

Introduction

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The troubadours have been called “the inventors of modern verse,”¹ and they stand at or near the beginning of the literary history of most modern European traditions. The student of medieval literature in French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, and English cannot ignore the phenomenon often called Courtly Love, which finds its first broad expression in Old Occitan (sometimes, especially formerly, called Old Provençal) in the twelfth century. Courses on the troubadours are offered in but few universities, however, and not every year even where they are available. Consequently, many students need to be able to learn something of the troubadours on their own. This book, then, has been produced not only to serve as a text for formal courses, but also to provide the necessary secondary material for independent study. The primary material, the texts of the troubadour poems themselves, is to be found in innumerable published editions, anthologies, and translations.

This book is intended to be a reference book and a digest of the material known to every troubadour specialist. While some of the chapters present scholarship that is on the cutting edge of troubadour studies, many of the contributions contain a précis of decades or even centuries of scholarly work. Frequent reference is made to longer studies, some written by the contributors to the present volume. Each contributor is an expert in his or her own area and gives in this handbook condensed information that will be sufficient for many scholars' needs. Readers who wish to pursue in more detail some aspect of troubadour studies will find ample bibliographical references to additional secondary material.

1. James J. Wilhelm, *Seven Troubadours: The Inventors of Modern Verse* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970).

What the authors have done is to summarize the current consensus on their topic. This kind of “conventional wisdom” (in a positive sense) grows from a process of thesis and antithesis, leading to synthesis. Most of the present work is therefore synthesis—which may nevertheless be the starting point for a new antithesis. The contributors show the current status of troubadour studies, the basis of shared knowledge and opinion that one must take into account if one is going to make progress.

Lawyers are familiar with such digests. For those areas of the law that are governed by precedent rather than by statute, such as torts and contracts, books are published for the guidance of lawyers that state the general position of the law in boldface type (or black letters) and then give pertinent commentary and references to case law. This conventional wisdom, known as black-letter law, represents the mass of legal opinion established not by legislation but by a developmental process lasting sometimes for centuries. To contest black-letter law successfully is usually very difficult; but great advances can sometimes be made by means of such contestation.

Even in literary studies, a new and revolutionary view of the material can sometimes change a discipline. Such a view was presented in Robert Guiette’s short article “D’une poésie formelle en France au moyen âge,” *Revue des Sciences Humaines* 54 (1949): 61–68. The influence of this essay is everywhere felt in troubadour studies today, and it came as a challenge to the conventional wisdom of its day. For many years before Guiette’s article, troubadour studies had been dominated by a few very influential scholars, especially Alfred Jeanroy. Guiette’s article challenged Jeanroy’s views, showing that what the earlier scholar had seen as a weakness in troubadour poetry was actually a strength. This new approach proved an inspiration to many younger researchers.

Some of the chapters of the present volume indeed contain material that is not, or not yet, part of the conventional wisdom. In areas that are seeing growth and change, the contributions are more conjectural and often more specific than the received knowledge. Such chapters include those on the trobairitz, or women troubadours (Bruckner), and on the origins of the tradition (Bond). Other essays present material that is hardly susceptible to a new interpretation, such as versification (Chambers) and language (Jensen). Yet other chapters deal with matters that are still evolving, such as bibliography (Taylor) and “courtly love” (Lazar).

Like the law, troubadour studies appear as a seamless web. Each way of approaching the material presupposes and complements all the others. The chapters of this book, which treat discrete topics, may therefore be read in any order. Nevertheless, their arrangement follows a certain pattern. Zumthor’s “Why the Troubadours?” gives an overview of the place of the troubadours in European literature and their importance in literary studies. While this essay touches on a great number of different topics, and briefly

alludes to the content of various of the other contributions in this volume, it also synthesizes much of Zumthor's thinking about what was to become, in his terms, the *grand chant courtois*. One of the foremost medievalists of our time, Zumthor has adorned his text with lapidary sentences that will be mined for decades by setters of examinations, used in the form of a quotation followed by the word *Discuss*.

The first section of the book, "The Essentials," deals with the primary materials of study, the lyric poems of the troubadours (Van Vleck), followed by some general considerations of those materials. One of the principal subjects of troubadour lyric poetry, *fin'amor* (Lazar), is presented, followed by the formal aspects of the poems: versification (Chambers) and the melodies that accompany the words (van der Werf). The second section, "Accessory Texts," comprises two chapters: one on the non-lyric texts (Fleischman), and one on the medieval biographies of the troubadours themselves, the *vidas* and *razos* (Poe). In the following section, "A Subgroup: The Women Troubadours," appears a single chapter, on the trobairitz (Bruckner). Next, in "Origins and Diffusion," a group of six essays deals with the origins (Bond) and the influence of the troubadours' poetry, the latter topic presented according to the country or language where the influence was felt (Nelson on northern France, Van D'Elden on the minnesingers, Snow on the Iberian Peninsula, and Martinez and Keller on Italy). Finally, in "General and Technical Considerations," the handbook is rounded out by a series of essays on more advanced aspects of troubadour studies: manuscripts (Paden), translation (Rosenstein), the Old Occitan language (Jensen), rhetoric (Smith), topoi (Schulze-Busacker), and vocabulary (Ghil). Much of the material in this last series of essays will be found to be relevant to a wider group of poets than just the troubadours. The very last chapter deals with the all-important topic of bibliography (Taylor). In the Appendix may be found a list of troubadours who left eight or more poems, and of the editions in which these may be found.

Some of the contributors (Van Vleck, Schulze-Busacker, and Bruckner) have chosen to analyze one or more troubadour poems in some depth, while others have quoted appropriate passages from a number of troubadours. The reader can form some opinion of the prestige of various poets by counting the references to their work. It will quickly become apparent that the most prolific poets are not necessarily quoted the most often; conversely, certain poets who left a very small corpus of work may be frequently cited.

Because the chapters will likely be read piecemeal, and in no particular order, each contains its own notes and/or bibliography. Nevertheless, no chapter should be completely neglected by the scholar trying to become familiar with the troubadour phenomenon. In attempting to understand or explicate a particular poem, the reader will need to draw on the different approaches of almost all of the chapters. The art of the troubadours is a

complex one, and many factors contribute to each poem. Jaufre Rudel already understood this when he said,

No sap chantar qui so non di,
Ni vers trobar qui motz no fa,
Ni conois de rima co's va
Si razo non enten en si.

(Wolf and Rosenstein 4:1-4)²

He cannot sing who makes no tune, / And he cannot write songs who makes no words, / And does not know how a rhyme works / If he does not understand the matter. (trans. Wolf and Rosenstein)

If the poet needed to be a master of all these factors, so must the reader. The poets were not naïve; nor can the reader afford to be. Attentive study of seemingly mechanical or unrelated aspects of a poem may lead to a sudden revelation of its nature. The poets themselves were not unaware of the theoretical underpinnings of their poetry, and to read the poems as mere effusions is to miss much of what they have to offer.

Strikingly absent from the volume is any consideration of the troubadours as people or as individuals. Poetic individuality has not until very recently been a preoccupation of troubadour scholarship,³ though many troubadours present individual characteristics that make their poems more or less identifiable. A poem by Bernard de Ventadorn, for example, is easily distinguished from one by Arnaut Daniel. These differences exist, however, within a corpus of poems that are otherwise remarkably homogeneous. It is in the main the similarities, not the differences, that have been addressed by the contributors to this volume. Regardless of the poet being studied, this book's chapters on courtly love, music, versification, language, rhetoric, tropes, and vocabulary will contain much material that will aid in understanding and interpreting the body of troubadour poetry as a whole.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

For those readers wishing to learn Old Occitan so as to be able to read the troubadours in their original language, a beginning text, William D. Paden's *Introduction to Old Occitan*, is to be published by the MLA in its series *Introductions to Older Languages* in about 1995. This book will do for Old Occitan what William W. Kibler's *Introduction to Old French* has done for that language. Until Paden's book appears, readers may consult Nathaniel B. Smith and Thomas G. Bergin, *An Old Provençal Primer* (New York: Garland,

2. For an explanation of the system of citation, see "Forms of Citation," p. 6 below.

3. Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

1984); and an anthology such as *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, ed. R. T. Hill and T. G. Bergin (with the collaboration of Susan Olson, William D. Paden, and Nathaniel Smith), 2d ed., 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); or *Introduction à l'étude de l'ancien provençal*, ed. Frank R. Hamlin, Peter T. Ricketts, and John Hathaway, 2d ed. (Bern: Francke, 1986). Neither of these anthologies contains translations of the poems. Several bilingual anthologies have been published, including Alan R. Press, *Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*, Edinburgh Bilingual Library 3 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); and Fred Goldin, *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology and a History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1973). In addition, there are several anthologies of troubadour poems prepared for a French audience, such as Pierre Bec's *Anthologie des troubadours*, 10/18 (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1979). Many prose texts, which may offer an easier introduction to the language than the difficult lyric poetry, have been edited by Pierre Bec in his *Anthologie de la prose occitane du moyen âge (Xe–XVe siècle)* (Avignon: Aubanel, 1977). There are of course some rather dated accounts of the grammar of Old Occitan (often called Old or Ancien Provençal in their titles). A succinct and modern account of the language appears in the present volume (Chapter 17, by Jensen); while this chapter is not intended to teach how to read the language, it will provide a handy reference for many points of morphology and syntax.

Some troubadours write very difficult poetry, while others compose in a relatively easy style. Among those generally considered more approachable, both in language and in content, are Bernart de Ventadorn, Peirol, and Arnaut de Marueill; somewhat more difficult are Peire d'Auvergne, Folquet de Marseilla, and Peire Vidal; and among the most difficult are Arnaut Daniel and Raimbaut d'Aurenga. All these poets are of major importance, but the reader might do well to work from the easier to the more difficult ones.

A warning is perhaps necessary with respect to the spelling of troubadour names in the present volume. Because names are spelled in various ways both in the manuscripts and in modern editions, a choice had to be made. The editors have decided to use throughout the spellings that appear in the Hill-Bergin anthology or, for the names that do not appear in Hill-Bergin, the spellings used in the Index bibliographique to István Frank's *Répertoire*.⁴ This decision has caused some of us slight discomfort. A poet whom we have thought of for twenty or thirty years as William IX must here be called Guillem de Peiteus, and the poet whose one critical edition calls him Raimbaut d'Orange must be referred to as Raimbaut d'Aurenga. But Hill-Bergin is an *auctoritas*, and the reader's indulgence is requested.

4. István Frank, *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1953–57).

FORMS OF CITATION

Parenthetical references throughout this volume are keyed both to the individual chapter's list of Works Cited and, for editions of the troubadours, to the book's Appendix. If the Works Cited lists only one work by an author, the parenthetical reference is by name only; the date of publication is added if there are multiple entries. If the Appendix shows more than one edition of a troubadour's works, a headnote to the Works Cited will state which edition is used in that chapter. Troubadour editions are always cited by the troubadour's (not the editor's) name only.

The Appendix lists the troubadour names in the numerical order of the Bartsch/Pillet-Carstens/Frank repertory (on which see Chapter 21 and its Works Cited); the result is almost completely alphabetical. References to troubadour texts are given by the poem and line number in the edition used, or very occasionally by the Pillet-Carstens number (signaled "P-C"). Not all critical editions print the poems in order of their Pillet-Carstens numbers, and two different editions of the same poet may number the poems differently (for example, the Appel and Lazar editions of Bernart de Ventadorn). However, later editions generally include a concordance showing the corresponding poem numbers in all previous editions.

THE DISCIPLINE

The field of troubadour studies may seem very well organized. For example, every troubadour poem preserved in the manuscripts has been published, generally in all the known versions. And as we have just seen, each poem has been given a standard number, making for easy reference, whether its author is known or disputed or even anonymous. Thanks to István Frank we know that there are 2,542 troubadour lyrics.⁵ Not only has every poem been published and numbered, but also more than four-fifths of the poems have been entered into the computer, which allows their texts to be manipulated electronically.⁶ Thus the raw material of study—the text of the poems—is available and largely accessible without recourse to the original manuscripts.

5. *Ibid.*, 1:xvi.

6. The repository of the troubadour corpus is ARTFL: A Textual Database. This is a cooperative project of the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique and the University of Chicago. ARTFL stands for American and French Research on the Treasury of the French Language. Information on how to access the troubadour database may be obtained from ARTFL, Department of Romance Languages, University of Chicago, 1050 East 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA. The work of entering the whole corpus of troubadour poetry, as undertaken by an international team including F. R. P. Akehurst, Peter T. Ricketts, and Gérard Gouffon, is nearing completion, and a complete concordance is planned, to be published probably on CD-ROM.

The scholarly aids go well beyond the mere text, however. Every poem of the 2,542 has been scrutinized, its form analyzed, its syllables counted, the sometimes convoluted patterns of its rhymes deciphered, and all the resulting data noted in tabular form. Any poem can thus be compared, as regards its form, with any other poem. It is immediately apparent whether a poem under investigation is formally unique or shares its form with one or more other poems. (For a discussion of this secondary material, see Chapter 4, by Chambers, in this volume.) A preoccupation with form was already visible in some of the earliest writers on troubadour verse, and we still use the critical vocabulary that they invented.⁷

Another aspect of the formal study of troubadour poems is the accompanying music. Already in 1972 Hendrik van der Werf published *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères, and Their Relation to the Melodies* (Utrecht: Oosthoek), and since that time two teams of editors have each published the complete repertoire of troubadour melodies.⁸ In the past twenty years or so considerable interest has been shown in the performance of medieval music, including the songs of the troubadours, and many recordings by groups and individuals, in a variety of styles, are now available.⁹

The work of bringing the texts of troubadour poems before the public was first undertaken in modern times by scholars in the nineteenth century. They produced not only works about the troubadours but also collections of previously unpublished poems transcribed from manuscripts,¹⁰ as well as early critical editions of individual poets.¹¹ While some poems have been published many times over in critical editions and anthologies, others published nearly a century ago have never reappeared, and some poets have not yet been given critical editions of their own.

Many of the major poets have been the subject of satisfactory critical editions. Some poets have been edited twice or more; for example, there

7. *Las leys d'amors*, ed. Joseph Anglade, 4 vols., Bibliothèque Méridionale 17-20 (Toulouse: Académie des Jeux Floraux, 1919-20).

8. Hendrik van der Werf and Text Editor Gerald A. Bond, *The Extant Troubadour Melodies: Transcriptions and Essays for Performers and Scholars* (Rochester, N.Y.: author, 1984); and Ismael Fernandez de la Cuesta and Text Editor Robert Lafont, *Las cançons dels trobadors* (Toulouse: Institut d'Etudes Occitanes, 1979).

9. See, for example, Larry S. Crist and Roger J. Steiner, "MUSICA VERBIS CONCORDET: Medieval French Lyric Poems with their Music (A Discography)," *Medievalia* 1 (1975): 35-61; also Annie Zerby-Cros, *Discographie occitane générale*, Publications du C.I.D.O., Biblioteca d'Occitania (Béziers: Centre International de Documentation Occitane, 1979).

10. Carl A. Mahn, *Die Werke der Troubadours in provenzalischer Sprache* (1846-53; Geneva: Slatkine, 1975); Carl Appel, *Provenzalische Inedita aus pariser Handschriften* (Leipzig: Fues/R. Reisland, 1890).

11. These include some who have never been reedited, such as Raimon Gaucelm de Beziers, Guilhem Anelier de Toulouse, Blacasset, Palais, Uc Brunenc, Peire Guilhem de Luzerna, and Blacatz.

exist critical editions of Guillem de Peiteus in French, Italian, and English, and editions of Bernart de Ventadorn in German, English, and French. In addition to critical editions of individual poets, facsimile photographic editions of certain manuscripts have appeared, as well as anthologies of poems, which seem to appear at the rate of one a year.

The task of organizing a field of research such as troubadour studies often falls to a professional organization, which may sponsor a publication. Internationally, there exists the Association Internationale d'Etudes Occitanes (AIEO), which publishes irregularly the *Bulletins de l'Association Internationale d'Etudes Occitanes*. In North America, the Société Guilhem IX fills this role; its journal, *Tenso*, first appeared in 1985–86.¹² Each volume contains a medieval Occitan bibliography for the preceding year. An invaluable research tool is Robert Taylor's *La Littérature occitane du moyen âge: Bibliographie sélective et critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), of which a new edition is being prepared.

In recent years, students and scholars have been particularly interested in women writers of the past. An edition of the known poems of women troubadours was compiled as early as 1889;¹³ in 1976 Meg Bogin republished those poems with translations in both an English and a French edition.¹⁴ More recently, the poems of Na Castelloza were published by William D. Paden.¹⁵ Other offerings include a collection of essays on the *trobairitz*¹⁶ and a new edition of poems by women troubadours, containing a number of poems not attributed to women poets by Bogin.¹⁷

The subject matter of the troubadour poems is also of much interest to scholars. Since over a century ago, the terms *amour courtois* and *courtly love* have been applied to the variety of male-female relationship described by the troubadours in many of their poems. Called *fin'amor* by the medieval poets, this phenomenon has been investigated in its nature, its origin, and its subsequent literary history by probably hundreds of scholars. Frequently cited among those who have written on the topic is Moshe Lazar,¹⁸ who

12. Information on both these organizations may be obtained from Wendy Pfeffer, Editor in Chief, *Tenso*, Department of Modern Languages, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292, USA.

13. Oscar Schultz-Gora, *Die provenzalischen Dichterinnen* (Leipzig: Gustav Foch, 1888).

14. Meg Bogin, *The Women Troubadours* ([1976] New York: Norton, 1980).

15. William D. Paden et al., "The Poems of the *Trobairitz* Na Castelloza," *Romance Philology* 35 (1981): 158–82.

16. William D. Paden, ed., *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

17. Angelica Rieger, ed., *Trobairitz. Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik. Edition des Gesamtkorpus, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 233 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991).

18. Moshé Lazar, *Amour courtois et fin'amors dans la littérature du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964).

provides a summary of the subject for this volume. For the poems that do not deal with *fin'amor*, a thorough treatment is to be found in Suzanne Méjean's book *Les Poésies satiriques et morales des troubadours*.¹⁹

Given this abundance of material, a student may well ask if anything remains to be done. Even if it were true that nothing remained to be done, the troubadours would be worth reading for their own sake. Each new reader may find something new to enjoy in each poem; and the more one reads, the greater the understanding and the greater the *joy*. However, much indeed does remain to be done. The psychological aspects of troubadour verse remain relatively unexplored, and questions about performance have not yet found a definitive answer. Troubadour poems form a convenient-sized, well-defined corpus, to which any literary theory might be applied. They have been remarked upon by writers such as Goethe, Stendhal, and Nietzsche. We have hardly seen the last of theory; and a scholar who has mastered the corpus of the troubadours will be in a position to apply to that corpus each new theory that comes along.

19. Suzanne Thiolier-Méjean, *Les Poésies satiriques et morales des troubadours du XIIIe siècle à la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1978).