

*SUITE PROVENÇALE*  
FOR OCARINA, TRIANGLE, AND POWERPOINT

Virginie Greene

NB: This essay is also available in its original format  
<<http://www.archive.org/details/SuiteProvenaleForOcarinaTriangleAndPowerpoint>>

**PowerPoint** does not have a good reputation with humanists. They do not view it as a medium for thoughtful scholarship, astute criticism, or creative commentary. Can you imagine Walter Benjamin or Jacques Derrida presenting their thoughts as a PowerPoint slide show? The name lends itself to jokes (“Powerless and Pointless” among others). It evokes a brand of battery or a drilling tool rather than a frame for dreams or a virtual path for exploration, investigation, musing, and doodling. The fact that it is too often used to invest a weak argumentation based on spurious facts with an air of non-nonsense authority and straightforward honesty contributes to its low popularity in some academic and artistic circles. PowerPoint sounds vulgar and threatening with its two capital Ps erected like flagpoles indicating with no uncertainty where the wind is blowing from: hightech, and where it is blowing to: highertech. Powerpoint brings to mind at once

- bullets
  - sub bullets
    - sub sub bullets
      - sub sub sub bullets
        - » sub sub sub sub bullets
          - sub sub sub sub sub bullets
          - sub sub sub sub sub bullets
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- bullets

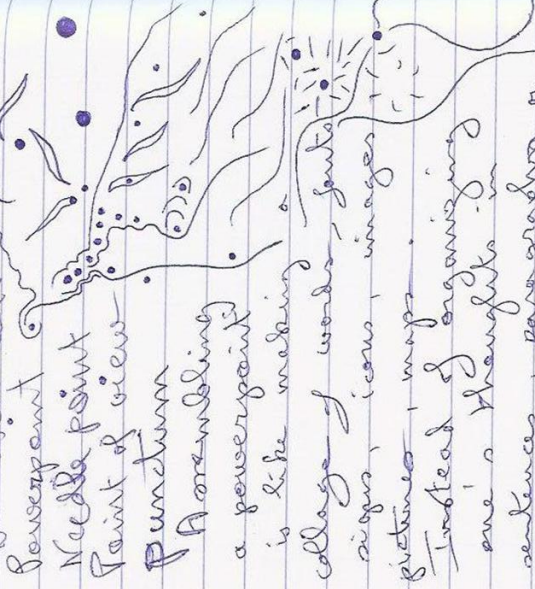
- corporatism
- monologism
- rigidity
- hierarchy
- homogenization
- quantification
- simplification
- electronics
- bad vibes
- lack of aura

(and, worse of all)



But

This is due to a lack of imagination - A hidden art of Powerpoint waits to be discovered.



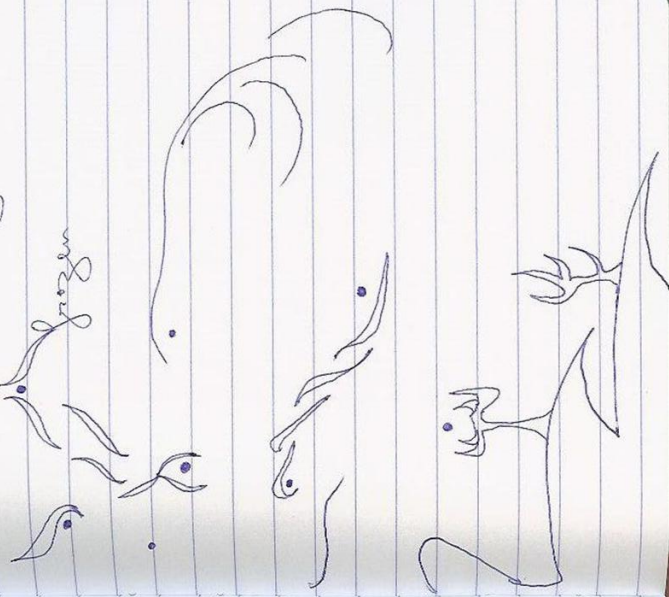
Powerpoint  
Noodle point  
Point of view  
Punchum

A assembling  
a powerpoint  
is like making  
collage of words, fonts,  
signs, icons, images,  
pictures, maps.

Instead of organizing  
one's thoughts in  
sentences, paragraphs or  
pages ~~that~~ one would orga-  
nize in slides or  
pictures.

Doodles can only be done  
by hand and in a dreamy  
mood.

But they can be recorded  
in electronic form



frozen

Platitudes and spurious  
handwritten in

arguments may be  
small notebooks,

Platitudes and spurious arguments may be  
handwritten in small notebooks.

As pen and less writing is done by hand, the manuscript  
becomes more and more an object of fetishism.  
It has been found by Fre

Hand

Platitudes and spurious arguments may be  
handwritten in small notebooks.

As pen and less writing is done by hand, the manuscript  
becomes more and more an object of fetishism.  
It has been touched by fate

### Hand

Ancient manuscripts or rare manuscripts by Famous People  
are relics of bodies and minds out of our reach. Present  
manuscripts by non famous people generally interest  
only their author or, after his or her death, bereaved  
relatives and friends - so we hope. In all cases, manus-  
cripts offer the trace of a touch and display the  
disjunction between an "I", who once wrote this,  
and an "I", who now read this."

**OK!** Stop pretending you are Anne Frank and tell us seriously, without doodling around, what you plan to add to the corpus of learned comments on old provençal poetry (given that you are neither an expert in codicology nor in old provençal poetry).

Herein should appear a grand declaration of purpose and intention, but I have a hunch my preliminaries have been circuitous enough to tire most of my audience, so I replace the declaration by a short interlude for ocarina and triangle, before moving to the fetish, I mean the manuscript.





This ink is very pale

Musical notations: nice,  
but I am not a musicologist

I can't read this column,  
and I bet it's not  
transcribed anywhere

I like these three capitals; I  
picked this manuscript for no  
other reason

That's OK.  
I am sure  
it's not very  
interesting  
anyway.  
Proof is  
they did  
not even  
fill in the  
illuminated  
capital at  
the top of  
this column

I can at least  
see that it's  
in provençal

Must be a  
kind of vida  
or razo  
(a long one,  
so  
hopefully it  
isn't Jaufre  
and the  
countess of  
Tripol's  
silly story)



L N L with  
big nosed  
faces and  
tentacles

The little  
balls or  
spheres  
indicate  
something is  
in motion

This is  
Lanquan li  
jorn son  
lonc en mai.  
I have  
taught this  
poem too  
often to be  
sure I still  
like it

For the sake of  
focus, I'll assume  
this column is not  
within the purview  
of this essay. Let's  
ignore it

Little machines to  
produce atoms or  
sounds



This is the verso as you probably guessed

Two more poems by Jaufré Rudel and both starting with a C

Again for the sake of focus and sheer laziness this column is declared out of the purview of etc.

The initials are not as good as those on the recto

Moreover I don't know much about P. Vidal

Still the whole page is pleasantly balanced

This looks like a coffee stain (I know they did not drink coffee)

Maybe an herbal tea stain?



I wish this initial was in the other column so I could include it in my purview



The creature has one head and two tails or tentacles. Or the lower tail may be viewed as a small peg leg. The head seems ready to shoot a black projectile through the page by way of its tongue. The tails or limbs seem on the contrary to be attracting matter from the outside. The L shaped body stands squarely like a cabin, a cabinet, a lantern, a stove, or a very primitive camera. The creature turns its back from the poem and its musical notation, running away toward the prosaic left column. Maybe it does not like this kind of music and would rather sing another song. The creature may be a musical box: if you pull the loop on the top, it cranks a mechanic air. The tentacles suck sounds from outside. The sounds agglutinate in spherical compounds, which fall into the box. Their chance collisions produce music. After a while, used spheres are expelled and replaced by fresh ones for new combinations of sounds. This imaginary device emblemizes the experimental and technological nature of courtly lyric. What sings is not a subject but a machine. There is no author, but engineers and designers. In the same fashion, there is no author to this slide, which is brought to you by electronic know how.



Although the pictemes are the same than in the preceding initial (anthropomorphic profile, tentacles, spheres, all attached to the letter shaped as a container), the general effect is quite different. The head looks less like a mask or a gargoyle, and more than the quickly sketched likeness of a man with a hawkish nose. The letter N fits the back of his head like a helmet secured by straps to his forehead and chin. His mouth is tightly closed and the sphere attached to it seems to lock it like a key or a gag. No running away: the man's head is kept in a cage like a bird. Were his lips unlocked, God knows what abuses, supplications, screams and whispers he would proffer. Courtly poetry is subjective indeed, but at a price for the subject supposed to sing, to love, and to love to sing.

a green profile  
blooms out of  
the L that  
sprouts buds  
leaves sap and  
seeds across the  
page plants do  
not sing though  
as they silently  
grow and  
conquer their  
space on earth  
the green  
man's grave



all things  
morph into  
each other like  
soup who  
could say that  
a rock does not  
grow a heart  
and a heart  
does not bear  
fruits a poem  
does not make  
sense at some  
point in time as  
it produces at  
once a poet  
and a reader

Deceptively easy the first stanza puts the reader in her place. She does neither know how to sing, nor to compose poetry in provençal, nor to understand the reasoning at work in the poem. She is invited though to listen again and again: “*com pus lauziretz mais valra.*” The added value depends on the incapacity of the listener to occupy the place of the singer. If all could sing, compose and understand, poetry would be common speech and nobody would pay attention to it. Poets need non poets to pay attention. Poets need that non poets pay attention. Poets need non poets in order that someone pay attention. I claim the seat of the non poet non laureate.

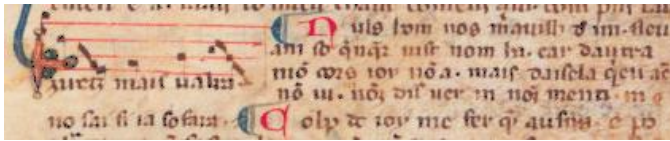


*No sap cantar quil so nom ditz. nil vers trobar quils motz nos fay. ni no sap de rima cos vay. si razo non enten e si. mais lo mieu chant comens aisi. com pus lauziretz mais valra.*

She does not know how to sing who does not say a sound to me. She does not compose a poem who does not find the words. She does not know the way rhymes work if she has no reason in her. Here is my song. The more you listen, the best it's worth.

Another self enclosed riddle that does not seem to have much to do with the first stanza. It is not about composing and listening, but about loving and seeing, loving someone who has never seen you and whom you have never seen. The missing side of the square is a statement about her love. I love her; I have never seen her. She has never seen me; does she love me?

*Nuls hom  
no  
meravilh  
de mi.  
sieu am  
so  
quenquar  
vist nom  
ha. car  
dautra  
mon cors  
joy non  
a. mais  
daisela  
quieu anc  
non vi.  
ni noms  
dis ver ni  
noms  
menti. ni  
no sai si  
ja so  
fara.*

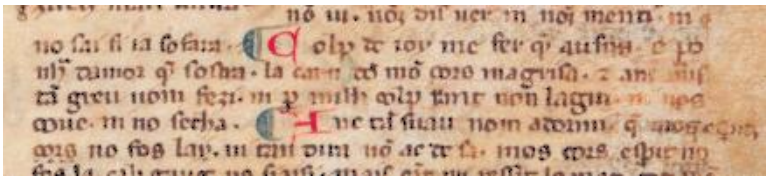


Beside being blind to me, she is also mute to me, unless there is something to say that is neither true nor false. But “me” here is him, the male poet; this present non poet listener would fit better in her shoes (if she has any). The stanza does neither say nor imply that she has never heard or read him.

May no one wonder at me if I love who has not yet seen me. For my heart has no joy from any one except her whom I never saw. She did not tell me the truth; she did not lie to me; I don't know if she will ever.

*Colp de joy me fer  
quem ausira e ponha  
damor quem sostra. la  
carn don mon cors  
magrisa. & anc mais  
tan greu nom fezi ni  
per nulh colp tant non  
lagui ni nos mue ni no  
secha.*

A stroke of joy hits me  
that'll kill me and love  
postponed that'll melt  
my flesh and make my  
body slim. Never did I  
cause so much grief to  
myself; never did I  
waste away so much  
from any blow; no  
change, no relief for  
me.



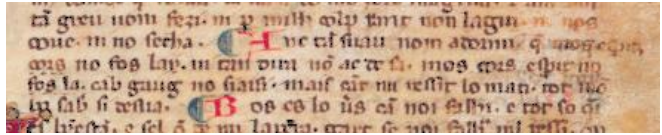
Joy hits, love is postponed, and this entails a loss of bodily matter. Should I consequently feel guilty? If this poem requests my love like a love letter, I am sorry to say I received it a few centuries too late. I can only witness the emaciated state to which love of logic and poetry can lead someone who claimed earlier to know how to sing, compose and understand a poem. “*ni nos mue ni no secha*” suspends heart, body, poet and poem in the no time zone of the manuscript page—or in the private, delightful hell of cultivated frustration.

*Anc tan suau nom adormi  
que mos esperitz ~~cors~~ no  
fos lay. ni tan dira nom  
ac de sa. mos cors ~~espriz~~  
~~no fos la. cab gaug no~~  
~~siasi. mais cant mi ressit~~  
~~lo mati. tot mon bo saber~~  
~~si desva.~~*

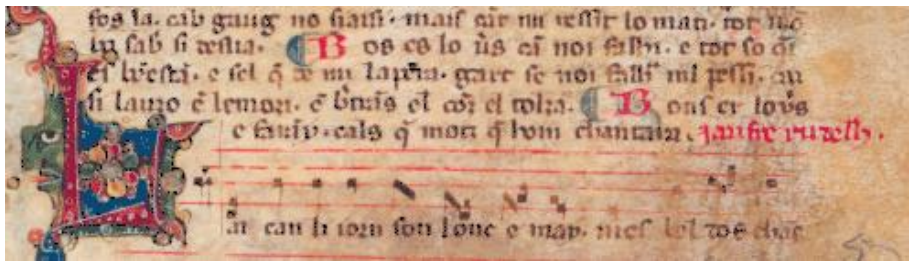
I never felt asleep so lightly, that my mind ~~heart~~ was not there. And my heart ~~mind~~ was ~~not there~~ was never so angry over here that joy did not comfort it. But when I awake in the morning, all my good knowledge is gone.

No matter how sweetly I sleep, my mind remains present and my heart is so full of anger that no joy can comfort it. But when I wake up in the morning, my true knowledge is gone.

No matter how lightly I sleep, my mind is far away, and no matter how much anger my heart contains, joy comforts it. But when I wake up in the morning, my pleasant knowledge is gone.



I have tried different interpretations of this stanza, which is plagued by double negations and ambiguities, not mentioning the corrections indicating that the scribe had a hard time making sense out of it. Depending on how one understands *suau adormi* (it can indicate a sweet sleep or a light sleep) and *bo saber* (it can indicate an agreeable delusion or a harsh truth), one ends with an ode to sleep and the soothing delusions that dreams bring to suffering lovers, or with a clinical description of sleep deprivation due to love pains, resulting into a state of hyperconsciousness that unfortunately does not last: with day light, love illusions come back. *Et si jamais ma pouvre ame amoureuse Ne doit avoir de bien en verité, Faites au moins qu'elle en ait en mensonge.* Louise Labbé, lucidly, called for the sweet lies that she knew to be unable to comfort her (but that was a few centuries later).



“*Bos*” again teases me. Is the poem good because it is true, pleasant, or beautiful? From the poet side, it is good when it is done and that everything falls into place: rhymes are rounded, stanzas are squared, and meaning will take care of itself. It is time now to pass it on, not to the unseen, unheard and unborn female reader who may fall in love with it from afar—or not, but to some guy here and now who will probably misunderstand half of it and forget the rest. Still, he will transmit it and the transmission will make the poem “good” or keep it “good” no matter the shortcomings of the performer. *In saeculi saeculorum*, singers, copyists, glossators, critics, and readers will ally to get it right while playing it wrong. Or the opposite. Poets need non poets to pay attention.

*Bos es lo vers can noi falhi. e tot so quei es ben esta. e sel que de mi lapenra. gart se noi falha nil pessi. que si lauzo en lemozi. e bertans el coms el tolza. Bons er lo vers e farany, cals que motz que hom chantara.*

The poem is good: I did not fail and all it contains goes well. The one who will learn it from me should keep from messing it up and butchering it, for they should hear it as it is those in Limousin, Bertrand and the count in the Toulousain. The poem will be good. There, they will make it so no matter what words will be sung.

But non poets get easily bored or distracted. They need disruptions and changes to keep interested.

I suggest that you take now a short break and go on wikipedia or youtube to listen to a little air of galoubet, the traditional provençal flute and tambourine.



If you are a poet, then you may skip the galoubet interlude

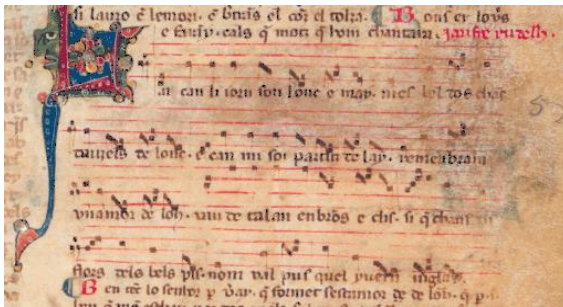
If you do not like galoubet that much, then good old ocarina and/or triangle will be a nice alternative (note that since each needs both hands to be played, they cannot be played simultaneously like the tambourine and flute of galoubet). There are numerous airs played on triangle and numerous airs played on ocarina available on the internet.

No matter what you listen to, do not forget to come back. The next poem I'll misinterpret is the famous Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai

*Lai can li iorn son lonc e may. mes bel dos chans dauzels de lonc. e can mi soi partitz de lay. remenbran un amor de lonh. vau de talan enbrons e clis. si que chans ni flors del bels pis. nom val pus quel yvern inglatz.*

There, when the days are long in May, I enjoy the sweet song of birds from afar; and when I have left, I remember a love from afar; I go as I wish stooped and downcast, and neither song nor flower from pine trees I praise more than icy winter.

Days tend to be longer in May than in April in the Northern hemisphere but they are still shorter than in June. However, *mai* being consonant with *amar*, *amor* and various forms of the first person pronoun, it is a preferable emblem

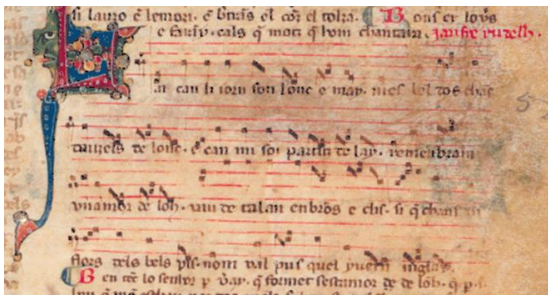


condition in its listeners. The birdsongs and the poet song operate on different planes. The former are part of the setting of a discursive situation; the latter is a narrative, split between the time of the saying and the time of the said, and between the “I” who sings now and the “I” who is the hero of the song. Nothing extraordinary in this, except that the singing “I” remembers now its past avatar, the hero “I,” as remembering. I remember now that at certain moments of the year and in certain circumstances including birdsongs, I used to remember something that saddened me. This does not seem to imply that the present remembering of the past remembering is also associated to sadness. No wonder that a love memory evoked through a double remembering act would be qualified as *de lonh*, as a phenomenon separated from its origin. Birdsongs too generally come to us disembodied and from a distance. We don’t see the singers we hear, and we

of the poet’s *saison mentale*. So, when days are long, in May and in *me*, the first person of this poem enters into a chronic, seasonal depression, which birdsongs trigger. The poem itself is not expected to trigger a similar

locate them “over there” and not “right here” even if “over there” is a few yards away. There is nothing depressing in that (I am currently hearing birds singing through an open window, despite the whirl of the fan, and feel grateful that there are still some birds to sing in my environment.) In the poem sadness falls on the listener when he moves away from the place where he can hear the birds (*mi soi partitz de lay*) and realizes he cannot take them with him, except in his memory. Then he remembers something else that obliterates the *hic et nunc* of a long May day and renders it equivalent to a short, cold, winter day. The first rhyme of the stanza “may” becomes equal to the last rhyme “glatz.” Now I remember that I used to remember something comparable to birdsongs and vaguely labeled *amor de lohn*, but powerful enough to substitute a memory to a perception. The substitution process is repeated as the poet composes his poem, replacing his current perceptions by the memory of a memory. In this first stanza, three moments in times and two cognitive faculties are compressed to

form a  
 apparatus.  
 moment,  
 the enunciation  
 the poet  
 but does not  
 rather does not  
 to  
 perceives of  
 surroundings.



compact  
 At the first  
 or present of  
 of the poem,  
 remembers  
 perceive, or  
 pay attention  
 what he  
 his

We don't

know in what month of the year he is composing his poem. At the second moment, or past of the narration, the poet both perceives (the birdsongs) and remembers (the love from afar). At the third moment, or anterior past of the narration, the love from afar is a perception not yet transformed into a memory. But what sort of perception can be a “love from afar”? Our only clues are the comparison with the birdsongs and the description of the mood the memory of this love induces in the reminiscing “I.” The only defining quality of this love is that it involves a haunting separateness. Being in love from afar is like continuing to hear the birdsongs when they are no more physically audible. The lover from afar adopts the posture of people who hear voices and talk to invisible beings (without a cell-phone), shoulders hunched over their secretive relationship, oblivious of their surroundings, eyes downcast, ears deaf to anything but the voice, the song, the sound of what is not here. Where, then, does the non poet listener stand in this stanza? Afar too, but not in the same “afar” than the beloved. I am not a poet, and I am not in the mind of this poet. However, what he displays in front of me is a piece of his mind. In the same way that in *no sap cantar quil so nom ditz* he brings to the fore his nocturnal dreams—whether truthful or delusory—without revealing their content, in *lai can li jorn son lonc e may* he presents a particular interlace of perceptions and memories without providing any details that could help a non poet listener to create a fictional space of projection. Imagine what

would happen if someone was projecting a film, outdoors, at night, without a screen, and moving constantly the camera. At some point a tree may be projected over a tree, a body over another body, but that would be mere coincidences and the temptation to construct a scene with these moving fragments would be constantly thwarted. The experience may be enjoyable though, if one accepts to stay afar, remains awake, and does not insert her own memories into the compact apparatus this first stanza proposes. What can be shared



are not the contents but the apparatus itself. Thus the poetic commonplace “when I am sad it is winter no matter when I am sad” becomes an opportunity to ask oneself “when is when?” and “where is where?” Which will lead to the conclusion that there is no joy and no sadness elsewhere than here and now. The rest is madness. Very ordinary madness. And lack of logic. For if spring is winter, if afar is constantly present to my mind, if love means separateness, if what I want is never here, if what I want is “never here,” I might as well jump in the first well on my way to Megara.



Oops! It looks like I am loosing my manuscript in the shuffle.



Not that I don't like Jaufre Rudel. Or courtly poetry in general.

I call Aristotle to the rescue (you know, the crazy guy in Metaphysics who does not believe in the principle of non contradiction and might as well jump into a well?) when I cannot bear any more with the implacable psycho-logic of poets: love is the most exciting thing that can happen to an embodied mind; but love is messing up your perceptive and rational faculties; therefore either you condemn your mind to dullness and boredom, or you condemn it to alternating between delusion and lucidity.

Anyway, it seems I truly lost my manuscript.

What about a drink here and now?

Tea?

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