

Opposites and Identities: Maurice Scève's *Délie* and Charles de Bovelles's *Ars Oppositorum*

i) Opposition in Early Sixteenth-Century Poetry and Philosophy

Opposition is central to much early-sixteenth century writing in the domains of both poetry and philosophy. Love lyricists use antitheses to depict the lover's experience: opposites such as heat and cold, sickness and health, and fire and ice are extremely commonplace. Two very different conceptions of 'opposites' were available to philosophical prose: those of the Aristotelian square of 'opposites', and those which, in the thought of Nicholas of Cusa, coincide in the vision of the divine. In this essay, I will examine examples of both love poetry and prose philosophy: Maurice Scève's *Délie* (1544) and Charles de Bovelles's *Ars Oppositorum* (1511)¹ respectively. I intend to show that both texts, in their contrasting discursive domains, explore opposition and its relationship to difference, identity, and similarity; both

¹ The *Ars* was published together with a series of other works; it reworks and develops material from Bovelles's earlier *In Artem Oppositorum Introductio* (1501).

also challenge conceptions of difference and identity, expressing a particular interest in antithetical or binary pairs.

Stephen Murphy's fascinating article, 'Bovelles. Scève. Bruno. *Antiperistasis*', pointed to convergences between Bovelles and Petrarchist poetry in general as well as Scève's *Délie* in particular.² Murphy notes that in both Bovelles's theory and Petrarchist poetry opposites serve to intensify each other; in the case of poetry, the lover's *mal* means that his *bien* increases. Murphy further suggests that the *Délie* is particularly interesting because of its oft-noted evocation of *simultaneous* opposites (rather than cyclical ones), such as 'heureux souffrir' (pp. 43-6). Murphy then pursues other related concerns, analysing conceptions of opposition in Bruno's commentary on love poems in *De gli eroici furori*, and their movement towards mystical theology; however, opposites in the *Délie* – and their relationship to Bovelles's writing – are also very worthy of further study. Scève and Bovelles share an interest not only in the mutual intensification of opposites but also in the relationship between antithetical modes of difference and other kinds, as well as in the dynamic interactions between different pairs of opposites.

² *Allegorica* 14 (1993), pp. 39-52. See also Jacqueline Risset, *L'Anagramme du désir: Sur la Délie de Maurice Scève* (Paris, Fourbis, 1995), pp. 91-100; Doranne Fenoaltea, "Si haulte Architecture": *The Design of Scève's Délie* (Kentucky: French Forum, 1982), pp. 84-92.

ii) The Vocabulary of ‘Opposition’ in the *Ars Oppositorum* and the *Délie*

Bovelles’s *Ars Oppositorum* both employs and transforms the Aristotelian concept of *oppositio* (‘opposition’). The Aristotelian notion of a square of opposites is central to the *Ars* but Bovelles uses it very differently from more traditional Aristotelian writers.³ Bovelles’s square, like the Aristotelian one, is intended to produce knowledge. However, it differs from the traditional square concerning the types of ‘opposition’ involved in creating knowledge, as well as the sort of knowledge achieved.

The Aristotelian square of opposites was used to analyse the relationships of ‘opposition’ between propositions (statements), in order to determine how the possible truth or falsity of one or more propositions limited the possible truth or falsity of others. ‘Opposition’ did not carry its

³ For discussions of Bovelles’s *Ars*, see Maurice de Gandillac, ‘L’Art bovilien des opposés’, in *Charles de Bovelles en son cinquième centenaire 1479-1979: Actes du colloque international tenu à Noyon les 14-15-16 septembre 1979*, ed. by Jean-Claude Margolin (Paris: Guy Trédaniel, Éditions de la Maisnie, 1982), pp. 157-70; Joseph M. Victor, *Charles de Bovelles 1479-1553: An Intellectual Biography* (Geneva: Droz, 1978), pp. 73-87; and Jean-Claude Margolin, ‘Sur L’Art des opposés de Bovelles’, in *Logique et Littérature à la Renaissance: Actes du Colloque de la Baume-les-Aix, Université de Provence, 16-18 septembre 1991*, eds Marie-Luce Demonay-Launay and André Tournon (Paris: Champion, 1994), pp. 5-16.

modern everyday meaning of antithetical or absolute difference but rather referred to four contrasting kinds of differing, of which only the ‘contrary’ implies absolute difference (of the type existing between the propositions ‘all A is B’ and ‘no A is B’). Depending upon which of the particular ‘oppositions’ (or types of differing) held between propositions, particular inferences could be made: thus the square provided a logical basis for validating certain forms of argument regardless of whether the subject-matter concerned, for example, the mortality of men or the ingratitude of republics.

By contrast with traditional Aristotelian logicians, Bovelles inserts into his square of opposites not propositions (such as “all men are mortal”) but single terms such as “light”, “darkness”, “God”, “nothing”, “truth”, “falsity”, “unity” and “number”. Furthermore, Bovelles states in the opening paragraph of his first chapter that for him *oppositio* (*opposition*) refers not simply to the logicians’ four types of difference but rather to any sort of relationship between things: ‘we, by contrast [with the ‘dialecticians’], wish in this work to give a broader meaning to the term of opposition ... for although most things in existence seem not to have received from nature any contrariety or dispute, they are nevertheless called opposites with respect to

one another for the sole reason of their mutual relation'.⁴ Bovelles expresses this mutual relation in spatial terms which are characteristic of much of his discussion throughout the *Ars*.⁵ However, while being broader than logical categories of difference, it is clearly a relation of some kind of difference (or identity): Bovelles proceeds to discuss the sources of 'every difference and unity of things'.⁶ As in Aristotelian logic, consideration of oppositions can reveal knowledge about many disciplines, but for Bovelles (as he explains in his dedicatory address to François de Melun) this is because knowledge about one discipline can be gleaned from another, thanks to the

⁴ 'Nos vero hoc in proposito latius oppositionis nomen extendi volumus ... Nam tametsi pleraque entium nullam natura aut contrarietatem aut pugnantiam sortita esse videantur, opposita tamen invicem sola mutue relationis causa vocantur': ed. by Pierre Magnard, (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1984), p. 36. I refer throughout to Magnard's edition; translations into English are my own, although I have consulted Magnard's French translation.

⁵ 'we, by contrast, wish in this work to give a broader meaning to the term of opposition, to all those things, I say, which in any way you like are *placed facing each other* either by nature or by the understanding (*intellectus*), or which in whatever way you please are returned / referred each to the other, or which [*taken*] *from their own area* are *placed facing* each other, are *turned back towards* each other and *as if by the distance of some diameter* look at each other': 'Nos vero hoc in proposito latius oppositionis nomen extendi volumus, ad ea inquam cuncta, que quomodovis *contra sese* aut natura aut intellectu *statuuntur*, queve quomodolibet ad alterutrum *referuntur*, queve *regione sui* et adversum se *collocantur*, in seinvicem *convertuntur* et *velut quodam diametri interstitio* in alterutrum spectant' (p. 36, my italics)

⁶ 'omnis rerum differitas unitasque' (p. 38).

‘coincidence’ and ‘proportion’ of all opposites.⁷ The art of opposites thus gives rise to a creative movement of language, ‘a productive development of discourse’;⁸ as a result, it is even possible to use the human disciplines to ‘voice’ in some sense divine mysteries.⁹

Therefore Bovelles’s concept of ‘opposition’ is even broader than the Aristotelian one, which itself does not necessarily imply antithetical difference. For Bovelles, *oppositio* can mean simply the relation of two things to one another (or the placing of two things in relation to one another); *opposita* denotes the two things which are considered in relation to one another. However, many of the pairs of terms which Bovelles considers are in fact antithetical ones, binary pairs such as light and darkness. Furthermore, *oppositio* is used to denote the bringing together of antithetical terms such as *Deus* (God) and *nichil* (nothing). In this context *oppositio* is

⁷ p. 32. On gaining knowledge about different disciplines from the square, see also chapter 17.

⁸ ‘fecunda quedam orationis propagatio’ (p. 32). Insofar as he implies the conjunction of knowledge and discourse, Bovelles’s attitude to Aristotelian logic can be compared to that of logicians like Petrus Ramus. Bovelles repeats the idea of the *productivity* of his square: ‘Et per hec opposite equidistantiam et angulum sive intersectionem, *latissime* de cunctis oppositis philosophari’ (‘And through these opposites, parallelism and the angle or intersection, one can philosophise *extensively* on all opposites’, p. 66, my italics).

⁹ pp. 32-4. Later in Bovelles’s career, he moved further towards speculative theology, and what Lefèvre d’Etaples called ‘intellectual’ philosophy (that is, philosophy based in intuition rather than reason): see Victor, pp. 54-5.

aligned with *lis* (conflict), *bellum* (war), and *discordia* (discord; p. 56). Although Bovelles has said that ‘opposites’ can be any terms in relation with one another, *oppositio* also comes to signify antithetical and conflictual difference. *Oppositio* equivocates between denoting, on the one hand, any relationship between two terms, and, on the other hand, a relationship of conflictual binary difference, of ‘discord’ and ‘war’. The term *opposita* carries similarly contrasting meanings. Thus Bovelles’s vocabulary confuses antithetical difference with other kinds of difference and of similarity. Kinds of difference cannot be clearly categorised as they are in Aristotelian logic, and antithetical difference cannot be clearly distinguished from other kinds. Bovelles not only broadens the concept of *oppositio* but also troubles its conceptual boundaries. Indeed Bovelles sometimes discusses the very terms ‘same’ (*idem*) and ‘opposite’ (*oppositum*) – alongside his discussion of other pairs such as ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ – and this gives rise to complex statements about opposition such as ‘if the same is in the opposite, the opposite will be in the same’.¹⁰

By contrast with the *Ars Oppositorum*, Scève’s *Délie* belongs to a genre in which the primary object of description is supposed to be a lady

¹⁰ ‘Et ita in cunctis reperies, si idem eodem fuerit, fore simul oppositum in opposite, et si idem in opposite, oppositum fore in eodem’ (p. 54).

rather than opposition; unsurprisingly, then, Scève uses the abstract language of difference much less frequently than Bovelles does. However, Scève does occasionally use terms associated with opposition, and, like Bovelles, he does so in a manner which is far from straightforward. In D124, Apollo is evoked as the jealous sun who hides his light in response to the lady's superior light. The lady is referred to as Apollo's *contraire*, a term which implies absolute difference both generally and also in Aristotelian logic.¹¹ Yet, while the lady may be superior to the sun, they are also *similar* since both supposedly emit a bright light. In other words, Scève uses the vocabulary of antithetical difference (*contraire*) for a relation which apparently involves a more nuanced type of difference and also similarity. Like Bovelles, Scève seems to question the meaning of antithetical difference and its relationship to other sorts of difference, as if asking whether absolute difference and similarity can somehow co-exist. Both Scève and Bovelles use the vocabulary of opposition in a way which implies that its meaning is not self-evident; both, to varying extents, use vocabulary

¹¹ It can also have a spatial meaning: Algirdan Julien Greimas and Teresa Mary Keane give a definition of it as 'de direction opposée'; *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance* (Paris: Larousse, 1992). This, together with Scève's cosmic imagery, suggests that Scève – like Bovelles – thinks of opposition in potentially spatial terms; however, developing this line of thought is beyond the scope of this essay.

from logic and yet go beyond or trouble the meanings which such vocabulary carries in logic.

iii) Relations of Opposition and Identity in the *Délie*: The Lady and the Sun

While Scève does not often use the abstract vocabulary of opposition, I will argue that – by placing particular terms into relations which seem to fluctuate between difference, identity, and similarity – he does question the categorisation of types of difference or opposition, and explore the ways in which identity and difference might co-exist. I will focus in particular upon the relations of ‘opposition’ between the lady and the sun, which are at issue not only in D124 but in many other dizains. Studies of the cosmos in the *Délie* have tended to focus upon the relationship between the *ie* and the cosmos (rather than the lady and the cosmos).¹² However, the relationship

¹² In his *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), James Helgeson focuses upon the relationship between the cosmos and the *ie*, as his title suggests. The lady is part of the subject’s relationship with the world, and the subject attempts to force her into the mould of cosmic harmony. Hans Staub focused upon the cognitive movement into the world of the *ie*, and considered the

between the lady and the sun is particularly interesting for my purposes here because it involves complex relations of difference, similarity, and identity.

Scève is working through specific questions thrown up by the discourse of love lyric, such as the nature of the similarity between the lady and the celestial, as well as the related question of the difference between the *ie* and the lady who seems as distant and different from him as the sun is from the earth. However, in love lyric, desire and difference seem to be *a priori* bound up with one another; indeed other love lyricists also use the word *contraire* to refer to the lady who refuses the poet's desire.¹³ Moreover, for Scève in particular, love seems to be bound up with a difference which defies categorisation in terms of Aristotelian logic.

Critics of the *Délie* – and of love lyric more generally – often refer to the relationship between the human and the cosmic as if its nature were self-evident, as if it were predetermined by a fixed sixteenth-century conception of the 'microcosm': cosmic images are explained with reference to a relationship between the human and the cosmic which, apparently, was

lady to be united with the *ie* in this movement: *Le Curieux Désir: Scève et Peletier du Mans, poètes de la connaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), pp. 35-84.

¹³ Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle* (Paris, 1925-), 7 vols, p. 487.

universally interpreted to be one of *similarity*.¹⁴ This is suggested more explicitly by Hans Staub's use of a quotation from Cusa to frame his reading of the *Délie*: the quotation states that the human behaves like the cosmic but 'in a human way', *humaniter*.¹⁵ I would not dispute the idea – expressed most explicitly by Jean Rousset – that cosmic images in sixteenth-century poetry are ontologically grounded in the relationship between the human and the cosmic.¹⁶ However, it does not follow that this relationship was conceived in only one fixed and stable way, as a relationship of similarity. I

¹⁴ For example, Jerry C. Nash considers Scève's solar and lunar images to represent a triumph of clarity over obscurity, thus implying that cosmic light is simply a *symbol* of human cognition, thanks to the similarity between the two; cf. my discussion of the relationship between light and cognition in 'The Cosmic, the Human, and the Divine: The Role of Poetic Images in Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas's *Sepmaine* and Maurice Scève's *Délie*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005), Part II; my book under preparation, *Cosmos and Image in the French Renaissance*; and in a second planned article on the *Délie* and the *Ars Oppositorum*, 'Difference, Cognition, and Causality: Maurice Scève's *Délie* and Charles de Bovelles's *Ars Oppositorum*. Critics often refer to the 'universe' of the *Délie* to mean the subjective 'world' of the lover, thus suggesting that the cosmos is not a concern but simply a source of images. See also Fenoaltea, for whom the role of the cosmos is to illustrate and clarify the lover's experience: "*Si haulte architecture*", pp. 35-52.

¹⁵ *Curieux Désir*, pp. 9, 35-84.

¹⁶ *L'Intérieur et l'extérieur: essai sur la poésie et sur le théâtre au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1976) pp. 57-71.

will suggest rather that the *Délie* interrogates the roles in this relationship of difference, similarity, and identity.¹⁷

In the *Délie*, as in much other love lyric of the same period, the beloved lady is often related to cosmic light-sources and in particular to the sun.¹⁸ The poet shifts between, on the one hand, evoking *Délie* and the sun as separate beings and discussing their differences, and, on the other hand, identifying and conflating the lady and the sun. Sometimes the relationship between the lady and the cosmic light-source is one of similarity or analogy. For example, in D24 the relationship of the *ie* with the lady resembles the relationship which human beings in general have with cosmic light: the *ie* is dazzled by the lady's light just as the human eye is dazzled by cosmic light.

Quand l'œil aux champs est d'esclairs esblouy,

¹⁷ My study *Cosmos and Image* is also concerned with difference and similarity in the relationship between the human and the cosmic (and the divine); however, whereas the focus in this essay will be on concepts of difference or opposition, the focus in my book will be on the human, the cosmic, and the divine. Thus the two projects respond to very different concerns within the same nexus of problems. See also my 'Situating the Masculine: Gender, Identity and the Cosmos in Maurice Scève's *Délie*, Marsilio Ficino's *De Amore* and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi*' in *Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century France: The Eighth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium* (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, forthcoming).

¹⁸ On light imagery in the *Délie*, see also Lance K. Donaldson-Evans, *Love's Fatal Glance: A Study of Eye Imagery in the Poets of the Ecole Lyonnaise* (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, Inc, 1980), pp. 99-144; Banks, 'The Cosmic', Part II.

Luy semble nuit quelque part, qu'il regarde :
 Puis peu à peu de clarté resjouy,
 Des soubdains feuz du Ciel se contregarde.
 Mais moy conduict dessous la sauvegarde
 De ceste tienne, et unique lumiere,
 Qui m'offusca ma lyesse premiere
 Par tes doux rays aigument suyviz,
 Ne me pers plus en veue coustumiere.
 Car seulement pour t'adorer ie vis.¹⁹

The first four lines describe the effects of cosmic light, then the final six lines evoke those of the lady's 'light'. There is no *confusion* between the cosmic light and the lady, especially since the *ie* distinguishes between their effects using 'mais': the light and the lady are said to be *similar* but they are not *identified* with one another; each has its own separate place in the cosmic realm and the human realm respectively.

In the same way, in D386, the sun's rays resemble Délie's hair, and its dazzling midday strength resembles her dazzling eyes, but Délie and the sun are not represented as being identical:

Quand Apollo après l'Aulbe vermeille
 Poulse le bout de ses rayons dorez,
 Semble à mon œil, qui lors point ne sommeille,

¹⁹ Throughout this essay I cite Gérard Defaux's edition of the *Délie* (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

Veoir les cheveulx, de ce Monde adorez,
 Qui par leurs noudz de mes mortz decorez
 M'ont à ce joug jusqu'à ma fin conduyct.
 Et quand après à plaine face il luyt,
 Il m'est advis, que ie voy clerement
 Les yeulx, desquelz la clarté tant me nuyt,
 Qu'elle esblouyt ma veue entierement.

In these dizains, Délie's resemblance to the sun is congruent with a conception of the human-cosmos relation as one of *analogy* or *similarity*: the lady is apparently a human equivalent of the sun, performing a similar role for the poetic subject as the sun performs in the cosmos. These dizains fit with the notion that the human is *similar* to the cosmic, and with Staub's Cusan reading in which the human resembles the universe but 'in a human way'.

However, the *Délie* does not always reiterate this particular conception of the relationship between the human realm and the cosmos. In other dizains the lady and the sun are *conflated*. For example, D92 opens in a similar manner to D386 in that the sun makes it seem to the *ie* as if he sees the lady who startles and dazzles him; as in D386, the sun is similar to Délie yet separate from her. However, when, in the final two lines of the dizain,

the poet evokes ‘tel Soleil’, these words could denote the solar body itself or could have come to refer to the lady:

Sur nostre chef gettant Phebus ses rayz,
 Faisoit bouillir de son cler jour la None :
 Advis me fut de veoir en son taint frais
 Celle, de qui la rencontre m'estonne,
 De qui la voix si fort en l'ame tonne :
 Que ne puis d'elle un seul doulx mot ouir :
 Et de qui l'oeil vient ma veue esblouir,
 Tant qu'aulture n'est, fors elle, à mes yeux belle.
 Me pourra donc tel Soleil resjouir,
 Quand tout Mydi m'est nuict, voire eternelle ?

In the opening lines, the *ie* tells us that when the sun shines in the late afternoon (‘la None’), he imagines that he sees the lady; then, in the final two lines, he wonders whether ‘such a sun’ (‘tel Soleil’) can bring him joy, when every midday is to him eternal night. The argument of these final two lines might be construed as follows: the poet will be unable to gain joy from the sun (the cosmic body) because of the love for his lady which he has evoked in lines 3-8. In this reading, ‘tel Soleil’ would refer to the solar cosmic body, as one would usually expect. However, the potential absence of joy from ‘tel Soleil’ results from the fact that ‘tout Mydi m'est nuict, voire eternelle’ (l. 10): therefore, since literal cosmic midday could not in

any real sense be either night or eternal, ‘tel Soleil’ does not seem to refer literally to the cosmic solar body. In addition, the idea of midday being night recalls the notion of a light so dazzling that it casts the *ie* into darkness, and such a light figures in the *Délie* as an image of the lady, for example in D386 (quoted on page 13) and D51 (quoted on page 17); indeed in D92 itself the lady has been evoked in her dazzling role (l. 7), whereas the actual cosmic sun was in ‘la None’, the fourth quarter of the day, rather than at midday. So, ‘tel Soleil’ seems to refer to the lady whose gaze might dazzle the poet into darkness, or ‘turn “midday” into “night”’. Moreover, in D92 it is only the *ie* who is said to experience midday as eternal night (‘tout Mydi *m*’est nuit’): this suggests that it is his ‘sun’ – the lady – who is here referred to as a ‘Soleil’. On the other hand, in this particular dizain, the lady has not previously been referred to as a sun, and her dazzling gaze has not been foregrounded but rather features as only one of a list of her attributes: thus the reader does not necessarily have in mind an image of her as a sun, whereas the poet has definitely created an image of the cosmic sun casting its rays. So, by contrast with references to the sun in dizains 24 and 386, the expression ‘tel Soleil’ does not refer unambiguously to either the sun or the lady.

Thus, in D92, ‘tel Soleil’ has attributes of the lady (casting the *ie* into darkness), so that ‘Soleil’ equivocates between referring to the solar cosmic body or to the supposedly human lady. Although D92 begins by comparing the lady and the sun to one another, by the end of the dizain there seems to be only one ‘sun’. There is not an equivalent ‘universe’ in the human realm which resembles the cosmic ‘universe’: this is not an analogic relation between cosmos and human in which the sun and the lady would be *similar* yet nonetheless clearly maintain their *difference*. Instead, the macrocosm and the microcosm are collapsed onto the same signifiers. The sun and the lady of whom the sun reminds the *ie* seem to become one. In the same way, D51 begins by explicitly comparing the sun and the lady (or, at least, ‘si grand beaulté’), but then proceeds to a discussion which is apparently of the lady, yet which uses so much solar vocabulary that the sun and the lady seem to have merged into one, or to occupy the same place:

Si grand beaulté, mais bien si grand merveille,
 Qui à Phebus offusque sa clarté,
 Soit que ie sois present, ou escarté,
 De sorte l’ame en sa lueur m’esveille,
 Qu’il m’est advis en dormant, que ie veille,
 Et qu’en son jour un espoir ie prevoy,
 Qui de bien brief, sans deslay, ou envoy,
 M’esclercira mes pensées funebres.

Mais quand sa face en son Mydy ie voy,
A tous clarté, et à moy rend tenebres.

Here the lady is not cosmic ‘in a human way’ (‘humaniter’) but literally *is* the cosmic.

Of course it is common poetic practice for the second pole of a comparison to be implicit and unexplained so that, for example, a poet says ‘sun’ and means ‘lady’. However, Scève moves *between* explicit comparison of the lady and the sun – implying their similarity yet separate existences – and implicit ‘comparison’, or conflation of the lady and the sun onto the same signifiers. In other words, it is not simply that Scève uses solar vocabulary for his lady: rather he evokes and compares the sun and the lady, then confuses them so that the solar vocabulary might refer to either or both. He compares them, referring to their differences and similarities, but then conflates them, making it difficult to distinguish between them. Thus, I would suggest that, rather than being ontologically grounded in the notion of a relationship between the human and the cosmos based in similarity, Scève’s cosmic images explore the nature of that relationship by reconstruing it as one of similarity and difference, then as one of identity. This reconfigures the same relationship as one of difference and one of

identity, and undermines any sense that one should be able to define relationships in terms of difference or of identity exclusively.

Furthermore, other relationships of difference and similarity are also implicated in the shifting relations between the lady and the sun. If we accept that the solar signifiers in D9 refer to the sun as well as to the lady, then the midday sun is conflated with a different – even opposite (in the sense of antithetical) – point on the cosmic cycle: night. Furthermore, these opposites are in turn conflated with the eternal, which one can think of as ‘containing’ all temporal points. The ‘sun’ merges with its opposite as a result of the equivocation of ‘soleil’ between referring to the sun and referring to the lady. In other words, the lady’s shifting relationship of similarity and sameness to the sun in a sense changes the sun: that is, as a result of being in a shifting relation of difference with the lady, the sun becomes different, or opposed to itself.

A similar process is arguably at work in D124, the dizain in which the lady is referred to as Apollo’s ‘contraire’:

Si Apollo restraint ses raiz dorez,
 Se marrissant tout honteux soubz la nue,
 C’est par les tiens de ce Monde adorez,
 Desquelz l’or pur sa clarté diminue.
 Parquoy soubdain, qu’icy tu es venue,

Estant sur toy, son contraire, envieux,
 A congelé ce Brouas pluvieux,
 Pour contrelustre à ta divine face.
 Mais ton tainct frais vainct la neige des cieulx,
 Comme le jour la clere nuit efface.

The lady and the sun, Apollo, are similar in their brightness, although the lady's brightness is superior. Furthermore, the lady is, in line 10, compared to the sun, or at least to 'le jour'. However, as we have seen, despite her similarity to Apollo, the lady is described as Apollo's 'opposite', his 'contraire' (l. 6). Moreover, it is suggested that the lady's brightness diminishes that of Apollo. Finally, when the lady is aligned with 'le jour', the sun (Apollo) is implicitly aligned with the 'neige des cieulx' and even 'la clere nuit'. Despite being similar to the lady, Apollo does seem to become something like her 'contraire' and, moreover, is also something like his own 'contraire', the night. Once again, a dizain opens by referring to a relationship of similarity between the lady and the sun, yet by the end of the dizain solar signifiers (in this case *jour*) have come to refer to the lady, and the sun has implicitly become something different from – or even opposite to – itself: complex relations of difference are introduced into the sun by the same token that they exist in the relationship between the lady and the sun.

As in D92, a resemblance between the lady and the sun undermines the sun's sameness to itself and perhaps also its opposition to night.

iv) Relations of Opposition and Identity in the *Ars Oppositorum*

By occupying the place of the sun, the lady troubles the cosmic hierarchy in which the solar should be higher than the human and opposite to the night. Bovelles also connects conflictual *oppositio* with undoing this hierarchy: *oppositio* reverses the hierarchy so that earth is high and fire is low (p. 58). Moreover, the interaction between different pairs of terms – which I have described in the *Délie* – is discussed more explicitly by Bovelles. In the *Délie*, then, the relations of difference between one pair of terms (the sun and the lady) affect the relationship between another pair (night and day). Bovelles's theoretical text is also concerned with how pairs of 'opposites' function and interact: in the *Ars Oppositorum*, the relation between a pair of opposites is redefined by their relation to another pair of opposites. Bovelles describes how opposites – such as *Deus* (God) and *nichil* (nothing) – partake not only in a relation of opposition to each other but also in relations of sameness with other terms: thus *Deus* is in a relation of sameness with *esse*

(being), and *nichil* is in a relation of sameness with *non esse* (not being). Bovelles represents these relationships diagrammatically, as shown in fig. 1. *Deus* and *esse* are linked by a ‘line of identity’, as are *nichil* and *non esse*. By contrast, ‘lines of opposition’ link *Deus* to *non esse*, and *nichil* to *esse* (p. 64). Bovelles explains that these ‘lines of opposition’ give rise to four more, since the two angles formed by their intersections form four further lines of opposition (p. 66). However, the relations of ‘opposition’ represented by these additional lines ‘oppose’ *Deus* and *esse*, which are also joined by a ‘line of identity’, and which one would not expect to be opposed (at least if ‘opposition’ is conceived, as it is here, as diversity and discord rather than simply as a relation):

Similarly all the lines which form an angle, like those which go from God to both being and non-being, or from nothing to both being and non-being, or from God and nothing to being, or from God and nothing to non-being, are called lines of opposition, diversity, and discord.²⁰

Thus, the relation of identity or opposition between a pair of terms is altered by the placing of that pair in a relation with another pair, so that some terms are ‘joined’ to one another by *both* identity and opposition.

²⁰ ‘Similiter et quecumque faciunt angulum ut que a deo simul ad esse et non esse, vel que a nichilo ad esse et non esse, aut que a deo et nichilo ad esse, aut a deo et nichilo ad non esse producuntur, he oppositionis diversitatis et discordie line vocitentur’ (p. 66).

This is rather like the process I have analysed in the *Délie*. Indeed one might place the pairs ‘*ie*’ and ‘lady’, and ‘sun’ (or ‘*iour*’) and ‘night’ (or ‘darkness’) into Bovelles’s diagram in place of *Deus* and *nichil*, and *esse* and *non esse*; after all, Bovelles suggests that his *Ars* can be used to find knowledge about all sorts of pairs of opposites. In fig. 2, I have joined ‘lady’ and ‘sun’ with a ‘line of identity’, since these two terms are similar; likewise ‘*ie*’ and ‘night’ can be joined with a ‘line of identity’, since the *ie* often bemoans his state of darkness which results from his encounter with the lady-sun. While ‘identity’ seems too strong a term for those instances where the lady and the sun (or *ie* and darkness) are simply said to be alike, it is appropriate for the instances where they are conflated. As a result of inserting these terms into the square, the lady and the sun become joined simultaneously by identity and by opposition, something which also happens in the very different context of the *Délie*. One could also place ‘sun’ and ‘night’ into the diagram so that they were joined by lines of both opposition and identity. Therefore opposition functions in similarly paradoxical ways in both the theoretical text and the poetic one: both Scève and Bovelles suggest that, as part of a dynamic relation between pairs of terms, opposition can co-exist with identity, and the existence of one relation can create the other.

As well as pointing to the dynamic nature of the relationship between different pairs of opposites, Bovelles also – like Scève – breaks down antithetical differences between binary pairs like darkness and light: I observed earlier that, despite Bovelles’s inclusive definition of opposites, he uses many antithetical pairs, but, furthermore, he is also interested in breaking down antithetical differences, in uniting opposites. Bovelles uses the square of opposites to generate propositions, showing how it produces: ‘truth is true truth’, ‘falseness is true falseness’, ‘truth is false falseness’, and ‘falseness is false truth’. He then – presumably following his stated principle of proceeding from knowledge in one discipline to knowledge in another – similarly produces a set of statements concerning light and darkness: ‘light is luminous light’; ‘light is dark darkness’; ‘darkness is light darkness’; and, ‘darkness is dark light’ (pp. 120-2). While one might be able to construct some sort of commonsensical meaning from the propositions concerning truth and falsity, the statement that ‘light is dark darkness’ has no obviously comprehensible meaning. Thus, like Scève, Bovelles not only uses the vocabulary of antithetical difference for ‘oppositions’ which involve similarity or even identity, but he also has a strong interest in breaking down antithetical differences and in making opposites coincide. His statement that

‘light is darkness’ recalls the simultaneity of opposites in the *Délie* where midday is night.

As we have seen, in the *Délie* it is the lady who introduces such complex differences into the world. In addition, the breaking down of opposites may have something to do with her ‘divinity’. In D92, the conflated opposites of day and night are in turn conflated with the eternal: ‘Me pourra donc tel Soleil resjouir, / Quand tout Mydi m’est nuict, voire eternelle?’ More generally, like all Petrarchist ladies, Scève’s lady has attributes not only of the cosmic but also of the divine; furthermore, arguably more so than in other contemporary French love lyricists, Biblical and theological language is used to refer to her and to the lover’s relationship with her.²¹ It is thanks to this divinised lady that oppositions are undermined or rendered complex and paradoxical.

²¹ On Biblical language in the *Délie*, and its connections to evangelist discourse, see Kathryn Banks, ‘The Cosmic, the Human, and the Divine’, Part II, and *Cosmos and Image in the French Renaissance*; Marc Graff, ‘Nombres et Emblèmes dans la “Délie”’, *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance: Bulletin de l’Association d’Étude sur l’Humanisme, la Réforme et la Renaissance (France du centre et du sud-est)*, 12 (1980), pp. 5-12; Jerry C. Nash, ‘Maurice Scève et la poésie paradisiaque’, in *Il Rinascimento a Lione*, ed. by Antonio Possenti and Giulia Mastrangelo (Rome: Edizioni Dell’Ateneo, 1988), two vols, vol. II, pp. 779-94; Lance K. Donaldson-Evans, “‘Love Divine, All Loves Excelling’: Biblical Intertextualities in Scève’s “Délie””, *French Forum*, 14 (1989), pp. 5-15; Cynthia Skenazi, *Maurice Scève et la pensée chrétienne* (Geneva: Droz, 1992); Defaux, ‘La Myrrhe, l’aloès et la manne: pour une lecture mariale de

In the *Ars* – which belongs of course to a discourse very different from that of love lyric – the coincidence of opposites is not linked in any way to the erotic; however, it does point towards the divine. In the thought of Nicholas of Cusa – an important influence upon Bovelles – some sort of knowledge of God can be achieved through a vision of the coincidence of opposites.²² In early sixteenth-century France, God is again described in ways which break down opposites, and the apparent paradoxes of such mystical language are particularly strikingly manifested in the writing of Guillaume Briçonnet, to whom the dedicatory letter of Bovelles's *De*

Délie', in *Première poésie française de la Renaissance: autour des puits poétiques normands. Actes du colloque de Rouen, 30 Septembre – 2 Octobre 1999*, ed. by Jean-Claude Arnould and Thierry Mantovani (Paris: Champion, 2003), pp. 243-61; id., 'De Marie à Délie: le cèdre, le venin, la licorne et la colonne du Dieu vivant', in *Ronsard, figure de la variété: en mémoire d'Isidore Silver*, ed. by Colette Winn (Geneva: Droz, 2002), pp. 27-51; id., '(Re)visiting Délie: Maurice Scève and Marian poetry', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54.3 (2001), pp. 685-739; id., 'Du nouveau sur Délie: Maurice Scève et la poésie mariale', *A French Forum: mélanges de littérature française offerts à Raymond et Virginia La Charité*, ed. by Gérard Defaux and Jerry C. Nash (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), pp. 179-94; id., 'L'Idole, le poète et le voleur de feu: erreur et impiété dans Délie', *French Forum* 18 (1993), pp. 261-95. Defaux's articles are reproduced in the introduction to his edition of the *Délie* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), two vols, vol. I.

²² See Maurice de Gandillac, 'Lefèvre d'Étaples et Charles de Bouelles, lecteurs de Nicolas de Cues', in *L'Humanisme français au début de la Renaissance: Colloque international de Tours (XIV^e stage)* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1973), pp. 155-71 (165-6).

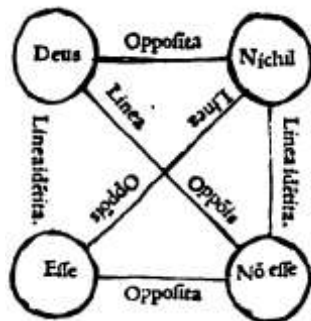
Sapiente is addressed.²³ Bovelles's statement that 'light is dark darkness' recalls such writing, and appears to represent one of the expressions of 'divine mystery' alluded to in the dedicatory letter of the *Ars* (p. 34). Certainly, in the final lines of the *Ars Oppositorum*, the coincidence of opposites is considered to be a work of God.²⁴ Furthermore, in Bovelles's *Divinae caliginis liber* (*Book of Divine Darkness*) of 1526 – which is deeply indebted to Pseudo-Denys – the coincidence of these opposites of light and darkness is clearly situated in the divine.

One might argue then, that in both the *Ars* and the *Délie* complex articulations of difference are motivated at least in part by the desire to express the divine; unfortunately considerations of space prevent me from investigating this further here. Another focus for further study is that both texts explore opposition's relationship not only with the divine but also with the human: both express a deep interest in the relationship between difference and the human subject, and in the respective roles of nature and

²³ For Briçonnet's representation of the coincidence of light and darkness, see, for example, letter six from Briçonnet to Marguerite de Navarre, in *Guillaume Briçonnet. Marguerite d'Angoulême. Correspondance (1521-1524)*, two vols, vol. I: *Années 1521-1522*, pp. 34-6.

²⁴ 'Deo honor qui ... fecit omnia duo unum contraunum': 'Honour to God who ... has made all things double, one and their opposite' (p. 176). See Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Ombre et lumière dans la pensée de Charles de Bovelles', in *Ombres et lumières de la Renaissance: Colloque du Puy-en-Velay (8 et 9 septembre 1997)* (Puy: Conseil général de la Haute-Loire, 1998), pp. 25-42 (25-27).

human cognition in establishing differences. I would argue that, for both writers, causality and cognition seem to overlap in function, as if human attempts to establish difference might actually alter the world; yet, in the *Délie* the *ie* suffers intensely from difference, whereas, in the *Ars*, the human subject is privileged above the natural world in his relationship with difference. I will discuss these issues in a future essay but, as far as this one is concerned, I have aimed to demonstrate that the *Délie* and the *Ars* share an interest in undermining antithetical difference, in confusing it with other modes of difference, and ultimately in challenging the way we conceive of differences and identities.

Fig. 1Fig. 2