

2/5/01 Monday's Rock, Sandro Lingam  
Closing time: 9:48 P.M., C.S.T.

Part of the problem of any analysis of textuality is that notions such as ‘the text’ and ‘the author’ are culturally specific and ideologically charged. For example, in medieval Occitan, an *autor* was not an ‘author’, but rather an ‘authority’, usually an ancient writer. The composer of a troubadour lyric was not an *autor*, but a *trobador*, one who ‘finds’, the implications being that the text pre-exists the poet and is an object that has somehow to be retrieved. The text does not emanate from the troubadour, but antecedes him or at the very least exists independently, a notion that is reinforced by the metaphors used to articulate troubadour poetics: the poem is an artifact that is bound up, planed, filed or polished. The text then is not a unique utterance expressing the poet’s essential being: it is rather an exquisite, inanimate, jewel-like object, fashioned from a resistant and challenging matter, language.

Simon Gaunt  
“The Text of the Troubadour Poem”

*In which Bel Desir honeys-over its rapier of treachery*

It was one of Professor Razo’s guilty pleasures to sally forth from the semi-cloistered domains of Tempe and A.S.U., and pilgrimage across the wilds of Papago Park to the hinterlands of Scottsdale. There, amidst clusters of faux-wild-west shops, whose false-mouths, sticky with trinket-honey, were pried open to spring shut as tourist traps, he would seek the object of his pent desire. Although his ten-minute drive across this urban-enclosed spec of Sonoran Desert was well protected by his heavy American-made-air-conditioned-white-sedan, it still afforded him the limp thrill of adventure. Yes, he knew he could have more easily attained his destination from his condo only a few blocks away in the Golden Keys, but leaving from and returning to campus kept his escapades hidden from Shirley. Besides, the extended excursion — he believed — no, he was convinced of it — stimulated the production of testosterone. Call it his own up-dated version of *amor di lonh*, but the passage north across the wilderness, and the possibility, however remote, of encountering some danger, always made him a bit rammish. For often, even here, in the clutch of metropolitan Phoenix, he would see in the park, the ancient demon-denzens of an inhospitable terrain — scorpions, tarantulas or even rattlers — slithering across the infernally-heated black-top. What if his car should over-heat? What if he ran out of gas? Or perhaps he would be called upon to come to the rescue of some stranded demoiselle, a comely middle-aged divorcée, perchance, her car immobile, her hopes forlorn, while he, obdurate in hardship, the very model of *valor* . . . this was the kind of drivel that occupied Lovernius’s addled brain as he headed for the metaphoric-closet of his *fin’ amor*, one Ety Kaplan, proprietress of the Sefer Yetzerah, a souvenir shop and herbarium located in “Old Town” Scottsdale, just north of the canal along Indian School Road.

As he dismounted from the car, the recollection of their story-book first meeting made fragrant passage through his titillated memory. He had originally entered her premises to seek herbal relief for one of those — harumpf — intimate problems involving urgent but

tardy micturition that sometimes beset the maturing body of the seasoned gentleman. With so inauspicious a key, the lock of fate was sprung. He had been idly flipping through one of the many books that the shop had displayed along a wall surmounted with a huge reproduction of one of Edward Hick's renditions of the "Peaceable Kingdom," the large-eyed beasts, both domestic and wild, staring in wonder on his still puissant form, when she first approached. Tentative, like a doe, tactful, like a high-born lady, she offered her delicate advice. As a New Age expert in *sanhals*, Lovernius smiled inwardly to recall how she had cleverly expressed his need with pseudonyms without once mentioning the unmentionable. For his ailment, she recommended saw palmetto and pumpkin seed extract, a concoction, which, amazingly, worked some wonders for the Professor's bulbous prostate. He took this boon as a sign, and thereafter, would return to the herbarium rather more frequently than his condition actually warranted, to gaze, unrequited, on his *fin' amor*, and to seek her sage council in matters of health and general virility. For her part, Etty, née, Esther, knew well the wiles to attract the older male customer. The whole Greater Phoenix metropolitan area was the country's urban overheated hospice for the retired and retiring, and she had scores of elderly gentleman, just like the Professor, whose problems and aspirations hopelessly required some of her Wiccan attention, not all of which was herbal. Etty knew how to cock her butt as she turned to reach for a canister on a high shelf, how to throw one leg back lithely as she stood on tip-toe, how to lightly touch the arm of a beguiled codger, how to lower her eyelids when receiving a compliment and how to let her hair brush subtly across a blue-veined, thin-skinned hand as she came near to read the label on a package, or to point out a passage in a book. All these old geezers were secretly, or not so secretly, in love with her, and their love, so hopeful and so harmless, was transformed into the musical CaChing! of cash sales. It was Etty's way of making Primavera's negotiable-green spring forth, even in the heart of the desert. Besides, she reasoned, her flirting gave them all a reason to live, a reason to come into the shop and a reason to accept her advice, which was, compared to that given them by their slash-and burn allopathic doctors, actually, quite good. Etty not only knew the elderly male libido, but she knew the body, too. And she knew what herbs and diets would be most apt to stay the relentless hand of disease and death, and to coax the old stump to sprout new buds, if only for another few seasons. Her customers looked upon her as a kind of healing goddess, beneficent, erotic, and just ever so-slightly beyond their crotchety reach. The Professor was one of these hoary-haired hoards, who like all her other gentleman suitors, thought himself special, the one, the only, the single prince vying for her recently divorced, yet still comely hand.

As Professor Razo entered the shop, he was pleasantly conscious that he had dressed for the occasion, that he was, in fact, attired in a rather *jovent*-fashion. He always wore his cotton, blue-boy turtleneck, the color chosen to accentuate his ruddiness, which high-blood-pressure and sidewalk-heat had already burnished to a dangerous vermilion. The collar, of course, was chosen to hide the bunched and bulged skin of his own turtleneck. The sleeves, even in this heat, were long, in order to armor his bony arms. Paired with this equipage for the upper moiety, for the lower, he matched, or mismatched, his wine-colored stay-press pants, the whole ensemble garnished with the accoutrements of a white belt and white neat's leather Velcro-fastened walkers. ("Teeth feet," as Etty mockingly called them to her friends, when safely out of earshot of her dapper gentleman callers.)

Also, the Professor invariably took the precaution of pocketing his wedding band, and as he entered the shop, he would affect a pose — left-hand on hip in a fist — to conceal his cheater’s ring — with body arched and head thrown back, like those conquerors of infidels and women shown in the portraits of haughty pre-renaissance crusaders. In addition, the Professor, to demonstrate his *largueza*, took care to prepare some flowery bouquet of eloquence, the which largess he would present in a casual, nonchalant sort of way. Words piquant enough, he weened, to impress her with the erudition of his spontaneity, but not, he hoped, so trite or so transparent in their artifice as to offend. He would lurk outside on the blistering sidewalk and peer clandestinely in — *celar* — the need for secrecy, always creeping around the edges of his mind. Then, when the shop was void of rivals, guards or spies, he would pop in jauntily with his rehearsed phrase. “Etty, *Midons*, I now proffer my poor visage for the comely sun of your beauty and sagacity.” These esoteric *cortesias* were supposed to be funny, and Etty perceived them as such, but not quite in the way that the Professor imagined. At any rate, she would laugh, express *joi*, and the blood would come to her cheek, and also, albeit more recklessly, to his.

“Today, today, today, today, today,” this is the chant of every wayward lover, young or old, that the past was mere prelude, and that the lonely chamber that has been gathering darkness and pain for all of one’s life, will today, of all days, be at last penetrated by the light and fragrance of the beloved, that this day will be the epithalamion of fulfillment, the touch of the dawn that will fetch a night of bliss. But, alas, today, was not to be that day for Lovernius “Lover” Razo. For *Gilos* was about to enter the little wondrous world of Etty Kaplan’s Sefer Yetzerah, as green-eyed and as monstrous as did ever prompt the Bard’s Moor to viciously throw *mezura* on the knives of fate and prompt his hands to murder.

### The Rules of Joy

“Rules are indispensable.” At least, that is what Grace tells me. She affirms that I have now learned the perfection of Amadée de Jois. But she gently admonishes that this is only one case of perfection, polished, to be sure, to blessedness by repetition and the application of rotely remembered rules — but a case still marred by separation. To be “perfectly perfect,” she says I must expand that blessedness from a single case to Case with a capital “C.” “Perfection,” she says, “is not static in itself, but is the attribute of a flowingness which has created rules of creation to Create.” Yet I am puzzled. How can I be a thing other than myself? And whereas before my damnable life was blessed by blessed singing, now my blessed singing is damned by damnable thinking. I have wept, I don’t know how many times, how many repetitions, trying to think from a point outside of myself. It was, of course, through weeping, that I discovered what I believed to be my first rule. For in my weeping to find the answer to my question, I was naturally drawn to all the times in my life when I had wept. And so I was led to study the necklace of my life in Time, and as I looked inside the cluster of each pearl — seeing my father, my mother, my *fin amor*, and all the competing clergy — I saw, as I looked closely, that they had not only caused me to weep, but that I had been the cause of their weeping as well. And at last I remembered the wails of my baby girl, as she drew her first breath in the blood of incarnation. And then I realized — oh, how slow I have been, how blind! —

that all this Weeping was a Case with a capital “C.” My weeping had not been mine only, but it was passed about, flowing through everyone, yet sealed in by the glass of Time. When I related my modest revelation to Grace, she told me that I had now discovered that “rules can be productive (quaint phrase!),” that we need not repeat each separate event, each thing, but that a single case of weeping will suffice to stand for all the tears the world has ever shed. Then I realized, too, that as with weeping, so is it with the case of rage, or pride, or lust, or gluttony! That once is enough for Creation, and that once has passed! Then it was that the angel descended, so bright, so sweet, so utterly embracing. And when I saw this angel’s wings fold and unfold as she hovered just above me, I felt the soft breeze of the second rule — that weeping and wings and, indeed, the whole wide world are an abstract sun, which animates all types — “W” standing for everything that whirls. Now, Grace said that I had learned the second rule — that types can be symbolic, the ciphers that hold whole stars of luminous things. Oh how I loved my rules! And how I stuffed them! Packing up all my many repetitions and placing them in the vast spheres of my rules. But after a time, my rules became so heavy, that their brightness was nearly eclipsed by their density, and so, quite naturally, as one sphere darkened, I began to relieve its burden, by placing its cases in another sphere — and Lo!, a strange thing happened! Both spheres expanded wondrously, profoundly! Then Grace said a curious thing, at which I marveled, “rules can be combinatorial.”

Now I could make many things one and one thing many, which Grace called, respectively, “syncretism” and “allomorphy” — she has such queer, such wonderful names for things. And with these rules, I could begin to make sense, that is, to say the sentences of my life. I saw that my life had forms, that it had actions, and that my sayings were modifications of forms and actions. I saw that forms and actions were modified by space, by time, by weight, by textures, by color, and that sometimes they came singly and sometimes many together, and that by attaching these things and actions to modifiers, I could apply my rules, and write, so to speak, out of my own small mind, my own humble experience, the songs of many others — of my father, my mother, my *fin amor*, my baby — and not only these — but also of those others living in my incarnate sphere — the parfais, the croyants, the inquisitors, the lepers, the peasants, the nobles, the priests (both false and true). And so the repetitions that I had seen which did not seem to be part of me were now explained. And the song, the blessed song of Amadée de Jois, was expanded, but simplified, too, by the harmonious application of these rules.

Grace said that I had ascended in the hierarchy, for now my singing was joined by many others — celestial choirs, celestial symphonies, from which concerted solos ushered forth, or single voices stood out from the throng, like jewels which rise from waves of other jewels. Now I could *sing* while *thinking*. And so I thought. And I saw that this marvelous thought-music had five attributes, in the midst of which was a wonderful, almost transparent, angel who could change his/her shape at will, making the simple complex, the complex simple. And around this wondrous Being there rotated four thrones. And one throne was sound, made by the mouth and heard by the ear. And opposite this throne was the meaning of these sounds, the quarreling doctrines of the priests and the parfais, the swiving of desire in the flesh when touched by the *vers* of the salacious troubadours, the soft rap-rap of the rising starling’s wings, the cry of the child to

pierce her mother's ears. And these sounds and meanings stared into each others' eyes, as they spun round and round about the diaphanous center, which changed its axis as its satellites turned and turned.

And I saw another couple, facing each other as they turned. One was a throne of all that had passed before — the real, the experienced, the incarnate, the historically true. And this throne was weighty and scarred and wise, and full of many treasures, trinkets and trash. And opposite this being there was another, eclyped "Expression," the things that could be, the flare and clothing of what might have been, the imaginative, the endlessly arranged. And likewise, these two beings spun round and round about the diaphanous center, changing its axis as they turned and turned.

And I saw that the rules were not confining, but freeing, and that with them, I could sing any song, make anything I chose, I could, if I wished, damn or redeem the world.

And Grace laughed at my joy. And the Angel of the Center she called "Morphology." And the throne of the mouth and ear, she called "Phonology." And facing Phonology, the throne of belief and desire, she named "Semantics." And the other pair, the throne of memory, so imperfect, she christened "Lexicon," and his partner, she said was "Syntax." And with these rules she said I could create, develop, change and annihilate worlds. And now I grew and grew, being full of rules, making joy with rules, pathos with rules, lies with rules, truth with rules, and I thought I might even command Grace herself with my rules. But Grace sensed this, and she appeared before me so brilliantly, that she seemed utterly, utterly dark. And Grace said:

**"Rules are arbitrary."**

#### The Rule of Hope

There are many who are wandering, lost,  
In the day's wreckage, in the night's dilapidations,  
Groping to find the magnet of some rule,  
Some permanent embracing that will save them.  
No matter how old their bodies, they are young,  
Naïve, aching to touch the happiness  
They seek at their next meeting with another  
Lost one. 'Let there be something in these eyes,'  
They think, 'that tells me I am loved.' This is  
The rulemaker's litany of despair,  
The hope for something boundless in that stare.

2/8/01 Thursday's Rock, Giles Nagual  
Closing time: 4:20 p.m., C.S.T.

Sometimes the casuistry goes right to the heart of the matter: “If you had a rendezvous at night with your mistress, would you rather see me leaving as you are arriving or see me arriving as you are leaving?”

Jean Markale

*Courtly Love: The Path of Sexual  
Initiation*

*The two poets, rivals for one love, meet, 'though tangentially, and a mountebank appears*

For today was the day when Lovernius Razo, professor emeritus, and specialist in *trobar*, would discover that it was not he who was the polished, secret apple of Etty Kaplan's chestnut brown eyes. No, that glamour was reserved for another. The professor had been regaling his lady with tales of the Church-annihilated Cathars, their championship of women's rights, their general pacifism, their herbal medicines, their vegetarianism, when in blew an upstart pushed by a gust of hot air from the street. And though he was nothing more than a callow-shallow will-o-wisp with sandy hair — he still had his — and a dithering unsteady manner, his in-eloquent talk still packed more than enough erotic punch to flatten Lover's professorial banter. Fie on his unshod words, callused with the trod of everyday usage! A mere blurter of the base-born monosyllable “Hi” as if such a screeching were a lyric sweetly-tuned to woo an haughty lady. Lovernius Razo was a keen student of all human behavior, save his own. His long tenure battling academics in the petty campos of faculty lounges had taught him much about the unconscious communications of *Homo sapiens banalus*, and as soon as the young till-plowing clerk had entered the herbarium, he knew from Etty's reaction, however coy, that she burnt for him a secret, scarlet flame. The little capillaries at the base of her long, smooth neck opened their tiny rosebuds, and the angel's thumbprint in her throat throbbed for an instant with a fresher quicker breathing. Then, too, those eyes, liquid with brown and golden lights, opened their galaxies in sudden black dilation. There was no doubt that Esther was in love, but not with Lovernius Razo. Stung, the professor hastily concluded his purchase and backed out of the Sefer Yetzirah with feigned courtesy, trying to catch the name of the interloper as his tarnished *fin'amor* spoke it. Was it Von? Von something? Something Von? The ceruminosis-plagued waxy build-up of his hair-infested ear portals distorted the hated moniker. Where had he seen this inofficious cockalorum before? Was he a former student? No, even the low grade naffins who passed for scholars at A.S.U. were a cut above this patchwork cloth. But where? As the professor retreated through the door and into the heat-blast of the Sonoran sun-smack — backwards, like Hamlet, without the help of eyes, he left the feist of a silent fart behind him as unseen opprobrium. Then he thrust his thumb between the middle and forefinger of his closed fist, and when the couple, blinded by each other's light, had turned away, he raised his arm in a fico, that ancient universal gesture of deep contempt. Modern customs being what they were, and it being impossible to infibulate the feckless damsel with a chastity belt, Lover, snuffing a teary mieldrop from the tip of his red-veined nose, vowed inwardly to thwart this *paysan* liaison. He was not about to let himself be assotted by this scrag. At this moment, as fate would have it, the backpedaling professor intercepted a pedestrian whose downcast eyes were occupied in the reading of a book — Razo's trajectory neatly clipping the pamphlet-sized tomelette from the reader's hands and

sending it scuffling to the blazing sidewalk. “I beg your pardon . . .” began the twice-mortified professor, while the other, in a gleeful (and perhaps malicious) moment of recognition interjected: “Doctor Ratso! What a bumptious surprise! Slumming among the tourist kiosks, I see.” It was that klazomaniac. Howard “Steamer” Lawhead, who compulsively shouted every word he spoke. This gaseous puffer, an adjunct visiting lecturer whom Dr. Razo had met in one of those obligatory Chancellor’s receptions, and whom he now seemed to “bump” into far too often to be mere coincidence, was squatting down to fetch his book, seeming to want to hurriedly hide its title before the professor spied it.

Professor Razo, huffily, replied: “Just picking up an herbal tonic for the wife.”

To which Lawhead, winking in an annoying conspiratorial manner, and shooting his eyebrows up and down with lightning quickness, retorted: “Of course (nodding his head towards the herbarium’s storefront window, through which the fetching Etty and the young rube could be darkly seen) *for the wife.*”

The constant recrudescence of this rudesby both baffled and annoyed Professor Razo. For one thing, besides the constant screaming with that buzzsaw voice of his, Steamer Lawhead was one of those blatherskites who know everything about everything and are over-eager to explain the esoteria of some meaningless drivel while standing too-close to his squirming listener and specking his poor victim with sialoquent speech. But it was not only these sputitive harangues that caused the professor’s collywobbles to re-surge whenever he was in Lawhead’s presence, it was also the man’s saprostomic breath — it was not liquor, although the fumes of a highball could often be found mixed in this bromopnea, but something positively in-human, and also unforgettable. The professor often struggled for an apt description of this effluvia that still hung in the unwilling memory for far too many nauseating post-encounter hours. It was not undigested food, or clabrous milk, or even feces, but something akin to — toad urine — not that the professor really could say that he knew what the smell of toad urine was like, but he did imagined it as a foul smell that was somehow also “warty.” The sophomaniac shouter always wanted to talk, but Razo was quick to sputter his apologies for the collision (Good, God, was the man tailing him — did he plan this?) and sped off in the direction of his white sedan, feeling his stomach contents starting to wamble in the intense desert heat, and wondering if he was going to suffer the ignominy of up-chucking right here on the sidewalk, in front of his nemesis and in possible view of his feckless *fin’ amor*. As he hurried on wobbly legs towards the relative safety of his car, his mind sped over the noxious terrain of his knowledge of Howard Lawhead. The philodox worked out of this cinderblock house/laboratory off-campus and just on the southside of Papago Park, giving out, depending on the subject of his ear-splitting and face-spitting verbosity in the moment, wildly different explanations regarding the nature of his “research.” Sometimes he boasted that he was experimenting with extractions from certain desert creatures to create a treatment for alcoholism. At other times he claimed to be studying the calendar systems of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures. And at still other times, he said he was working on predicting through the study of certain chromatological wave-forms, the rise and fall of civilizations, often hinting, that he could pinpoint to the day, and maybe

even to the hour (depending on which time-zone one lived in) the demise of the current social order. His most outlandish claim was that he was honing in on the influence of various cosmic radiations on the human nervous system and, as an adjunct to this balderdash, the effects of the movement of the Earth through the galaxy on the planet's human cultures. What was most astounding to Professor Razo was that the man was unaccountably popular among the faculty and was even reported to be a bosom buddy of the Chancellor himself. Faculty lounge conversations were liberally peppered with references to visits to the adjunct's "facilities." So much so, that Professor Razo surmised that Doctor Lawhead (if he even was a Ph.D.) must have had drop-ins around the clock. People showing up, staying a few minutes, and then leaving, at all hours of the day and night. It was all unaccountably strange, as were his own thoughts whenever he was involuntarily sucked into Lawhead's fetid vector.

Although the professor's car was parked only a short jaunt from the Sefer Yetzirah, it seemed, by time he arrived there, that he had traveled leagues across burning sands. His blueboy turtleneck was now drenched with sweat and the collar was stretched out from the professor's constant tugging at it to make room for his pendulous chollar. Poor Razo, the swaggering *joven* who only moments before was romancing his *fin'amor* in air-conditioned comfort, was now an elumbrated, trembling sweatbucket about to parbreak the chankings of half-digested food on the cardoor. His eyes were swimming in salty pools of sweat and tears and he had trouble getting the key into the keyhole, a familiar problem with elderly men, and one much compounded, in this case, by the fact that the metal of the handle was so hot that Razo had to take out his shirttail and wrap it around his jittery hand to even touch the thing. The delay proved costly. For Lawhead had been following him, and even through the wax and hair encrustations, the professor heard the booming cry of "Doctor Ratso! Doctor Ratso!" cutting through the external hum of traffic and the yet louder internal pounding of his own irregular pulse shaking the drum of his scone. Feebly, Razo turned to face the persuevant, thinking, 'It's pronounced RAW-so, like uncooked meat and sewing, why couldn't this dunderwhelp get it right?' But now he could see the blurry, squat, fubsy body of Lawhead trundling toward him and waving the book, which only moments before he had tried to conceal. When the foulbreathed bore reached the collapsing professor, he stuck his konky face almost in the folds of Lover's neckfat and shouted so that poor Lovernius's skull shook in its adipose tissue like a fruit pit in a bowl of Jell-O.

"Ratso, I know what ails you and I'm pretty sure I cure it."

Doctor Razo was backing up against the blazing cardoor and burning his ass through the his stay-press pants, but he had no place to retreat, and so he said, tasting the first wave of vomit in his mouth, which had to be swallowed before he could desticate a cough of two mean monosyllables: "I'll call."

"You do that Ratso. You call me. And you and me will cook that little New Age Romeo's nether-geese, if you get my drift. We'll cook it and stuff it in his own chichiface, we will. And set you on the road to extra-marital sexual bliss."

In the next moment, or was it the next eternity, Professor Razo was seated safely in his car, and letting the still-hot, but shortly to be cool air from the air-conditioner rush over him. He was free at last from the graveolent accoster with his indefinable odors, his spit, and his bellowing. But as the professor settled down into the rather unsavory flatulence of his own intestinal discomforts, his head began to clear, and he spied again, in his mind's eye, that insignificant little dink chumming up to his *fin'amor*. In a flash two images merged. One of Steamer Lawhead waving his book to flag him down, and the other of his sandy-haired rival standing in front of a bookshelf, scanning the titles. Now Lover Razo remembered where he had seen this nonchalant bumbler. It was in that stupid New Age bookstore! What was it called? But this he could not remember, and so Razo drove back to his office, his pants a little dampened by liquid emissions, heading south across the wilderness, traversing in just ten-minutes the desert waste.