

CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY FEATURES OF THE SONGS

The texts of songs appearing in monophonic sources exhibit a number of literary features, which by their presence or frequency of appearance, serve to set the repertoire apart from some or all of contemporary courtly poetry. These traits, which will be discussed presently, include "rusticity" and "dimunitiveness", obscenity, regionalism, and special forms of repetition. Each of these aspects of monophonic song was recognized by contemporary rhetorical theory. And both rusticity and obscenity seem also to have been recognized by the general public, if allusions to them in the plays can be considered to indicate widespread recognition.

These literary features represent contemporary poetic issues. Their presence provides a means for determining, in literary terms of the times, whether a song might have been considered to belong to a special repertoire.

Rusticity

Henri de Croy, the rhetorical theorist, alludes to rusticity in two contexts. In Chapter 27 of his L'art de rhétorique,¹ he describes "another scheme for double ron-

¹Henry de Croy, "L'Art de Rhétorique," p. 321 in Ernest Langlois, Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1902. For a discussion of prosodic treatises and theorists in general, see below, pp. 236-41.

deaux which are called simple virelais because laymen put them into their rural songs like 'Gente de corps'."¹ This confusing passage only seems to make sense if the term "chanson rurale" is viewed as the equivalent of "strophic song". One of the chief distinctions between the texts of the monophonic songs and courtly poems is that the former are almost invariably strophic, whereas the latter are seldom so. With regard to virelai form itself, one can observe that in courtly texts, the virelai structure is presented only once: refrain, verse, refrain. In the monophonic repertoire, this structure is repeated by adding new verse sections in a strophic manner: refrain, verse, refrain, verse, refrain, verse, etc. Thus in courtly songs, a virelai structure is coterminous with the poem as a whole; in a monophonic song, the form is repeated strophically. In this way, de Croy's description of the virelai as a structure which is "put into" a rural song would be meaningful, for in the monophonic repertoire the virelai form is included within a larger, strophic framework, that is, it is a part of the whole, rather than the totality itself.

The example he provides has the following rhyme

¹"Autre taille de rondeaux doubles qui se nomment simples virelais pour ce que les gens lais les mettent en leurs chansons rurales comme 'Gente de corps.'" For the complete passage, see below pp. 272-74.

scheme:¹

Refrain	Verse	Refrain
a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁	e ₁ f ₂ a ₁ b ₂ g ₁ h ₂ i ₂ j ₁	a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁
J'ay mis mon cuer en une lourde, Qui est très belle baichelotte, Si non qu'elle a la mamelotte Aussi grosse que une cahourde.		a1 refrain b2 c2 d1
Pour ce que fine femme est sourde Quant ce vient à conter à l'oste, J'ay mis mon cuer en une lourde, Qui est tres belle baichelotte.		e1 verse f2 a1 b2
Savez vous pour quoy je me hourde D'une si faitte jone sotte? Pour ce que, quant je m'en assotte, Elle dist mainte belle bourde.		g1 h2 i2 j1
J'ay mis mon cuer en une lourde, Qui est très belle baichelotte, Si non qu'elle a la mamelotte Aussi grosse que une cahourde.		a1 refrain b2 c2 d1

As such it corresponds to many rondeau quatrains of the Ockeghem period.² However, certain aspects of this passage are suspect. First there is the false etymology of virelai which explains the "lai" portion by analogy with the term for laymen rather than with the poetic form, "lay", and neg-

¹Unless otherwise indicated, lower case letters represent lines of poetry. Thus aa implies that one line is repeated. Numerical subscripts represent the rhymes: a₁b₁ implies that lines a and b rhyme; a₁b₂, that they do not rhyme.

²See Eugénie Droz, Geneviève Thibault, and Yvonne Rokseth (eds.), Trois chansonniers français du XV^e siècle, Paris, E. Droz, 1927, nos. 2, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 30, 31, 36-41, 47.

lects the prefix "vire". And secondly, de Croy appears to have confused the rondeau and virelai forms which, though similar, are distinct.

None of the extant poems beginning "Gente de corps" corresponds exactly to the form described.¹ One song beginning "Gente de corps," B:47, belongs to the virelai type, having the following rhyme scheme:

Refrain	Verse	Refrain
a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁	e ₁ f ₂ g ₂ h ₁ i ₁ j ₂ k ₂ l ₁	a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁
Gente de corps, belle aux beaulx yeulx,		a1
Bouche riant, plaisante et belle,		b2
Sans rien blasmer, vous estes celle		c2
Que Dieu feist à mon gré le mieulx.		d1
Entre la terre ne les cieulx		e1
Il n'y a point tel damoyselle:		f2
La grant beaulté qui est en elle		g2
Si tient tousjours mon cueur joyeulx.		h1
Il seroit bien mal gracieux		i1
Qui n'aymeroit telle pucelle.		j2
La grant bonté qui sortist d'elle		k2
Resjouit tous ces amoureux.		l1
Gente de corps, belle aux beaulx yeux,		a1
Bouche riant plaisante et belle,		b2
Sans rien blasmer, vous estes celle		c2
Que Dieu feist à mon gré le mieulx.		d1

As such it is a variant of the "double virelai" form discussed later in de Croy's treatise,² a form which has the fol-

¹See Langlois, op. cit., note 1, p. 231, for a list of poems beginning with the words "Gente de corps."

²Langlois, op. cit., p. 249, Chapter 40.

lowing scheme:

Refrain	Verse	Refrain
a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁	e ₃ f ₄ g ₃ h ₄ i ₁ j ₂ k ₂ l ₁	a ₁ b ₂ c ₂ d ₁
Amours me tient pour son soudart		a1
Et je serviray à ses gaiges;		b2
Doulz Regart et Plaisans Langaiges		c2
Sont pourtrais en son estandart.		d1
Espoir me soustient le menton,		e3
Désir me donne hault voloir,		f4
Et Bien Celer est le baston		g3
Pour quoy je suis trop mieulx valoir.		h4
Qui n'est plain de science et d'art		i1
Ja n'y fera beaux vasselages,		j2
Mais pour ce que je suis volages		k2
Et que je sçay lanchier le dart,		l1
Amours me tient pour son soudart		a1
Et je serviray à ses gaiges;		b2
Doulz Regart et Plaisans Langages		c2
Sont pourtrais en son estandart.		d1

Such double virelais are frequent in the corpus of songs isolated in Chapter II.¹ There are two explanations for this passage then. Either de Croy considers all forms of the virelai type such as "Gente de corps" to be appropriate in chansons rurales. Or he considers only the simple virelai described in Chapter 27 to be fitting, and the song "Gente de corps" was altered during the period intervening between de Croy's composition of the treatise (ca. 1490) and the compilation of B (ca. 1510). Significantly, the author of Anon.

¹ See Chapter 6, below.

VII, in his re-edition of de Croy's treatise, leaves out the reference to "Gente de corps."¹ The omission in Anon. VII might then reflect dissatisfaction with the ambiguities in de Croy's work which arises from the citation of "Gente de corps". In either case, simple virelais seem to be associated with strophic songs, and possibly the whole virelai type.

The second context in which the notion of rusticity occurs in de Croy's treatise is that of rhyme, specifically the difference between rhyme and assonance. In "rime rurale" only a few letters (or phones) rather than a whole syllable correspond where there should be a full rhyme:

Amours me font par nuit penser
Ou je n'ose par jour aler

Of such rhymes de Croy remarks: "laisse les bregiers [sic; recte: bergiers] user de leur retorique rurale."² Both de Croy³ and the author of Anonymous VII⁴ group rime rurale with other prosodic vices, the so-called paltry ways of rhyming ("menues tailles"): rime en goret, where only one phone

¹ Anonymous VII, "L'Art et science de rhétorique," in Langlois, op. cit., pp. 291.

² Langlois, op. cit., p. 249, Chapter 40.

³ De Croy groups rime rurale with the menues tailles. See Langlois, op. cit., pp. 249-51, Chapters 40-46.

⁴ Anonymous VII similarly groups rime rurale with the menues tailles. See Langlois, op. cit., pp. 314-16, Chapters 58-64.

corresponds between rhyming syllables:

C'est le lit de nostre conte:
On le fait quant on se couche.

redicte en sens, needless redundancy:

Le sage homme ne doit aler
Trop fort, s'il ne veult ambuler

(The wise man ought not to go
Too fast, unless he wants to walk).

plate redicte, the use in rhymes of a single word with only one meaning:

Qui veult amis avoir,
Il fault argent avoir.

(If one wants to have friends
One should have money).

and baguenaude, verse lacking rhyme or reason (i.e., coherence)¹:

Qui veult très bien plumer son coq,
Bouter le fault en un houseau.
Qui boute sa teste en un saq,
Il ne voit goute par le trau.
Sergens prennent gens par le nez
Et moustarde par les deux bras. etc.

(If one wants to pluck his rooster
He should put it in pants.
If one puts one's head in a bag
One does not drink a drop by the (?).
Sergeants take people by the nose
And mustard in their two arms. etc.)

¹ Anonymous VII, in Langlois, op. cit., pp. 214-16, Chapters 60-64, omits the command to leave rural rhetoric to shepherds and the comment that such menues tailles are rejected by true craftsmen ("repulsés de bons ouvriers").

The theorist, Fabri, also warns against rithme de goret which he also terms "boutechouque." Such a manner of rhyming he says "is only approved among rural and ignorant people who make such poems to go to the mustard."¹ And he also

¹ Pierre Fabri, Le Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique (Alexandre Héron, ed.), Rouen, 1889-90. 3 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 27: "N'est approuvée que entre ruraulx et ignorans qui en font les dictz pour aller à la moustarde." He also ascribes boutechouque to ignorant mechanics ("mechaniques ignorans"). Some idea of the implications of "going to the mustard" can be had from the following passages: a) "Little children sang in the evening while going to the wine or to the mustard, all together:

Your _____ has a beard, gossip,
Your _____ has a beard, a beard"

(Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris ed. Tuety, 1414, p. 49, 992: "Chantoient les petiz enfans, au soir, en allant au vin ou à la moustarde, tous communement:

Vostre con a la toux, commère,
Vostre con a la toux, la toux."

cited in Louis Thuasne, ed., Francois Villon: Oeuvres, Paris, Auguste Picard, 1923, vol. 3, pp. 499-501);

b) "Item to Jacquet Cardon--nothing
Since I have nothing decent for him.
(Mind you, I won't abandon him),
Except perhaps this little song.
If it could have the tune of 'Marionette'
Composed for Marion la Peautarde
Or that of 'Open your door, Guillemette'
It might then serve for getting mustard."

(Francois Villon, Le Testament (ed. & trans., Anthony Bonner), New York, David McKay, 1960, ll. 1776-83:

"Item, riens à Jacquet Cardon,
Car je n'ay riens pour luy d'honneste.
(Non pas que le gette habandon),
Si non ceste bergeronnette;
S'elle eust le chant 'Marionette'
Fait pour Marion la Peautarde
Ou d' Ouvrez vostre huys, Guillemette,
Elle allast bien à la moustarde;")

Children who go to the mustard
Sing of you [a prostitute] at the crossroads.

(M. Schwob, Le Parnasse Satyrique du XV^e siècle, Paris, 1905, no. XXV, p. 81 of a prostitute :

Enfans qui vont à la moustarde
Chantent de vous aux carrefours.)

associates baguenaudes with rural rhetoric. They are, according to Fabri, for rural fellows ("ruraulx compaignons").¹

The use of assonance or partial rhyme rather than true, leonine or rich rhyme is to be found in monophonic sources² as is the occasional lack of reason.³ However, complete absence of rhyme, as in the examples cited by the theorists, is never found.

Not only the theorists recognized that there was a rural way of rhyming. In the farce Un Vendeur de Livres,⁴ an important document of contemporary issues of the popular press and obscenity, the outraged women comment on the inferior literary quality of some of the poetry the vendor offers for sale. To the salesman's question regarding La Gesine de Saine: "Is it not well fashioned or rhymed?" , the second woman answers: "And who was the devil that printed it? It has neither rhyme nor reason."⁵ Later the first woman remarks about some pieces of obscene literature: "There

¹ Fabri, op. cit., p. 27.

² See Appendix, passim.

³ See, for example, 90(a):21.

⁴ Dated ca. 1515-20 in Philipot, loc. cit.

⁵ Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 40: "Voyés La Gesine de Saine. / Est-el pas bien faicte et rimée?"

is no subtlety, neither of quantity nor measure; neither is there good nor pretentious art in them."¹

What de Croy and Fabri implied by the term "rurale", that is, the connotations of rusticity, can be determined by an examination of the plays and songs. Rusticity in the plays is often associated with folly. Among the country people depicted in Le Retraict is Guillot who announces himself -- probably in song -- with an allusion to a coxcomb or fool's cap: "Ture lu tu tu, tu tu, tu tu,/Ture le tu tu, chapeau poinctu."² In Ung qui se fait examiner, the son, when asked what he wants to do, describes to his mother a pastoral retreat: "I want .../To play in the shade of a thicket [the site of many monophonic songs]/Singing a song," to which she replies: "You are nothing but a fool."³ And the scholar in Les Batards de Caulx describes the farm-boy, Henry, as "the most foolish of his line."⁴ Other plays,

¹"Et n'y a ne pié ne mesure/Setile, ne bon art ne vaine."

²Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. III, no. 53, p. 5. See Brown, Music in the French secular theater, Catalogue no. 393, pp. 277 f. on the survival of this distich as a children's rhyme.

³"Je veulx . . ./Iouer à l'ombre d'un buisson/En chantant quelque chanson." "Tu n'es c'un fol." Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. III, no. 57, p. 10.

⁴"Le plus fol de son lignaige." Ibid., Vol. IV, no. 73.

such as Le Poulrier employ rural settings or characters. However, bumpkins need not come from the countryside exclusively. Galop, one of the two displaced mercenaries in Marchebeau et Galop, points with apparent pride to the fact that they are not only frank, strong and bold, but also "bumpkins, in both word and deed,/Without eloquence, knowledge or memory."¹

A rural setting is also associated with illicit sexual exploits. The miller in Deux Gentilzhommes conspires to get money by having his wife surrender to the gentlemen and then interrupting their adulterous pursuits near the chicken-coop.² And the son's song in La Bouteille describes the conventional nocturnal visit as an entrance "by the door of the sheepfold's shelter."³

The connotations of folly and illicit eroticism are topics for mockery in the plays. However, the truly pastoral life is an object of admiration. In Mestier et Marchandise the "berger des chans"⁴ is depicted as "always gay

¹ Fournier, op. cit., p. 41: "Rustres et en faicts et en dis/Sans engin, science et memoire."

² Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. II, no. 27. The reference to a chicken-coop in B:37 could also be part of a sexual metaphor.

³ Ibid., Vol. III, no. 46: "Par l'huys/En l'estable de la bergerye."

⁴ Fournier, op. cit., p. 48. Note the pun on "champs" and "chants". Similarly one of the types of ballade is known at the time either as "champ royal" or "chant royal".

healthy, poor, joyous, and nice."¹ Asked for his reactions to urban life, he replies that in the city he is "at his wits' end," and bemoans the "troubled climate" of urban life.² Thus there is a paradox in the French Renaissance view of rusticity. On the one hand it is considered to be vicious, and is associated with folly and illicit sex. On the other, it is considered to be a respite from the turmoils of urban life. Nowhere is the paradox of the rustic more telling than in the prologue to Rabelais' Gargantua, (Book I, 1534 or 1535). Here Socrates is described as a man who was "deformed in body, ridiculous in his gesture, wearing the countenance of a fool, simple in his carriage, boorish in his apparel, poor in wealth and unhappy in his wives, unfit for all offices, always laughing, tippling,..." This, however, was only his external appearance for which one "would not have given a slice of onion." Beneath this can be seen his "divine wisdom". There one would find "a heavenly and inestimable drug, superhuman understanding, marvelous virtue, invincible courage, unequalled sobriety, sure contentment, and perfect assurance."³ Possibly, then, the justification for the elite classes' interest in "rural" song at this time has a metaphysical basis

¹ "Tousjours gay sain, povre, joyeux, et gent."

² "Au bout de son sens." "Temps brouille."

³ After Sir Thomas Urganhart and Peter Motteux (ed., trans.), The Complete Works of Doctor Francois Rabelais, London, 1927, vol. I, pp. xxxiif.

in the alleged unity of opposites such as the pastoral and the urban, the rustic and the urbane, and even "appearance" and "reality".

Diminutiveness

Fabri, the rhetorical theorist, introduces an important idea into French literary theory when he states that diction or "la stille" should be appropriate to the subject matter to which it is applied. Thus choice of words should differ depending on whether one is speaking of plowmen, clerks, or other kinds of people.¹ Fabri distinguishes three levels of subject matter and diction: high, medium, and low.² The last might involve discussions of family life, little children, little flowers, shepherds, cowherds and so on. Positive and diminutive terms, as opposed to comparatives and superlatives, should be used in such situations. Examples of such terms are "brebiettes," "mignonnes bergiers," "chansonnettes," and "petitz oyseaux."³ Such diction is described as "meager and frivolous."⁴ Diminutives diminish the substance of the subject matter or the dignity of the

¹ Fabri, op. cit., p. 22.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., loc. cit., "Mesgre et frivolle."

person described by them. Thus Fabri criticizes those who in search of a rhyming word refer to the Virgin as a "bergerette" or as a "pucellote" instead of using the more dignified term "pucelle."¹

Diminutives occur often in the monophonic songs. The most frequent one used is "rossignolet" signifying a small nightingale.² This usually appears in the last stanza of a poem where the nightingale is asked to serve as a messenger between the lover and his loved one. Another frequent diminutive is the adjective "mignonne"³ or, in its masculine form, "mignon".⁴ A number of other diminutives are found which do not recur as often: aignelet,⁵ amourette,⁶ bergeronnette,⁷ chansonnette,⁸ chapellet,⁹ doulcette,¹⁰

¹ Ibid., loc. cit.

² See 90(a):3, 6, 11, 24, 30, 35; 53:2; A:5, 18, 27, 67, 72, 77, 106, 117, 120, 121, 123, 124, 132, 139.

³ See 90(a):1, 29; 53:12; A:75.

⁴ See 53:21; A:88.

⁵ 90(a):3.

⁶ A:139.

⁷ A:18, 27.

⁸ BA 3653:10, BN 2368:7, 52.

⁹ See 90(a0):29; A:4, 8.

¹⁰ See 90(a):3.

jardinet,¹ jeunette,² or oysillon.³ Names are also diminished.⁴ In both cases the people so named are shepherds or shepherdesses. Implied diminution of status also occurs. In 90(a):2 a "garson" is contemptuously described by his uncooperative lover as one who does not know how to wipe his nose. And in Le Bateleur the instruction: "mouchés vos nez" is given to a number of "petits enfants."⁵ The girl friend's assertion thus implies her lover is less competent in matters of personal hygiene than small children.

Generally the persons or things chosen to be treated diminutively are already of low status: young lovers, girls, shepherdesses, domesticated animals, items of apparel, parts of the body, gardens, thickets, birds and songs. The use of diminutives in the songs is, then, usually consistent with the subject matter. In some noëls, however, there is occasionally a discrepancy between diction and subject matter.

¹See 90(a):3; A:27; BA 3653:21.

²A:22.

³See 90(a):30; 53:13; BN 2368:7; A:109, 67.

⁴A:1, Marionette for Marion; A:6, Loÿset for Loÿs (i.e., Louÿs = Louis).

⁵Fournier, op. cit., p. 325.

For example, Christ is referred to as "roy nouvellet" rather than a "roy nouvel."¹ Nevertheless, such instances are rare.

The notion of diminutiveness arises from the recognition of a cosmic hierarchical order. This is matched in turn by an order of diction which is appropriately "large" or "small." Such an order and its implications for art works were recognized not only by literary theory but also by courtier poets. In Chapter 82 of Molinet's Roman de la rose moralisé, a passage occurs which shows the application of a similar linear model to musical values. Here Fortune is depicted as raising a person of low degree (estat) who is represented as a poor minim upward in the scale "au plus haut de la game, tant augmentée et de sy grant valeu" that the poor minim becomes one of the largest durations possible, "une grande maxime, portant une bien longue queue." There he sings "à haulte voix 'Le Serviteur hault guerdonné.'" Fortune, seeing that he is reveling in his new estate (estat), says to her chamber-maids: "Là, là, là, faictes luy bonne chièr." Thereupon her victim descends "de hault en bas" and Fortune teaches him to sing discant and to diminish "so lightly and softly that his voice was no longer heard."² A key to this passage is that "Le Serviteur" is a

¹ BA 3653:21; BN 2368:7.

² Quoted in Helen Hewitt (ed.), Canti B, pp. 57 f.

polyphonic song of courtly provenance by Ockeghem. and "La, la, la, faictes luy bonne chiere" is probably a monophonic song by an anonymous tunesmith.¹ According to Molinet's metaphor, then, high pitches, loud tones, long durations, and polyphonic songs are associated with high estate. With low (poure) status are associated low pitches, soft tones, short durations, and monophonic songs. Thus, from the point of view of courtly poets and theorists, there seems to have been an isomorphism between social estate and musical style.

Finally, an association of greater length with higher status is found in the theory of prosodic weight. In a pair of telling statements, the author of Anonymous VII describes a long strophe of twelve or fourteen lines as "très richement décorée et pondéreuse"² and as "pondéreuse et grave."³ Opposed to richness are such meagre types of rhyme ("menues tailles") as rime rurale and rime de goret (rural and pig rhyme).⁴ Monophonic song which specializes in short strophes

¹An arrangement of the Busnois chanson appears in Hewitt's edition of Odecaton as no. 35. Concordances for the piece are listed on pp. 145 f. of the same edition. Also cf. "Faisons bonne chere," in A:21, and "La, la, la, faictes luy bonne chière", in Canti B, no. 27 in a setting by Ninot le Petit.

²Very richly decorated and weighty." Langlois, op. cit., p. 278, Chapter 21.

³"Weighty and grave." Ibid., p. 279, Chapter 22.

⁴Ibid., p. 316, Chapter 64.

of two to four lines and medium length strophes of about eight lines¹ can thus be seen as a prosodically "lighter" or "less rich" genre than that of art poetry which seeks heaviness and rich decoration. The distinctions presented by Fabri, Molinet, and the author of Anonymous VII appear to reflect the dichotomy between monophonic song and courtly poetry and polyphony of the period. In contrast with courtly poetry, the monophonic songs more often deal with lowly subjects -- except in the noëls -- and use diminutives, shorter strophes, and meager types of rhyme.² With respect to music, monophonic songs seem more frequently to employ shorter durations than polyphonic settings of courtly poetry.³ The validity of Molinet's association of loudness with polyphony as opposed to softness in monophony cannot be checked: the only reference to the dynamics of monophonic performance practice is indirect, consisting as it does of the previously mentioned description of ladies singing "secreto" and "sub ocio", which could be taken to imply a quiet style of singing.⁴ However, this reference is to noëls and Molinet's remarks seem to be restricted to secular

¹See below, Chapter 6.

²See above, note 60.

³See below, chapter 4.

⁴See above, chapter 2.

monophonic song. Finally not enough is known about the pitches at which monophonic songs were sung. Many of the tunes are notated in a tenor range but even these might have been performed an octave higher as the performances of young and female characters in the plays suggest. Nevertheless, what is known of the two styles suggests that, especially with regard to textual matters, these writers' stereotypes are borne out on the whole by observable differences between the monophonic and courtly repertoires.

Obscenity

Under the heading of barbarism, Fabri censures the use of "terms deshonnestes", obscenities common in the spoken vernacular and slang, but inappropriate in the rhetoric he is teaching. He provides as an extreme example of mixing levels of diction and subject matter, a scatological address to a magistrate.¹

Obscenity was an issue not only in literary theory but among readers of popular literature generally. The salesman in Un Vendeur de livres² lists among his wares La grande farce des femmes qui ont la langue arse quand ilz blasonnent leurs marys; Les Regrectz des marys; Les Dis rimés de mariage qui se plainct de ce qu'il y a coqu mainct;

¹Loc. cit.,

²Fournier, op. cit., p. 114.

Le Testament Pierre, maistre de ceulx qui ont le feu au cul.

To this the women reply: "Cela est infaict." They cast aspersions on the authors, "ces quocardeaulx qui font balades, chansons, rondeaulx tant disolus et tant difames que n'en desplaie aux bonnes femmes et gens de bien."¹

In other plays there are frequent references not only to sexual organs, intercourse, and adultery, but also to bodily functions. A favorite device is metaphor. Thus, female sex organs are equated with doors. In the farce of the Amoureux qui ont les botines Gaultier, Gaultier discovering that he has been cuckolded says "il est temps de fermer son [his wife's] huis."² The Abbess's guests in L'Abeese inquire about the sexual safety of the nuns by asking (in song): "Vos huys sont-ils tous fermés?"³ Male genitals are also treated metaphorically. Tretaulde in Jehan de Lagny speaks of a villainous, dishonest sot who brags "qu'il l'avoyt aussi dur c'un os."⁴ In some cases one wonders

¹"The great farce of women who have long arses when they herald their husbands; Regrets of husbands; Rhymed poems of marriage which complains about there being much cuckoldry; The Testament of Pierre, master of those whose rear ends are on fire." "This is obscene." "Those fools who made ballades, chansons and rondeaux so dissolute and amoral that they are not pleasing to good women and people of worth. Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. II, no. 40.

²"It is time to shut up her door." Cohen, op. cit., no. IX.

³"Are your doors all shut?" Le Roux de Lincy and Michel, op. cit., Vol. II, no. 37, p. 18.

⁴"His is as hard as a bone." Ibid., Vol II, no. 31.

whether the literal meaning or a metaphorical one is intended. For example, Guillot in Le Retraict threatens his wife as follows: "D'un baston rouge comme un fer chault/Soyés batue toute nue."¹ Scatological remarks and actions are not avoided in the plays. The Badin in Femme et badin urinates and later reports that he must drain the urinal. And in the farce of the Trippière, Rolhiart sings the following ditty: "Ce trou du cul me boutonne/Je ne sçay si flourira./ Il viendra une prune/Que Male Fin mengera."²

In the monophonic songs, circumstances surrounding illicit sexual acts are described by means of formulas. The lovers are typically in a bedroom,³ lying⁴ on a bed,⁵ holding each other⁶ in their arms⁷ and one or both is completely naked.⁸ Preliminaries to love-making such as un-

¹ "With a stick that is red like a hot iron/May you be beaten, completely naked." Ibid., Vol. III, no. 53.

"This hole in my behind is breaking out;/I do not know whether it will blossom./It will bring forth a plum,/Which Bad End will eat." Cohen, op. cit., no. LII.

³ "Chambre," 90(a):35.

⁴ "Couché," 90(a):16, 32, 36; 12:2.

⁵ "Sur un lit," 90(a):11; B:2.

⁶ A form of "tenir" is used in 90(a):11, 36.

⁷ "Entre les bras," 90(a):11, 32, 36; 12:2, 5; A:111, 133; B:34.

⁸ "Toute nue," 12:2, 5; B:20.

dressing are described.¹ Sometimes the inevitable consequences of sexual activity, namely pregnancy and the attendant social disgrace are mentioned.²

Genitals are described outright only occasionally in the songs.³ More often metaphor is used; a woman's sex organs are equated with a door -- just as in the plays;⁴ a furrow;⁵ an entrance or wicket;⁶ a lock.⁷ And a man's scrotum is equated with a billiard ball.⁸ At times the analogy is obscure, as in the gentil rustre's reference to his ink and paper in 90(a):24.

Sometimes a metaphor is sought for the entire sex act. For example, in one song the woman asserts of her lover that "il n'est ouvrier que luy de ce mestier joly que l'on fait sans chandelle."⁹ B:59 depicts a French girl as a fortress

¹ An extended episode in 90(a):38. A lover puts his hand under a girl's coat in A:21 and touches her pectoral region in A:7 and 134.

² In 90(a):39; 12:2.

³ See 53:7, 11; A:11, 134, 142 for a description of a woman's tetins and 53:7 for a description of her con.

⁴ "Huys," 90(a):3, 4, 12.

⁵ "Roye," 90(a):28.

⁶ "Guichet," 53:2, 7.

⁷ "Serrure," 53:2.

⁸ "Billiard", 90(a):28.

⁹ 90(a):36, and A:118.

to be laid siege to or penetrated. By far the most developed sexual metaphor in either the plays or songs is that presented in B:9. Here the singer complains that he has tilled the field so hard that his plow is worn out. He recounts that he has two oxen and a red colt who know how to pull together, but that the horse has a heart so vain that he is nearly dead. The plowman thus decides both to let his land go fallow since he wants the fruit, and to rub down his horse. He speaks further of the edge of a valley which he has often plowed. Finally he concludes that he would willingly plow all the time, whether in winter or summer.

Certainly, obscenity is prevalent in the monophonic songs, but it is not a definitive trait. "Soft-core" bedroom scenes abound in the rhymed missives which male and female courtiers sent to one another, and at least one collection of anonymous poetry, which seems not to have been set to music, is filled with references that can only be described as graphic and explicit.¹ It seems, thus, that obscenity is consistent with diminutive subject matter and minor poetry in general.

Regionalism

Several of the monophonic songs betray a provincial provenance. This is in contrast to other French poetry of

¹See Schwob, ibid.

the time which appears to have originated in the great metropolises such as Paris and Lyon or the secular courts. A special category of songs comprises those associated with the valley of Vire in Normandy. Altogether five songs mention Vire or the Vau (=Val) de Vire.¹ Two of these complain of the English pillaging and collecting money. Also mentioned in these two are Saint-Gire and the white livery of the Norman defenders. Both thus point to the English rape of the Norman countryside at the end of the Hundred Year's War, and one seems to indicate the existence of a uniformed resistance movement. The third song simply describes a woman as "la plus belle du Vau-de-Vire."² The fourth refers to a number of adventurous varlets from Vire. Another six songs seem to be Norman in origin or at least ambiance. One, B:3 (=A:68), refers to the pillage in Normandy, and another, B:40 (=A:56), praises Olivier Basselin, leader of the Norman resistance and mentions a town in the Vire valley, Saint-Lo-en-Cotentin. B:62 deals with the English pillage of French lands without, however, referring to any places in Normandy. The second strophe of B:57 is in praise of an otherwise unidentified "seneschal de Normandie." In B:64, oral tradition seems to have replaced the original Saint-Gire with Saint-Jame. The former accords better with the rhyme scheme.

¹B:14, 37, 38, 45; A:42.

²"The fairest of the Vire valley."

Finally, Rouen is mentioned in the Bayeux version of "Puisque Robin" (B:65) though this reference is missing in the version A:1, and Briand's timbre for the noël "Plaisante fleur, chose tant adorée" is as follows: "Sur une chanson du Vau de Vire: Plaisante fleur, etc." (probably A:37).

In plays of the time, two references are made to vaux-de-vire. In Le Bateleur the public singers are depicted as singing "chans de Vire."¹ In La Condemnacion de Bancquet (ca. 1500, pub. 1507) a rubric indicates that "icy dessus sont nommez les commencements de plusiers chansons tant de musique que de vaul de ville."² The list of songs includes a number that could well be considered "de musique":³ "Quant ce viendra" with a text by Busnois, "D'Ung aultre amer" set by Ockeghem and de Orto, "Allez regretz" with a text by Jean II de Bourbon and set musically by Hayne, Agricola, Senfl, and others, etc. All of these are courtly texts, for the most part rondeaux, set to music by the foremost composers of the present and preceding generation. Under heading of vaul de ville can be grouped the following: "J'ay mis mon cueur," which appears in B, is used as a timbre

¹ Fournier, op. cit., p. 325.

² "Directly above are named the incipits of several songs, both musical songs and vaudevilles."

³ See Brown's discussion of the terms "musicale" and "de musique" in his article, "The Chanson rustique," pp. 17-19.

for a noël, and appears in an a3 setting by Gascogne in Cambridge 1760; "Mon seul plaisir" which in its quodlibet form appears in A; "Jamais mon cœur joye n'aura" which was cited in a farce; and "Gentil fleur de noblesse" which was used as a timbre and appears in a combinative chanson.¹

Whatever its origins, a vau-de-Vire or vaul-de-ville could, ca. 1500, be performed by batelleurs in the streets or professional musicians at a banquet. It seems to have become a generalized term for songs which were monophonic in origin. And the shift from "vire" to "ville" had been made. Nevertheless, its geographical connotations of a song from Normandy, especially one dealing with the heroic resistance to the English, had not died out and were still alive in the repertoire when B was compiled (ca. 1510).

Other songs show a preoccupation by the collectors or poets with regional dialects. Throughout his treatise, Fabri comments on the barbarisms of regional dialects. In Maine, for example, the word "alloyent" rhymes with "souv-vent;" in other regions the last syllable is elided: "alloynt."² In Lower Normandy the phrase "Dieu soit avec vous" is rendered as "Dieu starvous."³ In the same region

¹ See Brown, Music in the French secular theatre, Catalogue nos. 194, 298, 190 and 139, respectively.

² Fabri, op. cit., II, p. 7.

³ Ibid., II, p. 122.

"ou estes-vous" is pronounced "ou estous," and in Picardy "nostre maistre" comes out as "no maistre."¹ Under the heading of "dyphthongue Picard" are ranged words not heard beyond the suburbs of cities or villages of a dialect region.² Fabri cautions his readers to avoid such regional forms.³ He further warns against mixing foreign words or pronunciations with French ones in a single poem. The examples cited are of Breton or Flemish mixed with French. (Macaronic mixtures of Latin and French are, however, excepted as fully acceptable.)⁴

Examples of dialect are not difficult to find in plays and monophonic songs of the time.⁵ The third scholar in Le Maistre d'escolle bids his fellows to sing "des chansons du pays" from which they come, mentioning as he does "des escolliers de landoque (=Languedoc.)"⁶ Among the sec-

¹Ibid., II, p. 114.

²Loc.cit.

³Ibid., II, p. 26.

⁴Ibid., II, p. 117.

⁵ On the use of dialect in the plays, see Halina Lewicka, Etudes sur l'ancienne farce Francaise, Paris, Klincksieck, 1974. On this point, see Stephen d'Irsay, Histoire des universités francaises et étrangères des origines à nos jours, Paris, Auguste Picard, I, 217.

⁶ The original "landoque" is probably a misprint. Substitution of "Languedoc" makes the line a feminine one of nine syllables in accordance with the surrounding lines.

ular monophonic songs are found examples in the dialects of Provence,¹ Gascony,² and Savoy.³ The dialect of Poitou is frequently used in the noëls.⁴ There is even a "noël en escossois," a French noël rendered in a Scottish accent, and still more extreme is the use of Basque.⁵ The latter appears in a single phrase which serves as the refrain of a ballade. Here, the words spoken by a Basque girl are incomprehensible to her lover and his resulting frustration forms the song's theme.

Just as rural ways of rhyming are distinctive of the monophonic repertoire, so too are rural, "north country" settings. However, the use of dialect is not restricted solely to monophonic songs of the time: as was mentioned above, the Jardin de Plaisance contains two examples of poems en escossois.⁶ Nevertheless, such regional traits are much less frequently encountered in courtly poetry than in monophonic

¹ A:104.

² 90(b):12; A:119.

³ A:96.

⁴ BA 3653:48, 49, 50; BN 2368:32, 37, 42, 45, 46; BA 10650¹:16, 17.

⁵ BA 10650¹:15; A:7.

⁶ It should be noted that there was a Scottish college in the University of Paris at the time.

songs, and are to be found in miscellanies which are more varied in style than the great collections of courtly ron-deaux.

Repetition

Three concepts can be invoked to compare the uses of repetition in the repertoires of monophonic song and courtly poetry: prosodic position, contrast, and consistency. In courtly poetry, repetitions are effected in relatively contrasting positions of the prosodic scheme. In the poetry of monophonic songs, repetition tends to occur in analogous or parallel positions. Beyond positional contrast, courtly poetry favors contrasts in meaning. The texts of monophonic songs on the other hand show a preference for semantic similarities. Finally, schemes of repetition are carried out consistently in courtly poetry, and inconsistently in the monophonic repertoire.

Art poetry makes the use of a number of prosodic artifices. In the theory of the time these are termed "rhetorics" or "verse modes."¹ The simplest of these is anaphora: starting two or more verses with the same word.² Here, repetition involves similarity of position. A relation of

¹ De Croy, "L'Art et science," in Langlois, op. cit., p. 219, Chapter 8, and p. 247, Chapter 38.

² Fabri, op. cit., p. 128.

phonetic identity holds among similar positions characterized by being at the beginnings of lines. It also involves semantic similarity. The phonetically identical words are also identical in meaning. Anaphora is found throughout all kinds of poetry at the time. The following example illustrates its use in the monophonic repertoire:¹

Adieu, ma dame, ma mignonne,
Adieu, vous dy piteusement.

An extension of anaphora is incremental repetition.² Here, more than a single word can be involved and the unit of repetition can be a whole strophe or stanza rather than a mere line. Incremental repetition is common in the monophonic repertoire and rare in courtly poetry. The following stanzas of a monophonic song illustrate the device:³

J'ay ung billard
Dequoy biller souloye,
Mais mon billard (etc.)

and J'ay ung cognin
Qui est bordé de soye,
Mais mon cognin (etc.).

¹ 90(a):28. See also 90(a):38; 53:33; 11:2; BA 106492:4.

² The term incremental repetition was coined by Gummere to describe a technique in the verse of folk ballads. See "Incremental repetition" in Maria Leach (ed.), Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, New York, Funk & Wagnall's, 1949-50, 2 Vols., Vol. I, p. 515.

³ 90(a):28. See also 90(a):38; 53:33; 11:2; BA 106492:4.

Direct repetition is a distinctive feature of the monophonic songs. Significantly it tends to occur in refrains rather than in verses, the refrain being a traditional location for exceptional prosodic structures.¹

Mauldit soit le petit chien,
Qui aboye, aboye, aboye,
Qui aboye et ne voit rien.

A number of especially odd artifices are found in courtly poetry. In "vers brisiez" ("broken verses") the end of a hemistich rhymes with the end of a full line, so that a relation of phonetic identity obtains between contrasting prosodic positions. Such broken verse also appears in the monophonic repertoire, as in the following example:²

Mon cueur chagrin, endurer je ne puis,
 Arriere tout soucy, tristesse et ses apuis,
 En amour suis trop ardente et soudaine.

and later

Et mon gent corps si est de maintes gens repris
 Parquoy mes dis Sur toutes souveraine.

Though found in both repertoires, this artifice is employed differently in the two genres. In monophonic song it

¹ For example, in French folk song of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, normal text underlay is abandoned in refrains. See Jay Rahn, "Text Underlay in Gagnon's Collection of French Canadian Folk Songs," Canadian Folk Music Journal, 4 (1976), pp. 3-14.

² From "Maulgré danger/Pompera Magdalène" (90(a):13), which can be considered an alternation of ten- and twelve-syllable lines. See also 90(a):11, 37, and 90(b):12.

appears only sporadically, never being carried out consistently throughout a poem as it is in elite poetry.

Other special devices of courtly poetry make use of équivocques, words which are phonetically similar but semantically different, in other terms, homonyms.¹ Equivocal relations often occur between words at the ends of lines. In such cases there is no positional contrast, but rather a semantic one. The monophonic counterpart of such equivocal rhyme is rime plate ("flat rhyme"). The latter is considered to be "vicious" in courtly poetry.² The only difference between the two is that in flat rhyme no difference in meaning obtains between the repeated words. The following is an example of rime plate from the monophonic repertoire:

Pour me faire un dame aymer,
Car j'ay sentu le goust d'aymer.³

Rhétorique enchaynée ("enchained rhetoric") and

¹ Equivocques are defined by most of the theorists of the time. For example, Fabri, op. cit., p. 17 states that when "two or more lines have a last word such that two or more syllables sound the same, and such that these syllables have different meanings," one can speak of équivoques. ("Deux ou plusieurs lignes ont leur dernier terme de deux syllables ou plus entre eux commun, qui est entendu en plusieurs diverses et différentes significations.")

² See, for example, De Croy, "L'Art et science," in Langlois, op. cit., pp. 250 f., Chapters 45 and 46.

³ 90(b):5. See also 90(a):15; 11:3, 5, 7, 8; 12:3; 53:17, 28.

rhetorique à double queue ("double-tailed rhetoric") are forms of equivocal rhyme in which contrasting positions are used. In the chained type, the positions involved are the end of a line and the beginning of the next; in the double-tailed type, the last and penultimate syllables of a single line. Again, when such artifices are found in the monophonic repertoire, the rhyme falls flat, there being no contrast in meaning between the repeated words. Examples of chained rhyme include the song "Mon mary est allé au guect/Au guect, au guect" in its first lines and in a following stanza:¹

Que je suis allée à l'esbat,
Et à l'esbat.

Examples of double-tailed rhyme are rare in the monophonic repertoire. The following refrain from the play Grant Gosier is the only known example:

Ce vin qui est si bon don don.²

Significantly the semantic relations here are ambiguous.

"Don" can be considered a noun lacking an article, or a meaningless syllable fashioned to rhyme with the preceding "bon". Under neither interpretation can the rhyme produced be considered equivocal, and under both interpretations there is a

¹53:3. See also 90(a):14, 37, 38; 53:30; 11:7.

²Cohen, op. cit., no. XV.

lack of reason in the rhyming.

One can order the various artifices of poetry ca. 1500 along a line which proceeds from the relatively re-cherché to the relatively naive. At the esoteric end would appear equivocal rhymes and consistently broken verses which are found in professionally written poetry. At the other extreme would be flat rhymes and inconsistently broken verses which are found in monophonic song. In the middle are devices such as direct and incremental repetition typical of the monophonic repertoire. And in the center, the two practices meet in their common use of anaphora.

Conclusions

Literary theorists ca. 1500 recognized a number of features which could be found in monophonic song of the time. For the most part they recognized these traits in theory in order to censure their use in practice. However, their condemnation of these features must be understood in the light of the purpose which their treatises served, namely, to teach poets how to write in the highly complex forms which professional writers like Jean Molinet and Jean Lemaire de Belges produced. These theorists devote less space to the simpler forms such as the rondeaux which amateur poetasters cultivated at court and less still on forms and procedures which are found in monophonic songs. Nevertheless, they do not exclude the less "pretentious" forms from consideration,

for their view, biased though it is, includes almost every variety of poetry known to have existed at the time. Everything is included, but it is carefully assigned its proper place according to a hierarchical order in which groups of beings from birds and children through magistrates and divinities such as the Virgin are arranged from low to high parallel to similarly linear arrangements of diction and prosodic structure. According to this scheme, features are censured not so much outright, but rather when levels of the hierarchy are confused. Thus, for example, diminutives are not forbidden per se, but only when they are applied to high subject matter such as the Virgin rather than to low topics such as shepherdesses. These features are so closely associated with the monophonic repertoire that their presence in a song serves as an indicator of its distinctiveness. Nevertheless, these features are only symptoms. They do not explain the monophonic style functionally. Also, these symptoms are not found in every song isolated in Chapter II. Rather they are found here and there among the songs. In order to define the style of this repertoire one must discover the system which best interprets each song. Such a system would define a basic song type to which all the songs in the corpus can be considered to belong or of which they are all variants. Then the basic song type can be divided into a number of specific formal types. The basic song type is described in Chapter IV and the beginning of Chapter V. And specific formal types

are discussed in the remainder of Chapter V and in Chapter VI.