Sarah Kay. 2013. *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

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The troubadour lyric corpus has fascinated other authors and scholars since it flourished in the twelfth century. Quotations and citations of the lyric appear in a variety of medieval genres, preserved today in sources from a number of different geographical locations. Sarah Kay's detailed book examines the processes of quotation and citation of the Occitan lyric that appear in numerous medieval texts (in Italian, French, Catalan, Latin, and a few Occitan sources), and the effects inclusion of the lyric in these texts had on an understanding of both the newer works and the older lyric.

Kay separates the sources she analyzes into two large methods, or "ways." Direct quotations of Occitan lyric, labeled the "parrots' way," are differentiated from cited instances, labeled the "nightingales' way" (which emphasize re–creation of the lyric Occitan texts rather than repeating them word–for–word). The majority of the book is concerned with the parrots' way, which elevates and promotes the Occitan language via direct quotation.

Kay is primarily interested in the quotation's ability to alter the meaning of a text. She argues that quotation of the lyric "plays with expectations of knowledge and recognition; it summons subjects of knowledge and recognition into existence; but it does not necessarily ratify them" (Kay 2013, 19). Kay bolsters her argument with help from Jacques Lacan's concept of "the subject supposed to know" ("le sujet supposé savoir"), which allows her to interact with the subjective ambiguity and connection between knowledge and desire that defines the troubadour lyric corpus. Quotation and citation create a web of subjects and subject positions that are never fully revealed or explained. The subject of the quoted lyric is obscured—the reader is led to assume or presuppose knowledge of the quotation's speaker by virtue of the quoting author's positioning of the quotation itself. The author frames the quotation, allowing the reader to assume ideas about the quoted subject. The reverse is also true—the author may assume his reader has certain knowledge of the lyric tradition and will recognize and read the quote in a specific manner. This act of assumption or presupposition is based on the idea that "knowledge presupposes a series of subjects that are difficult to locate, and that subjects

are supposed to have knowledge that is difficult or impossible to specify" (19). The speaking subject of the quoted text remains ambiguous, while the reader and author desire knowledge of the material the quotation presumes knowledge (or ignorance) of.

Kay's psychoanalytical method offers a beneficial entry point for understanding the complicated intersubjective structure of desire, power, and subjectivity that comprises each lyric text and the corpus as a whole. A number of different "worlds" collide in any given lyric text—the physical world of the living poet and the carefully regulated world of courtly love chief among them. The concept of a psychoanalytic subject that changes depending on the subject's position in the lyric offers a possible means of comprehending the relationships between these worlds. Kay's psychoanalytic approach is a useful tool in the exploration of the connections between subjects, as it allows modern scholars to understand the myriad changes in subject position that occur (sometimes rapidly) within both the quoted material and its quotation in later sources.

After a brief introduction to the study of troubadour poetry (which makes the rest of the book accessible to scholars who are not intimately familiar with the lyric and Occitan poetry), the book divides into three large parts, each containing shorter chapters devoted to the text of one or two authors who quote or cite the troubadours. Part I explores in its first chapter the *Razos de Trobar* of Raimon Vidal de Besalú and other grammar treatises, evaluating how their authors seek to make Occitan poets authorities just as Latin poets were treated in Latin grammars. Much is at stake here, including the expansion of Occitan from a regional poetic language to a more universal one and the extension of a Latin–style scholasticism into the vernacular, and Kay lucidly delineates the ways in which the authors of Occitan grammars push their language beyond its lyric boundaries. In the second chapter, Kay turns to Raimon Vidal de Besalú's *novas* (short didactic verse narratives), evincing how the quotation of the lyric in the *novas* relies not only on the knowledge transmitted by the lyric quotation itself, but also on what knowledge the reader has of their poetry—it is a challenge to know what one is supposed to know, and who already knows it. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the act of creating compilations of troubadour poetry, both in *chansonniers*, or songbooks, of the lyric, and in florilegia, a compilation of excerpts from other writings. Kay situates her discussion of the Occitan *vidas* and *razos* found in *chansonniers* within the relationship between quoting and other forms of copying. She highlights the ways in which the semi–biographical texts serve as both texts and paratexts, both indicating the organization of the manuscript's contents while providing biographical information for the troubadours whose works they

accompany. Florilegia, on the other hand, compile excerpts of works to create anthologies, "mutilating" the poems by preserving only one stanza and leaving out the rest. The distortion of the poems frees them from their original frameworks, allowing their quotation and transmission in new contexts.

Part II elucidates the differences between the nightingales' way and the parrots' way through investigation of two thirteenth–century texts. Chapter 5 analyzes the interpolated romance *Le Roman de la Rose ou Guillaume de Dole*, an example of the nightingales' way that uses lyric as a kind of saturation point to mark where the text is particularly rich in affect and underscores the song's status as a song. Chapter 6 is devoted to two Occitan short stories that exemplify the themes of quotation Kay discusses throughout the book: the "otherness of language to the speaker, the fabrication in language of identities and desires, and the repetitions it involves whether it is explicitly quoted or not" (118). The chapters at the book's center serve to make plain Kay's distinction between quotation and citation, exemplifying the two methods and how their usage might affect the text in which they are incorporated.

Part III looks at several Occitan sources and two Italian texts. The sources examined in Part III expand on and transform the methods of quotation outlined in Part I, as each author presents himself differently to obtain diverse forms of knowledge and authority from his troubadour sources. Kay includes discussions of Dante and Petrarch along with troubadours such as Matfre Ermengau to illustrate the trajectory of the parrots' way and its transition into the works of later authors.

Kay investigates the different sources in each chapter through the lens of subjectivity, a theme intrinsic to the lyric corpus. As seen in Kay's (1990) earlier work and the subsequent scholarship of Judith Peraino (2011), the concept of a "subject" or a "subject position" is often at stake within troubadour lyric. This subjectivity—which Kay argues is changed via quotation—is charged with certain types of power and expertize, connected to desire for certain ideas and objects. For example, the subject position of the lover in the lyric desires his (usually unattainable) beloved, or the subject position of the poet may desire favor from his patron. Numerous subject positions can appear in one poetic text, making any discussion of the lyric difficult without a frame through which to view these subjective shifts. Kay (2013, 16) explores how quotations and citations illuminate the intersubjectivity of the lyric, which she describes as "the relations forged between and thereby constituting subjects." Her study of this intersubjectivity looks at the problems surrounding the construction of a subject position within the quoted material by both original author and quoting author.

While Kay's work attends to a written tradition, her framework for examining quotation and citation is valuable for understanding the poetic discourse initiated through live performance of troubadour songs. Live performance of the songs precipitates an ambiguous subject in a similar manner to the lyric, as the performer simultaneously interacts with numerous subject positions. Live performance also instigates presuppositions of knowledge and desire for that knowledge, as the performer seemingly becomes an authority on the relationships presented within the song. The listening, physically present audience desires knowledge of the authorial subject's "story" and connection to historically viable people.

The book also exhibits how quotation and citation can be used to understand authorial intent. While Kay does not explore in detail the question of medieval authorship in *Parrots and Nightingales*, she has eloquently and succinctly addressed it in her earlier work (see Kay 1990). The idea of the medieval author is especially problematic in the troubadour corpus, where the concept of an author does not approach today's definition of the word (a single figure who is the intellectual origin of the material produced). The names and attributions we have today are transmitted in the *chansonniers* and the other sources Kay includes in her book, most of which were compiled or written a century or so after the height of troubadour performance and production. The concept of "autobiographical assumption," clearly articulated in *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, engages with the thirteenth to mid–twentieth–century assumption that the "I" of troubadour lyric referred to a "supposed author and that the ideas and feelings expressed there [in the lyric] are in some sense his or hers" (Kay 1990, 2).[1] The introduction to *Subjectivity* parses the concept of an individual author, its history and reaction against it, and reworks it for Kay's own analyses. Reading Kay's earlier work alongside *Parrots and Nightingales* provides a coherent discussion of the question of medieval authorship while thickening the complexity of her arguments regarding supposed knowledge.

The music associated with troubadour poetry does not make much of an appearance in the book, though it is no fault of Kay's. She makes clear early on that most quotations are transmitted without music, but she demonstrates that even without melodic transmission the appearance of song–as–poetry in medieval texts can reflect on their melodies and their position as songs, positing their musical elements as supposed or desired knowledge. In her discussion of Jean Renart's *Le Roman de la Rose ou Guillaume de Dole* as an example of the nightingales' way in Chapter 5, the songs present in the narrative romance appear not as songs with lyrics that can be read and understood, but as unintelligible, purely musical

examples of the "art of song." Kay argues that the songs in *Guillaume de Dole* (including three troubadour songs: Jaufre Rudel's "Lanquan li jorn," Daude de Pradas's "Bele m'est la voix altane," and Bernart de Ventadorn's "Quan vei la lauzeta mover") act as aural stains on the written language, and are referred to as such by Jean Renart in his prologue—as embroidery on the fabric of the narrative text.

Reading the song as blot allows Kay (2013, 96) to interpret the instances of singing in the text as "points where the text becomes dense with sexual or social affect without necessarily assigning it meaning." The lyric in the romance highlights not the meaning of its text but its essence as song, accentuating its function as a form of vocal expression and receptacle for the sound of the singing voice. Guillaume's romance produces a clear distinction between the nightingales' use of the musical sound of the lyric to conceal linguistic significance and the parrots' use of the lyric as text imbued with meaning.

The idea that music symbolizes an object that defies meaning while possessing the ability to be written down is particularly intriguing. It connects somewhat to the ideas of *vox articulata* and *vox confusa* that appear in numerous musical and grammar treatises.[2] *Vox articulata*, or articulate voice, is defined by its ability to be written down, which also makes it "rational." *Vox confusa*—confused, or undifferentiated voice—cannot be written down. These two early categories are further partitioned by sixth–century grammarian Priscian (and enumerated in later treatises, including Thomas of Cantimpré's thirteenth–century *Opus de natura rerum* and the early fifteenth–century *Nova musica* of Johannes Ciconia), who explains that articulate voices are named as such because they contain the ability to be written down, but also because they restrict the listener to themselves alone for understanding. This distinction means that voices can be either rational or irrational and literate or illiterate, giving rise to four possible combinations. The aural blot Kay describes in Renart's *Rose* can be written down but, according to Kay, is too concentrated in affect to be restricted to itself alone for understanding, and therefore falls into the category of *vox confusa*.

Kay's description of the songs as objects that transition (via citation) from carrying meaning and the ability to be written down (clear examples of *vox articulata*) to objects stripped of their ability to be understood on their own can help modern scholars understand more about the role of song and singing in medieval courtly society. In Renart's romance, song is used in a very different way both from the way it appears in lyric *chansonniers* and from the way scholars of the lyric assume it was performed in courtly settings. Kay's reading of Renart's *Rose* shows us that song, even

sans melody, can be used as a textual device to stand in for the experience of feeling or emotion, performing social or emotional connection without an explicit explanation.

A similar phenomenon appears in the recent work of Marisa Galvez, though the connection runs in the opposite direction. In a paper given at the 2015 SUNY–Binghamton CEMERS Conference, Galvez argues that, in the *Jeu de St. Agnès* (a fourteenth–century hagiographic play written in Occitan) the fragmentary melody of "Bel seiner Dieus," commonly recognized as a contrafact of Guilhem IX's "Pos de chantar," imbues Guilhem's poem with pious affect purely through the use of its melody as a contrafact. Here, meaning is also transferred into affect by separation of the "original" words from the melody. The earlier melodic element of Guilhem's song is reframed, its newly sacred setting lending a previously secular melody a tinge of piety. Renart's *Rose* and the *Jeu de St. Agnès* reveal that the musical components of troubadour lyric and Occitan texts can be quoted just like their textual counterparts, and that their inclusion in textual sources (whether or not musical notation is included) can similarly enter the web of supposed knowledge that is enacted with every quotation of Occitan lyric.

Kay's discussion of Jofre de Foixà's *canso* "Be m'a lonc temps menat a guiza d'aura" and Gilles de Viés–Maison's *trovère chanson* "Se per mon chant me deüse aligier" showcases another way in which the musical elements of Occitan texts can be quoted and enter into the supposition of knowledge. Both songs include incipits from other songs (Jofre quotes his at the end of each stanza) and are influenced by Gace Brulé's *trovère chanson* "Tant m'a mené force de signorage," which leads Kay to speculate about the possibility that Jofre adopted Gace's melody for performance as well. She explains that if Jofre did use Gace's melody as a contrafact, the incipits of the famous songs Jofre quotes (supposing the audience had knowledge of their melodies) would be displaced by the final line of Gace's melody and would relate musically to its preceding melodic lines, creating a rift between the audience's association of the quoted troubadour incipits with their original melodies and the reality of the performance of Jofre's song—but as the song is transmitted without a melody, we cannot know for certain what actually happened.

Sarah Kay's book has manifold implications for musicologists working on medieval song, poetry, and literature. Her analyses supply numerous methods for approaching and understanding quotation and citation as both poetic and musical objects. They allow for exploration of the role of quotation and citation within the realm of sung performance, offering starting points from which to examine the way

quotation changes the authority of singing the lyric, and what type of relationship is re–forged between the words and the melody of lyric quotations.

Notes

1. For more on the concept of "autobiographical assumption," see Kay 1990, 2–5; 132–170.

2. For an excellent explanation and summary of these terms and their appearance in numerous treatises, see Leach 2007, 11–54.

References

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