

TROUBADOURS, TROUVERES, & JONGLEURS, OH MY!

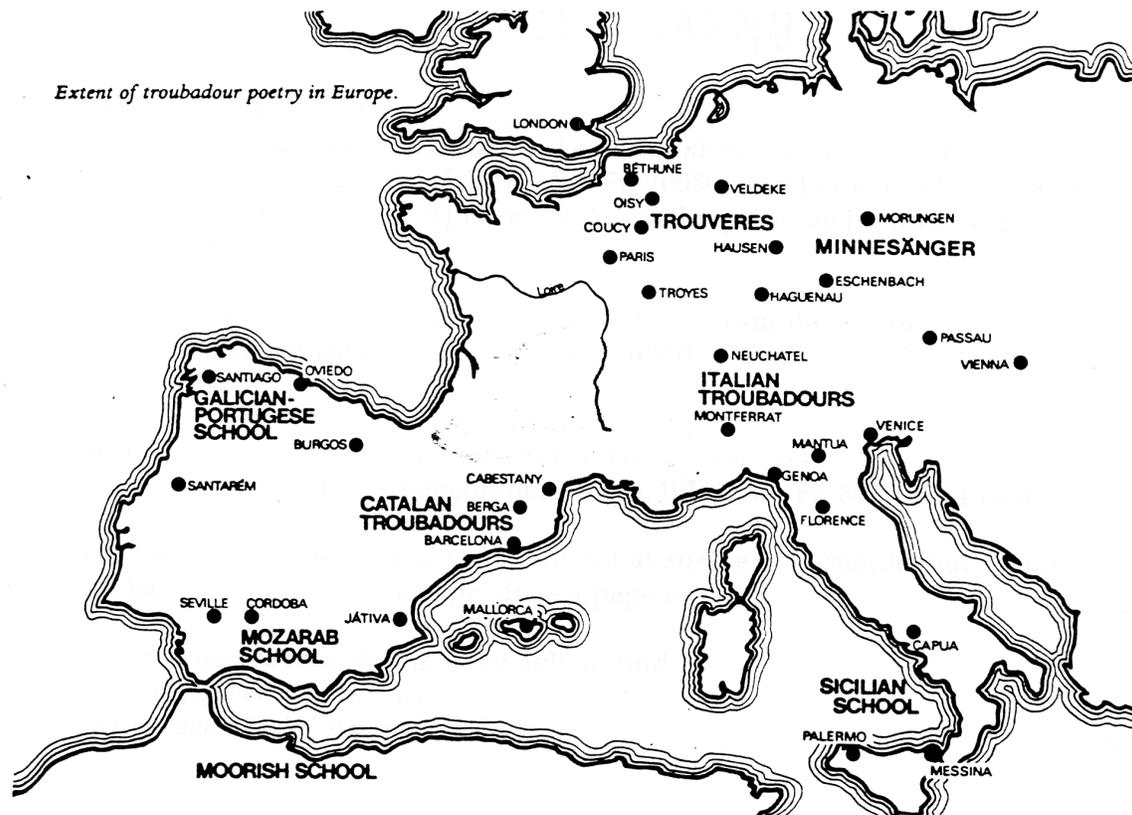
By Mistress Amelie d'Anjou, OL

First, some definitions. We may know that these words sort of mean the same thing, but just for fun let's break them down into parts.

Troubadour: this is the English version of the Provençal/Occitan word, spelled *Trobador*. The Occitan verb *trobar* = to find. So *trobador* = finder? *Trobairitz* is a female trobador. Same verb in Medieval French = *trover* or *trouver*, and the noun *trouvere* is also spelled *troveor* & *troveur*.

Jongleur is *jongleur*, *jogleor* or *jogler* in Medieval French (female is *jogleresse* or *joerresse*), in Occitan it's *joglar*, Latin *joculator*, and English *minstrel*. German *minnesanger*; *minne* = love, so that's a "love-singer."

All right, that's enough. So what's the difference between and trobador and joglar? The trobador writes the songs/poems, the joglar just performs them (or juggles). But really it was more of a class differentiation; the nobles wrote poems, those lower-born minstrels weren't credited with compositional skills.



Map from Meg Bogin's [The Women Troubadours](#)

STYLES, FORMS, or GENRES

We all know the troubadours were famous for their love poetry, but they did write other kinds of poems, and the love-themes can be broken up into different categories.

The *sirventes* is a political poem; Bertan de Born wrote mostly these. His poems are very event-specific; often he is trying to incite various of his lords to fight each other (like Henry II's sons).

The *jeu-parti* and *tenso* are debate poems; two parties take opposite sides of an issue, often love-related. Usually the voices alternate verses.

The *pastourelle* is essentially about a knight trying to seduce a shepherdess. (Can you believe a whole category for that?)

The *alba*, or Dawn song, is about the two illicit lovers having to part now that night is almost over. The jealous spouse and the watchman (for the lover) are often mentioned. (In at least one *alba*, the watchman sings the song rather than the lover, and one German Minnesanger wrote an "anti-*alba*" about how great it is to be married, so you don't have to run away at dawn.) Each verse ends with the same line, something like "and dawn comes soon."

The *canso* (*chanson* in French) is the classic love-song. Lots of these.

The *planh* is a lament.

Specifically from the woman's point of view are the following:

The *mal-mariee* is the "bad-husband" song; not a troubadour, but a *trouvere* category. It ends with a refrain, often something like "why does my husband beat me?"

The *chanson de toile*, also *trouvere* only, are supposedly songs the women sang while working, presumably while sewing or spinning. There is a repeated refrain line at the end of each verse.

The Gallo-Portuguese had a category of song called *cantiga d'amigo*, or "song of a (boy)friend," always from a woman's perspective, usually an unmarried girl, but sometimes her mother. (The whole gamut of mother-daughter relationships get explored here – lots of fun!) Many of these end each verse with a repeated refrain.

There are more categories, (they change over time and location,) and also poems that don't fit any categories.

The poetic forms are so varied that I couldn't begin to list them; often a troubadour would invent a new form just for that poem. Some styles caught on and were copied, but many are unique. Many are deliberately difficult; they were trying to impress the others at court, don't you know. Most of these deliberately difficult forms work better in Romance languages than in English, of course. Some have what author Amelia Van Vleck calls "rotating rhymes," the most famous of which is the *sestina*, invented by Arnaut Daniel. Peire Vidal apparently topped them all in one song so complicated that Van Vleck claims "the rhyme scheme nearly requires advanced mathematics to schematize." There are simpler forms too, of course, such as *abbacdd* or *abababCC* (CC is the refrain), or

ababbab or *aaabab*, or *aaaaB*, *ccccB* etc. (I'm just giving rhymes here, not syllable counts also.)

Time for some examples. [Examples are in handout, but not online, as they are from the books cited below.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

RECOMMENDED SCA EDITIONS:

Medieval Songs and Dances of 11th-14th C. Europe Vol.1, arranged by Al Cofrin, 1997.

This is available directly from the author at http://www.istanpitta.com/cds_books/ for ~\$40. It has almost 100 songs (some are dances only) arranged in modern notation. A great medieval fake book.

Cantigas de Santa Maria of Alfonso X el Sabio; A Performing Edition, transcribed by Chris Elmes. Vol. 1 Prologo to Cantiga 100, 2006. Vol. 2 CSM 101 to CSM 200, 2008.

These are available from the author at Gaita Medieval Music, Edinburgh, Scotland. He has also done an edition of some other Spanish music from the same time. <http://www.gaita.co.uk/publications.html> Only the first verse; if you are looking to write your own words these are peppy melodies, some with unusual rhythms.

USEFUL PROFESSIONAL MUSIC EDITIONS:

Songs of the Troubadours and Trouveres: An Anthology of Poems and Melodies, edited by S. Rosenburg, M. Switten & G. Le Vot. Garland Publ., NY, 1998.

This book was based on two older books, one on Trouveres and the other Troubadours (2 books listed below). This one is newer, so I like it better, but the old ones have points in their favor also. All the poems have English translations, and the tunes are presented without rhythm. Comes with a CD of some of the songs.

Chanter M'Estuet: Songs of the Trouveres, edited by S. Rosenburg & H. Tischler. Faber Music Ltd., London & Boston, 1981.

The songs in here have their poems and are transcribed rhythmically (I don't always like the rhythms), but no English translations. Has some trouvère songs not in above book.

The Medieval Lyric, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/medst/medieval_lyric/index.html

There are 2 versions of this; one a multi-volume spiral bound edition from 1988, the other a CD-ROM. Both come with CDs of the music. The troubadour and trouvère stuff is the same, but the spiral bound has a slim volume with Middle English lyrics, while the CD-ROM has a bunch of cantigas, and interactive pictures of the manuscripts. You can order either version from Mt. Holyoke, order form on website.

The Extant Troubadour Melodies, by Hendrik Van der Werf. Self-published, Rochester NY, 1984.

Contains all the existing versions of all the troubadour melodies, presented without rhythm. Only the first verse of each, but tells where to find text editions and facsimiles.

Songs of the Women Trouveres, edited & translated by E. Doss-Quinby, J. Tasker

Grimbert, W. Pfeffer and E. Aubrey. Yale Univ. Press, 2001.

Supposed to have both all the lyrics of the women trouveres, plus any anonymous ones in a woman's voice. Like all the other newer books, the tunes have no rhythm. Also has poems without music.

A Medieval Songbook: Troubadour & Trouvere, edited & transcribed by Fletcher Collins, Jr. Univ. Press of Virginia, 1982.

50 songs in rhythm with simple accompaniment added, which could be played on a variety of instruments, or ignored. Words for all in both original and translation.

Early Music for the Harp, by Deborah Friou. Friou Music, Glendale, CA, 1988.

Recommended mainly for harpists. There are no words, and the harmonies are her own. There are a lot of cantigas in addition to English, troubadour, trouvere and minnesinger music. Available for about \$20 from <http://www.harpcenter.com/page/SWHC/PROD/BAuthDFri/6333B> Probably available elsewhere.

If you are looking for Spanish or German, ask me for more sources. I don't have much in the way of Italian, but I might be able to point you in the right direction. I can also give you info on facsimile editions of troubadour and trouvere chansonniers (songbooks).

TEXT ONLY EDITIONS

Songs of the Troubadours, edited and translated by Anthony Bonner. Schocken Books, New York, 1972.

Just 20 troubadours, just in English, but really great. Has a vida and bio for each with a good selection.

Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouveres; An Anthology and a History, translations and introductions by Frederick Goldin. Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass., 1983. (reprint of 1973 Doubleday edition)

Most of the same troubadours as Bonner, plus 8 trouveres, but with the original poems also.

Lark in the Morning; The Verses of the Troubadours, a bilingual edition, edited by Robert Kehew, translated by Ezra Pound, W.D. Snodgrass & Robert Kehew. Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2005.

The title says it all. Original Occitan plus verse translations.

Lyrics of the Middle Ages; an Anthology, edited by James J. Wilhelm. Garland Publ. Inc., NY and London, 1990.

I particularly like this very inclusive anthology; it really has some of everything.

The Women Troubadours, by Meg Bogin. W.W. Norton & Co., 1980.

This is a charming little paperback with a nice introduction, original Occitan with English translations of some 20-odd poems, and vidas (short period bios) of the trobairitz. I highly recommend it.

The Goliard Poets; Medieval Latin Songs and Satires, with verse translation by George F. Whicher. Orig. publ. in 1949, reprinted in 1979 by Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn.

Like the title says, Latin lyrics with English rhyming translations. Since they were students at the universities, I like to think of the goliards as medieval frat boys. Some of the famous Carmina Burana ms. is here, including those great drinking songs.

Selections from the Carmina Burana, a verse translation. Publ. by Penguin Classics. 1986.

An Anthology of Medieval Lyrics, edited by Angel Flores. Publ. by Modern Library, Random House, 1962.

I picked this up at a used book store – you never know what you’ll find. All in English, it has some charming translations, some in rhyme.

Songs of a Friend; Love Lyrics of Medieval Portugal, translated by Barbara Hughes Fowler. Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1996.

I love these! Although originally written by men, they are all from the women’s point of view, mostly young unmarried girls singing about their boyfriends, but sometimes their mother’s viewpoint. Barbara has translated around 100 of 500 extant poems in this genre. She cites the 1926 book of the original Portuguese poems, which are worth looking at for the actual poetic forms.

One Hundred Middle English Lyrics, edited by Robert D. Stevick. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1964; 1994.

If you haven’t looked at these, you should. Since they’re English, one can almost understand them. I’ve been writing tunes for some of them (a very few already had music).

The Comedy of Eros; Medieval French Guides to the Art of Love, trans. by Norman Shapiro. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971, 1997.

Technically not trovere stuff, (shouldn’t be sung) but loads of fun. “Tongue in cheek” verse translations of medieval French versions of Ovid. Sadly, they thought Ovid was serious. Lots of misogynist stuff.

DISCOGRAPHY

There are a ton of recordings out there; many are easy to find on Amazon. Groups I like include Martin Best, Sinfonye, Gothic Voices, Anonymous 4, Sequentia, and the Hilliard Ensemble. There are many many other good groups also, like Wolgemut and Owain Phyfe’s New World Renaissance Band (he plays ren faires and Pennsic). Rather than write my own discography, I’ll point you to some others already out there, on the web. A truly formidable collection of discography lists is available at Early Music FAQ <http://www.medieval.org/emfaq/> under recordings. I was shocked at how many different recordings there were just of Martin Codax’s Cantigas d’Amigo, for example.

<http://www.ostgardr.org/music/discography.html> has 4 different medieval discographies, including one on troubadours and trouveres and one on the Cantigas de Santa Maria.

WEB SITES

<http://www.ostgardr.org/music/> is maintained by 2 laurels I know in the East Kingdom. They’ve a lot of good info and links (including discography listed above and a bibliography).

<http://www.angelfire.com/mi/spanogle/emusic.html> is Teleri’s medieval music webpage. She has a lot of good links too.

<http://www.medieval.org/music/early.html> is run by Todd M. McComb, who also does the Early Music faq above. He has more lists of good recordings here, but a shorter, more manageable list than emfaq.

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/mus.html>

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/minstrel.html>

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/cantigas/>

<http://www.pbm.com/~lindah/vladislav/filk/>

If you haven't been to Gregory Blount's SCA Medieval & Renaissance Music or SCA Minstrel webpages, go now. He has tons of links; those above are the ones I particularly recommend.

<http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/index.php>

<http://www.trobar.org/prosody/>

Found this off Greg's site (above). First has words (and some translations, less often midi too) of many troubadours' poems. Second explains poetry forms clearly and humorously. (Site's author would like you to buy it as a book, but it is all online.)

<http://www.earlymusic.net/links/> This is more for professional early music musicians; has links to record companies, publications, festivals and such like.

I have even more sources, but tried not to make this too long. I haven't included the more reference type works, (like lit. crit., Medieval French-English dictionaries, facsimile editions, even books on just one troubadour, etc.) but if you're interested, contact me.

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Now go have fun! Go read some poems!