The Discourse of Power: The Lyrics of the Trobairitz

In ''L'ordre du discours,'' Foucault postulates that there are two levels of contradiction: ''that of appearances, which is resolved in the profound unity of discourse; and that of foundations, which gives rise to discourse itself.''[1] In twelfth-century Europe there is a contradiction of appearances between the historical fact of women's power through property ownership and the subordinate legal status of women as minors, a contradiction that is ultimately diffused in the representation of women in historical discourse as powerless, which they often were. There is, moreover, a contradiction of foundations in the contrast between the representation of women as powerful in the literary discourse of the male troubadours and the representation of women as powerless in the literary discourse of the female trobairitz,[2] a discourse that in its very existence constitutes an act of empowerment.

Despite some historical evidence of women's economic and political power, the representations of women's powerlessness throughout historical discourse is preeminent. Philippe de Beaumanoir, the thirteenth-century French jurist who recorded the common law of Beauvais, reminds us of the inferior legal status of medieval women: '' 'The dumb, the deaf, the insane and the female cannot draw up a contract, neither alone nor through a representative, since they are subservient to the authority of others.' ''[3] Historically, by the twelfth century, however, women could and did inherit fiefs throughout Europe, either as inheritance or as dowry.[4] As widows, they held the usufruct of one-third to one-half of their deceased husbands' estates as part of the dower.[5] These fiefs included oaths of fealty, military service, and the exercise of any necessary government functions.[6] In fact, there is evidence that in Provence, for a time in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, opportunities were somewhat improved for women.[7] Diane Owen Hughes writes:

> In Provence, where in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries daughters seem often to have shared the same familial rights as sons, almost exactly contemporary statutes

> began to exclude dowered daughters. . . . But they were not kept from the succession of grandparents or more distant collaterals.[8]

Although the exclusion of daughters from bilateral inheritance by means of dowries was ultimately to come to an end, for a brief time around the twelfth century, some women in Provence enjoyed the economic privileges that afforded them the education, the leisure, and the freedom to compose and sing songs in their own right.[9] Indeed, the emergence of women's voices at the very moment of the decline of their economic rights and political privileges does not seem coincidental.

Beyond the apparent contradiction between the historical fact of female property ownership in the twelfth century and historical discourse describing women as powerless, however, is a fundamental contradiction in literary discourse where male authors code women as powerful and sexual in a culture where women's sexuality was feared, denigrated and controlled.[10] It is this profound contradiction that gives rise to a new discourse in which female authors depict their own powerlessness even as they are empowered through the discursive act itself.

While it is clear that it is the contradictions in masculine literary discourse that give rise to the discourse of the trobairitz, it may actually have been a historical accident (in the sense of Foucault's "irruption"[11]) that formed the catalyst that enabled certain women to become trobairitz. Brian Stock posits in *The Implications of Literacy* that "[j]ust as the market created a level of 'abstract entities' and 'model relations' between producer and consumer, literacy created a set of lexical and syntactical structures which made the persona of the speaker largely irrelevant."[12] Stock argues that the subjectivity of oral discourse was increasingly replaced by the model of the objective written text, particularly in the twelfth century. The trobairitz may have been in some sense the beneficiaries of an increasingly literate society that in its rising objectivity in law and philosophy accidentally provides a fissure through which the voices of women briefly emerge.

An analysis of the literary code of the *joc d'amor* and the signs of feminine discourse within the lyrics of the trobairitz reveals the contradictions inherent in representations of feminine power. Paraphrasing Bahktin, Cerquiglini writes that speech is the attempt "to master the discourse of others."[13] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in seeking a voice and a subject, the trobairitz should have adopted, or adapted, masculine troubadourial conventions. While the lyrics of the trobairitz contain signs about the historical and literary representations of women, they do not establish a separate feminine discourse as do writers such as Marie de France and Christine de Pisan.[14] That the trobairitz were unable to overthrow the paradigm of male-controlled discourse does not vitiate their importance to the study of women in the Middle Ages.

The lyrics of the trobairitz comprise a public poetry responding to the contradictions of the troubadour construct, the game of *fin'amors.* This public poetry is characterized by the participation of the trobairitz in the literary *joc d'amor,* though in the role of women who remain both subject and object of that game. As Pierre Bec puts it, "la *domna,* devenue adoratrice, . . . n'en cessait . . . d'être la dame dominatrice."[15] In this respect the trobairitz preserve the seignorial aspect of the troubadour tradition, while at the same time pointing to its limitations. Indeed, by speaking for themselves the trobairitz manifest the limits of male power and female subordination, exposing the fictions of the troubadours.[16]

Duby, meanwhile, has argued that the troubadour lyric represents the socialization of a military class through the repression of violence and its sublimation into a game of conduct.[17] If the courtly romance provided the ruling military class with its self-justification,[18] the troubadour lyric crystallized this justification into legitimacy. Erich Koehler notes that "[l]a poésie des troubadours naît très précisément à l'instant où l'anoblissement de la chevalerie est *de facto* accompli, sans qu'il soit encore entré définitivement dans la conscience—ni des maitres, ni des sujets—comme une donnée évidente dont on ne conteste pas la légitimité."[19] Particularly evident in the troubadour lyrics is the tension between the lower nobility and the older, established aristocracy.[20]

Amors became a concept in which these social tensions were at once sublimated and deflected onto women. Love in the Middle Ages, and in particular the literary code of *fin'amors,* was a social construct that encompassed an entire web of relations and codified rules prescribing conduct in many areas of behavior for the upper classes: "L'amour est compris comme un facteur d'ordre dans la société."[21] That the medieval definition of love was indeed preceptive is particularly illustrated by one of the songs of Guillem VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine:

> Ja no cera nuils hom ben fis
> Contr'amor, si non l'es aclis,
> Ez als estranhs ez als vezis
> Non es consens,
> Ez a totz sels d'aicel aizi
> Obedïens.

> Obedïensa deu portar
> A maintas gens, qui vol amar;
> E cove li que sapcha far
> Faitz avinens,
> E que.s gart en cort de parlar
> Vilanamens.[22]
>
> [No man will ever be perfect toward love, if he is not submissive to it, and if toward both strangers and neighbors he is not obliging, and to all those of that realm obedient. He ought to render obedience to many people, he who wishes to love, and it is necessary that he know how to perform pleasing feats, and that he guard himself, in court, from speaking vulgarly.]

The ethics of love include congeniality toward strangers and neighbors alike, proper service, avoidance of vulgar speech, and above all, obedience.

This insistence on obedience to rules carries over into the game of love, the *joc d'amor;* after all, love is all a matter of how you play the game. Playfulness has always been a component of the troubadour tradition, even as Guillem VII sang:

> Farai un vers de dreit nïen:
> Non er de mi ni d'autra gen,
> Non er d'amor ni de joven,
> Ni de ren au,
> Qu'enans fo trobatz en durmen
> Sobre chivau.[23]
>
> [I shall make a verse of exactly nothing: there will be nothing of me nor of other people, there will be nothing of love nor of youth, nor of anything else, for it was composed earlier while I was sleeping on a horse.]

Among the funniest and most memorable examples of the game of flirtation is that of Bernart de Ventadorn, who pleads:

> Domna, a prezen amat
> autrui, e me a celat,
> si qu'eu n'aya tot lo pro
> et el la bela razo.[24]
>
> [Lady, in public love the other one, and me in private, so that I may have all the good of it, and he the fine conversation.]

Perhaps one of the clearest instances of the seignorial relation between a troubadour and his lady, however, is to be found in the *tenso* between the trobairitz Isabella and the troubadour Elias Cairel, where Elias says:

e s'ieu en dizia lauzor
en mon chantar, no.l dis per drudaria,
mas per honor e pro qu'ieu n'atendia,
si com joglars fai de domna prezan;[25]
[and if I have sung your praise in my song, I did it not for love, but for the honor and profit that I expected from it, just as a jongleur does with a lady of worth.]

The game is up when one gives it away, or is it? Not judging by Isabella's response:

N'Elias Cairel, amador
non vi mais de vostre voler
qui cambies domna per aver,
e s'ieu en disses desonor,
ieu n'ai dig tant de be qu'om no.l creiria;
mas ben podetz doblar vostra follia:
de mi vos dic qu'ades vau meilluran,
mas endreig vos non ai cor ni talan. (22)
[Sir Elias Cairel, I have never seen a lover more of your willingness to exchange a lady for property, and if I were to say dishonor of you, I have spoken so many good things of you that no one would believe it; but certainly you can double your folly: as for me I say to you that already I go on improving, but for you I have neither heart nor inclination.]

Isabella takes Elias's frank admission in stride, and turns it to her own advantage.

In fact, the one common denominator in the surviving lyrics of the trobairitz is the literary *joc d'amor*—either in the sense of playing the game or in an analysis of how the game is played—from Castelloza's dramatic extremism to the ironic use of religious language that Dronke finds in the *tenso* of Almucs de Castelnau and Iseut de Capio.[26] By daring to speak on behalf of the silent Lady, the trobairitz reveal the contradictions inherent in the troubadour *topoi*; armed only with the authority of their own wit and their posture of powerlessness, the trobairitz play the game and often win.

The received critical view about the trobairitz is that they simply inverted the conventions of the troubadours and were stylistically inferior.[27] In fact, however, the gender of the trobairitz does not result in a corresponding shift whereby the male subject embodies an ideal of value or perfection, as Marianne Shapiro has pointed out.[28] Moreover, the trobairitz all share a consciousness of their places as women in the game, both as artists and as ladies within the literary construct of *fin'amors.* This awareness leads to a doubleness in the poetry that highlights the contradictions of the game, as illustrated in the following lines from Clara d'Anduza, wherein the speaker is both active subject and passive object:

> Ja no.us donetz, bels amics, espaven
> que ja ves vos aja cor trichador,
> ni qu'ie.us camge per nul autr' amador,
> si.m pregavon d'autres *omes* un cen; (26)
>
> [Do not be afraid, handsome friend, that I would ever be unfaithful to you, nor that I would exchange you for any other lover, if I were wooed by a hundred other men.]

The trobairitz deliberately exploit the difference between their roles as artists and their roles as objects of the love game. Shapiro points out that "[t]he *trobairitz* demonstrate by omission their selection of those *topoi* that foreground the essential paradox of their femininity as poets within a male system."[29] She goes on to link the choice of *topoi* with the ways in which the trobairitz play the game within the rules while actually *emphasizing* their own status as objects. By doing so, the trobairitz demonstrate their intentions to play the *joc d'amor* according to its rules, and part of the game includes the women's refusal to play.

Though "contre-courtoise" songs are legion among the troubadours,[30] I would locate the works of the trobairitz in the tradition of the lyric wherein the women refuse to be seduced by the lines of their suitors. Women who play the part of pragmatists in the *joc d'amor* are particularly evident in the *pastorelas* of the troubadours, as in the following stanza from Marcabru where the peasant girl typically is not taken in by the nobleman:

> —"Don, hom coitatz de follatge
> Jur' e pliu e promet gatge:
> Si.m fariatz homenatge,
> Seigner, so.m dis la vilana;
> Mas ieu, per un pauc d'intratge,
> Non vuoil ges mon piucellatge,
> Camjar per nom de putana."[31]

> [''Lord, a man tormented by madness swears and pledges and promises security: so you would do homage to me, Master,'' this said the peasant to me; ''but I am not at all willing, for a little entrance fee, to exchange my virginity for the name of a whore.'']

The pastorela involves the additional element of class hierarchy, and, at least in the early pastorelas of Marcabru, the social realism of the traditional frame; the trobairitz were presumably from the educated aristocracy, and therefore had to play a more subtle game, having more to lose.

If there seems a certain unwillingness in the extant lyrics by the trobairitz to play the troubadours' ornate word-games of *trobar ric* and the esoteric hermeneutical games of *trobar clus,* it is in keeping with their roles within the *joc d'amor.* The trobairitz Lombarda addresses this issue in her *tenso* with the troubadour Bernart Arnaut d'Armagnac when she says: ''car lo mirails e no vezer descorda / tan mon acord c'ab pauc no.l desacorda'' (22) [''for the mirror and not seeing so disrupts my rhyme that it almost interrupts it'']. In the context of the lyric, these lines imply that Bernart Arnaut is in love with his own image and almost disrupts Lombarda's rhymes, which is to say that the troubadours' self-projection onto the images of women that they have created and with which they then pretend to be in love has made life very difficult for the trobairitz, both as artists and as women. That Lombarda's lyric is the only surviving example of *trobar clus* by a trobairitz—and one that incorporates the difficulty of composing *trobar clus* as a woman in its very subject—is particularly significant because it highlights the problem confronted by women trying to utilize the very troubadour models that require women as silent mirrors of narcissistic masculine desire.[32]

The posture of unsophistication is in fact an extension of the traditional female role in the game, one that is most clearly delineated in the *pastorelas.* In Marcabru's ''L'autrier jost' una sebissa,'' when the poet says to the shepherdess that she is sweet and innocent and that therefore she should not be alone in the pasture, she replies:

> —''Don, fetz ela, qui que.m sia,
> Ben conosc sen e folia;
> La vostra pareillaria,
> Seigner, so.m dis la vilana,
> Lai on se tang si s'estia,
> Que tals la cuid' en bailia
> Tener, no.n a mas l'ufana.''[33]

> [''Lord,'' she said, ''whatever I may be, I certainly know sense and foolishness; your company, Master,'' this said the peasant girl, ''there where it is fitting let it stay, for many a one who believes to hold it in her power, has nothing but the look of it.'']

Of this poem, Zink observes, ''Il faut dire que cette rusée bergère accentue à plaisir ses manières campagnardes et sa feinte simplicité pour se moquer du poète et finalement l'envoyer promener. . . .''[34] The fact that Marcabru underlines the shepherdess's so-called simplicity within the very means by which he signals her reported discourse (''so.m dis la vilana'') suggests that a highly developed awareness of the manipulation of discourse is part of the genre from its earliest example.

Indeed, the trobairitz' lack of linguistic pyrotechnics is part of the refusal of women to engage in the *joc,* which in itself is a posture required of the game. This is particularly evident in the third song of Castelloza:

Mout aurai mes mals usatge
a las autras amairitz:
qu'om sol trametre messatge
e motz triaz e chausitz,
et ieu tenc me per garida,
amics, a la mia fe,
quan vos prec, qu'aiss.m cove;
que.l plus pros n'es enriquida
s'a de vos qualqu'aondanssa
de baisar o d'acoindanssa. (24)

> [I shall have set a very bad example for the other (female) lovers, because usually the man sends the message, words collected and chosen. Yet I hold myself protected, friend, by my faith, when I court you—because this is right for me; for the most noble lady is enriched if she gets from you any abundance of kissing or affection.]

In her declaration that only men send deliberate messages of courtship, Castelloza illustrates that the straightforward language of the trobairitz is part of the posture of artlessness women adopt as part of the game. The public awkwardness of female authorship is the subject, and the seignorial *topos* is inverted so that it is the lady, and the trobairitz, who is enriched from the friendship.

The trobairitz openly address fundamental contradictions faced by medieval women, especially those stemming from women's limited access to power. Azalais de Porcairagues is particularly direct about the predicament of a woman who is chosen by a man of much higher rank:

> Dompna met mot mal s'amor
> que ab ric ome plaideia,
> ab plus aut de vavassor,
> e s'il o fai, il folleia;
> car so diz om en Veillai
> que ges per ricor non vai,
> e dompna que n'es chauzida
> en tenc per evilanida. (17)
>
> [A lady places her love very badly who pleads with a wealthy man, one above the rank of vavassor: and if she does it, she is a fool; for in Velay one says that love and money do not mix, and the woman who is chosen by money I hold as debased.]

The implication here is that the woman chosen by a rich man in a love match is base because she must have used her sexuality to gain access to his wealth, prestige, and authority; yet the responsibility for the relationship is deliberately ambiguous ("Dompna . . . ab ric ome plaideia," "dompna que n'es chauzida"), emphasizing the double bind in which historically many medieval women must have found themselves. The social prohibitions against women's acquisition of power were strong enough to be enforced by other women, as Azalais's own use of "tenc" shows.

The *partimen* among Alais, Iselda, and Carenza, on the other hand, is remarkable for its direct treatment of the few options available to medieval women, namely marriage or cloister, and of a young woman attempting to choose between them. It is surprising too in its frank discussion of the effect of matrimony and childbirth on women:

> Na Carenza, penre marit m'agenza,
> mas far enfantz cug qu'es grans penedenza,
> que las tetinhas pendon aval jos,
> e.l ventrilhs es cargatz e enojos. (28)
>
> [Lady Carenza, it pleases me to take a husband, and yet having children I think is a great penance, for one's breasts hang right down, and one's belly is heavy and irksome.]

The sense of play in the language, from earthy to religious, demonstrates a freedom of literary form that is unusual. It is not the troubadour lyrics but the long tradition of clerical exhortations to women on virginity that this song parodies.[35] In reappropriating misogynistic language, the trobairitz also reclaim power over their own bodies, and celebrate this feat in a song about a young woman who herself has the power to choose her fate.

The explicit appropriation of religious and legal language in the *tenso* of Almucs de Castelnau and Iseut de Capio authorizes the power of the lady over her lover; at the same time, however, the temporary and borrowed nature of that power is made apparent by the condition of the final couplet:

> Dompna n'Iseus, s'ieu saubes
> qu'el se pentis de l'engan
> qu'el a fait vas mi tan gran,
> ben fora dreich que n'agues
> merces; mas a mi no.s taing,
> pos que del tort no s'afraing
> ni.s pentis del faillimen,
> que n'aja mais chauzimen;
> mas si vos faitz lui pentir
> leu podretz mi convertir. (25)
>
> [Lady Iseut, if I knew that he repented of the great deceit he showed towards me, it would be right that I should have pity; but it is not fitting for me, since he does not diminish his wrong nor repent of his failing, that I should have more indulgence towards it; but if you make him repent, you can convert me easily.]

The lady Almucs cannot escape the confines of being at once the subject and the object of the game. The language plays in the cramped space between the constricted lives of women, the restrictions upon which are represented by the song's borrowed legal and religious terms,[36] and the empowerment of discourse, represented by the song itself. Here we see clearly the box in which the trobairitz find themselves, adopting the discourse of the troubadours but ultimately confined by the paradigm of that discourse.

In Maria de Ventadorn's *tenso* with Gui d'Ussel, Maria highlights the power play between men and women in literary discourse by contrasting the hierarchical relations between the lady and the troubadour with the fiction of the equality of the sexes in love:

> Gui d'Ussel, ges d'aitals razos
> non son li drut al comenssar,

> anz ditz chascus, can vol preiar
> mans jointas e de genolhos:
> ''dompna voillatz que.us serva francamen
> cum lo vostr' om'', et ell' enaissi.l pren;
> ieu lo jutge per dreich a trahitor,
> si.s rend pariers ei.s det per servidor. (21)

> [Gui d'Ussel, lovers do not have reasons of such a kind in the beginning at all; on the contrary each says, when he wishes to court, hands clasped and on his knees: ''Lady, allow me to serve you frankly as your man.'' And she takes him thus; I judge him by right a traitor if he renders himself her equal after having given himself as her servant.]

Maria points out that suitors cannot have it both ways, insisting both on service and equality. The trobairitz here is refusing the pedestal by herself taking on the role of the pragmatist who is not mystified by the game, a role often assigned to women in other genres, particularly the *pastorela.* Gui d'Ussel's response is interesting for its typical masculine insistence on the fiction of a love that binds between ranks and incurs no obligations beyond itself: ''pois ren no.lh deu drutz mas quant per amor'' (21) [because the lover owes her nothing more than that which is required by love]. The tension between the actual relations of men and women and their literary relations is the animating force behind this *tenso.*

The disparity between women's lives and their images in masculine literary discourse is the explicit subject of the following stanza from Castelloza's first lyric, where public disapproval of female ''courting''—which must in some sense also mean singing—creates a dilemma for the trobairitz both as women and as poets:

> Ieu sai ben qu'a mi estai gen,
> si bei.s dizon tuich que mout descove
> que dompna prei a cavallier de se
> ni que.l teigna totz temps tan lonc prezic;
> mas cel qu'o ditz non sap ges ben chausir,
> qu'ieu vuoill proar enans que.m lais morir,
> qu'el preiar ai un gran revenimen
> quan prec cellui don ai greu pessamen. (23)

> [I know well that it is becoming to me, although rightly they say that it is very unsuitable that a lady plead for herself with a knight, and hold him in such long conversation all the time; but he who says this does not know how to discern at

> all, for I want to try (to entreat him) before I let myself die, since in entreating him I get great recovery, when I entreat the one who gives me such grief.]

This stanza is extraordinary for the way in which Castelloza modulates its tone, from glee to mock high tragedy—what Paden et al. strangely mistake for masochism.[37] Such a misinterpretation results from a failure to read the tone of the lyric correctly; the question of tone in any poem must take into account the relation between the poet and the audience as well as the literary context against which the poet is working.[38] We know that troubadours often composed for their peers, and included many jokes, frequently at their own expense; there is no reason to suppose that the trobairitz might not have done the same. Castelloza's mock seriousness is even more obviously parodic in the last stanza of this lyric, where the tone evokes the emotional blackmail motif common in troubadour poetry:

Oimais non sai, que.us mi presen,
que cercat ai et ab mal et ab be
vostre dur cor, don lo mieus noi.s recre;
e no.us o man, qu'ieu mezeissa.us o dic
que morai me, si no.m voletz jauzir
de qualque joi, e si.m laissatz morir,
faretz peccat, e serai n'len tormen,
e seretz ne blasmatz vilanamen.[39] (23)

> [From now on I do not know how I may present myself to you, for I have sought with bad and with good your hard heart, whence my own does not renounce you; and I don't send you this, but I say it to you myself: that I shall die, if you don't want me to enjoy whatever joy, and if you let me die, you will commit a sin, and I will be in torment, and thence you will be blamed vilely.]

The tone is very similar to that of Bernart de Ventadorn in the following passage:

A, can mal sembla, qui la ve,
qued aquest chaitiu deziron
que ja ses leis non aura be,
laisse morrir, que no l'aon.[40]

> [Ah, it does not seem to whoever sees her that she would leave this man, miserable with desire, who will have no good without her, to die because she does not aid him.]

Yet no one has suggested that Bernart is a masochist, but simply a reproachful lover (or an unappreciated troubadour); indeed, the poet who threatens his lady with his imminent death is a standard troubadour *topos.* Out of the context of the troubadour game, however, Bernart's passage sounds much like Castelloza's; Castelloza's lyrics, removed from their social context, may be misinterpreted as the moanings of a masochistic female by those inclined to see women as masochists.

The trobairitz also point to the dichotomy of women's lives and literary images within the context of their own artistic production. The relation between life and art is brought into question by Tibors, who says "ben vos posc en ver dir" (25) [I can indeed tell you truly], where "ver" suggests both "truly" and "in verse"; the poet thereby calls into question the veracity of verse through the disjunction between her playfulness and her assertion of sincerity. By undermining the truth of the verse with her word-play, Tibors skillfully underscores the mendacity of the game.

Similarly, in her second poem, the Comtessa de Dia not only confronts the discrepancies inherent in the game's expectations of women but also those encountered by women who are caught between the fiction of sexual license and the reality of social proscriptions:

> A chantar m'er de so qu'ieu non volria,
> tant me rancur de lui cui sui amia,
> car ieu l'am mais que nuilla ren que sia:
> vas lui no.m val merces ni cortesia
> ni ma beltatz ni mos pretz ni mos sens,
> c'atressi.m sui enganad' e trahia
> com degr' esser, s'ieu fos desavinens. (18)
>
> [I have to sing of what I would not wish, so bitter do I feel about him whose love I am, for I love him more than anything there is: with him, of no use to me are grace or courtesy, nor my beauty, merit or understanding, for I am deceived and betrayed just as much as I would rightly be if I had been unwelcoming.]

The posture of the poet impelled by bitterness to sing is ironic in juxtaposition with the idea of her compelling love; it is especially so in the context of the Comtessa's insistence upon her own attributes and her warning at the end: "Mas aitan plus voill li digas messatges / qu'en trop d'orguoill ant gran dan maintas gens" (18) [But so much more I want you to tell him, messenger, that in the case of too much pride many people have great harm]. This lyric is less "an attempt to persuade the lover"[41] than a reversal of the troubadours' self-projections, one that emphasizes the contradiction between the literary invitation to sex and the actual opprobrium for women who would act upon it.

The trobairitz present an array of rhetorical strategies through which women survive and surpass their limited options.[42] In the first stanza of Castelloza's first lyric, the transposition of name-calling and praising is ironic:

> Amics, s'ie.us trobes avinen,
> humil e franc e de bona merce,
> be us amera, quan era m'en sove
> que.us trob vas mi mal e fellon e tric;
> e fauc chanssos per tal qu'ieu fass'auzir
> vostre bon pretz, don ieu non puosc sofrir
> que no.us fassa lauzar a tota gen,
> on plus mi faitz mal et adiramen. (23)
>
> [Friend, if I found you charming, humble, frank and compassionate, well would I love you, since now I remember that I find you bad, cruel, and false toward me, yet I make songs such that I make your good worth heard; whence I cannot endure that I cause you to be praised by everyone where most you cause me harm and hatred.]

Here the empowerment of women through subversive means, in this case that of the rhetorical ploy of altruism, is ably demonstrated. Castelloza further undermines her public statement of her lover's worth by revealing her fiction, crowning it with an ostensibly inadvertent, private confession, thereby dramatizing a frequent strategy of women's discourse.

Clara d'Anduza employs the rhetorical device of *aporia*: in her *tornada,* she discusses the difficulty of composing a song for a noncompliant man:

> Amics, tan ai d'ira e de feunia
> quar no vos vey, que quan ieu cug chantar,
> planh e sospir, per qu'ieu non puesc so far
> ab mas coblas que.l cors complir volria. (26)
>
> [Friend, I have so much anger and wickedness because I do not see you that when I think to sing, I weep and sigh; because I can not make music with more stanzas than my heart would be willing to complete.]

The exploitation of the contradiction between the words that assert the impossibility of the creative act and the actual fact of the song's composition is part of the discursive strategy of the trobairitz. Indeed, what Ernst Robert Curtius calls the ''inexpressibility topos'' is one to which writers have always had recourse.[43] Yet within the masculine discourse of the troubadours, silence is the primary space allowed women; we must not mistake the trobairitz' exploitation of rhetorical *aporia* within masculine discourse for evidence of a separate feminine discourse.[44]

Penny Schine Gold erroneously suggests that because women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did not engage in a feminist movement and did not overtly rebel against their devaluation, they passively accepted it. She writes, ''[m]edieval women's acceptance of these structures must be seen in the context of a value system that held hierarchy to be the dominant principle of social order.''[45] To say as much is to confuse the myth of a male hegemonic class with the actuality of what people themselves believed. The fact that medieval women did not systematically revolt suggests merely that they did not enjoy the economic power that would have enabled them to do so. The surviving lyrics of the trobairitz give adequate testimony to the fact that, when they were able, women did protest the restrictions and the contradictory expectations of their lives.

Although some women in Provence had attained enough economic security to acquire education and find a public voice for themselves, this security was rapidly eroding. The twelfth century saw the decline of the custom of the morning gift from the husband to his bride, signalling the decline of bilateral inheritance in favor of the patrilinear, the latter effectively excluding women from inheritance by means of cash dowries.[46] With the depletion of their economic base, women's rights and power were severely curtailed, their voices silenced.

As Tavera suggests, ''Si les *trobairitz* ont été mises 'hors jeu', ce n'est pas en leur temps: c'est au notre.''[47] Ultimately, however, it is the contradiction at the foundation of the troubadours' literary representations of women that gives rise to the discourse of the trobairitz. And when the historical moment had passed, so too had the voices through the cracks,[48] Tennyson's ''flower[s] in the crannied wall.''

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NOTES

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1. Michel Foucault, ''L'ordre du discours'' (Paris: Gallimard, 1971); trans. as ''The Discourse on Language'' by Rupert Swyer, appendix to *The Archeology of Knowledge,* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 151.

2. The trobairitz are female troubadours who composed songs in Southern France during the Middle Ages. Approximately twenty-three songs survive and are attributed to approximately eighteen trobairitz. What little biographical information we have about the trobairitz is sketchy and often conjectural. The reader is referred to the biographies in Meg Bogin's otherwise often inaccurate edition, *The Women Troubadours* (1976; New York: Norton, 1980), 160–79.

3. Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages,* trans. Chaya Galai (New York: Methuen, 1983), 92.

4. Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, ''The Power of Women Through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500–1100,'' *Feminist Studies* 1 (1973): 126–41, rpt. in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 95; Shahar, 128.

5. Diane Owen Hughes, ''From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe,'' *Women and History* 10 (1985): 22, 29; see also Shahar, 130.

6. McNamara and Wemple, 93–94; Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (New York: Archon, 1983), 96; see also Shahar, 130.

7. As David Herlihy writes: ''The economic role of women in Southern France and Spain . . . is particularly remarkable. Undoubtedly, a significant reason for this are [sic] the peculiarly favorable provisions of the Visigothic and Burgundian laws, which placed no juridical restrictions on her freedom to administer her own property, to share in the administration of the family property or, as a widow, to assume administrative control over it. The principle of community property in Visigothic law likewise served to increase the personal wealth of the widowed woman.'' ''Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701–1200,'' *Traditio* 18 (1962): 89–120; rpt. in *Women in Medieval Society,* ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 30, 32. See also Archibald Lewis, who argues that in addition to the insistence on allodial land ownership in Southern France and Catalonia, the ''emphasis on family control of property, political power, and the Church . . . helps to explain why women became so powerful in the Midi and Catalonia at an early period and remained so. . . .'' *The Development of Southern French and Catalan Society, 718–1050* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 404.

8. Hughes, 32–3.

9. The manuscripts of the trobairitz date from the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, and, according to what little information can be reconstructed about the trobairitz, it is unlikely that the songs themselves were composed much earlier.

10. As Joan Ferrante has demonstrated in *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature* (1975; rpt. Durham, North Carolina: Labyrinth, 1985), the lady in the troubadour lyrics is always aloof and is essentially fungible because she functions as a mirror for the poet. If the poet has hope of winning her affection, then he praises the lady hyperbolically and depicts her as the inspiration for great deeds. If she has rejected the poet, then she is blamed as a *trichairitz,* a deceiving trickster. See also James A. Brundage, who discusses the various misogynist canonistic approaches to female sexuality in "Carnal Delight: Canonistic Theories of Sexuality," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law, Salamanca, 21-25 September 1976,* ed. Stephen Kuttner and Kenneth Pennington (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980), 361-85.

11. Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge,* 25: "We must renounce all those themes [of historical analysis] whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence. We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse and its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from view, in the dust of books."

12. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 86.

13. Bernard Cerquiglini, "The Syntax of Discursive Authority: The Example of Feminine Discourse," *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 183.

14. Although Joan Ferrante's recent study, "Notes Toward a Study of a Female Rhetoric in the Trobairitz," in *The Voice of the Trobairitz,* ed. William D. Paden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), suggests that there are some differences in the rhetoric of the trobairitz, including their use of second person address, negatives, subjunctive contrafactual statements, and simple rhyme schemes, the trobairitz do not overturn the paradigm of troubadour discourse. For an analysis of how Marie de France claims masculine authority in order to establish her own feminine discourse, see my "Politics of Marie's Poetics," paper presented at the Barnard Medieval and Renaissance Conference, New York, 12 November 1988, forthcoming.

15. "[T]he [Provençal] lady, having become the adorer, . . . did not cease . . . to be the dominating lady." Pierre Bec, "Trobairitz et chansons de femme. Contribution à la connaissance du lyrisme féminin au moyen âge," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 22 (1979): 261. Beyond the scope of this paper, but worth noting here, is the Nietzschean argument that the lady must be elevated to dominatrix in order to be dominated. It is significant, however, that the trobairitz did not overturn this paradigm and did not extend beyond masculine literary discourse.

16. As Elaine Tuttle Hansen has written of Chaucer's Griselda in "The Powers of Silence: The Case of the Clerk's Griselda," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Georgia: University of

Georgia Press, 1988), 237: ". . . Griselda's archetypically feminine position thus marks not only the absence and silence and powerlessness of 'real' women in history but also the limits of power for masculine authority. . . . Viewed as a poem about either a woman's subversive silence or her silenced subversion, the *Clerk's Tale* thus affirms two central conclusions about masculine and feminine power in Western culture. It suggests that 'maleness,' as Catherine MacKinnon has put it, is 'a form of power that is both omnipotent and non-existent, an unreal thing with very real consequences.' It also explains why 'woman' is of necessity defined as an equivocal, troublesome figure, at once utterly powerless and fundamentally threatening."

17. Georges Duby, "Les 'jeunes' dans la société aristocratique dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XIIe siècle," *Hommes et Structures du Moyen Age* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

18. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 123–42.

19. "The poetry of the troubadours is born precisely at the very instant when the ennoblement of the knighthood is accomplished *de facto,* without which it still entered definitively in[to] consciousness—neither of masters, nor of subjects—as an obvious fact the legitimacy of which one does not contest." Erich Koehler, "Observations historiques et sociologiques sur la poésie des troubadours," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 7 (1964): 37.

20. Koehler, 37.

21. "Love is included as a factor of order in society." Koehler, 38.

22. Gerald A. Bond, ed. and trans., *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine* (New York: Garland, 1982), 28, 30. All translations are mine. As the troubadours have been ably translated by a number of scholars, and as the trobairitz have been inaccurately translated by Meg Bogin, my own translations aim for literalness.

23. Bond, 14.

24. Stephen G. Nichols, et al., eds. *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn,* University of North Carolina Studies in Romance Languages and Litertures, no. 39 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 57.

25. Oscar Schultz-Gora, *Die Provenzalischen Dichterinnen* (Altenburg: Druck von Oskar Bonde, 1888), 22. All texts of the trobairitz are cited from this edition.

26. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (203) to Marguerite Porete (1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101.

27. From Jeanroy to very recently. See Meg Bogin's introduction, page 68.

28. Marianne Shapiro, "The Provençal *Trobairitz* and the Limits of Courtly Love," *Signs* 3 (1978): 564.

29. Shapiro, 565–66.

30. Antoine Tavera, "A la recherche des troubadours maudits," *Senefiance* 5 (1978): 147.

31. J.-M.-L. Dejeanne, ed. *Poésies complètes du troubadour Marcabru,* Bibliothèque Méridionale, first series, vol. 12 (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1909), 140.

32. The narcissism of *fin'amors* has been discussed by Frederick Goldin in chapter 2 of *The Mirror and Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), and Ferrante, *Woman as Image,* chapter 3.

33. Dejeanne, 138.

34. "It must be said that this artful shepherdess wantonly accentuates her country manners and her feigned simplicity to make fun of the poet and finally to send him packing. . . ." Michel Zink, *La Pastourelle: Poésie et folklore au Moyen Age* (Paris: Bordas, 1972), 43.

35. On these treatises, which find their precedent particularly in Jerome, see Bornstein, 15–30.

36. As Peter Dronke has noted: "In Almucs' reply, we see the playful use both of legal terms ('dreichz', 'tort') and again of religious ones. The leitmotif here is that of penitence and contrition ('qu'el se pentis . . . n'agues merces . . . ni.s pentis . . . faitz lui pentir'). Especially the concluding word, 'convertir,' is evocative: if her lover repents, Almucs will be 'converted'—not to the religious life, but back to the rôle of the gracious *domna,* who shows mercy to the man she cares for." *Women Writers of the Middle Ages,* 101.

37. William D. Paden, et al., "The Poems of the Trobairitz Na Castelloza," *Romance Philology* 35 (1981): 165: "The songs of Na Castelloza concentrate on feelings of melancholy and affliction with a single-mindedness which borders on masochism—not masochism in the narrow sense as a sexual perversion, but the derivative form in which satisfaction comes from suffering or humiliation apart from any sexual pleasure. . . ." The essay by H. Jay Siskin and Julie A. Storme entitled "Suffering Love: The Reversed Order in the Poetry of Na Castelloza" in Paden's recent collection, *The Voice of the Trobairitz,* persists in this unfortunate misreading.

38. As Simon Gaunt points out, "[q]uestioning the conventions of *fin'amor* within the framework of a courtly love poem is obviously an ideal recipe for irony, for the poet is simultaneously confirming and denying his adherence to the tradition." *Troubadours and Irony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2. See also Laura Kendrick, *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 176.

39. Note that Paden's variant has as its final lines, "Farez pecat, e serez n'en turmen,/ E serai mos quesid'a jutjamen," which he translates as, "you will commit a sin, and you'll be in torment for it,/ and I'll be more sought after at Judgment," and which carries the parodic blackmail effect even further.

40. Nichols et al., 167.

41. Dronke, 104.

42. Women's empowerment through false speech in the genres of the romance and the epistle is explored by Ferrante in "Public Postures, Private Maneuvers," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* 216: "Manipulation by words takes various forms: the hidden promise, the false oath, the forged letter, the beneficial fic-

tion, the malicious lie. None of these is an exclusively female tool, but in the romances all are practiced far more widely by women and all, potentially or actually, have social repercussions.''

43. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 159–62.

44. Cf. Kathryn Gravdal, ''Speechless Singers: The Women Troubadours of Medieval France'' (paper delivered at Columbia University on 28 February 1987), who has suggested that *aporia* is one of the figures that the trobairitz commonly employ to create their own discourse. I would argue, however, that the trobairitz neither explore nor exploit the ''blank pages, gaps, borders, spaces and silence, holes in discourse,'' as Xavière Gauthier has described the emphasis of certain modern French female writers. Gauthier continues: ''If the reader feels a bit disoriented in this new space, one which is obscure and silent, it proves perhaps, that it is women's space.'' In the case of the trobairitz, however, *aporia* is a rhetorical strategy within the confines of masculine discourse. Xavière Gauthier, ''Existe-t-il une écriture de femme?,'' *Tel quel* Summer (1974); trans. Marilyn A. August, in *New French Feminisms,* ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken, 1981), 164.

45. Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 150.

46. Hughes, 46; McNamara and Wemple, 96.

47. ''If the *trobairitz* have been sidelined, it is not in their time, it is in ours.'' Tavera, 147.

48. I owe this image to Kathryn Gravdal.