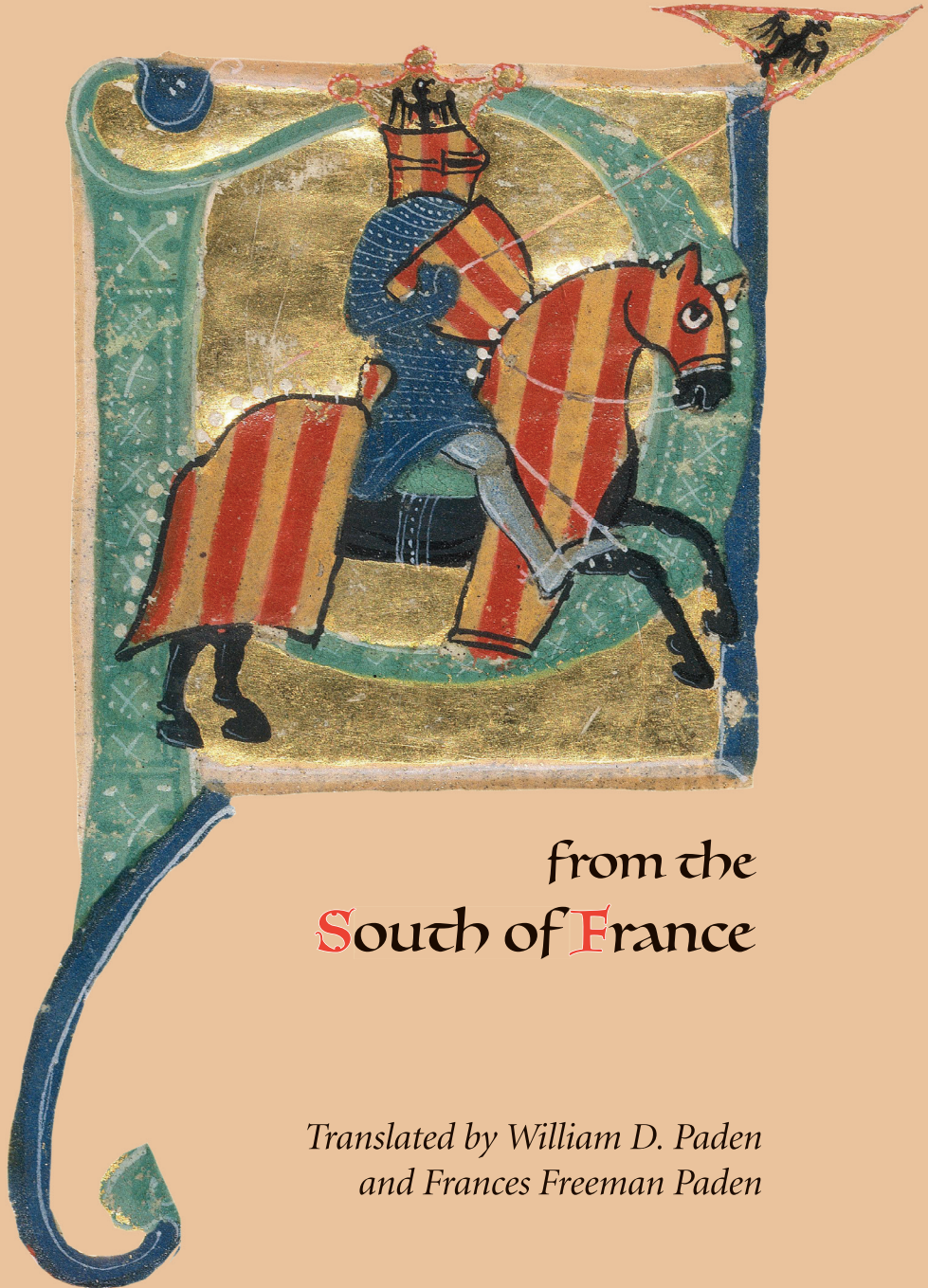


# Troubadour Poems



from the  
**S**outh of **F**rance

*Translated by William D. Paden  
and Frances Freeman Paden*

TROUBADOUR POEMS  
FROM THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

*For Catherine and Will*

Troubadour Poems  
From the South of France

*translated by*

William D. Paden  
Frances Freeman Paden

D. S. BREWER

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First published 2007  
D. S. Brewer, Cambridge

ISBN 978-1-84384-129-6

D. S. Brewer is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd  
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK  
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc,  
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA  
website: [www.boydellandbrewer.com](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com)

The Northwestern University Research Grants Committee has provided partial support for the publication of this book. We gratefully acknowledge this assistance.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library

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This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Typeset in Adobe Caslon Pro by Word and Page, Chester, UK

Printed in Great Britain by  
Antony Rowe Ltd, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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## PREFACE

ON the twelfth-century Limoges casket that we have used as our frontispiece, the enameled figures enact a narrative in which a bird, by moving across space, suggests the passage of time.<sup>1</sup> On the left, a man gazes at a woman whose dress contains the night sky. She returns his glance, and they dance together as he fiddles. In the sky above, a night bird seems to watch them. It passes across the horizon and reappears on the right, perched on the hand of the same woman, who is now dressed in the green of springtime. Her lover half kneels before her, enthralled by the object of his desire. The dawn witnesses their engagement. Below the hasp, the watchman's feet move toward the dancing couple, but his eyes turn toward the lovers at dawn. Holding both a sword and a key, he protects the treasure, their intimacy.

The casket provides an exquisite visual representation of the *alba* or dawn poem, and, by extension, of the love sung throughout troubadour poetry composed in medieval Occitania, the land we know today as the South of France. For the troubadours and their listeners, sexuality is the worldly expression of the sacred. The pleasure of desire brings happiness, and the sexual narrative holds the promise of continuity. The yearning and fulfillment that lovers experience make sense of the world—its seasons, its wars, its anguish. On the casket the bird's flight is circular; at the end of the story it is poised for flight, signaling that the narrative may begin again. The poets, too, sing of continuity and the kinship between people and nature. So it is that in an early poem, a lover yearns to be a goshawk (Poem 4); in another the poet implies a kinship with his falcon (Poem 22). When Peire Vidal sings of inhaling a breeze from afar, he suggests the communion he feels with both the distant land (Provence) and his lady (Poem 59).<sup>2</sup>

In this book, intended primarily for the reader who does not know Occitan, we present English translations that we hope will communicate not only what the troubadours said but some of the excitement in how they said it. We have approached each poem as a performance, as an artifact within a context; we have considered its language, its place in history, its prosodic structure, and its treatment by scribes and editors. Our goal has been to offer the reader translations that are both accurate and evocative of the poems' medieval present.

<sup>1</sup> The technique of time-lapse representation seen here in the treatment of the hawk is frequent in medieval imagery. See, for example, the departure of Saint Alexis in the twelfth-century Saint Albans Psalter, where one picture represents him saying goodbye to his wife, leaving her, and sailing away: Otto Pächt, C. R. Dodwell, and Francis Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter (Albani Psalter)* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1960), plate 35. Later the Books of Hours employed "depiction of successive episodes in a story within a single miniature": John Harthan, *The Book of Hours* (New York: Crowell, 1977), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See also Poem 18, in which a sparrowhawk soars toward the lady. For other resemblances to the casket, see Poem 57, where a lover kneels before his lady and offers obeisance; Poems 32 and 95, for the lover as prisoner of his lady; and Poems 19, 20, and 35 for the bird as messenger bearing the poet's love.

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From the beginning, we knew that we wanted to render verse translations, but that trying to imitate the rhyme patterns of the original would be a distraction. Occitan is a language far richer in rhymes than English. We decided to be true to stanzaic patterns and, as much as possible, to line lengths, but to suggest the patterning of the original prosody rather than adhere to systematic rhyme-schemes that would have obliged us to adopt forced rhymes. We have avoided archaic diction because our goal is to regain the poems' presence.

As our collaboration evolved, we felt we were in close dialogue with the original poems and wanted to replicate that experience for the reader as much as possible. To that end, we provide a substantial selection of poems for the English-speaking reader rather than a smaller sampling of poems with facing translations. In order to help our readers gain a sense of the original, we offer a general introduction that addresses the historical context of the poems and includes notes on the music, the language, and the performance situation. We also provide notes on each of the poems, illustrations from manuscripts, sources of texts in the original language, and a bibliography.

We have collaborated in the deepest sense; rather than dividing the labor, we have worked closely together on all aspects of the book. As we approached each poem, we both read it in its original language and drafted an English translation. As a seasoned expert in medieval lyric poetry, William Paden produced renderings informed by extensive scholarship. It is his knowledge that gives this volume its range and its depth. Frances Freeman Paden, who is relatively new to Occitan studies, brought her experience as a writer and student of English poetry to the translation process. Her knowledge of gender and performance made us aware of nuances we might otherwise have missed. As we passed the translations back and forth, striving to bring the poems closer and closer to the meaning and spirit of the originals, we consulted a range of scholarly works. In doing so, we felt engaged in a collaboration not only with the troubadours and trobairitz, but with scribes, editors, and scholars who have been working on the poems over the past eight or nine hundred years. This book is deeply indebted to all of them.

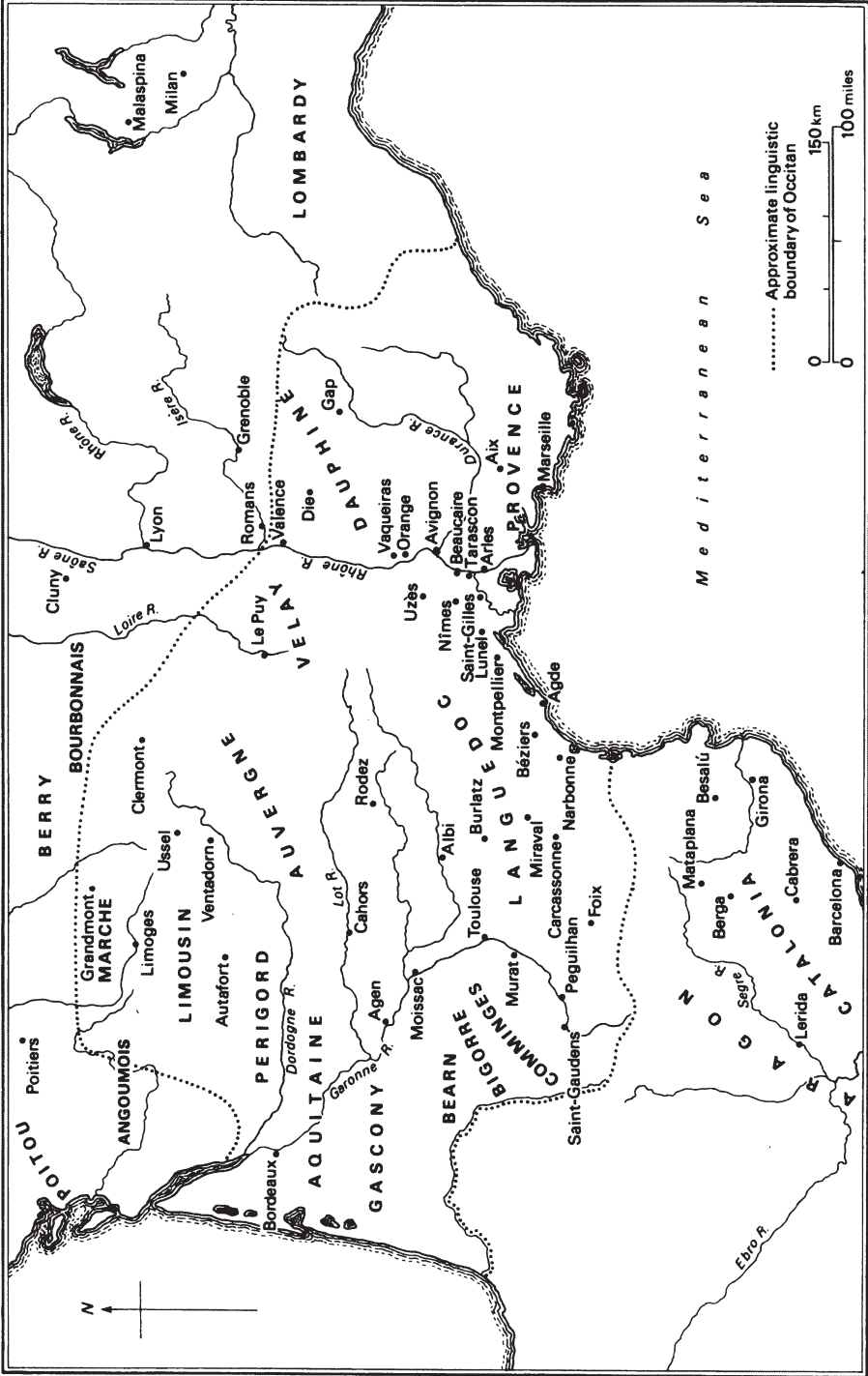
We are also indebted to many colleagues, students, and friends who have supported this project as it has evolved. We are especially grateful to Richard Barber, who graciously invited us to produce this volume; to Ruth Harvey, who suggested he do so; and to Caroline Palmer, the editorial director at Boydell and Brewer, who saw the project through the press. Northwestern University, especially the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences; Andrew Wachtel, Dean of the Graduate School; and Robert Gundlach, Director of the Writing Program, supported this project with a research leave for Fran Paden and a subvention from the University Research Grants Committee. Janice Spencer and Matthew Taylor, of the Multimedia Learning Center, provided invaluable help with the illustrations. For their prompt response in providing illustrations we thank the British Library, the Bibliothèque communautaire et interuniversitaire (Clermont-Ferrand), the Morgan Library (New York), the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and Luc de Goustine, President of the Association Carrefour Ventadour. Wendy Pfeffer gave us a careful reading of the Introduction; we appreciate her valuable suggestions. For their generous hospitality and warm support for our research in France and Italy, we thank Christine and Luc Amiech. Finally, we are grateful to our children, who have continually stimulated our imaginations. It is to them that we dedicate this book.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Bec, *Burlesque* = Pierre Bec, *Burlesque et obscénité chez les troubadours: pour une approche du contre-texte médiéval* (Paris: Stock, 1984).
- Bec, *Chants d'amour* = Pierre Bec, *Chants d'amour des femmes-troubadours* (Paris: Stock, 1995).
- Bec, *Lyrique française* = Pierre Bec, *La lyrique française au moyen âge (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Picard, 1977-8).
- Boutière, *Biographies* = J. Boutière and A.-H. Schutz with I.-M. Cluzel, *Biographies des troubadours: textes provençaux des XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles*. 2nd ed. (Paris: Nizet, 1973).
- Bruckner, *Songs* = Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White, *Songs of the Women Troubadours* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).
- Carmi, *Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* = T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Viking Press, 1981).
- Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* = Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ed. and trans. Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Hill and Bergin, *Anthology* = R. T. Hill and T. G. Bergin, *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, 2nd ed., with the collaboration of Susan Olson, William D. Paden, Jr., and Nathaniel Smith, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
- Meyer, *Derniers troubadours* = Paul Meyer, *Les derniers troubadours de la Provence* (Paris, 1871; reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 1973).
- Noulet and Chabaneau, *Deux manuscrits* = J.-B. Noulet and Camille Chabaneau, *Deux manuscrits provençaux du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Leclerc, 1888).
- Paden, "Before the Troubadours" = William D. Paden, "Before the Troubadours: The Archaic Occitan Texts and the Shape of Literary History," in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. Keith Busby, Bernard Guidot, Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 509-28.
- Paden, *Introduction to Old Occitan* = William D. Paden, *An Introduction to Old Occitan* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1998).
- Paden, *Medieval Pastourelle* = William D. Paden, *The Medieval Pastourelle*, 2 vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987).
- Paden, "Petrarch, Poet of Provence" = William D. Paden, "Petrarch as a Poet of Provence," *Annali d'italianistica* 22 (2004): 19-44.
- Paden, "Troubadours and Jews" = William D. Paden, "Troubadours and Jews," in *Études de langue et de littérature médiévales offertes à Peter T. Ricketts*, ed. Dominique Billy and Ann Buckley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 471-84.
- Paden, *Voice* = William D. Paden, ed., *The Voice of the Trobairitz: Perspectives on the Women Troubadours* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).
- Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, ed. Durling = *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

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- Rieger, *Trobairitz* = Angelica Rieger, *Trobairitz: Der Beitrag der Frau in der altokzitanischen höfischen Lyrik, Edition des Gesamtkorpus*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 233 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991).
- Riquer, *Trovadores* = Martín de Riquer, *Los trovadores: historia literaria y textos*, 3 vols. (Barcelona: Planeta, 1975).
- Rosenberg, *Songs of the Troubadours* = Samuel N. Rosenberg, Margaret Switten, and Gérard Le Vot, *Songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology of Poems and Melodies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).
- Wilson, *Women in the Middle Ages* = Katharina M. Wilson and Nadia Margolis, *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004).



Map of Occitania and adjacent regions.



## Introduction

IN the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and continuing into the fourteenth, the region that we know as the South of France was home to the troubadours, poets whose lyrics were heard from the Pyrenees to the Alps. These poets did not speak French but Occitan, the vernacular language of the region. The word “troubadour” represents Occitan *trobador*, from the verb *trobar*, meaning “to find,” “to invent,” or “to compose”; hence, a troubadour is “one who finds, invents, or composes.” Women troubadours are called by the infrequent feminine form of the word, *trobairitz*. Although we know about twenty *trobairitz* by name, relatively few of their works survive. We have about fifty poems that we attribute to *trobairitz*, including several anonymous poems that appear to have been written by women. This number compares with about 2,500 poems composed by 360 men and women combined.<sup>1</sup>

Some troubadours kept a number of *joglar*s in their service. The word *joglar* corresponds to *jongleur* in French and English, “an itinerant minstrel, who sang and composed ballads, told stories and otherwise entertained people” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.). Troubadours who employed *joglar*s, such as Bertran de Born, would send one of them off to perform a new composition before the addressee. The distinction between troubadour and *joglar* was not hard and fast: both composed and both performed, but the troubadour tended to be primarily the composer, and the *joglar* the performer.

In the beginning, troubadour poems were transmitted as songs from one musical performance to the next. The poems gained increasing prestige over time, and by the mid-thirteenth century, if not earlier, scribes began to write them down. In the manuscripts that have survived, the poems present themselves to us directly, enveloped in an aura of prestige that implies high esteem for their art. The original environment of the poems, however—their social, political, literary, and musical context—is more difficult to grasp. These poets and singers lived in a world very different from our own.

Rather than living in modern nation-states with sharply defined borders, the troubadours inhabited spheres of influence that constantly shifted and changed.<sup>2</sup> Though most of them lived in the land we call France today, they did not consider themselves French. When the troubadours spoke of *Fransa* (France), they meant

<sup>1</sup> This statement is based on the listing by Alfred Pillet and Henry Carstens, *Bibliographie der Troubadours* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1933), brought up to date by Peter T. Ricketts, *Concordance de l'occitan médiéval: COM 2, Les troubadours, les textes narratifs en vers* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). It does not take account of the many “lost troubadours,” those for whom we have no poems but some other trace of their existence. On the lost troubadours see Kathryn Klingebiel, “Lost Literature of the Troubadours: A Proposed Catalogue,” *Tenso* 13.1 (1997): 1–23.

<sup>2</sup> Ronnie Ellenblum, “Were There Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages? The Example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,” in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 105–19.

either the large expanse that had once been ruled by the Franks, reaching from the Pyrenees to the Rhine, or, more commonly, the smaller area that was actually controlled by the kings of France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At times, the royal domain was almost as small as the Ile de France, the region surrounding Paris.<sup>3</sup> The kings of France struggled to expand their territory at the expense of local lords. Most troubadours were not vassals of the king, or if they were, that relation was more nominal than real. Instead, many of the troubadour poets served dukes or counts, while others, such as Guilhem IX, duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitou, were powerful noblemen.

Guilhem IX was the earliest troubadour whose works survive. Though the king of France was his titular overlord, Guilhem was largely independent. His granddaughter, Eleanor of Aquitaine, married Louis VII, who was then king of France. After that marriage failed, she wed Henry Plantagenet, originally of Anjou. In 1154, when Henry became king of England as Henry II, he brought Aquitaine under English rule for three hundred years. While this situation continued in the Southwest, the land east of the Rhône was controlled for generations by the kings of Aragon in eastern Spain. Once they acquired the title of count of Provence, these kings traveled frequently between Barcelona and Aix-en-Provence. Although his own language was Catalan, Alfonso II, king of Aragon, count of Barcelona, and count of Provence, composed songs in Occitan in order to appeal to his vassals in Provence. For similar reasons, Guilhem IX had composed the earliest troubadour songs in Occitan instead of Poitevin French, the language we assume was his mother tongue.

Land hunger strongly motivated these peripatetic lords. They went to war for land, both close to home and abroad. It was their hunger for land, combined with piety and intolerance toward Islam, that sent them off on the Crusades (1095–1272). These armed pilgrimages to recapture Jerusalem from the Muslims appear in a number of troubadour songs.<sup>4</sup> Serving their lords in Occitania, many troubadours regarded the French with antipathy, especially because of the French role in the Albigensian Crusade (1209–49), a religious war organized by Pope Innocent III against believers who were centered in the town of Albi, a town that lies in the hills east of Bordeaux. The Albigensians claimed to be Christians, but their radical theology, including their belief in two gods (one good, one evil), made the Church regard them as heretics. The Pope offered the lands of the heretics to anyone who would fight against them for the Church. French nobles led by Simon de Montfort joined forces with the Church to attack the Albigensians, against the resistance of local lords and the king of Aragon. The troubadour Peire Cardenal, an orthodox Catholic himself, was sharply critical of clerical abuses and the French (see Poems 80 and 81).

The Albigensian Crusade set in motion a complex series of events that resulted in the passage of the county of Toulouse to the king of France in 1271. But fighting for land continued across the rest of Occitania for hundreds of years. Below Toulouse, where the Pyrenees approach the Mediterranean, Perpignan belonged to Aragon until 1276, then to the Kingdom of Majorca until 1346; the city became

<sup>3</sup> See Angus MacKay and David Ditchburn, eds., *Atlas of Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> See Marcabru, Poem 14; for reservations about the idea of crusade, compare Marcabru, Poem 15, and Gaucelm Faidit, Poem 55.

part of France in 1659. Most of the Southeast, the area we know today as Provence, was acquired by France in the 1480s. But the city of Avignon belonged to the pope until 1791, while Nice and its surrounding area were acquired from Sardinia as late as 1860.

People living in the South of France during the time of the troubadours spoke Occitan, not French, as their native language. Occitan descended from Latin and was a sister language of Italian, Spanish, and French; it is what we call today a Romance language, a term and concept that developed in the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> French, on the other hand, was the language of the North; it was spoken from Paris to London from the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 until the end of the Middle Ages.

At the time of the troubadours, the Occitan language did not have a generally recognized name. Guilhem IX, the first troubadour, called it *Romans* in contrast to the Latin of the Church; it was his vernacular, his spoken, local speech.<sup>6</sup> Eventually, Occitan came to be called *Provençal* by Italians who traced their own poetic origins to Provence, the land that lay east of the Rhône; it was called *Lemosí* by the Catalans, who looked to the troubadours from the western area around Limoges. For a long time, speakers of English, continuing the Italian tradition, called the language Provençal. As a name for the language, Provençal achieved wide currency when Frédéric Mistral, the poet from Provence, won the Nobel Prize in 1904. However, this term inevitably misrepresents the language that was spoken not only in Provence, the region east of the Rhône, but with dialectal variations across the entire South of France. During the twentieth century, the language of the troubadours has come increasingly to be called Occitan. Based on the word *oc*, which means “yes” in this language, the term better represents the people who speak it while affirming its importance as a living language.

Speakers of Occitan have felt pressure to shift to French ever since the Albigensian Crusade. In the nineteenth century Mistral and his fellow poets, in a movement called the *Félibrige*, strove to restore their language to the prestige it had enjoyed in the days of the troubadours, although they knew that it was severely threatened. A determined movement to revive the language goes on in the South of France today, even though it has not been learned as a mother tongue since the 1930s. As the European Union continues to develop, the fate of languages such as Occitan, Catalan, and Gaelic remains a lively issue.

If we wish to imagine the performance of troubadour art in its own time, we must remember that many of the poets wrote songs, both the words and the melody. One in ten of these poems comes to us with a notation of its melody in the manuscripts. The notations provide the pitch of each syllable but not the length of the note, so we are left to guess at the rhythm that was employed. It seems most likely that the songs were set to a declamatory rhythm, that is, a rhythm suitable for declaiming the verbal text.<sup>7</sup> Out of 2,500 extant poems, only one song in medieval Occitan is accompanied by a musical transcription that extends over all the stanzas.<sup>8</sup> The other poems that include musical notations have them only for the

<sup>5</sup> William D. Paden, *An Introduction to Old Occitan* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Guilhem IX of Aquitaine, Poem 8, stanza 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and Their Relation to the Poems* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1972), pp. 35–45.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous, Poem 3.

first stanza. Scholars believe that subsequent stanzas followed the same essential melody with variations in musical detail, variations that were appropriate to the evolving verbal text.

Some scholars assume that all troubadour poems were written to be sung. Since writing down melodies required the services of a specialized scribe, many poems may have been performed as songs that were not accompanied by melodies in the manuscripts. Still, to imagine that all troubadour poems were sung is to overlook the historical development of reading. Since the art form of the troubadours began as song and evolved toward writing, it seems likely that the performance of the poems may also have moved toward reading aloud, or even silent reading.<sup>9</sup>

To today's nonspecialist listener, the melodies that survive resemble Gregorian chant. The tunes are sinuous, with frequent rises and falls and occasional leaps within a range that is usually no wider than an octave. The musical style is syllabic; that is, it has one note for each syllable in the verbal text until the end of a line, which is frequently ornamented with a melisma, a group of several notes sung to one syllable. The combination of the sinuous line with ornamental melismas can be haunting, as it is in Jaufré Rudel's "Love from afar" (Poem 10), or vivacious, as it is in Raimbaut de Vaqueiras's "When May Day comes" (Poem 64).<sup>10</sup> It is most likely that troubadour music evolved from the liturgy that troubadours heard at Mass, but the possibility of influence from Arabic music cannot be excluded.<sup>11</sup>

The troubadours exemplify vivid secular individualism as well as recurrent religious impulses. It goes without saying that in their own time they were not perceived as medieval. The notion of a Middle Age derives from the idea of a Renaissance, which may be defined as a rebirth of the values of Classical Antiquity in Italy in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. For Jacob Burckhardt, the Swiss historian whose vision of the *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) remains influential, the Italian Renaissance rediscovered the values of secular individualism from Antiquity, in contrast to an intervening dark time of religious community.<sup>12</sup> But this view, which incorporates the way some Renaissance figures saw themselves, has been challenged on several grounds.<sup>13</sup> Just as it is not true that the civilization of the Renaissance abandoned religious values, it is also not true that the earlier

<sup>9</sup> See Paul Saenger, *Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Many recordings have been made of troubadour songs. Musical performances on compact disks accompany Rosenberg, *Songs of the Troubadours*, and Paden, *Introduction to Old Occitan*. For reference to the musical scores and performances of some of the poems translated in this book, see Music.

<sup>11</sup> The Occitan names of instruments such as the lute, the rebec (a fiddle), and the tambour (a drum) come from Arabic etyma. See Peter T. Ricketts, "L'influence de la culture arabe sur le lexique de l'ancien occitan, en particulier dans le domaine musical," *L'espace lyrique méditerranéen au Moyen Âge: nouvelles approches* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2006), pp. 291–301.

<sup>12</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel: Schweighauser, 1860); translated by S. G. C. Middlemore as *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> See Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). "The study of Renaissance notions of identity has often been based on a baffling indifference to what came before": Martin, p. 11.

period was devoted entirely to religious community, as in the monastery. Rather than a historical progression from religious community to secular individualism, it seems more reasonable to think that religious community and secular individualism represent varieties of experience and that both were available from the twelfth century to the sixteenth, as well as earlier and later.

The troubadours anticipated the spirit and the poetry of such figures as Dante and Petrarch, both of whom publicly acknowledged their inheritance with admiration and gratitude.<sup>14</sup> For this reason Italian culture to this day regards the troubadours as the source of its poetic tradition. Given this perspective, the Burckhardtian master narrative, so widely entrenched in our general culture, may be regarded as an artifact that is out of date. It depends for its existence on an implicit nineteenth-century sense that the Renaissance continues into the present, and with it a revolt against preceding religious tradition.

A more contemporary view of the past enables us to dispense with the prejudice against the Middle Ages and opens our minds to the richness and diversity of medieval culture, particularly to troubadour poetry. The poems range from pious hymns to the Virgin to heartfelt celebration of the joys of warfare, but the most prominent theme in the troubadour corpus is sexual desire. A man exclaims that God Himself wants no woman nobler than his mistress; a woman cajoles her reluctant lover by saying that if he lets her die of unsatisfied desire, he will “commit a sin and go to torment,” and leave her to be “more desired at the Judgment.”<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of these lovers, the ways of God are subordinate to the force of erotic love. The poetry of the troubadours and trobairitz compels us to recognize that members of fashionable society felt free, when they chose, to ignore the strictures of the Church regarding sexuality.<sup>16</sup>

For more than two centuries, the troubadour poems spoke of desire that was usually but not always heterosexual. In general, male poets describe male desire for a woman, and women poets describe a woman’s desire for a man, but there are also poems in which a troubadour imagines a woman’s desire and a trobairitz imagines the desire of a man.<sup>17</sup> The expression of desire ranges from frank sex talk in the first troubadour, Guilhem IX of Aquitaine, to humble beseeching for the lady’s intimate favor in Bernart de Ventadorn, and from the self-confident projection of the Comtessa de Dia to the long-suffering misery of Castelloza. The beloved, in the eyes of the lover, possesses *pretz* or “merit,” *valor* or “worth,” *cortesia* or “courtesy,” and above all *jovent* or “youth, youthfulness.”<sup>18</sup> Occasionally, the singer identifies his or her beloved as married,<sup>19</sup> but we do not have good reason to imagine adulterous desire as the norm. If anything, the norm is a man’s love for a lady who is young

<sup>14</sup> For examples of continuity from the troubadours see Dante, Poem 119, and Petrarch, Poems 125 and 126.

<sup>15</sup> Jaufré Rudel, Poem 11, stanza 3; Castelloza, Poem 74, stanza 6. For further impertinence see the Monk of Montaudon, Poem 66, and Peire Cardenal, Poem 82.

<sup>16</sup> “It was a world in which a normative religious discourse taught that sexuality was something sinful and evil, and yet where large segments of the society chose to ignore that teaching”: Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Male poets depict female desire, for example, in Marcabru, Poem 13, and perhaps in Raimon Jordan, Poem 49. The trobairitz Castelloza imagines her lover’s desire distrustfully. Bietris de Romans may have depicted male, if not lesbian, desire in Poem 117.

<sup>18</sup> On *jovent* in women and men, contrasted with age, see Bertran de Born, Poem 43.

<sup>19</sup> Jaufré Rudel, Poem 9, stanza 3; Castelloza, Poem 72, stanza 5.

and whom we may imagine as unmarried, but the subject of marriage arises in few poems. Frequently mentioned obstacles to love include the *gilós*, the “jealous” or “zealous” one, either singular or plural, which may refer to the lady’s husband (if she has one) or, in the case of an unmarried woman, to anyone—father, brother, or relatives, both male and female—who resists her will to love. The *lauzengiers* are the advisers, flatterers or gossips who work against the loving couple.

The converse of sexual desire is the misogyny that is characteristic of Marcabru, and the misandry found in late songs about unhappily married women or girls.<sup>20</sup> Nuances of same-sex desire surface in Giraut de Bornelh’s *alba*, in which the watchman focuses on the male lover; in the homophobia invoked by Guilhem de Berguedà; in a leper’s nostalgia for his male lover; in an ambiguous pronoun that complicates an anonymous bawdy poem; and in a song by Bietris de Romans in which the female speaker expresses love for a woman.<sup>21</sup> Filial love underlies the lamentations on the death of a leader like Richard Lionheart (Poem 56) or Saint Louis (Poem 108). Love for a mother figure appears in Peire Vidal’s yearning for his lady in Provence or for Provence in his lady (Poem 59). Jaufré Rudel’s love for his faraway lady comes very close to desire for desire itself (Poem 10). Other troubadours, from early to late, sang of their desire for poetry, which, since they sang as poets, becomes a kind of self-love.<sup>22</sup> Love of God or the Virgin becomes a stronger theme in troubadour lyric of the thirteenth century than it had been in the twelfth.<sup>23</sup>

During the time that it flourished, troubadour poetry evolved, driven by the rising status of the vernacular language. From the fall of Rome to the advent of the Renaissance, the sociolinguistic situation in Europe changed profoundly. At first the prestige language throughout Western Europe was Latin, and the popular language in each place was the local vernacular, spoken but rarely recorded. Gradually, the vernaculars were elevated, first from speech into writing and then into further functions of high language. The transition culminated when the vernaculars became competitive with Latin. In the fourteenth century it was still natural for Dante and Petrarch to regard Latin as superior, even for the purpose of describing the vernacular in Dante’s *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; but by the sixteenth century the vernacular had become the norm for Montaigne, Cervantes, and Shakespeare, with his “small Latin.”<sup>24</sup> Even though Montaigne said his mother tongue was Latin,<sup>25</sup> he chose to write in French.

The rise of the vernacular over the course of a millennium is mirrored by the development over centuries of medieval Occitan. The language was first written in the tenth century. Early, fragile bits of poetry include a charm, perhaps related to midwifery (Poem 1), a vernacular refrain in a Latin religious allegory (Poem 2), an eleventh-century hymn to the Virgin (Poem 3), and an early expression of hetero-

<sup>20</sup> Marcabru, Poem 12; Cerveri de Girona, Poem 106.

<sup>21</sup> Giraut de Bornelh, Poem 37; Guilhem de Berguedà, Poem 34, stanzas 3 and 4; the anonymous leper, Poem 122; the ambiguity, Poem 116; Bietris de Romans, Poem 117.

<sup>22</sup> Raimbaut d’Aurenga, Poem 25; Arnaut Daniel, Poem 51; Raimon de Cornet, Poem 124; Petrarch, Poem 125.

<sup>23</sup> Alais, Iselda, and Carenza, Poem 69; Falquet de Romans, Poem 77; Peire Cardenal, Poem 84; Arnaut Vidal, Poem 120.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Jonson, “To the memory of my beloved, the author Mr. William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us” (1623).

<sup>25</sup> “De l’institution des enfans” (*Essais* I.xxvi).

sexual desire (Poem 4). These very short compositions have been preserved in the margins of manuscripts dedicated to weightier subjects that are treated in Latin.<sup>26</sup> Full-blown Occitan lyric began in the twelfth century with the first known troubadour, Guilhem IX of Aquitaine, and those who followed him. At first this lyric had no established subtypes, or genres; the early songs that describe themselves at all are simply called *vers*, or “songs.” During the twelfth century, when poets began to write increasingly about sexual desire, *vers* with this theme came to be called *cansós*. As the genres proliferated, the *cansó* gradually came to contrast with other themes, such as those found in the *sirventés* or satire, etymologically a “servant-like” song. Forms such as the *pastorela*, a song about a shepherdess, and the *planh*, a “plaint” or “funeral lament,” appeared first as experiments. Later, through imitation, they became institutionalized as genres. The *cobla*, or isolated stanza, came into use late in the twelfth century, and dance songs such as the *balada* arrived in the thirteenth.

As genres evolved, other ways to monumentalize the poems also developed. In the early thirteenth century, prose commentaries on the poets and their songs came into fashion; scholars distinguish between the *vida*, or “life,” a brief, usually fictionalized biography of the poet, and the *razo*, or “reason” for a particular composition.<sup>27</sup> In 1254 the first dated, extant troubadour manuscript was transcribed.<sup>28</sup> Most of the *chansonniers*, or songbooks, were compiled in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century, and one as late as the nineteenth. About ninety-five manuscripts containing troubadour poetry survive today; more than half of them were written in Italy, others in northern France or Spain, about twenty in the South of France. Only four of them provide notation of melodies. The imposing presence of the manuscripts speaks eloquently of the prestige that the troubadours came to enjoy toward the end of the period when they flourished, not only at home but in regions remote from their own.

In the early fourteenth century a literary society, the *Sobregaya companhia del Gay Saber*, or the “Exceedingly Merry Company of the Merry Wisdom,” was founded at Toulouse to preserve the best of the troubadour tradition. Its board of governors, the *Mantenedors*, or “Maintainers,” authorized a clerk, Guilhem Molinier, to draw up a massive poetic treatise called the *Leys d’amors*, or “Laws of Love,” in which “love” was understood to mean love poetry. Guilhem Molinier defined more than twenty distinct genres of lyric poetry, providing judges with criteria for awarding prizes in each category. The elevation of troubadour poetry, and with it the Occitan language, might have seemed to be complete. But from today’s perspective, the multiplying of categories can be seen to signal a phenomenon on shaky ground; the

<sup>26</sup> Compare Figure 1, showing Poem 1 in the margin of a breviary, with Figure 2, a page from a troubadour songbook.

<sup>27</sup> We include three *vidas* (86, 87, 88) and one *razo* (76) to illustrate the monumentalization of the troubadours, and we draw upon *vidas* in our introductions to individual troubadours. For more on the *vidas* and *razos*, see Margarita Egan, trans., *The Vidas of the Troubadours* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), and Elizabeth Wilson Poe, *From Poetry to Prose in Old Provençal: The Emergence of the Vidas, the Razos, and the Razos de trobar* (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1984). The standard edition is J. Boutière and A.-H. Schutz, with I.-M. Cluzel, *Biographies des troubadours: textes provençaux des XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Nizet, 1973).

<sup>28</sup> Called D (Modena, Biblioteca Nazionale Estense, Estero 45, formerly Alpha R.4.4), this large manuscript has been partially published in facsimile: see *Il canzoniere provenzale estense*, 2 vols. (Modena: STEM-Mucchi, 1979–82).

Occitan language and its literature were already under siege. France was emerging as a nation, and Occitan, in comparison to French, was becoming a regional language. This threat motivated the effort to make permanent and fixed what had been, for several hundred years, a poetic art in constant evolution.

The poems that have survived show us that the production of troubadour poetry waxed and waned through the years. In the generation of Guilhem IX and Marcabru, troubadour poetry was sparse, but the volume of poems grew considerably in the later twelfth century with poets such as Raimbaut d'Aurenga. The production of poems reached a peak in the years around 1200, only to fall as the thirteenth century advanced, and to fall again as that century drew toward its close. In other words, the production first rose sharply, then declined more slowly. Underlying the rise and fall was, we believe, the emergence of vernacular language followed by the decline of Occitan when it began to compete with French on its own terrain.

The interweaving of linguistic, literary, and musical traditions richly complicated the milieu in which the troubadours composed. We have already noted the Latin tradition, robust in liturgical culture, from which troubadour music seems to have arisen, and the possible influence of Arabic music from Spain. The recurring theme of the breeze that brings the fragrance of the lady's perfume to the lover may have been inspired by Arabic poetry.<sup>29</sup> When the earl of Orkney, an archipelago off the north coast of Scotland, passed through Narbonne on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he flirted with the viscountess of the city and, in a skaldic stanza in Old Norse, praised her intelligence and beauty (Poem 22). A polyglot troubadour, Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, composed a song in which he used Occitan in the first stanza and followed it with stanzas in Italian, French, Gascon (a language spoken from Bordeaux to the Pyrenees) and Galician-Portuguese (Poem 61).<sup>30</sup> In the thirteenth century, poets who were native to Catalonia employed Occitan for lyric compositions (Poems 78 and 94).

Some poems that survive from medieval Occitania were composed in Hebrew. Jews had been present throughout the South of France since before the fall of Rome, despite hostile traditions such as the ritual lapidation, or stoning, of Jewish houses in Béziers and the colaphization, or slap, of a Jew in Toulouse—a slap that could be fatal. In Provence Jews enjoyed the protection of the pope. There in the thirteenth century, Jewish poets wrote, usually in Hebrew (Poems 111, 114, 115, 121), but in one poem a Jewish poet speaks Occitan in a dialogue with the troubadour Guiraut Riquier (Poem 105).

By the thirteenth century a steady cultural flow had begun between the lands that are now Italy and the South of France. Sordello fled from his enemies in Verona to Provence, where he became the troubadour known in Occitan as Sordel (Poem 90). A trobairitz named Guilhelma de Rosers left Provence for Genoa, where she engaged in an Occitan *tensó* with a local judge (Poem 92). Guido Cavalcanti, Dante's friend and one of the founders of the *dolce stil nuovo*, or "sweet new style," visited Toulouse and wrote in Italian of his love for a lady he met there (Poems 109 and 110). Dante composed Occitan verses for the shade of Arnaut Daniel,

<sup>29</sup> See Poems 29, 59, 62, and 112. On contacts with Arabic culture by the first troubadour, Guilhem IX, see notes to Poems 5 and 6 (stanza 2).

<sup>30</sup> Multilingual compositions were also written by Bonifaci Calvo in three languages (Occitan, French, and Galician-Portuguese), and by Cerverí de Girona in six (Galician-Portuguese, Castilian, Occitan, French, Gascon, and Italian). See Bonifaci Calvo in Riquier, *Trovadores*, no. 296; vol. 3, p. 1422, and Cerverí in Riquier, *Trovadores*, no. 330; vol. 3, p. 1571.

## Introduction

whom the pilgrim encountered in Purgatory (Poem 119). In the fourteenth century Petrarch, who was educated as a boy in Provence and lived half his adult life there, wrote poems in Provence and in Italy that mark the passage of the poetic tradition from Occitan into Italian (Poems 125 and 126). Through Dante and Petrarch, the troubadour tradition flowed into modern poetry.

Troubadour poetry has a recognizable set of formal conventions. Most of the poems are based on the stanza, which, in Occitan, turns on a strict rhyme scheme that recurs identically throughout the song. The specific rhyme sounds employed in the unchanging pattern may vary in a controlled way. Supplementing the rhyme scheme is a second structural feature: the syllabic pattern, which also recurs identically throughout the song. A frequent stanzaic form, for example, has the rhyme scheme *abbacddc*, with each line containing eight syllables. The same rhyme scheme may also involve lines of a different number of syllables; in fact, the lines in a stanza often have different lengths, arranged in a pattern that recurs throughout the composition. Many songs end with a shorter final stanza, called the *tornada*, which reproduces the rhymes and syllabic pattern of the corresponding lines in the preceding full stanza.

In our translations we have indicated the relative length of Occitan lines along the left margin. When the line length does not vary, the left margin is straight, as we may see in the first stanza of a song by Guilhem IX of Aquitaine (Poem 5), one of the earliest in the repertoire:

Ab la dolchor del temps novel  
Foillo li bosc, e li aucel  
Chanton, chascus en lor lati,  
Segon lo vers del novel chan;  
Adonc esta ben c'om s'aisi  
D'acho don hom a plus talan.

With the sweet beauty of the new season  
The woods leaf out, and the birds  
Sing, each one in its language  
To the measure of a new song;  
Then it is well for a man to enjoy  
What he most desires.

The stanza is made up of six lines. The rhyme scheme in Occitan is *aabcbc*, with the rhymes *-el, -el, -i, -an, -i, -an*. All the rhymes are masculine; that is, they end on a stressed vowel. The rhymes are the same for the following stanza but then change for each subsequent pair of stanzas; this pattern is called *coblas doblas*, or “double stanzas.” All the lines have eight syllables. The translation follows the original closely for meaning but does not reproduce the rhyme scheme or the syllable count. Since the lines in Occitan all have the same number of syllables, the left margin has no indentations. We do the same with the left margin in English.

Somewhat more elaborate in design is the first stanza of an *alba*, or dawn song, attributed without certainty to Gaucelm Faidit (Poem 54):

Us cavaliers si jazia  
Ab la re que plus volia.  
Soven baizan li dizia,

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“Doussa res, ieu que farai?  
Que.l jorns ve et la nueyetz vai,

*Ay!*

*Qu'ieu aug que li gaita cria,  
'Via! Sus! Qu'ieu vey lo jorn  
Venir apres l'alba.”*

Once a knight was lying  
With the woman he loved best.  
He kissed her many times and said,  
“Sweetheart, what should I do?  
The day comes and the night goes,

*Oh,*

*I hear the watchman crying,  
Away! Up! For I see day  
Coming after dawn.”*

This stanza is nine lines long, including the substantial refrain comprising the last four lines. The Occitan rhyme scheme is *aaabbbacd*, with the rhymes *-ía, -ía, -ía, -ái, -ái, -ái, -ía, jorn, alba*. The rhyme sounds do not change from stanza to stanza, a structure called *coblas unissonans*, or “one-sounding stanzas.” Most of the lines are seven syllables long, either feminine—that is, with an unstressed and uncounted (eighth) last syllable, as in lines one to three and seven—or masculine, as in lines four, five, and eight. Two lines differ in length. Line six is the monosyllabic introduction of the refrain, and line nine has five syllables and a feminine ending. Most editors indent the shorter lines in Occitan as above. Our English version does not replicate the rhyme scheme or the syllable count; however, we indent the last line once and the monosyllabic line twice, so that the left margin of the translation calls attention to the syllabic design of the stanza in Occitan.

An elaborately structured stanza begins this song by Arnaut Daniel (Poem 50):

L'aura amara	1
Fa.ls bruoills brancutz	2
Clarzir	3
Que.l doussa espeissa ab fuoills,	4
E.ls letz	5
Becs	6
Dels auzels ramencs	7
Ten balps e muts,	8
Pars	9
E non-pars;	10
Per qu'eu m'esfortz	11
De far e dir	12
Plazers	13
A mains, per liei	14
Que m'a virat bas d'aut,	15
Don tem morir	16
Si.ls afans no m'asoma.	17

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The bitter breeze	1
Makes the branchy bushes	2
Brighten	3
(The gentle one thickens them with leaves),	4
And cheery	5
Beaks	6
Of the birds among branches	7
Keeps stammering or mute,	8
Paired	9
Or not paired;	10
And so I strive	11
To speak and make	12
Pleasures	13
For people, for the sake of her	14
Who has turned me upside down,	15
Making me fear I'll die	16
Unless she ends my agony.	17

This extraordinary stanza of seventeen lines contains lines of six syllables, five, four, three, two, and one. The rhyme scheme is *abcdefgbbhicjklcm*. The first line has three syllables plus the uncounted feminine ending: *l'aura amara* (with elision of the final *-a* of *aura* before the beginning *a-* of *amara*). The second line has four syllables, and so on. One may combine the rhyme scheme with the syllable count in a rather forbidding formula as follows: *a3 b4 c2 d6 e2 f1 g5 b4 h1 h3 i4 c4 j2 k4 l6 c4 m6*. The first and last rhymes are feminine. To prove that this fantastic elaboration is not a delusion, one has only to read further, observing that the poem repeats exactly this rhyme scheme, preserving the rhyme sounds (*coblas unissonans*) and the precise syllabic structure, through six full stanzas and a tornada.<sup>31</sup> This stanza typifies the intricate style of *trobar clus*, or “closed composition,” for which Arnaut Daniel is famous.

For more examples of Occitan language see Poem 119, Dante's encounter with Arnaut Daniel in *Purgatorio*, and Figures 1 and 2.

Since these poems were written for performance, we suggest that readers try to pronounce a few lines of verse in order to hear the sound of the language. The pronunciation of vowels in Old Occitan follows the “Continental” manner, as in Italian, Spanish, or French, including the French sound of *u* as in *tu*, “you” (the familiar form). The diphthongs *ié* and *uó* are stressed on the second element. Triphthongs are stressed on the central element, as in *iéi* (like English “Yay!”), *uóu* (like English “Woe”), and so on. Most consonants are pronounced as they are in English. The consonants *c* and *g* could be either hard or soft: hard in *cantar*, “to sing,” and *gai*, “merry”; soft in *cen*, “hundred,” and *gelos*, “jealous, zealous.” The graphies *lh*, *nh* represent sounds like those in English *million*, *canyon*; thus *melhor*, “better,” and *senhor*, “sir” (pronounced like Spanish *señor*). The *r* is tapped when single and trilled when double, as in Spanish. In general, words ending in a consonant are stressed on the final syllable (*cantár*, *gelós*, *melhór*, *senhór*), while those ending in a

<sup>31</sup> It is possible to combine the short lines of this poem into longer ones, arriving at the scheme *a8 b8 c8 d8 e10 f10 g10*, which looks more reasonable but obscures the systematic recurrence of the rhymes in the short lines. Evidently, Arnaut did not care to seem reasonable. See Riquer, *Trovadores*, no. 115; vol. 2, p. 624.

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vowel are stressed on the preceding syllable (*cánta*, “he sings”; *dómna*, “lady”). We indicate the position of stress with an acute accent, even though accent marks are not normally used in Occitan.<sup>32</sup>

As translators, we pass the poems along to our readers, hoping to show that the world the troubadours inhabited was dynamic and present. With its share of persecution, intolerance, violence, and cruelty, it was not an ideal world, but neither was it lacking in powerful ideals. The troubadours and trobairitz cultivated a youthful spirit, a requisite quality for their engagement in arms and their expression of desire. Their songs resound with vigor and passion. Their words can open a world.

<sup>32</sup> For more on pronunciation of the language see Paden, *Introduction to Old Occitan*, pp. 10–14. The compact disk that accompanies that book illustrates pronunciation in normal speech and in musical performance.

## Before the Troubadours

950–1100

THE earliest traces of written Occitan go back to the tenth and eleventh centuries. They include legal documents written in a blend of Latin and Occitan, or *latin farci* (“stuffed Latin”), that is, Latin interspersed with vernacular elements. Typically, Latin is employed for the more impersonal passages and Occitan for passages in which the speaker engages himself more directly.

The oldest literary texts date from the same period. Their language is often difficult to determine precisely, in part because their transmission was unreliable. We have selected a tenth-century charm from folk medicine and, from the eleventh century, a bilingual dawn song with an Occitan refrain, a hymn to the Virgin, and a lyrical stanza. The stanza seems to have been written shortly before Guilhem IX of Aquitaine began to sing his songs. It differs from the other early texts in that it turns from ritualized incantation to expression of amorous desire. Like the dawn song, it seems to have been sung, since the transcription includes neumes, or musical lines; but in neither case did the scribe insert the notes. These four Occitan texts are anonymous and very short. Their transmission, compared to that of troubadour poems, was very frail. The charm and the amorous stanza were unknown until they were discovered in the margins of manuscripts in the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Paden, “Before the Troubadours.”

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Figure 1. Manuscript of Poem 1 (Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque communautaire et interuniversitaire, ms. 201, folio 89 verso) (Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque communautaire et interuniversitaire de Clermont-Ferrand)

The unique text of Poem 1 is preserved as a marginal insertion, upside-down, in a treatise on law from the ninth or tenth century. Our Poem 1 begins on the third line down. The text reads:

tomida femina in tomida uia sedea tomid infant in falda sua tenea  
 tomides mans & tomidas pes tomidas carnes que est colbe recebrunt  
 tomide fust  
 & tomides fer  
 que istae colbe  
 doner — [erasure]  
 [erasure]  
 exs — en dolores  
 dos en polpa  
 de curi in pel  
 de pel en erpa  
 taerra madre  
 susipiant do  
 lores

The poem may be edited as follows:

Tomida femina in tomida uia sedea; tomid infant in falda sua tenea;	4
tomides mans et tomidas pes, tomidas carnes que est colbe recebrunt;	8
tomide fust et tomides fer que istæ colbe donerunt.	12
Exsunt en dolores d'os en polpa [de polpa en curi] de curi in pel de pel en erpa.	16
Terra madre susipiat dolores.	

Line 14, lacking in the manuscript, is conjectured on the basis of the pattern of the following lines.