

Lexicology and Stylistics. Vocabulary of Provençal Courtly Lyrics –
Introductory Remarks.

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Lexicology and Stylistics. Vocabulary of Provençal
 Courtly Lyrics - Introductory Remarks.
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 дорогому Якову Львовичу Малькелю

For several years now we have been discussing various phenomena referred to by a polyvalent term, "intertextuality."¹ In medieval literary criticism, the wide usage of the term probably goes back at least to the publication of Julia Kristeva's once celebrated work on Le Petit Jehan de Saintré.² The term "intertextuality" is both very wide, having subsumed all sorts of phenomena referred to previously by such terms as "influence," "theme," "school," "fashion," etc., and quite narrow, since - and here lies the perilous parallelism with post-1957 linguistics - it emphasizes the "generative" "transformational" process of production, rather than the end product. It stresses the aspects of literature about which purely historical-philosophical research (which I would like to compare to archeology) teaches us very little.

If we consider some fundamental aspects of medieval esthetics, we must realize that "intertextuality" as a way of analyzing medieval love lyrics is an approach hardly conducive to significant explicatory power. One of the fundamental traits of courtly love lyrics is the existence of a limited, fixed, ever-reiterated specialized vocabulary. Since everything in this vocabulary is "intertextual," nothing really is so. This vocabulary is a keystone of traditional, conventional poetry. And this tradition was understood and accepted by poets and listeners (readers) alike. This voluntary submission, this apparent acceptance of the rules of convention - so felicitously presented by Paul Zumthor in his thorough discussion of "Le Poète et le texte"³ - is of course a hallmark of medieval art in general. It does represent a considerable difficulty for the modern critic accustomed to consider the "originality," i.e. the bending or even breaking of the rules of the imposed conventional code, as the sole measure of artistic accomplishment.

The lyric vocabulary of the Middle Ages presents, to be sure, other problems. It is important for the understanding of the stylistic-textual aspects of medieval lyrics to recall that this vocabulary is not only controlled by an accepted convention, i.e. occurring and recurring in similar contexts in a given language, but that it is also "inter-lingual." The same terms traveled from Provence to Northern France to Sicily, Northern Italy, Northern Spain, Germany and England. While maintaining its basic poetic function, the fin cor of the troubadours transformed, in time, into fin cuer, cuor gentil, edelez herze, and gentil herte (although Gallego-Portuguese not seem to use gentil coraçon, (meu) coraçon is very frequent); and with each entry into these new environments it acquired certain new secondary stylistic characteristics. Thus, a study of courtly vocabulary should, in the long run, be comparative, since understanding Francian usage does help us in appraising its Provençal analogue. But this means that we must proceed with caution ("comparaison n'est pas raison"), for there might be some important local differences.⁴

The exhaustive comparative study of the vocabulary in its specific stylistic situation still remains to be done.⁵

The basic courtly love poetry vocabulary is relatively small. Thus, Paul Zumthor, in his older study of the early Provençal and Francian lyrics, estimated that the meaningful, specifically lyric vocabulary of that genre could not be more than two or three hundred words.⁶ This very smallness constitutes yet another basic fact to be reckoned with. It must be pointed out that the general common vocabulary was quite restrained also. Zumthor calculated again that Bernart de Ventadorn, surely one of the most "classical" of the troubadours, used in the forty odd poems attributed to him a vocabulary of only some 2,400 different words.⁷

But there lies precisely the heart of the matter: a limited number of specialized words, "controlled" by the laws of a well accepted convention and residing inside a doubtless artificially restrained, general vocabulary,⁸ was used over and over again in the genre which, for Provençal alone, was practiced by some 350 troubadours (known to us by name or nickname, plus many anonymous ones) and which survives to this day in 2,540 lyric compositions.⁹ Such lexical, numerical poverty had to result in a very high degree of polysemy of each term and, concomitantly, in a very high degree of synonymy existing among those terms.

There are two basic critical attitudes which can be taken toward such a lexical situation. A critic whose vantage point is the whole linguistic system (e.g. Old Provençal language) can simply describe the state of imprecision of semantic oppositions resulting from this repeated polyvalence and synonymy. Many literary critics, especially those of previous generations, have, wittingly or not, followed such a "linguistic" path. They usually complain about the "naive," "trite," "imprecise," therefore "meaningless," vocabulary. If they are interested in the general vocabulary of the linguistic system, they can choose to shun the specifically courtly love materials.¹⁰ Unlike real linguists, such critics, even otherwise good ones, can deplore the state of affairs. Moshé Lazar, faithful to his mission of debunking any idea of serious intellectual purpose behind courtly love ideology, truly regrets that "l'emploi d'une terminologie équivoque et prêtant à confusion, la traduction de concepts divers par des mots identiques, ne permettaient pas de se faire une idée claire de l'ensemble du phénomène courtois dans ses manifestations les plus variées." He goes on to remind us that "le vocabulaire poétique n'avait pas la même valeur à toutes les époques ... telle expression de la lyrique provençale à ses origines n'eut pas un sens identique à celui employé un siècle plus tard."¹¹ But fortunately such a "linguistic" approach aiming at the "cataloguing" of vocabulary, that is to say, at the definition of the cultural realities behind artistic expression, and despairing about the enormous difficulties encountered in the task, is not the only one possible.

Following the path most clearly traced by such critics as Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor, one can also take a stylistic approach to the problem. Rather than looking at the specialized vocabulary through the prism of a linguistic and cultural system,

we can approach it more fruitfully through a closer reading of the genre, assuming that the "real" meaning resides precisely in that genre. Such a stylistic approach results not in despairing about the imprecise clichés of the genre, but rather in a realization that this limited conventional vocabulary is art-producing. Such artistic possibilities were noted by Dragonetti who speaks about "dynamic clichés"¹² operating through the poetry upon the listener. This idea was most forcefully expressed by Pierre Bec. Far from considering the polyvalence and synonymy as exasperating shortcomings, the leading Provençalist deems that "les mots significatifs (terms-clefs), qui reviennent constamment, jouissent d'une richesse sémantique particulière, d'une pluralité de valeurs, d'une puissance allusive..." Bec knows very well that these terms "font le désespoir du philologue" but they also "étendent très loin le message poétique et compensent par là la pauvreté numérique des unités lexicales."¹³ As I stated before, such polyvalence and synonymy were possible because the convention (the "maturity of tradition," as Bec puts it) within the confines in which lyric poetry operated was accepted freely and totally by the "conniving" poets and their "conniving" audiences.

It must also be stressed here that the numerical poverty of the vocabulary of courtly lyrics together with its polyvalence, synonymy semantic richness and allusive power, are not the only examples of poetic ambiguity. In fact, the lexical ambiguity is an integral part of the veritable esthetic system based on polyvalence, ambiguity, i.e. allusive power. Students of Provençal (and again, of other courtly poetry) know very well that the troubadours constantly played upon the pronominal identity of el(h)a 'she' li, liei(s), 'her', etc. referring to amor (feminine in Old Provençal) and to the lady, and such ambiguity must have been obviously conventional, that is to say artistically desired. Such convention can occasionally be raised to the level of an organizational principle of the whole poem. Thus, e.g. Peire Vidal in his Ab l'alén tir vas me l'aire/ que'ieu sen venir de Proensa ('With my breath I draw the air/ which I feel coming from Provence') builds all the poetic tension upon the ambiguity in the expression of nostalgia for Proensa and for the unnamed feminine object of the poet's devotion. Here is the text:

- I Ab l'alén tir vas me l'aire
 qu'ieu sen venir de Proensa;
 tot quant es de lai m'agensa,
 si que, quan n'aug ben retraire, 5
 ieu m'o escout en rizen
 e.n deman per un mot cen:
 tan m'es bel quan n'aug ben dire.
- II Qu'om no sap tan dous repaire
 cum de Rozer tro c'a Vensa, 10
 si cum clau mars e Durensa,
 ni on tant fins jois s'esclaire.
 Per qu'entre la franca gen
 ai laissant mon cor jauzen
 ab lieis que fa.ls iratz rire.

- III Qu'om no pot lo jorn mal traire 15
 qu'aja de lieis sovinensa,
 qu'en liei nais jois e comensa.
 E qui qu'en sia lauzaire,
 de ben qu'en diga, no.i men;
 que.l mielher es ses conten 20
 e.l genser qu'el mon se mire.
- IV E s'ieu sai ren dir ni faire,
 ilh n'iaa.l grat, que sciensa
 m'a donat e conoissensa,
 per qu'ieu sui gais e chantaire. 25
 E tot quan fauc d'avinen
 ai del sieu bell cors plazen,
 neis quan de bon cor consire. (Trovadores, II,
 pp. 872-873, see note 8)

The much disputed literal meaning of the poem ¹⁴ confirms a certain kind of poetic "fusion" of Proensa (v. 2) with liei(s) ('her' v. 14,16,17) en ('of her' v. 19), la mielher ('the best' v. 20), la genser ('the noblest' v. 21), ilh ('to her' v. 23), and even sieu bel cors plazen ('her beautiful and fair body' v. 27) since cors can sometimes, but probably not here, have a pronominal value. And thus if literally (and prosaically) the poem treats two subjects, poetically they can become one, because the convention encouraged the real polyvalence in such poetic uses of liei(s), as it encouraged many other kinds of ambiguity.

What has to be done in regard to the study of Provençal courtly lyric vocabulary is to execute a series of lexical analyses of the key terms. Such analyses must be fundamentally text-and-genre-centered, that is to say they must be basically stylistically-oriented. It would be premature to attempt to analyze thoroughly the whole corpus of the specifically courtly love lyric vocabulary.¹⁵ Rather, we should attempt to carry out a series of in-depth investigations of the key words organized, whenever possible, in relation to their semantic fields. Here the Zumthorian concept of register can be applied with caution and with a complete understanding of what it entails. But, as I said, such investigations must be, above all, stylistic, that is to say, they must concentrate on the meaning and poetic function of the given term examined, first and foremost, in the genre of courtly lyrics. A recent good example in Old French of such subtle sounding is the work of G. Lavis, L'Expression de l'affectivité dans la poésie lyrique française du Moyen Age (XIIe-XIIIe siècles). Etude sémantique et stylistique du réseau lexical joie-douleur.¹⁶ This excellent, exhaustive, sophisticated work, employing up-to-date theoretical insights and technological equipment, is in one sense, perhaps, not stylistic enough: the corpus examined by Lavis is not confined to courtly love lyrics, but includes also other lyrical genres of Old French.

As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁷ such studies should examine first of all the difficult, i.e. polyvalent and omnipresent, terms which obviously belong to the very core of courtly vocabulary. Such words as afan 'suffering,' amor 'love,' consirar 'think anxiously,' cortezia, dan 'damage,' dezirier 'desire,' enveja

'desire,' gelos 'jealous' 'enemy of fin'amor,' ira 'rage' 'sadness,' joi, joven 'youth' 'youthfulness of spirit' 'capacity to love like a fin amic,' lauzengier 'flatterer' 'liar' 'enemy of fin'amor,' maltraire 'to suffer' 'suffering,' merce 'mercy,' pensar 'to think' 'to think anxiously,' 'pretz' 'valor (of a lover),' solatz 'solace,' talan 'love desire,' vilania 'vilany' 'opposite to cortezia,' etc., to name just a few, must be examined, like archeological artifacts, not in terms of some preconceived abstraction, but in their natural surrounding, that is to say, in their context. And the context must be understood as a three-level concept. On top of such a stylistically conceived concept, we have the contextual value of a given term in terms of the line (or the sentence); the second, the middle, in terms of a whole poem; the third, and this is particularly important for our purpose here, in terms of the genre of courtly love lyrics.

Grasping this "three-level" concept is a precondition for a proper understanding of and a correct approach to the lexical analysis of these difficult terms. Such analysis is obviously required in regard to many such evidently polyvalent, specialized and abstract terms as those mentioned above. Any student of Old Provençal lyric poetry knows full well that looking up, e.g., pretz in Emil Levy (S.-W., VI, pp. 525-527, P.D. p. 308) supplies only the general ("etymological") meanings of the term, and that such meanings are only initially of help in grasping the basic courtly usage of the basic courtly term. But what is even less clearly understood is that some very commonly used words can reveal themselves to be quite complex if we submit them to the three-level analysis. Such common omnipresent adjectives as e.g. avinen 'agreeable' 'fair,' bon 'good,' fin (fi(n)s) 'refined' 'noble,' franc 'noble,' gai 'gay' 'filled with the joi of fin'amor,' ric 'rich' 'powerful,' simple 'simple' 'loyal,' etc. acquire in the specific courtly environment a specifically courtly value. This value must be determined, as far as it is possible, on all three levels. The first level shows us the immediate semantic environment. Gai can very often be coupled with a near synonym, e.g. jauzen, and form a close semantic unit, a binomial construction: gai e jauzen. This favored stylistic device, much studied and much debated,¹⁸ is based on the fundamental poetic process operating throughout a conventional genre: the words, whether originally near synonyms or not, acquired gradually more and more common contextual meaning: the more immediate the context, the greater the semantic "homogenization."

Let us take two examples. In the poem of Peire Vidal quoted above "Ab l'alèn tir vas me l'aire", the word bon coupled with cor 'heart' in an adverbial phrase de bon cor not only creates most of the philological difficulties, but--and this is more important--determines to a large extent the whole sense of the poem (ultimately including the touched upon question whether Provence, the lady, or both are subject of the poem).¹⁹ From the lexical point of view the difficulty lies in the inherent, extremely rich semantic possibility of such words as bon and cor. And while most careful readers do realize the polyvalence of cor, such "dynamic" poetic power of the humble bon can very easily be overlooked.

Another example is even more deceptive. The adjective simple does not, at first glance, present any special difficulties. Emil Levy (S.-W., VII, pp. 660-661) attests two basic values of it (repeated in P.D. p. 344). The purely negative ones ('untutored' 'harmless' 'silly' 'stupid,' etc.) are taken from didactic literature. The second, positive or quasi-positive value is demonstrated by two citations from Flamenca. In a properly lyrical manner, simple is coupled here in binomial constructions with piu 'pious' and pur 'pure.' Levy glossed those simple as 'tender' and 'modest' ('sanft' 'bescheiden'). In the negative meaning we find simple to be a true descendant of simplex, the antonym of complex, or compositus,²⁰ but the study of lyric vocabulary reveals the importance of the positive meaning which, without necessarily being a direct descendant of another antonym of simplex, i.e. duplex, acts as if it were so. Note that the overwhelmingly positive environment of this adjective in: Per so lor serai fis e cars, / Humils e simples e leyaus, / Dous, amors fis e coraus ('For this reason I shall be toward them [=the ladies] noble and dear, / Humble and simple and loyal, / Sweet, loving, noble and sincere')²¹ indicates that simples must be placed somewhere in the semantic fields of sincerity and loyalty. A similar "register" of expression of humility, sincerity and trust is to be seen in the description of facial expression: Car'avetz d'anhel ab simpla gardadura 'You have the face of a lamb with simple expression'²². But it is important to understand that such positive functions of simple (rare in Provençal, far more common in Old French), while very much conditioned by the first level of context, could also be determined by the second level. Thus, if a poem is directed against courtly ideals or, more precisely, when we are confronted by a sort of implicit praise of these ideals in a contredit, then simple can very well mean 'simple-minded.' The reason for this is clear: the very "register" of expression of sincerity, loyalty, humility and trust has been temporarily abated, by the dominating sense of the anti-courtly poem, into the register of 'simple-mindedness'. We see such temporary return to non-courtly meaning in "Amors, be.m platz e.m sap bo" by Elias de Barjols: Amors, aissi.us dic de no, / qu'ieu no soi en vostras ma/ car ben es simples e planz/ qui.s met en vostra preizo ('Love, I say no to you/ because I am not in your hands/ indeed simple and plan is/ one who puts himself in your prison').²³

Such adjectives as simple (or its binomial companion plan²⁴), and many others, illustrate most fully the basic problem encountered in the analysis of most, if not all, of the specifically courtly love lyric vocabulary. An analysis carried out on the first and second level of context reveals a tendency, constant in essence and variable in intensity, to make the words depend semantically on each other. This semantic "homogenization" must be understood, accepted and studied if we wish to grasp the poetic function of a truly conventional term.

The third-level analysis in which the genre itself is considered as a semantic environment also discloses, of course, a tendency toward the similar process of "homogenization," but in addition it shows something else. The terms used over and over again, in similar

contextual levels, acquire, on the stylistic, i.e., on the level of genre, a greater and greater degree of abstraction. Fin'amor, pretz, valor, mezura, etc., etc., mean more with every poem of the genre, as long as the convention supporting this genre is respected, i.e., is dynamic. The role of a modern, stylistically-oriented critic is to understand this process and to apply it, in order to understand better the very poetic function of the old, traditional language. To paraphrase Mallarmé, the critic must find "le sens le plus simple aux mots complexes de la poésie."

It should be argued that only if we understand, as thoroughly as possible, our linguistico-archeological artifacts on the three contextual levels, can we make generalizations on the ultimately fundamental level, that is to say, on the level of language. The whole history of the last several decades of literary and stylistic criticism teaches us about the many perils of moving, consciously or not, to and fro between lexical-stylistic and lexicographical-linguistic levels. But it should also teach us about its rewards. I am sure that the understanding of the stylistic implications of the vocabulary of Provençal courtly lyrics will help us understand on the very central cultural developments in Western European languages, that is to say, the development of the native, vernacular abstract vocabulary. This development led to, or at least coincided with, one of the most important and the most lasting phenomena of Medieval culture, the discovery, or rather rediscovery and vernacularization, of allegory. It is not surprising that Simplece, that lateral descendant of our humble simple, has become one of the important allegorical figures of the Roman de la Rose.

Notes.

1. A longer version of this paper was read at the Conference on Stylistics and Interpretation of Literature held at the City University of New York in April 1977.
2. Le Texte du roman: approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle, The Hague, 1970.
3. Essai de poétique médiévale, Paris, 1972, pp. 64-105, see especially the discussion of the concept of tradition (pp. 64-82). Zumthor continues the critical approaches which, far from taking the convention as "fetters" resulting in "unoriginality," consider the fidelity to the accepted canons of literary art as the very main-spring of medieval creativity. Recently, the Swiss scholar applied his (somewhat modified) approach to an even more "form centered" French poetry of the late Middle Ages in Le Masque et la lumière, la poétique des grands rhétoriciens, Paris, 1978. In the French-speaking world, the "precursors" of Zumthor were Robert Guette in his truly pioneering short essay "D'une poésie formelle en France au moyen âge," Revue de Sciences Humaines, Nouvelle Série, fasc. 54, 1949 pp. 61-68 (reprinted in Questions de Littérature, 1960, 9-32 and in a separate booklet, Paris 1972) and Roger Dragonetti's opus magnum: La Technique poétique des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise: Contributions à l'étude de la rhétorique médiévale Bruges, 1960. Pierre Bec in his excellent essay, "Quelques réflexions sur la poésie lyrique médiévale. Problèmes et essai de

caractérisation"; Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune, Gembloux, II, 1969, pp. 1309-1329, building on the ideas of Guiette, Dragonetti and Zumthor, speaks very convincingly about the art of "connivence c'est-à-dire, un art qui implique l'adhésion commune du poète... à un univers mental dont la langue poétique assure la communication" (p. 1321) and about this connivance as being implicit between the poet and the listener. (p. 1323).

4. Thus, for instance, mezura 'moderation' 'indulgence' 'manner', etc. is used in Provençal as a specific term of courtly love lyrics. The term is rare, if not absent, in Francian love lyrics (where it was very widely accepted in, e.g., epic poetry). See my "Mesura dans la poésie lyrique de l'ancien provençal," to appear in Studia Occitanica in memoriam Paul Remy. The preliminary survey of the semantic value(s) of this term was made with the help of the data bank of Provençal courtly lyrics gathered and made available for scholars by Professor F.R.P. Akehurs of the University of Minnesota.

5. The need for such a study is evident, especially for Provençal, which is probably the oldest (if not the original) language of courtly lyrics. The historical dictionaries: F.-J.-M. Raynouard, Lexique roman..., Paris, 6 vols, 1844, and its supplement--continuation: Emil Levy, Provenzalisches Supplement-Wörterbuch..., Leipzig, 8 vols, 1894-1924, (S.-W.), were based chiefly on narrative and non-lyric materials. The courtly love lyric elements occupy only a modest place in those dictionaries. Petit dictionnaire provençal-français, Heidelberg, 1909, is a handy digest of S.-W., showing the same basic orientation (P.D.). More recently, Glynnis M. Cropp published an ambitious work of courtly Provençal vocabulary. It should be considered as an introduction to the subject. Le vocabulaire courtois des troubadours de l'époque classique, Genève, 1975, treats many general lyric terms, without enough emphasis on the purely poetic-stylistic functions of these terms.

6. Langue et technique poétiques à l'époque romane (XIIe-XIIIe siècles), Paris, 1963, p. 182. The study of G. M. Cropp (see above, note 5) examines, or mentions, some 390-420 (if one counts such derivatives as senhorar-senhoratge as separate items). Not all the terms examined here belong necessarily to the basic, significant courtly love vocabulary.

7. Compared with some 5,000 different words used by Wace, 6,000 by Chrétien de Troyes, and 12,000 by Benoît de Sainte-More in Le Roman de Troie. See "Recherches sur les topiques dans la poésie lyrique des XIIe et XIIIe siècles", Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale, II, 1959 p. 410.

8. All students of Provençal (and of other courtly) poetry are of course aware of the fear expressed by the troubadours of violating lexical tabus. Thus, e.g. Bernart de Ventadorn in his "Chantars no pot gaire valer" while accusing bad women of being marchandas et venaus confesses "Vertat en dic vilanamen" 'I speak truth in common terms' (Martín de Riquer, Los Trovadores. Historia Literaria y textos, Barcelona, I, 1975, p. 370). All citations, unless indicated otherwise, are taken from this three-volume edition. The editors of the introductory manual of Old Provençal commenting on this verse cite with reason the authority of Las Leys d'amors

(poetic code edited in Toulouse in the first half of the XIVth century): en chanso no deu hom pauzar daguna laja paraula, ni dagu vilanal mot ni mal pauzat 'in a canso one must not use any unseemly term or a common word, or one which has bad metre' (F.R. Hamlin, et al., Introduction à l'étude de l'ancien provençal. Textes d'étude, Genève, 1967 p. 103). Note the juxtaposition of vilanal mot with the mot mal pauzat. The conventional laws restricting the vocabulary of courtly love exist as an integral part of a larger conventional system.

9. The number 350 is suggested by M. de Riquer, Las Trovadores, I, p. 9. Following István Frank, Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours, Paris, I, p. xvi, n. 1, he mentions 2,540 poems. Approximately half of the known Old Provençal poetic corpus is recorded in the University of Minnesota data bank mentioned in note 6.
10. Cf. note 5.
11. Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XIIe siècle, Paris, 1964, p. 17. I cite Lazar because he is a contemporary critic. As for the older critics, they generally dismissed the whole problem by stressing the trite and formulaic character of the poetry. Typically severe is, e.g., Alfred Jeanroy: "Il y a dans le style des troubadours, même les meilleurs, beaucoup de formules toutes faites, de clichés, et l'on peut dire que cette res nullius en constitue proprement le fond", (La Poésie lyrique des troubadours, Paris, II, 1932, p. 116). Cliché was, of course, not res nullius, but res communis (or, if we wish, res publica), resulting, as Dragonetti describes so well, in "une entente préétablie entre le poète et son public" La Technique poétique (see note 3) p. 543.
12. La Technique poétique (see note 3), p. 542.
13. "Quelques réflexions" (see note 3), p. 1323.
14. Trovadores, II, p. 873. See the notes to v. 26-28 and D'A. S. Avalle, Peire Vidal, Poesie, Milano-Napoli, II, 1960, p. 163, note to v. 26 ff, p. 165.
15. The lexicographically slanted study of G. M. Cropp (cited in note 5) certainly points out the difficulties inherent in such a large undertaking.
16. Paris, 1972.
17. "Vocabulary of Old French Courtly Lyrics: Difficulties and Hidden Difficulties," Critical Inquiry, II, 1976, pp. 763-779.
18. It was Yakov Malkiel who gave a most thorough linguistic analysis of binomial lexical constructions. See his "Studies in Irreversible Binomials," Lingua, VIII, 1959, pp. 113-160. For other literature on this subject see my "Les Binômes synonymiques en ancien français", Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny (Hommages à Halina Lewicka). XXIII, 1976, pp. 81-90. It is interesting to note that some scholars believe that it was the Provençal lyric which popularized this device throughout Western Europe.
19. The last three lines of the poem, complex in their deceptive simplicity: E tot quan fauc d'avinen/ ai del sieu bell cors plazen, neis quan de bon cor consire./ mean literally: And all that I do agreeable/ I receive (=have) from her beautiful fair body,/ Even when I contemplate (her? it?) with good heart. For the difficulties of joining consire 'I contemplate sorrowfully' with de bon cor see

- Avalle's various explanations (above note 14). It is possible that we shall never "solve" the problem of this poem, for such insolubility ultimately lies at the heart of lyric poetry, but we should, at least, see the problem and, above all, not attempt to offer any false solutions. In the Introduction F.R. Hamlin et al (see above, note 8) p. 159, offer what I consider "anti-poetic" explanation by simply glossing de bon cors with 'avec concentration'. In a recent American translation the whole problem, as one should expect, is hidden: A. Bonner, Songs of the Troubadours New York, 1972, p. 170 the last line reads: 'even to my heartfelt thoughts,' but 'heartfelt' is far better than 'avec concentration.'
20. Donatus provincialis speaks thus of figuras 'words:' *Figura o es simpla o composta: simpla si cum coms; composta, si cum vescoms* 'Word is either simple or compound: simple as in count, compound as in viscount' (K. Bartsch, Chrestomathie provençale, Berlin, 1892,⁵ p. 194, ll. 7-8).
21. Vv. 38-40 of 'Assatz sai d'amor ben parler' of Raimbaut d' Aurenga (Trovadores I, p. 434). M. de Riquer avoids the whole problem by translating simples as sencillo, but the American editor, W. T. Pattison, The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d' Orange, Minneapolis, 1952, p. 153, offers a slightly more precise, albeit not very poetical, translation, 'straightforward'. (The question of whether Raimbaut parodied the love poetry throughout his poem, or only at the beginning, should not enter into the discussion of the problem of the courtly meaning of simple.)
22. Guilhem Figueira, "D'un sirventes far en est son que m'agensa", Trovadores, III, p. 1279, v. 157.
23. S. Stroński, Le Troubadour Elias de Barjols, Toulouse-Paris, 1906 p. 33, vv. 25-28. v. 27, containing simples is a variant. In the MS used by Stroński this whole verse is missing.
24. Note the positive, "proud" meaning of plan(a) in Jaufré Rudel's "Quan lo rius de la fontana:" tramet lo vers.../ en plana lengua romana 'he sent the poem/ in plan provençal language' (Trovadores I, p. 159 v. 30-31). (The variant in five out of fifteen MSS: tramet lo vers/ plan e en lengua romana.) A. Jeanroy, Les Chansons de Jaufré Rudel, Paris, 1915, p. 5, translated plana lengua as 'simple langue.' Plan was a frequent epithet capable of conveying a general, positive, value of 'pleasant' 'smooth' 'terse'. E.g.,: sonez levez e plas 'melody light and pla(n)s' (Monge de Montaudon, "Pus Peire d' Alhvern'a cantat," Trovadores, II, p. 1042) and: cors be faihz, delgatz e plan 'well-built, delicate and pla(n)s body' (Bernart de Ventadorn, "Lo tems vai e ven e vaire", Trovadores, I, p. 355).