

PREFACE

Old Provençal versification was not monolithic. It did not spring full-blown from the head of the first troubadour, but evolved gradually over an extended period of time. Meters, rime-schemes, the content and even the names of various genres—these were in a state of flux throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To approach matters of this nature from the point of view of definitions and generalizations would therefore be to picture a uniformity that never existed. One must, I think, study this versification chronologically, recording its growth and its changes as they occurred; and that is what I have tried to do in this book.

I have taken very little for granted, other than a familiarity with Old Provençal, some knowledge of related languages, and a basic technical vocabulary. Certain readers may find my explanations too elementary, but it has been my experience that it is better to err in the direction of too many explanations rather than too few.

The numerous illustrative quotations contained in the following pages are taken from standard editions of the texts involved, which are always identified. Substantial deviations from these sources are noted, but I have felt free to make slight changes in punctuation (mostly to conform to current American standards) and also in such respects as reading *qu'ie·us* for *quieus* and distinguishing visually between *el* ('in the') and *e·l* ('and the') where this is not done in the edition from which I quote.

I should like to acknowledge my debt to the late István Frank, whose *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours* provided the underlying basis of facts and indeed the inspiration for my book. The data meticulously assembled and intelligently presented by this young scholar (he was 37 when he died) have smoothed the way for me at every step; without them I might well have abandoned the task in discouragement. This is not to minimize the importance of other fundamental works, to which I, like every other student

of Old Provençal literature, am inevitably indebted, and which I cite time and time again; but it was Frank whose interests were closest to my own, and it is to his memory that I dedicate this study.

My thanks also go out to a few persons in this country. I am indebted to Professor Joseph Palermo, of the Department of Foreign Languages of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, for his careful reading of my manuscript and for the valuable suggestions he made for its improvement. I also wish to thank Professor Margaret Louise Switten of Mount Holyoke College, who supported me with her ideas and her encouragement after examining an early stage of my work. And finally, I thank Carole N. Le Faivre of the American Philosophical Society and those who worked with her as editors and proofreaders: Elizabeth Read Foster and Eleanor Roach. In addition to catching a number of bibliographical and other errors, they have also eliminated various stylistic infelicities. The book is better because of their efforts, and it has been a pleasure to work with them.

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