'La Chastelaine de Vergi' - the technique of stylistic cohesion

When, some time during the second quarter of the thirteenth century, the anonymous author of La Chastelaine de Vergi [1] set about writing his poem, he had to face some of the compositional problems already encountered by romance writers of the preceeding generation when they had endeavoured to graft the lyrical ideology of fine amor onto a narrative framework of chivalric adventure. The tenets of fine amor, in particular its advocacy of adultery, were totally at odds with conventional feudal and christian morality. When a romancier such as Chrétien de Troyes, in his Cligès and Charrete, attempts to produce a working moral synthesis of the fine amor ethic and traditional feudal mores, the result may be judged as far from satisfactory. In Cligès, Chrétien is obliged to adopt all manner of incredible narrative ploys in order to play down the adultery of his hero and heroine, Cligès and Fénice; the adultery is engineered by means of a series of philtres and once it becomes public knowledge, the heroine's husband is instantly and rather conveniently written out of the story and the adulterous couple are quickly married off. In the Charrete, Chrétien's solution to the adultery of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere seems to have been more drastic; for here, once the lovers have committed adultery, Chrétien simply abandons his romance in mid course and hands it over for completion to another poet. This fundamental incompatibility between the morality of the code of fine amor and the traditional teaching of the Church was not the only obstacle which romance writers of the generation of Chrétien de Troyes had to surmount. Another incompatibility of a completely different kind also existed between the enclosed, subjective world of the lyric poet and the objective representation of reality which is the domain of the writer of narrative. The fine amor lyricist is a lonely figure, imprisoned in a static, timeless world of his own consciousness which is dominated by unmitigating self-analysis and sensual self-pity. In complete contrast, the writer of narrative is a bystander in a world of his own creation in which characters and their actions are invested with a fictive semblance of spatial and temporal dimension. At first sight, the generic differences between the lyric and narrative modes appear to be so great that it would seem impossible for the two to be equated. It is, however, precisely such a marriage between two ostensibly incompatible genres that the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi is attempting: a narrative intrigue which has variously been likened to that of a fabliau [2] and a lai [3] (and which, at times, is reminiscent of Marie de France's Lanval, [4] in which a despicable and vengeful middle-aged woman brings about the downfall of a young man who has spurned her untimely advances) is welded onto a typical lyric situation in which the young man is engaged in a clandestine love affair with a married woman. The legitimacy of the morality of the fine amor ethic does not have the same fascination for the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi as it obviously does for a writer like Chrétien de Troyes, probably because by the time the

author of La Chastelaine de Vergi was writing (during the second quarter of the thirteenth century [5]) the theme of fine amor had become an accepted part of the stock literary baggage of the romance writer.   Nonetheless, the problem of how to combine into a coherent whole such disparate ingredients as love lyric themes and a fabliau/lai narrative plot remained as much of a challenge for the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi as it had been for his pre-decessors.   That our author succeeded in meeting this challenge cannot be denied.   Raynaud hailed the poem as 'un des joyaux de la littérature française du moyen âge'. [6]   Recent critics are no less flattering. [7]   How, then, it may be asked, does the author of this poem manage to achieve this vital cohesion on which the work ultimately stands or falls?   Over the years, the critics have come up with several answers to this question.

        The first group of scholars to identify and tackle this problem advance the view that the careful psychological delineation by the poet of the four protagonists in the poem, together with his sustained interest in character de-velopment and interplay, provide the cohesive element which binds the work together.   Such a critical view which takes it as axiomatic that an ability to plumb the depths of the human psyche is the ultimate test of an author's artistry, is exemplified in the writings of the French inheritors of the mantle of Bédier, for example Cohen and later Frappier.   Cohen sees La Chastelaine de Vergi as a sort of psychomachy, 'un jeu ténébreux et aveugle des passions'. [8] Frappier is also impressed by the 'finesse psychologique' [9] of the poem.   But it is to an English critic, Frederick Whitehead, [10] that we must look for a de-tailed analysis of the psychological mechanisms which operate in the romance, and which, it is claimed, give it cohesion and dynamism. [11]   Whitehead ex-plains that in handling the psychology of character in the poem, the author uses what can best be termed 'the method of exclusion' [12] - that is to say that each scene is articulated about a specific relationship which is analysed in psychological terms which are applicable only to the particular situation at the particular moment it occurs in the poem.   This being so, there is no reason why we should look for, nor indeed expect to find, a consistent psy-chology running from one scene to another.   Further, it is quite unjust to find fault with the romance because, to our modern eyes, some of the psycho-logy is dubious or improbable. [13]   The constantly shifting psychological perspective which the 'method of exclusion' entails, is - from the point of view of critical methodology - very convenient, since it enables anything and everything to be justified, but, at the same time, it seems to us that it emphasises the fragmentary nature of the narrative rather than its homogenity. It seems somewhat unwarranted to assume that because each scene in the poem has its own particular psychological pivot, this in itself is enough to knit to-gether the conflicting ingredients of the romance.   Whitehead's analysis of the individual scenes which make up the action of La Chastelaine de Vergi is sensitive, incisive and meticulous; his extrapolation from such an analysis of a unifying factor which gives shape and cohesion to the poem may be

perhaps less convincing.

Critics writing more recently about La Chastelaine de Vergi have tended to discard any attempt to explain the unity of the work which is founded on the author's handling of human psychology. Instead, a 'structural' explanation is preferred - the different components in the narrative are given structural cohesion because they are arranged in a carefully controlled precise and symmetrical pattern. One immediate drawback to this approach is that there appears to be as many structural justifications of the work as there are critics. One of the first exponents of the structuralist view as far as La Chastelaine de Vergi is concerned, Zumthor, [14] suggests that the way in which the author of the poem balances passages of narrative against passages of monologue/dialogue makes for a 'construction rigoureusement équilibrée'. [15] The structural duality of the romance which comes out in the way in which the author combines direct and indirect speech reflects its thematic duality; the unity of the poem is achieved by a subtle and careful blending of narrative and monologue/dialogue structures. Sometimes, however, Zumthor's statistical projections, although theoretically plausible, do not always work in practice. For instance, Zumthor points out that there are twenty-one narrative passages in this poem and an equal number of monologue/dialogue passages yet he gives no explanation why there are only two monologues as against nineteen dialogues, and apart from stating that one of these monologues is twice as long as any continuous passage of narrative found in the poem (all of which undermines the theory of a balanced structure), he gives no indications why he thinks this should be. [16]

According to Maraud, [17] it is the constantly recurring motif of making and then breaking promises which gives the work its narrative cohesion. On the other hand, Dubuis [18] concentrates less on the specific and more on the general in his explanation of the unity of the poem. He compares the basic narrative structures of La Chastelaine de Vergi with those of a typical short verse work of the early thirteenth century whether it be fabliau, lai or nouvelle; in this respect, this romance is no different from any of its antecedents - the narrative thread unwinds according to a prescribed formula. [19] There is first of all a 'début linéaire' followed by a 'tremplin', i.e., something which sets the action in motion, in this case the Duchess's advances to the knight and her subsequent denunciation of his alleged misconduct. The next phase is called by Dubuis the 'accélération' which culminates in the 'point de bascule' (when the Duke tells the Duchess the knight's secret) which is then followed by the 'dénouement'. It must be confessed that this sort of 'discovery' is neither startling nor original and it illustrates one of the prime weaknesses of the structuralist critique. Quite often, what appears to be structural criticism is little more than plot summary in disguise. More than anything else, however, it is the multiplicity of proposed solutions which highlights the deficiency of a structuralist approach to the question of the cohesion of La Chastelaine de Vergi.

Since an examination of both the psychological and structural mechanisms at work in La Chastelaine de Vergi proves somewhat inadequate when we have to account for its cohesion, there remains, it would seem, one further avenue to explore - an approach to this question which could be termed 'stylistic'. [20] Is there anything about the way in which the poet manipulates language in his work which contributes towards its thematic cohesion? Such a question seems especially relevant when it is remembered that like most of the octosyllabic verse compositions written before 1250, La Chastelaine de Vergi was probably composed to be recited aloud. [21] The possible aural impact of the text is far too often ignored by critics of medieval vernacular literature composed during the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth centuries; indeed, a great deal of modern criticism seems to take it for granted that a medieval man like his modern counterpart had a visual acquaintance with the text. In point of fact what could be called the 'oratorical' effect of a medieval text - the effect produced by the acoustic impression of the constituent lexical items and an aspect of medieval poetry which nowadays we probably sense least on first acquaintance with a text - must have provoked a much more spontaneous and immediate reaction from a medieval recipient, in the same way perhaps, as we react quite differently hearing a piece of music played than we do from simply reading the score. To pursue the musical metaphor - just as in a piece of music notes or phrases may be repeated with the express design of producing an effect of structural cohesion, in my opinion, the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi employs an analogous stylistic technique to bind together the fundamentally ill-matching components of his romance.

Significantly enough, the main ways in which the poet achieves this effect of stylistic cohesion in his poem are announced in the opening lines:

> Une maniere de gent sont
> qui d'estre loial samblant font
> et de si bien conseil celer
> qu'il se covient en aus fier;
> 5   et quant vient que on s'i descuevre
> tant qu'il sevent l'amor et l'uevre,
> si l'espandent par le païs
> et en font lor gas et lor ris.
> Si avient que cil joie en pert
> 10   qui le conseil a descouvert,
> quar, tant com l'amor est plus grant,
> sont plus mari li fin amant
> quant li uns d'aus de l'autre croit
> qu'il ait dit ce que celer doit;

15   et sovent tel meschief en vient
que l'amor faillir en covient
a grant dolor et a vergoingne,
si comme il avint en Borgoingne
d'un chevalier preu et hardi
20   et de la dame de Vergi
que li chevaliers tant ama
que la dame li otria
par itel couvenant s'amor
qu'il seüst qu'a l'eure et au jor
25   que par lui seroit descouverte
lor amor, qu'il averoit perte
et de l'amor et de l'otroi
qu'ele li avoit fet de soi.
Et a cele amor otroier
30   deviserent qu'en un vergier
li chevaliers toz jors vendroit

    . . . . .

40   Ainsi le firent longuement,
et fu l'amor douce et celee
que fors aus ne le sot riens nee.   (1 - 42)

This opening extract has a threefold importance for our investigations: first, it foreshadows the end of the romance; secondly, it contains in v.1-9 lexical items which are subsequently reiterated at frequent and regular intervals throughout the remainder of the work; thirdly, the repetition within the passage of certain words like celer, descouvrir, otroier is typical of a technique employed throughout the poem.

It is not unusual for critics to regard the sententious prologue and epilogue of the work (1-17 and 944-58) as little more than platitudinous trimming, [22] a pair of didactic book-ends which formally mark the beginning and the end of the aventure. However, the link between the beginning and the end of the work is not just the presence of a formal didactic tag; the author deliberately strives to join up his poem at its two ends in a much more subtle and original way.　He does this quite simply by repeating at the end of his poem many of the lexical items which occur in the opening lines. Prominent among these is the verb celer which occurs three times in the opening lines, 3, 14 and 41, and three times in the final lines, 947, 952 and 955. Descouvrir, which also occurs three times in the opening lines, 5, 10 and 25, is also repeated at the end, 954.　The word meschief occurring in 15 is used at the end of the poem in 935 and 945.　In the prologue we learn that once a love affair has been divulged the fin amant is dispossessed of his joie (9); at the end of the poem, the author remarks the whole court loses its joie (926) when the full extent of the tragedy has been revealed.　Conversely, whereas

at the beginning of the poem the author tells us that the revelation of a love affair causes general public mockery and laughter (8), at the end of the poem it is the Duke who never laughs again on account of his personal tragedy:

> c'onques puis ne l'oï on rire. (940)

This process by which lexical items announced at the beginning of the work are then echoed at the end has the effect of giving the romance a 'circular' shape; the romance world within the circle is therefore mimetically self-contained and morally autonomous - in short, not unlike that of the lyric poet. [23] But whereas the courtly lyricist creates a private world where he explores his own states of mind, the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi unfolds an aventure which is enclosed as though it were in a sort of soap bubble reflecting and capturing an image of reality. It seems to me that this self-contained effect is achieved by the simple stylistic device of lexical repetition.

The echoic effect of lexical items set out at the beginning of the romance is not only felt at the end of the poem. In the first nine lines the author masses together all the key words which subsequently dominate the rest of the poem. In this connection, the following items are significant: nouns: samblant (2), conseil (3), amor (6), joie (9); verbs: celer (3), fier (4), descouvrir (5), perdre (9); adjective: loial (2). It is only possible to appreciate the full importance of these words in La Chastelaine de Vergi if their statistical frequency is examined in some detail. In all, the author employs 233 different nouns in this work; 117 of these occur once only; of the remainder, 19 are used 9 times or more. Many of these 19 nouns refer to the main protagonists in the romance, the location of the action, or the time of day at which the action takes place. [24] There are, however, 4 nouns which fit into none of these categories and these happen to be the 4 nouns listed above from the first nine lines of the work: samblant occurs 17 times, conseil 9 times, amor 36 times and joie 12 times. Similar findings emerge from a study of the statistical frequency of the verbs in the poem. 213 different verbs are used, 105 of them occur only once. Of the remainder, 27 are used 8 times or more and this number includes celer 15 times, descouvrir 8 times and perdre 11 times. [25] 60 different adjectives are used in the poem; only grant, doux and beau are used more frequently than loial which occurs 8 times. [26] The grouping together in the first nine lines of the work of nine words which have such statistical prominence argues no mere coincidence. On the contrary, it seems to be a deliberate and carefully conceived stratagem on the part of the author to connect at the beginning of his romance 9 lexical items which are very often associated with a lyric stylistic register. [27] To illustrate this point, one need look no further than the lyrics of the Châtelain de Coucy whose work is cited by the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi. [28] In the following lines, the Châtelain de Coucy uses four of the nine words which are so important to the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi:

> Si coiement est ma doleurs celee
> Qu'a mon samblant ne la recounoist on;
> Se ne fussent la gent maleüree,
> N'eüsse pas souspiré en pardon:
> Amours m'eüst doné son guerredon.
> Maiz en cel point que dui avoir mon don,
> Lor fu l'amour descouverte et moustree;
> Ja n'aient il pardon!   29

However, although commonly used in lyric poetry, many of the nine words which figure so prominently at the beginning of La Chastelaine de Vergi can also be employed in a non-lyric context. Needless to say, the author of this romance is fully aware of the ambiguous nature of this sort of terminology and exploits it to the full. Loial is used to express fidelity in love in:

> Je cuidoie que plus loiaus
> me fussiez ...   (758-9)

whereas in:

> que j'ai mout longuement creü,
> que vous fussiez de bone foi,
> loiaus a tout le mains vers moi ... (160-2)

feudal trust is the central issue. [30] Similarly, amor can refer to a love affair between a man and a woman or to the trust and respect which exists between a feudal lord and his vassal:

> sor l'amor et sor la foi
> que je vous doi sor vostre hommage ... (334-5) [31]

Joie can evoke the erotic pleasure which arises from a fine amor relationship or it can mean simply happiness:

> des chevaliers qui la estoient,
> qui grant joie menee avoient.   (925-6)[32]

Celer, generally used in a lyric register to express the idea of concealing one's thoughts, is used once in this work in quite a different way in the scene in which the Duke hides under a tree in order to spy on the lovers:

> et mout entent a lui celer.   (391)

Perdre is also used once in a literal sense:

> et pert le païs ...   (280)

elsewhere it is used to express the notion of losing one's love. Conseil, which on 8 occasions means 'secret', is used one time in the sense of 'advice':

> Cil ne set nul conseil de soi ... (268)

These instances where, in the course of the narrative, the author plays on the semantic ambiguity which many of the key words announced at the beginning of the romance can have, are, it would seem, far too numerous for the phenomenon to be merely a chance accident. On the contrary, we seem to be dealing with a stylistic device the object of which is to produce a unifying effect between lyric and narrative registers.

One of the key words not included in the preceding discussion, samblant, is also ambiguous; this word signifies the outward appearance - the protective barrier between the private inner world of the individual and external reality; sometimes, the veneer conceals or gives a false impression of what is underneath:

> Mes quel samblant qu'el en feïst,
> li chevaliers samblant n'en fist
> que poi ne grant s'aperceüst ... (53-5)

at other times, the external gives a true reflection of the internal:

> et au samblant que li cors moustre
> voit bien qu'ele est morte tout outre. (869-70)

The fact that samblant, which is on the narrow dividing line between the internal and the external, features so constantly in this romance and can be so totally ambiguous, is just further evidence of how the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi attempted to bridge the gulf between the subjective and the objective by the simple stylistic means at his disposal.

Having grouped together, at the beginning of his romance, various key words, throughout the rest of the poem the author constantly reminds us of their co-existence. On five other occasions, apart from the prologue and the epilogue, we find that clusters of key words occur:

> 'Bien voi que ne vous fiez pas
> en moi tant com vous devriiez.
> Cuidiez vous, se vous me disiez
> vostre conseil celeement ... (316-9)
>
> mes por Dieu vous requier et pri
> que cest conseil celer vous plaise
> qu'amor perdroie et joie et aise ... (498-500)

'Sire si ne m'en dites pas,
quar je voi bien a cel samblant
qu'en moi ne vous fïez pas tant
que celaisse vostre conseil;
et sachiez que mout me merveil;
ainc n'oïstes grant ne petit
conseil que vous m'eüssiez dit,
dont descouvers fussiez par moi;　　　(620-7)

mes ainc de ce samblant ne fist
ainçois otroia et promist
au duc a si celer ceste oevre
que, se c'est qu'ele le descuevre ...　　　(663-6)

Ha! fine amor! est ce donc droiz
que il a ainsi descouvert
nostre conseil, dont il me pert?　　　(808-10)

This regular and rhythmic repetition of clusters of key words through-out the romance gives it harmony and balance; alongside there is also to be found repetition of a much more specific kind from one episode to another or within the same episode. In its simplest form, this form of repetition involves individual lines which are identical:

Ne vous vaut riens li escondit　　　(196 and 206)

Tantost a la voie se met ...　　　(384 and 478)

Et li dus errant li demande　　　(111 and 526)[33]

In some instances two individual lines are very similar although not completely identical:

qui onques fusse si ossez:　　　(192)
que je ne fusse si osee ...　　　(590)

Ha! ma dame, por Dieu merci ...　　　(101)
Ha! fet cil, por Dieu merci, sire ...　　　(323)

mes grant corouz et grant deshait ...　　　(104)
dont tel corouz et tel deshait ...　　　(512)

et trichierres et desloiaus ...　　　(578)
comme trichierres et desloial ...　　　(888)[34]

Sometimes a type of recapitulation occurs which extends to more than one individual line and in which lexical items are taken up which have already figured previously in the work although in the recapitulated form the lexical items need not all occur again, nor need they occur exactly in the same order:

> jouste le duc, a souspirer
> commença et puis a plorer.   (109-10)

> et oï forment souspirer
> et au congié prendre plorer.   (467-8)

> Lors a commencié a plorer
> la duchoise et a souspirer ...   (609-10)

> Si m'en avez mout deceü,
> que j'ai mout longuement creü
> que vous fussiez de bone foi
> loiaus a tout le mains vers moi,
> que j'ai vers vous amor eüe.   (159-63)

> et j'ai esté lonc tens si fole
> que j'ai creü vostre parole
> que soventes foiz me disiez
> que de cuer loial m'amiiez;
> mes hui m'en sui aperceüe
> que j'en ai esté deceüe.   (581-6)

> si qu'il ne li a riens teü
> qu'il i ait oï ne veü.   (657-8)

> ce qu'ele a oï et veü,
> si qu'ele n'i a riens teü ...   (905-6)[35]

Cohesion between one episode and another which is effected by means of this type of linguistic repetition and recapitulation also exists within individual episodes.   The opening lines of the romance reveal a technique which becomes a constant stylistic feature of the work. By regularly repeating one, sometimes more, lexical items several times within a particular episode, the author is able to persuade his listener/reader to focus his attention on an idea which underpins the episode, but, at the same time, the continual reiteration of a linguistic leitmotif can give the episode a unity and consistency on an aural plane which it may or may not always have on either a psychological or a structural level.

La Chastelaine de Vergi is, of course, about concealment and reve-
lation and the author makes abundantly clear his intentions in the opening
lines of the poem by repeating the words celer and descouvrir at regular inter-
vals: celer 2, 14, celee 41; descuevre 5, descouvert 10, descouverte 25.
This overall theme of concealment and revelation specifically affects in the
first instance the love compact which the chastelaine has made with the knight;
the serious and binding nature of this compact is underlined when the author
repeats on three separate occasions a word which in feudal legal terminology
conveys the notion of the formal granting of a privilege: otroier 29, otria 22
and otroi 27.

The next scene in the romance (43-106) during which the Duchess
'makes a pass' at the knight but is rejected by him, is also built around three
lexical items which are repeated.   The atmosphere which pervades this scene -
the sham hypocrisy and the innuendo - is prefigured right at the start when the
author repeats the word samblant four times in six lines (49, 52, 53 and 54); 36
in her advances to the knight, the Duchess appeals to his sense of social snob-
bery suggesting that a liaison with a person of high rank (such as herself)
would greatly advantage the knight's potential for social advancement.   Repe-
tition of the word haut: en si haut leu 63, en un haut leu 71, hautement 77,
haute dame 87, reinforces this theme.   Such behaviour is, however, fraught
with danger as well as being immoral; it is necessary to be wary and to look
to one's honour.   By repeating honor three times (64, 86, 90), the poet
brings out this idea, too.   But what is particularly interesting is that in the
next scene (107-149) during which the Duchess accuses the knight of having
tried to seduce her and tells her husband about it, the two linguistic leit-
motifs which have been prominent in the previous encounter appear once more:

> 'Certes, dist elle, j'ai duel grant
> de ce que ne set nus hauz hom
> qui foi li porte ne qui non,
> mes plus de bien et d'onor font
> a ceus qui lor trahitor sont ...　　　　　(114-8)

The mention of trahitor in line 118 is the advance signal for the leitmotif
around which the beginning of the long scene between the Duke and the
knight (150-371) is articulated.   The Duke has been made to suspect the
knight of having attempted to seduce the Duchess - an act of treason in
medieval law: the author emphasises the gravity of the knight's predicament
by referring to the notion of treason four times: trahitresse 165, trahitor 186,
trahi 189, trahitres 201.   When confronted by the Duke's accusations, the
knight is in a dilemma bound as he is by a love compact with the chastelaine
and a feudal compact with his overlord, the Duke.   If the knight tells the
truth, one of the compacts will be broken and the knight will lose his amie;
both these ideas run through the remainder of this encounter.   There are no

fewer than nine references to 'truth': voir 214, vraiement 220, verité 241, voire 246, verité 264, verité 271, voir 278, voir 304, voir 328 and these are interlaced with seven mentions of the verb perdre: perte 228, perdra 276, pert 280, perdre 283, pert 288, perdre 327, perdroie 327.

The scene in which the Duke spies on the secret meeting of the lovers (372-508) is constructed around four linguistic leitmotifs; the verb voir is used five times (380, 392, 393, 396, 427) to emphasise the fact that the Duke is but a passive interloper at the tryst; the noun chambre is repeated 5 times (387, 392, 395, 400, 433) possibly an allusion to the traditional locale of love-making in lyric poetry; [37] the intensity of the erotic satisfaction which the lovers experience at their meeting is expressed when the poet repeats the word joie 5 times (435, 438, 441, 445, 448); such love is however furtive and must always remain hidden; the repetition of the noun nuit five times highlights this idea (431, 454, 460, 481, 485).

Just as samblant was a key word in the initial scene between the Duchess and the knight, in the encounter between the Duchess and the Duke (509-680) when the Duchess again resorts to pretence and shamming to get her way, the same key word crops up on no fewer than eight occasions (511, 515, 537, 568, 572, 579, 621, 663). When the Duke is about to give in to his wife and tell her about the knight's liaison with the chastelaine, concealment of the secret is what is most important and this notion is emphasised linguistically: celez 603, celaisse 623, celer 638, celer 665, celera 679.

The rhetorical set-piece which dominates the final scene of this romance [38] (733-831) in which the chastelaine reasons herself from a state of love into one of death is an excellent illustration of the skill with which the author applies his particular stylistic technique of repetition. The chastelaine begins her monologue by lamenting the fact that the love she had for the knight has been betrayed; all she has lived for has been her love, an idea which is repeated: amoie 739, amast 742, il ne m'aime mie 744, je l'amoie tant 746, amer 747, amoie 761, amer 770, amor 784, amer 796, amaisse 803, amor 808, amor 830. Line 803:

s'avant morust, que tant l'amaisse ...

is especially important since it represents the turning point in the chastelaine's reasoning, the point at which her thoughts turn from love to death. Once the motif of death has been announced in v.803, it dominates not only the rest of the chastelaine's monologue but also the rest of the poem. There are five other allusions to death in the monologue: morte 805, mort 820, mort 826, mort 828, morir 831. Death also looms large in the remainder of the work: morte 839, morte 870, morte 872, morte 876, morteus 881, morte 883, morte 889, mors 900. Although the chastelaine's monologue is basically

constructed around the love and death themes other leitmotifs which have al-
ready appeared in the romance are used once again: the betrayal motif recurs:
trahie 739, trahie 743, trahir 768, trahie 826; interlaced with this are the
recurrent notions of revelation and loss: descouvrir 771, descouvert 809,
descouvreroit 814; perdisse 778; pert 810, perdu 815. Finally, in the epi-
logue (944-58) the wheel has turned a full circle and we are back with a key
word celer with which the romance started.

By resorting to this stylistic technique of intertwining a series of
linguistic leitmotifs within the separate episodes in his romance, the author
is able to highlight the irony which is sometimes inherent in the ambiguous
postures of the characters in a given situation; in some episodes he is also
able to establish a cohesion between thematic constituents which would other-
wise be paradoxical. The encounters between the Duchess and the knight
(43-106) and the Duchess and the Duke (509-680) both reveal how the author
can emphasise the irony of a particular situation by employing the stylistic
device of repetition; for example, the leitmotifs of honor and haut which are
interlaced throughout the first of these encounters can take on quite different
meanings according to whether the situation between the Duchess and the
knight is viewed from an adulterous (the Duchess), or a fine amor (the knight)
standpoint although superficially the samblant of both characters enables them
to pay lip service to conventional morality. Similarly, during the later
meeting between the Duchess and her husband, the repeated use of celer
epitomises the irony of a situation in which one character (the Duke) insists
on the keeping of a secret which he himself reveals in order to insist on its
concealment, and where the other character (the Duchess) cannot wait to give
the secret away. In a slightly different way, the full irony of the knight's
dilemma when faced with the Duke's persistent interrogation (150-371) is
encapsulated in words connected with the notions of 'treason' and 'truth' which
pinpoint the precarious double moral standard which the courtly ethic can
impose. But two scenes in this romance are made up of more paradoxical
matière - the scene during which the lovers make love and the Duke spies on
them (372-508), and the chastelaine's monologue. The way in which both
these scenes are handled is an excellent illustration and justification of the
cohesive effects of the poet's stylistic technique. When he spies on the
lovers, the Duke, and along with him the listener/reader, has to see what
cannot in theory be seen; the joie experienced by devotees of fine amor at
the shrine of the God of Love is an ineffable mystery, essentially an inward
and private sensation in which only the privileged few can share. Narrative
spectators have no place in this mystical rite. The paradox of seeing and yet
not seeing is conveyed in this scene in a careful and deliberate way; at the
beginning of the episode, the voyeurist activities of the Duke are emphasised
by the repetition of vit and yet with the introduction of the other linguistic
leitmotifs in the course of the scene, chambre and nuit, it is obvious that the
joie of the lovers is something which the Duke does not and is not intended to

see, for he cannot see through walls or in the dark! The paradoxical impression that the Duke sees everything and yet sees nothing which the poet succeeds in conveying by using the technique of repetition is the key to the way in which in the romance the bond seems to be forged between lyric and narrative elements. In the chastelaine's monologue, love must be transposed from a lyric to a narrative plane; we must glimpse for a moment the all-consuming power of fine amor which brings about its own destruction - the metaphor that a love affair which is made public must die is concretised in realistic narrative terms in the chastelaine's death. The death of the chastelaine and of fine amor is handled by the author of the romance with consumate skill. The chastelaine cannot be killed nor can she take her own life and yet she must die. The author solves this problem once again by recourse to his stylistic technique. In the course of the chastelaine's monologue allusions to 'love' which are frequent at the beginning gradually give way to allusions to 'death'. In this way, the chastelaine and fine amor are obliterated and anihilated stylistically - a lyric situation is given a tragic narrative dimension.

At the end of this study, we hope to have shown that a cohesive stylistic device - the repetition and recapitulation of lexical items - operates on three distinct levels in La Chastelaine de Vergi. The author links up his poem at both ends in order to produce a self-contained, circular effect; he establishes connections between one episode and another, and within the individual episodes, the interlaced repetition of linguistic leitmotifs gives a cohesive effect. For the purposes of illustration and argument, the cohesive elements on these three levels have been separated. Such a separation is, of course, somewhat artificial since, in practice, when the work was performed in the Middle Ages, it is unlikely that the multiple cohesive strands could have been unwoven so simply from the fabric of the narrative. Indeed, it is the total effect which this method of stylistic cohesion would have produced on the ear of a medieval listener which was probably so important. Like counterpoint in music, the various recurrent linguistic motifs in this poem are bound together in harmonious combinations which lend balance and unity to the whole. In this way, the heterogeneous raw ingredients of La Chastelaine de Vergi are transformed into a meaningful whole - a convincing and elegant synthesis of the lyric and narrative modes.

DAVID J. SHIRT
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NOTES

1. References are to F. Whitehead, La Chastelaine de Vergi, Manchester 1961. Another edition of the text based on MS A (Paris, B.N. f.fr. 375) has recently been published: R.E.V. Stuip, La Chastelaine de Vergi, The Hague and Paris 1970.

2. P. Zumthor, 'De la chanson au récit: La Chastelaine de Vergi', Vox Romanica, 27, 1968, 77-95, p.80: 'Le contenue du roman peut être analysé selon deux lignes thématiques: la ligne de la fine amor et la ligne du fabliau.'

3. J. Frappier, 'Remarques sur la structure du lai: essai de définition et de classement' in La Littérature narrative d'imagination, Paris 1961, p.39: 'Pour l'influence du lai sur la nouvelle, on peut prendre comme exemple La Chastelaine de Vergi.' Cf. also R. Dubuis, Les Cent nouvelles nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age, Grenoble 1973, p.524; 'La Chastelaine de Vergi serait réellement un maillon dans une chaîne, l'intermédiaire indispensable entre le lai merveilleux et la nouvelle réaliste.'

4. Cf. Whitehead, op.cit., pp.xii-xix; A.Maraud, 'Le lai de Lanval et La Chastelaine de Vergi: la structure narrative', Romania, 93, 1972, 433-459.

5. Zumthor, op.cit., p.92, n.51, suggests that the poem was written some time during the first third of the thirteenth century. Stuip, op.cit., p.65, places the date of composition a little later: 'vers l'an 1240'.

6. G. Raynaud, 'La Chastelaine de Vergi', Romania, 21, 1892, 145-193, p.145. This remark by Raynaud is also taken up by Ch V. Langlois, La Vie en France au Moyen Age, 2 vols., Paris 1926, vol.1, 210.

7. Cf. J. Fox, A Literary History of France - The Middle Ages, London 1974, p.210, who cites the judgement of the Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises, Paris 1964: 'une des plus parfaites réussites de la littérature narrative du Moyen Age.'

8. G. Cohen, Le Roman en vers au XIIIe siècle, Fasc. IV, Paris 1936, p.124.

9.   J. Frappier, 'La Chastelaine de Vergi, Marguerite de Navarre et Bandello', Mélanges II, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg, fasc. 105, Strasbourg 1945, p.97.

10.   Whitehead, op.cit., pp.xxxi-xliii.

11.   Ibid., p.xlii: 'The narrative is of course handled in such a way as to conceal the radical contradiction in the theme and to make the psychologically impossible appear plausible and acceptable.'

12.   Ibid., p.xxxi.

13.   Modern critics point out two main psychological weaknesses: why should the chastelaine so readily take the Duchess's insinuations at their face value? Why did the knight not tell the chastelaine about the Duchess's importunities? Cf. Whitehead, op.cit., p.xviii; Fox, op.cit., p.209.

14.   Zumthor, op.cit., pp.80ff.

15.   Ibid., p.86. Zumthor counts 467 lines of dialogue/monologue and 459 of narration.

16.   Ibid., pp.85-6.

17.   Maraud, op.cit., p.449: 'C'est le même motif, celui du secret trahi, qui se trouve ainsi répété.'

18.   Dubuis, op.cit., pp.516-525.

19.   Ibid., p.523.

20.   Cf. Frappier, Mélanges, p.90, who, to a certain extent, anticipated this approach: 'Tout n'a peut-être pas été dit sur le style de l'auteur, dont le nom est inconnu, ou plutôt sur sa technique narrative.' W.D. Lange, 'Höfische Tradition und individuelles Leben in der Chastelaine de Vergi', Zeitschrift für franzosische Sprache und Literatur, 76, 1966, 17-43, has studied the use of binominal expressions in the poem.

21.   Cf. P. Gallais, 'Recherches sur la mentalité des romanciers français du moyen age', Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, 7, 1964, 479-493 (p.483): 'Nous croyons que toute la production littéraire française en vers a été, au moins pendant le premier siècle et demi, destinée à la récitation.'

22. Maraud, op.cit., p.456, says the didactic content is 'désirioire';
     Dubuis, op.cit., p.521, talks of a 'leçon bien plate et insipide.'

23. Cf. Zumthor, op.cit., p.88: 'l'oeuvre est un petit univers d'une
     parfaite sphéricité'.   Similar sentiments also seem to be expressed
     much earlier than this by Bédier in his translation into Modern French
     of the poem, La Châtelaine de Vergy, Paris 1927, p.xiv: 'car une
     invisible muraille l'enclot (i.e. le monde du romancier courtois) de
     toutes parts, une muraille d'air, résistante comme l'acier.'

24. 9 nouns are regularly used to refer to the protagonists in the action:
     duc (56); dame (25); chevalier (23); sire/seigneur (19); duchesse
     (19); amie (14); ami (11); niece (10); chienet (9).   Chambre and
     lieu both occur 10 times, jour is used 15 times and nuit 10.

25. Fier is used 4 times in this text.   Only verbs such as vouloir (18),
     tenir (19), venir (27), amer (30), veoir (32), pouvoir (33), savoir
     (60), faire (80), dire (84) are used with more frequency than celer.

26. Grant is used 30 times, doux 12 and beau 11.   34 of the 60 differ-
     ent adjectives employed in this text occur only once.

27. Cf. Zumthor, op.cit., p.83: 'le vocabulaire amoureux de Ch V
     constitue, dans son extrême simplicité, comme le plus petit
     dénominateur commun de la terminologie habituelle aux poètes
     lyriques courtois du XIIIe siècle.'   Cf. also Lange, op.cit.,
     pp.29-31.

28. V.295-302 the author of La Chastelaine de Vergi quotes from one
     of the lyrics of the Châtelain de Coucy.   Cf. A. Lerond, Chansons
     attribuées au Chastelain de Couci, Paris 1964, Chanson 1, v.17-24.
     Cf. also Zumthor, op.cit., pp.77-80.

29. Chanson V, v.41-48.   Cf. also Chanson 1, v.3-4:

         Quar il m'estuet partir outreement
         Et dessevrer de ma loial conpaigne;

     and Chanson 1, v.37-8.

         Pour tant porrai perdre toute ma joie,
         Quant tant m'ont fait de mal li trahitour ...

     where the Châtelain de Coucy uses other key words which figure in
     the opening lines of this romance.

30. Cf. also 162 and 219.

31. Cf. also 148 and 163.

32. Cf. also 383 and 491.

33. In MS A (ed. Stuip) v.190 and v.495 are also very similar.

34. Sometimes half lines are identical:

vous le dites, ne que ce monte;	(75) MS A Ce me dites, n'a coi ce monte ...
mes ne sevent a qoi ce monte;	(720)
A malaise fu cele nuit ...	(144)
et est de son cuer a malese ...	(632)
qu'a mort se tient et a trahi ...	(189)
morte se tient et a despite; ·	(662)
ne comment savez lieu ne tens ...	(351)
que, s'ele voit ne lieu ne tens ...	(676)

35. Cf. also 316-9 and 620-7 cited above. Sometimes two or three continuous lines may evoke lines which have been previously used separately:

n'en ert a creature nee par moi novele racontee ne samblant fet grant ne petit	(337-9) can be compared with
que fors aus ne le sot riens nee ...	(42)
li chevaliers samblant n'en fist que poi ne grant s'aperceüst ...	(54-5)
et comment il fu el vergier en l'anglet ou il n'ot qu'eus deus, quant li chienés s'en vint a eus; et de l'issue et de l'entree ...	(652-5) can be compared with
seul a seul, ne furent qu'eus deus ...	(155)
D'iluec vit en la chambre entrer le chevalier, et vit issir ...	(393-4)

36. Cf. Lange, op.cit., p.21.

37.   Cf. for example:

        Quan serem sol en chambra o dintz vergier ...

        Bertrand de Born, 60, v.16 in R.T. Hill and T.G. Bergin, <u>Anthology</u>
<u>of the Provençal Troubadours</u>, New Haven 1941.

38.   Cf. Whitehead, <u>op.cit</u>., p.xxxviii, n.2 for a detailed analysis of
the rhetorical devices used in the monologue.