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Jerry C. Nash

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This book reassesses the love poetry of Maurice Scève from a phenomenological viewpoint. It calls into question the traditional critical view of Scève as a poet who laments the anguish and darkness of unrequited love, and whose poetic and erotic quests lead him nowhere, and argues instead that the conflicting forces in Scève's poetic expression of love (light and dark, night and day, heaven and hell) do ultimately lead him to a sense of equilibrium and a transcendent paradisaical state. Contemplation and portrayal of the ineffable are shown to constitute the central and unifying concern of this compelling body of Renaissance love poetry.

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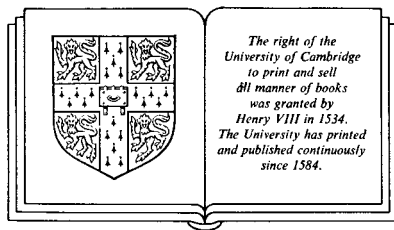
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# THE LOVE AESTHETICS OF MAURICE SCEVE

POETRY AND STRUGGLE

*JERRY C. NASH*



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For Ian McFarlane,  
who introduced so many of us to Scève,  
and to the memory of Enzo Giudici.  
Also, for J and B.

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Love is the magician, the enchanter . . .  
with it, earth is heaven.

Robert Ingersoll

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.

. . . .

God appears and God is Light  
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night  
But does a Human Form Display  
To those who Dwell in Realms of Day.

William Blake

Apperceuant cest Ange en forme humaine,  
Qui aux plus fortz rait le dur courage  
Pour le porter au gracieux domaine  
Du Paradis terrestre en son visage,  
Ses beaulx yeulx clers par leur priué vsage  
Me dorent tout de leurs rayz expanduz.

Maurice Scève

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## PREFACE

My largely phenomenological approach to poetry and paradise as presented in this book has been molded, on the one hand, by an epistemological tradition concerned with the problem of expressing the ineffable in literature, a tradition to which, I believe, Maurice Scève rightfully belongs and that includes Aquinas, Artaud, Augustine, Baudelaire, Blake, Boccaccio, Dante, Donne, Flaubert, Mallarmé, Pascal, Petrarch, Plotinus, Proust, Shakespeare, Speroni, Valéry, as well as other writers; and, on the other hand, by a long tradition in critical reading which attempts to come to terms with the ineffable in literature and that includes, among others, such diverse critics as Yvonne Bellenger, Maud Bodkin, Wolfgang Iser, Julia Kristeva, and Philip Wheelwright. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my special debt not only to the above writers and critics but also to many others in this distinguished tradition as invaluable guides in my own pursuit of an ineffable meaning in Scève's poetic love masterpiece. These authors and critics will receive fuller mention in the pages that follow.

This book also owes much to the advice and encouragement of friends and colleagues. Most notably, I wish to thank Professor Donald Stone, Jr., Harvard University, and Professor John R. Williams, University of New Orleans, who took of their own time to read the text of this study at an early stage and to offer me many sound and helpful suggestions, and Professor Hope H. Glidden, Tulane University, who read the Epilogue. I also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the long-term encouragement and generosity of Professor Emeritus I. D. McFarlane, University of Oxford, who has always provided me needed clarification on Scève and on other Renaissance writers when I have turned to him over the past ten years. It is only fitting that I should, with pleasure, dedicate this book on Scève to him, as well as to the memory of another devoted and generous 'scéviste' without whose seminal work on Scève we would not be where we are today in Scève studies, the late Enzo

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Giudici. In their dealings with me and the present book, Professor Malcolm Bowie and Dr. Katharina Brett, of Cambridge Studies in French/Cambridge University Press, have exhibited an exemplary level of professionalism and patience, and I am most grateful to them for their help and understanding.

I also wish to thank the University of New Orleans, through its faculty research funds, for providing me the released time that was necessary to research and write this study. A special word of thanks is also due my typist, Debra Berthelot, without whose cheerful and expert attention to detail this book would have been greatly delayed. Finally, I wish to acknowledge several earlier published pieces on Scève by me whose ideas have been greatly expanded in this book: "Stoicism and the Stoic Theme of *Honestum* in Early French Renaissance Literature," *Studies in Philology*, 76 (1979); "The Notion and Meaning of Art in the *Délie*," *The Romanic Review*, 71 (1980); "Logic and Lyric: Poetic Closure in Scève's *Délie*," *French Studies*, 38 (1984); "Maurice Scève, poète de l'ineffable," in *Lire Maurice Scève*, ed. Françoise Charpentier and Simone Perrier, 1987; and "Maurice Scève et la poésie paradisiaque," in *Il Rinascimento a Lione*, ed. Giulia Mastrangelo Latini and Antonio Possenti, 1988.