. Du Guillet believed in fact that affection should precede desire, not vice versa as was commonly the case. In one scholar's plausible view, "...proof of this is the fact that Pernette never denigrates sensual actions...[it is understood] that desire and love are distinct and that the first depends on the second. Once this is firmly grasped, then desire is not reprehensible unless it forgets its dependency."22 This same scholar disagrees with the interpretation advanced by most that Du Guillet's conception of love depended on chastity:

Pernette not only knew physical love, she also enjoyed it and thought it beneficial to the self; just as Leone Ebreo...observes that physical desires and their fulfilment are "plustot liens pour estraindre l'Amour que l'occasion pour le dissouldre."23

The opening lines of Epigram 12 support this view. Thus Du Guillet was not against all desire and physical pleasure. Sensual satisfaction could exist only in relationships already based on affection, however, and then the lovers should try to overcome desire for the sake of a

23 Ibid., p. 268.
higher good. When there is a conflict between love and friendship, friendship always wins out in the Rymes.
CHAPTER IV

PERNETTE DU GUILLET'S NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW

The concept of narrative point of view in literature remains an elusive one, historically speaking, despite critical attempts to define it.\(^1\) "Point of view" can be said to have two basic meanings. It can designate the "position from which something is observed or considered; standpoint" or it can be described as "one's manner of viewing things; attitude". Both of these definitions are operative in discussions of literature, in which "the basic attitude or idea of the author" is usually analyzed, along with the "method of narration".\(^2\)

\(^1\)For the following discussion of Pernette du Guillet's narrative point of view the general guidelines presented and exemplified in Susan Sniader Lanser's *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), will be most largely adhered to because this work is a fairly recent one and one which takes into account older, prescriptive theories of point of view as well as critiques of the more modern, descriptive formalist-structuralist theories. Although this work is concerned primarily with novels and short stories, its basic framework can easily be applied to a study of point of view in poetry.

Given that a "narrative" is "a story of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious...[it] is the general term for a story long or short; of past, present, or future; factual or imagined; told for any purpose; and with or without much detail," it is possible, of course, to examine narrative point of view in poetry, and in particular in works such as Pernette du Guillet's Rymes.

The Rymes give an account of Du Guillet's personal emotional search and of the evolution of her love for the poet Maurice Scève. They are "not a miscellaneous collection of unrelated poems, but display both singleness of inspiration and organic unity...general and specific themes recur throughout the collection." There are six possible stages in the evolution of Du Guillet's love in the Rymes:

1. Du Guillet as Scève's eager young student
2. Her joy of basking in the happiness of a newly-discovered love
3. Her pleasurable awakening to the sensual aspects of her love
4. Her torment caused by the appearance of rivals and her growing awareness of the ambiguous nature of love; Her indecisiveness
5. Her acceptance of her inner turmoil
6. Her formulation of a universalized concept of love in which "l'amytié" is the keynote; Her inner peace

Now that the status of the Rymes has been established as narrative, the various levels of voice encoded in the text may be examined, in quest of point of view. A second section will be a study of the narrator's status, contact and stance. Status representing her relationship to the text as a figure of authority; contact, her interaction with recipients of the text; and stance, her attitude towards her discourse.

**Narrative Voice**

The study of narrative voice concerns the identification of the various personae who speak in a text. These include the real-life author, the "extrafictional" voice, the "implied author", and the narrator. In the case of Pernette du Guillet as a real-life author, we know that she wrote the Rymes at the rate of about eight poems a year over a period of about nine years. This indicates that it was possible for her to put great care and attention into the composition of each of her poems, and that her ideas as a person and her skill as a poet had time to evolve and mature.

It should be noted that the public self Pernette du Guillet encoded in the Rymes is not necessarily synonymous with her real-life "private" self, and that, due to a lack of documentation concerning this self, it is impossible to validate completely the real, biographical author. We are more fortunate as far as the "extrafictional" voice is concerned.

\(^6\) Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, p. 70.
The extrafictional voice is an authorial presence which is situated within the text itself. It may be the equivalent of the "implied author" (who is reader-created), and may, as is the case here, give information concerning the narrator of the text.\(^7\) The extrafictional voice is the "entity which accounts, for example, for organizing, titling, and introducing the (fictional) work."\(^8\) In the case of Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes*, the extrafictional voice is multiple. It is that of her editor, Antoine du Moulin, of her publisher, and of the poets who published epitaphs in her honor, included in the same volume. This collective extrafictional voice sets up expectations for the reader, who begins to construct an image of the author's identity, beliefs, attitudes, intentions and goals. In the case of the *Rymes*, readers already begin to construct an author-image as they read Du Moulin's prefatory letter, *Aux Dames Lyonnoizes*, and Jean de Tournes' *L'Imprimeur au lecteur*. Du Moulin's letter gives readers information about Du Guillet's education and accomplishments, and reveals the story of how Du Guillet's husband found her poetry, "ce petit amas de rymes, lesquelles elle nous laissa pour tesmoignage de la dextérité de son divin esprit," and brought it to be published. The fact that it was her husband who brought love poetry addressed to another man to be published may appear a paradox. One may suppose that he was not a jealous man, that he wished to profit from his wife's celebrity, or that the type of love Pernette du Guillet professed in the *Rymes* was in fact chaste.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 8. \(^8\)Ibid., p. 122.
As for Jean de Tournes' poem to the reader, it reveals "une familiarité sensible avec l'essence de la pensée de Pernette:"9

Quelle puissance Amytie puisse avoir,  
Quand la vertu y est au vif empraincte,  
Tu le pourras clerement icy veoir,  
Appercevant une affection saincte  
De chaste amour si hautement attaincte  
En foy loyale, et si bien poursuyvie,  
Qu'elle peut cy, sans aucune contraincte,  
(Maulgré la Mort) faire taire l'Envie.

The four epitaphs which follow Du Guillet's own work further enrich the image the reader has already constructed of the author as one endowed with virtue and knowledge.

In the Rymes themselves, the pronoun je is a narrator who directly addresses the reading public. Public narrators are usually linked to the biographical author in the absence of any information to the contrary; and in the case of the Rymes the reader has no reason to suppose that this je does not represent Pernette du Guillet herself. This je is both a first-person I-narrator and an I-protagonist, for the je tells its own story as it takes place. The fact that the narrator and the protagonist are one permits the narrator to convey much subjective information. The poetess has deep, internal perspectives concerning her own feelings, and the fact that the reader equates the narrator-protagonist with the author only adds to the historical authority of the text. The narrator also assumes different roles in various poems: she is at times the lover, at others the beloved; sometimes guide,

sometimes the guided.

The Narrator's Status, Contact and Stance

Status. Status is the narrator's relationship to the text and enables readers to attach meaning and weight to the speaking voice. The notion of status includes factors such as the narrator's authority, social identity, and reliability. The authorization accorded the I-narrator on the basis of authorial equivalence, privileged position, social identity, honesty and competence provides the framework in which the narrative voice will operate.

Readers must accord high authority to the narrator in the Rymes because of her identity with the real-life author of the text, who was clearly a competent poet. Du Guillet's occasional admissions of inferiority do not seriously put her competency in jeopardy. Thus, when she states that "Peu de-scavoir, que tu fais grand nuisance/A mon esprit", (Epig. 3, v. 5-6), this is to a large extent nothing more than an accepted, conventional device which highlights the praise of the object of her love, i.e. he looks better if she looks worse.

Varying degrees of confidence in her own status can be seen throughout the Rymes. Du Guillet is frequently apologetic in earlier poems and in the first stages of the evolution of her love. She gains confidence as the years go by and actually begins to assert a certain power over Scève, trying to convince him to love her in her way. In Epigram 16, for example, Du Guillet claims God-given authority to control her lover:
le vouloir de l'Eternel nous donne
Sens et sçavoir pour pouvoir discerner
Le bien dû bien, que la raison ordonne:
Parquoy, si Dieu de telz biens te guerdonne,
Il m'a donnè raison, qui a pouvoir
De bien juger ton heur, et ton sçavoir. (Epig. 16, v. 2-7)

The narrator's high authority also stems from the fact that she is omniscient concerning herself and her relationship with Scève and concerning the story she records in the Rymes, which is a "true" one. The inclusion of one particular "imaginary" episode only heightens the historicity of the other poems. This Elegy 2, which reveals a wish, is a sort of day-dream in which Du Guillet works out her position with regard to physical desire and in which she tries to define the extent of force she should exercise over her lover.

The social identity of the narrator-author also determines the degree of authority readers conventionally accord the narrative voice. Social identity includes such elements as gender, education and class. The fact that Du Guillet was a woman writer is of utmost importance. Generally, male writers are accorded a higher level of authority than female writers. However, the cultural situation in Renaissance Lyons encouraged literary production for women, thus lending them a privileged legitimacy. But in Du Guillet's case, her special relationship with Scève enhanced her authority as a writer even further. Her use of anagrams of Scève's name and her references to him make it clear that she wanted this relationship to him to be known and that she wanted to attach herself to his authority, thus increasing her own by association. By thus establishing this sort of social identity with a well-known poet, Du Guillet, whether consciously or not, determined the degree to
which the text is now valued.

In the Rymes the narrator seems to have earned this sort of social authority in the realm of morals by virtue of being a woman. This could be attributable to the traditionally accepted civilizing role of women, who were required to maintain a higher level of morality than men. This double-standard is found in Chanson 5, where it accentuates the differing sexual roles and requirements. Here men accuse women of being frivolous and unfaithful in love, but they do so only to encourage women to be this way. Du Guillet rejects this attitude:

Lors la legereté
Prendra la fermeté.
    S'ilz nous disent volages
Pour nous en divertir:
Asseurons noz courages
De ne nous repentir

.................
Se voulantz excuser,
Que leur moytié perdue
Peult ainsi abuser
Tant qu'elle soit rendue:
La loy pour nous fut faicte
Empruntant leur deffaicte.

.................
Ne nous esbahissons
Si le vouloir nous change:
Car d'eulx nous congoissons
La vie tant estrange,
Qu'elle nous a permis
Infinité d'amis.

.................
Amour nous vengera,
Quand foy les rengera. (Chanson 5)

As the reader constructs an image of the narrator he considers the elements of honesty, sincerity, and reliability. These factors help constitute the authority he is willing to accord the narrative voice. The narrator in the Rymes is highly honest, sincere and reliable. She
is consistent, always returning to the same ideal: that of a pure, Platonic friendship. The reader feels that she speaks the truth as far as she perceives it and that she will not dissimilate. Evidence of these characteristics of the narrator include the fact that she tells even what hurts—a dozen poems deal with the theme of jealousy—she talks about her hurt rather than trying to conceal it. She readily admits her own shortcomings—for example that she is a less knowledgeable and less able poet than her friend. Her attitude is generally one of seeking solutions, of trying to work through feelings, of clarifying ideas. Her willingness to discuss personal dilemmas give her considerable credibility, which in turn leads to trust and to authority in relation to her text.

Contact. The term "contact" refers to the interaction which exists between speakers and listeners. Contact determines the degree of receptivity to the message and the way it will be understood. Elements of contact which must be considered are mode of contact, the attitude of the narrator towards the recipients of the message, and the identity of the audience.

The mode of contact in the Rymes is, in most cases, overt and direct. There is usually clear and direct interaction between the I-narrator and a you-receiver. And although readers never see an actual dialog in the pages of the Rymes, many of the epigrams are responsifs. That is to say they are directly in response to certain dizains of Scève's Délie, just as some of Scève's poems may have been in answer to some of Du Guillet's works. The example most often cited in support of this view is Epigram 13, which corresponds with Scève's
Délie 136. I will quote Scève's poem first:

L'HEUR de nostre heur enflambant le desir
Unit double ame en un mesme povoir:
L'une mourant vit du doux desplaisir,
Qui l'autre vive a fait mort recevoir.

Dieu aveuglé, tu nous as fait avoir,
Sans aultrement ensemble consentir,
Et posséder, sans nous en repentir,
Le bien du mal en effet desirable:
Fais que nous puissions aussi long temps sentir
Si doux mourir en vie respirable! (Délie 136)

Du Guillet's response follows:

L'heur de mon mal, enflammant le desir,
Fait distiller deux cuer de en un devoir
Donc l'un est vif pour le doux desplaisir,
Qui fait que Mort tient l'autre en son pouvoir.

Dieu aveuglé, tu nous as fait avoir
Du bien le mal en effet honnorable:
Fais donc aussi, que nous puissions avoir
En noz espritz contentement durable! (Épig. 13)

There is clearly a dialog established between the Rymes and the Délie here since the Délie was published in 1544, the year before Du Guillet's death and date of publication of the Rymes. The most subtle difference between the two poems stresses Du Guillet's fear "that her lover's love may be based on desire rather than vice-versa."¹⁰ Du Guillet's "concern becomes clear in the last verse, in her wish that Scève's impetuousness may be nourished by solid affection."¹¹ Scève's version insists with much more conviction on the perfection of their union.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 263.
Psychological aspects of contact comprise the attitude of the narrator towards the receivers of the message. Psychological contact is what is revealed through register, tone and direct comments from the narrator. In the *Rymes* the register is abstract and the tone one of elevation. The narrator uses conversational asides to create a comfortable, friendly, and intimate contact with the reader, rather than a formal one. The parenthesis in Epigram 18, for example, helps the narrator gain reader support for her views:

> Que d'avoir mal pour chose si louable,  
> Comme à chascun son grand contentement  
> Tout bon esprit (tant soit peu raisonnable)  
> Le pourra croire, et par bon jugement  

(Epig. 18, v. 1-4)

In Epigram 26, the words in parentheses suggest a declaration of love made in secret:

> Prenez le cas, comme je suis vostre  
> (Et estre veulx) vous soyez tout à moy  

(Epig. 26, v. 1-2)

The narrator's attitude towards the reader changes as Du Guillet matures. Occasionally Du Guillet is self-conscious and calls attention to her discursive activity. This occurs in epigrams in which she is somewhat self-deprecatory, acknowledging her inferiority to Scève as a poet. This insecurity is not expected of a narrator, but here it may be simply an indication of conventional respect and polite formulas. At first she indeed defers completely to Scève. But as she gains confidence she shifts and tries to gain more power as she tries to convince him to love in tandem with her principles. She usually accom-
plishes this through a recourse to flattery, an admittedly feminine form of strategy.

As these very personal poetic works are interpreted, the audience of this material must be understood and defined too. The identity of the recipient of the text may range from that of a degree zero, passive reader to an individualized, active one. The are multiple recipients addressed in Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes*. In 35 out of 57 cases it is a "public narratee" which is addressed. Theoretically, the "public narratee" is anyone who is able to read. In the case of the *Rymes* this may in fact have been the intended audience. The fact that four of Du Guillet's most intimate poems were published in her lifetime indicates that she eventually may have had the others published as well, once completed and polished. The Petrarchistic form of these poems does suggest that they may have been meant to attract readers of the time. Du Guillet tries to gain the support of the audience she thinks her text will reach and, indeed, capitalizes on their expected reaction in order to convince Scève to adopt her rules for the game of love.

Despite the apparently prominent role of the public narratee in these poems, Scève too is addressed in the *Rymes*. Evidence of this is the appearance of anagrams of his name in Epigram 5, "puis qu'il t'a pleu de me faire congoistre,/Et par ta main, le VICE A SE MUER"; "Ce VICE MUERAS", and references to him in two other epigrams:

Et tu [Amour] me mis es mains, oè heureuse devins,
D'un qui est haultement en ses escriptz divins,
   Comme de mon, severe
   (Chanson 6, v. 32-34)

Puis que, de nom et de faict, trop severe (Epig. 34, v.1)
Scève may be assumed to be the *tu* and the *vous* who is directly addressed in 19 out of 57 poems. The use of the polite forms rather than the familiarized ones either shows a higher degree of respect or of distance from him. Two other poems are first addressed to an impersonal, public reader and then shift to a personalized you. This would seem to indicate that all the poems, though ostensibly addressed to a broad public are at the same time intended to be messages sent to Scève. This sort of shift is found in Chansons 3 and 8. In Chanson 3 Du Guillet begins with a sort of prayer to "true love" and friendship in general, but ends up by addressing her friend himself in more Petrar­chistic fashion: "Helas, amy, en ton absence/Je ne puis avoir asser­rance..." In Chanson 8 a similar shift occurs.

The level of trust between Du Guillet and her audience is always high, but in the case of Scève it is broken by her doubts stemming from the appearance of rivals. She is mostly approving of his actions and feelings, except when he becomes too insistent on physical satisfaction or pursues other women. In that case she exorts the public to support her. This only serves to bring Du Guillet closer to the public narratee and, more specifically, to other women, whose views reinforce her own. But on the other hand, she is hostile to her detractors and resorts to the strategy of playing down their remarks via humor.

**Stance.** Stance represents a narrator's attitude toward the represented world. It is a narrator's relationship to the message offered and his commitment to his discourse. As applied to Pernette du Guillet stance functions in precisely this manner. In the *Rymes* the reader gradually builds up the notion of stance, most specifically
through the series of poems which deal with the theme of jealousy. On this score the narrator's range of stances evolves from one of frightened jealousy to one of self-assurance.

Stance also operates on four literary planes: phraseological, spatial-temporal, psychological and ideological. Phraseological stance has to do with the person of the narrator's voice; in most cases Du Guillet is speaking in her own voice. On the spatial-temporal plane, in the Rymes the structural relationship between the narrator and the textual world is seen from within. That is to say that in space and in time the narrator's involvement is more direct and the sense of immediacy greater. Scenes which seem to have been set down on paper as they happened rather than in retrospect make the reader feel he is present. This is particularly true in Elegy 2, where we are presented with an intimate scene beside a fountain. In such scenes the reader experiences the narrator's emotion better than when she simply generalizes on the nature of true love. The detailed scenic descriptions indicate the importance of certain episodes, just as here the fountain episode heightens the complexity of desire. In many cases, however, Du Guillet prefers abstract hypothesizing to the creation of such scenes.

Most of the Rymes are written in the present tense. The reason for this is that the present tense accentuates the unity between the events related and the narrator. In the Rymes we probably have what could be called interspersed narration, as in a journal or memoir, in which actions occur between and during moments of narration. Epigram 40, for example, was written after an event. Du Guillet had caught Scève
in the presence of a rival and describes the scene after the fact, using past imperfect tense:

Mon jour estoit assis tout aupres d'une,
L'entretenant à l'aise, et à repos (Epig. 40, v. 1-2)

Epigram 17 is more typical in that it describes Du Guillet's present sentiments in present tense, though they are based on past testing of Scève's friendship:

Je suis tant bien que je ne le puis dire,
Aytant sondé son amitié profonde
Par sa vertu, qui à l'amyrer m'attire
Plus que beaute: car sa grace, et faconde
Me font cuyder la premiere du monde. (Epig. 17)

Psychological stance deals with the degree of detachment or affinity between the narrator and other people and events in the text. It focuses on the evaluation of actions and values. The quantity of information concerning each event or person reveals their importance to the narrator. In the *Rymes* it is obvious that Du Guillet values spiritual qualities, such as friendship, that she places no importance on physical beauty, and that she finds her lover too demanding.

Ideological stance expresses the text's relationship to the values of the culture in which it was written. It is easy to select phrases and incidents which typify ideological stance in the *Rymes*. In many cases Du Guillet is literal, meaning what she says; in other cases she is figural, using metaphor and symbol.

Insofar as Pernette du Guillet's attitude is one of questioning, she does not threaten the cultural code. Furthermore, her stance corresponds to the cultural text because she supports women's tradi-
tional role as the upholder of standards in society. She stays with her husband; she is not promiscuous. There is a degree of non-coincidence with cultural expectations when she tries not to be jealous, but males could not feel that their freedom is being questioned or limited.

One component of a woman's traditional role is, in fact, the expectation that she not infringe upon a man's freedom. Pernette du Guillet conforms to this expectation and gives it at least lip-service in Epigram 23, when she exclaims:

Mais que je prenne en moy telle arrogance,  
Que dessus vous je m'osasse avancer:  
Je vous supply ne me vouloir penser  
Si indiscrete à faire mon devoir. (Epig. 23, v. 3-6)

Even when she insists on her rights she expresses reluctance at being this forward, presumptuous or assertive:

Bien est il vray que je tasche à avoir  
Ce qui m'est deu, quoy qui en ait esmoy:  
Car si Amour, et foy ont ce pouvoir  
De vous donner, vous estes tout à moy. (Epig. 23, v. 7-10)

Every literary endeavor transforms raw material found in the surrounding culture. The fact that Pernette du Guillet did not invent any new forms is an indication that she did not reject her culture. She followed the examples of serious Petrarchism and of Neoplatonism. Neoplatonic ideology, being otherworldly, was probably somewhat unpopular, but through use of humor and flattery and the establishment of an atmosphere of trust Du Guillet is able to communicate what could have been an unpopular stance. Her conformity to convention, while rejecting minor portions of it, are a comment on the positive relationship
she maintained with the social origins of her literary production. 
The society showed high tolerance for the variations she introduced. 
Indeed, she mostly represented a fairly conventional woman's point of 
view. In most cases she wrote what would be expected of a woman and 
is not very controversial.
CONCLUSION

It was as a fledgling poet that Pernette du Guillet was most indebted to the four literary traditions predominant in her time. Initially she followed the conventions of Marotism and of the courtly love ideal. She imitated the conventions of Petrarchistic love and incorporated Neoplatonic ideals into her poetry. Her originality emerged progressively as she adapted and combined these four traditions, applying them to the personal experience she accumulated in her love relationship with Maurice Scève. Du Guillet thus evolved from an apologetic young poet to a confident and assertive one. She always incorporated references to herself and her relationships with others into her work. This makes the Rymes a personal document, and although Du Guillet largely conformed to convention she rejected or re-worked minor portions of it.

Pernette du Guillet borrowed the epigrammatic form and the procedures of the débat and the responsif from the Marotic tradition. But the very variety of the verse forms she used must be credited to her originality, a factor which distinguishes her from her contemporaries.

Her conformity to certain aspects of the courtly love conventions is particularly manifest in her humility, as evidenced by her recognition of Scève's intellectual and literary superiority. She rejected, however, the patient submissiveness and the servitude characteristic of
this tradition.

Petrarchism was not a fundamental perspective of the *Rymes* because Du Guillet was generally happy in love and this satisfaction in the love relationship with Scève dominated her poetry. Her omission of references to her lover's physical traits, stating only that they are unimportant, was also unpetrarchistic. Du Guillet did resort to Petrarchistic antithesis in her poems in praise of Scève, and particularly when speaking of her suffering caused by the appearance of rivals or by contradictions inherent in their love. Nonetheless she systematically rejected the Petrarchistic ethos in favor of a Neoplatonic one.

The quest for purification is a major preoccupation in the *Rymes*. The renunciation of sensual pleasure while in search of chastity and friendship, of Platonic goodness, and of knowledge is the habitual form which this purification takes. In accordance with Neoplatonic tradition, intellectual enlightenment is Du Guillet's highest value. The lovers serve as guides along a path of elevation, and love, according to Du Guillet, must be reciprocated and lasting. Pernette du Guillet and Maurice Scève were participants in a complementary relationship to which she contributed virtue while he knowledge. Stylistic evidence of Du Guillet's Neoplatonism manifests itself in her preference for a discursive reasoning, which appeals to an elite audience.

Pernette du Guillet expressed the point of view of a fairly conventional woman poet. She does not seem to have felt ill-at-ease within the male poetic tradition, rarely employing any technique to disguise her sex. She supported the role of women as upholders of sexual morality in society, speaking in favor of fidelity in love and
condemning frivolity. She did not threaten cultural expectations for women thanks to her usually questioning attitude. She was also careful to allay male fears that she might be attempting to infringe upon a lover's freedom. In general she sought her own lover's approval and always tried to please him, even when trying to persuade him to adopt her views on love. Thus she could in no way be considered a menace to cultural norms. Women's literary endeavors were clearly encouraged in Renaissance Lyons, and Pernette du Guillet's Rymes are probably most interesting today because they are expressive of the woman's point of view in this society.
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