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The Physical World in the Poetry of Charles d'Orléans

by

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APPRECIATION

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CHAPTER I
THE PHYSICAL WORLD IN THE POETRY OF CHARLES D'ORLEANS
INTRODUCTION

Charles d'Orléans, the poet, is most often judged in terms of Charles d'Orléans, the prince. That is to say, he is judged as a poet in terms of his aristocratic and princely station in life, and is found to be the last, valiant champion of a dying chevalric code and a waning noble poetic tradition. It is our contention, however, that on the contrary, he did not uphold this code but rejected it, and that he distinguishes himself not as a courtly poet, but as a lyric poet. Lyric in the sense of personal. In order to pursue this point of view, it is important, however, to discuss briefly both the aristocratic society and the aristocratic poetic tradition into which he was born.

In general, the 15th Century was chaotic and depressing. In France it was characterized by one hundred years of war with England, by pestilence, the plague, famine, and poverty. It was during the 15th Century that hungry wolves dared to enter the streets of Paris and attack its citizens. In addition, it was a time of social upheaval and uncertainty. The old values of chevalerie and courtoisie no longer fit the needs of society. But society (and particularly those in it who had the least to gain by doing so) resisted change.

So it was in the 15th Century that the noble class, traditionally the leading force in a tightly organized social hierarchy, found itself threatened and dislodged from its secure position. As Daniel Poirion observes, "L'aristocratie malheureuse fait une expérience précieuse pour l'humanité; elle découvre parfois le sentiment inquiétant d'être inutile, de n'avoir ne fonction, ni but."¹ The chevalier of yore is gone. In reality the knight-hero serves no purpose anymore. In his place is a hereditary prince menaced on one side by the steady progression of a centralized monarchy, and on the other by the development of the economic strength of towns and the bourgeoisie.

Caught in the squeeze of all these changes, the knight finds that functionally there is little for him to do. And in the moment of the final test - the Hundred Year's War - he proves incapable and foolhardy.
When the towns and peasantry do indeed look to him for protection, he

drags the whole society into humiliating failure. The brutal end of

a way of life is symbolized perhaps by the terrible Battle of Agincourt

where the "Flower of French nobility" was spiritually as well as physically

slaughtered. Overladen with the heavy armor of vain-glory and pomp, the

noble soldiers of France fell one upon another in the mud.

In truth, the aristocracy became an expensive luxury. Indeed, as

Huizinga points out, "...nobody perceived that the nobility maintained it-

self thanks to the blood and riches of the commoners". ² Facing reality

became progressively more and more distasteful to the upper class. This

resulted in a general sense of insecurity which Mr. Huizinga says was in

large part "caused by the chronic form wars were set to take, by the con-

stant menace of the dangerous classes, by the mistrust of justice...by the

obsession of the coming end of the world, by the fear of hell, of sorcerers

and of devils." ³

The reaction to this unhappy state of fear was one of escape. Rather

than to attempt to restructure and re-orient himself toward a more secure

and more meaningful position in a changed world, the displaced chevalier

clung tenaciously and blindly to old forms and anachronistic ways. With

almost desperate frenzy he threw himself into a pursuit of form and ritual

to avoid the fact that there was no longer any substance beneath. With an

excess of leisure on its hands, aristocratic society turned with passion

to vanity and pleasure.

Games became a way of life. Mocking in a sense the significance that

once gave these very rituals meaning, jousts, tournaments and fêtes of

every sort became fulltime occupations - elaborate and empty gestures.

Extravagant costumes and intricate customs served to fill otherwise empty

days and lives. The Court of Burgundy became a center and fashion-setter

for endlessly complicated etiquette and increasingly outlandish dress.

The tournois became a focal-point of courtly activity and reflected the

decadance of surrounding society. Having lost all function as a soldier-

protector and stripped of all heroic virility, the knight is reduced to

mock-heroic performances to please the ladies, with all the manliness of

a peacock parading his new feathers.

Love, of course, was itself one of the most complicated and impor-
tant of games. Ritualized flirtation, courting, and adultery became a
very integral part of noble existence. Inspired by the extravagant
tastes of Isabeau de Bavière, wife of Charles VI, the "Court of Love"
was established. Its tribunal was to render judgments in disputes
of love. It served to underscore the fact that love, like warfare,
courtoisie, heroism, or anything potentially meaningful came to be a
mockery of its very seriousness.

The aristocracy gave itself over fully to these games and illusions.
In addition to the psychological isolation of their "courtliness", for the
most part they were also physically isolated from the cities and towns that
were fast becoming the real power centers. In their country domains, thus,
the gentry insulated itself in every respect from the harshness of reality.
This insulation was further strengthened by the sense of community in the
courtly life. Suffering from common problems, the aristocracy banded
together in small, rural courts and drew strength from the community.
The courtly society grew to regulate and ritualize every aspect of life,
as if thereby to spare the individual the pain of doing it himself. Society
ruled on every matter and virtually stood between man as an individual and
everything else. As Poirion remarks, "...c'est que la société assume plus
souvent le rôle d'intermédiaire entre l'homme et la divinité, l'individu
et l'absolu, l'instant et l'Éternel."^6

Because of this strong trend away from the individual toward the col-
clective, there grows a unique place in an increasingly rigid world for
poetry. In order to reflect and further the elaborateness and inflexibi-
licity of the new order, poetry is fixed in form and in purpose. Poetry
is, like all else, an évasion. The pursuit and performance of a poem is
an end in itself - and a social function. Daniel Poirion states that "...la
poesie lyrique, au Moyen Age, n'est ni une pure création personnelle, ni
une simple qualité saisie dans un object: c'est une activité, à la fois
personnelle et collective, qui nous met en étroit rapport avec le milieu
culturel et la vie sociale."^5

On the one hand, the poem reflects the direction of society: poems
are written about and for the social events of court - tournaments, jousts,
feasts, and particularly love. On the other hand, and less directly, by
its form, poetry reflects the taste of courtly society - its vanity, its
rigidity, its banality. The intricacy of a poetic form such as the virelai
or the formality of the chant royal are born of the same society that expressed itself by incomparably exquisite miniatures, by finely detailed tapestries, and by flamboyant gothic architecture. Inheriting the style and allegorical figures of the Roman de la Rose, courtly poetry of the 15th Century lends itself easily to the vogue of veiled, mysterious allusion, to complex patterns of repetition, and to elaborate metaphor. Cut off from any sense of intellectual tradition and devoid of any intimate personal expression, courtly poetry of this period becomes in its own way a form of l'art pour l'art. As Poirion observes:

...a l'ivresse religieuse succède l'enivrement artificiel d'une littéraire stupéfiante. La légérété, l'étourdie, la vanité de la vie mondaine seront l'héritage d'une courtoisie privée de ses racines intellectuelles. 6

Poetry serves, then, at once as an escape and as an activity to fill a great void. Traditionally associated with music, by the late Middle Ages poetry is still a part of a larger complex of activity involving singing and dancing. Furthermore, it independently becomes the inspiration for yet new activities and games. Inspired perhaps by the cour d'amour and the puys, a new contest evolves in the form of the débat poétique in which the competitors exchange ideas in verse or maxime form and the winner is declared by a panel of gallant judges. Thus poetry becomes quite literally a jeu poétique which in turn resembles a verbal jeu de paume. The skill of the poet is best judged by his ability to pick up a given image or phrase and toss it back with intricate style. Virtuosity, not sensitivity, is the hallmark of a skillful player. 7

Standing in the midst of such tradition, but seemingly always going in the opposite direction, is Charles d'Orléans. To properly understand his position in relation to this noble society and its poetry, it is perhaps necessary to look briefly at his life.

The single most important aspect of his life which we must keep in mind is that he was so thoroughly in every sense a Prince. Charles d'Orléans was born to the pinnacle of power and prestige. The highest of titles and the best aspirations of all aristocratic society were his as a birthright.
Born in 1394 to the dashing and powerful Louis d'Orléans and his gentle Italian wife, Valentine Visconti, Charles d'Orléans as their eldest surviving child came blessed into the world. The King, his uncle, served as Godfather. Though his childhood years were happy and productive, his station in life made him forever vulnerable to personal tragedy. Princes of the Realm could never escape the vulgar brutality of government and politics.

At the age of 12, in 1406, Charles was married to Isabelle of France, five years his elder and child-widow of the murdered Richard II of England. Despite the disparity in their ages, this proved to be a happy match, and some contend that Charles never got over his tender love for the young queen.

The year following his marriage, 1407, was to mark a turning point in Charles's life, and indeed for all of France. The rivalry between the alliance of Berry-Orléans and Burgundy had reached dangerous proportions, but the weak and senile Charles VI was incapable of stopping it and unable to protect his brother Louis d'Orléans. As a result, a bold and horrible crime was committed under the King's nose in Paris. On November 23, 1407, the unsuspecting Louis was brutally murdered by the henchmen of the Duc de Bourgogne, Jean sans Peur.

Thus at 14 the young Charles assumed the heavy title of Duc d'Orléans and the heavier duty of avenging his father's death. Though and ally the Duc de Berry promised to aid him, Charles and his brothers (including his half-brother Dunois, the celebrated Béatard d'Orléans) were forced to a humiliating peace with Burgundy, known as the "Paix de Chartres". The animosity between the two factions was only to heighten, however, and led to such hostilities that France was torn apart by civil war at the same time that she was trying to defend herself from the ever-advancing British. The hatred between Orléans and Burgundy finally forced Jean sans Peur to abandon the French cause altogether and to befriend the English.

But that was only the beginning of the troubles of young Charles. Despite his attempts to console his bereaved mother, she died of grief the year following his father's assassination. And soon thereafter his beloved wife bore him a daughter and died of childbirth. Thus at
Charles was an orphan, father, widower, head of a dukedom, and chief avenger of his murdered father. It is not surprising that one finds so many references to mourning and grief in his poetry.

A young prince of his importance could not be allowed his bachelorhood for long, however, despite his private wishes. Thus in 1410, less than a year after his wife’s death, upon the advice of his uncles a marriage was arranged to shore up their promising alliance with the Armagnacs. Thus barely a man, he married for the second time. His new bride was Bonne d’Armagnac, 11 1/2 years old. There were no children of this marriage. This was perhaps because the young Bonne was scarcely an adolescent when Charles, not yet 21, went to lead an army into the disastrous Battle of Agincourt, never again to see his wife.

Many of Charles’s cousins and friends fell in the calamity. Charles himself was taken for dead when he was discovered by the English under a heap of bodies. But when he moved the victors were overjoyed to realize they had such a prize for a captive. Though wounded, Charles was marched in humiliation behind the triumphant Henry V as he returned to England. Thus Charles began his twenty-five years of imprisonment.

Although he was moved about from place to place — now Windsor, now the Tower of London, now distant Pontefract, Charles was always accorded the privileges befitting his rank. As Pierre Champion concludes, "Charles d’Orléans ne connut ni les chaines, ni la paille des cachots, mais bien des égards dus à un prince de son rang." Indeed, his keepers were of the highest nobility and among them were such names as the Count of Suffolk and Lord Bolingbroke; as a result, Charles enjoyed a genteel and cultivated society. He spoke fluent English and even wrote many poems in this second language.

In fact Charles was so well able to participate in this gentle life that he is often linked romantically with several high-born English ladies — most notably Lady Maud (née Lovell) Arundel and Lady Anne Molins, cousin of the Duchesse of Suffolk, Alice Chaucer. Though the poetic allusions to these ladies are extremely veiled, it is certain that Charles was from time to time involved with certain English belles.
At the same time, however, he mourned the loss of his wife Bonne who died sometime between 1432-1437. And he was later grieved by the death of his daughter Jeanne, the only offspring of his first marriage, who became the wife of the illustrious Jean II, Duc d'Alençon.

In addition to these personal losses, however, Charles was worn down by the burdens of imprisonment. His suffering was psychological, not physical. He longed to return to France, to his beloved Loire, its lush valley and warm sun. He worked endlessly to terminate the war, to make an enduring peace and, of course, to get himself released. During those twenty-five years, much had changed. The English had overrun most of France, but had finally been beaten back at Orléans. For the professed sake of him, Charles, Duc d'Orléans, a young maid named Jeanne d'Arc, with the aid of his brothers and son-in-law, had lifted the siege of his city. With Charles VI long since deceased, the Maid had valiantly forced the reluctant Dauphin to the throne and had him crowned Charles VII at Rheims.

Another important change had occurred too: the hated Jean sans Peur was dead and in his place was his only son, Philippe le Bon. Realizing the necessity for reconciliation with Burgundy, Charles tried vigorously and long to establish a peace that would reunite France. Finally after many false starts and false hopes, peace was negotiated, and with the help of Burgundy, Charles d'Orléans left England for good in 1440.

One of the most astonishing aspects of his life is his triumphal return to France. Though gone for twenty-five years, he returned a beloved hero. His long, slow trip home from Gravelines to Saint-Omer to Ghent, Bruges, Compiegne and Paris was like an extended triumphal march. Everywhere he was met by wildly cheering crowds, uninhibited jubilation, feasting and dancing. The final, touching proof of the love of the people for Charles was that everywhere he went an impoverished and war-weary populace voluntarily gave all they could to help defray his staggering ransom. It was, as Champion says, as though he himself were king:

Certes, partout ou il séjournaît on lui rendait de grands honneurs comme s'il fut le roi de France en personne ou son fils, le dauphin; sa délivrance était considérée par beaucoup de gens comme bien consolante pour le royaume; le bon peuple de France avait souffert de son emprisonnement et depuis longtemps le désirait voir en franchise comme il était.
Before returning home to his beloved Loire, in order to cement his new friendship with Burgundy, an aging Charles (45) married for the third time. His new bride, Marie de Clèves, 14 years old, was the daughter of Adolph de Clèves and Marie de Bourgogne, and had been reared at the court of Burgundy. Surprisingly, considering her background, when she married she spoke only German and could hardly understand a word of French.

Finally, after all the years of dreaming and hoping and the months of actual journey, Charles returned to Orléans and Blois to remain—with the exception of an abortive campaign to his maternal homeland of Asti—forever in France. Ignoring his vast popularity and eschewing all the power and position that was rightfully (and easily) his, Charles retired to a quiet and meditative life.

He lived and dressed simply. He always wore black. One senses in his chosen life-style an irrevocable disillusionment with titles and position. He found no satisfaction in being a beloved prince and mighty duke; indeed he mocked the court and its courtiers and carried out his duties with reluctance.

Living quietly with his young wife and devoted friends, he gave over much of his time to poetry and collected about him many fellow poets in what was to be known as the Cercle de Blois. Among the most illustrious of these friends were René d'Anjou and François Villon.

Less than ten years before his death, he was, to his great surprise, to become a father again. The birth of his daughter Marie was followed by the birth of a son, Louis, who would become Louis XII of France. And in 1464, a year before his death, Charles was presented with yet another daughter, Anne. The following year at 71 years old, Charles undertook a short trip in his domain and fell ill. On the night of January 5, 1465, he died at the Château d'Amboise. A few years before, in his final poem, he had already bid a fond farewell to his good friends and his gentle life at Blois, "Salués moy toute la compagnie".

What we learn from this brief sketch of Charles's life is that he was born in every sense a Prince. All that aristocratic society had to offer was his for the asking. But astonishingly, he did not seem to gain
strength or satisfaction from his position. Disillusioned at every turn, and seemingly unaffected even by a triumphal return to France befitting a king, Charles chose to retire to solitude and privacy. He even preferred the quietness of Blois over the bustle of Orleans. In his personal life, we must conclude, he rejected the values of "courtliness." He did his duty as he saw it, but with reluctance. He preferred to live as a private man of simple habits and literary tastes rather than as a Prince defined and bound by pre-determined attitudes and conventions.

If Charles's personal life may be judged "uncourtly" by contemporary standards, it is not surprising that, poetry being an extension and reaffirmation of courtly values, his poetry could be judged uncourteously too. It is our intention in this paper to explore the view that, contrary to prevailing opinion, Charles should not be considered a courtly poet.

Although he did use the conventional poetic forms of the courtly tradition - notably the ballade and the rondeau - in our view it is a misreading of Charles to see in him only a delicate, refined, and conventional aristocrat. To us the value of Charles's poetry - and its beauty - lies in its essentially lyric nature. Charles as an intensely private, and not a basically social man, reflects his struggles and quests in his highly lyric and personal poetry.

That he found no satisfaction and little significance in his elevated position seems everywhere apparent. If he directly mentions the court or courtly life at all, it is inevitably with distain and disgust. And in perhaps a more subtle, subconscious way, he tends to reject social values by reacting in a manner diametrically opposite to that which was socially prescribed. This is most obvious in those poems which "celebrate" the yearly cycle of fêtes marking the social calendar.

Although Charles did indeed write many purely conventional poems, especially love poems, these tend to be toward the beginning of his career and do not reflect his poetic maturation, nor indeed represent what seem to us to be his most moving and original verse, (though most anthologies and surveys tend to choose his work from this period). What appears to us as fascinating and highly significant is that, even from the beginning Charles, as if somehow hoping to by-pass a pre-established courtly view of the world, relies heavily upon his senses to interpret all
that is about him. Rejecting a definition of himself as a courtly personnage with a predestined role to play, he prefers to think of himself as a lone man. Thus alone he has only himself and his own senses to perceive, grasp, and comprehend what is often a bewildering universe.

In short, the physical, concrete world seems to be a most important element in Charles's poetry. In an attempt to understand and to analyze this aspect of his work we will trace it through many steps. First we will discuss the purely sensual side of Charles's poetry and his reliance upon his senses to interpret the world for him. Secondly, we shall examine the role of nature in Charles's poetry and his rejection, on the one hand, of the usual poetic formulas for ritual poetry coupled with his apparent aversion to the pastourelle, and on the other, his spontaneous, lyrical and personal response to nature, the elements, and the cycle of the seasons. In the following two chapters we shall outline Charles's basic interior dilemma which is characterized by the contradictory pull of static forces versus fluid forces. This conflict is reflected in his desire to turn objects, thoughts, and desires into places or things to be shut off, closed out, or imprisoned, and his opposing desire to find eternal freedom in the elements of movement and fluidity - paths, the wind, the waters, and time. Finally we shall attempt to determine how Charles came to resolve his dilemma by tracing some of his important, if ultimately misleading, avenues to understanding and acceptance of life.

Having in the end found no lasting peace in the various "escapes" of art, sleep, or death, he comes to an acceptable, if not perfect, solution. By examining the relationship between the two central figures of Merencolie and Nonchaloir, we find that Charles did reach a compromise between the conflicting forces of movement and life against stillness and death. With the confidence born of wisdom and experience, Charles finds not blissful exuberance, but calm, reasoned resignation. If he cannot attain real happiness, at least we know that he does achieve a measure of peace.

As a final note and a prelude to the text of this study, we should like to say a word about the problems of chronology. Because of conflicting opinion which we are not prepared to resolve concerning the actual dates of many poems, we are hesitant to lean too heavily toward
a chronological and "progression of thought" approach to Charles's poetry, except in the most general way. As a result, we tend to view a given question only thematically and without attempting to base our point of view on the chronological order of each specific poem.

The only exceptions to this general premise that seem justified are concerning those poems about which there is universal agreement as to the time, place, and circumstances of composition, and these facts are often obvious from the text itself. Furthermore, we are reluctant to draw any conclusions about a change in viewpoint on a given issue except in the broadest sense. We feel, however, that there is little disagreement about the definite change in tone, attitude, and circumstances between the early ballades and the later rondeaux, hence only in this very general respect do we advance any conjectures about evolution in Charles's thought and art.
NOTES


3 Huizinga, p. 21.

4 Poirion, p. 399.

5 Poirion, p. 8.

6 Poirion, p. 96.

7 Poirion, p. 181.


10 Champion, p. 326.
CHAPTER II

SELF-AWARENESS: THE SENSES, THE BODY, AND PHYSICAL EXISTENCE

Central to our approach and understanding of the poetry of Charles d'Orléans is the fact that Charles' own view of himself, as revealed in his poetry, is basically that of a lone man trying to come to terms with the real world, rather than that of a Prince trying to function in an artificial one. The fundamental and most basic way he or any man tries to relate to his world is first by himself: that is, by his very being, his body, his senses. Whatever else a man may be, he is first of all a physical entity functioning in a physical and concrete world. Charles d'Orléans knew this, or perhaps one should more accurately say, sensed it. The physical aspect of existence is a constant and important theme in his poetry. Though to date no critic has stressed this "physicalness" in regard to Charles' poetry, it would seem to be as fundamental to our understanding of his poetry as it was to his understanding of the world.

Huizinga mentions, in discussing the role of the Fifteenth Century poet, that with respect to objects, details, or as he says, "accessories" the poet is tied down to tradition: "There is a conventional way of expressing each detail, from which, though he may be unconscious of it, he can hardly deviate; the flowers, the delights of nature, sorrows and joys, all these are seen in a fashion which varies but little." Whereas Charles certainly did not escape all the poetic fashions of his time, particularly in his early ballades, even from the beginning, the repetition of and stress given to particular objects, events in nature, and especially to parts of the body would seem to be significant. The earlier poems abound with the traditional admonishments to treacherous eyes, lying lips and cruel heart. However, beyond the traditional and by now much-overworked anatomical symbols borrowed from the Roman de la Rose, Charles carries through with certain basic concepts that allow us to feel with him as he reaches out to the world with his senses and his whole being.
First among these is the idea that his whole self is a unit composed of certain important parts that are distinct from each other yet interdependent. One of these is inevitably le cœur, which we shall discuss in fuller detail; another one is often le corps, as a whole, and the third part (generally there are three) is more indefinite and elusive. Sometimes it is called l'âme, frequently it is Penser, as in the famous ballade "En tirant d'Orleans a Blois" in which the poet describes himself as "Mon cueur, Penser et moy, nous troys," (B. XCVII, p. 154). Other times, however, this "other part" is much harder to define, as though the poet is struggling to know some inpenetrable but very real part of himself:

J'estraine de bien loing m'amie, De cœur, de corps et quanque j'ay," (R. XXIV, p. 304).

This structural view of self, much like a contemporary triptych showing the three parts of a central theme, is certainly not out of the mainstream of medieval tradition. What is significant, however, is that Charles adapts it to himself and takes it as his own. By his own definition, he as a being has separate, distinct parts making up his whole. This is a decidedly physical concept.

In addition to these rather broad divisions, Charles makes innumerable references to individual parts of the body through which he feels and knows the world. Most frequently mentioned are the sense organs. Particularly important of course is vision; but in addition to his eyes, his ears and hands are invaluable messengers constantly bringing him sounds, shapes, and impressions of the world about him. One can truly share his sensual delight, for example, in the colors, smell, sound, and rhythm of lovely Spring:

En regardant ces belles fleurs
Que le temps nouveau d'Amours prie,
Chascune d'elles s'ajolie
Et farde de plaisans couleurs.

Tant enbasmes sont de odeurs
Qu'il n'est cueur qui ne rajeunie,
En regardant ces belles fleurs.

Les oyeaux deviennent danseurs
Dessuz mainte branche flourie,
Et font joyeuse chanterie,
De contres, deschans et teneurs,
En regardant ces belles fleurs. (R. XXXIV, p. 309).

More often than not, however, his senses tell him things he would prefer to disbelieve, but wisdom dictates that they, more than most, are reliable courriers:

Devenons saiges, désormais,
Mon cœur, vous et moy, pour le mieux;
Noz oreilles, aussi noz yeulx,
Ne croyons de legier jamais. (R.CCXIII, p. 459).

Not infrequently, too, internal disputes and indecision on Charles’s part are described as conflicting sensory evidence, and different domains of his person engage in a sort of tug of war for supremacy, as in the following exchange:

Je vous areste, de main mise,
Mes yeulx, emprisonnés serés;
Plus mon cœur ne gouvernerés
Desormais, je vous en avise. (R. LIII, p. 319).

And again:

Mais ma bouche fait semblant qu'elle rie,
Quant maintefoiz je sens mon cœur plorer. (B. X, p. 27).

Or in a more traditional vein, his recalcitrant heart resists truth or domination by other parts:

L'oreille je tens et escoute
Savoir que, sur ce, dit Secours.
Ou milieu d'Espoir dt de Doubte

All in all, Charles's repeated allusions to these certain parts of himself singal to us that on the very most basic level he is aware of himself as a physical being. The acceptance of this helps us to explore better his view of life on more complex levels and to evaluate the depth of his poetic talent. It also explains in part Charles’s penchant for personnification which often brings forth startlingly physical and sometimes nearly visceral imagery. One cannot help but be struck by the very physical and graphic quality of such verse as the following:
Pour tant, s'avale soussiz mains,
Sans macher, en peine confis,
Si ne seront ja desconfis
Les pensers qui m'ont en leurs mains. (R. CCCXVI, p. 472).

However, certain aspects of this sensory and corporal poetry reveal more to us than the simple fact that Charles is aware of this part of existence. His visual or "sight poetry", for example, can be examined on more than merely a surface plane. Many critics have discussed the importance of visual imagery to the courtly tradition of the late Middle Ages. Huizinga states, for example, that "one of the fundamental traits of the mind of the declining Middle Ages is the predominance of the sense of sight, a predominance which is closely connected with the atrophy of thought. Thought takes the form of visual images." 3

Varvaro studies the importance of visual imagery in the poetry of Machaut, Deschamps, and Christine de Pisan. 4 As for Charles himself, Goodrich points out that in his poetry the study of the eyes can be divided into an early and a late manner, the former belonging to the courtly tradition and the latter expressing Charles' own sceptical and satirical view of court life. 5 More to the point perhaps is Poirion's comment that, "Charles d'Orléans saura bien tirer parti de la mise en scène, de la description du décor, du jeu des personnages, mais sans jamais renoncer à célébrer par cette représentation poétique, quelque subtil mystère." 6 It is precisely this "subtil mystère" which sets Charles apart from the others and which merits further study.

To backtrack for a moment, however, it would perhaps be beneficial to look first briefly at the use of the eyes in their more superficial and common role, at least as described by Charles himself. Throughout his poetry one may find such clarifications of their importance as the following:

Sot euil, raporteur de nouvelles, (R. L, p. 318).

Or,

Les yeulz si sont fais pour servir
Et pour raporter tout plaisir
Aux cuers, quant ilz sont en martire. (Ch. LIII, p. 236).

Thus he tells us they are his messengers; sometimes he extends the personification to become a traditional allegorical figure, as when he
addresses Regard:

Par vous, Regard, sergent d'Amours,
Sont arrester les povres cueurs, (R. CXCII, p. 400).

In any case, eyes are clearly meant to serve their master, and they
clearly do. They may bring him a delightful vision of nature:

Les fourriers d'Esté sont venus
Pour appareillier son logis,
Et ont fait tendre ses tappis,
De fleurs et verdure tissus.

En estandant tappis velus
De vert herbe par le pais,

Or sometimes they provide a witty look at human folly, such as in
this description of obsequious courtiers:

Laissez aler ces gorgias,
Chascun yver, a la pippee;
Vous verrez comme la gelee
Reverdira leurs estomas.

Dieu scet s'ilz auvert froit aux bras,
Par leur manche deschiquette:
Laissez aler ces gorgias!

Ilz portent petit soulers gras,
A une poulaine embourree;
Froidure fera son entree
Par leurs talons nuz embas:
Laissez aler ces gorgias! (R. VIII, p. 295.)

And sometimes they give the poet insight into himself:

Tous nouveauux revendorons en France,
Et quant me reverrés a l'ueil,
Je suis tout autre que je sueil;
Au mains j'en fais la contenance,

Of course, whereas the eyes of the poet are supposed to be in his
service, sometimes they are more than servants. Sometimes the "news" they
bring places him in mortal danger - particularly if it has anything to do
with love. As he warns himself, no doubt after looking at Beauty:

C'est grand peril de regarder
Chose dont peut venir la mort. (B. III, p. 19).

In fact it can be just as lethal to be the victim of such a glance as it
is to have cast it. Thus he asks the fair lady not to look upon him in
such a way:

    Vueillez voz yeulx emprisonner
    Et sur moy plus ne les giettes,
    Car quant vous plais me regarder,
    Par Dieu, Belle, vous me tues. (B. II p. 18).

Or even more vehemently he protests:

    Helas! me tuerez vous?
    Pour Dieu retraiez cest eul
    Qui d'un amoureux acueil
    M'occit, se ne suis rescous. (R. XXVIII, p. 306).

However, this kind of danger is all part of the game of courtly
love, and this kind of verse is certainly typical courtly lyric. There
is another and more real danger to Charles that comes from visions of
another sort. These are not the flirtatious sketches of life and death
that one finds in the manuals of Courtly Love, but rather the good hard
looks the poet takes at life as he stares out of the windows of his own
mind.

From this vantage point he sees a different view, unembellished and
often not very pretty. He concludes, thus, that the other, the courtly
view of life is an illusion, and he quite literally disillusion himself. He speaks quite plainly of this revelation, for example, in Bal-
lade XCV:

    Par les fenestres de mes yeulx,
    Ou temps passe, quant regardez,
    Avis me estoit, ainsi mai dit Dieux,
    Que trop plus belles veoie
    Qu' a present ne fais: mais j'estoie
    Ravy en plaisir et lyesse
    Es mains de ma Dame Jennesse.

    Or, maintenant que deviens vieulx
    Quant je lys ou livre de Joie,
    Les lunectes prens pour le mieulx,
    Par quoy la lettre me grossoye,
    Et n'y voy ce que je souloie:
    Pas n'avoye cest foibless,
    Es mains de ma Dame Jennesse. (B. XCV, p. 150).

Here one sees more than an old man rebuking a young man's folly; here
the poet is asking in a sense which way of looking at the world is
the true distortion, and with tongue in cheek he answers the question by
posing it.
Thus, once the true danger is recognized - in this case seeing what does not correspond to a pretty and preconceived view of life - Charles proposes a solution that will be his answer to reality again and again: to shut his eyes and not look. Rather than to accept the malicious half-truths of the Book of Joy, he will close his eyes and retreat and sleep, thereby at least shutting out the pain:

Tant sont les yeux de mon cuer endormis
En Nonchaloir, qu'ouvrir ne les pourroye:
Pource, parler de Beaulte n'ozeroye,
Pour le present, comme j'ay fait jadiz.

Par cuer retiens ce que j'en ay apris,
Car plus ne scay lire ou livre de Joye,
Tant sont les yeux de mon cuer endormis!

Chascun droit qu'entre les rassotiz,
Com avugle des couleurs je jugeroye;
Taire m'en weil, rien n'y voy, Dieu y voye!
Plaisans regars n'ont plus en moy logis,
Tant sont les yeux de mon cuer endormiz. (R. XXVI, p. 305).

Therefore, to close one's eyes, to see nothing, to be silent, to be blind - all of these become symbols of shutting out light, sensation, and life. Those who have been overcome by the false hopes of the Book of Joy are, then, the ones who like the poet himself wander from "life's path" - the blind and the deaf:

Esloigne de mondaine route
Me tiens, comme n'en decours,
Entre les aveugles et souris;
Dieu y voye, je n'y voy goute
Ou milieu d'Espoir et de Doubte! (R. CCXCI, p. 459).

Doubt, false hope, danger, grief, all of which Charles experienced in abundance took him far from the mainstream of life and plunged him into darkness and wildernesses such as the "Forest d'Ennuyeuse Tristesse" where he wanders blind, lost, and aimless after the death of his lady:

" Aveugle suy, ne scay ou aler doye;
De mon baston, affin que ne forvoye,
Je vois tastant mon chemin ça et là;
c'est grant pitie qu'il couvient que je soye
L'homme esgaré qui ne scet ou il va. (B. LXIII, p. 89).

Thus from the simple and superficial pleasure of seeing a lovely spring
all the way to a symbolic blindness as an expression of despair, we find a wide spectrum of the uses and meaning of the eyes and vision in Charles's poetry. But if the eyes are vital organs to the poet, so too is the heart. Not only, as we have seen, does it make up one of the broad units of the poet's being, but in a much more intimate way it is the essence of the poet himself.

Of course, in the most traditional sense, the heart is the focal point for love and desire. Among Charles's poems are many that may rightly be called courtly in this respect. The heart is the seat of love and is susceptible to all the pleasures and pains that capricious Fortune may bring. It is the delicate part that must be awakened to love's call:

Mon cœur dormant en Nonchalor,
Reveillez vous joyeusement,
Je vous fais nouvelles savoir,
Qui vous doit plaire grandement,
Il est vray que presentement
Une dame tresthoncoree
En toute bonne renommee
Desire de vous acheter,
Dont je suis joyeux et d'accort; (B. LXVII, pp. 92-93).

Often, too, the heart is depicted as a figure in Love's complex allegorical garden:

Veu que j'ay tant Amour servy,
Ne suis je pas mal gueronné?
Du plaisir qu'il m'avoit donne
Sans cause m'a tost desservy.

Mon cœur loyaument son serf vy,
Mais a tort l'a habandonné,

And it is always a vital yet special part of the lover; it is very commonly portrayed as something bargained for, bought and sold, given and returned as a symbol of the very essence of the lover himself. Thus in the poetry and art of this period one often finds the heart held in the hand of the lover or his lady, or even in the hands of one of the allegorical figures. In speaking about Amours, Charles expresses the wish of recovering his own heart: "Et reprendray hors de ses mains
mon cœur," (Songe en Complainte, p. 105). So, too, one often finds the idea of living without the heart as sort of a state of half-life caused by love's injustices, the absence of the loved one, or a rebuff by the cherished lover.

\begin{verbatim}
Si m'esmerveille, main et soir,
Comment j'ai vécu tant de jours
Depuis sans cœur; mais pour tout voir
Ce n'est que miracle d'Amours. (B. XX, p. 38).
\end{verbatim}

All in all it would seem that within the courtly tradition itself, the heart was regarded as a special and vital organ that was central to the whole concept of courtly love. As such it achieved a certain autonomy: that is, it functioned as the dearest part of the lover and represented him in transactions of love, yet it could act on its own as a servant, messenger, friend, or even foe as it wound its way down the intricate path of Love's Garden. Furthermore it was an entity unto itself that in a very physical sense could be held in a hand, given or taken, and its presence or absence caused explicit sensations of pain or pleasure.

Charles borrowed heavily from all these concepts of the heart and used them in various ways throughout his poetry. However, in addition to viewing the heart as a pawn in the game of courtly love, he took the basic idea of the heart as an autonomous entity, nearly a being of its own, and expanded it to the point that \textit{le cœur} to Charles takes on a whole new meaning. More than just a character with a role to play in courtly transactions, the heart is himself and his "other self". It is his conscience, his companion, his alter ego.

As his conscience it has certain moral duties to perform and he not infrequently admonishes it for his own lassitude or negligence:

\begin{verbatim}
Cœur, que fais-tu? renforce toi
De Soussy et Merencolie;
C'est des honneur et vilenie
De lachement se tenir coy. (R. LXXIV, p. 332).
\end{verbatim}

Or again, in his longstanding struggle with his "false eyes" he sends his heart to the front, almost as a second, to do his battle for him:
Et leur montrez tell rigueur
Qu'ilz vous craignent, car c'est le mieulx
Qu'ilz obeissent, se m'aist Dieux,
A vous, pour montrant leur seigneur.
Ne cess'ez de tenser, mon cueur! (R. CCLXXXVIII, p. 450).

"ces faux yeux"

As a conscience, the heart plays a rather traditional and subservient role; it often has to be reminded, cajoled, and badgered. As a companion, friend, and alter ego, however, it is a complete equal if not better of the poet. In this capacity the poet often recognizes the debt he owes to his heart who suffers for him, as would a friend:

Mon cueur se plaint qu'il n'est payé
De sez despens, pour son travel
Qu'il a porté, si nompareil
Qu'onquez tel ne fut essayé. (R. LXXXVIII, p. 340).

Or in a remarkable dialogue reminiscent perhaps of the "Moi et Lui" of a Diderot, the two parts of himself chuckle over a matter that:

C'est conseil que tressegret tien.
..............................
Qu'esse? -Je le vous ay a dire?

Ainsy m'esbas ou penser myen
Et mainte chose faiz eseripre
En mon cueur, pour le faire rire,
Tout ung est mon fait et le sien
Sans ce, le demourant n'est rien. (R. CCCIV, pp. 465-466.)

Thus, as a companion and friend the heart is literally the poet's closest confidant - his other self. As such, the poet advises with thoughtful concern, all the while respectful of the heart's autonomy, that "he" not overdo:

Mon cuer, n'entrepren trop de choses.
Tu peux penser ce que tu veulz,
Et faire selon que tu peux
Et dire ainsi comme tu oses.

..............................
Il est temps que tu te reposes;
Mon cuer, n'entrepren trop de choses. (R. XC, p. 341).

If the figurative autonomy of the heart is thus assured to such a point that the poet regards it as a confidant who may speak for him-
self, it is perhaps important to note, then, that this independence is further stressed by the marked physical, humanoid characteristics of the organ. We observed earlier that Charles had a structural view of himself generally comprising three separate parts. So, too, he speaks of "les Trois Estas de mon cueur" (B. XCIX, p. 155). We mentioned too the importance of the eyes and sight to the poet, and it is not insignificant that his heart is accorded eyes of its own:

\[
\begin{align*}
tant sont les yeulx de mon cueur endormis \\
En Nonchaloir, qu'ouvrir ne les pourroye. \text{(R. XXVI, p. 305).}
\end{align*}
\]

In fact, at times the heart seems to have a whole body that is subject to the frailties of any flesh:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Les malades cueurs amoureu}x \\
\text{Qui ont perdu leurs appetis,} \\
\text{Et leurs estomacs refroidis} \\
\text{Par soussis et maulex douloueux,} \text{ (R. CXVIII, p. 358).}
\end{align*}
\]

The capacity of the heart to suffer, not in an abstract and hypothetical way, but in a real and physical way is, in truth, what makes it the equal or perhaps the essence of the poet. Thus when bearing the hardships and pain of the poet, the heart is seen as a martyr:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cueur, a qui prendrez vous conseil?} \\
\text{A nul ne povez descouvrir} \\
\text{Le tresangoisseus desplaisir} \\
\text{Qui vous tient au peinne et travel!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je tiens qu'il n' a soubz le soleil,} \\
\text{De vous plusparfait vray martir} \\
\text{Cueur, a qui prendrez vous conseil?} \text{ (R. XXXII, p. 308).}
\end{align*}
\]

Furthermore, it not infrequently carries the poet's burden of grief by wearing the black. Knowing how often and how deeply Charles himself mourned, one ought to appreciate more fully the capacity of the heart to reflect the poet's strongest emotions and to represent him in every way when he says, "Je suy cellui au cueur vestu de noir" (B.XVIII, p. 36).

But even beyond grief and pain, the heart has more yet to endure, and the reader is often made witness to its suffering unto death. The torturer may be as insidious and seemingly harmless as a little sigh or beautiful eyes, but the result is generally pitiful and always
fatal. One cannot help but be struck by such violent imagery as the following; the heart is struck, beaten, punished, cries out for mercy, and yet the attackers pursue:

As tu ja fait, petit soupir?
Est il sur son trespassement
le cuer qu'as mis a sacquement
N'a il remede de guerir?

Tu as mal fait de le ferir
En haste, si piteusement.
As tu ja fait, petit soupir?
Est il sur son trespassatement? (R. CCCXLIX, p. 497).

Quant ung cuer se rent a beaux yeulx,
Criant mercy piteusement
S'ilz le chastient rudement
Et il meurt, qu'en valent ilz mieulx? (R. CCCXLIX, p. 497).

And the violence often reaches a pitch of brutality as the struggle becomes a mortal combat between the assailed and the assailant:

Ce n'est que chose acoustumee
Quant Soussy voy vers moy venir,
Se tost ne lui venoye ouvrir
Il romroit l'uis de ma Pensee.

Lors fait d'escremie levee
Et puis vient mon cuer assailir
Ce n'est que chose acoustumee
Quant Soussy voy vers moy venir.

Adonc prent d'espoir son espee
Mon cuer, pour dez coups soy couvrir
Et se defendre et garentir;
Ainsi je passe la journee.
Ce n'est que chose acoustumee. (R.CCXXXII, p. 423).

In a very real sense, the heart is the poet himself, his very essence, his inner being. He would like to keep this special part of himself locked up safely "behind the door of thought,". But as life does not accord any such sanctuary to the poet, so too his heart, as a bit of himself, is heir to pain, suffering, injustice, and death, and cannot escape. This part of himself, like his eyes, is truly a vital organ because he needs it to live. It is far more than a perfunctory part which functions only according to the legends of courtly love, but it is rather a real heart; one that beats and bleeds and thus helps the poet to experience - to feel - the real world.
Having irrevocably taken the significance of the human body, or more precisely his own body, beyond the limits of allegorical tradition, it is only natural that Charles should try to redefine other fundamental concepts in a more personal light too. His attempts to come to grips with the real world that did not fit the stale patterns of courtoisie and the pale confines of conventional allegorical expression is his great poetic victory and perhaps his greatest struggle.

To a certain degree Charles began this task even very early in his poetry. The traditional garden of the Roman de la Rose was divided neatly into two groups that could easily be categorized by Good and Bad. In the former group are found such personages as Bel Acueil, Deduit, Amour, and the Rose herself; in the latter such villains as Danger, Felonie, Vilenie, Vieillesse, and Mal Bouche. Naturally over the course of roughly two hundred years the role and characteristics of the various participants were bound to change, but basically the mold remained. The literary tradition that Charles d'Orléans inherited was satiated with these and other allegorical figures which could still be divided into the categories of Good and Bad. Another basic fact remained too: that which aided in attaining Love was good; that which stood in Love's way was bad.

Even when treating these hackneyed themes, Charles's reliance on his own senses and instincts is one of his strongest qualities. Though he does speak of "Beauté" and "Amours", and addresses many poems to a "Beauté sans per", the best of his love poetry is not that which upholds stiff models of Love and Beauty based on moral abstractions, but poetry which lets us know that there is a real woman on his mind, and if he can arrange it, in his arms! Love is above all pleasure! And so we find from very early on in the Ballade Cycle the Lady as a physical presence and her gracious, pleasing body as the object of the poet's praise and desire. The descriptions are often delicate and discreet - and sometimes perhaps a little shy:

Fresche beauté, tresriche de jeunesse
Riant regard, trait amoureusement,
Pleasant parler, gouverné par Sagesse,
Port feminin en corps bien fait et gent. (B. IX, p. 25).
Jusques a tant que reconfort auray
D'un doux plaisir, quant Reveoir pourray
Voste gent corps, plaisant et gracieux, (B.XI, p. 28).

Sometimes too, they are a bit bolder and leave little doubt that physical (and not mental) possession is, after all, the object of the lover:

Alez vous logier ou manoir
De son tresgracieux corps gent
Pour y demourer main et soir
Et l'annonwer entierement. (B. LXVII, p. 93).

Logies moy entre vos bras
Et m'envoiez doux baisier
Qui me viengne festier
D'aucun amoureux soulas. (B. XLIII, p. 229).

However, another side of Charles comes to mock love and its foolishness. Thus several poems, particularly among the later rondeaux fall into a bawdy, rollicking tone more akin to Villon or Rabelais than to the other, more delicate Charles d'Orléans! Here too, however, it is the physical aspect of love that is important and which makes a man a fool. Even so it is "pleasant folly":

Amour, qui tant a de puissance
Qu'il fait vieilles gens rassoter
Et jeunes plains d'outrecuidance
De tout estas se scet meller.

--------------------------

Au fort, il fault que je le dye
Ce qui fait le ventre lever
Ce n'est fors que plaisant folie. (B. XCII, p. 146).

In sum, love at its best is pleasure. Absence and denial, long part of the concept of courtly love are not praised by Charles as being in any way helpful to love's cause. Pleasure is not something cerebral; that which is pleasurable is physical and sensual and something one feels. Literally, Charles tells us, it is something one can grasp:

S'en mez mains une foiz vous tiens,
Pas ne m'eschaperés, Plaisance, (R.XLV, p. 315).

On the other side of the ledger, however, the experience of love is certainly not always pleasurable. In fact for Charles the negative side far outweighs the positive. If what is desirable about love is pleasure, it is only a fleeting reward. The reverse, the denial or loss of love is accordingly painful, but the pain endures. Pain to
Charles is far from an abstraction or a condition of moral duress. Pain rather, even if caused by such an abstraction as Love, manifests itself in very real and physical symptoms. Here again Charles borrows often from tradition, as when he describes Love's fever:

Plaisant Beaute mon cuer nasvra
Ja piega si tresdurement
Qu'en la fievre d'Amours entra;
Qui l'a tenu moult asprement; (B. LXV, p. 90).

Often, too, the discomfort is more vague, causing an ache or a general malaise. But its cure is always difficult:

De la maladie des yeux
Feruz de pouldre de Plaisir,
Par le vent d'Amoureux Desir
Est fort a guerir, se m'aid Dieux. (R. LXXXVI, p. 338).

In any case, if at best love can be folly, at worst it can be the cause of pain and sickness. In fact, Charles tells us not infrequently, it can be sickness itself:

Quant je voy en douleur pris
Les amoureux, je m'en ris;
Car je tiens pour grant folie,
L'amoureuse maladie. (B. LXXXIII, p. 121).

Whether for better or for worse, then, love is something one feels and knows through the senses. At its best, it is pleasure; at its worst it is sickness and pain, but either way, Good or Bad, its effects are known above all to the body of the lover.

The cure for love, if one can call it that, is a condition far worse than love itself: old age. In a rondeau addressed to Regard, the fatal harbinger of Love, an aging Charles explains:

Ennemy, je te conjure,
Regard, qui aus gens cours sus:
Viellars aux mentons chanus,
Dont suis, n'avons de toy cure.

-----------------------------

Va querir ton avanture
Sus amans nouveauiz venus;
Nous vieulz, avons obtenus
Saufcondultz de par Nature
Ennemy, je te conjure! (R. CCXXXIV, p.424).
Thus using the language of battle to attack one enemy, Charles brings to light another one, unnamed and more treacherous: Time. For though Nature may grant him a mythical safeconduct from Love's ravages, ultimately the cure is worse than the disease. Again and again he tells us that from the deadliest enemy, Time, there is no escape. The inevitability of old age and death becomes an obsession to him.

In his earlier poetry he reflects on this phenomenon as he sees it in the world about him. In the following ballade, reminiscent in theme to the "Ballade des dames du temps jadis" of Villon, Charles observes that no one escapes death, and that beauty of the flesh is heir to destruction as is all "Plaisance Mondaine":

Ou vieil temps grant renom couroit  
De Creseide, Yseud, Elaine  
Et maintes autres qu'on nommoit  
Parfaïtes en beauté haultaine.  
Mais, au derrain, en son demain  
La Mort les prist piteusement;  
Par quoy puis veoir clerement  
Ce monde n'est que chose vaine.

La mort a voulu et vouldroit,  
Bien le cognois, mettre sa païne  
De destruire, s'elle povoit,  
Liesse et Plaisance Mondaine,  
Quant tant de belles dames maine  
Hors du monde; car vrayement  
Sans elles, a mon jugement,  
Ce monde n'est que chose vaine.

Amours, pour verité certaine,  
Mort vous guarrie fellement  
Se n'y trouverez amendement,  
Ce monde n'est que chose vaine. (B. LX, p. 85).

More often, though, particularly towards the end of his life, the sting of time strikes him more personally, and he tells us his Good Will runs on "Foibles Jambes" (B. CVIII, p. 168); he curses his misspent youth, his physical and mental weaknesses, and the Wisdom that makes him realize his plight:

Rendez compte, Viellesse  
Du temps mal despendu  
Et soctement perdu  
Es mains dame Jeunesse.
Trop vous court sus Foiblesse;  
Qu'es Povair devenu?  
Rendez compte, Viellesse,  
Du temps mal despendu.

Mon bras en l'arc se blesse  
Quant je l'ay estandu  
Par quoy j'ay entendu  
Qu'il couvient que jeu cesse:  
Rendez compte Viellesse  
Du temps mal despendu.

Tout vous est, en destresse,  
Desormais chier vendu;  
Rendez compte Viellesse  
Du temps mal despendu.

Des tresors de Liesse  
Vous sera peu rendu,  
Riens qui vaille ung festu;  
N'avez plus que Sagesse;  
Rendez compte, Viellesse. (R. XCVI, pp. 344-345).

In fact, the closer he comes to really facing death, the more his poetry about it becomes physical. As it approaches, the impact of the destruction of his physical being seems to hit him in every part, and he shudders and tries to shut it out by closing off his senses, as he has done before in other instances. Old age has used him up and he wants repose - the end of sensation - which in a physical sense is death itself:

Asourdy de Non Chaloir,  
Aveugle de Desplaisance  
Pris de goute de Grevance  
Ne scay a quoi puis valoir.

Voulez vous mon fait savoir?  
Je suis pres que mis en trance,  
Asourdy de Non Chaloir,  
Aveugle de Desplaisance.

Se le Medecin Espoir,  
Qui est le meilleur de France,  
N'y met briefment pourveance,  
Viellesse estainct mon povair,  
Asourdy de Non Chaloir. (R. CCCCCXXI, p. 536).
Again on the same note of helplessness, in the rondeau following the preceding one, Charles imagines a sort of frenzied danse macabre in which Viellesse and her companions Soussy and Desplaisance dance to the tune of Maleur in the house of Douleur:

Dedans la maison de Doleur,
   Ou estoit trespiteuse dance,
Soussy, Viellesse et Desplaisance
Je vis dancer comme par cuer.

Le tabourin nommé Maleur
Ne jouoit point par ordonnance
Dedans la maison de Doleur
Ou estoit trespiteuse dance.

Puis chantoient chançons de Pleur,
Sans musique, ne accordance;
D'ennuy, comme ravy en trance
M'andormy, pour le meilleur,
Dedans la maison de Doleur. (R. CCCXXXII, pp. 536-537).

What is remarkable about this nightmare is that the horror of this scene does not seem to bother the poet any more than the cacophonous songs without music, but rather it bores him. And the trance he falls into here is a trance of boredom, as the one in the preceding poem was one of NonChaloir, not one of terror or anguish. Even more significant perhaps, the whole effect of this nightmare is to cause sleep - to close out sensation - rather than to awaken the poet to the pain of his experience. This, then, is Charles's reaction to death: he accepts it, often welcomes it, as the end to physical existence. If life is experienced by the body and the senses, which in youth hold false promises, then old age comes to cancel youth and brings death to numb the body and muffle the senses - in a "trance", or in a great sleep. Thus, on a certain plane, existence is summed up by the body which is born and feels, then grows old, weakens, dies, and ceases to feel.

If there were no more than that to it, perhaps Charles's struggle with existence would have been less acute and more easily resolved.
However, though death may appear to be a solution, it is not that
easy to succumb to it. In Charles's case the temptation to live is
stronger than the wish to die; but the struggle is often violent
and always painful, as life and pain are the more difficult choice
against death, tranquillity, and sleep.

The struggle to live in the ultimate sense is not a physical
struggle, because physical existence is already fixed by the boundary
of inevitable death. It is rather a spiritual struggle, in which
one must combat boredom, unhappiness, melancholy, grief, and despair.
Charles's poetry becomes peopled with such foreboding figures as Ennuy,
Desespoir, Soussy, Nonchaloir, and Merencolie, which we shall examine
more closely at the end of our study. For the moment, however, it
is important to understand how Charles regards these enemies and what
effect his encounters with them had on him and in turn on his poetry.

Several critics, notably Varvaro and Poirion, have emphasized
the special quality, the "subtil mystère" of the allegory in Charles's
poetry, that somehow has to do with his ability to blend the real with
the imagined. Poirion states that, "L'allégorie, chez Charles d'Orléans
a moins pour principe l'idée, dont la personnification est en somme la
divinisation poétique, que l'image, dont le pouvoir sur les consciences
ne cesse de grandir à la fin du Moyen Age...." We would agree with
this evaluation, but would extend the meaning of "image" to include
other and all physical sensation beyond the visual.

If one studies the imagery that Charles uses in describing spiritual
afflictions, such as the above-mentioned Soussy or Merencolie, one finds
that in their most vivid manifestations they are seen as sickness and
felt as pain, those experiences which are perhaps most vivid to Charles.
Pasquali has likened the meaning of ennui in Charles's poetry to a
Baudelarian spleen:

Ma il suo più grande nemico è l'Ennui,
un Ennui che, nato della disperazione
solitudine, non ha più abbandonato il
poeta, mutandosi a poco a poco in un
sentimento molto simile allo Spleen
baudelairiano.
We would accept this premise too, but would expand this concept of Spleen beyond that of an expression of ennui to say that Spleen to Charles d'Orléans is the ultimate, physical manifestation of moral or spiritual disease. Its torments can rack the whole body:

Yeulx rougis, plains de piteux pleurs
Fourcelle d'espoir reffroidie
Teste enrumée de douleurs
Et troublee de frenesie,
Corps perdu sans plaisance lie,
Cueur du tout pausmé en rigueurs,
Voy souvent avoir a plusieurs
Par le vent de Merencolie.

Migraine de plaignans ardeurs,
Transe de sommeil mipartie,
Fievre frissonnans de maleurs,
Chault ardent fort en reverie,
Soif que Confort ne reassasie,
Dueil baigné en froides sueurs,
Begayant et changeant couleurs
Par le vent de Merencolie.

Goute tourmentant en langueurs
Colique de forcenerie
Gravelle de soings assailleurs
Rage de desirant folie,
Amuys enflans d’ydropisie,
Maulx ethiques, aussi ailleurs,
Assourdissent les escouteurs,
Par le vent de Mercencolie.

Guerir ne se peut maladie
Par phisique, ne cireurgie,
Astronomians n'enchanteneurs,
Des maulx que seuffrent povres cuerus
Par le vent de Merencolie. (B. CXI, pp. 172-173).

Here is a man ravaged and totally wrecked, physically, by a spiritual disease for which, as he tells us, there is no earthly cure. The "wind of melancholy" blows only inside, but it brings total havoc, inside and out. This certainly is Spleen, in both its physical and mental manifestations. It is a malady of the whole sense - the heart, the mind, and the body.
As any sick man does, the suffering Charles cries out frequently for relief. In the following rondeau he is afflicted by mal (one is again tempted to think of Baudelaire) which is never really clarified but leaves the impression of being a vague malaise of the spirit that once more plunges the whole being into a state of malady:

Remede comment
Pourray je querir
Du mal qu'a souffrir
J'ay trop longuement?

Qu'en dit loyaument
Conseil: sans mentir,
Remede comment
Pourray je querir?

Pour abregement,
Guerir, ou morir!
Plus ne puis fournir,
Se Sens ne m'aprent
Remede comment

Here again the poet asks with urgency for a remedy, an end to his suffering. As he sees it, there are two choices: either to heal or to die, both of which are experiences and terms of the physical world. Which of the two comes about doesn't seem to matter much; what does matter though is that he views the whole spiritual problem in the context of the physical world: illness, disease, suffering, healing and death.

He makes this even more explicit perhaps when he describes not just general suffering caused by mal or merencolie, but the tortures of his soul in a private purgatory of Soussy within his own body:

Une povere ame tourmente
Ou Purgatoire de Soussy
Est en mon corps: qu'il soit ainsy
Il y pert en muyt et journee.

Piteusement est destoree,
Sans point cesser, puis la, puis cy,
Un povere ame tourmente.

Mon cueur en a paise portee
Tant qu'il en est presque transy;
Mais esperance j'ay aussy
Qu'au derenier sera sauvee
Un povre ame tourmente.

(R. CCCLII, pp. 493-494).

This poem is significant because he has not only clearly defined the interrelationship of their partnership in suffering, but he has defined, too, their ultimate separation. And, with clearly Christian overtones, he has opted for life. Though his struggle is certainly not always a traditionally religious one, the essence of it is outlined here. Life in a spiritual sense can be defined and understood really only in terms we understand, and we understand best what we know with our own faculties. Good and bad translate as pleasure or pain. Existence on the physical level is certain in the sense that we can define it in our own terms and it has a definite end: death. That is easy enough. But life is more than just existence, and it is uncertain. Does it end so peaceably in death? And if so, why are we so loath to give it up? Hence the struggle.

In this poem, the soul, clearly the repository of the spirit if life, suffers the physical torments of existence in the confines of the body. But here the heart, the poet himself, does not succumb to the temptation of easy peace. He is only "presque transy", and he offers the hope that the soul will be saved. This being in the passive voice makes it rather unclear just how the soul will be saved - except from what can be surmised by the religious context. What is perhaps more important, though, is that having repeatedly defined the abstract and spiritual worlds in terms of physical existence, having brought them together and mingled them in his own unique way, Charles acknowledges that they are intimately related, yet ultimately remain distinct. This curious coming together and parting, this blending and separating of the two aspects of life - the abstract and the concrete, the spiritual and the physical - is perhaps the very essence of his "subtil mystère".

The desire not to give in to Souussy, Merencolie, and their cohorts, to sleep or to die in a spiritual sense and the will to struggle and to live - all these concepts certainly merit more thorough examination. For the moment, however, suffice it to say that Charles's basic attitudes
toward life were firmly grounded with himself and shaped to dimensions he could grasp. From the focal point of his own body he reaches out to know the world with his senses, and to define it in terms that fit his own experience.

Even when confronted with a preconceived and well-defined idea, such as Love, he reconstructs it to conform to his own method of understanding. Such abstractions as Good and Bad become translated into the concrete examples of Pleasure and Pain.

Experience tells him, too, that just as surely as old age brings destruction to everything, so death comes and puts an end to sensation and agony. But before death comes, and perhaps as an alternative, however temporary, there is life. And with it comes its whole parade of torments and tormentors. Care, Strife, Worry, Boredom, all these, if they are to be understood and more importantly, dealt with, must be treated not as abstractions, but as the real, devastating menaces they are. Their damage can be total as they attack not only the mental parts of man, but the sensual, the visceral as well.

Their attacks produce a certain kind of sickness, a spleen, that encompasses the whole being, the spiritual and mental, the physical and metaphysical. In short, when the poet encounters these, the psychological and physical world crash together and blend on impact. Here perhaps we find Charles d'Orléans' greatest poetic talent, his ability to bring together in a totality of experience and expression the abstract and the concrete worlds.
NOTES


2 All references to the text will be cited from: Charles d'Orléans Poésies, ed. Pierre Champion (Paris, 1966), 2 vols. Abbreviations as follows: B. for Ballade, R. for Rondeau, Ch. for Chanson.

3 Huizinga, p. 261


7 Poirion, p. 468.

CHAPTER III

NATURE AND SELF: CHARLES D'ORLEANS AGAINST CONVENTION

Most critics would agree that one of the most fundamental themes in poetry of any sort is the relation of man to his world, or in a more individual sense, of the poet to nature. This is certainly the case concerning poetry of the Middle Ages. However, when it comes to defining the place and meaning of nature in medieval poetry, particularly in the late medieval period, general agreement gives way to confusion except on two points: first, that there is a stylized and often artificial portrayal of nature, and second, that the rhythms of the seasons are somehow connected with the rites and festivals of society.

In order to properly appreciate the originality of Charles d'Orléans and his concept of nature, we feel it is necessary to read his poetry against the backdrop of the courtly tradition he supposedly epitomized.\(^1\) Though, as noted above, there is hardly a consensus among critics as to the significance of nature in this tradition, it would seem valuable and even necessary to sort out the various views on the subject before going on to examine Charles' poetry. Therefore, let us first examine briefly the rapport of nature with the aristocratic society which produced what we shall call "ritualistic" poetry, and then look at the contemporary use of a specific form of "nature" poetry, the pastourelle.

To attempt to fathom the origins of ritualistic poetry is perhaps the same as trying to fathom the origins of poetry itself. Some critics, notably A. Jeanroy and C. Paris,\(^2\) would have us believe that lyric poetry itself grew out of the dances and songs that accompanied primitive celebrations of spring. Whether or not this speculation is true, it is indisputable that the rhythm of nature, the changing of the landscape, and the repetition of life and death in the cycle of the seasons had a profound and mystical effect upon medieval man. By the late Middle Ages the mystery of nature was so accepted and formalized that it was deeply woven into the elaborate fabric of courtly life, and solemnly celebrated in the ceremonial fêtes.
In a very real sense the fête is a mingling of dance and poetry, music and games, love and religion. We see the festival events and actions crystallized into fixed forms which attained the dignity of ritual. The very social calendar itself, the formal marking and recognition of time, is based upon the turning of the seasons. As Poirion remarks, "ainsi le calendrier poétique reflète d'abord le culte de la nature et des saisons. Le lyrisme établit un certain rapport entre le rythme naturel et la vie de cour." And binding together this relationship between the social and the natural is a strong sense of the supernatural, formalized not only by the adaptation of pagan rituals into the mainstream of aristocratic society, but also emphasized by the blending of the important Christian holidays into the same naturalistic pattern. Certainly the Church calendar as well as the social calendar owed its structure to the basic instinct of men to associate themselves with nature. Again to quote Mr. Poirion: "le temps des hommes sembla rejoindre alors un temps métaphysique et religieux: les jours marqués de rouge sur le calendir obéissent à un rythme surnaturel."

Thus we see the culmination of these inclinations toward the natural and the supernatural formalized and "civilized" in the ceremonies of the courtly fêtes, and the record of these solemn (and not so solemn) events reflected in the chronicle of courtly poetry. Not surprisingly, the calendar year was begun and celebrated with a New Year's festival which in turn was properly celebrated by circumstantial poetry. This holiday along with St. Valentine's and May Day were the most commonly celebrated festivals by the end of the 14th Century. (Much less frequently one finds poems inspired by Christmas, Lent, and the Feast of the Virgin). What is significant, then, about these chosen occasions is that each of them represents the theme of renewal - the renewal of the yearly cycle of love, and of life itself.

The New Year's celebration, according to Poirion, was an occasion of much oath taking and vow-making - perhaps not unlike our current custom of making "resolutions." The underlying reason for this seems to be the need for a collective introspection, a re-evaluation and a
strengthening of society as a whole. As Poirion says, "...le nouvel
an est l'occasion de renouveler les liens de la société. Le lyrisme en
cette circonstance réaffirme avec gravité l'hommage féodal ou amoureux,
celui-ci se calquant sur celui-là". Thus we see the New Year as a
time for the renewal and reaffirmation of the society, and the role
of the poet to uphold and to strengthen its bonds.

The occasion of St. Valentine's, instead of being a collective,
social event, was in a sense a personal event, but one conducted in
a social and formalized manner. It was a time of sanctioned adultery:
the choosing of a lover and the making of vows of love and fidelity.
What is striking about this celebration is that it fit so harmoniously
into the cycle of nature. The duration of the vows, and of the love,
was expected to be one year - the full circle of one St. Valentine's
to the next. And instead of making promises of a lifetime or in-
deed of eternity, as the opposing trend of the cult of the Virgin
would impose, the lover chooses an object of affection and desire for
a season, rather like an animal or bird chooses a mate. And with the
new season - the new St. Valentine's - comes a new love, or the op-
ton of renewing an old one. The acceptableness of this sort of
adultery is shown in the following Valentine poet by René d'Anjou:

Apres une seule exceptée,
Je vous serviray ceste année,
Ma douce Valentine gentee;
Puisque'Amours veult que m'i consente
Et telle est ma destinee.

De moy, pour aultre abandonnée,
Ne serez; mais si fort aimée
Qu'en devrez bien estre contente
Apres une seule exceptée.

Or me soit par vous abandonnée,
S'ill vous plaist, a ceste journée,
Va (votre) voulenté douce et plaisante;
Car à la faire me presente
Plus que pour dame qui soit née,
Apres une seule exceptée.
The duty of the lover then is to regulate his amorous instincts into a formalized, acceptable pattern, while the role of society is to recognize and channel man's adulterous drives into some practice compatible with civilized existence. All of these objectives were neatly achieved by the celebration of St. Valentine's. All that remained was for the poet to in a sense give the blessing for the event by celebrating and sanctifying its meaning with his love lyrics.

By far the most important fête, however, at least as indicated by the volume of poetry it inspired, was that of May Day. The desire to celebrate the rebirth of life and to participate in its beauty and hope is perhaps as old as man himself. Certainly the manifestation of this feeling translated into rites of spring is among the most primitive of man's social events. Not surprisingly then, as May Day was a significant occasion for the aristocracy of the late Middle Ages, there is much poetry that describes, lauds, and embellishes this special day.

In fact it would seem that the poets of the day were almost required to treat this important subject, and virtually without exception they did. In such poems as the "Dit de la Rose" and the "Dit du Vergier", Guillaume de Machaut describes the wonders of spring, the singing of the nightingales, and the secret garden where bliss awaits in the form of the Rose. And Alain Chartier, whose descriptions of nature according to Huizinga are comparable to the greatest painters of the times, describes in his masterpiece La Belle Dame sans mercy, the music, banqueting, and dancing of the May in a lovely garden. Christine de Pisan, a closer contemporary of Charles d'Orléans, also describes these celebrations in such poems as the "Dit de la Rose" and the "Debat de deux amans" in which a joyful company gathers to dance the May dance and to make merry in the parks of the Duke of Orléans. And the sheer joy and beauty of the love season is lengthily and carefully documented in the beginning of her "Dit de Poissy":


Maintes diverses
Herbes et flours qui a la terre aheres
Encor furent, verdes rouges et perses,
Jaunes, indes, qui malles ne diverses
Ne furent mie.

La ot la flour de n'oubliez mie,
Souviengne vous de moy qui n'est blesmie
Mais vermeille, dont amant et amie
Font chappellez
Et qu'il mettent souvent en anellez

Pour devises et autres jouellez
Qu'ilz se donnent jolis et nouvellez
Par druerie.

But perhaps the most vivid and accurate accounting of the rites of May and all they entailed is to be found in the delightful "Lay amoureux" of Eustache Deschamps:

Pour ce voit on princes et Roys
Le premier jour de ce douz mois,
Chevaliers, dames, pucellettes,
Escuriers, clers, lays et bourgeois
pour leurs amours gens et adrois,

Et aler cueillir les floorettes
Perses, bleues et vermeilletes
Et faire chapeaux par les boys
Et les donner à ces fillettes
Qui ont ces dures namelettes
Et qui chantent a haulte voix
Ces amoureuses chançonnettes
Gracieuses, plaisans, doucettes
S'onques m'amas, lors amer dois,

Car d'elles les douz chans ois
Et du douz roussignol la vois,
Il couvient qu'a amer te mettes.
S'aveugles n'yes, d'autre part vois
Jousters, festes, dances, convois,
Compagnies plaisans et nettes
Amis, amans et amourettes
Par tourbes, cy. iii., ci trois,
Corner, dancier les jollettes
Et cueillier may et violettes;

La doit chacuns estre courtis
Et d'amours requérir les debtes;
La soient aliences faittes
Des amours dont l'en est destrois.
From these brief descriptions and citations of various ritualistic poems, a few distinct conclusions can be drawn. First of all, far from attempting to isolate man from nature and certain natural instincts, the noble society of this period recognized and formalized certain inclinations and behavior. Underlying all of these occasions is a regard for the necessity of renewal, whether it be a renewal of the bonds of society in the form of vows and oath-taking, a renewal of love by choosing, wooing, and winning a lover, or a renewal of the sense of life itself by actively participating in the very rebirth of nature.

By "civilizing" and fixing in a sense these basic human drives, the society required that its members react by responding in a certain, fixed manner — always a joyous and positive manner, because these occasions marked the strengthening of society itself. On New Year's one was to re-dedicate himself to his lord, his oaths, or to his purpose in general; on St. Valentine's he was to find love and pleasure and swear himself to it; on May Day he was to celebrate all the bounties of life by drinking in the splendors of spring, and to renew himself in all endeavors, feudal, amorous, or whatever. We assume in any case that these are the appropriate and expected responses to the fêtes, for these are the sentiments most commonly expressed in the poetry written to exhale and enrich these occasions.

Turning to a specific form of nature poetry, the pastourelle, one finds the "expected response" even more pronounced. Once again, however, critical opinion seems to be generally contradictory and confusing concerning the origin, significance, and even the definition of this poetic form. It would seem necessary, therefore, to clarify certain aspects before proceeding with our discussion.

The pastourelle, like the May poetry, is intimately connected with the theme of renewal and spring. In fact, because the pastourelle remains an ill-defined poetic form, many critics loosely label May or spring poetry "pastourelle". This is reasonable from a certain point of view: the setting of this spring poetry is often in a meadow or pasture, and the scene often includes a shepherdess or
shepherd and their flocks. As Gaston Paris argues:

Le début de toutes nos chansons, sans exception, se rapporte au printemps et aux circonstances qui l'accompagent, soit que le printemps, ou avril, ou le temps de Pâques, ou mai y soit expressément mentionné, soit que le poète se représente cueillant la fleur ce que l'on faisait comme une sorte de rite au mois de mai, ou, ce qui revient au même comme indication, dans un pré, un bois, un verger, un jardin...

The connection, therefore between spring, the newly blooming flowers, the fields, and the shepherds with their sheep is an obvious one, but one that seems to be most properly described by the adjective pastoral, and not necessarily by the poetic genre pastourelle. The distinction between the two terms is perhaps drawn by Huizinga's observation about medieval poetic themes in general: "The themes are few in number and have hardly changed any since antiquity; we may call them the heroic and the bucolic themes." 14

If one accepts this general division of medieval poetry, it greatly simplifies our task of placing and defining the role of the pastourelle. In general the May or spring poetry is simply bucolic: it describes and exhals the season of spring and often includes pastoral scenes and characters in its panorama. The pastourelle, on the other hand, at its apex might be more properly called heroic in the sense that it concerns the strengthening and defining of the roles of the hero or gallant to those socially beneath him; more specifically, it is about the relation of the knight, who is the literary embodiment of the hero, to the pastourelle, or shepherdess.

The arguments concerning the origins of the pastourelle are endless and inconclusive. 15 Whether or not this genre began as a popular poetic form or an aristocratic one makes little difference to this study. What is important is that the pastourelle became, by the late medieval period, a fixed and definite part of the courtly repertoire, though it had reached its greatest flowering in the 12th and 13th Centuries.
According to the excellent and concise study by W.P. Jones, the pastourelle differs from most other poetic forms in that it is the subject matter rather than the length, meter, or versification that defines it: "Unlike most genres of a lyric nature, the pastourelle never had any definite form. Its only bid for a place as a type lies in its content, for it is a story, a theme, an incident, related in a more or less stereotyped fashion...." 16

It is the theme, then, that determines this genre, and the theme according to Jones is generally as follows: the gallant or knight rides into the forest or fields and comes upon a beautiful young shepherdess near the wood; he is instantly enamoured of her and proposes his love, which is then debated at length between the two of them and their respective companions as well; at the end of the debate the knight declares, rather succinctly, his success or failure. 17 These are the basic and essential elements; the variations and differences in point of view and tone are many. Huizinga points out, for example, that deviations from the central theme may be manifest in the "Descriptions of shepherds eating, dancing, and courting, matter for a naive naturalism with a spice of burlesque." 18 But according to Jones the great art of the true pastourelle lies in the débat, in the elements and psychology or pursuit and refusal. And the greater the debate, the more aristocratic the poem because the greater the role of the femme d'esprit. 19

But it is not the débat alone that distinguishes this aristocratic form in its declining stages; by the 15th Century it serves a distinct social and psychological function: it is a means of escape and evasion. As Jones himself points out, the genre is in a state of decay and "ennui and a desire for novelty lead to strange things - to sophistication for example, or to eroticism, to a desire to mingle with periwigged shepherds and beribboned shepherdesses in some rustic Arcady." 20

Perhaps the pastourelle from the late medieval period that best illustrates both these functions is Christine de Pisan's "Le dit de la Pastoure." The poem opens with elaborate descriptions of the care and
feeding of sheep, mingled with the flirtations and general gaiety of the shepherds and shepherdesses. The cast is familiar, being made up from such characters as Parrot, Robin, Regnault, Marote, and Lorete. They sing and dance their caroles in the splendor of sunshine and flowers, then feast on bread and cheese and fruit. Slightly apart from the rest is Marote who is happened upon by a small band of knights. The most handsome and distinguished of the lot, known only as Monseigneur, approaches her and invites her to come sit on the grass with him and to sing to him. After his declaration of love, which is quite discreet and proper, she sings many ballades by way of reply, and manages to avoid directly answering him. She talks at great length of the pastoral life, and then quietly slips away. Afterwards she has a conversation with her sister, Lorete, who plays the typical practical confidante and warns her that this knight isn't likely to honor his word, and besides, there are lots of nice shepherd boys around anyway. But Marote denies that she loves him, confessing only that she is attracted to him:

v. 914       Adonc respons: "Certes, suer,
               Amer ne vueil a nul fuer
               Par amours, ce n'est pas fable
               Qui qu'il soit, mais s'agreeble
               M'est un seul plus qu'aultres mille
               Pour son corps gent et abille,

           21

Marote then soon joins her lover again in the forest, but this time her suitor's demeanor has changed:

v. 1120       Cellui ou le plus pensoye
               Lors n'estoit vestu de soye,
               Mais d'une grant hoppellande
               Longue et ot une guerland,

           22

The pattern of debate and wondering on the part of the shepherdess, coupled with Marote's secret meetings with the knight, continues. There is much anguish on Marote's part, for she does not know if she is doing the right thing. The whole community becomes involved in her problem, and young and old alike lament that she will be lost to them:
v. 1824 Bien a du tout esloignée
Nostre assemblee si belle,
Plus ne sera pastourelle
Ains par un autre acointer
Renoncera au mestier.

23

After many more encounters with Monseigneur and many oaths of fidelity on his part, she finally concedes she will be his, to which he replies that suddenly he must attend to urgent business elsewhere. As she tells us:

v. 2189 Que cil me disoit: "M'Amour,
Partir me fault sans demour
Pour aler en tel voyage."

24

Despite assurances that he will return very soon, a year later she is still waiting and wondering, brokenhearted.

Beneath the structure of fantasy in such a tale, there are important things to be noted. First of all, if at one time the pastourelle was heroic in the sense that it exalted the clear superiority of the knight over everyone else, this is no longer the case. The Knight is no longer imposing and dominant, but rather a reflection of the decaying state of chivalry. He is equalled, if not out-witted by a spirited female who, though supposedly a naive peasant, is clearly more sensitive and introspective than he. Whether he wins or loses in this particular case is not important - but in the pastourelle it never has been. The important thing is that he display his masterfulness, his knightliness, by his wit or daring or physical prowess. Here, instead of being admired because he is a knight, Marote declares she is attracted to him by his looks, and she is especially enchanted when he replaces his splendid clothes with a shepherd's garb. The single most important thing for her to decide, and that which involves the whole community, is whether or not she should give up her way of life for his. In short, the pastoral life seems to have more to offer than the courtly.

The knight and all he stands for seem far from being at the functioning head of an accepted social hierarchy. While retaining
certain trappings of splendor and gallantry, these in themselves are not particularly praiseworthy. A felicitous band of imaginary and idealized shepherds (albeit as far from true peasants as the heroes of l'Astrée two hundred years later) seem to offer a more enticing, enervating, and enriching lifestyle than the poor knight, who clearly doesn't have much to offer anybody.

The pastourelle, then, turns from being a poetic vehicle re-enforcing chivalric values and ideals to one which provides an escape from their impotence. The immense attraction of an escape to the simple life, or rather an over-drawn, romanticized version of it, serves as the basis for the great popularity of this genre during the late Middle Ages.

In its most extreme form, this passion for escape is no doubt best exemplified by King René d'Anjou who even in his real and private life lived out a medieval fantasy worthy of the revery of an Alain Fournier. In many respects this poet-prince had much in common with his friend and fellow poet, Charles d'Orléans. His titles and his royal blood were of the same high order, and his political feats were if anything more disappointing. His concern with the arts, and particularly poetry, was just as intense, and he too turned his court in Provence into a haven for artists and poets. However, despite their common backgrounds and dilemmas, René's approach to his disillusionments was entirely different than was Charles'. This difference is reflected in his writings.

René dedicated himself to the excesses of his decaying chivalric world, to the exaggerated pleasures of the Burgundian court, to the elaborate rituals of etiquette, to the minute details of armor and tournament war-fare. He wrote treatises on these matters. And he wrote pastourelles. What is even more remarkable is that he attempted to play out his fantasies to a degree probably unthinkable even to one such as Marie Antoinette. His biographer explains:
Une tradition populaire, conservée en Provence, nous apprend que le roi René quittait, chaque printemps, son palais d'Aix et venait, avec Jeanne de Laval, la bien-aimée pastourelle du tournoi de Tarascon, habiter une riante bastade sur les bords de la Durance. Là, cheminant seuls, à pied et sans gardes, au milieu des prairies, les illustres époux se mêlaient aux bons habitants des campagnes voisines, présidaient à leurs jeux, quelquefois même abandonnaient leur sceptre royal pour la houlette légère des bergers....

In what is considered by some to be his best poetic endeavor, René extols the rustic existence in the pastourelle Regnault et Jehanneton. Here, all pretensions of "heroism" of any sort on the part of the gallant have completely disappeared. He is not in fact a knight, but Regnault, a traditional shepherd, though in a very real sense he represents René himself, as Jehanneton does his wife. All remnants of class superiority are gone, and the shepherds represent a fantastical version of the King and Queen themselves.

The nature of the débat has changed too, for here there is no question of one outwitting the other, but rather of one out-doing the other with elaborate phrases and oaths. These shepherds are so thoroughly aristocratic that amidst all their own festivities and merrymaking they rather distantly notice the peasants nearby:

On ne pourroit aler ung tout seul pas  
Que l’en n’oist voirement, a grant tas,  
Tout alentour  
Chanter oiseaux et faire grant rimour;  
Et d’autre part, les paisans en labour  
Si chantant hault, voire sans nul sejour,  
Resjoysant.

Thus, in the mind of the poet at least, the fusion is complete: the shepherds are lords and ladies acting out their fantasies in a lovely spring setting, serenaded by turtledoves and enchanted by the blooming flowers and trees.
But the most startling and revealing aspect of this pastourelle is what it exposes about the tastes of the aristocracy. René's inner drives to escape reality led him to pursue exoticism with an unquenchable passion, and to develop an insatiable taste for luxury of all sorts. His flight from boredom is recorded here as Regnault describes an incredibly varied and exotic landscape. He looks about him and declares he sees:

Les mouchettes, le gresillon  
La sigalle et le papillon,  
Et l'avette qu'a l'esguillon,  
La sigalle et le moucheron,  
La grosse mouche et le taon,  
L'escharbot et autres qu'ont nom  
Estrange, que nommer ne scay mie;

And later after vows of love, kisses, and tears, the two lovers celebrate with a little picnic they just happen to have with them. Once again René's professed admiration of the "simple life" is belied by his extravagant tastes:

Premier ung petit touillon  
Des aillex, aussi ung jambon,  
Et ung petit moul fromageron,  
Des eschallets,  
Du sel et aussi des noisettes,  
Et foison sauvages pommetes,  
Des responses et des herbetes,  
Des champignons,  
Du vin aigre et des oignons,  
Et de terre deux goderons,  
Et l'escuelle

And it goes on. It would seem fair to say that the pastourelle came to serve some, certainly René d'Anjou, as a justified way to express desire for extravagance, excess, and escape. The fantasies and dream-worlds portrayed were really not any more unrealistic than the extravagance and exotic practices at certain of the courts, patterned more or less after the elaborate and ritualistic style of Burgundy.
We find, then, art forms following the pattern of society itself; left without the substance of chivalry there is almost an orgy of its form. The craze to preserve this dying way of life burst forth in a last thrust of energy that produced a final, yellowing flower of decadence. The pastourelle of this period attests to this and is part of it.

The hero of yore is gone; in his palce is a poor aimless knight who is, in a sense, all dressed up with no place to go. He stumbles upon the merry shepherds, falls in love with one of their maids, and is generally swept up by their joyous and fulfilling life. In certain cases finding the shepherds is merely an excuse to give in to his own exotic dreams and taste for luxury. Above all it is an escape from boredom and no doubt from reality. This is true not only for the fictitious knight, of course, but especially for the courtly audiences who were enchanted by these tales. If ritualistic poetry attempted to strengthen the bonds of the noble to his society, the pastourelle served as a means of escape from that society which was in fact already defunct.

Perhaps this sort of revery and fantasy was needed in large doses to help shut out the more unpleasant realities of war, poverty, pestilence, and famine. In any case the popularity of this courtly genre is underscored by the fact that all the major poets of this period composed pastourelles. The list of illustrious names includes Adam de la Halle, Oton de Grandson, Jeane Froissart, Eustache Dechamps, René d'Anjou, Christine de Pisan, and doubtless many lesser poets. Conspicuous only for its absence is the name of Charles d'Orléans.

x x x x x x x x x

Whatever be the reasons for Charles d'Orléans's flagrant omission of the pastourelle from his poetic works must remain a matter of speculation. However, from our study of other contemporary pastourelles a few likely possibilities come to mind. First of all, if the pastourelle was by the 15th Century sort of hymn to a decaying way of life, Charles saw no more reason to celebrate this phenomenon than he did to participate in its excesses. As we know from the life he led at Blois, his
personal tastes were simple and frugal. The idea of his changing his black costume for a "houppelande et guerlande" is at least as unthinkable as imagining his changing it for the extravagant courtly dress of the "gorgias". If anything, Charles lamented this state of decay and could not enjoy its resultant debauchery.

But there is another probable reason, too, that would help explain Charles's apparent aversion to the pastourelle. As we have remarked, the pastourelle provided a poetic and whimsical escape for a bored aristocracy. But it was a social escape in the sense that the whole noble community could participate, either by hearing a dramatic presentation of such a fanciful dream, or in the more extreme cases, by actually participating in such a play-world. We have noted earlier that Charles d'Orléans also had a penchant for escape, but there is an essential difference between his attitude and the one represented by the pastourelle. To him escape and dreams were basically personal and private, not social, events. His inclination in this regard was to turn inward and away from the world of others, not to join in their communal frenzy. So in a very real sense one could say this solitary man was asocial, or at the very least "uncourtly".

This tendency is emphasized by Charles's use of ritual poetry. If he was unable to participate in the collective rites which furthered the decadence of society, he was equally incapable of responding to those efforts designed to renew and to bolster it. One has only to study his ritual poetry to discover his consistent inability to respond to social occasions in the socially expected manner.

We have previously established that the three most important fêtes at this time were New Year's, St. Valentine's, and May Day. Charles wrote poems commemorating all of these days - especially the latter two. The striking feature of all this poetry is that Charles is so regularly at odds with the emotions and responses dictated by the particular event and expected by society. His reactions were perhaps the equivalent of feeling unmerry at Christmas, unthankful at Thanksgiving, and unpatriotic on the Fourth of July.

The occasion that seems to have inspired him least was the one that was perhaps the most society-oriented, New Year's Day. On a
rare occasion when he did feel inspired to mark the event with a poem, his reactions were not oriented toward a sense of community nor toward a feeling of vigorous renewal:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ad ce premier jour de l'année} \\
\text{De cœur, de corps et quanque j'ay} \\
\text{Priveement estreneray} \\
\text{Ce qui me gist en ma pensee.} \\
\text{C'est chose que tendray celle} \\
\text{Et que point ne descouvreray} \\
\text{Ad ce premier jour de l'année.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Avant que soit toute passee} \\
\text{L'année je l'aproucheray,} \\
\text{Et puis a loisir conteray} \\
\text{L'ennuy qu'ay quant m'est eslongnee,} \\
\text{Ad ce premier jour de l'année.} \quad (R. LIX, p. 323).
\end{align*}
\]

Here, characteristically, Charles turns inward to himself and his own thoughts rather than toward society as a whole. The words *privee-ment* and *cellee* set the mood that is introspective and solitary. What is even more significant, though, is the idea of *ennuy* projected into the future of this New Year as an expectation. Far from being dis-illusioned by any "this year things will be different" sort of feelings, Charles gloomily, but realistically, foretells his own future. His self-knowledge and his understanding of the collapse of things about him prevent him from indulging in any empty promises of a brighter tomorrow. He is past all that.

If New Year's rarely moved him to any sort of poetic comment, St. Valentine's at least inspired him more frequently to write. However, his feelings are invariably those of sadness and ennui rather than any joy or excitement at the prospect of a new love. In a ballade written probably as early as 1436 he writes of St. Valentine's:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Le beau souleil, le jour saint Valentin} \\
\text{Qui apportoit sa chandelle alumee,} \\
\text{N'a pas long temps, entra un bien matin} \\
\text{Priveement en ma chambre fermee.} \\
\text{Celle clarte', qu'il avoit apportee,} \\
\text{Si m'esveilla du somme de Soussy} \\
\text{Ou j'avoye toute la nuit dormy} \\
\text{Sur le dur lit d'Ennuieuse Pensee.}
\end{align*}
\]
Ce jour aussi, pour partir leur butin
Des biens d'Amours, faisoient assemble
Tous les oyseaulx, qui parlans leur latin,
Crioyent fort, demandans la livree
Que Nature leur avoir ordonnee:
C'estoit d'un per, comme chascun choisy.
Si me me peu rendormir, pour leur cry,
Sur le dur lit d'Ennuieuse Pensee.

Lors en moillant de larmes mon coessin
Je regrettay ma dure destinee,
Disant: "Oyseaulx, je vous voy en chemin
De tout plaisir et joye desiree;
Chascun de vous a per qui lui agree,
Et point n'en ay, car Mort, qui m'a trahy,

A prins mon per, dont en dueil je languy
Sur le dur lit d'Ennuieuse Pensee."

Saint Valentin choisissent ceste annee
Ceulx et celles de l'amoureux party;
Seul me tendray, de Confort desgarny,
Sur le dur lit d'Ennuieuse Pensee. (B. LXVI, pp. 91-92).

Here we find St. Valentine who comes with warmth and light to evoke the feelings that one ought to have upon awaking from troubled thoughts. But these thoughts and feelings of joy, re-emphasized by the happy chattering of the birds, only painfully sharpen the contrast between what ought to be and what is. The poet is at odds with nature and with the society of the "amoureux party". In this case it is Death that has taken his love and has separated him from happiness. Even more cruelly he is now deprived of the one reprise from his sad situation - sleep. All the happy clatter prevents him from going back to sleep, and thus stripped of any comfort, we envision the unhappy poet in a sort of limbo lying on his hard bed, unable to improve his lot by waking up or by sleeping. In sharp contrast to the gay party of lovers, he is alone and will remain so. For him it is a miserable day, because he is incapable of joining in its spirit or of joining in with others. He is set apart by his own limitations, and his loneliness is all the more lonely set against everyone else's joy.
On the same note of solitariness, in the year 1454, Charles writes another Valentine poem. But this time he chooses a mistress, because, he says, he can't escape the custom.

A ce jour de saint Valentin
Qu'il me couvient choisir ung per,
Et que je n'y puis eschapper,
Pensee prens pour mon butin.

Elle m'a resveille matin,
En venant a mon huis frapper,
A ce jour de saint Valentin
Qu'il me couvient choisir ung per.

Ensemble nous arons butin
S'elle veult trop mon cœur happen;
Mais, s'Espoir je puisse atrapper,
Je parlass d'autre latin,
A ce jour de saint Valentin. (R. CCXLIX, p. 433).

He feels obliged to take a partner, so he chooses his own Thought, because he cannot escape her. He doesn't expect the liaison to be tranquil, indeed especially when Pensee and Cœur confront one another. But this arrangement seems to be the best he can do to adjust himself to the spirit of the day. His loneliness and isolation is made all the more poignant by the closing statement that if he could grab onto Hope somehow, he would gladly "sing another tune". But one has the feeling he won't because somehow he is destined to sit on the outside and look in. And when watching society pass him by because too painful, or too distasteful, he simply draws the blinds on it and looks in on himself.

In another mood the previous year, Charles wrote about St. Valentine's in another light:

A ce jour de Saint Valentin,
Que prandre je, per ou non per?
D'Amours ne quiers rien demander,
Pieça j'eus ma part du butin.

Veu que plus resveille matin
Ne veuill avoir, mais reposer,
A ce jour de Saint Valentin.

Jennes gens voisen au butin
Leurs sens ou folie esprouver;
Vieulx suis pour a l'escolle aller:
J'entans assés bien mon latin,
A ce jour de Saint Valentin. (R. LXI, pp. 324-325).

Here once again the poet makes an appeal to sleep as an alternative
to an unpleasant situation, but in general his stance is different than
in the two preceding Valentines. Pleading old age, he simply rejects
the holiday altogether. He has, he says, had all that ("Pieça j'eus
ma part du butin") and he will leave this folly to the young. In this
instance we find Charles using the occasion of a fête to write a poem
not indeed supporting the basic spirit behind it, but rather rejecting
the whole idea of it. This sort of attitude could certainly not have
been considered very social, and certainly not very courtly.

By far the greatest number of Charles's ritual poems were conse-
crated to May Day and the festival events it entailed. Here we find
a greater range of feelings expressed about the occasion, but once
again all of them negative and pessimistic. Over a period of many
years, a span nearly as long as Charles's poetic career itself, we
find scattered acknowledgements of May Day and the feelings of joy
it was supposed to evoke. But Charles's emotions on these days could
at best be described as ambivalent. As early as 1432 he writes the
following lines:

Je ne me sçay en quel point maintenir,
Ce premier jour de May, plein de liesse,
Car d'une part puis dire sans faillir
Que, Dieu mercy, j'ay loyalle maîtresse,
Qui de tous biens a trop plus qu'a largesse.

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

Mais d'autre part, il me couvient souffrir
Tant de douleur et de dure destresse
Par Fortune, qui me vient assaillir
De tous costez, qui de maulx est princesse!

(B. XLII, pp. 62-63).

Here then, even the joys of love which traditionally come to full bloom
in May, and which Charles admits he has in abundance, cannot counter-
balance the unhappiness caused by Fortune and his over-all situation.
So even with good reason to join in a feeling of general levity, the
burdens of prison and despair prove heavy, and the poet can only con-
fess to a feeling of uncertainty: "Je ne me sceay en quel point maintenir".

Years later, long after the termination of his captivity and the re-establishment of his private life, another May (1448?) brings forth even stronger feelings of ambivalence:

Ce mois de May, ne joyeux, ne dolent
   Estre ne puis; auffort, vaille que vaille,
C'est le meilleur que de riens ne me chaille,
Soit bien ou mal, tenir m'en faut content.

Je laisse tout courir a val le vent,
Sans regarder lequel bout devant aille;
Ce moy de May, ne joyeux, ne dolent
Estre ne puis; auffort, vaille que vaille.
(R. CLXXIX, p. 392).

In fact the ambivalence of this rondeau might best be called a testimony of supreme indifference - a version of Charles's own special Nonchalor. What is interesting to note, however, is the phrase, "ne joyeux, ne dolent estre ne puis"; the poet has chosen the verb pouvoir over the verb Estre. It would seem, then, that instead of just describing to us how he is at a given moment, Charles is indicating that he is incapable of being otherwise. He cannot, by his own admission, be moved by this event one way or the other.

In fact, on a different May Day in a different year, Nonchalor is the very term he chooses to describe his feelings:

Quant j'ay ouy le tabourin
   Sonner pour s'en aler au may,
En mon lit fait n'en ay effray
Ne levé mon chef du coissin.

   En disant: il est trop matin,
Ung peu je me rendormiray,
Quant j'ay ouy le tabourin.

   Jennes gens partent leur butin:
De Nonchalor m'acointeray,
A lui je m'abutineray;
Trouvé l'ay plus prochain voisin,
Quant j'ay ouy le tabourin. (R. XXXVIII, pp. 311-312).

There are many obvious parallels to be drawn between this poem and other ritual poetry, particularly the Valentine "Le beau souleil, le jour saint Valentin" (B. LXVI, pp. 91-92). Once again the sounds of festivity, here the tambourine and music rather than the birds, awaken a disgruntled Charles. He would prefer to sleep, but he is plagued by
troubled thoughts. He would prefer to shut out the whole day – the whole world – and return to the blissful indifference of slumber, but he cannot.

If indifference and uncertainty characterize some of the poems written to mark the beginning of May, others are decidedly more partisan, and more pessimistic. In another rondeau written presumably on the same day as the one above (May 1, 1452) Charles has a dialogue with his tattered and shabbily attired heart:

Le premier jour du mois de may,
De tannée et de vert perdu,
Las! J'ay trouve mon cœur vestu,
Dieu scet en quel piteux array?

Tantost demande je lui ay
Dont estoit cest abit venu,
Le premier jour du mois du may.

Il m'a respondu: "Bien le saiy,
Mais par moy ne sera congneu;
Desplaisance m'en a pourveu,
Sa livree je portereay,
Le premier jour de mois de may. (R. XXXIX. p. 312).

Here it is not just a question of ambiguity, but of defeat. If his heart stands for the poet himself, then his ragged appearance on this day calling for finery is a symbol of the inner condition of the man. He is tattered and in "pitiful array". And he attributes his situation to Desplaisance, certainly among the least expected of figures to dominate one's feelings on this happy occasion.

On another May Day Charles goes so far as to declare that he is in mourning. It is not merely a case of Desplaisance coming around and spoiling the fun, but rather of a graver matter: Plaisance is actually dead. Once again the costume, so important on this holiday of gaiety, marks the poet an outcast and symbolizes his revolt:

Pour ce que Plaisance est morte,
Ce May, suis vestu de noir,
C'est grant pitie de voir
Mon cœur qui s'en desconforte.

Je m'abille de la sorte
Que doy, pour faire devoir;
Pour ce que Plaisance est morte,
Ce May, suis vestu de noir. (R. CLXXII, pp. 392-393).
However Charles's strongest indictment of May Day and his strongest feelings against it were written probably sometime after 1456, when he wrote of an extraordinary vision:

Ce premier jour du mois de May,
Quant de mon lit hors me levay,
Environ vers la matinee,
Dedans mon jardin de Pensee
Avecques mon cueur, seul entray.

Dieu scet s'entrepris fu d'esmay,
Car en pleurant tout regarday
Destruit d'ennuyeuse gelee,
Ce premier jour du mois de May,
Quant de mon lit hors me levay,
Environ vers la matinee.

En gast, fleurs et arbres trouvay.
Lors au jardinier demanday
Se Desplaisance maleuree,
Par tempeste, vent ou nuee,
Avoit fait tel piteux array
Ce premier jour du mois de May?

(R. CCLVII, pp. 437-438).

Several things are remarkable about this poem. To begin with, the poet as usual wakes in the morning from a sleep, but here he is not awakened by any outside interference. He wakes and arises of his volition and then enters into his tortured fantasy. He calls the place the Garden of Thought, and one must keep in mind all that a garden symbolized at the time. In the tradition of the Roman de la Rose, a garden was a sort of special paradise one entered to seek love and enchantment, especially in the month of May. All the ruder then is the shock of finding a May garden "destruit d'ennuyeuse gelee". Nothing could be more unseasonable or more untimely than a blast of ice in May - and nothing more symbolic of the poet's own feelings. And so he continues to describe the ravaged garden, its trees and flowers uprooted and all destroyed. Desplaisance has once again done her job, but this time with all the vengeance and fury of a tempest.

In short, Charles has run the gamut, all the way from ambivalence to displeasure, to mourning, to absolute rejection of this day of ceremonial joy. In this, his last ritual poem and his final poetic comment about these fêtes, he has not just rejected the occasion, but
his final vision is in an utter perversion of it. The Garden of May, traditionally a haven of beauty for the pursuit of love and joy has become an unseasonable place of ice and wind, fit only for a weeping poet.

What, then, if anything can be determined from Charles's singular approach to ritualistic poetry? Certainly not, as we shall discover, that Charles felt uncomfortable with nature. The discordance sprang, rather, from a basic disagreement with society. He did not, and as he himself said in so many ways, could not seem to participate in these various occasions of socially-sponsored joy and communal renewal. But, whereas this attitude may certainly be branded asocial, it did not inhibit the poet in any way from reacting to nature on a personal and lyrical (if not courtly) level.

Many critics have given comment, more or less in passing, to Charles's undeniable ability to recreate the beauty and power of nature. Typical of these is the following remark of Constant Beauvais, taken from his 19th Century doctoral dissertation: "Quand il chante le retour du printemps et les charmes de la nature, il semble emprunter à Horace son imagination et sa grace". Others see a superficiality about Charles's nature poetry that is taken to be one further example of his courtly, artificial tastes. Poiron remarks that:

Toutefois les poèmes purement descriptifs restent rares, et si nous les regardons de près, nous regardons que le regard poétique habilie la nature déroulant le paysage comme une tapisserie...Le registre des Métaphores qui interprètent ainsi le paysage nous ramène au décor artificiel élaboré par les hommes. 30

And Alberto Varvaro, in comparing the poetry which he considers précieux of Christine de Pisan and Charles, labels both their nature descriptions as "peripheral" in the manner of a picture frame, highly elegant and studied. 31
The only critic who has given any credence to the seriousness of Charles's nature poetry is Sergio Cigado, who goes so far as to divide his works into three chronological and thematic parts: courtly, naturalistic, and realistic. This second phase, comprised mainly of the three famous springtime roundeaux (XXX, XXXI, XXXIV) he calls a "precious naturalism":

...la corrente metaforica, nata
da una variazione intellettualistica
e allessandrina della tradizione cortese,
e chiaramente identificabile nei suoi
caratteri di arte raffinata, viene
progressivamente a sovrapporsi all'altra
corrente, nata anche essa dal
tronco della poesia tradizionale e cortese, ma certo
più spontanea e
semplice, del naturalismo: e nasce
cosi la seconda maniera di Charles,
il naturalismo prezioso.

The importance of this phase, he contends, is the evolution of the metaphor which is now no longer based on courtly ritual, but rather on nature itself. In other words, he feels that at this point Charles has dropped the interference of traditional figures and responds poetically in a more direct manner to nature itself.

While the observations of Mr. Cigado are extremely interesting, we believe that still more needs to be said about the general scope of Charles's nature poetry. To limit the study of it to this very restricted period would seem to eliminate much of the breadth and depth of the poet's feeling for nature.

We have said much about Charles's negative reaction to the prescribed formulas of ritualistic poetry. This negativism is counter-balanced, however, by a positive, lyrical, and personal response on those occasions when the poet feels free to meet nature on his own terms. A singular example of this outpouring of feeling is contained in the joyous Latin poem "Canticum Amoris", published for the first time in 1955.
In this work Charles expresses an uninhibited religious awe at the spectacle of Creation, and he exhorts his soul to love the Creator even more than His perishable works. In doing so he writes of the splendors of the universe, of Grace and Redemption, and of the Celestial Beatitudes. But particularly he writes of the return of spring and of the ecstasy of its splendid renewal:

Ecce ligni genera multa procreantur,
Fronde, flore, fructibus mire decorantur.
Agri multa semen fruge fecundantur;
Variis graminibus cespites orantur,
Floribus multimodis prata purpurantur.

Charles is not, as Mr. Ouy points out, the first medieval poet to celebrate spring, but the sincerity and depth of his feeling is touching:

Chaque printemps qui revient, après
la torpeur d'un long et brumeux hiver
en terre étrangère, ne ramene-t-il
pas dans son chatoiement verdoyant,
l'espoir de la délivrance prochaine?
Aussi est-il du fond du coeur qu'il
remercie Dieu d'avoir instauré ces
rythmes de la nature, qui bercent son
attente.

In fact, not surprisingly, spring and summer are the seasons in which Charles feels the greatest hope and joy. Yet he has his strongest personal affinity with sad winter. In his seasonal poetry it is not uncommon to find Charles braving the tortments of winter, much as in other poems he braves the tortments of Desplaisir and Merencolie:

Dieu les en puisse guerdonner
Tous ceux qui ainsi tourmenter
Font de vent, de neige et de pluye,
Et nous et nostre compaignye,
Dont peu nous en devons louer. (R. CCCXXXI, p. 541).

Charles makes much, too, of the repetition of the seasons and the fact that spring and summer do return to chase away the miseries of winter. In fact he sometimes calls upon spring to come and rescue him in the same way he calls upon Confort or Lyses. In the follow-
ing poem he even substitutes the figure Ennuyeuse Merencolye for winter, and evokes spring to come chase her away:

Allez vous musser maintenant,  
Ennuyeuse Merencolye,  
Regardez la saison jolye  
Qui par tout vous va reboutant.

Elle se rit en vous mocquant  
De tous bon lieux estes bannye;  
Allez vous musser maintenant,  
Ennuyeuse Merencolye!  
(R. CCLIX, p. 439).

In another comparison of the seasons, he describes winter and summer with unsurpassed delicacy, preferring of course the warmth and beauty of the summer season:

Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain  
Esté est plaisant et gentil  
En tesmoing de May et d'Avril  
Qui l'accompaignent soir et main.

Esté revest champs, bois et fleurs,  
De sa livree de verdure  
Et de maintes autres couleurs,  
Par l'ordonnance de Nature.

Mais vous, Yver, trop estes palin  
De nege, vent, pluye et grezil;  
On vous deust banir en essil.  
Sans point flater, je parle plain,  
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain!  
(R. CCCXXXIII, pp. 482-483).

But in this poem, and in many others, Charles belies himself. Though he outwardly declares (and no doubt inwardly feels) a strong preference for summer over winter, it is winter he personifies and winter he addresses as "vous". Thus, though he would like to be at one with spring and summer, he seems unconsciously to identify with winter, which in his mind is interchangeable with Ennuyeuse Merencolie.

This is brought out once again in an earlier ballade:

Bien moustrez, printemps gracieux,  
De quel mestier savez servir,  
Car yver fait cueurs ennuieus  
Et vous les faictes resjouir;  
Si tost, comme il vous voit venir,  
Lui et sa meschant retenue  
Sont contrains et prestz de fuir,  
A vostre joyeuse venue.
Yver fait champs et arbres vieulx
Leurs barbes de neige blanchir,
Et est se froit, ort et plieux
Qu'emprés le feu couvient croupir.

(B. LXXIX, pp. 129-130).

Although in this case it is the gracious Spring the poet addresses directly, nonetheless it is winter who once again emerges as the more human figure. An in this case winter is depicted as an old man - we can graphically see his creaking bare limbs and his snowwhitened beard. The parallel between Charles' obsession with his own old age and his identification with "Old Man Winter" is apparent. Distasteful though he might find it, he seems once again to cast himself on the side of winter and all it represents rather than with spring and its bright happiness.

Even in the famous rondeau "Le temps a laisse son manteau", one does not escape the imprint of winter and its heaviness:

Le temps a laisse son manteau
   De vent, de froidure et de pluye,
Et s'est vestu de broderie
   De soleil luyant, cler et beau.

Il n'y a beste, ne oyseau
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie:
Le temps a laisse son manteau.

Riviere, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent, en livree jolie
Gouttes d'argent d'orfaverie
Chascun s'abille de nouveau:
Le temps a laisse son manteau. (R. XXXI, pp. 307-308).

The charm of this poem lies in great part in the intimate mood the poet creates between man and nature. All of nature is bursting with joy at the return of spring, and the birds and beasts sing out as does man. In addition, nature herself is personified, from "le Temps" in its changing costumes, to shiny drops of water who, too, are dressing for the occasion.

Although this does seem at first to be the perfect poetic triumph of spring, upon a closer reading one realizes that spring exists only
in terms of winter. For although Weather has shed its coat of wind and cold and rain for a brighter costume, the refrain, which is the backbone of the poem, belongs to winter. "Le temps a laissé son manteau" weaves throughout the poem to underscore the fact that it is the mantle of winter which is somehow the basic condition of nature, as melancholy is the basic condition of man, and a burst of spring, like a burst of joy, is an extraordinary but welcome relief.

Charles does identify, then, with nature and the seasons. But he does it in his own way, and not in a way prescribed by society. The personal and distinguishing imprint of his seasonal poems lies not in the fact that he celebrates spring in the traditional and artificial manner, but rather in that beneath the surface runs the cold, dark current of winter which is like Charles himself. Furthermore, his feeling for nature and its varied faces is entirely his own, and is not dictated by poetic convention. We have only to fall in with the easy, natural rhythm of Rondeau CCIV to be convinced that Charles is truly capable of living "selon les saisons":

Que nous en faisons
   De telles manières,
   Et douces, et fières,
Selon les saisons!

   En champs ou maisons,
   Par bois et rivières,
   Que nous en faisons
De telles manières!

   Ung temps nous faisons,
Tenans assez chéries
Nos joyeuses chéries
Puis nous rapaïsons
Que nous en faisons! (R. CCIV, p. 407)

In another sense Charles may be said to reduce the concept of the seasons to their more elemental levels of heat and cold, or fire and water. In certain instances either water or fire in a given and safe quantity can represent something beneficial and desirable. For example, he may refer to his deceased beloved as "la vraye fontaine"
(B. LX, p. 85) or he may seek the sunshine of his love's beauty:

Quant le doux souleil gracieux
De vostre beaute entera

(B. XLV, p. 67).

But in larger measures, either extreme seems to pose a threat. For example, either the "heat" or "cold" of love can prove fatal, and he declares he will keep the windows of his mind closed to either possibility:

Par les fenestres de mes yeulx
Le chault d'Amours souloit passer;
Mais maintenant que deviens vieulx.
Pour la chambre de mon penser
En est' freschement garder
Fermees les feray tenir,
Lessant le chault du jour aler
Avant que je les face ouvrir.

Aussi en yver le plieieux,
Qui vens et broillars fait lever,
L'air d'Amour epidemieux
Souvent par my se vient bouter:

(B. XCVI, p. 151).

If either extreme is undesirable, however, Charles recognizes man's basic need to find a moderate zone between the two; the difficulty lies in striking a balance. Too much cold produces a need for heat; too much heat brings about an unquenchable thirst. The repetition of these incompatible conditions seems to be the common lot of man, at least as indicated by the rhythm and spirit of the following rondeau:

En yver, du feu, du feu
Et en esté, boire, boire,
C'est de quoy on fait memoire,
Quant on vient ou aucun lieu.

Ce n'est ne bourde, ne jeu,
Qui mon conseil vouldra croire.
En yver, du feu, du feu
Et en esté, boire, boire.

Chaulx morceaux faiz de bon quen
Fault en froit temps, voire, voire;
En chault, froide pomme ou poire
C'est l'ordonnance de Dieu
En yver, du feu, du feu. (R. CCCXLVIII, p. 491).
Here the effective use of repetition evokes the feeling of an incantation, as though man is trapped in this contradictory cycle of dissatisfaction and can but cry out of his dilemma. His chants will bring about no magical change, however, for Charles firmly states that it is not in his power; it is the ordonnance of God.

If Charles sees man caught in a dilemma of extremes, he seems to have a personal fear of one more than the other. On the one hand he tells us of the miseries of cold, damp, rainy Melancholy. But, as we have seen, despite this loathing, it is with winter and cold that he seems most at home. On the other hand, however, despite his expressed longing for warmth, heat, and summer, it is fire that stirs in him the greater fear.

We have already commented on some of love's physiological manifestations, such as illness, fever, and a burning sensation. It would seem that the stronger the passion the more likely the possibility of getting "burned". Perhaps it is Charles's seemingly innate fear of fire that does not permit him to give in readily to passion, for he shuns it far more than he does the icy company of Melancholy and Solitude. Even in the incipient phase of a flirtation, he expresses the fear of being singed:

Quant je fus prins ou pavillon
   De ma dame, tresgente et belle,
   Je me brulé a la chandelle,
   Ainsi que fait le papillon.

   Je rougiz comme vermillon,
   Aussi flambant que une estincelle,
   Quant je fuz prins ou pavillon. (R. XXIII, p. 303).

But when passion really does get out of control, it can only be described as a raging fire, such as the poet describes rather desperately below. Here his heart actually burns and cries out pitifully for help:

J'ay essayé par lermes a largesse
De l'estandre, mais il n'en vault que pis;
C'est feu gregeois, ce croy je, qu'arme cesse
D'ardre, s'il n'est estaint par bon avis.
Au feu, au feu, courrez, tous mes amis!
S'aucun de vous, comme lasche, remaint,
Sans y aler, je le hé pour tousjours;
Avanciez vous, nul de vous ne soit faint,
Je l'oy crier piteusement secours.

(B. XXVI, p. 45).

In a more expanded sense, of course, passion is more than a condition of love; it is a whole way of approaching life, and one which Charles ultimately eschews. The same force that drives him to close out pain and sensation and to seek refuge in sleep, forces him too to disavow passion. If given the choice between ennui and passion, at the risk of burning, he seeks the safety of the former rather than the danger of the latter. He clearly makes this unhappy choice in the following rondeau:

M'apelez vous cela jeu
    D'estre toujours en ennuy?
Certes, je ne voy nulluy
Qui n'en ait plus trop que peu.

Nul ne desnove ce neu,
S'il n'a de Fortune apuy:
M'apelez vous cela jeu
D'estre toujours en ennuy?

On s'art qui est pres du feu;
Et pour ce, je suis celuy

Qui a mon povoir le fuy,
Quant je n'y congnois mon preuy.
M'apelez vous cela jeu? (R. CXCIX, p. 404).

Whatever may be Charles's fears regarding the basic elements of nature such as heat and cold, and whatever may be the psychological motives underlying them, must ultimately remain in the realm of conjecture. In another respect, though, we may perhaps speak with more assurance. It seems quite evident that Charles not only attempted to seek nature on his own terms, but that he tried to identify with it by humanizing it. We have seen this repeatedly in his attempts to personify the seasons.

This technique of "humanizing" extends beyond the poetry of seasons, however. By the use of innumerable metaphors and similes we find
Charles attempting to reduce nature to the size of man's comprehension and to make it like himself. We have seen the sun's sweet rays of beauty which often come after the clouds of sadness are chased away:

Se Dieu plaist, briefment la nuee
De ma tristesse passera,
Belle tresloyaument amee,
Et le beau temps se mustera: (B. XLV, p. 67).

Or again:

Quoyque la nue de Tristesse
Par un long temps ait fait son cours,
Aprés le beau temps de Lyesse
Vendra qui donnera secours (B. XIV, p. 32)

These expressions, attributing human feelings to different aspects of nature tend to reduce it to man's own dimensions. Taken out at a time, a cloud, a ray of sun, or even tiny drops of water such as the "gouttes d'argent d'orfaverie; chacun s'abille de nouveau" (R. XXXI, p. 307) can instill in us a sense of compassion, sympathy, or joy. On these terms nature and man seem to be one.

On the other hand, man can not only find nature much like himself, but he can also find himself to be much like parts of nature. Often Charles compares man to birds, singing their sorrows or chattering their "joueulx latin". Or again, crouching by the fire in cold winter he says: "on ne peut hors des huis yssir, comme un oisel qui est en mue" (B. LXXXIX, p. 130). And so one finds a natural empathy between helpless man and helpless bird.

All of these examples, though, are fleeting ones, poetic touches that momentarily bring man and nature together on common terms. On a rare occasion when Charles dedicates an entire poem to this theme, it is powerful and moving. In the following ballade Charles describes his whole life in terms of a plant, a biological entity which is capable of flowering, ripening, withering, and molding:
Je fu en fleur ou temps passé d'enfance
            Et puis après devins fruit en jeunesse;
Lors m'abaty de l'arbre de Plaisance,
Vert et non meur, Folie, ma maîtresse.
Et pour cela, Raison qui tout redresse
A son plaisir, sans tort ou mesprison,
M'a a bon droit, par sa tresgrant sagesse,
Mis pour meuir ou feurre de prison.

        En ce j'ay fait longue continuance,
Sans estre mis a l'essor de Largesse;
J'en suy contant et tiens que sans doubtance,
C'est pour le mieulx, combien que par peresse
Deviens fletry et tire vers vieillesse.
Assez estait est en moy le tison
De soit désir, puis qu'ay esté en presse
Mis pour meuir ou feurre de prison.

        Dieu nous doint paix, car c'est ma desirance!
Adonc seray en l'eaue de Liesse
Tost refreschi, et au souleil de France
Bien nettie du moisy de Tristesse;
J'attens Bon Temps, endurant en humblesse.
Car j'ay espoir que Dieu ma guerison
Ordonnera; pour ce, m'a sa hautesse
Mis pour meuir ou feurre de prison.

        Fruit sui d'yver, qui a meins de tendresse
Que fruit d'esté; si sui en garnison,
Pour amolir ma trop verde duresse,
Mis pour meuir ou feurre de prison! (B. LXXX, pp. 130-131).

Here Charles depicts the bitterness of his long imprisonment. He was, he says, picked in the flower of his youth and transplanted to ripen on the unfertile straw of a prison. And so he sees himself as a living plant, a part of nature withering on the vine in the unnatural habitat of a man-made dungeon. Deprived of his native sun and refreshing waters, he can only hope for God to rescue him soon. In the end he makes the remarkable admission which underscores our earlier observations that he is a "fruit of winter", and therefore is not tender like a summer's fruit. Even so he is afraid that his premature or "green hardness" is a result of his unnatural circumstances.

This poem is probably the apex of Charles's view of himself as a living, growing part of nature. As such he is in revolt against man and
his society which perverts the growth of a natural being by stifling it in an unwholesome prison. As a struggling, living thing - a plant - Charles here sees himself as a piece of nature slapped, against his will, into man's hostile environment.

However, in this case, as in all the others, Charles seems able to identify with nature only by breaking it down to comprehensible, human size. He can understand a single cloud, a ray of sunshine, or water, drop by drop. He can even envision himself as a single growing plant - a small part of a larger whole. But the collectivity of any of these smaller parts presents an awesome and in a sense overwhelming environment. The poet may on an individual basis be comparable to a single tree straining to bear sweet fruit, but a whole collection of trees is engulfing and bewildering. Thus we find a whole series of "forest" poetry which at once seems to represent a place of exile and a place of refuge.

Both of these aspects of the forest are present in an early ballade in which Cueur has been banished from Ly esse to become a hermite in the hermitage of Thought:

Place n'a ou puist demourer,
Fors ou boys de Merencolie
Il est content de s'i logier
Si lui dis je que c'est folie. (B. XLIII, p 64).

Here the heart (or the poet himself) is at once in exile and yet happy to have found refuge and repose in the woods of Melancholy.

Or again we may find the poet wandering in the forest of Ennuyeuse Tristesse, confessing to the Goddess of Love that he has long been exiled there and is a bewildered man who has lost his way:

En la forest d'Ennuyeuse Tristesse,
    Un jour m'avint qu'a par moy cheminoye,
Sire rencontrary l'Amoureuse Deesse
Qui m'appella, demandant ou j'alo ye.
Je respondy que, par Fortune, estoye
Mis en exil en ce bois, long temps a.
Et qu'a bon droit appeller me povoye
L'homme esgard qui ne scet ou il va. (B. LXIII, pp. 88-89).
Whether exiled to this forest or there by choice, it is evident at least that the poet becomes habituated to this place and frequents it often. In fact the dark imagery of the forest becomes so much a part of the poet, that he finds a forest within himself.

Once again the external and internal worlds blend as Charles envisions the whole adventure of the hunt taking place within the dark recesses of his mind:

Ainsi que chassoye aux sangliers
Mon cceur chassoit aprés Dangiers
En la forest de ma Pensee,
Dont rencontra grant assemblee
Trespasans par divers sentiers.

Lors mon cceur lascha sus levriers,
Les quelz sont nommez Desiriers;
Puis Esperance, l'asseuree,
L'espieu ou poing, sainte l'espee,
Vint pour combatre voulentiers,
Ainsi que chassoye aux sangliers. (R. CXCVII, p. 403).

Here too the poet is lost, but this time he is lost in the forest of his own thought, and borrowing the imagery of the real forest outside, is chasing real fears disguised as allegorical foes.

The real and imaginary forests blend in another extraordinary place which is at once inside and out. It is the forest of the Long Wait, or life itself. In this place made gloomy by old age and disillusionment, nothing matters and nothing happens, save the passage of time:

En la forest de Longue Actente
Par vent de Fortune Dolente,
Tant y voy abatu de bois
Que, sur ma foy, je n'y congois
A present ne voye, ne sente.

Pieça, y pris joyeuse rente,
Jeunesse la payoit contente,
Or n'y ay qui vaille une nois
En la forest de Longue Actente.
Vieillesse dit, qui me tourment:
Pour toz n'y a pesson, ne vente,
Comme tu as eu autresfois;
Passez sont tes jours, ans et mois;
Souffize toy et te content,
En la forest de Longue Actente. (R. CCXXV, p. 419).

Formerly there was at least some order to the forest; it had trees and paths and some familiar figures. The lost, wandering, blind man of Ballade LXIII had at least a path to stumble down. But here the trees have fallen and eradicated the paths; there is nothing familiar or comfortable. This forest is empty of everything save the cold, sorrowful wind and the tormentor, Old Age. There is nothing to do but wait. The starkness of the setting and the underplayed statement of man's condition could well be at home in the 20th Century theater of Samuel Beckett.

The forest, then, with its endless trees and endless dense silence comes to be life itself, where the only traveler is time. The forest with its cold, dark wilderness engulfs Charles in its endless sadness, and there doomed to the solitude of his own soul, he waits.

In conclusion, then, we must ultimately judge Charles to be a poet who contradicted the mainstream of poetic convention with regard to nature. As we have seen, he was incapable of participating in the socially acceptable ritualistic poetry. The best he could do was to respond in exactly the opposite manner to what was generally prescribed. And as for the anti-heroic genre of contemporary decadance and escape, the pastourelle, he alone among his class of poets never attempted it.

On the other hand, far beyond the stylized and artificial formulas for depicting spring, May dancing, and the splendors of nature, we find in Charles a genuine and sincere lyric response to nature. In it he attempts to find and understand something of himself. Whether by seeing parts of nature as somehow human - the clouds, the sun, or the seasons themselves - or by seeing himself like some other part of nature, be it a bird or a plant, Charles conveys the feeling that in some way he and nature are intimately related. Just as he knew himself to be a part of the physical world by reliance upon his senses, so too as
a living, growing being he knew himself to be part of the natural world.

On another level, though, his nature poetry lets us know more about his psychological as well as his physiological state of existence. For we learn that despite his desire for joy and beauty and spring, he is the fruit of winter. He lets us know, perhaps unwittingly, that his greatest affinity is with winter, and that which he fears most is not the despised and gloomy cold, but rather an excess of its opposite, fire. Given a choice, Charles prefers the dispassionate company of Nonchaloir and Ennuy to the dangers of heat and passion.

In the final analysis, the elements of cold and dark and brooding are the ones he calls upon the most, perhaps because they are the most like him. When nature cannot be reckoned within small and meaningful terms, it is huge and awesome and terrifying. The poet sees it as the Forest, an immense and lonely place where, like in the endless darkness of his own mind, a solitary man may be swallowed up. Indeed, ultimately, with all its imagery of darkness and cold, the Forest becomes Life itself - the Long Wait - where, far from the revelry of a self-deluded society, a lonely man faces himself and awaits the silent march of time.
NOTES

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4
Poirion, p. 83.

5
Poirion, p. 117.

6
René d'Anjou, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Quatrebarbes, III, Angers, 1843), p. 204.

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11
Christine de Pisan, II, p. 162.


Huizinga, p. 29


Jones, Ch. 1.

Huizinga, p. 282.

Jones, p. 13

Jones, p. 171.

Christine de Pisan, II, p. 251.

Christine de Pisan, II, p. 251.

Christine de Pisan, II, p. 280.

Christine de Pisan, II, p. 291.
25
René d'Anjou, II, p. 99.

26
René d'Anjou, II, p. 112.

27
René d'Anjou, II, p. 108.

28
René d'Anjou, II, p. 121.

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30
Poirion, p. 489.

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34
Ouy, p. 70.
CHAPTER IV

HUMAN SOCIETY: DEFINITION BY WALLS

From Charles d'Orléans's poetry one extracts the idea that the physical and spiritual existence of man can be defined in terms of nature. The size of significance of an individual can be measured beside exquisite waterdrops in spring or against the overwhelming power of the forest. But these are God's works, not man's. Man, too, has left his physical mark in the world, and to Charles d'Orléans the inevitable sign of man is the erection of walls and barriers.

Over and over again one finds the idea repeated that the evidence of human existence is manifest by walls. Man dwells not in a natural state, but in an artificial structure of his own creation, as if he wishes to shut off the world beyond. Charles sees the existence of human society in the very concrete terms it has itself constructed: by its walls - its castles, dungeons, fortresses, prisons, and lonely rooms. These are structures that at once close in and close out.

Even in terms of man-made objects Charles has an obsession with the things that enclose, lock, and cover up. We find innumerable references to boxes, closets, cases, and chests. Even in his early and most traditional poems, the web of this theme is almost unconsciously spun. For example, in a ballade in which he metaphorically uses the imagery of knighthood and fealty to describe the return of the lover's heart, he concludes:

A deux genouz m'agenoilly,
Merciant Amour humblemant
Qui tira mon cueur, sans delay,
Hors d'un escrin priveement,
Le me baillant courtoisement,
Lye en un noir drap de soye;
En mon sain le mist doucement,
Pour en faire ce que vouldroye.

(Songe en Complainte, p. 112).

As we already know, the heart was considered by the poet to be a physical entity, and one which symbolically could be given and taken.
Here, however, the figure Love is returning the heart of the lover by removing it from a little jewel-case and placing it back in the lover's chest. By implication at least the lover then takes on some of the qualities of the jewel-case, since as a safe-keeping place for the heart the one is as good as the other.

Elsewhere, in declaring to his lover that her heart is in good keeping, the same "closed" and "locked up" imagery recurs:

Belle, s'il vous plaist escouter
   Comment j'ay gardé en chierte
Vostre cuer qu'il vous pleut laisser
Avec moy, par vostre bonte,
Sachés qu'il est enveloppe
En ung cueuvrechief de Plaisance,
Et enclos, pour plus grant seurté,
Ou coffre de ma souvenance.

   Et pour nettement le garder,
   Je l'ay souventesfois lave
En larmes de Piteux Penser;
Et, regrettant vostre beatue,
Aprés ce sans delay porté,
Pour sechier, au feu d'Esperence,
Et puis doucement rebuté
Ou coffre de ma souvenance.

Pour ce, vueilliez vous acquitter
De mon cuer que vous ay donne,
Humblement vous en vueil prier,
En le gardant en loyauté,
Soubz clef de Bonne Voulenté;
Comme j'ay fait, de ma puissance,
Le vostre que tiens enferme
Ou coffre de ma souvenance.

Ma Dame, je vous ay compté
De vostre cuer a la gouvernance,
Comment il est et a esté
Ou coffre de ma souvenance. (B. XXXII, pp. 51-52).

Here the loved one is obviously absent, and the lover wants to keep her presence by physically possessing her heart in his memory. For the actual repository of the heart he chooses a rather curious object -
a *cveuvrechief*, or head covering, similar to a nun's habit. He uses this image perhaps because it was a usual part of the costume for women of the day. But beyond the natural feminine associations of the word, the *cveuvrechief* also had qualities of mystery and secretiveness about which the poet lamented in other circumstances. This apparel tended to hide the face and features of the wearer. The aura of being unseen and unknown adds to the whole idea of locking up and keeping the essence of this woman, which, embodied in the heart is ultimately unknowable. Beside taking this precaution and others, such as locking it up with the key of Bonne Vouenté, the lover further secures this precious object by placing it in the coffer of his memory. Once again the poet likens himself to a box - something with hard and rigid limits and emptiness inside. He longs to fill it with a human heart.

If on the one hand memory can be described as a little box, so too can forgetfulness. In a late rondeau Charles writes:

> Tout plain ung sac de Joyeuse Promess,
> Soubz clef fermé, en ung coffin d'Oublie
> Qui ne poursuit, certes c'est grant folie,
> Tant qu'on en ayt par Raison, a largesse?

(R. CCCXXVIII, p. 540).

Once again we see the idea of something precious, here a joyful promise, being twice enclosed and safety-locked. In this case, however, it is going into the compartment of oblivion rather than of memory. The similarity of the two situations lies in the psychology of the attempt of the poet to alter his destiny in some way by literally grabbing it and locking it up. In the first case he wishes to keep alive a love, hopeless because of separation, by locking it in his memory. In the latter situation, he wishes to lock away a false hope in order to forget it. This plan, too, he tells us is inevitably doomed by the ubiquitous, if unwelcome, Bon Espoir. In either case what is noteworthy is the concept of abstract notions or feelings becoming things to be stashed in things which ultimately fit in other
things - closed and empty parts of the poet himself.

A further proof of Charles's need to substantiate abstractions by making them concrete is the reversal of the above idea: that is, instead of seeing himself as the case or enclosure which may contain a coveted desire-turned-object, a part of the poet, notably his mind, becomes the thing to be contained in something else. Sometimes his thought may be considered precious, as in the following stanza in which he views it as treasure:

Ma plus chier tenue richesse
Ou parfont tresor de Pensee
Est soubz clef, seurement gardee
Par Esperance, ma Déesee, (R. CCCXIV, p. 477).

Oftentimes, however, thought is something to be gotten rid of and packed away, like any other useless or unpleasant thing. In response to a poem by his good friend Fredet, Charles expresses this very idea concerning his "broken thoughts":

Tant que Pasques soient passes,
Sans reveiller le chant qui dort,
Fredet, je suis de votre accort
Que pensees soient cassess;

Et en aumaires entassee
Fermans a clef, tresbiem et fort,
Tant que Pasques soient passees. (R. XVIII, pp. 300-301).

Charles's penchant for conceiving of ideas and feelings or even parts of himself as objects further substantiates the previously discussed idea of his attempt to literally grasp reality. Or at the very least to define it in terms that can be grasped. His fixation for fitting things into things in order to seal them off, however, lets us explore another aspect of him which we view as his "closed mentality", and which extends into other realms of his poetic search for definitions and limits.

When dealing with situations too complex and too large to be comfortably stuffed into a box, we often find Charles expanding the concept of enclosure into something of suitable size for the circumstances. Consequently several poems which view the troubled lover's heart as a
traditional figure in a traditional medieval setting, portray a be-
seiged knight locked in his fortress, defending his position to the
death. By using this very common imagery Charles parades before us
his particular slant on traditional roles and values. Typical of
Charles's point of view are the following stanzas:

Je ne crains Dangier ne les siens
   Car j'ay garny la forteresse
Ou mon cœu retrait ses biens,
   De Reconfort et de Lyesse;

Et ay fait Loyauté maistresse,
Qui la place bien gardera,
Dangier deffy et sa rudesse,
Car le Dieu d'Amours m'aydera.    (B. XXIX, p. 48).

Par le commandement d'Amours
   Et de la plus belle de France,
J'enforcis mon chastel tousjours
Appelle Joyeuse Plaisance
Assis sur roche d'Esperance;
Contre Dangiers et sa puissance
Je le tendray jusqu'a la mort.    (B. L. p. 72).

Borrowing terms and ideas from a noble society Charles repeatedly
conjures the image of the stony, impenetrable castle. This seems to
him to represent in a concrete form the very society of chivalric
values itself. In both these instances he views his heart (himself)
as being under seige and thus in need of his few allies before draw-
ing up the gate and preparing for attack. To him even the castle-
fortress, a complex large enough oftentimes to contain whole cities,
is a lonely, dangerous place.

Moreover, his heart, cast in the role of the defending knight,
ever plays the hero, but if anything it hopefully awaits someone to
come rescue it. We never find Charles sending a knight into the field
of battle emboldened by feats of derring-do. Rather, even in these
traditional images of warfare, Charles's knight is a sorrowful and melan-
choly figure, relying more on fate than on his own prowess; in short,
the figure of a poet, not that of a soldier. He even goes so far as to
beg for someone to come and fend off Dangier before he succumbs:

Rafreschissez le chastel de mon cœur
D'aucuns vivres de Joyeuse Plaisance,
Car faulx Dangier, avec son aliance,
L'a asségié, tout entour, de Doleur.

Se ne voulez le siege sans longueur
Tantost lever ou rompre par puissance,
Rafreschissez le chastel de mon cœur
D'aucuns vivres de Joyeuse Plaisance.

Ne souffrez pas que Dangier soit seigneur,
En conquestant soubz son obeissance
Ce que tenez en vostre gouverance;
Avancez vous et gardez votre honneur,
Rafreschissez le chastel de mon cœur!

(Ch. XIV, p. 212).

If these snatches of verse reveal something about Charles' own peculiar view of chivalric society, they also re-enforce another characteristic view - that of measuring and defining things in concrete terms. We have previously studied Charles' inclination to see things in corporal terms and in relation to his own body; here we see him defining ideas in concrete terms related to fortresses, dwellings, and man-made structures. The obvious underlying theme, of course, is that of the heart seeking a stronghold or shelter. Beyond that, though, his need to see abstract things in concrete terms is clear: Reconfort and Lyesse are seen as "goods"; Joyeuse Plaisance is itself a castle, and Esperance is a rock, sturdy enough to support the whole structure of optimism in the face of Dangier. Furthermore, the second stanza of Ballade L once more brings out Charles' desire to view things in a structural sense, as he describes the three qualities necessary to love's success as towers of this fortress:

En ce chastel y a trois tours,
Dont l'une se nommé: Fiance
D'avoir brieve et loyal secours,
Et la seconde Souvenance,
La tierce Ferme Desirance.
Ainsi le chastet est si fort
Que nul n'y peut faire grevance;
Je le tendray jusqu'a la mort. (B. L, p. 73).

The logical extension of the theme of fear and siege is of
course defeat. Carrying out the military imagery, defeat naturally meant imprisonment, and this not surprisingly is a favorite theme for Charles. Typical of his use of prison imagery in terms of the traditional figures is his Carole II in which he once again exhorts Esperance to rescue his heart:

Ayez de lui souvenance  
Et le venez deslogier  
De la prison de Dangier  
Ou il meurt en desplaisance:  
Avancez vous Esperance. (Carole II, p. 288).

But if the massive and stony hallmarks of power, castles and fortresses, led inevitably both literally and figuratively downward to dungeons, it is understandable that the poet should associate cheer and comfort with less imposing man-made structures. In one poem he takes the unusual point of view of being locked out of the Hostel of Love, and is forced to look longingly in on the joys from which he is banished. His distinct sense of isolation is once more confirmed by his choice of the word barriere, in this case the barrier of Doulx Plaisir, which becomes a concrete symbol of the obstacles that inexorably keep him from participating in the simple pleasures of human society:

Puis qu'Amour veult que banny soye  
De son hostel, sans revenir,  
Je voy bien qu'il n'en fault partir,  
Efface du livre de Joye.

Plus demourer je n'y pourroye,  
Car pas ne doy ce mois servir,  
Puis qu'Amour veult que banny soye  
De son hostel, sans revenir,

De confort ay perdu la voye,  
Et ne me veult on plus ouvrir  
La barriere de Doulx Plaisir,  
Par Desespoir qui me guerroye,  
Puis qu'Amour veult que banny soye.

(Ch. XXIII, pp. 217-218).

In other cases he speaks of manors, presumably smaller more personal dwellings than castles, as if they had a special and pleasant connotation to him. We have previously noted the verses in which
Charles directs his heart to, "Alez vous logier ou manoir de son tresgracieux corps gent", (B. LXVII, p. 93). In another instance, the long allegorical Songe en Complainte, as Confort takes him by the hand, Charles recalls with almost warm nostalgia his childhood manor of Nonchaloir:

VI

Confort, me prenant par la main,
Hors de la porte me convoye;
Car Amour, le roy souverain,
Luy chargea moy moustrer la voye
Pour aler ou je desiroye;
C estoit ver l'ancien manoir
Ou en enfance demouroye,
Que l'en appelle Nonchaloir.

(Songe en Complainte, pp. 114-115).

Here as elsewhere the manor projects a positive image as a place that represents and houses something desirable. Yet as is always the case for Charles, the desirable object is not in hand, but just out of reach either in time or in space. So the manor envelopes, in reality, his unobtainable dreams.

In another mood at another time he chooses to sanctify and enshrine his feelings in a structure befitting their tenderness and purity. It is once again a sad New Year's Day, and as his gift he chooses forget-me-nots to present to his faraway love. Now his heart rather than being imprisoned in a foreboding fortress or dank prison makes an offering from the holy chapel of love's sorrow:

Mon cœr de chapel de souspie
Ce jour de l'an, estreneray;
Et a elle presanteray
Dez fleurs de mem'oublies mie:
J'estraie de bien loing m'amie! (R. XXIV, p. 304).

Of all the structures thus far discussed the chapel seems the most personal, probably because it is the most private. But it is an unusual image for Charles to use, as though it occurred to him only in a particular circumstance. In general he chose to describe
and define his very private feelings by envisioning them within the confines of his private chamber, with the barriers of doors, windows, and walls carefully dividing them from the outside world.

In innumerable poems we find Charles defining himself in the very solid terms of a structured room, as in other instances he has likened himself to other physical things. His own sense organs are to him very like doors and windows to be opened and closed at the proper time. We have seen, of course, his eyes compared to windows ("les fenestres de mes yeulx", B. XLV, p. 67). Windows however are perhaps too ambivalent to project Charles's strong sense of enclosure, for they do after all let in the light and permit one to look out. Doors, on the other hand, are definitely open or shut, and therefore, present a more formidable barrier. Accordingly, one finds Charles likening his eyes, ears, and even his mouth to doors. For example, he warns his heart:

De tes levres les portes closes  
Penses de saigement garder,  
Que dehors n'eschappe Parler  
Qui descuevre le pot aux roses:  
Quant tu es cource d'autres choses,  
Cueur, mieulx te vault en paix laisser. (R. LXIV, p. 326).

Or in a more general admonition he cautions against the easy admission of worldly pleasure:

Par lex portes dez yeulx et dez oreilles,  
Que chacun doit sagement garder,  
Plaisir Mondain va et vient, sans cesser,  
Et raporte de diverses merveilles. (R. LXXV, p. 332).

The question arises, of course, upon what do these doors open and close? The answer is generally that they open to the poet's mind. Occasionally he calls for the doors to be opened in order to allow something refreshing or pleasant to enter:

Mon cuer, ouvrez l'uis de Pensee,  
Et recevrez un doux present  
Que la tresloyaument amee  
Vous envoye nouvellement, (B. XXXIV, p. 53).
Most frequently, however, the door is something to be closed, or to be kept closed, in order to assure the beleagured poet a sanctuary of safety from the perils of the outside world. Typical of this attitude of retreat behind his "door" are the following stanzas:

Fermez luy l'uis au visage,
    Mon c‘eur, a Merancolye,
Gardez qu'elle n'entre mye,
Pour gaster nostre mesnaige. (R. CCXCI, p. 458).

Ne hurtez plus a l'uis de ma Pensee
    Soing et Soussi, se que tant vous travailler,
Car elle dort et ne veult s'esveiller,
Tout la nuyt en paine a despensee. (R. CXXCVIII, p. 462).

Again and again Charles cries out against the pain of living in the world and expresses his desire to retire into himself, or as he repeats here, into sleep. And in this "chamber imagery", the door seems at once the symbol of his privacy and the obstacle which separates him physically and psychologically from life.

We have seen him commonly use the expression "chamber of thought" by which he compares his own mind to the dimensions of a room, such as in the previously examined ballade, "Par les fenestres de mes yeux" (B. XCVI, p. 151). The point of this metaphor seems to be that of permitting the poet to conceive of himself in comprehensible terms. Thus defined his mind is not a fearful and limitless place of darkness, such as the "Forest de Longue Actente", but at least a familiar place of bearable dimensions, however lonely.

The idea of viewing his mind as a room made comfortable by familiar objects is spelled out most clearly in another poem. In this case, Charles even goes so far as to take inventory of the "goods" as he says, and to consider these objects his treasures:

En la chambre de ma pensee,
    Quant j'ay visite mes tresors,
Maintesfoiz la treuve estoffee
Richement de plaisans confors.
A mon c‘eur je conseille lors
Qu'i prenons nostre demouree,
Et que par nous soit bien gardee
Contre tous ennuyeux rappors.
Car Desplaisance maleuree
Essaye souvent ses effors,
Pour la conquester par emblee
Et nous bouter tous deux dehors;
Se Dieu plaist, assez sommes fors
Pour bien tost rompre son armee,
Se d'Espoir banyere est portee
Contre tous ennuyeux rappors.

L'inventoire j'ay regardee
De noz meubles, en biens et corps;
De legier ne sera gastee,
Et si ne ferons a nuiz tors.
Mieux aymerions estre mors,
Mon cuer et moy, que courroce
Fust Raison, sage et redoubtee,
Contre tous ennuyeux rappors.

Demourons tous en bons accors,
Pour parvenir a joyeux pors:
Ou monde, qui a peu duree,
Soustenons Paix, la bien amee,
Contre tous ennuyeux rappors. (B. CXIX, pp. 181-182).

This room, in which the poet figuratively awaits peace and the army of Hope, is apparently filled with objects which reflect and buoy up his optimism. Most of Thought's dwelling places, however, are empty ones, such as inns, where at best a few stray if unwelcome visitors may pass through.

The Inn of Thought is generally not a very pleasant place. The poet usually finds himself there for want of more suitable accomodations and in company he has not chosen, but rather is fated, to keep. In one instance he explains that he puts up there for lack of room at the Inn of Joy:

En faute du logeis de Joye
L'ostellerie de Pensee
M'est par les fourriers ordonnee
Ne sgy combien fault que je y soye. (R. CCCXI, p. 469).

In another rondeau he depicts the vagrant, aimless kind of atmosphere that surrounds this hostel, and does not disguise his impatience with the "undesirables" who force away the potentially acceptable tenants:
L'ostellerie de Pensee,
   Plaine de venans et alans
Soussis, soient petits ou grant,
A chascun est habandonne.

Elle n'est a nul reffusee
Mais preste pour tout les passans,
L'ostellerie de Pensee,
Plaine de venans et alans.

Plaisance chierement amee
S'i loge souvent, mais nuisans
Lui sont anuis, gros et puissans,
Quant ilz la tiennent empeschee,
L'ostellerie de Pensee. (R. CCCXXXI, p. 481).

And yet again he decries the boarders at this private place which
seems now completely filled with enemies who harass him relentlessly
and offer no peace:

    Penser, qui te fait si hardy,
       De mettre en ton hostellerie
La tresdiverse compagnie
D'Anuy, Despiaiser, et Soussy?

    Se congie en as, si le dy,
   Ou se le fais par ta folie,
Penser, qui te fait si hardy?

    Nul ne repose pour leur cry,
   Boute les hors, et je t'en prie,
   Ou il faut qu'on y remedie;
Veulx tu estre a tous ennemy,
Penser, qui te fait si hardy? (R. CCCXXXIX, P. 486).

In all the above, however, the mythical innkeeper of Thought
tends to maintain at least a safe distance between the hagard, weary
poet and his antagonists. And the image of the inn's clients des-
cribed only in the third person tends to depersonalize his anguish.
The loneliness of this place is intensified when the poet dares to put
himself, in the first person, behind its doors. In Ballade CV the
ostellerie de Pensee is deliberately chosen as the place the poet will
rest, and underscores the rest of the poem by virtue of being the
refrain:

    En la forest de Longue Actente,
       Chevauchant par divers sentiers
M'en voys, ceste annee presente,
   Ou voyage de Desiriers.
Devant sont allez mes fourriers
Pour apparailler mon logeis
En la cîte de Destinee;
Et pour mon cœu re et moy ont pris
L'ostellerie de Pensee. (B. CV, p. 165).

The isolation of the poet is once again graphically delineated by the concept of being several times enclosed in places that seemingly fit in a neat concentric pattern: the Inn of Thought, inside the City of Destiny, inside the Forest of the Long Wait. Charles' desire to give form and structure to these abstractions is apparent, as is his attempt to make them fit together in a physical and material way. Even more pronounced, though, is his sense of isolation, and perhaps of security, by envisioning himself inside the many walls and barriers. Certainly this is another example of the mentality that forces the poet to double enclose and safety lock a precious object in order to be certain of it, and to close it off in order to keep it unblemished from the vicissitudes and hazards of exposure.

The walls of Thought project even more strongly the sense of loneliness when they form the starker edifices of solitary confinement such as a hermitage, or ultimately a prison. Again overtones of banishment and despair creep into Charles' words when he sees his heart as a lonely hermit:

Mon cœu re est devenu e hermite
En l'ermitage de Pensee;
Car Fortune, la tresdespite,
Qu'il l'a hay mainte journee
S'est nouvellement allee,
Contre lui, avecques Tristesse,
Et l'ont banny hors de Lyesse; (B. XLIII, p. 64).

But the theme which comes back repeatedly and which signifies the extremes of loneliness and entrapment more than the fortress, the inn, or the hermitage is, of course, the prison. Certain of Charles' many allusions to prison are, understandably, political and personal. Even among these, though, are statements about the nature of life and man's "imprisonment" that transcend a merely individual experience. The poem that perhaps best exemplifies this blending of real experience with observations of a more general nature is Ballade LXXX, discussed in the
previous chapter, in which the refrain is "Mis pour meurir ou feuree de prison."

Leaving aside all direct references, however, prison becomes a symbol to Charles of the ultimate despair and hopelessness. It is the final isolation because its walls are insurmountable. More than a place, it is a state of mind; in fact, it is the mind itself - the place from which he cannot escape. Of all the "things" Charles has termed his mind - a box, a room, an inn, a hermitage - the most awful, and probably the most realistic, is a prison. He describes its rank, oppressive atmosphere:

Jaulier des prisons de Pensee,
Soussy, laissez mon cœu yssir;
Pasme l'ay veu evanoir
En la fosse desconfortee.

Mais que seurté vous soit donnee
De tenir foy et revenir,
Jaulier des prisons de Pensee,
Soussy, laissez mon cœu yssir.

S'il mouroit en prison ferme,
Honneur n'y povez acquerie;
Veuillez au moins tant l'eslargir
Qu'ait sa fiance porchassee,
Jaulier des prisons de Pensee!

(R. CCCLXXXIII, pp. 513-514).

Here we must take note of the fact that the prison is called a fosse, the dank cave literally and figuratively beneath a castle and all the human society it houses. This is a poetic and symbolic concept to Charles, however, for as we know his own days in prison were not paced out in a dungeon, but at worst in the Tower of London, high above the fortress walls overlooking the Thames. So the association between the prison ferme down under with his own mind comes from that very mind and not from his actual imprisonment. The words that tumble forth from it underscore its paradoxical dimension: on the one hand, pasme, evanour, and desconfortee all indicate the stifling, deathly atmosphere; on the other hand, laissez mon cœu yssir and veuillez au moins tant l'eslargir are almost prayers to an unheeding Soussy to let the tormented prisoner escape. The paradox is, of course, that this prison is an
interior one, and one to which the poet flees as often as he wishes to escape from it. Soussy, being the jailer of his own mind, has only to obey the poet's command and he will be released. The problem is that he is as fearful of leaving as he is loath of staying.

In other poems the prison is not necessarily delineated by the walls of the poet's mind, but it is nonetheless the same place. In one such, the finality and sorrow of his destiny is spelled out in a place called the Prison de Dueil, where he warns his roving eyes that they will finish their days if they persist in looking for Bel Acueil, who is of course an ally of false Beauté and Esperance:

En aguet se tient Bel Acueil
Et se par puissance, ou orgueil,
Une foiz en ses mains te prent,
Tu fineras piteusement
Tes jours en la prison de Dueil.
Descouvreur d'ambusche, sot oeil! (R. CCCLXV, P. 502).

Whether or not the prison is named Dueil, its climate is always the same: sorrow, melancholy, despair. Sometimes other elements are added too to further define this lamentable state. Again using the eye-heart formula, Charles introduces scorn and bitterness to this already intolerable place:

Pour mon cueur qui est en prison,
Mes yeulx vont l'amousne querir;
Guerez n'y peuent acquerir,
Tant petitement les prise on.

Reconfort, qui est l'amousnier,
Et Espoir, sont allez dehors;
On ne donna point l'amousne hier,
Refuz estoit portier alors,
Pour mon cuer qui est en prison.

Il est si plain de mesprison,
De rien ne le faut requerir,
N'essaier de le conquerir,
Toujours tient sa vielle aprison,
Pour mon cuer qui est en prison. (R. CCLXIV, p. 442).

The final prison, both chronologically and poetically, is the prison Dedalus – the Labyrinth. In a forlorn rondeau, one of his
last, Charles explains the hopeless maze of his existence:

C'est la prison Dedalus
Que de ma merencollie,
Quant je la cuide fallie,
C'i rentre de plus en plus.

Aucunes foiz, je conclus,
D'i bouter Plaisance lie:
C'est la prison Dedalus!
Que de ma merencollie.

Oncques ne fut Tantalus
En si trespeneuse vie,
Ne, quelque chose qu'on die,
Chartreux, hermite, ou reclus:
C'est la prison Dedalus! (R. CCCCXI, p. 529).

Once again the final statement, in this case about the prison, seems to evolve from the simple limits of his own mind to a projection of universal significance: as the forest grew from his own dark place of seclusion to the endless jungle of the Long Wait, so too the stark, enclosed chamber becomes a tangled and engulfing maze, spun of the hopeless melancholy of his painful life. The neatly arranged doors and walls of the room have fallen away to a myriad of meaningless obstacles, just as the forest became finally a senseless trap, its trees felled and its paths eradicated.

There are other things to be noted too in this final concept of imprisonment. In keeping with all other observations about Charles it is fitting that the very web of his ensnarement should be made from the fibers of melancholy. In addition he compares his torture to that of Tantalus: that is, the temptation of the fruits of Lyesse and Bon Espoir ever haunting him and ever just out of reach. Finally, once again underlining the loneliness of his sentence in this prison, he compares himself to a chartreux, hermite, ou reclus and finds he is more miserable than any of these. In any event he is just as lonely.

In summary we may conclude from these many examples of "walls" that they indicate a certain view of the world peculiar perhaps to
Charles. Wherever there is evidence of human beings in his poetry, they leave their distinct mark in the sorts of walls they build - be they castles, fortresses, manors, or prisons. These walls serve not only to keep them safe inside, but especially to keep the outside out. They are inevitable barriers of hostility rather than friendly shelters to harbor the collective warmth of social intercourse.

The coldness of these dreary places is further felt when the society is but the company of one: the poet himself and the figures of his imagination. When withdrawn inside the lonely walls of his mind, there is perhaps a measure of safety from the dangers of the outside world, but the solitude only magnifies the hollowness within. Inside or out there is no peace.

In short, Charles's sketch of human society by way of its physical monuments is not a very flattering one. It serves, in fact, to point out once again that Charles is not a very social creature. His view of society is delineated by the obstacles its institutions represent, and that unhappy view extends down even to himself. The walls of his mind are no more friendly and no less formidable than those of the fortress.

From another point of view too, we can learn much about Charles by the study of these poems. In previous chapters we have remarked on his need to capture and express his abstract feelings and thoughts in concrete terms. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in these many poems in which he has attempted to give lines and dimensions and limits to his thoughts. Here we have seen his propensity to view his thoughts as "things" - objects to be tightly enclosed and safely locked up. We have seen him view his heart and mind as such objects to be grasped and held lest they should fly him forever. We have seen, too, his attempts to define society by the limits of its own walls, and finally to define himself in the same terms. Perhaps to make its dark unknown wilderness less terrible, Charles builds walls around his own mind, and sees it as an inn, a hermitage, or a private chamber.

All of these elements come together best in the symbol of the prison, which is at once the perverse invention of society and of the poet himself. It is the basest of human constructions, but a place Charles knew well. However, the tortures of his own prison - the one
inside - are worse. His attempt to deal with them by giving dimension and limits to his fearsome thoughts apparently fail. He becomes entrapped in the prison of his own creation, and despite his desire to escape, is incapable - or unwilling - to venture out.

Finally the structured walls collapse and the prison Dedalus is the last and most terrible of them all. The senseless intertwining web of the labyrinth like life itself, offers no meaning and no escape, only despair and solitude. In spite of his attempts to grasp and comprehend in tangible terms, Charles' neatly structured universe falls back into a hopeless and incomprehensible maze of melancholy.
CHAPTER V
THE FLUID VERSUS THE STATIC: THEMES OF MOVEMENT AND CONTINUITY

Having defined and studied what we called Charles's "closed mentality", we shall now pursue an opposite, if concurrent, trend in his poetry. Apparently the attempts to close in and close out continually failed to give the poet the peace he sought. As a result, there is another facet of his work that runs side by side with the "closed" aspect creating a fascinating counterpoint and focusing on the tension of the poet's own internal contradictions.

This opposite mood is one of breaking forth and seeking freedom, as if to escape from the shackles of his self-imposed containment. In this other trend we find Charles trying to break out from those very limits he has drawn about himself in the boxes and dungeons by which he has closed off the world. In opposition to the sterile confinement, he searches for those very things that in a figurative sense will lead him out. He looks for things which continue and flow and move as if by the mystery of their endless flowing they forge a secret passage out of the Labyrinth.

The most straightforward part of this search is the result of Charles's need to find a way out of the oppressive forest of his imagination. In order to escape, he seeks, of course, a path. Consequently we find many references to roads and paths, particularly from within the forest.

In certain poems there is an indication that many paths exist, and thus, even if the impression is one of a network of confusion, the sense of openess is maintained. The poet sees, for example, Desires riding into the Forest of the Long Wait seemingly from every direction:

En la forest de Longue Actente
Chevauchant par divers sentiers
M'en voy, ceste annee presente,
Ou voyage de Desiriers.  (B. CV, p. 165).

However, in addition to the fact that the many paths don't lead to any particular direction— or solution— the extent of their collective openess also indicates a position of vulnerability. As surely as allies can traverse these many paths, so too can enemies and danger:
Ainsi que chassoye aux sangliers,
    Mon cueur chassoit après Dangiers
En la forest de ma Pensee
Dont rencontra grant assemblee
Trespassans par divers sentiers. (R. CXCVII, p. 403).

Not surprisingly, then, the several paths more often than not merge into one, leading cautiously to hope or joy or whatever might lie beyond the confines of the dismal forest. In one case the heart of Charles's friend is depicted as wandering, albeit with difficulty, along the "joyous path":

    En la forest de Longue Actente
    Forvoyé de joyeuse sente
    Par la guide Dure Rigueur
    A esté robé vostre cueur,
        Comme j'entens, dont se lamente. (R. CCXXVIII, p. 421).

And in yet another forest poem, we have already viewed the poor dispirited poet, deaf and blind, stumbling along with a cane trying to find a way out of the forest. Here the path is his only link with hope, and thus he clings to it with all his feeble resources like a drowning man hanging to a life-line:

"Aveugle suy, ne scay ou aler doye;
    De mon baston, affin que ne forvoye,
    Je vois tastaunt mon chemin ça et là;
    C'est grant pitie qu'il couvient que je soye
    L'homme esgaré qui ne scet ou il va!"

    (B. LVIII, p. 89).

Or in another situation, one in which the metaphor is one of a ship sailing the hazards of the high seas, Charles assures his prince the "right path" is never broken, and following it he will be able to traverse in safety:

    Prince, se mauly Fortune atise,
    Sagement s'i fault gouverner:
    Le droit chemin ne brise,
    A bien aler et retourner. (B. CIX, p. 170).

Despite his desire to find this "joyous path", however, Charles ultimately fails to do so. In other terms, there is no such simple solution to his dilemma; he cannot simply walk out, much as he would like to. His acknowledgement of this impossibility is best expressed
in Rondeau CCXXV, discussed in Chapter III:

En la forest de Longue Actente,
   Par vent de Fortune Dolente
   Tant y voy abatu de bois
   Que sur ma foy, je n'y congois
   A present ne voye, ne sente.  (R. CCXXV, p. 419).

In this stanza the paths have been eradicated altogether, and symbolically, so too have the poet's hopes of finding a delineated, comprehensible exit.

The path represents a sense of continuity as it stretches on and on without any expected termination. But Charles's desires for freedom and deliverance manifest themselves perhaps even more strongly by his affinity for those elements that move and flow, seemingly forever free. In particular he tries to catch some of the spirit of the wind and the boundlessness of the waters.

Of course, Charles is not the first or last poet to be fascinated with water. In his poetry his attraction to both the immense seas and the winding, flowing Loire is evident throughout. In his book on "poets of water" Bachelard states that, "L'être voué à l'eau un être en vertige. Il meurt à chaque minute; sans cesse quelque chose de sa substance s'écroule."¹ Certainly there is an element of this in Charles; but, whereas there is death in each instant, just as each drop of water is swallowed and lost in the great body, there is also hope in its eternal fluidity. It is that very fluidity which in this respect differentiates, for example, the sea from the forest: the forest is particularly terrifying because it is static and as immutable as a prison; the sea, on the other hand, is potentially dangerous, but Charles seems to view its power as liberating, not threatening. Thus in a whole series of ship and sailing images, we find the hazards of the high seas - robbers, storms, bad winds - as obstacles inevitably overcome by the ship and the water, harmoniously allied.

When Poirion states that, "...la chevauchée aventureuse et la navigation perilleuse sont là pour évoquer le destin à la fois physique et spirituel du prince",² we take exception. He seems to indicate that the destiny in both cases is the same, while to us it
seems quite the contrary: the forest adventure is always a failure, but "perilous navigation" is, though indeed dangerous, always successful. The reason appears to be in the very nature of the water itself.

In one such poem, the ship Good News will cross a sea named by the poet Fortune, but here unlike most cases involving Fortune, she seems to be benevolent, and the happy cargo is assured safe passage:

En la nef de Bonne Nouvelle
Espoir a chargie Reconfort,
Pour l'amener, de par la belle,
Vers mon cœuir qui l'ayme si fort.
A joye puist venir au port
De Desir, et pour tost passer
La mer de Fortune, trouver
Un plaisant vent venant de France,
Ou est a present ma maistresse,
Qui est ma doule souvenance
Et le tresor de ma liesse. (B. XXVII, p. 47).

Furthermore, the envoy informs us that God, too, is blessing this adventure and despite Danger, this time its successful end is assured:

Dieu vueille celle nef garder
Des robeurs escumeurs de mer,
Qui ont a Danger's aliance;
Car s'ilz povoivent, par rudesse
M'osterioient ma desirance,
Et le tresor de ma liesse. (B. XXVIII, p. 48).

Similar optimism is expressed in a later poem in which the poet, again assured of God's help, packs his merchandise (his thoughts) into his galley and sends it off, confident of a safe crossing and return:

Dieu vueille sauver ma galee
Qu'ay chargee de marchandise
De mainte diverse pensee
En pris de Loyaulte assise;
Destourbee ne soit, ne prise
Des robeurs, escumeurs de mer!
Vent, ne maree ne lui nuyse,
A bien aider et retourner! (B. CIX, p. 169).

And later he calls not upon God, but upon Comfort to be the patron of his ship, and despite tempests and bad winds, he has every confidence that she will arrive in the port of Bonne Destinee:
Au port de Bonne Destinee
Deschargier tost, sans demoree,
La marchandise d'Esperance;
Et m'aportez quelque fiance,
Pour paier ma joye empruntee;
Patron vous fays de ma galee. (R. CCCXXXI, p. 482).

Even as a prisoner Charles places his often ill-founded and oft-dashed dreams of peace on the water and sends them hopefully to find his liberation. In the very famous ballade which begins, "En regardant vers le pais de France, un jour m'avint, a Dovre sur la mer...", Charles metaphorically places all his hopes in the "nef d'Esperance":

Alors chargay en la nef d'Esperance
Tous mes souhaiz, en leur priant d'aler
Oultre la mer, sans faire demourance,
Et a France de me recommander. (B. LXXV, p. 122).

Or in yet another famous prison poem he remarks on the cleansing properties of the water, which he calls Liesse, and which works harmoniously with the sunshine of France. Together they conjure a picture of the Loire which is ever in his dreams:

Dieu nous doint pais, car c'est ma desirance!
Adonc seray en l'eaue de Liesse
Tost refreschi, et au soleil de France
Bien netti du moisy de Tristessee; (B. LXXIX, p. 131).

But despite the cleansing and healing properties of water, and despite the buoyant optimism of the sailing poems in general, inevitably Charles comes to find that even going with the easy flow of current he must surmount obstacles that require all his will and strength in order to achieve his destination. In the following ballade the peaceful scene of traffic floating down the Loire from Orleans to Blois becomes a metaphor of the Ship of the World going once again down the water of Fortune:

En tirant d'Orleans a Blois,
L'autre jour par eau veneoye
Si rencontree, par plusieurs foiz,
Vaissieux, ainsi que je passoye,
Qui singloient leur droicte voye
Et aloient legereement,
Pour ce qu'eurent, comme veoye,
A plaisir et a gre le vent.
Mon cuer, Penser et moy, nous troys,
Les regardasmes a grant joye,
Et dit mon cuer a basse voys:
"Voulentiers en ce point feroye,
De Comfort la voille tendroye,
Se je cuidoye seurement
Avoir, ainsi que je vouldroye,
A plaisir et a gre le vent.

"Mais je treuve le plus des mois,
L'eaue de Fortune si quoye,
Quant ou bateau du Monde voys,
Que, s'avirons d'Espoir n'avoye,
Souvent en chemin demouroye,
En trop grant enuy longuement;
Pour neant en vain actendroye
A plaisir et a gre le vent:"

Les nefz dont cy devant parloye
Montoient, et je descendoye
Contre les vagues de Tourment;
Quant il lui plaira, Dieu m'envoye
A plaisir et a gre le vent. (B. XCVIII, pp. 154-155).

Here we must point out that the poet arrives safely not only by the help of God, but especially by his own iron will- and he does so against the tide, against the waves of torment, and not merely by coincidence, in the opposite direction from everybody else.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this poem is that Charles depicts so well the very dilemma which concerns us in this chapter. In the third stanza he describes the stagnation, that spiritual inertia, which so often confines him and because of which he thirsts after the forces of movement and liberation. Here that feeling is called, as it often is, ennui, and here even the water itself becomes a static body subject to the caprice of another moving force, the wind. Most importantly, perhaps, for want of wind, the poet by the sheer force of his own will frees himself with the oars of hope. The combination of hope and water once again emerges successful, though in this case the poet must also struggle to help himself.

Though water and joy or hope are always allied in the poet's mind, as with everything else, upon close scrutiny the situation looks at best ambiguous. Thus it is not surprising to find the waters of Tears and Sorrow running with the water of Joy. Here the current seems
to be one of change, as the poet maintains that whichever direction the
flow seems to take, Fortune will inevitably change it to a different
one:

L'eaue de Pleur, de Joye ou de Douleur,
Qui fait moudre le molin de Pensee,
Dessus lequel la rente est ordonnee,
Qui doit fournir la despense du cuer,

Despartir fait farine de Doulceur,
D'avecques son de Dure Destinee,
L'eaue de Pleur, de Joye, ou de Douleur,
Qui fait moudre le molin de Pensee.

Lors le mosnier, nomme Bon, ou Mal Eur,
En prant prouffit, ainsi que luy agree;
Mais Fortune souvent desmesuree
Lui destourbe maintes fois, par rigueur,
L'eaue de Pleur, de Joye, ou de Douleur.
(R. CCLXXXV, pp. 454-455).

Movement, though, is triumphant. No longer stalled by the phlegmatic,
sluggish waters of ennui, here waters continue to flow and in what-
ever direction they will. Most importantly, the poet's mind keeps
turning.

Charles's most definitive statement about the domination of hope
over all else is found in the remarkable Rondeau CCCXXV:

Ou puis parfont de ma merencolie
L'eaue d'Espoir que ne cesse tirer,
Soif de Confort la me fait desirer,
Quoy que souvent je la treuve tarie.

Necte la voy ung temps et esclercie,
Et puis aprés troubler et empirer,
Ou puis parfont de ma merencolie
L'eaue d'Espoir que ne cesse tirer.

D'elle trempe mon ancre d'estudie,
Quant j'en escripts, mais pour mon cueur irer,
Fortune vient mon papier dessirer,
Et tout gecte par sa grant felonnie
Ou puis parfont de ma merencolie. (R. CCCXXV, pp. 477-478).
Here though the waters appear alternately clear and murky, the water of Hope never ceases to run, finding its source from the depth of melancholy. That hope could spring eternally from melancholy is perhaps its greatest triumph.

Furthermore these two opposing streams, by the poet's own word found deep within himself, are perhaps the simplest expression of his profound conflict. Out of this conflict comes somehow the creative force, the very ink that flows into poetry. As Jean Starobinski remarks in his article "L'Encre de la melancolie": "...l'eau profonde est une eau sombre; le mariage paradoxal de la distance souterraine de la substance acquise donne, pour l'imagination, une encre chargée de nuit, une eau-forte qui ne cesse d'éroder le puits ou elle s'est formée." ³ Though the result of this flowing, the poem itself, may be the poet's judgment fail, nonetheless the creative force, born of the waters of hope in the depth of melancholy, continues to live and move. This water, no matter how deep and dark, is as Starobinski says a living force, an eau-forte.

Putting water back into the context of nature and out of the well-spring of his own thoughts, it is once again movement that inspires Charles:

Les en voulez vous garder
Ces rivières de courir
Et grues prendre et tenir
Quant hault les veez voler?

A telles choses muser
Voit on folz souvent servir:
Les en voulez vous garder

Here he denounces men, those folz, who would trap the rivers to turn them into their own static domains. Once again clearly defining his own conflict, he affirms the superiority of the free and flowing elements, expressed in the verbs courir and voler.
The word **voler**, of course, indicates the wind – another important fluid element in Charles' poetry. Let it be said, however, Charles was never given to any illusions about the constant benevolence of the wind. Throughout his poetry we find the bad airs and "le vent de Mœrncolie" which brings sickness (B. XCVI, p. 151; R. CCCVII, p. 467), the tempest winds which wreck the May garden (R. CCLVII, pp. 437-438), "le vent de Desplaisance" which would lead astray the hopeful galley (R. CCCXXII, p. 482), and of course "le vent de Fortune Dolent" which destroys the "Forest de Longue Actente" (R. CCXXXV, p. 419).

So, while fully aware of the mailiciousness of the wind, Charles nonetheless is fascinated and attracted by the exhilaration – and mystery – of its movement. We have already seen certain instances in which it works side by side with water to liberate the poet's shackled spirit. For example, it is "un plaisant vent venant de France" which will guide the safe crossing of the ship Bonne Nouvelle (B. XXVIII, p. 47), and the refrain which will stir the stagnant waters and fill the sails of the dispirited poet is "a plaisir et a gré le vent" (B. XCVIII, pp. 154-155).

But there are other examples which bring forth even more the sense of sheer exhaltation Charles frequently feels such as when he is literally riding with the wind:

```
En gibessant toute l'après disnee
    Par my lez champs pour me desanuyer
N'a pas long temps que faisoie, l'autr'ier,
Voler mon cœure apres mainte Pensee.
```

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L'aquilote, Souvenance nommee,
    Sourdoit deduit et savoir remeurchier,
En gibessant toute l'après disnee
Par my lez champs pour me desanuyer. (Ch. LXXV, p. 248).
```

At another time he makes an almost magical wish that his desires and even his sighs could **fly** across the seas to his sovereign lady:

```
Se je povoye mes souhais
    Et mes soupirs faire voler,
Si tost que mon cœure les a fais,
Passer leur feroye la mer
Et vers celle, tout droit aler,
Que j'ayme du cœure si tresfort,
Comme ma liesse mondaine,
Que je tendray, jusqu'a la mort
Pour ma maitresse souveraine. (B. XXXIX, p. 59).
```
Certainly nothing could better express Charles's sense of exhilaration and freedom than this rondeau; here he has at last "flown the coop"; la mue, or cage, is left behind and he even asks to be forgiven for his unbounded joy. Even the weather is kind as he uplifts himself on this imaginary flight.

Such levity is, however, indeed rare for the melancholy Charles. If he sought and occasionally believed he found an exit from his dilemma in the freedom and movement of the waters and the wind, in the final analysis, they offered only temporary respite. Like the forest's treacherous paths, they seem to stretch forward, ever beckoning, but leading nowhere. And so, perhaps sensing the inherent failure of his attempt to find freedom in the wake of their capricious movements, he returns with regularity to that other, final movement, the passage of time. Although time is most often regarded as a mortal enemy (see Ch. II, p. 22), not infrequently when Charles regards it as a living, fluid force, he appears excited and fascinated by its unspoken promises of ultimate freedom.

In the short run, Charles knows full well that the relief time offers is short-lived and well-defined within the confines of a moment. He comments, like many other poets of every age, upon the brevity of joy and beauty. Typically, this thought is best expressed by the contemplation of a flower:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Il n'est fuite que dure} \\
\text{Que pour un temps, car esprouve} \\
\text{J'ay la chose que j'ay contee,} \\
\text{Comme lors fut mon aventure. (B. LXI, p. 87).}
\end{align*}
\]

Or in a way more personally related to himself, he laments that in the face of Douleur, Courroux, Desplaisir, and Tristesse, Lyesse will offer him comfort, but its effect will be brief:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ne m'espargnez donc en rien de rudesse,} \\
\text{Je vous feray bien brief appercevoir} \\
\text{Qu'auray secours d'un confort de Lyesse.} \\
\text{Long temps ne puis en ce point remanoir:} \\
\text{(B. XVIII, p. 36).}
\end{align*}
\]

Nonetheless, Charles looks beyond these temporary moments to find something more lasting in the movement and continuity of time. In
separate instances he tells us specifically that time is like the wind and the water. He concludes Ballade CXII by saying:

Le temps passe comme le vent
Il n'est si beau jeu qui ne cesse,

(B. CXII, p. 174).

And in the rondeau discussed previously in which he poses the question "Les en voulez vous garder ces riveres de courir?", in the last stanza he answers:

Laissez le temps tel passer
Que Fortune veult souffrir,
Et les choses avenir
Que l'en ne scet destourber.

So it is truly the flow and endless movement of time that forever fascinates him, and in a sense, obsesses him. That it passes is inevitable. The question for the poet is: how should one react in face of this inevitability? Sometimes he seems, if not content, at least resigned to accept what fate doles out to him and to let time pass as it will:

Je ne puis demourer en paix,
Fortune ne m'y veult laissier;
Au fort, a present je me taïs
Et veïl laissier le temps passer,

(B. XXXIX, p. 60).

At other times, to make it pass, he indulges in the very human, if futile, occupation of playing games. Here he even plays with his mortal enemy, Dangiers, simply to while away the endless hours:

J'ay aux eschés joué devant Amours,
Pour passer temps, aavecques faulx Dangiers

(B. LVIII, p. 82).

Or more in keeping with his solitary nature, he plays, he says, with his own thoughts for a pastime:

Il n'est si beau passe temps
Que se jouer a sa Pensee; (R. CCCCVI, p. 526).

In these and many other instances in which Charles speaks of the passing of time, we feel a tension, a certain apprehension, as if at the end of it all, he awaits something. In this regard his view of time is particularly linear, as if like at the end of the path, he
expects to find something, or expects something to happen. In his later poems, however, there appears to be a new conception of the flowing of time. Perhaps abandoning the ever-evasive hope of finding a way out, even in the passage of time, Charles seems to view it not in a linear fashion flowing in a particular, if unknown direction, but rather in a circular pattern ever turning in upon itself.

In one terse rondeau, he expresses the disillusioned thought that even if the time is new, he is the same old, tired self, and the same old, tired things can be expected to happen:

Et de cela, quoy?
En ce temps nouveau,
Soit ou laid, ou beau,
Il m'en chault bien poy.

Je demourray quoy
En ma vieille peau;
Et de cela, quoy
En ce temps nouveau?

Plusieurs, comme voy,
Ont des poiz au veau;
Qu'ainsi je le croy;
Et de cela, quoy?  (R. CLXXXIII, p. 395).

This poem says in a word, so what? Ugly or beautiful, it's all the same to Charles. And finally, from here, where? "Et de cela, quoy?"

Our own adage that "the more things change, the more they stay the same" became a sorrowful reality to Charles. Posing all the questions of who? what? for whom? and why? that seem so long unanswered, a sage old man smiles knowingly to himself:

Qui? quoy? comment? a qui? pourquoi?
Passez, presens, ou avenir,
Quant me viennent en souvenir,
Mon cœur en penser n'est pas coy.

Au fort, plus avant que ne doy,
Ja mais je ne pense enquerir;
    Qui? quoy? comment? a qui? pourquoi?
Passez, present ou avenir!

On s'en peut rapporter a moy
Qui de vivre ay eu beau loisir,
Pour bien apprendre et retenir,
Assez ay congneu, je m'en croy,
The past, the present, the future - all seem to blend into one in an eternal repetition. The circular nature of time is strengthened here by the very structure of the rondeau and by the fact that the answers to the eternal questions are the repetition of the very questions themselves.

Charles's failure to find meaning in a natural, continuing progression by allying himself with the forces of movement, leads him finally to view time as turning in upon itself in the very way he himself does. As he concedes that the passing of time does not, in fact, go anywhere, he concludes that time merely repeats itself in an endless cyclical pattern. And so the forces of fluidity and change offer no real way out of the castles of fear and the dungeons of despair. Indeed, they fail to lead anywhere, but chase themselves about in an endless circle that becomes as static as the immutable prison walls.

But Charles accepts this discovery with a resigned equanimity. Converting the winds and rains into his own sighs and tears, he acknowledges that even when these stop, the movement of hope continues, and he relies upon it to accord a measure of peace:

Quant Pleur ne pleut, Souspir ne vente,
   Et que cesse est la tourmente
De Dueil, par le doux temps d'Espoir,
La nef de Desirulx Vouloir
A Port Eureka fait sa dessente.

Sa marchandise met en vente
Et a bon marché la presente
A ceux qui ont fait leur devoir,
Quant Pleur ne pleut, Souspir ne vente
Et que cesse est la tourmente
De Dueil, par le doux temps d'Espoir.

Lors les marchans de Longue Actente,
Pour engaiger et corps et rente
En ont ce qu'en peuent avoir,
D'en acheter font leur povoir
Tant que chascun cueur s'en contente,
Quant Pleur ne pleut, Souspir ne vente.

(R. CCLXXX, pp. 451-452).

Time no longer passes in a flow of movement, but stops altogether to be fixed in its final form expressed no longer by verbs, but by a noun - the Long Wait. Time becomes the very framework in which men,
like the merchants, go about their daily affairs with a measured degree of contentment. When all other movement has ceased, there still remains the gentle flow of Hope, which, though born of the depths of melancholy, is perhaps eternal after all.

For Charles, Hope is the one movement that inexplicably never stops. Its delicate thread pulls him ever toward life, despite its pain, and ever away from the dark, numb sleep of death.
NOTES

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE MERGING OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY

If we accept the point of view that Charles d'Orléans did relate to the world in a physical and sensual way and that he did try to comprehend himself as a living part of nature, rather than as a functional pawn in a social game, then we are perhaps better able to understand his basic dilemma. This dilemma is traced in the two previous chapters in which we find a Charles on the one hand wanting to shut himself in and close off the world behind solid, safe walls, and on the other hand desiring to free himself from this bondage, and to find a sense of eternity in the flowing movement of paths, wind, water and time - the movement of life itself. Pushing each contradictory trend to its final psychological extreme, one can view the struggle as one between the painless stillness of death and the painful churning of life.

In the former situation, he fails to find happiness because of the gnawing echoes of boredom and loneliness inside the safe, but solitary walls of men. In the latter, he learns from nature that the direction he seeks disintegrates like the forest path, and that the movement of life, which flows eternally with the wind and the waters, really doesn't go anywhere, but turns in upon itself like time and the seasons.

The only thing that doesn't fail him either in the eternal world or within himself, is the small but persistent stirring of Hope.

It is difficult to say Hope was so persistent and so persuasive for Charles, as it is indeed difficult to find in his poetry any reasonable basis for its existence. Yet against all odds, from the depths of despair and defeat, it unexpectedly appears throughout his poetry. We have seen it in many capacities in the figures of Esperance and Bon Espoir. But particularly in those instances where Hope is not a person, but a substance, or thing, does it emerge powerful.
We have seen it as the oars that the poet pulls to move him from the waters of ennui (B. XCVIII, p. 154); we have seen it as something he possesses that is strong enough to snatch him from the Purgatory of Soussy just as he is about to be destroyed (R. CCCLII, p. 494); and finally we have seen it as the flow of creativity that springs from the very depths of melancholy (R. CCCXXV, pp. 477-478). Its existence is unexpected and unexplained, but Charles strains to follow its movement wherever it will take him. In doing so he turns toward life and hope becomes indeed the movement of life within him.

In the final analysis, then, movement and life triumph over stillness and death. But it is safe to say that this concept changed and grew in Charles' poetry as perhaps no other idea did. This can perhaps be best understood by the juxtaposition of the figures Merencolie and Nonchaloir. Their final conception evolved over a lifetime and they are in a sense the harvest of an old man's suffering and the fruit of his wisdom.

In his search for a way out of his dilemma, Charles periodically attempted several different solutions, all of which have been tried by other poets and artists throughout time, but all of which ultimately failed him. Turning to the living forces of movement and creativity, Charles periodically sought meaning in his poetry. Could he find any purpose to his existence by means of or because of poetry? He seems to have asked himself this question at various stages of his life, and to have answered it in varying, if finally negative, ways.

Early in his poetry there are references to the solace he finds in writing - particularly when it helps him in his difficulties with love:

Loué soit celui qui trouva
    Premier la maniere d'escrire;
En ce, grant conform ordonna
Pour amans qui sont en martire; (B. XXI, p. 39).

Or in another instance, in the face of the torments of love, writing is the only pleasure left to him:
De balader j'ay beau loisir,
Autres deduis me sont cassez;
Prisonnier sui, d'Amour martir,
Helas! et n'est ce pas assez? (B. XXXIX, p. 61).

Frequently, too, if nothing else, writing gives him something to do. In one case, he tells us it helps him to fend off melancholy:

Pour vous moustrer que point ne vous oublie,
Comme vostre que suis ou que je soye,
Presentement ma chançon vous envoye,
Or la prenës en gre', je vous en prie.

En passant temps plain de merencolie,
L'autrier la fis, ainsi que je pensoye,
Pour vous moustrer que point ne vous oublie
Comme vostre que suis ou que je soye.
(Ch. XXXI, p. 222).

And in another singular admission, the act of writing is almost a catharsis to him as his mind, now the Book of Thought, becomes etched with the story of his sorrow, illustrated by his tears, and finally soiled by the sweat of his labor:

Dedans mon Livre de Pensee,
J'ay trouué escripvant mon cueur
La vraie histoire de douleur,
De larmes toute enluminee,

En defassant la tresame
Ymage de plaisant douceur,
Dedans mon Livre de Pensee.

Helas! ou l'a mon cueur trouvée?
Lez grossez gouttez de sueur
Lui saillent, de peineé et labeur
Qu'il y prent, et nui et journee,
Dedans mon livre de Pensee. (R. XXXIII, pp. 308-309).

However, in other instances which become more frequent toward the end of his life, Charles finds that his poetry, like everything else, is boring or useless. Even in an early ballade he declares that his written hopes are of little value:

J'ay mis en escript mes souhais
Ou plus parfont de mon penser;
Et combien, quant je les ay fais;
Que peu me peuvent proufiter;
Je ne les vouldroie donner
Pour nul ou qu'on me sceut offrir,
En esperant, qu'au par ailer,
De mille l'un puist avenir. (B. XLIX, p. 71).
In another case he finds that his balades, chançons, and complaintes are locked away forgotten, because the poet is sleepy from ennuy and his language is rusty from Nonchaloir. Like many poets of many ages, he is haunted too by his own poetic sterility and his inability to communicate. Again poetry fails him:

**Balades, chançons et complaintes**

Sont pour moy mises en oubly,
Car ennuy et pensees maintes
M'ont tenu long temps dormoyy.
Non pour tant, pour passer soussy,
Essaier veueil se je sourcyye
Rimer, ainsy que je souloye.
Au moins j'en feray mon povoy,
Combien que je congnois et şçay
Que mon langage trouveray
Tout enroillé de Nonchaloir.

**Plaisans parolles sont estaintes**

En moy qui deviens rassoty;
Au fort, je vendray aux attaintes
Quant beau parler m'aura failly.
Pour quoy prynceuls qui m'ony oy
Langagier, quant piece j'estoyye
Jeune, nouvel et plain de joye,
Que vueillent excuse m'avoir.
Onques mais je ne me trouvyay
Si rude, car je suis, pour vray,
Tout enroillé de Nonchaloir. (B. LXXII, p. 119).

But in those cases in which it does not fail him in the sense that he is capable of writing it, it does fail him from the point of view of meaning anything. In one rondeau in which he exhibits a rare sense of bonhomie, he underscores the banality of writing which he places on the same level as eating, drinking, or boating:

**Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau,**

En ce monde n'a telle compagnie,
L'un parle ou dort, et l'autre chante ou crie,
Les autres font balades ou rondeau.

Et y boit on du vieil et du nouveau,
On l'appelle le desduit de la pie.
Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau,
En ce monde n'a telle compagnie.
Il ne me chault ne de chien ne d'oyseau;  
Quant tout est fait, il faut passer sa vie  
Le plus aise qu'on peut, en chiere lie.  
A mon avis, c'est mestier bon et beau,  
Souper ou baing et disner ou bateau.  
(R. CCCXLVII, p. 490).

And finally in that very poem in which the creative force of hope forges its way from the well of melancholy, Charles laments that the fruit of his labors is willfully destroyed by malicious Fortune:

D'elle trempe mon ancre d'estudie,  
Quant j'en escrips, mais pour mon cueur irer,  
Fortune vient mon pappier dessirer,  
Et tout gecte par sa grant felonnie  
Ou puis parfont de ma merencolie. (R. CCCXXV, p. 378).

The poet does not divulge what exactly he hoped to achieve by his writing, but it seems clear that he nurtured some secret purpose. For whatever reason, his heart is angered by its wanton destruction.

The sense of destruction in this poem deserves a second look, however. Beyond reiterating the ill-will and the predatory nature of Fortune, the chaos wrought by her here fits into a larger scheme of desolation and disillusionment. Like the May garden torn asunder by storms, the forest of the Long Wait made shambles by the wind, and the walls of structured order collapsing into the labyrinth of Daedalus, the efforts of Charles's poetic labor are here ripped up and thrown about in a final gesture of despair and failure.

If the collective pull of movement-hope-creativity did not directly lead the poet to a viable solution to the dilemma of his existence, it is logical that he should turn to the other extreme—the closed, silent vacuum of Death. Thus we find occasional appeals to Death to release him from the torment of living. In one early ballade, he pleads with Death to take him too, as it has taken his love and his reason to live:

Las! Mort qui t'a fait si hardie,  
De prendre la noble Princesse  
Qui estoit mon confort, ma vie,  
Mon bien, mon plaisir, ma richesse  
Puis que tu as prins ma maîtresse,  
Prends moy aussi son serviteur,  
Car j'aime mieulx prouchainnement  
Mourir que languir en tourment,  
En paine, soussi et douleur! (B. LVII, p. 81).
In another instance he speaks about death, recognizing that the acquisitions of life on earth are meaningless, and that in the end the great equalizer claims everyone for a soldier:

   Prince, je dy que c'est peu de richesse
   De ce monde ne de tout son plaisir:
   La mort depart ce qu'on tient a largesse.
   Las! fauldra il son soudart devenir? (B. CVIII, p. 169).

And finally, he issues an uncompromising ultimatum to Desplaisance that he must either find peace or die. He views this conflict as a mortal combat:

   Ou combatons tellement a oultrace
   Que l'ung die: Je me rens ou ren toy;
   Mieuix estre mort je veil, s'estre le doy,
   Qu'ainsi languir' d'offrir premier m'avance.
   Paix ou treves je requier, Desplaisance.
   (R. CCXCVI, p. 461).

Overall there are singularly few calls to Death, however. Though from time to time Charles toyed with it as the ultimate release, his melancholy bias was never really suicidal. Rather than regarding Mort, an abstract allegorical figure, as a benefactor, he is characteristically more concerned by the physical works of her hand-maiden, Vieillesse. We have studied many of Charles’ poems regarding the ravages of old age in Chapter II. Death in fact seems to mean to Charles the slow deterioration of his being. Hence we quite disagree with Miss Lebovics when she asserts that, "...Charles does not show his contemporaries' obsession with death, with the sheer physical ugliness of death. He is not concerned with its remarkable democratic character."

Quite the contrary, it seems to us that Mort as such never concerned Charles in the same forceful way as Vieillesse did, precisely because death is an abstract notion, whereas aging is a continuing physical process.

The link between Vieillesse and Mort is of course, time. Frequently Charles acknowledges that old age is taking him by the hand, leading him through time, and he warily accepts this inevitability:
J'ay tant joué avecques Aage
A la paulme que maintenant
J'ay quarante cinq; sur bon gage
Nous jouons, non pas pour neant.
Assez me sens fort et puissant
De garder mon jeu jusqu'a cy;
Ne je ne crains riens que Soussy. (B. XC, p. 144).

That Charles does not anticipate any relief at the end of this journey is perhaps because in all his many poetic searches he has found no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, no exit at the end of the road, and no particular destination in the progression of time. Time after all is cyclical, and turns back upon itself like the seasons. Thus he anticipates nothing more from his trip with Aage than a journey along the course of Nature:

Pourquoy m'as tu vendu, Jennesse,
A grant marchie, comme pour rien,
Es mains de ma Dame Villesse
Qui ne me fait guerres de bien?
A elle peu tenu me tien,
Mais il convient que je l'endure,
Puis que c'est le cours de nature.

Son hostel de noir de Tristesse
Est tandu; quant dedans je vien,
G'y voy l'histoire de Destresse
Qui me fait changer mon maintien
Quant la ly, et maint mal soustien;
Espargnee n'est creature,
Puis que c'est le cours de nature. (B. CXXI, p. 183).

In short, with few exceptions, death as a place or a haven for Charles is rarely a serious alternative. Though he may have yearned for its tranquility on those many occasions when he closed himself off from the confusion of life, he never seriously considered giving in to it altogether. The call of life and hope was too strong — and the challenge lay with them. As we have suggested earlier, perhaps death is too easy. In any case as an alternative it is too abstract. Charles rarely traces the course of old age all the way to death, for he had first to deal with the realities of aging. These are visible and physical; death too is visible, briefly, but beyond the moment it is out of reach. It would have been out of character for Charles
to give himself over so finally to something he could not see nor touch nor grasp. Death is perhaps an exit, but since it is intangible and thus incomprehensible, it could at best only erase, not solve, the puzzle of existence.

Though death itself was too final or too vague to be considered by Charles, certain aspects of it appealed to him immensely. Particularly he sought its peace. This he thirsted after, and rarely found, all his life. In the political and social realm, of course, he sought peace among men. But in the private and poetic domain, he sought the inner peace that comes from being at peace with the world. That inner peace proved more difficult to achieve than the seemingly hopeless peace between two nations after one hundred years of war.

True, unbreakable peace is, no doubt, as elusive and difficult to attain as perfection. It is the aspiration that is always just out of reach, no matter how close it seems. For Charles it seemed to be in eternal contradiction to the turmoil of life. And having accepted life, a real and enduring inner peace is ever an unobtainable dream. In his plea for peace here, he readily admits fortune has tricked him, and soussi has claimed his heart forever:

C'est grant pâne que de vivre en ce monde,
   Encore esse plus pâne de mourir;
Si convient il, en vivant, mal souffrir,
Et au derrain, de mort passer la bonde.

S'aucune foiz joye ou plaisir abonde,
On ne les peut longumnt retenir.
C'est grant pâne que de vivre en ce monde,
Encore esse plus pâne de mourir.

Pour ce, je vueil comme fol qu'on me tonde
Se plus pense, quoy que voye a venir,
Qu'a vivre bien et bonne fin querir.
Las! il n'est rien que Soussy ne confonde;
C'est grant pâne que de vivre en ce monde!
(R. CLIV, p. 378).

And so, for want of the real thing, Charles grasps, a little desperately, for the simulated peace of sleep. Simulated because it is not really a condition of nor even an alternative to life,
but merely a reprieve from it. Sleep is a little death, but unlike death is not final, and promises to release its hold, rhythmically, following the revolving pattern of life.

Although Charles hopes to find peace in sleep, often even this modest desire fails him. Charles’s sleep is often a troubled one, as we have witnessed in the Valentine in which he confessed to having awakened on the bed of troubled thoughts:

Ou j’avoye tout la nuit dormy
Sur le dur lit d’Ennuieuse Pensee. (B. LXVI, p. 91).

Or again in describing the terrible physical tortures of love, along with fevers, colic, chills, and every other conceivable discomfort, he is further bothered by a "transe de sommeil m’apartie" (B. CXI, p. 173). And in another ballade he complains that because of love he cannot rest in peace:

Quant je suis cousche en mon lit,
Je ne puis en paix repose;
Car toute la nuit mon cuer lit
Ou rommant de Plaisant Penser, (B. VIII, p. 24).

Despite these misadventures in the realm of sleep, however, more often than not he finds, if not real peace, at least a passable substitute; escape. The escape into sleep seems to be the one ritual that Charles clings to tenaciously throughout his life. We have already witnessed it on several occasions. We remarked in Chapter II that sleep, in a physical sense is the end of sensation and thus of pain. The blocking off of sensation and pain help to explain the healing powers of sleep. Not infrequently sleep is like a medicine which the poet takes in order to face life again, feeling restored.

In any case, the most important properties of sleep are those of release and escape. In many different ways Charles has shown his need for évasion. But sleep is the most dependable of these for it is always there, just beneath the surface. Upon occasion, it can even induce pleasant dreams and fantasies. In the following rondeau, Charles describes what is almost a day-dream in the lazy mist of an idle moment:
En me pais, quant me trouve a repos,
   Je m'esbais, et n'y scay contenance,
Car j'ay apris travail dez mon enfance,
Donc Fortune m'a bien chargié le dos.

Que voulez que vous die a briefs mos?
Ainsi m'est il; ce vient d'acoustumance,
En mez pais, quant me trouve a repos.

Tout a part moy, en mon penser m'enclos,
Et fais chasteaulz en Espaigne et en France;
Oultre les montz forge mainte ordonnance,
Chascun jour j'ay plus de mille propos,
En mez pais, quant me trouve a repos. (R. LIV, p. 320).

However, it is not often that we find Charles building dream castles in Spain and France. In fact, we rarely find him dreaming at all. Sleep for him is more utilitarian: it usually does not provide an escape to something pleasant, but rather away from something disagreeable. We have seen Charles turn many times to sleep in this manner to shut out painful reality. Typical of this attitude is the following rondeau in which he grumbles about an unpleasant St. Valentine's Day trip, and concludes that it would be far better to be at home asleep than to be in Bourges:

A ce jour de saint Valentin,
   Que l'en prent per par destinee,
J'ay choisy, qui tresmal m'agree,
   Pluye, vent et mauvais chemin.

   Il n'est de l'amoureux butin
Nouvelle ne chançon chante,
A ce jour de saïnt Valentin,
   Que l'en prent per par destinee.

   Bourges me donne ce tatin,
Et a plusieurs de ma livree;
Mieux vaudroit en chambre natee
Dormir, sans lever sy matin,
A ce jour de saïnt Valentin. (R. CX, p. 353).

We may determine, then, that a great deal of Charles's life was spent in the pursuit of escape. The basic outline of his primary conflict may be traced in his opposing desires to avoid life by walling himself off, and failing that, to avoid his lonely confinement by finding some moving force to carry him back into the mainstream of
living. But that didn't work either, and so we find Charles attempting to solve this dilemma by turning first to one thing and then another. But these turns were for the most part false turns, and they led consistently from one dead end to another.

All of these avenues in the end failed to bring Charles peace and meaning. His poetry perhaps had the potential to give his life a sense of substance, but it never got beyond the potential. Thus it was symbolically discarded in the same chaotic way in which other broken dreams fell. Writing became, for the most part, a pastime. Death might have offered the ultimate escape, but it was too irrevocable, and too unknown. Charles rarely even writes directly about death, so obsessed is he with the process of dying. Becoming old, feeble, helpless—these are far the greater consideration to him, and they remain within the realm of life. Finally there is sleep. As a substitute for the real peace he seeks, and the real death he avoids, Charles turns to sleep as a refuge. Despite an occasional good dream, the real value of sleep is that it too is an escape—but unlike death, one promising a return.

Escape, evasion, these, then, are the keys to understanding much of Charles's poetry. But these do not solve anything, nor do they constitute a viable way of living. Indeed, they provide a respite, but nothing more. Sooner or later one must return to the starting point, especially one so committed to a cyclical view as Charles. So as surely as one sleeps at night, he can count upon awakening to life again in the morning. Charles in fact wanted this very return. The strain of hope within him was strong enough to ever pull him back to life.

Realizing, perhaps, the ultimate futility of escape as a solution to the dilemma of life, but still incapable of embracing life fully, Charles finally goes beyond the hollowness of evasion. He evolves a very private view, perhaps more poetic than philosophic, which enables him to live, and ultimately to die with a measure, if not of happiness, at least of peace.
To appreciate Charles' full personal and poetic maturity, it is our opinion that one must understand the relationship between Merencolie and Nonchaloir. These two figures, more than any others, dominate his poetry and capture, along the way, the essence of what he feels and thinks. In the long view they are the reflection of his experience and wisdom, and are the fruit born of a long, tormented poetic evolution. They mirror his final view and his final words, and from them we learn that he closes out his life with a definite, however modest, sense of contentment.

To begin with Merencoly, one thinks naturally of her common associates, who in a way help us to know her. She is frequently in the company of such other figures as Soussy, Soing, and Annuy. For example, we find her in such company as the poet threatens and warns them to never dare return again:

Se jamais plus vous retournés
Avecques vostre compaignie,
Je pri a Dieu qu'il vous maudie,
Et ce par qui vous revendrez:
Alez vous ant, allez, ales,

Or again coupled with Annuy, Merencolie is pictured as a cruel villain:

Et comment l'entendez vous,
Annuy et Merencolie,
Voulez vous toute ma vie
Me tourmenter en courrous? (R. CCLXVI, p. 443).

However, while Merencolie is frequently surrounded by these cohorts, she herself far surpasses them in every respect, and they remain pale allegories in her shadow. Far from remaining an abstraction, she is cast in the role of real personalities, and takes the part of many different characters.

Intermittently, and appropriately, Charles speaks of himself as her escollier. The tone is always the same: he has learned too little too late, and now he is too old to change. However, Merencoly is always his teacher, and in fact his only teacher, indicating
that much as he dislikes her, she has much to teach him. Typical of this unhappy student-teacher relationship is the following rondeau:

Escollier de Merencolye,
Des verges de Soussy batu,
Je suis a l'estude tenu,
Es derreniers jours de ma vye.

Se j'ay ennu, n'en doubtez mye,
Quant me sens vieillart devenu,
Escollier de Merencolye,
Des verges de Soussy batu!

Pitié convient que pour moy prié
Qui me treuve tout espru;
Mon temps je pers et ay perdu,
Comme rassote en folye,
Escollier de Merencolye. (R. CCCXCVII, p. 521).

As though he were not unhappy enough at the thought of being in the hands of the teacher Melancholy, he goes on to find even more distasteful roles for her to play. She is variously a keeper, jailer, robber, nagging housewife, and not infrequent tyrant. As "keeper" so to speak, Charles laments the fact that she holds him in a "bondage of evils":

Las! Merencolije,
Me tendres vous longuement
Es maulx dont j'ay plus de cent,
Sans pensee lie?

Je l'ay souffert, main et soir,
Loingtair de joyeulx confort.
Main nul bien n'en puis avoir
Dont mon cueur est presque mort.

Au meins, je vous en prie
Que me laissiez seulement
Aucum peu d'alegement
Sans m'oster la vie,
Las! Merencolie. (Carole I, p. 287).

Or going even further in the same direction, she becomes almost a jailer. Charles accuses her of guarding him so closely that one can almost feel the chains that bind them as he is linked to her de pis en pis:
Ci pris, ci mis,
Trop fort me lie
Merencolie,
De pis en pis.

Quant me tient pris
En sa baillie,
Ci pris, ci mis,
Trop fort me lie.

Se hors Soussis
Je ne m'alie
A Chiere lie,
Vivant languis,
Ci pris, ci mis. (R. CLXXXI, p. 394).

And further on Merencolie is cast not as a guard, but as the
criminal, the thief, who robs him of his happiness:

Vers moy venez en larrecin,
Et me robez Plaisance Lie;
Suis je destine, en ma vie,
D'estre toujours en tel hutin?
En verrai ge jamais la fin? (R. CCLXXXVI, p. 455).

Though these latter characterizations on the part of Merencolie
seem masculine in emphasis, oftentimes Charles goes out of his way
to emphasize her distinctly feminine quality. Once he even addresses
her as Dame Merencolye:

Mort de moy! vous y jouez vous
Avec Dame Merencolye!
Mon cueur, vous faictes grant folye!
C'est la nourice de Courroux. (R. CXCIV, p. 401).

On another time, stripping her of even her noble demeanor, he de-
picts her as a domineering, nagging housewife:

Commandez qu'elle s'en voise,
Mon cueur, a Merencolie,
Hors de vostre compagnie,
Vous laissent en paix sans noise.

Trop a esté, dont me poise,
Avecques vous, c'est folie.
Commandez qu'elle s'en voise,
Mon cueur a Merencolie.
Oncques ne vous fut courtoise,
Mais les jours de vostre vie
A traititez en tirannie;
Sang de moy, quelle bourgeois!
Commandez qu'elle s'en voise! (R. CCCLVI, p. 496).

And yet again she seems a meddling member of the household who has
made herself an unwelcome, but permanent fixture:

    Trop ennuyezy la compaignie,
    Douloureuse Merancolie,
    Et troubliez la feste de Joye:
    Foy que doy a Dieu, je vouldroie
    Que fussiez du pais banye!
    ........................................

    Soucy avecques vous s'alye,
    Si lui dy ge que c'est folie.
    Quel mesnage! Dieu vous conoye
    Si loings tant que je vous renvoye
    Querir! - Quant? - Jamaz en ma vie:
    Trop ennuyezy la compaignie! (R. CCCXCVI, p. 520).

Oftentimes, too, the significance of Merencolie is determined
not so much by whom she characterizes, but by the role she plays in
forcing the poet to withdraw. In many instances she is the reason he
feels compelled to pull in behind walls and locked doors. From there
he frequently warns others not to let her in:

    Pour Dieu! boutons la hors
    Ceste Merencolie
    Qui si fort nous guerrie
    Et fait tant de grant tors.

    Monstrons nous les plus fors,
    Mon cuer, je vous en prie.
    Pour Dieu! boutons la hors
    Ceste Merencolie.

    Trop lui avons amors
    D'estre en sa compaignie,
    Ne nous amisons mie
    A croire ses rappors,

And yet another time her presence appears so ferocious to him that
he compares her to a mad dog:
Fermez luy l'uis au visage,
    Mon cœur, a Merancolye,
Garder qu'elle n'entre mye,
Pour gaster nostre meesaige.

Comme le chien plain de rage,
Chassez la, je vous en prye;
Fermez luy l'uis au visage,
Mon cœur, a Merancolie. (R. CCXCI, p. 458).

But much as he wishes she would go back "where she came from" ("Allez vous en dont vous venez, Annuyeuse Merencolie", R. CCCC, p. 522), he knows full well Merencolie will never disappear.

For Merencolie is far more than a figure of Charles' imagination; as we have already seen she plays many different and realistic parts in the drama of living. Beyond that, she is not merely an allegorical character. In keeping with Charles' need to grasp significant aspects of life in concrete terms, he often molds melancholy into many different substances as if thereby to understand them better. Sometimes melancholy appears as almost a force of nature in eternal opposition to the promise of spring:

Qui est celluy qui s'en tendroit
    De bouter hors Merancolie,
Quant toute chose reverdie,
Par les champs, devant ses yeulx, voit?

Ung malade s'en gueriroit,
Et ung mort revendroit en vye.
Qui est celluy qui s'en tendroit
De bouter hors Merancolie?

En tous lieux on le nommeroit
Meschant, endormy en follie;
Chasser de bonne compagnie,
Par raison, chacun le devroit.
Qui est celluy qui s'en tendroit? (R. CCLVIII, p. 438).

And at other times it seems to represent a condition or state of mind. In one instance it is described as the opposite of repos:
311 Ce me seroit trop grant folie, 
Quant demourer puis en repos, 
De reprendre merencolice: 
Je suis bien loings de ce pourpos. 
(Songe en Complainte, p. 110).

And another time it is the basis of the "high theology" of perpetual dissatisfaction:

Quant je voy ce que ne veuill mie, 
En n'ay ce dont suis desirant, 
Pensant ce qui m'est desplaisant, 
Est ce merveille s'il m'anuye?

Nennil, force est que me soussie 
De mon cuer qui est languissant, 
Quant je voy ce que ne veuill mie.

En douleur et merencolice 
Suis, nuit et jour, estudiant; 
Lors je me boutre trop avant 
En une haulte theologie, 
Quant je voy ce que ne veuill mie. 
(R. LXIX, pp. 317-318).

Or yet again it is kin to these conditions above, but more hateful. It is the condition in which the poet lives and for which there is no alternative. Songs and laughter are to no avail. His boredom again approaches a condition of spleen as he attests that he hates his life:

A Dieu! qu'il m'anuye, 
Helas! qu'esse cy? 
Demourray je ainsy 
En merencolice?

Qui que chante ou rie, 
J'ay tous jours soussy. 
A Dieu! qu'il m'anuye 
Helas! qu'esse cy?

Penser me guerrie, 
Et Fortune aussi, 
Tlemment et si 
Fort que he ma vie. 
A Dieu! qu'il m'anuye! (R. CLXXY, p. 393).
But melancholy does not stop at being a condition of life nor a state of mind. It changes and becomes a thing or a place or a feeling almost at will. All that is important to Charles is touched or changed by it. It can be the place of his sorrows, such as the boys de Merencolie (B. XLIII, p. 64), or the symptom of his disease - Fievre n'avez que de merencolie (B. CVIII, p. 167). It can be in fact the very movement that brings destruction: in one instance the vent de Merencolie (B. CXI, pp. 172-173), brings disease and suffering; in another he warns that this same wind causes doleurs nompairesilles (R. CCCVII, p. 467). And from the depths of its well, melancholy even mingles with the waters of hope. Yet when movement is stilled and Charles seems frozen in despair, it is from melancholy that are made the walls of the ultimate prison, Dedalus.

In a sense, then, melancholy is everything. To begin with it is a figure which quickly passes the vague, abstract boundaries of allegory. With its multiplicity of faces it presents a kaleidoscope of roles which create a sense of total personality. The many faces of melancholy - man, woman, teacher, jailer, thief - blend into a sort of Everyman. Melancholy is everywhere; it is everyone.

In fact to Charles, it is indeed omnipresent. Not only does he see Merencolie in every role and in every human face, but he senses also that merencolie is a basic substance of all else that lives. It is a condition of existence, a state of mind, a place, a fever, a sickness. It forms the woods of loneliness and the walls of the labyrinth. It runs with the winds and the water, even as he hopes to find life in their movement. It is in fact the very fabric of existence, and as such it bridges the gap between the psychological and physical worlds.

Having realized melancholy as the condition, the very framework for living, Charles comes to accept it as almost a necessity for life as it is for death:
Et fust ce ma mort, ou ma vie,
    Je ne puis de mon cueur chevir
Qu'i ne vueille conseil tenir
Souvent, avec Merencolie.

Si luy dy je que c'est folie:
Mais comme sourt ne veult oïr,
Et fust ce ma mort, ou ma vie!

A Grace, pour ce, je supplie
Qu'il lui plaise me secourir;
Au paraller, ne puis fournir,
Se ne m'aide, par Courtoisie,
Et fust ce ma mort, ou ma vie! (R. CCCXCIX, p. 522).

Life and death revolve slowly in the poet's mind around the central figure of the ever-present Merencolie. As Charles acknowledges that melancholy permeates everything, he abandons the futile attempt to escape it. By incorporating it into the pattern of life and death, he admits it as an integral part of nature. The question arises thus, if Charles ultimately gave up trying to escape from melancholy, how does he face its presence? Occasionally he seems to cave in from despair and give himself over to its rule:

    Je suis a cela
        Que Merencolie
    Me gouvernera.

Qui m'en gardera?
Je suis a cela
Que Merencolie
Me gouvernera.

Puis qu'ainsi me va,
Je croy qu'a ma vie
Autre ne sera.
Je suis a cela. (R. CCCLXXVI, p. 308).

For the most part, however, he strenuously resists its domination. Sometimes, as we have seen, he attempts to escape. But his ventures in évasion and hiding are doomed to failure. In the end it is only through the development of Nonchaloir, which parallels the multifarious presence of Merencolie, that Charles is able to cope and survive in a world everywhere gilded by melancholy.
Nonchaloir, as no other concept does, also touches all the psychological and physical realities that Merencolie so agilely spans. Nonchaloir is also a figure, but it, too, is much more beyond that. It, like Merencolie can be a place, a thing, a condition, or a state of mind. At every turn it seems to be able to parallel Merencolie and to face her directly. In the end, Nonchaloir does not offer an alternative to Merencolie in the sense of a better, happier universe, but it does afford Charles the measure of peace he needs in order to live in Merencolie's world. Through Nonchaloir, Charles finally finds not the total stillness that is death, nor the imperturbable calm that is Peace, but the healing quiet that is tranquillity. More than just recognizing Merencolie, he reaches a resignation to it through Nonchaloir. He comes at last to a sort of peace.

To ascertain that Nonchaloir is at least as versatile as Merencolie, we have only to look at the many roles it plays. To begin with, in the most physical sense we know that nonchaloir is related to the shutting out of sensation and to sleep. Charles often makes these connections himself. He tells us not infrequently that blindness and deafness are indeed conditions of nonchaloir:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Avugle et assourdy} \\
\text{De tous poins en nonchaloir,} \\
\text{Je ne puis ouir ne voir} \\
\text{Chose dont soye esjouy.} \quad (\text{Ch. LXXXV, p. 254}).
\end{align*}
\]

Oftentimes, too, Charles relates nonchaloir with sleep as he addresses "Mon cieur dormant en Nonchaloir," (B. LXVII, p. 92), or laments that:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tant sont les yeulx de mon cieur endormis} \\
\text{En Nonchaloir, qu'ouvrir ne les pourroye:} \\
\quad (R. XXV, p. 305).
\end{align*}
\]

But even more than the oblivion of sleep, in a larger sense Nonchaloir seems to have powers of refreshing and restoring. Like sleep, it offers a respite from the intensity of life, but it soothes and heals.
It is not an escape from, but an acceptance of, life. It is literally a coolness, not a numbness; a detachment, not a total blocking out. It is a neutral ground between the tumultuous melancholy of life, and the motionless melancholy of death.

At one moment it allows Charles to deal with his dreaded enemies with cool dispatch. Admitting that he will have only very temporary succor from Lyssè, he addresses Douleur, Courroux, Desplaisir, and Tristesse:

Pour ce je metz du tout a nonchaloir
Les tresgrans mauux qui me faites sentir;
Bien aurez duel, se me voyez avoir
Le plus grant bien qui me puist avenir, (B. XVIII, p. 36).

At another it allows him to reach a nostalgic place in the back of his memory, as he happily recalls the manor of his childhood:

Se nous travaillons fort ce soir
Tost serons au lieu que vouldroye,
Que l'en appelle Nonchaloir.
(Songe en Complainte, p. 115).

And yet again it is the familiar hermitage. Here, however, the hermitage offers a retreat, a rest from folly, and not a prison of solitude and despair:

De tout retrait en hermitage
De Non Chaloin, laissant Folie,
Desormais veult user sa vie
Mon cueur que j'ay veu trop volage.

Et savez vous qui son courage
A changie? s'a fait maladie,
Du tout retrait en hermitage
De Non Chaloin, laissant Folie.

Fera il que fol ou que sage?
Qu'en dictes vous, je vous en prie?
Il fera bien, quoy que nul die,
Moult y trouvera d'avantage,
Du tout retrait en hermitage. (R. CCLXXIV, pp. 447-448).
As a personality, Nonchaloir is sometimes a welcome companion when the poet feels rejected by the company of society:

Jeunes gens partent leur butin:
De Nonchaloir m'acointeray,
A lui je m'abutineray;
Trouve l'ay plus prochain voisin,
Quant j'ay ouy le tabourin! (R. XXXIX, pp. 311-312).

Most often, however, stressing the healing quality of Nonchaloir, it appears in the person of a doctor—a healer of physical and spiritual ailments. At one point Charles declares himself wonderfully cured from the fever of love by this good doctor:

Un bon medecin qu'on appelle
Nonchaloir, que tiens pour amy,
M'a guery, la sienne mercy
Se la playe ne renouvelle. (B. LXV, p. 90).

Or again, Dr. Nonchaloir steps in to guide the poor lover in time of distress:

Desormais en sains et seur lieux,
Ordonne mon cuer demourer,
Et par Nonchaloir, pour le mieulx,
Mon medicin, soy gouverner. (B. XCVI, pp. 151-152).

But in another case nonchaloir is not the doctor, but the cure itself. If melancholy brings on disease and causes fever and pain, nonchaloir is the remedy for it. In a surprising image Charles calls Nonchaloir, l'emplastre, or mustard-plaster, which brings him blessed relief:

L'emplastre de Nonchaloir
Que sus mon cuer pieça mis,
M'a guery, pour dire voir,
Si nettement que je suis
En bon point; ne je ne puis
Plus avoir, jour de ma vie,
L'amoureuse maladie. (B. LXXIII, p. 120).

The course of Nonchaloir, then, follows closely the course of Merencolie. But whereas Merencolie is the very pain of living, Nonchaloir is its remedy. Although it doesn't offer a complete cure, at least it acts like a painkiller, allowing the poet to live and breath
and function. On the physical level, it is literally non-chalouir — a
cooling, comforting antidote; on the psychological, it is a dispassionate non-attachment. From the cool vantage-point of nonchaloir,
Charles can sit back and live as he is best suited to — not as a participant, but as an observer. That Nonchaloir does offer a kind of
peace and a kind of companionship as an alternative to the servitude
of Merencolie, Charles tells us himself:

Serviteur plus de vous, Merencolie,
   Je ne seray, car trop fort y travaille;
Raison le veult, et ainsi me conseille
   Que le face, pour l'aise de ma vie.

A Non Chaloir vueil tenir compaignie,
Par qui j'auray repos sans que m'esveille.
Serviteur plus de vous, Merencolie,
   Je ne seray, car trop fort y travaille.
   (R. CCLXX, p. 445).

Thus, in the juxtaposition of these two figures — who are really
much more than mere figures because they combine so much of the material
and spiritual existence that concerns Charles — we find a solution to
the riddle of life and death. At least a solution in the sense that,
unlike the other avenues Charles pursued, this one does not dead end.
Instead of trying to escape the unpleasantness of existence, as he has
done in every other instance, in Merencolie he embodies it and finally
accepts it as inevitable. Having done that, he endures it by an atti-
tude of Nonchaloir, which represents neither a submission nor an
escape, but a compromise: a knowing, thoughtful resignation. Nothing
could better exemplify this role than the symbol of the staff the
aged prince uses to support himself as he shuffles reluctantly through
the distasteful, and foolish, duties of court:

Des soucies de la court
   J'ai acheté au jour d'uy;
De deux bien garny j'en suy,
   Quoy que mon argent soit court.
A les avoir chacung court:
Mais quant a moy, je m'enfuy.
Des soucies de la court,
J'ay acheté au jour d'uy.

Je deviens viel, sourt et lourt;
Et quant me trewe en ennuy,
Non Chaloir est mon apuy,
Qui maintesfoiz ma secourt
Des soucies de la court.

(R. CCCXXVII, pp. 539-540).

An old Charles comes to rest, finally, much as a young one started out - only perhaps wiser and more sure of himself. As the young prince did, the old prince turns not to the society of men to find his place, and to justify his existence, but to nature and the world about him. The only marked difference between the young and the old mas is explained perhaps by the evolution of Merencolie and Nonchaloir. Instead of trying to change or escape from the ubiquitous touch of Merencolie, the old Charles gradually comes to accept it as inevitable, and lives in spite of it. His helpmate Nonchaloir grows from a doctor who patches the wounds, to a state of mind that allows him to live according to nature and to himself: neither embracing the passions of life, nor courting the flirtation of death, an old Charles finds peace at last in a quiet resignation.

In one of his very last poems Charles sums up much that he has said and felt, and writes it down from the "script of his thought" as he says, in its final form:

De Veillesse porte livrée
Qu'elle m'a, puis ung temps, donnee,
Quoy que soit contre mon desir,
Mais maulgre myen le fault souffrir,
Quant par Nature est ordonnee.

Elle est d'annuy si fort brodee,
Dieu scet que l'ay cheiere achatpee,
Sans guerrie d'argent de plesir:
De Veillesse porte livrée
Qu'elle m'a, puis ung temps, donnee,
Quoy que soit contre mon desir.
Par moy puist estre bien usee,
En eur et bonne destinee,
Et a mon soubett parvenir,
Tant que vivre puisse et mourir
Selon l'escript de ma pensee:

Here, if he has not found perfect peace, we at least sense the cessation
of his turmoil. He is resigned at last to his old enemy, Veillesse.
Though he would have preferred not to, he takes its mantle and accepts
that he must wear it. Though ennui is embroidered on this cloak, none-
theless he feels that he has worn it well. He has extracted what hap-
piness he could, and he will receive death as he has life - as his own
man. Most importantly though, he makes no mention of human society
in these final words; here, as so often before, he speaks not as a
prince, but as a man. As a man, and by the dictation of his own
thought, he resigns himself to take life and death as they come, because
it is the law of nature. Once again, and finally, he bypasses the
society of men to find and accept himself in the natural world. He,
who as a prince of men could easily wield power and laws in the secular
realm of society, renounces this and bows resignedly instead to the in-
evitable suffering of life "Quant par Nature est ordonne" (R. CCCCXXXIV,
pp. 543-544). Thus he dies as he lived, not as a prince defined by a
social code, but as a lone man, shaped and defined by the physical
world and dominated by the laws of nature.

In the light of all we have said in these chapters, it is time
to examine again the proposition that Charles d'Orléans should be ap-
preciated as a lyric, not a courtly, poet. We feel that the numerous
examples of his work cited and discussed in this study give credence
to this view: Charles attempted to live and to understand life es-
sentially outside the confines of structured society. Though in his
poetry, as in his life, he did not openly rebel against all conven-
tion and form, he resigned himself to it and sought to live and create,
as much as possible, in an intensely personal and private way.

Thus in a larger view it is perhaps not inappropriate to compare
Charles with poets of a different age rather than with his own con-
temporaries. This of course, has been done, and we feel with valid-
ity. Because of the similarities of their declining societies and the sense of decadence that carried over to their respective art forms, Charles d'Orléans has often been compared to certain poets of the second half of the 19th Century. We, of course, have already found certain things in common between Charles and Baudelaire: their sense of mal, the preoccupation with ennuy, and the development of the malady of the body and spirit that is spleen.

It is common, too, however, to view Charles in light of the entire Symbolist movement, or to compare him to individual Symbolist poets. He has been variously compared to Gautier, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Laforgue. Of all these, we would tend to see the most valid similarities between our poet and Verlaine. Pierre Champion is perhaps right when he proposes that, "les voix musicales et grêles, dont l'écho se reconnaît encore dans les Fêtes Galantes de Verlaine, peuvent se réclamer de notre poète." Beyond the music of their poetry, however, there seems to be a bond of sadness and an innate simplicity that links the two poets. And certainly, long before Verlaine wrote "Vos âmes est un paysage choisi," Charles just as skillfully blended the inner and outer worlds into the paysage intérieur of his boys de Merencolie and his forest de Longue Actente.

It is, though, the theme of melancholy that brings the poets together yet separates them at the same time. Both are poets of melancholy and in a sense are haunted by it. Verlaine, however, is a poet of autumn, and his melancholy is cast in the sweet sadness of lingering sunlight and falling leaves. Charles is a poet of winter, and for all his preoccupation with nature never, curiously, speaks of autumn. For him, then, melancholy seems allied only with winter, as it opposes spring and summer. With no hint of any mellowness or nostalgic longing, his melancholy plunges him directly into the dark cold of winter and old age, without ever letting him linger in the bitter-sweet shadows of Fall. Thus, once again Melancholy sets Charles apart, even from Verlaine, with whom at first glance he would seem to have that very trait in common.
In the final analysis, though, Charles d'Orléans as a lyric and unique poet must be understood and appreciated only for himself. His uniqueness stands out best perhaps against the backdrop of his own age and the poetic tradition in which he found himself. We have pointed out innumerable examples of his poetic originality. This may be further corroborated by a final, brief look at the form and style of his poetry.

As we know, the two major poetic forms he employed were the ballade and the rondeau. Generally the ballade corresponds to his earlier works. Its triptych-like form and linear design, with a repetition of the refrain at the end of each stanza, parallels Charles's own structural and linear tendencies. Particularly in the earlier years he sought a sense of definition in form and of meaning in linear progression, as we have suggested in Chapter V. The sharp break between the ballade and the rondeau, however, corresponds perhaps to a basic change in outlook.

The rondeau, rather than projecting any straight-forward sense of progression, turns in a circular way back upon itself. This is consistent with Charles's own evolution of thought, and thus particularly in his later years, the rondeau appears to be his ideal form of expression. That he adapts this form to himself to become his only personal mode of expression is a lyric triumph as well as a triumph of artistic craftsmanship.

When Poirion declares, apropos of the rondeau that:

L'équilibre du genre repond en effet à un équilibre social. Le poète a sa situation bien définie au sein de la cour: il fait partie du "cercle" littéraire. Dans le cas de Charles, il est naturel que le prince se situe au centre de ce cercle, au coeur même de la ronde.

we are inclined to disagree. It seems to us that the encirclement represents not a prince at the center of courtly society, but rather of a man in the center of his solitude, surrounded only by the world he can perceive and feel. The rondeau grows, with the poet, away from the artifices of society.
Finally, pared of any excess eloquence, the rondeau becomes a lean and taut expression of the poet's wariness of the world. The rapid pulse of the poet's feelings is best captured in its succinct, rhythmic flow as it never could be in the more elaborate ballade. Only as the rondeau becomes molded to his own, personal form of expression can Charles really give vent to his deepest feelings and fears:

Fiés vous y!
A qui?
En quoy?
Comme je voy,
Riens n'est sans sy.

Ce monde cy
A sy
Pou' foy.
Fiés vous y!

Plus je n'en dy,
N'escry,
Pour quoy?
Chascun j'en croy
S'il est ainsy;
Fiés vous y!    (R. XLI, p. 313).

And stripped to the essentials, nothing but a rondeau could so powerfully express man's place in the world and Charles's resignation to it, by accepting the laws of nature and the will of God:

Pense de toy
Dorenavant,
Du demourant
Te chaillé roy.
Ce monde voy
En epirant,
Pense de toy
Dorenavant.

Regarde et oy,
Va peu parlant,
Dieu tout puissant
Fera de soy.
NOTES

1  

2  
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3  

4  

5  
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