1. INTRODUCTORY

The group of romans antiques comprises the romans of Thèbes, Eneas, Troie and Alexandre, and the poems of Piramus et Tisbé and Narcisus. These works have two points in common: they all deal with material from Greek or Roman antiquity, and they all fall within the twelfth century. As the date of Philomena is still uncertain, it has not been included in the group.

The study pursues two main lines of enquiry. Each work is the subject of a separate chapter, which analyses the way in which the love theme or themes have been treated and these analyses are followed by a chapter which tries to draw together the separate threads and to see if it is possible to define a concept of love which may be common to all the romans antiques or to some of them. The findings of this chapter have then been extended to a comparison with the theme of love as treated by Marie de France in the Lais and by Chrétien de Troyes, in works which are presumed to have been written at a slightly later date than most of the romans antiques themselves.

It has been necessary in the analyses of the individual works to make a comparison with the sources, as the romans antiques are primarily adaptations. Where the love theme has been adapted from an earlier source, this means of course that the framework of the story and the dénouement are to some extent fixed, and the poet has less latitude in construction. It does not necessarily mean, however, that the poet has to accept the love theme exactly as it stood without making any changes, any more than it prevents him from inventing love interest where previously there was little or none, as occurs both in the Roman de Thèbes and the Roman de Troie. The analysis has therefore attempted to show such adaptations and inventions.

Two major literary influences of the time have also had to be considered: the influence of Ovid and that of courtly love. Much work has already been done on Ovidian influence on medieval literature, and Faral in particular has examined it in relation to the romans antiques and established that writing in the Ovidian style was already a convention.¹ Imitation of Ovid might take the form of adapting the texts themselves, as occurs in the case of Piramus et Tisbé and Narcisus, but also, and more commonly, it could consist in the use of Ovidian language to describe the effects of love upon the lover, for example his sufferings, restlessness, impatience, his wounding by Love, and love itself described as a sickness. As
Ovidian influence in these works has been established, the extent to which it is found in the different *romans antiques* is here examined. To avoid repetition in the body of the text, the expressions which might be described as 'Ovidian' have been grouped in the glossary under sections one to five and section eleven.

The second current which may have influenced the *romans antiques* is the concept of courtly love, which first appears in the works of the Provençal troubadours. It would be dangerous to attempt a summary definition of such a wide topic, particularly as ideas vary between the different troubadours, but some elements of this *fin'amors* have been fairly clearly isolated, by M. Lazar among others.² For the purposes of comparison later in this study it is possible to say that courtly love is a concept characterised by the idealization of the woman and the humility of the lover towards his lady. The lover may hope to win favour by his service, and this service at the same time ennobles him and develops social qualities. Courtly love rests on a free choice, and the rôle of the lady is passive. It may or may not be an adulterous love, and it may or may not be consummated, but it is kept discreet. This study attempts to establish whether the concept of courtly love does in fact appear in the *romans antiques*.

A further concept considered is the ideal of *courtoisie*, which is distinct from courtly love. It might be summarized as gentlemanly or ladylike behaviour, which tends to express social values, since its aim is to make society more pleasant. Characters may be described as *courtois*, yet this is not in the more limited Provençal sense of the term. It means, rather, that the person in question is well-bred, polite, and possesses social graces. It may well follow, however, that those who are *courtois* will make suitable partners in the love relationship.

The glossary following the text seeks to give references to the vocabulary used to describe the love situations as it occurs in the texts. It tries to show the relatively frequent use of some terms as opposed to others, and to group them under headings. Its further purpose is to provide references to particular concepts which will be discussed in relation to individual works.

NOTES