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'Scuro saccio che par lo | meo detto' (I know that my Word Seems Obscure): Wordplay and Obscurity in Thirteenth-Century Italian Poetry

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Introduction: A False Start

When I was invited to write a chapter for this book on wordplay and etymology, in the first instance I thought that a good subject in Italian literature of the Middle Ages could be the practice of the *interpretatio nominis*, as it is applied in a group of poems by Guittone d'Arezzo (*c*. 1235–1294) and his correspondents. Guittone — who later became 'frate Guittone', when around 1265 he joined the military order of the so-called 'frati gaudenti' — was the leader of the Siculo-Tuscan (or Tusco-Emilian) poets who flourished in Italy after the Sicilian School, initiated by Frederick II (d. 1250).[1] Starting from the assumption that 'the name should proceed from the fact' ('proceder dal fatto il nome dia'), in several sonnets Guittone and his correspondents discuss, both seriously

[1] On Guittone's biography, see Margueron, *Recherches sur Guittone d'Arezzo* and Cerroni, 'Guittone d'Arezzo'. On the 'frati gaudenti', namely the *milites beate Marie Virginis gloriose*, see Gazzini, '*Fratres* e *milites* tra religione e politica' and Borsa, *La nuova poesia di Guido Guinizelli*, pp. 150–54.

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and jokingly, the consistency between their own names and nature.[2] Those debates all exploit wordplays and etymologies. Guittone thus reconnects his own name to the word *guitto* 'dirty, vile, stingy'; when jurist Ubertino told him that his name reflected his life's conduct, Guittone replied that he was true to his name ('ver […] guittone') every time he dealt with Ubertino. In another sonnet, Master Bandino says that his friend's name is not truthful; Guittone is, indeed, *leal* 'loyal' and praiseworthy. Guittone recurs to the etymology of his own name also in a sonnet to the poet Onesto da Bologna; while the name of Onesto is 'respected and honoured' (*onesto* meaning 'honest'), Guittone's name is 'vile and shameful'. Still he would not exchange his name with that of his correspondent, for it did not suit Onesto, who was not 'honest' at all. (Guittone probably refers to the fact that in June 1285 Onesto had killed a notary with a bludgeon and was then condemned to death on 24 July.)[3] Another *interpre-tatio nominis* occurs in a sonnet frate Guittone addressed to his brother Meo Abbracciavacca, where he states that Meo's name is now truthful ('Lo nom'al vero fatt'ha parentado'); because of his lusty life, it seems that sorceresses have bewitched Meo and *le vacche* 'cows' (here probably for 'sluts') have 'embraced' (*abracciato*) him.[4] Similar wordplays and etymologies are also found in contemporary Occitan poetry: Peire Cardenal interprets the name of Raymond VII of Toulouse as *Rai-mon* 'pure ray'; an anonymous troubadour, addressing a *conselh* to Frederick III of Sicily in 1295, explains that his name means *fres de rics* 'curb on the powerful'. In the Occitan corpus even Provence and the adjective Provençal contained a fanciful etymology; around 1246 Guilhem de Montanhagol associates the name of his land to bravery (*Pro-ensa*), while in 1262 Bertran d'Alamanon urges his peers and fellow countrymen to be truly *Pro-en-sal* 'brave in the salt', in order to be able to maintain their control over the Provençal saltpans (and related revenues) threatened by Charles of Anjou's greed.[5]

In all these cases, *interpretatio nominis* is based on quite simple patterns. However, it also shows a certain degree of linguistic freedom. Furthermore, in the Italian examples *interpretatio nominis* is usually embedded in texts marked with a complex, ornate, and sometimes obscure style, rich in figures of sounds

[2] See sonnets nos 29 (by Mastro Bandino), 208–09 (tenzone with Giudice Ubertino), 230 (to Meo), 234 (to Onesto), in Guittone d'Arezzo, *Le Rime*, ed. by Egidi, pp. 153, 251–52, 262, 264.

[3] Antonelli, 'Nuove su Onesto da Bologna', pp. 12–13.

[4] See Carrai, *La lirica toscana del Duecento*, p. 41.

[5] Borsa, *Poesia e politica nell'Italia di Dante*, pp. 145–46.

(mostly paronomasia), schemes, and tropes that are typical of the Siculo-Tuscan, or rather Guittonian, production. Although complete and detailed, a survey of the *interpretatio nominis* in this group of poems is likely to be, so to speak, literary curiosity. As an individual phenomenon, it must be inscribed in a more comprehensive frame, where to consider and analyze the substance of the free treatment of the vernacular language — of which (para)etymological *interpretatio nominis* is just one manifestation.

Hence, despite my initial intentions, this contribution will *not* be on etymology as *interpretatio nominis*. Taking one step backward, it will focus on wordplay more generally, as one of the most interesting and original traits of thirteenth-century Italian lyric poetry — or at least one of its main, daring, and original streams. My aim is to present to the reader some basic reflections on the way the Tuscan poets of the *Duecento* conceived their compositions in the vernacular, and on the processes of writing and reading, coding and decoding, formatting and copying, to which textual artefacts were subjected by the authors and their public. Furthermore, I will demonstrate the special way in which the Italian vernacular was used to convey meanings, and how Guittone and his followers exploited their mother tongue in their writing, in order to establish a tradition of texts whose essential characters were structurally different from the Latin tradition.

Equivocatio and Meaning:
Dante's trobar car *vs Guittone's* trobar clus

In the second book of his unfinished Latin treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante Alighieri explains what a poet in high style should be aware of when using rhyme (II xiii 13).[6] According to Dante, the first inappropriate way is *rithimi repercussio*, namely 'hammering on the same rhyme'. This artifice is allowed only if the poet is seeking to excel in a new and unattempted technique; this is what Dante himself had tried to do in his *sestina doppia Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna*, one of his *canzoni petrose*. Next, Dante attacks the abuse of *equivocatio* in rhyme position. He defines equivocal rhymes — namely those rhymes in which 'the word is the same, while the meaning changes: e.g., *passo* "step" / *passo* "I pass"'[7] — as *inutilis* 'useless' or 'superfluous', because they always seem

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[6] Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Fenzi, pp. 234–36 (from which I cite); see also Dante Alighieri, 'De vulgari eloquentia', ed. by Tavoni, pp. 1538–44. English translations from Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. by Botterill.

[7] Kleinhenz, 'Italian Prosody', p. 559.

'to detract to some extent from meaning' ('inutilis equivocatio, que semper sententie quicquam derogare videtur'). Thirdly, Dante criticizes harsh-sounding rhymes, except when they are not mixed with gentle-sounding rhymes. It has been said that in this passage Dante was also condemning some of his own poems, precisely his *canzoni petrose*, which he had composed on the model of, and in competition with, Occitan troubadour Arnaut Daniel, the inventor of the sestina and the leading figure of the precious and artificial *trobar car* (or *prim*, or *ric*).[8] As Tavoni and Fenzi have recently pointed out, in this passage Dante does exactly the contrary: he extolls his harsh, hyper-technical, and over-refined experiments in order to distinguish them from the barren and vain verbal and metrical games that were typical of other Italian poets.[9] Since poetical skills and artifices must be functional to the sense an author wants to convey (*sententia*), harsh-sounding rhymes in Dante's *canzoni petrose* and, more specifically, hammering on the same whole-word rhyme in the sestina *Al poco giorno* (*ombra* : *colli* : *erba* : *verde* : *pietra* : *donna*) and the *sestina doppia Amor, tu vedi ben* (*donna* : *tempo* : *luce* : *freddo* : *pietra*) are far from being 'useless'. In those texts Dante seeks to exploit the full semantic potential of the verbal material he has selected. The semantic field is limited and dense at the same time, with a calculated effect of fixation of the thought on the object of love. The psychological condition of the lover is hard and harsh, just as much as his beloved is as cold and impenetrable as a stone.[10]

In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante's censure is probably directed to some of the Siculo-Tuscan poets who flourished before the stilnovo generation.[11] As I have already said, their leading figure was Guittone d'Arezzo, a poet Dante

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[8]   In the *Commedia* Dante would define Arnaut as one of the greatest artisans — if not the greatest — of the mother tongue: 'miglior fabbro del parlar materno', *Purgatorio* XXVI 117; Dante Alighieri, *Commedia. Purgatorio*, ed. by Inglese, p. 324.

[9]   Dante Alighieri, 'De vulgari eloquentia', ed. by Tavoni, pp. 1538–44; Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. by Fenzi, pp. 235–37.

[10]   Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, ed. by De Robertis, pp. 103–19; see also Dante Alighieri, 'Rime', ed. by Giunta, pp. 476–94. The latest comments on *Al poco giorno* and *Amor, tu vedi ben* are by Formisano, 'Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra' and Lazzerini, 'Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna', respectively. An important dossier on *Al poco giorno* — with contributions by Emilio Pasquini, Rossend Arqués, Enrico Fenzi, Raffaele Pinto, Rosario Scrimieri Martín, and Juan Varela-Portas de Orduña — was published when this article was already in proof: Grupo Tenzone, *Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra*.

[11]   On Guittone and the Siculo-Tuscan poets, see Bologna, 'Poesia del Centro e del Nord', pp. 420–50; Carrai, *La lirica toscana del Duecento*, pp. 8–52; and Lannutti, *La letteratura italiana del Duecento*, pp. 36–63.

repeatedly attacked in his work, like Dante's 'father' Guido Guinizelli had done in the ambiguous and mocking sonnet *O caro padre meo, de vostra laude* (which apparently mimed Guittone's style), and his 'first friend' Guido Cavalcanti did in the sonnet *Da più a uno face un sollegismo*.[12] According to *De vulgari eloquentia* II vi 8, Guittone and his followers are praised by 'the devotees of ignorance'; their poetry is considered folksy in both 'vocabulary' and 'construction'. Since the choice of rhymes has strong repercussions on both vocabulary and construction, and therefore on the sense of a poem (*sententia*), we may argue that Dante's censure of inappropriate rhymes was part of his strategy to scrap the peculiar, hermetic style of Guittone and his companions and imitators. As we will see, the extreme pursuit of wordplay and metrical puns, paronomasia and *equivocatio*, and the accumulation of tropes and figures, led Guittone d'Arezzo and some poets of his generation — like Panuccio del Bagno da Pisa and Monte Andrea da Firenze — to the invention of an original, Italian *trobar clus* where the complex and sometimes abstruse wording resulted in a general sense of obscurity. This style, which can be associated with Marcabru's *paraul' escura*, must not be confused with Arnaut Daniel's and Dante's *rimas caras* or, more generally, with the phonetic and rhetoric refinement and density of expression of the *trobar car*.[13] Guittone's *trobar clus* seeks obscurity by complicating the process of decoding the text and distinguishing the units of sense (namely the words) in the scribal continuum. His obscurity is usually a matter of surface: once decoded, his compositions are often quite easily interpreted in their general meaning. The possible obscurity of Dante's *trobar car*, by contrast, works in depth and is the effect of the semantic density of the text — which, instead, is usually quite easy to decode.

In the following pages I will analyze some remarkable examples of the peculiar style of Guittone and his followers. I will start with an easier, albeit impressive, specimen of wordplays, and then I will move to more complex samples. The most daring verbal and prosodic experimentations of Guittone and other

12 *Purgatorio* XXVI 97–98: 'il padre | mio' (Dante Alighieri, *Commedia. Purgatorio*, ed. by Inglese, p. 322); *Vita nuova* III 14: 'primo de li miei amici', XXIV 6: 'al mio primo amico', XXV 10 and XXX 3: 'questo mio primo amico' (Dante Alighieri, *Vita nuova*, ed. by Pirovano, pp. 94, 204, 215, and 234). On the tenzone between Guinizelli and Guittone, see Borsa, *La nuova poesia di Guido Guinizelli*, pp. 13–59; see also Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, pp. 36–48. On Cavalcanti's sonnet to Guittone, see Rea's comment in Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. by Rea, pp. 246–50 (with bibliography), and Pasero, 'Contributi all'interpretazione del sonetto *Da più a uno face un sollegismo* di Guido Cavalcanti'.

13 On the distinction between *trobar leu*, *trobar clus*, and *trobar car*, see Canettieri, *Il gioco delle forme nella lirica dei trovatori*, pp. 187–204, and Rea, 'Guinizzelli "praised and explained"'.

poets of his generation show an amazing blend of eclectic use of the vernacular language and metrical ties, vocality, and artificiality. On the one hand, the segmentation of the scribal continuum and the graphical agglutination of words on the page often reflect orality, that is, the way syntagmas were pronounced; on the other hand, the visual and syntactic-prosodic structures of those compositions, as Wayne Storey has pointed out, 'lead the reader away from the sonnet's performed acoustics and toward the study of its written and readerly structures'.[14]

Guittone's gioi' *and Giacomo da Lentini's* viso

Guittone's sonnet *Tuttor ch'eo dirò 'gioi'', gioiva cosa* is related only in the codex Laurenziano Redi 9 (hereafter L), one of the three major manuscripts of early Italian lyric poetry, along with the Vaticano latino 3793 (V) and the Banco Rari 217, previously Palatino 418 (P).[15] L contains a broad selection of Guittone's letters and poems; the section with his poems, which follows one of the letters, is organized in rhymes composed before and after he joined the 'frati gaudenti'. (In the codex the distinction is marked by the headings, where 'Guittone' is opposed to 'frate Guittone'.)[16] Tinged with sensuality, as many of Guittone's erotic compositions, the sonnet *Tuttor ch'eo dirò 'gioi'', gioiva cosa* (L no. 155, fol. 108ᵛ) is a love poem which belongs to Guittone's former, secular production. It is constructed from the *replicatio* of the root *gioi-* and the word *gioi(a)* 'joy', the *senhal* (literally 'sign' in Occitan, i.e. a secret code name) of Guittone's lady.[17]

Here and in the following sonnet, before presenting a modern edition of the poem, I will first provide a photograph of the manuscript representation of the text (Figure 1), as well as a diplomatic transcription of it. I am aware that diplomatic or semi-diplomatic transcriptions are not neutral representations of

[14] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, pp. 46–47.

[15] MS P dates to the end of the thirteenth century; MSS L and V date to the end of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century. A complete transcription and a photographic reproduction (along with a volume of studies) of the three great canzonieri are provided by *CLPIO* and *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle Origini*, ed. by Leonardi, respectively. On the manuscript tradition of early Italian poetry, see Leonardi, 'La poesia delle Origini e del Duecento'.

[16] On Guittone in L, see Leonardi, 'Guittone nel Laurenziano'.

[17] Guittone's poetical corpus is still read in Egidi's edition (Guittone d'Arezzo, *Le Rime*); this sonnet is taken from *Poeti del Duecento*, ed. by Contini, i, 244.
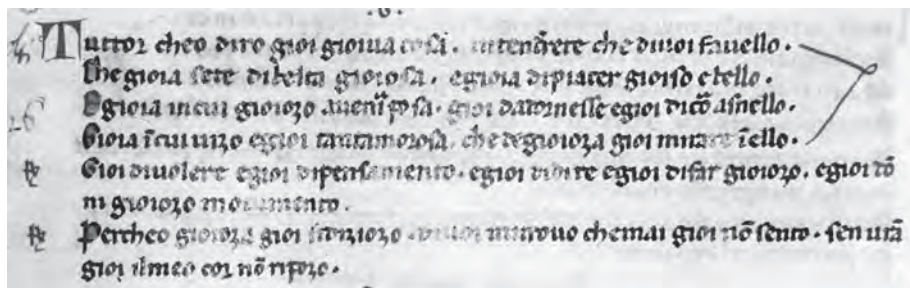
Figure 1. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Redi 9, fol. 108ᵛ.
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texts: they cannot subrogate the manuscript artefacts, nor can they supersede critical editions, which imply a full assumption of responsibility by their editor. Nonetheless, I think that in the specific case of the poems and the poetical style analyzed in this study, raw transcriptions will help readers perform the task of decoding the texts shown and get a general idea of the *usus scribendi* of the thirteenth-century Italian poetical tradition; these are marked with graphical agglutinations and segmentations of the scribal continuum that are very different from a modern rendering.[18] An English translation will always follow.

Tuttor cheo diro gioi gioiva cosa . intend(e)rete che diuoi fauello .
  Chegioia sete dibelta gioiosa . egioia dipiacer gioiso ebello .
  Egioia incui gioiozo aveni(r)posa . gioi dadornesse egioi dico(r) asnello .
  Gioia i(n)cuivizo egioi tantamorosa . chedegioioza gioi mirare i(n)ello .
ꝗ Gioi diuolere egioi dipensamento . egioi didire egioi difar gioiozo . egioi do(n)
  ni gioiozo movimento .
ꝗ Percheo gioioza gioi sidiziozo . diuoi mi trouo chemai gioi no(n)sento . sen u(ost)ra
gioi ilmeo cor no(n) ripozo .

           Tuttor ch'eo dirò 'gioi'', gioiva cosa,
           intenderete che di voi favello,
           che gioia sete di beltà gioiosa
           e gioia di piacer gioi[o]so e bello,   4
             e gioia in cui gioioso avenir posa,
           gioi' d'adornezze e gioi' di cor asnello,
           gioia in cui viso e gioi' tant'amorosa

[18] On the thirteenth-century Italian *usus scribendi*, see Loach Bramanti, 'Il gruppo grafico' and Costantini, *Le unità di scrittura nei canzonieri della lirica italiana delle Origini*. On the production of manuscript books, see Petrucci, 'Il libro manoscritto'.

ched è gioiosa gioi' mirare in ello. 8
   Gioi' di volere e gioi' di pensamento
e gioi' di dire e gioi' di far gioioso
e gioi' d'onni gioioso movimento: 11
   per ch'eo, gioiosa gioi', sì disïoso
di voi mi trovo, che mai gioi' non sento
se 'n vostra gioi' il meo cor non riposo. 14

[Every time I will say 'joy', joyful creature, you will understand that I will be speaking of you, who are joy of joyful beauty and joy of sweet and beautiful pleasure; and joy on which a joyful future is based, joy of amenities and joy of a slender body [*cor* < OPr., OFr. *cors*], joy into which I gaze and joy so lovely that beholding it brings joyful joy. Joy of willing and joy of thinking and joy of saying and joy of joyful doing and joy of every joyful movement. For, joyful joy, I find myself so eager of you, that I will never feel joy if I do not rest my heart [*cor*; but the word could also mean 'body': see v. 6] in your joy.][19]

The model for Guittone's use of *replicatio* is probably the sonnet *Eo viso e sono diviso da lo viso* by *il Notaro* 'the Notary' Giacomo da Lentini (d. *c.* 1260), a leading figure of the Sicilian School that flourished at the court of Frederick II.[20] In addition to the use of *replicatio*, Giacomo's sonnet — which, like Guittone's, is contained only in codex L (no. 375, fol. 137ᵛ; Figure 2) — is also remarkable for its series of equivocal, derivative, rich, grammatical, and internal rhymes.[21]

[**E**]o uisso eson diuiso dalouiso . ep(er)auisso credo benuisare .
   P(er)odiuiso uiso dalouiso . chaltre louiso chelodiuisare .
   Ep(er) auiso uiso intale uiso . delqualme no(n)posso diuisare .
   Uiso auedere quelle p(er)auiso . chenone altro seno(n) deo d(i)uisare .
℈ Entro auiso ep(er) auiso noe diuiso . chenone altro cheuisare inuiso .
   p(er)omi sforço tuctora uisare .
℈ Credo p(er)auiso cheda uiso . giamai me no(n) posessere diuiso .
   cheluomo uinde possa diuisare .

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[19] On the Gallicism *cor* for 'body' in early Italian poetry, see Zinelli, 'Cuore o corpo? Storia linguistica di un'immagine'.

[20] The poems of Giacomo da Lentini and of the other poets of the Sicilian School have been recently edited — by Roberto Antonelli and Costanzo di Girolamo respectively — in vols i and ii of *I Poeti della Scuola siciliana*.

[21] *I Poeti della Scuola siciliana*, i, 477–84. Giacomo da Lentini exploits the *replicatio* of *viso* also in the sonnet *Lo viso mi fa andare alegramente*: ibid., pp. 471–75.
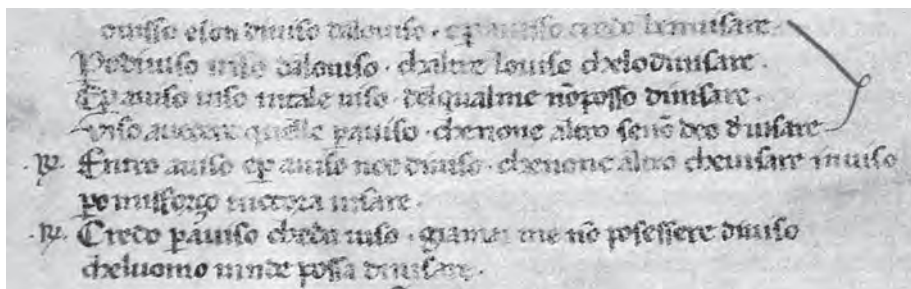
Figure 2. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Redi 9, fol. 137ᵛ.
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>   Eo viso   e son diviso   da lo viso,
> e per aviso   credo ben visare;
> però diviso   'viso'   da lo 'viso', c'altr'è
> lo viso   che lo divisare.   4
>   E per aviso   viso   in tale viso
> de lo qual me non posso divisare:
> viso a vedere quell'è peraviso,
> che no è altro se non Deo divisare.   8
>   Ẹntro a viso   e peraviso   no è diviso,
> che non è altro che visare in viso:
> però mi sforzo tuttor a visare.   11
>   E credo per aviso   che da 'viso' giamai
> me non pos'essere diviso,
> che l'uomo vi 'nde possa divisare.   14

As the poet himself states in v. 3, the word *viso* is equivocal: along with the first-person singular of the verb *visare* 'to watch, to gaze', *viso* indicates the 'face', the 'visage' of the lady (the word derives from Lat. *vīsum* 'sight', then 'look, appearance'), with a distinction being made between her physical appearance as it is *seen* by the poet and her figure as it is *represented* in the poet's memory and imagination. Giacomo's sentence is particularly striking because he was a notary: while distinguishing between the meaning of two homographs and homophones, he is performing one of the tasks required from a professional of the word who deals with the possible ambiguities of the vernacular.[22] I will

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[22] About half a century later, the necessity for notaries to avoid ambiguous forms in the vernacular was highlighted by Bolognese Pietro Boattieri (1260–1334) in his *Expositio in Summa Rolandini*: see Antonelli and Feo, 'La lingua dei notai a Bologna ai tempi di Dante', § I.

return to this issue further ahead, in particular with regard to the fundamental opposition between neat, stable Latin, and elusive, unstable vernacular.

In several passages the peculiar wording of the sonnet allows the reader to test different possibilities of interpreting the words, in order to reach a plausible general understanding. To limit ourselves to the English translation proposed in the following passage, which is based (with slight differences) on the Italian paraphrase proposed by Antonelli,[23] see for instance v. 6, where *<me>* can be interpreted as *me* 'me' or *me'* 'better' and *<divisare>* as 'divide/separate' or 'describe':

> I see and yet I am separated from what I have seen [the lady's face], but with certainty I think I see/describe well; thus I distinguish *viso* [the figure I still see even in the lady's absence] from *viso* [her face in a direct view], since the sight is different from describing [in the memory and imagination]. And through my imagination I gaze in such a visage from which I cannot separate myself (*or* that I cannot describe better): watching that sight is a paradise, since it is nothing else but contemplating God. There is no difference between *viso* [what I see/I have seen] and paradise, which is nothing else but gazing at *viso* [the lady's face and God's face as well, with deliberate ambiguity]: that is why I strive to watch constantly. And reasonably I think that I can never be separated from *viso*, whatever one might think.

In Giacomo's sonnet, the use of equivocal rhymes is not just intended to show the poet's virtuosity. It probably aims to reflect the process through which the pleasant figure of the lady, as it is seen by the lover's eyes, is transferred, as an immaterial simulacrum, from the outside to the lover's heart and memory, where it is kept, imagined, and immoderately contemplated and desired. As Andreas Capellanus explains at the beginning of his renowned treatise *De amore*, to which Giacomo himself refers in his sonnet *Amor è uno disio che ven da core*, the passion of love originates from the 'immoderate thinking' (*immoderata cogitatio*) of the mental representation of the beloved.[24] In the lover's experience, this process — which, in the ballata *Veggio negli occhi de la donna mia*, Guido Cavalcanti would represent as a sequence of female appearances deriving one

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[23] *I Poeti della Scuola siciliana*, i, 480.

[24] Andreas Capellanus, *De amore libri tres*, ed. by Trojel, p. 3: 'Amor est passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus' (Love is an inborn passion that proceeds from the sight of and immoderate thinking about the beauty of the other sex). On the medieval, phantasmatic theory of love, see Agamben, *La parola e il fantasma nella cultura occidentale*, pp. 15–35 and 73–155. Giacomo's *Amor è uno disio che ven da core* is the third and last poem of a tenzone with Iacopo Mostacci and Piero della Vigna: *I Poeti della Scuola siciliana*, i, 389–411.

from the other[25] — results in a diffraction of the lady's figure into a multiplicity of similar objects: (1) the figure of the lady seen through the sense of sight outside the subject, who finds it beautiful; (2) the image of the lady passing from the outside to the subject's interiority, through his eyes; and (3) the inner image of the lady represented and reprocessed by the subject's internal sense, in his heart and/or mind. (This last stage of the sensitive apperception is often developed through the topos of the picture of the lady painted in the heart, as in Giacomo's canzone *Meravigliosa-mente*.) The superposition of sacred and profane (see v. 8, 'che no è altro se non Deo divisare'), here susceptible to various interpretations, might be suggested to the poet by the similarity between the practice of contemplating the beloved's phantasmatic image, located in the heart, and the associative practices involved in the religious meditation and the cult of sacred images (e.g. the Veil of the Veronica that Dante would mention in *Vita nuova* XL).[26] In the medieval tradition, the lover can be represented as an idolater, since he fixes his mind pathologically on the contemplation of the inner image of his beloved — which from a Christian point of view is a false image of good.[27] However, in Giacomo's sonnet there is no reference to the sin of idolatry; on the contrary, the lover's state of mind, although he is 'split' (*diviso*) between *viso* and *viso* (the visage of the lady as it has been seen outside, and as it is depicted and behold inside, respectively), is represented — be it truth or illusion — as positive and euphoric.

[25] Cavalcanti, *Rime*, ed. by Rea, pp. 143–45 (vv. 7–12): 'veder mi par de la sua labbia uscire | una sì bella donna, che la mente | comprender no la può, che 'mmantenente | ne nasce un'altra di bellezza nova, | da la qual par ch'una stella si mova | e dica: "La salute tua è apparita"' ('I seem to see issuing from her countenance so beautiful a lady that the mind cannot grasp her, for at once another is born of her of fresh beauty from whom a star seems to come and say: "Your salvation has appeared"': trans. by Nelson, quoted by Ardizzone, *Guido Cavalcanti*, p. 36).

[26] *Vita nuova* XL 1 (Dante Alighieri, *Vita nuova*, ed. by Pirovano, p. 277): 'quella imagine benedetta la quale Geso Cristo lasciò a noi per essemplo de la sua bellissima figura, la quale vede la mia donna gloriosamente' ('the blessed image that Jesus Christ left us as a visible sign of his most beautiful countenance, which my lady beholds in glory', trans. by Musa, *Dante's 'Vita nuova'*, p. 82).

[27] For a concise framing of all these themes and motifs, from Giacomo da Lentini to Dante's *Vita nuova*, see Borsa, 'L'immagine nel cuore e l'immagine nella mente'. On the themes of the beloved's image in the lover's heart and the Veronica / 'vera icona', see Meneghetti, *Storie al muro*, pp. 32–42.

Poetical Skill and Poetics of Obscurity

In Guittone d'Arezzo's work the use (and abuse) of *equivocatio* aims in principle to display the poet's skill and mastery, although it sometimes seems intended to prevent erotic content from becoming obvious and scandalous. Guittone's sonnet *Deporto e gioia nel meo core apporta*, contained in MS L only (no. 201, fol. 114ᵛ; Figure 3), is another example of a composition constructed from *replicatio*. It is marked by the repetition *porta*/*porto*; more precisely, it is framed around identical rhymes (equivocal and derivative), both in the octave, *porta* : *portato*, and the sestet, *porti* : *portare* : *portara*. Moreover, each line has an internal rhyme, *porta* : *porto* in the octave and *portato* : *porti* : *portar* : *portara* in the sestet.[28]

Deporto egioia nelmeo core apporta . enmi desporta al mal caggio portato .
  Chedeporto saisina aggio edaporta . chentrala porta ove forgie a portato .
  Fe porto tal delei che no(n) trasporta . mame con porta oveo so(n) transportato .
  Conporto meno(n)fa piu se(n)ma porta . ella du porta sue star diportato .
¶ Conportato demal tanto cheo porti . d(e)po(r)ti opo me fa(n)no atraspo(r)tare . deportare m
  orto veo sonmi portara .
℧ Non comportara caltri mi conporti . nei porti sei sia qual vole apo(r)tare . chedel
  portare teilei madesportara .

>   Deporto   e gioia nel meo core apporta,
> e·mmi desporta   al mal ch'aggio portato,
> che de porto   saisina aggio, ed aporta
> ch'entr'a la porta   ov'e' for gie aportato.   4
>   Fe' porto   tal de lei che non trasporta,
> ma me comporta   ov'eo son trasportato;
> ch'on porto   me non fa più, se·mm'aporta
> ella, du' porta   su' estar diportato.   8
>   Comportat'ho   de mal tanto ch'eo porti:
> deporti   opo me fanno a trasportare
> de portar   morto 'v'eo s'on mi portara.   11
>   Non comportara   ch'altri mi comporti
> nei porti,   s'ei sia qual vole a portare,
> ché del portar   mei lei m'adesportara.   14

With twenty-eight set positions, Guittone's sonnet is a veritable metrical feat. Despite the extremely complex wording that suggests — although it does not allow for — multiple possibilities of divisions or unifications of words, the

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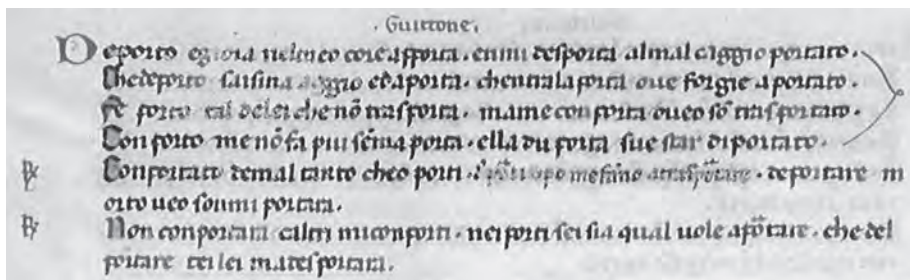28 *Poeti del Duecento*, ed. by Contini, i, 246–47.

Figure 3. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Redi 9, fol. 114ᵛ.
By concession of the MiBACT. Further reproduction by any means is forbidden.

general meaning of the composition, based on a sexual metaphor, is fairly simple. The poet's condition is compared to a quiet harbour (*porto*) and a door (*porta*) through which he can now go; this new situation brings pleasure (*deporto*) and joy (*gioia*) to he who has suffered so much pain until now. The poet is ready to be carried by his lady's will wherever she wants, because she is his source of joy and pleasure; by contrast, the possibility of being subject to the will and whim of anybody else is compared to a metaphorical death. The following translation is based on Pellegrini's laudable effort to decode and interpret the text:[29]

(The consideration) that I have possession of a port brings pleasure and joy to my heart and moves me away from the pain I have suffered, and this makes that (now) I go through the door out of which I was taken. I have such faith in her that it does not carry me, but it keeps me (of my own accord) where I am carried; for a port is no more suitable to me, if she takes me (elsewhere), where her pleasure takes her. (Until now) I have suffered as much pain as I can suffer: pleasures are necessary to me in order to avoid to land where I (would) go as a dead man if someone brought me (there). I would not suffer that someone else takes me to the ports, whoever is the one that takes me; for this would keep me far from being brought by her.

Guittone's canzone *La gioia mia, che de tutt'altre è sovra*, kept in both MSS L and V (with the *incipit* 'La mia donna'), is another remarkable example of the poet's *trobar clus* and experimentation (L no. 37, fol. 65ᵛ, Figure 4a;

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[29] Quoted by Egidi in Guittone d'Arezzo, *Le Rime*, p. 351; for different solutions, see Minetti, *Sondaggi guittoniani*, pp. 75–77.

V no. 158, fol. 49^{r–v}, Figure 4b). The composition is based on rich rhymes, *sovra* : *sovro* : *sovri* : *sovre*. As the heading *quivoca* suggests in MS L, all the rhymes of the poem are equivocal; the words can be divided in different ways (*sovra/s'ovra, sovro/s'ovro, sovri/s'ovri, sovre/sovr'è/s'ovre*), and in two cases (*sovro-orrat'è* and *sovra-ricca*, vv. 11–12 and 28–29) the rhyme is to be considered a broken rhyme, since the prefix *sovr(a)-* is used to produce the composite form of the absolute superlative, on the model of Occitan *sobre-*. Only the first stanza of five will be quoted; in order to help the reader decode the manuscript transcription and appreciate the medieval *usus scribendi*, the edition provided by Egidi is preceded by the diplomatic transcription from both MSS L and V.[30]

In thirteenth-century Italian manuscripts sonnets are laid out with the octave on four lines, with one couplet per line, and the sestet on two, three, or four lines: with one tercet per line (but sometimes on two lines, due to the necessity of a line shift), or 2+2+2 verses per line (e.g. in MS V), or 2+1+2+1 (e.g. in MS L), or 1+2+1+2 verses per line (e.g. in MS P). Canzoni, on the other hand, are laid out *a mo' di prosa* 'like prose', with just a small dot to delimit the verses and a line shift only at the end of each stanza. On the pages the writing field can be organized both in two columns, like in MS L, or in one single column, like in MSS P or V.

In this canzone, 'la gioia' (v. 1) is once again the *senhal* of Guittone's lady. Verses 3–4 bear a clear statement of poetics, where the author declares that he aims to be obscure.[31]

[L] **L**agioia mia che detuttaltre | soura . ensua lauda uol cheo | troui non souro . desuo pia|cer mifollo adesse souro . la ca(n)son | mia sichaciascun non soura . Gia |diragion pero non credo souri . p(er) | chelongegnio men piacere souri . | ensottil motti ealti dolci soure . de | cio che cherenme suo corte soure

[V] **L**amia donna che ditute altre esoura . emsua lauda uuole chio truoui nomsouro . | delpiacere suo mafallo adessa souro . lacanzone mia si cha ciaschuno soura Gia |diteragio poi non credo souri . p(er) che lengiengno mio non mi piacie souri . ensotili | motti endolzi ealti soure . dicio chi chere me sua cortte soure .

30 Guittone d'Arezzo, *Le Rime*, ed. by Egidi, pp. 27–28.

31 Cf. Guittone d'Arezzo, *Le Rime*, ed. by Egidi, pp. 301–03.

Figure 4a. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Redi 9, fol. 65ᵛ.
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Figure 4b. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3793, fol. 49ʳ.
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> La gioia mia, che de tutt'altre è sovra,
> en sua lauda vol ch'eo trovi, no 'n sovro
> de suo piacer; ma fallo ad essa, s'ovro
> la canzon mia, sí ch'a ciascuno s'ovra.
> Già di ragion però non credo s'ovri,   4
> per che l'engegno m'è 'n piacere s'ovri
> en sottil motti e 'n dolzi e alti, sovre
> de ciò che chereme sua corte s'ovre.   8

[My joy, that is above all others, wants me to write verse in her praise, not more than she likes; but I am defective to her, if I open my song, in such a way that it is open to anyone. In this way I do not think that one acts reasonably; therefore I am pleased that my mind exerts itself in subtle, sweet, and deep wordings, about that which her gentle command demands from me.]

In its modern rendering, the interpretation of the text is entrusted to the editor: the standardized spelling (especially in the presence of homographic forms, as in this case) has already solved much of the puzzle. Furthermore, the normalized edition tends to 'conceal a visual ambiguity presented in early manuscript forms of the original poem'.[32] By contrast, in the medieval transcription the interpretation of the text is left to individual readers, who are required to try different possibilities on the level of both lexical individuations and syntactic solutions. In a case like this, readers — especially if the poem ever provided a public of *listeners* — are also asked to assign different phonetic renderings to homographs: in the Tuscan vernacular, the tonic vowels *ò* of the forms of the verb *ovrare* (< Lat. *ŏpĕrāri*) are open [ɔ], whereas the tonic vowels *ó* of both the adverbial forms derived from Lat. *sŭpra* (*sovr-*) and the verbal forms moulded on OFr. *ouvrir* (see also OPr. *obrir*) are closed [o].

An analogue and even clearer statement of poetics is contained in the first congedo of Guittone's canzone *Tuttor, s'eo veglio o dormo*, copied in MSS P, L, V (P no. 3, fols 2ᵛ–3ʳ; L no. 35, fols 64ᵛ–65ʳ; V no. 141, fol. 43ʳ), and in MS Vaticano Barberiniano 3953. Here my discussion focuses on MS P. Its beautiful illustration representing the poet will be shown (Figures 5a and 5b), followed by the transcription of the verses as they can be read in P, a modern edition by Contini, and my paraphrase.[33] In this poem Guittone again recurs to rich and equivocal rhymes, among which the composed rhyme *par lo* : *parlo* (vv. 61–62). The poet explains which style he has chosen and which public he is

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[32] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, p. 71. [33]
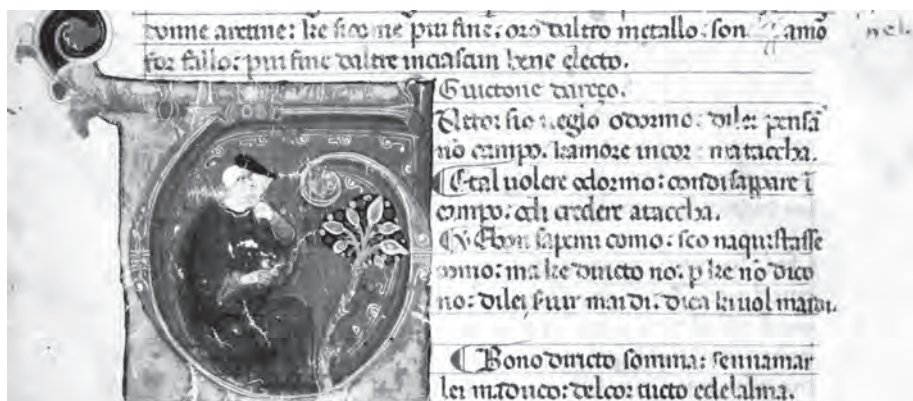
Poeti del Duecento, ed. by Contini, i, 197–99.

Figure 5a. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Banco Rari 217, fol. 2ᵛ.
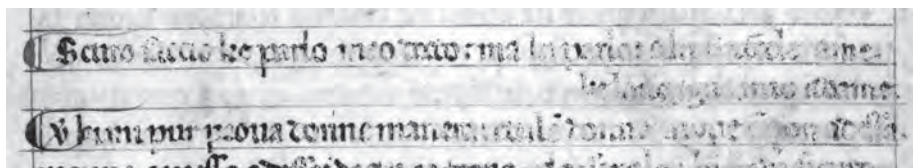Reproduced with permission.

Figure 5b. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Banco Rari 217, fol. 3ʳ.
Reproduced with permission.

addressing. His manner is intentionally obscure: on the one hand, his mind and cleverness allow him to do so; on the other hand, he wants to do so because the public he is speaking to is composed of authentic lovers and initiates, who will be able to understand the poet's message, foreclosed to others.[34] Along with the first congedo, I will cite the first stanza of the canzone; readers will thus be able to get a taste of the complex scheme of identity rhymes interwoven by Guittone, and test the complexity and effectiveness of his *trobar clus*.

Tuttor sio ueglo odormo . dilei pensa(r) | no(n) campo . kamore incor mataccha . | Etal uolere odormo . condisappare i(n) | campo . odi credere ataccha .

ℂ Ebon sapemi como . seo naquistasse | como . ma ke diricto no . p(er)ke no(n) dico | no . dilei s(er)uir | maidi . dica kiuol maidi .

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[34] On the congedo (or tornata) of this poem, and the relation Guittone established with Marcabru's *paraul'escura*, see Leonardi's remarks in his *Introduzione* to Guittone d'Arezzo, *Canzoniere*, pp. xix–xxi.

¶ Scuro saccio ke parlo meo decto . ma ki parlo . aki sintende ame . | ke longegno mio dame .

¶ kimipur proua donne . manera etale(n)donne …

> Tuttor, s'eo veglio o dormo,
> di lei pensar non campo,
> ch' Amor en cor m'atacca.
> E tal voler ho d'òr mo,
> com' di sappar in campo
> o di creder a tacca.   6

> E bon sapemi, como
> eo n'acquistasse Como;
> ma' che diritto n'ò,
> perch'eo non dico no
> di lei servir mai dì,
> dica chi vol: 'Maidì!'   12

> […]

> Scuro saccio che par lo   61
> mio detto, ma' che parlo
> a chi s'entend' ed ame:
> ché lo 'ngegno mio dàme
> ch'i' me pur provi d'onne
> mainera, e talento ònne.   66

[Whether I am awake or asleep, I never escape from thinking of her, for Love binds me in my heart. And I am now so eager for gold, as I am for hoeing in a field or giving credit. And yet I like it, as if I acquired Como; for I have the right to it, since at no time I ever refuse to serve her — may whoever so wishes say 'Help me God!'. […]

I know that my word seems obscure, because I speak to the ones who are experts on love: for my mind allows me to attempt any matter, and I am willing to do that.]

Here again the readers get no explanation on how they should decode and interpret the text: they must establish a meaning by testing different possibilities of dividing the words. Sometimes the process of decoding requires brainy solutions leading to the discovering of convoluted forms, as for *dormo* 'I sleep' vs *d'or mo* 'of gold now';[35] other times the reader must recognize the use of

[35] Or also *a chi, se 'ntend e', ame* 'to those who appreciate, if they understand', as proposed for v. 63 by Costantini, *Le unità di scrittura nei canzonieri della lirica italiana delle Origini*, pp. 172–73.

uncommon, literary forms, like the Gallicism *Maidì* 'Help me God'; still other times the easiest solution is not the best one, as in the cases of the scribal segments <dame> and <donne>, placed in rhyme position in the congedo, where they should not be interpreted (although they could be, with a different scanning of words!) as *dame* 'dames' and *donne* 'ladies'.

Wordplay and Visual Poetics: Panuccio, Monte, Guittone

Panuccio del Bagno da Pisa is one of the main followers of Guittone's manner. In his sonnet *Amor s'ha il mio voler miso di sovra*, contained in MS V (no. 305b, fol. 98ᵛ; Figure 6), Panuccio refers to the 'Guittonian' tradition by exploiting the rich and equivocal rhymes *sovra*, *sovro*, and *porto* that we have found in Guittone's poems, to which *diviso*, *parte*, and *regna* are added, here with an amazing metrical and technical surplus. Thus in the octave each couplet ends with the same rhyme *diviso*, while the rhymes *sovra* and *sovro* at the end of odd lines are immediately replicated at the beginning of even lines, as identical and internal rhymes; in the sestet both tercets end with the same rhyme *regna*, while the rhymes *porto* and *parte* close and open the first/second and second/third lines of each tercet, respectively.

> Amor s'à *a*l meo voler miso di sovra;
> s'ovra   non falla, già mai non divizo
> che·ssua virtù da me sia punto sovra,
> s'ovra   sì forte lo parer di vizo;   4
> e l'alma à vinta ognor, s'e' poso o s'ovro:
> sovro   è da me, non mai punto è divizo.
> Tucto non [so] com'elli è tanto sovro,
> sovro   da me à stenensa, etia[m] divizo.   8
> E quella amore in me che tanto porto,
> portoè d'onne virtù, non sol di parte:
> parte   da cui non mai lei tanto regna: 11
> in che pensando, benenanza porto;
> pòrto   sentir da lei m'è d'onne parte
> partedi ben di sé vero in cui regna.   14

In MS V, the extraordinary *mise en texte* and *mise en page* of the sonnet, which is an *unicum* in the Italian thirteenth-century lyric tradition,[36] is meant to high-

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[36] This *mise en texte* and *mise en page* could go back to the author but, as Storey points out, could also be the result of the copyist's 'own analysis and graphological reinterpretation of the sonnet' (Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, p. 33). For a
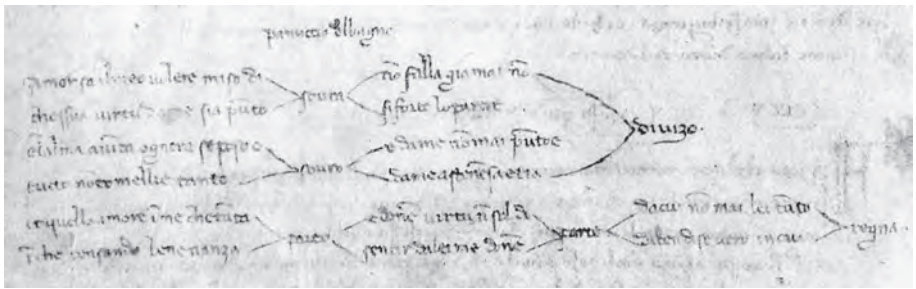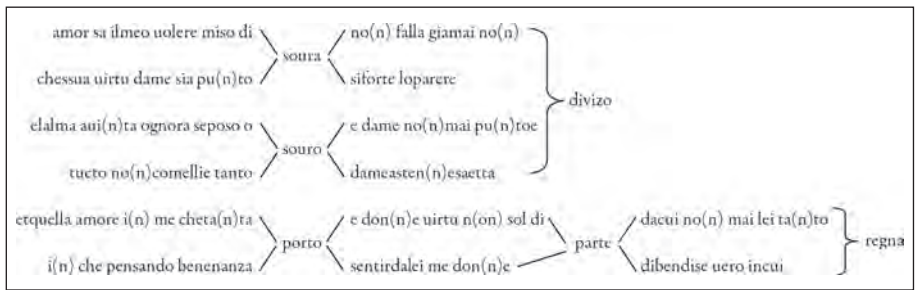
Figure 6. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3793, fol. 98ᵛ.
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light the peculiar and daring metrical structure conceived by Panuccio. The internal, shared rhyme words that are emphasized by four diagonal lines (*sovra*, *sovro*, *porto*, *parte*) must be added to both the lines before and after, in order to complete each metrical unity, while the two words on the right extremity, emphasized by two diagonal lines (*diviso* and *regna*), respectively complete the four couplets of the octave and the two tercets that compose the sestet. Along with a modern presentation of the text, I think that a critical edition of the sonnet should also display a picture of the manuscript, in order to illustrate this extraordinary example of visual poetry, and perhaps also a diplomatic transcription like the one that I have proposed above (although, as I have already said, a diplomatic transcription is not to be considered a fully neutral operation). These would help the reader appreciate the way the poet contrived his composition, playing with words and equivocal semantic values and thinking of the 'abstract' structure of the sonnet, that is, not as a sequence of fourteen lines of

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later example of 'graphic isolation' of the rhymes in the Latin tradition, see the transcription of the goliardic strophes of the poem *Vehementi nimium commotus dolore*, ascribed to Petrus de Vinea, in Montpellier, École de médecine, MS 351, fols 25ᵇ–26ᵛ: Montefusco, 'Petri de Vinea *Vehementi nimium commotus dolore*', pp. 308 and 363 (description and table).

hendecasyllables, as we do nowadays, but as an octave, composed of four couplets of hendecasyllables arranged in four lines, and a sestet, composed of two tercets arranged on two transcriptional lines.[37] Paraphrasing the text is particularly hard in this case, since many possibilities of word division and attribution of meaning must be tested, and are possible for adoption in multiple combinations. The paraphrase that follows is based on the interpretation of the text provided by Brambilla Ageno, the editor of the most reliable scholarly edition of Panuccio's poems (from which the sonnet has been cited).[38]

> Love has overwhelmed my will; if the work does not fail, I do not think that its virtue can ever be exceeded by me, since the appearing of a look works so strongly; and it keeps my soul ò subjugated evermore, whenever I rest or work: it is far from me, (and yet) it is by no means ever separated from me. Although I do not know how it is so superior, it has dominion over me, even from a distance. And the love[39] that I hold in me, and is so great, is the port of every virtue, not just of a part of them: it departs from the one who does not live for that (love) only: and thinking of this, I feel joy; from every part it is accorded to me by that (love) that I feel a part of its real good, in which it consists.[40]

Another master of Italian thirteenth-century *trobar clus* was the Florentine poet Monte Andrea, who produced a large number of compositions marked by semantic equivocation, dense wordplay, and obscurity. In Monte's work, the most complex and daring poem — which is one of the most elaborated technical and metrical achievements of early Italian poetry — is probably the extended sonnet *Coralment' ò me stesso 'n ira*, the seventeenth and last sonnet of a political tenzone on the Italian military campaign of Charles of Anjou, 1265–66.[41] The poetic correspondence is related only in MS V ('tenzone xvii': nos 882–98, fols 167ʳ–168ᵛ): it involves Monte Andrea (who in the first sonnet mentions Pallamidesse, another Florentine poet), ser Cione, ser Beroardo,

[37] On this sonnet, see Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, pp. 33–37.

[38] Panuccio del Bagno, *Le Rime*, ed. by Ageno, pp. 29–30. On the edition of Panuccio's poems, see Panizza, *Verso una nuova edizione di Panuccio del Bagno*.

[39] The feminine *quella amore* (to which Panuccio refers twice as *lei*) is a Gallicism, like *divizo* 'I think', *regna* '(she) lives', *benenanza* 'well-being, joy', etc.

[40] In the last verse the division *part'è* is also possible: 'part'è di ben di sé vero in cui regna'. In this case the verse could be interpreted as 'in the one where it (love) reigns there is a part of its (love's) real good'. I am grateful to Fabio Zinelli for this suggestion.

[41] On Monte's political tenzoni, see Robin, 'Espoirs gibelins au lendemain de Bénévent' and Borsa, *Poesia e politica nell'Italia di Dante*, passim.

Federigo Gualterotti, Chiaro Davanzati, and messer Lambertuccio Frescobaldi. Monte's sonnet (V no. 898, fol. 168ᵛ; Figure 7) shows his typical expansion of the octave from eight to ten verses, the so-called *modificazione di Monte Andrea*, with the addition of a couplet to the octave (8+2 verses). A twenty-five-verse *sonetto rinterzato*, in which seven-syllable verses are inserted between the hendecasyllables of each couplet of the octave (10+5 verses) and between the hendecasyllables of both tercets of the sestet (6+4 verses), Monte bases his sonnet on the repetition of the identical rhymes in <*cappo*> and <*aqua*>. The operation of visually decoding the text, which breaks down in its oral performance, is extremely hard because of the complex and abstruse wording, and because of the dense network of broken rhymes.[42] In his ground-breaking study, Storey observes that in *Coralment' ò me stesso 'n ira* the 'merging of the traditional successivity of poetry's oral presentation with the simultaneous geometries of the poetic document's purely visual dimensions (e.g. the broken rhyme arranged as a visual phenomenon in the document itself) results in a mixing of the visual and semantic codes which might at first seem difficult to reconcile in a scribal tradition used to the simple documentation of poetic performance'.[43]

The reference edition for Monte Andrea is Minetti's edition, from which I cite and to which I refer for a possible interpretation.[44]

Coralmento mestessonira cappo. rgo. atalmio dire cappo. co. misaria mortte sine scappo. chesuariato etutto cio cappo. rtta. edancortuto cio cappo. dere. uerasentenza nonua cappo. fordirasgioni lequistioni cappo. ne. sono corette cappo. niscie. se stesso talfa jn cappo. ancora delsuo maestro dico cappo. fare. chesegue cappo. rtto. mençongne tali oue noascappo. chelodire ditali dico cappo. sanza. iloco cappo. gire. conciaschuno folle sonne cappo.
ꝙ Edio aprouo p(er) ciertto che aqua. nte. sentenze e aqua. li. me portte sono efiaro aqua. lora. sono aqua. ntan(n)o conoscienza colppi come naqua.
ꝙ Mali colppi mortali fiaro aqua. ndo. giungneraqua. lagiente checontra carllo fera aqua. tora lauita laqua. ntita. sia asai chedicie pur daqua.

[42] On Monte's style, see Capovilla, *Dante e i 'pre-danteschi'*, pp. 23–27. For definitions and examples of 'technical rhymes', see Beltrami, *La metrica italiana*, pp. 190–94, and Menichetti, *Metrica italiana*, pp. 549–51 (broken rhyme), 562–66 (compound rhyme), and 572–78 (equivocal rhyme). See also Avalle's Introduction to *CLPIO*, pp. cclxii–cclxiii.

[43] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, p. 96.

[44] Monte Andrea da Fiorenza, *Le Rime*, ed. by Minetti, pp. 265–66. At this point it is easy to notice how much a modern rendering of the poem, formatted line by line, conceals the visual ambiguity and wordplay present in the early manuscript form. The best modern representation of the sonnet is, in my opinion, the one proposed by Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric*, pp. 90–91, who has effectively reproduced the poem in its nine-line presentation.
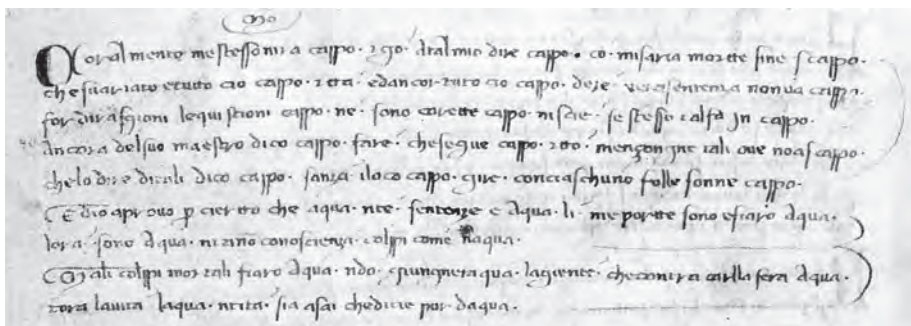
Figure 7. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3793, fol. 168ᵛ.
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    Coralment' ò me stesso 'n ira, cappo-
-rgo, a tal, mio dire, ca ppo-
-co mi· saria morte, s' i' ne cappo!
Ché svariato è tutto ciò c' appo-
-rta, e ancor tuto ciò c' à '· ppo-
dere: vera sentenza non v' acappo!   6
    Fòr di rasgioni, le quistioni c' appo-
-ne, sono cor[r]ette: ca ppo-
-nisce se stesso, tal[e] fa incappo!
Ancor del suo maestro, dico, ca ppò
fare, ch' e' segue c' à ppo-
-rto menzogne tali ove no à scappo?   12
Ché, lo dire di tali, dico c' à ppo-
-s[s]anza i[n] loco ca ppò
gire con ciascun folle, s' òn-ne cappo!   15
    Ed io aprovo per certo che, a[h], qua-
-nte sentenze, e, a[h], qua-
-li me porte sono (e fiaro, a[h] qua-
-l', ora!) sono, a qua-
-nt' àn conoscenza, colpi come 'n aqua.   20
    Ma li colpi mortali fiaro, a[h], qua-
-ndo giungnerà [a] qua
la gente ch' è contra Carllo fera; a'
qua' tor[r]à la vita! La qua-
-ntità sia asai, ch' e' dice: 'Pur da' qua!'   25

[I hate myself deeply, since I address my words to such an individual that I would pre-
fer to face death instead, if only I could escape from him. In fact all that he reports,

as well as all that he has at his disposal, is abnormal: nothing of it makes sense to me! The objections he moves are clearly unreasonable (*lit.* are correct outside of reason). He hoods himself so well that he falls on his sword (*lit.* he punishes himself). Furthermore, I will say, what can he do with his master, since it resulted that he had proffered such lies from which it is hard to disentangle? For I say that the words of men like this have power only when they stay with the fool, provided they can find one. And I consider certain that, oh!, all the many discourses that will be proffered to me, whatever their quality be (and, oh!, which will it be now!) will be dead in the water for those who are sage. But deadly blows await the people who will come here with a fierce attitude towards Charles [of Anjou]: he will take their lives. The quantity of the blows will be huge, for he says 'Come here, do not spare yourself!']

Lastly, a borderline case of Guittone's pursuit of obscurity is the sonnet *A fare meo porto*, contained in manuscript V (no. 449, fol. 123ʳ; Figure 8). The poem stands out for its extreme equivocalness: in the octave, the first couplet (vv. 1–2) is identical to the second (vv. 3–4), while the third couplet (vv. 5–6) is identical to the fourth (vv. 7–8); in the sestet, the first tercet (vv. 9–11) is identical to the second (vv. 12–14), although the way the tercets were copied, namely on three lines of two couplets, does not allow for immediate realization of their visual identity. The poem, which is a sexual vaunt, is a true tour de force: the process of decoding the text, by dividing the *continuum* of letters into single units of sense, can lead — as Roberto Antonelli pointed out — to multiple, albeit not infinite, possibilities, due also to the presence of a high number of interdependent variants.[45] Following the diplomatic transcription, I propose the solution devised by Antonelli which, not presenting *repetitiones* (the repetition of the same word with the same meaning), perfectly matches the criterion of *equivocatio* (the word is the same, while the meaning changes).

A fare meo portto cante partte cheo . adire sagio conto coma pare .
afare meo portto cante partte cheo . adire sagio conto coma pare .
amore digioia che fatto mi deo . contare esto core pienosi damare .
amore digioia che fatto mi deo . contare esto core pienosi damare .
℈ penetro che modo can aportto . coragio mando dipresgione sofrango .
amanie ofero amante orestei lasso . penetro che modo can aporto .
coragio mando dipresgione sofrango . amanie ofero amante orestei lasso .

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45 Antonelli, 'Metrica e testo', pp. 57–66. On this sonnet, see also Minetti, *Sondaggi guittoniani*, pp. 74 and 95; Avalle, 'Un "vanto" di Guittone'; and *CLPIO*, pp. lxxix–lxxxi. On the history of the interpretation of Guittone's sonnet, his style, and technical hypertrophy, see Carrai, *La lirica toscana del Duecento*, pp. 33–36 (and now also Lannutti, *La letteratura italiana del Duecento*, pp. 40–42).
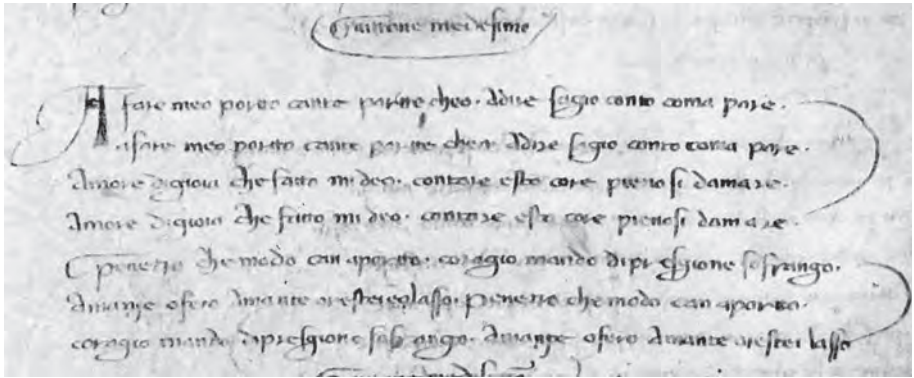
Figure 8. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 3793, fol. 123ʳ.
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> A fare m'è oporto cant'e·parte ch'eo
> a dire s'aggio conto, com'apare,
> a fare meo porto, cante part'è, cheo:
> a! dir e' saggio conto, co' m'apare!
>   Amore, di gioia ch'è fatto, mi déo
> contare, esto core pien ò sì d'amare:
> a! mor' e' di gioia, che fatt'ò mi' dèo:
> con ta·re estò, c'ore pieno sì d'amar è.
>   Penétro, ch'è modo ca n'aportò
> cor a gio' 'mand', o di presgione sofrango!
> a! mai eo, fero amante, ò rest'e i lasso:
>   penetrò, ché mod'ò can aport'ò
> c'or aggio: ma 'nd'ò di pregio, ·ne so, frango:
> amai e o' fero a mante or estei lasso.

[I need to compose a song on a part [namely Guittone's beloved or her sex] that,
if I have to say it clearly, as it is, I long to make my harbour in all the parts that it
has: ah!, I think it is sage to say how much I like it! I have to describe love, which
is made by joy, since this heart of mine is so full of love: ah!, it dies for joy [*Gioi(a)*
is the *senhal* of Guittone's beloved], which I have made my god. I am with such a
guilty one [that is, Guittone's heart or sex], which is now so full of love. I penetrate,
for this is the way provided by the heart [or the body: see p. 144] to love my joy, or
I fail because of the prison [where the beloved or her sex is restrained]! Ah!, being
a fierce lover, I never find quiet or rest: it penetrated, for I have that chance when I
am welcome as I am now: but I know that I break as soon as I get the prize: I loved
and, where I (was) fierce, I remained exhausted for many hours.]

Ultimately, any attempt to decode and interpret univocally this sonnet results in just one of multiple possibilities. Dividing or unifying the textual strings, introducing punctuation and diacritics according to modern grammatical rules, presenting the composition verse by verse according to our present conception of poetry: all this radically modifies the text as it was conceived and realized by the author, and then reproduced by the copyist. Guittone sought ambiguity and obscurity by exploiting the *usus scribendi*; as for the compositions we have analysed before, most of the semantic potential of his sonnet relies on its *mise en texte* and *mise en page*, and gets partly — and sometimes irremediably — lost once the text adopts a modern rendering. As a paradox, we could say that the meaning of this sonnet, as well as that of other poems composed in the same way, *is* its original (or, at least, its ancient) form.[46]

Wordplay, Orality, and Artificiality: Latin Tradition vs Vernacular Culture

Thanks also to the invention and the establishment of print, the way we write and conceive the language we speak is now grammatical and, so to say, analytic; in writing we distinguish the units of sense, namely the words and their grammatical functions, and we emphasize syntactic relations. One theory of the thirteenth-century *usus scribendi* of copyists transcribing Italian lyric poetry — a relatively new writing and linguistic system in comparison to the transcriptional system for Latin[47] — was based on a vocal and synthetic conception of the tongue: copyists tended not to segment the text into single words, clearly distinguishing their grammatical functions, nor did they adopt regular and stable forms for the words they recorded. A coherent grammatical system in the vernacular simply did not exist, nor did a common literary language adopted by all — like the language Dante sought in the *De vulgari eloquentia* among the multiplicity of Italian dialects: a language grounded in stability and with rules, on the model of Latin *gramatica*. The words were usually recorded on the page and agglutinated, or grouped together, in 'clumps' of letters, in a way that somehow reflected oral performance or execution of the grouped syllables. Writers

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[46] I suspect that the copyist of V did not reproduce the original *mise en page* of *A fare meo porto*, which probably provided that the sestet be written in two lines in order to highlight the visual identity of the two tercets that compose it.

[47] See Costantini, *Le unità di scrittura nei canzonieri della lirica italiana delle Origini*, pp. 20–21.

were prone to merge in one scribal unit contiguous words that were pronounced seamlessly, often registering elisions, apocopes, apheresis, phonosyntactic consonantal geminations, phonosyntactic assimilations, euphonies, and so on, in a system devoid of case flexions where, unlike Latin, it could sometimes be difficult to understand where one word ended and another began. The 'obscurity of the vernaculars' of which Francesco da Barberino speaks in the *Prohemium* to his Latin *glossae* to the *Documenti d'amore* is likely to be the consequence of these features, combined with a lower degree of intellectualization as opposed to Latin.[48]

The lack of a standard literary language, and the writers' attention to vocalization, allowed poets like Guittone, Panuccio, and Monte, on the one hand, to utilize and imitate linguistic materials taken from contiguous and concurrent literary systems (in particular the French and Occitan, as well as the Latin, traditions); on the other hand, to exploit the variety of Tuscan idioms, resorting to verbal forms that could vary depending on the contingent expressive necessities.[49] To recall the terms used by Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia* II iv 3, their linguistic system was governed by usage or even by chance (*casu*), rather than being regulated by a set of rules (*arte*), as it was for Latin — a language that Dante considered artificial — or as it would have been in the presence of an illustrious and courtly vernacular language, acknowledged by all Italian literati as a binding model. Accusing Guittone and other Siculo-Tuscan poets of being 'municipal', Dante was reacting not only to the decidedly urban and thus limited components of their linguistic usage, but also against their linguistic eclecticism in word choice and thematic associations, which drew on sources that were not literary.[50]

In a modern setting, wordplay is in principle a matter of sound, not of script. However, such a dividing line is difficult to establish in manuscript culture, especially in the vernacular. Equivocal compositions and puzzle poems, like the ones

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[48] 'Et cum de circumspectionis consilio presentes glosas intenderem per librum totum extendere, visum est clarius ut adaptate latino vicine magis sint ille, quam[vis] etiam aliquando super obscuritatem vulgarium extendatur': Francesco da Barberino, *I Documenti d'Amore*, ed. by Albertazzi, ii, 26. I owe this suggestion to Antonio Montefusco, whose study on vulgarizations and Latin versions of original vernacular texts is forthcoming.

[49] See Carrai's linguistic remarks on the language and prosody of Guittone and other poets of his generation in Carrai and Inglese, *La letteratura italiana del Medioevo*, pp. 49–50. On Gallicisms in the Italian literature of the Origins, see Cella, *I gallicismi nei testi dell'italiano antico*.

[50] On Dante's reaction to Guittone's linguistic eclecticism, see Manni, *La lingua di Dante*, p. 47.

we have analysed in these pages, are complex literary artifacts: their extraordinary artificiality is the result of the extreme exploitation of the freedom allowed to writers in the vernacular, regarded as a natural language that evades strict rules and regulations, and the distance of copyists transcribing these complex works ten to thirty years after they were composed. The producers and users of those literary artefacts belonged to the same social and cultural milieu. They were merchants, bankers, public officers, rhetoricians, physicians, notaries, jurists: a group that was gaining preeminence in the Italian city-states at the expense of the aristocratic-military class, and that was distinguished by the expertise in, and familiarity with, public speaking, reading, and writing. A few years later, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Convivio*, Dante would try to establish the vernacular as an alternative form of expression to Latin ('This shall be a new light, a new sun which shall rise where the old sun shall set').[51] This shift would imply a process of appropriating some traits of the *gramatica* (Latin), in particular its stability and intellectual *formulae*, traits not shared by the vernacular of the Siculo-Tuscan poets.

Exploiting a kind of wordplay and obscurity that were not allowed in Latin, Guittone and his followers invented and supported a peculiar literary tradition: one which had few, if any, equals in the romance domain, and which followed its own rules, in the way that linguistic signs were used and meaning was conveyed.

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[51] *Convivio* I xiii 12 (Dante Alighieri, *Convivio*, ed. by Fioravanti, p. 186): 'Questo sarà luce nuova, sole nuovo, lo quale surgerà là dove l'usato tramonterà, e darà lume a coloro che sono in tenebre ed in oscuritade, per lo usato sole che a loro non luce' ('This shall be a new light, a new sun which shall rise where the old sun shall set and which shall give light to those who lie in shadows and in darkness because the old sun no longer sheds its light upon them', trans. by Lansing).

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