

Towards a New Edition of the *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*

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Abstract The troubadours' metrical schemes are indexed in István Frank's *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*. This major work classifies all the Occitan songs in ascendant order, depending on the type of their rhymes, giving the opportunity to study in depth the metrical organisation of the medieval Occitan poetry. Despite its importance for every scholar approaching the study of the courtly songs, there are many unsolved issues concerning the way it is organised. For instance, since the main goal of the *Répertoire* is to give the researcher a detailed survey of all the metrical schemes existing in the troubadours' songs, it lacks any kind of data synthesis; as a result, it lists 885 different metrical schemes, which is a clear overgeneration. Indeed, there is no attempt to discover similarities and recurring patterns among metrical schemes, nor to help a scholar willing to find them. The present paper will analyse in detail the unsolved questions arising from Frank's catalogue organisation. Furthermore, This paper will underline that many of the existing problems could be avoided with a new, digital edition of the *Répertoire*, which should be highly wished from the scientific community.

Keywords Metrics · Troubadours · István Frank · Poetry · Occitan literature

István Frank and His *Répertoire*

It is hard to define how valuable is—for the romance philologists—the *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*, a catalogue of all the metrical schemes used by the Occitan poets during the golden age of the *trobar* (12th–13th centuries). The

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book, published in two volumes between 1953 and 1957, is the result of the meticulous work of the famous scholar István Frank.¹

Briefly, the repertory lists the metrical patterns as well as the rhyme schemes of all the medieval Occitan songs (about 2.600). It shows, per each verse composing a stanza, both the number of its syllables and the type of its rhyme. The catalogue lists the different types of stanzas in ascendant order, by means of their rhymes. For example, one will find the following hypothetical strings, in this order: /7a7a7a > 8a5a8a8a > 6a10a10b > 8a8b8a8a10c10c\.

The following string, /8a8b8a8a10c10c\, would be placed in the last position because of its second rhyme, which is *b*, unlike the second rhyme *a* of all the other strings. The string /6a10a10b\ would be placed in the third position because of its third rhyme, which is *b*, unlike the third rhyme *a* of both the first and the second string. Finally, the string /8a5a8a8a\ would be placed in the second position because of its fourth rhyme, which is *a*, unlike the first string, where we find in the fourth position an empty position. As aforementioned, the number of syllables per verse is not taken into account.

Nonetheless, when the rhymes of two or more stanzas are identical, Frank lists all the strings under the same entry, in descendant order depending on the length of their verses, from the first to the last one. For instance, under the entry n. 17 we find the following metrical schemes: /8a8b8a8a8b ≥ 7a10b7a7a7b ≥ 7a10b7a3a7b - ≥ 6a6b6a6a6b\ . The string /8a8b8a8a8b\ is placed in the first position because of its first verse, composed by eight syllables. The string /6a6b6a6a6b\ is placed in the last position because of its first verse, composed by six syllables. Finally, the remaining two strings are placed in second and third position because of their first verse (seven syllables). Moreover, /7a10b7a7a7b\ precedes /7a10b7a3a7b\ because of its fourth verse, composed by seven syllables.

This way of cataloguing brings advantages as well as disadvantages. From one side, the catalogue is fundamental for every scholar who is willing to approach the study of the medieval Occitan poetry, since it supplies a complete overview of all the schemes used by the troubadours. The *Répertoire* is an extremely powerful tool when we need more information about a specific song as well as a specific metrical pattern. From the other side, it lacks of synthesis. In fact, thanks to his method, Frank lists 885 different metrical schemes used by the troubadours; approximately one metrical scheme every three songs.

Obviously, this is a descriptive method. The reason of the analytical nature of the *Répertoire* is likely to be found in two different reasons, one concerning Frank's purposes and the other concerning the technological tools at his disposal. It is also possible for the two explanations to be interconnected.

First, when Frank arranged the catalogue, he did not want to make any synthesis of the data: on the contrary, his goal was specifically to describe as many metrical schemes as possible.

Livrer ces matériaux au public savant nous a paru, en effet, plus urgent que lui soumettre la doctrine que nous en avons dégagée. Elle s'en dégage d'ailleurs,

¹ Frank (1953–1957). Cf. also Beltrami and Vatteroni (1988, 1994).

en grande partie, d'elle-même, *et de la seule façon légitime en bonne méthode cartésienne : de l'inventaire exhaustif des phénomènes.*²

Thus, it is not surprising that Frank's catalogue reflects his objectives.

Nonetheless, we could also hypothesize that the choice of his goals was influenced by the lack of tools at his disposal in the early fifties. In that period, all he could wish for his catalogue was to be published on a printed form. We do not know whether—at the beginning of the third millenary, in the age of computers and digitalised information—he would have hoped for the same publishing support. In fact, a wise use of the new technologies could potentially allow us to exploit better all the information included in the catalogue.

Here I aim to illustrate the potentialities of a digitalised edition of Frank's *Répertoire* as an example of how new technologies could improve the understanding and the analysis of existing data.

Lacks and Limits of Frank's Approach

There are no doubts that the *Répertoire* is an essential tool for every scholar working on the Occitan medieval songs. Nonetheless, it gives all but a synthetic overview of the phenomenon taken into account. In this section, I will highlight some of its main limitations, which cause some troubles to the researchers. In particular, I will exploit the following issues: 1) is the complex interaction between rhyme schemes and syllabic schemes in Occitan songs adequately investigated in Frank's catalogue? 2) Should we treat the internal rhymes as normal rhymes—as Frank did—or shall we consider them as detached from the rhymes at the end of the verse? 3) On a macroscopic level, when should we consider two stanzas as related and when—on the contrary—as following two different rhythmic patterns? Finally, 4) how shall we consider masculine and feminine rhymes? Should we treat them as different types of rhymes, or as two variations of the same metrical family?

In general, Frank's method of analysis of the Occitan literature is based on an analytic description of the different issues above mentioned, possibly as a consequence of the material support used by the scholar. Therefore it is natural to question whether the use of a more syntetic support would be beneficial to extract more information from Frank's data about the metrical schemes used by the troubadours. Finally, the question I would like to answer at the end of this paper is: is a printed edition the best method we know, in order to exploit the data contained in the *Répertoire*? Since the answer is negative, the following questions will be: how can we turn it into a synthetic tool? How can we extract more information

² Frank (1953–1957: ix). The authors reaffirms then that he aimed to provide «l'inventaire détaillé de tous les éléments métriques de l'ancienne poésie provençale» (Ibid.). In both cases, the emphasis is mine.

about the metrical schemes used by the troubadours, starting from the data collected by Frank?

Interaction between Rhyme Scheme and Syllabic Scheme

To answer our questions on the limits of the *Repertoire*, I will first analyse the well-known *pastorela* composed by Marcabru: *L'autrer jost'una sebissa*. Its metrical scheme is the following:³

{a} Marcabru, *L'autrer jost'una sebissa*

7' 7' 7' 7' 7' 7' 7'

a a a b a a b

(Frank 51.5; BdT 293.30; Gaunt et al. 2000: 375)

Thanks to the identity of its rhyme scheme with the one of *Ab nou cor et ab nou talen*, Frank places properly both the songs {a} and {b} under the same entry (n. 51) in his catalogue.

{b} Raimbaut d'Aurenga, *Ab nou cor et ab nou talen*

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

a a a b a a b

(Frank 51.1; BdT 389.1; Milone 1993: 166)

Nevertheless, we already know that, when the correspondence is not complete, Frank places the songs under different entries. In particular, we could find, under the entry n. 54, the following rhyme scheme, where the last rhyme is *c* instead of *b*:

{c} Marcabru, *A la fontana del vergier*

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

a a a b a a c

(Frank 54.1; BdT 293.1; Gaunt et al. 2000: 40)

There is no doubt that {a} and {c} are related. They belong to the same troubadour (Marcabru), and they are both among the oldest representations known

³ All the quotation of the troubadours' songs, included the *incipit*, are taken from the editions cited in the references.

of the genre of the *pastorela*, which we commonly hypothesize to be invented (or, at least, adapted in Occitan language) by Marcabru himself.⁴

Thus, the link between {a} and {c} (and consequently between {c} and {b}) gets lost in the *Répertoire*. Nonetheless, since we find all these songs at page 44 of the catalogue, it would be still not impossible, for the scholar, to recognise at a glance the metrical similarities among the three patterns. But what happens when, instead of the last rhyme, the transformation affects the second one?

{d} Bernart de Ventadorn, *Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn*

10 10' 10 10' 10 10 10'

a b a b a a b

(Frank 215.1; BdT 70.12; Appel 1915: 67)

The scheme of {d} differs from the one of {a} and {b}—in addition to the length of the verses—because of its second rhyme, which is *b* instead of *a*. For this only reason, we find it at the entry n. 215 of the *Répertoire*—more than 150 entries after {a}!

Two more observations will complete the example. First, a hypothetical stanza {d¹} would have been placed at the same entry even if composed by verses of the same length than {b}. Second, the melody of {b} likely made a break after the fourth verse, as we can assume from the rhyme scheme as well as from the syntax of the song.⁵ Since this kind of break was very common among the courtly songs, it is far from impossible to imagine a hypothetical song {d¹} to carry the same melodic pause.

{d¹} Hypothetical stanza

8 8 8 8 8 8 8

a b a b a a b

(Frank *215)

Therefore, for the reader of a printed index, such as the *Répertoire*, there would be no chances to find a connection between {b} and {d¹}, which—on the contrary—obviously would be metrically, melodically and rhythmically related.

A second example will definitively clarify the issue.

⁴ However, is to remember that the definition of *A la fontana del vergier* as a *pastorela* is controversial. Cf. at least Hatcher (1964), Pirot (1973) and Cholakian (1987).

⁵ Cf., for instance, the first stanza, as published by its last editor: «Ab nou cor et ab nou talen, | ab nou saber et ab nou sen | et ab nou bel captenemen, | voill un bon nou vers comensar: | e qui mos bos nous motz enten, | ben er plus nous a son viven | que miels s'en deu renovar» (Milone 1993: 166).

It is well known, among the scholars, that the songs {e} and {f} are linked. In particular, we suppose nowadays that—when composing his text—Peire Vidal was aware of the existence of Folquet’s *Greufeira nuills hom faillensa*. Indeed, he borrowed from it some concepts, some key words as well as the same metrical scheme, in order to make a sort of intertextual dialogue with the troubadour coming from Marseilles.⁶

{e} Folquet de Marselha, *Greufeira nuills hom faillensa*

7' 7 7 7' 7' 7 7 7' 7'
a b b a a b b a a

(Frank 477.1; BdT 155.10; Squillacioti 1999: 300)

{f} Peire Vidal, *Pus tornatz sui em Proensa*

7' 7 7 7' 7 7 7 7 7
a b b a c d d c c

(Frank 627.6; BdT 364.37; Avelle 1960: II,361)

Because of the difference among the last five rhymes, in the *Répertoire* the two songs are placed very far one from the other. However, on closer inspection, their metrical schemes are less distant than we suppose.

We are lucky enough to own both the transcriptions of their melodies. Because of both the syntax and the rhythm, we do suppose that the melodies of these songs—like the one of {b}—made a break after the fourth verse.⁷ Therefore, it would be reasonable to consider the metrical scheme of {f} as identical to the one of {e}; in order to do this, the next and last step should be to realise that, after the break, Peire Vidal changed his rhymes.

In other words, we will recognise much better the existing similarities between the two patterns if we would describe {f} as follows:

{f¹} Peire Vidal, *Pus tornatz sui em Proensa*

7' 7 7 7' 7 7 7 7 7
a b b a a² b² b² a² a²

(Frank 627.6; BdT 364.37; Avelle 1960: II,361)

⁶ A detailed discussion, with bibliographical references, can be found in Valenti (2014), § 7.2.3.

⁷ Cf. Sesini (1942: 130); Gennrich (1965: 84 n. 81); Fernández de la Cuesta and Lafont (1979: 198 e 357); Werf (1984: 87*). The melismata placed just before the end of each fourth verse seem to validate the hypothesis.

Thus, the two cases considered until now indicate that sometimes Frank's way of cataloguing songs results in placing clearly connected poems in very distant entries in the *Repertoire*.

Internal Rhymes

This is Frank's viewpoint about the issue concerning the internal rhymes.

Sans entrer ici dans les détails de la discussion autour des «rimes intérieures» [...], nous pensons que le seul moyen utilisable dans un classement méthodique est de considérer comme vers chaque suite de syllabes terminée par une rime. Il n'existe, pour nous, ni rime sans vers ni vers sans rime (Frank 1953–1957: xxx).

First, it should be remarked that Frank's method was undoubtedly the most efficient at his disposal. Being the scholar compelled to give account—on a written form—of the metrical schemes of the courtly songs, he chose to eliminate all ambiguities, and to differentiate all types of rhyme. Nonetheless, he was also perfectly aware that—doing so—there would have been «le seul inconvénient [...] de séparer ainsi deux compositions à deux structures identiques mais dont l'une présenterait, par exemple, une rime intérieure à un endroit de la strophe ou l'autre n'en aurait point» (ibid.). Exactly to avoid this problem, he presented in apparatus the metrical scheme of the «strophes amphibes» without any notation of internal rhymes.⁸

His choice is perfectly reasonable, and possibly the only logical one for his purposes to classify as many metrical schemes as possible. However, not always redundancy is the best way to describe the reality. In the following example, I will present a case in which the method used by Frank is not that remunerative, because it creates some misunderstanding in the reader's mind.

{g} Cerverí de Girona, *Si per amar leyalmen ab amor*

4 6 10 10 2 2 3 3 10 10 10

a b c c d d e b a f a

(Frank 823.1; BdT 434a.61; Riquer 1947: 138)

⁸ The procedure just described was adopted with only two recurring patterns: 10-syllables verses (with internal rhyme at the caesura) and 8-syllables verses (with internal rhyme after the fifth or third syllable). In all other cases, Frank did not report any alternative metrical scheme in the apparatus.

Frank places the song *Si per amar leyalmen ab amor* at page 170 of his *Répertoire* (entry n. 823). Still, another version of the same text is listed in the apparatus at page 133, under the following metrical scheme:

{g²} Cerverí de Girona, *Si per amar leyalmen ab amor*
 10 10 10 10 10 10 10
 a b b a c d c
 (Frank 611; BdT 434a.61; Riquer 1947: 138)

It does not require long time to understand that {g²} was the melodic pattern used by Cerverí when playing his song. Indeed, compared to the other courtly songs, {g} has an unusual number of verses per stanza (eleven), as well as an unusual number of syllables per verses (two, three, four and five). On the contrary, {g²} reflects perfectly the Occitan standards, in terms of both the number of verses per stanza and the syllables per verse.⁹ Furthermore, at the entry n. 611 of Frank's catalogue (the same as {g²}), we find also the following song:

{h} Guiraut Riquier, *Cristias vey perilhar*
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
 a b b a c d c
 (Frank 611.1; BdT 248.87; Longobardi 1982: 71)

The intertextual relationship between these two texts are well known.¹⁰ Of course, in the 14th century as well as nowadays, a listener/reader could recognise the poetic dialogue between two troubadours only on condition that he could also recognise the identity of the two metrical and melodic patterns. This is why we should suppose that the melodic pattern of *Si per amar* was—from the beginning—the one as shown in {g²}, with long verses and internal rhymes, and not as in {g}, with short verses. There is no need, in similar cases, to duplicate the information, and to show the reader both metrical patterns. While composing the text, Cerverí had in mind the melody as described in {g²}, and his public listened it through the same melodic scheme. Based on these observations, it is extremely plausible that the first scheme listed in Frank's catalogue never existed.

⁹ On the number of stanzas, verses and syllables in the troubadours' songs, cf. Valenti (2009).

¹⁰ Indeed, in addition to the same metrical structure, the two poems have also two rhymes in common (-ar, -ors).

Length of the Stanzas

The third matter concerns the length of the stanzas. In particular, I would like to enlighten some of the main issues concerning the following complex question: when are two stanzas different one from the other, and when can we consider them as variations of the same rhythmical pattern?

In some cases, the answer is easy to find.

{i} Bernart and Peirol, *Peirol, cum avetz tant estat*
 8 8 8 8 8 8 8
 a b b a c c a

(Frank 548.6; BdT 70.32; Marshall 1987: 45)

{l} Pons de Capduelh, *Tuit disen qel temps de pascor*
 8 8 8 8 8 8 8 10' 10'
 a b b a c c a d d

(Frank 554.5; BdT 375.25; Napolski 1879: 75)

The rhyme scheme and the metrical scheme of the two songs are identical. Both are composed by 8-syllables verses, and both—as we deduce from the rhyme scheme as well as from the syntactic flow—had a melodic break after the fourth verse. The only difference is the presence of two additional verses in {l}. We do not know if the Bernart mentioned in the *tenso* was Bernart de Ventadorn.¹¹ Still, it is easy to imagine that Pons exploited the metrical scheme of that poem (which, eventually, Pons supposed to belong to the poet from Ventadour, one of the most known and most appreciated troubadours of his time), modifying it with the insertion of a *coda*, which not necessarily affected the first part of the melody. When hearing Pons' song, the listeners were able to recognise not only the pattern of the *tenso*, but also a new variation on it. This method was quite common among the troubadours.¹² Although we know that these melodic repetitions were rarely random, the way Frank's catalogue is organised does not allow us to find most of them.

Nonetheless, there are cases more intricate. For instance, it is possible to verify—among the troubadours' songs—a large amount of stanzas composed by 6-syllables verses. The number of verses per stanza is widely variable, though. Starting from a classical Occitan stanza, composed by eight verses (i.e. the one of Bertran de Born, below mentioned), we could progressively get to longer and longer strophes, until we reach a stanza composed by nineteen verses.

¹¹ Appel, for instance, does not publish this poem in his edition.

¹² On this topic, Gruber (1983) and Meneghetti (1984) are fundamental.

Bertran de Born, *Gent part nostre reis liouranda*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

Bernart de Ventadorn, *Pois preyatx me, senhor*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

Peire Vidal, *Estat ai gran sazo*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

[...]

Giraut de Bornelh, *De chantar ab deport*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

The only possible way to determine whether all these type of stanzas are related (or not), is to look at their rhyme patterns. In particular, I will focus on the first three songs.

{m} Bertran de Born, *Gent part nostre reis liouranda*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

a b b a c c d d

(Frank 577.297; BdT 80.18; Gouiran 1985: II,817)

{n} Bernart de Ventadorn, *Pois preyatx me, senhor*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

a b a b a b a b b

(Frank 235.4; BdT 70.36; Appel 1915: 204)

{o} Peire Vidal, *Estat ai gran sazo*

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

a b b a c c d d e e

(Frank 592.68; BdT 364.21; Avallé 1960: 91)

Despite the number of syllables per verse is the same in all cases, and the number of verses per stanza is not that different from one song to the other, we can notice that {m} and {n} are not metrically related, while {m} and {o} are. Not only the rhyme pattern of {n} is very far from the one of {m}, but also it suggests the possibility of a melodic break after the sixth verse, while both {m} and {o} had it for sure after the fourth.¹³ Indeed, the analysis of {m} and {o} shows that the two

¹³ Cf. also Fernández de la Cuesta and Lafont (1979: 143).

schemes are very close, the latter being the same as the former, with an additional couplet at its end.

Of course, the metrical similarity is not sufficient to proof intertextual dialogue between two texts. Still, the identification of new metrical correspondences should be the point of departure for a scholar willing to examine the songs in depth, searching for textual elements who could eventually confirm the metrical connections. In order to make this possible, it is highly wished an innovative approach to Frank's *Répertoire*, which could allow seeing the 'old' data from a new perspective.

Masculine and Feminine Rhymes

In his catalogue, Frank always underlines the difference between masculine and feminine rhymes. He treats them as separate rhymes, so the masculine heptasyllable is different from the feminine heptasyllable (while they have in common the position of the strong accent) and the feminine heptasyllable is different from the masculine octonary (while they have in common the total number of syllables). Since the entries are listed by rhyme scheme—the length of the verses as well as the type of their stresses being completely irrelevant—we do not know how significant this difference was, in Frank's mind. However, what we do know are all the metrical acquisitions of the last 50 years, and we are nowadays able to compare Frank's procedure of classification with them.

The standard metrical rules show—among other—that two verses are related when the strong accent falls at the same place, i.e. in the same metrical position. There is no need to imagine that these laws, were not valid for the troubadours. In other terms, we should postulate that in the Occitan Medieval poems, a feminine heptasyllable was different from a masculine octonary, while—metrically speaking—a feminine heptasyllable was identical to a masculine heptasyllable.

Two additional elements confirm the hypothesis.

First, the majority of the courtly songs were composed by different metres, instead than one (the most common sample is the recurring combination of 8- and 10-syllable verses in the same stanza). When feminine verses are present, they appear mostly in alternation with their masculine counterpart. In other words, looking into the Occitan metrical corpus we find much more stanzas composed by masculine and feminine heptasyllables, than stanzas composed by feminine heptasyllables and masculine octosyllables. Likely, this is an indication that, also at Middle Ages, feminine and masculine verses were identified cognitively as the two sides of the same coin, i.e. two variations of the same verse.

The second clue is to be searched in the *Leys d'Amor*, a sort of guide for troubadours composed at Toulouse in the 14th century, i.e. at the very end of the experience of the *trobar*. The *Leys* forbid the use of nine-syllable lines for aesthetic reasons: «e devetz saber que lunhs bordos no deu esser de.ix. sillabas quar non ha bela cazensa» (Gatien-Arnoult 1841-1843: I,102). At a deep insight, what type of verses do we not find in the Occitan corpus? We do not find both, nine-syllable verses with masculine or feminine rhymes, which definitively means that—in the troubadours' minds, as well as in the minds of the authors of the *Leys*—masculine and feminine verses were actually considered to be part of the same metre.

A Glance at the Future

From all the facts here presented, it clearly emerges that the *Répertoire* is an excellent tool in terms of description of metrical phenomena but—at least in his current paper version—it lacks of synthesis and does not allow the reader to exploit at best all its data.

Furthermore, another negative effect is that the current paper version of the *Répertoire* strengthens the idea that the variation among the metrical patterns used by the troubadours was greater than the one occurred in reality. Even an expert poet and intellectual like Jacques Roubaud fell in the trap of «one metrical scheme every three song», which is definitively an untrue consequence of the way the data are shown.

Une [*sic*] trait assez extraordinaire de l'expérience formelle des Troubadours est la très grande variété des dispositions de rimes (formules de rimes) qu'il[s] ont proposées. Le *Répertoire en recense près de 900 pour environ 2500 textes*. C'est énorme. Les Trouvères parviennent à un résultat assez voisin.¹⁴

We could avoid all these problems with a digitalised edition of the *Répertoire*. Indeed, thanks to the possibility to overlap many criteria of research, the scholars would benefit immensely of the new system of consultation.

For instance, we can imagine how the exploitation of a database containing all the data already collected in Frank's catalogue might be done. Thanks to its digitalised nature, the new database would be consulted by means of a series of criteria, such as: «percentage/position of common rhymes among two or more stanzas»; «presence of *codas* in the metrical schemes»; «inclusion/exclusion of masculine and/or feminine rhymes in one or more verses» etc. This kind of multi-factor research will allow the metricists, as well as the philologists and the musicologists, to cross multiple criteria in order to be more precise in their researches.

There is no doubt that this system would increase significantly our chances to find new relationships and new recurring metrical patterns hidden in the Occitan courtly songs, as well as to extend our knowledge about the way metrics, rhythm and also music were conceived by the troubadours. This is the main and fundamental reason why the academic world should seriously take into consideration the funding of a new, digitalised edition of that magnificent tool, which is the *Répertoire*.

Abbreviations and References

Abbreviations

Frank = Frank, I. (1953–1957). *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours*. 2 vols. Paris: Champion.

¹⁴ Roubaud (2007). The emphasis is mine.

BdT = Pillet, A. & Carstens, H. (1933), *Bibliographie der Troubadours*. Halle: Niemeyer.

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