Poem as Score

Finding Melodies for Unnotated Troubadour Songs

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INTRODUCTION

Though the intricate and colourful poems of the troubadours were intended to be heard in song, fewer than ten percent of the twenty-five hundred or so surviving texts are accompanied in manuscript by notated music (Bonner 1972, 85–86; Bruckner, Shephard, and White 1995, xiii). In the absence of a notated melody, the primary performance practice currently accepted as historically authentic is to create a *contrafact* by borrowing the melody of another song with the same poetic structure. The troubadours themselves practised contrafacture, and examples of original contrafacts survive in manuscript (van der Werf and Bond 1984, 72–75).[1] But the troubadours were also masters of versification, and as many as 1,200 of their poems contain unique metrical schemes for which no exact contrafact exists (Stevens 1986, 32). The only way to perform such songs to an original troubadour melody is to alter that melody to fit the poem. Nonetheless, most performers of troubadour song consider contrafacture to be the only way to retain an element of historical truth in their performance of unnotated songs and thus are limited in their performance to only a fraction of the repertoire. The prospect of composing or commissioning new music for poems lacking notated melodies is met with caution:

> ... we are an "early-music" group interested in historically informed performance, and whilst there are many unknowns in the field of medieval music-making, our approach is to stick within the bounds of known practice as far as possible. To this end we would not consider working with a contemporary composer or setting medieval texts to contemporary music. (Brooks 2009)

This dependency upon notated melody is not an accurate reflection of the resources available to performers, even those committed to the pursuit of

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1 The CD liner notes to *"The Sweet Look and Loving Manner": Trobairitz Love Lyrics and Chansons De Femme from Medieval France* (Wishart 1993, 2) provide further evidence of this, as well as sources for the melodies used as contrafacts on the CD itself.

historical authenticity. A closer examination of the troubadour repertoire in the context of medieval and modern notions of the musicality of language demonstrates that troubadour poems themselves contain musical information and constitute a surviving musical source even in the absence of notated music. By emulating the troubadours' own process of *trobar* (the act of creating songs), it becomes possible to read these poems as scores and re-create a lost repertoire through the pursuit not of original notes and rhythms but rather of the original relationship between composer, performer, poem, and song.

THE TROUBADOUR REPERTOIRE: POEM AS SONG

In order to understand how a troubadour poem can be a source of useable musical information, a measure of familiarity is needed with the troubadour song repertoire and social context in which *trobar* took place. The troubadours were nobly born poet-musicians who flourished in medieval Occitania in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The song tradition launched by Guillem de Peiteus (1071–1127) spread northward with the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, gradually exerting influence throughout Europe, developing sister traditions in what is now northern France (trouvères) and Germany (minnesingers).[2] Mimicking the rise and fall of Old Occitan as the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean, troubadour song reached its height in the late twelfth century, gradually declined through the thirteenth, and evolved into a fixed literary art in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the commissioning of the first *chansonniers*.[3]

The troubadours are best known today for birthing chivalry and *fin'amor* (courtly love), but in reality their subject matter ranged from shrewd politics to eroticism to bawdy comedy. These themes were manifested in a variety of song forms that served many social functions beyond entertainment; *trobar* was also a dynamic form of communication. Content aside, however, versification (the process of weaving of intricate webs of linguistic structure according to specific rules) was the true cornerstone of the troubadours' art. Through subtle, complex manipulations of metrical factors like the number of syllables per line, masculine and feminine endings, placement of caesuras within lines, number of lines per stanza, rhyme scheme at the level of the stanza and the song, and depth and variety of rhyme sounds, the troubadours achieved over a thousand similar but structurally unique poetic forms, hundreds of which appear only once in the manuscripts (Chambers 1995, 105).

What we know of troubadour melody comes primarily from the *chansonniers*, which are already editions themselves, irrevocably shaped by changes in

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2 Amelia E. Van Vleck (1995, 21) provides a brief overview of the rise of the troubadour song tradition and clarifies that Guillem de Peiteus is one of many surviving forms of the name of the first known troubadour; other titles include Guillem IX (ninth Duke of Acquitaine) and Guilhem VII (seventh count of Poitiers).

3 Occitan was one of the principal poetic and political languages of Europe from about 1100 to 1400 (Zumthor 1995, 11). For information on the dating of the elaborate medieval songbooks (*chansonniers*) in which troubadour songs and biographies were preserved, see William D. Paden (1995, 308). William Burgwinkle's (1999) chapter is also useful for understanding the role of the *chansonniers* in medieval literary culture.

aesthetic and perception between the time when the songs were conceived and when they were recorded in manuscript (Switten 1995, 3). In appearance, the music resembles plainchant; melodic motion is mostly stepwise, interspersed with less frequent movement by thirds and the occasional larger interval, the repetition of one pitch for several syllables is common, and most melodies remain within the range of an octave (van der Werf 1995, 133–134). Rhythmic content is sparse; though *musica mensurabilis* (implying the ability to notate measured rhythm) dates to the thirteenth century, the *chansonniers* overwhelmingly stick to older, nonmensural notation, leaving the modern performer with a degree of freedom that has sparked fierce scholarly debate for over a century (Haines 2004a, 5).[4] Performers' solutions have ranged from modal rhythm to declamatory rhythm and isosyllabism, each with their own historical problems and all of which are still in practice today.[5] The extent to which the melodies reflect the structure and meaning of their poems is also under debate. Some scholars claim to identify a correspondence between poetic structure and melodic structure, while others believe most melodies were through-composed or structured independently from the poem, though possibly to the same principles of proportion (Switten 1998, 15; van der Werf 1995, 139–146).

To appreciate the troubadour's art of *trobar*, which translates as literally "to find" but had many nuances of meaning, which included the acts of composing, singing, and sending a song, it is important to recognise the orality of Old Occitan culture in comparison to our own. Reading and writing were not the effortless acts they are today, and few troubadours would have known how to notate their own melodies. In this context, it is likely that the conception and transmission of troubadour songs were likely oral and inherently collaborative processes. Hendrik van der Werf paints a picture of *trobar* as "remembered improvisation" which took place while singing out loud, without the aid of writing tools, and relied strongly upon familiarity with existing poems and melodies.[6] Collaboration was also a prominent factor in *trobar*. As we have already seen, the *chansonniers* contain numerous contrafacts, which indicate that the troubadours willingly borrowed each other's melodic material. Many song texts include instructions to take them to another troubadour or trobairitz who is called upon to respond to or improve upon the original, while certain song forms like the *tenso* and the *partimen* (debate songs) are inherently collaborative.[7] Transmission was also a collaborative process; after a song was "found," it was passed on to others by rote until it was eventually recorded or forgotten (van der Werf and Bond 1984, 3–4). The *chansonniers* themselves

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4   Switten (1995, 5) believes that scribal avoidance of the new mensural system indicates that it was not considered appropriate for the songs they were notating.

5   John E. Stevens (1986) provides an overview of rhythmic performance practices. The key problem with modal theory is its assumption of regular scansion, which most romance languages do not display (494).

6   Van der Werf (1995, 146) also sees a possible reflection of the troubadours' compositional process in that of musically illiterate popular musicians today.

7   Press (1971, 35) provides an example: the final verses of the song "No sap chanter qui so non di," by Jaufre Rudel, instruct a messenger to learn the song and faithfully transmit it to several distant lords who are invited to make their own contributions. For an overview of the many troubadour song forms, see Bonner (1972, 20–22).

reflect the collective influence of generations of performers, to which is added the scribes' own contributions in the form of *razos* (short, colourful biographies of the troubadours), orthographic variation, and simple copying errors.[8] All of these factors suggest that for the troubadours, performance and writing were creative continuations of *trobar*, welcoming and perhaps even dependent upon additional development through intentional and unintentional variation.

Troubadour song reception and performance practice has undergone many transformations since the repertoire first attracted scholarly interest in the sixteenth century.[9] There are too many approaches to list in full here; they range from Charles Burney's 1782 transcription of a troubadour melody in modern notation with 4/4 meter, figured bass, and an English translation in his 1782 *General History of Music*, to the 1970s trend of seeking inspiration in the folk music of modern Occitania and the Middle East, to the *Gothic Voices'* unaccompanied, isosyllabic sound world modelled after the English sacred choral style of singing plainchant, to ensembles like *Duo Trobairitz* and *Sinfonye* who depend on contrafacture to explore unnotated repertoires (Haines 2004a, 90–91, 246–248).[10] In distinct contrast to these examples is the work of Brice Duisit (2003), who recorded the songs of Duke Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine (for which no notated melodies survive) accompanying himself on the *vièle à archet* while declaiming the texts in a manner closer to speech than song.

With the exception of Duisit, most performers of troubadour song who self-identify as historically informed are limited in their explorations by the availability of notated melody (whether original or contrafact), a dependence that contradicts the frequently cited desire to derive musical interpretation from the text. This contradiction between vision and approach is mirrored in the work of Old Occitan scholars who present troubadour song primarily in silent written form even while asserting that the songs were meant for live aural reception. Modern editors perpetuate this dichotomy through one of two approaches: in one the words are paramount, while melodies are attached as accessories or eliminated; in the other the music is paramount, and only the first stanza of text is emphasised while subsequent stanzas are ignored. Margaret Switten (1995, 70) observes: "on the one hand, then, we have a concept proposing the text as the song, on the other a concept proposing text and music together, but only part of the text."

The troubadours would have found this compartmentalised approach to their songs counterintuitive. Medieval treatises indicate that the linguistic sounds and poetic structure of troubadour songs were once equally or more musically charged than their melodies; in the Middle Ages a song consisted of words and music, but the relationship between the two was more mathematical

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8   Amelia Van Vlecak (1991, 26–27) addresses the multiplicity of versions (and variation between versions) of songs in the *chansonniers*, arguing that it demonstrates the troubadours and their audiences had a very "distinctly unmodern" approach to transmission and preservation of their songs.

9   Haines (2004a) offers a comprehensive overview of the history of troubadour song performance practice, arguing that despite the common claim that medieval music was rescued from oblivion at the turn of the twentieth century, the troubadour repertoire was never really laid to rest.

10 David Monrow and the Early Music Consort of London's (1991) CD *Music of the Crusades* is a good example of the Middle Eastern folk idea in practice.

than conceptual. In other words, the melody of a troubadour song was more likely to reflect the rhyme scheme and syllable count of the poem than to paint the meaning of the words. The word *musica* could indicate music in the modern sense, but it also encompassed speech sounds, acoustics, the balance of gesture, and the movement of the spheres (Stevens 1986, 25). To be musical a song had to possess *armonia*, or harmoniousness, but this referred to numerical structure and proportion rather than functional Western harmony; according to the Occitan treatise *Las Leys d'Amors* (1328–1337), no composition could be considered harmonious "unless it is properly measured and set in rhyme, and unless it has a fixed number of syllables" (Stevens 1986, 24–25). The numerical *armonia* of stanzas, lines, and syllables existed independently, "as a numerical reality waiting to be incarnated, as it were, either as music or as poetry (verbal music) or both" (ibid., 499).

This distinction between spoken music and sung music appears in numerous medieval sources. *Las Leys d'Amors* describes a certain kind of melody which is formed from the rising and falling of the voice in reading according to word accent, rather than from pitches (Switten 1995, 85–86). Dante's (1996, II 5–7) analysis of the harmony of troubadour songs in *De vulgari Eloquentia* (1302–1305) is carried out entirely through a detailed discussion of artful versification, with no mention of notated music. In the following chapter, Dante undertakes to define what he means by *canzone* (song):

> 5 Furthermore, we must now discuss whether the word canzone should be used to refer to a composition made up of words arranged with due regard to harmony, or simply to a piece of music. To which I answer that a piece of music as such is never given the name canzone, but is rather called "sound"; or "tone", or "note", or "melody". For no player of a wind or keyboard or stringed instrument ever calls his melody a canzone, except when it is wedded to a real canzone; but those who harmonise words call their works canzoni, and even when we see such words written down on the page, in the absence of any performer, we call them canzoni.

> 6 And so it seems clear that the canzone is nothing else than the self-contained action of one who writes harmonious words to be set to music; and so I shall assert that not only the canzoni we are discussing here, but also ballate and sonnets and all arrangements of words, of whatever kind, that are based on harmony, whether in the vernacular or in the regulated language, should be called canzoni. (ibid., II 8:5–6)

In other words, a mere melody alone cannot be considered a song, while any arrangement of words based on harmony (which Dante previously defined as artful versification) can, even if it is only written on the page with no notated melody or performer present. In chapter seventeen of his *Micrologus* (written in the late 1020s) Guido d'Arezzo (1955) stated that a harmonious poem, sung to equally well-structured music, would produce a duet in which one melody was built of pitches, the other of linguistic structure: "Thus in verse we often see such concordant and mutually congruous lines that you wonder, as it were, at a certain harmony of language. And if music were added to this, with a similar internal congruity, you would be doubly charmed by a twofold melody." Clearly, the troubadours' carefully crafted poems were songs in their

own right, musical because of, not in spite of, their texts, enhanced by notated melody but not dependent upon it.

The inherent musicality of language further enhances this picture of medieval poem as musical entity. Any language consists of sounds—subtle rhythms, micromelodic contours, vowels, and consonants—which can be arranged in patterns just as pitches and note values can be arranged in a melody. J. Campbell-McInnes (1939, 36) once said, "tones in speech are sounds in order, or in disorder, and that is all that music is." The musical qualities of Old Occitan in particular are indicated in part by its status as an international poetic language. Troubadour Raimon Vidal's twelfth-century treatise *Razos de trobar*, written to educate inept foreign poets in the proper use of Old Occitan, defends the language's suitability for verse (Marshall 1972, lxxix). From what scholars have discerned of its pronunciation, Old Occitan combined the best expressive sounds and qualities of the various languages it encompassed as a *koine*: abundance of rhyme alongside compact sentence structure, crisp consonants alongside smooth elision, bright, purely differentiated vowels alongside drawling diphthongs and triphthongs, all contributing to a linguistic energy John Potter (1992, 313) described as constant motion "at the level of the syllable." In the hands of wordsmiths obsessed with versification, this palette of sounds was a recipe for intentional linguistic music.

Today's early music performers strive to begin their interpretations of medieval secular song from the text but are predisposed through convention to favour the written music. Yet once we realise that musical information is contained in the texts themselves, whose poetic structures were so carefully preserved, in comparison to their melodies, the troubadour repertoire changes dramatically. Where once there were surviving musical sources for only ten percent of the songs, there is now a surviving musical source for every surviving poem. We lack only a method of interpretation, of learning how to read the manuscripts as a kind of medieval musical score.

READING THE TROUBADOUR POEM AS SCORE

A troubadour poem, whether facsimile or modern edition, is not a score in the way that scores have come to be regarded since the twentieth century: you cannot hear the tune in your head during silent analysis, or sight-read it easily in real time, or use it, in the words of John Butt (2002, 106), "as a transparent recipe for performance, one that is indeed almost interchangeable with performance itself." But a troubadour poem *is* a score inasmuch as it is a vessel for musical information and inspiration, which through the development of the performer's own personal reading can lead to a very real interpretation/re-creation of the song. In order to achieve this kind of reading, certain circumstances must be met from the outset.

The performer must work in the original language. Old Occitan's musical value is inevitably lost through poetic translation, which tends to preserve nuance of meaning at the expense of rhyme and meter or vice versa, but never both. Douglas R. Hofstadter (1997, 459) attributes translators' willingness to relinquish the
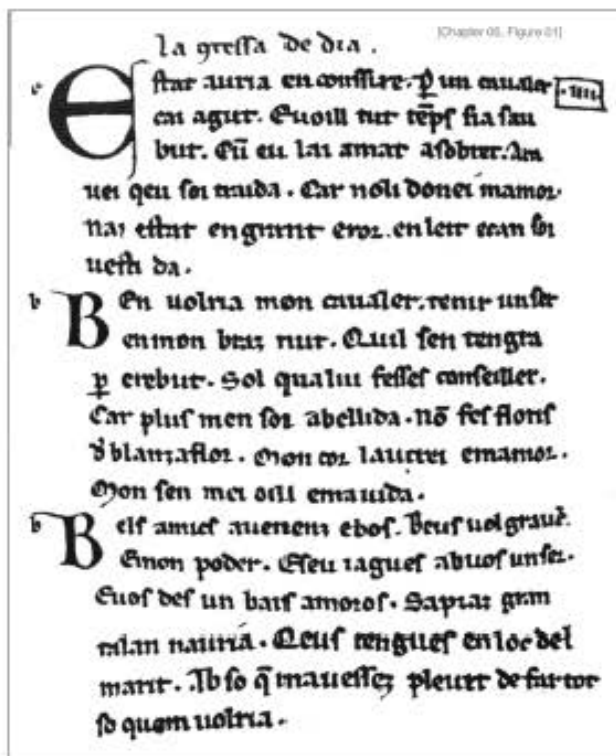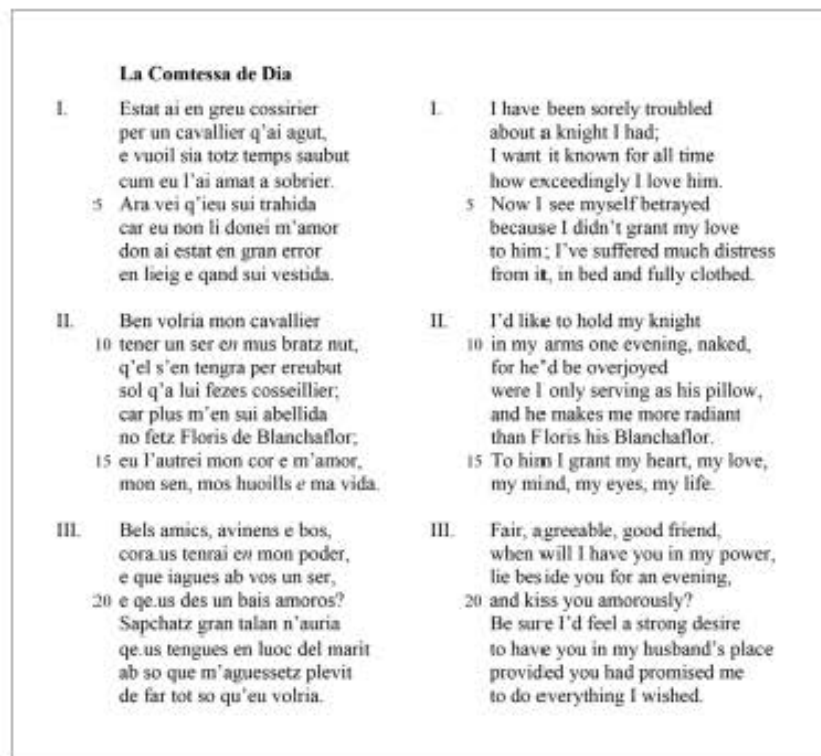
Fig. 1

La Comtessa de Dia

I. Estat ai en greu cossirier
per un cavallier q'ai agut,
e vuoil sia totz temps saubut
cum eu l'ai amat a sobrier.
5 Ara vei q'ieu sui trahida
car eu non li donei m'amor
don ai estat en gran error
en lieig e qand sui vestida.

II. Ben volria mon cavallier
10 tener un ser en mus bratz nut,
q'el s'en tengra per ereubut
sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier;
car plus m'en sui abellida
no fetz Floris de Blanchaflor;
15 eu l'autrei mon cor e m'amor,
mon sen, mos huoills e ma vida.

III. Bels amics, avinens e bos,
cora.us tenrai en mon poder,
e que iagues ab vos un ser,
20 e qe.us des un bais amoros?
Sapchatz gran talan n'auria
qe.us tengues en luoc del marit
ab so que m'aguessetz plevit
de far tot so qu'eu volria.

I. I have been sorely troubled
about a knight I had;
I want it known for all time
how exceedingly I love him.
5 Now I see myself betrayed
because I didn't grant my love
to him; I've suffered much distress
from it, in bed and fully clothed.

II. I'd like to hold my knight
10 in my arms one evening, naked,
for he'd be overjoyed
were I only serving as his pillow,
and he makes me more radiant
than Floris his Blanchaflor.
15 To him I grant my heart, my love,
my mind, my eyes, my life.

III. Fair, agreeable, good friend,
when will I have you in my power,
lie beside you for an evening,
20 and kiss you amorously?
Be sure I'd feel a strong desire
to have you in my husband's place
provided you had promised me
to do everything I wished.

Fig. 2

musical integrity of a text to a misguided perception that sophisticated readers are unconcerned with "musical frivolity." Yet this frivolity was the heart and soul of *trobar*, the full aesthetic effect of which is impossible to recreate in a modern Anglo-Saxon idiom (Press 1971, 1–2). In the words of Old Occitan scholar William Paden (1998, 7), "precisely because the art of the troubadours is a lyric art, it demands to be studied in the original language." The communication barrier thus imposed fails to diminish Old Occitan's musical value, and may actually bring us closer to the source; regardless of their native language or dialect, all troubadours (as well as anyone who independently performed, read or copied their songs) adopted Old Occitan in order to participate in *trobar*.[11] This parallels the experience of today's performers and audiences every time they choose to engage with music in a foreign language for the sake of its sound.

The performer must work out loud. The reason for this becomes immediately apparent when confronted with a facsimile of a *chansonnier*. Because medieval scribes recorded text and melody alike in run-on lines with minimal punctuation, breaking only between stanzas if at all, the versification is not visually apparent in the manuscript and the poem must be heard aloud before it can be recognised as a song. The truth of this can be seen in a comparison of three versions (facsimile, transcription, and translation) of the song "Estat ai en greu cossirier," attributed to the Comtessa di Dia, circa 1160.

The facsimile text [Fig. 1] appears as prose: the only structural markers are the decorative letters indicating the beginning of each stanza, the syllables cannot be counted because it is unclear where one line of text ends and another begins, and the rhyming words are jumbled within the verses so the rhyme scheme is not apparent, though you would hear the rhymes if you read the poem aloud. The modern transcription of the Old Occitan [Fig. 2, left column]

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11 The various languages Old Occitan encompassed as the art language of troubadour song included Catalan, Gascon, Spanish, French, Italian, and various dialects of Occitan itself (van Vleck 1995, 23).

organises the text to allow for visual analysis of its structure but still does not bring the performer in contact with the musical possibilities of the language sounds, which need to be heard aloud and felt in the mouth to be explored. The editor of a given modern edition also may have chosen to standardise the Old Occitan spellings during the transcription process, rendering it more accessible to the reader but eliminating potential musical variation for the performer who would use the poem as a score. Finally, the English translation [Fig. 2, right column] reveals meaning but dismantles the numerical proportions and therefore the medieval *armonia* of the original song.

If the written versions of troubadour songs cannot visually communicate precise musical material to the performer in the manner of a modern score, they can act as a blueprint for emulating the troubadours' own composition process. Recall that the Old Occitan *trobar*, "to find," takes the place of later centuries' more familiar verbs "to write" and "to compose" (Menocal 1982, 139). In comparison to these modern equivalents, *trobar* evokes a sense of mysticism, chance, and the pursuit and sharing of treasure. What role did the linguistic music of the poem—its rhymes, syllable count, verse structure, vowel sonorities, inflection—play in the quest for a transcendent melody? In search of a plausible answer to this question, I decided to emulate the act of *trobar* as I imagined it, first by committing the words of a troubadour song to memory (in lieu of having written them myself), then by "finding" a melody through notationless improvisation, repetition, and memorisation.[12] The idea: if the linguistic music of the spoken poem helped the troubadours to find their melodies, a modern performer might use the same material to guide the finding of new, yet historically relevant melodies, thus gaining musical access to the full gamut of the troubadour repertoire. What follows is a description of my own process of putting this idea into practice.

Centuries removed from the cultural context and language of the poems I selected for my work, the process of emulating *trobar* had to begin with achieving the greatest possible intimacy with the texts through study of the sound and meaning of the Old Occitan language. This was when the manuscripts of the poems most literally served as my scores, whose musical content in a modern sense could not be unlocked until the sounds of words were lifted off the page through spoken exploration. There are many available editions of the troubadour lyric corpus, which handle the original Old Occitan and the task of poetic translation differently depending on the manuscript source(s) and the values of the editor. As discussed earlier, all approaches to translation result in some compromise of the music and meaning of the poetry. My own translations sought to clarify the literal meaning of individual words, a necessary step toward achieving fluency with the texts and their sounds. Ironically, the process of translating Old Occitan brought me into contact with a plethora of other languages; the most thorough Old Occitan dictionaries are in German and French, and because even these do not account for all the orthographical

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12 Memorisation, a necessary element of performance and transmission in an oral literary culture, is referenced specifically in original troubadour texts (van Vleck 1991, 48–49).

variations in my texts, I constantly turned to outside dictionaries for additional comparison, particularly Spanish, Catalan, and Modern Occitan.[13] Direct translation of certain words and phrases proved impossible, so I listed multiple possibilities instead of selecting one. Although visually complex, this approach revealed nuances of meaning that published translations are forced to simplify for the sake of presentation. My word-for-word translations, by virtue of ignoring the rules of English grammar, also drew attention to the composers' manipulation of syntax to achieve certain metrical and sonorous effects, an aspect of linguistic music that is "corrected" in modern poetic translations.[14]

Old Occitan has many scholars but no native speakers, making the study of its pronunciation a more creative process than one would expect. What we know of the pronunciation, interestingly, has been reconstructed through analysis of the same musical content that was the essence of the troubadours' art; rhyme sounds and schemes, syllable counts and stress patterns, as well as orthographic variation, Latin etymology, and the sounds of sister languages like Old French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and Galician-Portuguese. Because language sounds alter gradually over time, it is impossible to reconstruct the precise pronunciation of Old Occitan or any language at a specific point in history. Instead, scholars attempt to reconstruct a palette of plausible sounds that could have been heard in society at the time (Wray 1992, 295). Though I was a newcomer to Old Occitan and medieval studies in general, I undertook to construct my own palette in this way, in order to fully experience the extent to which musicality and expressivity could influence the process.

I began by learning the basic vowel and consonant sounds recommended by existing authorities on Old Occitan pronunciation, according to the approximate date of each song.[15] From there, the process developed aspects of a detective game. As we have already seen, numerical patterns were the backbone of troubadour versification. Much of my time was spent hunting for these patterns, trying to identify the syllabic breakdown of individual words, the coordination of masculine versus feminine endings, and plausible, metrically exciting distributions of stresses. This hunt was complicated by orthographic variation; I could not simply trust my dictionaries and pronunciation guides, because troubadours and scribes alike exercised a considerable freedom to elide, omit, contract or otherwise manipulate sounds to serve the needs of versification and available parchment space (van der Werf and Bond 1984, 62).

This astonishing variability of spelling, which occurs not only between manuscripts and composers but also within individual songs, quickly became my biggest source of both frustration and creative musical freedom. The most common explanations for it are (1) most of the *chansonniers* were com-

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13 For Old Occitan dictionary resources, see Paden (1998). The most thorough contain approximately 20,000 entries. Jeffrey Gantz (2008) calls Modern Occitan "a wordsmith's delight" for its vast lexicon, which is comparable in size to English. Hill and Bergin's (1973) anthology of troubadour songs contains a complete glossary of the vocabulary that appears in the anthology, which is extremely helpful for the performer.

14 Because word stresses in Old Occitan vary according to syntax, manipulation of syntax was a way of achieving rhythmic tension and release (Switten 1998, 17).

15 According to Robert Taylor (1996, 111), certain Occitan vowels shifted significantly between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example [u] to [y], and tonic [o] to [u].

piled in countries outside of Occitania, generations after composition, by scribes who likely had only a distant understanding of Old Occitan, and (2) spelling and writing had not yet become codified to the extent they are now (Paden 1995, 308).[16] A compelling alternative explanation, and the source of my creative freedom, is that the spelling reflects the poet's intentional musical choice from within the rich variety of possible linguistic sounds, to be pronounced as written. According to Old Occitan scholar Robert Taylor, "Regional variants even occur within the same poem, and some poets seem to have used them at will as a means of enriching their fund of expressive words and sounds" (Taylor 1996, 104–105). Within the boundaries laid out for me by current experts and analysis of the songs' poetic structure, my actual execution of the pronunciation—how long to prolong the [rr], how slowly to move though the components of a triphthong, how long to linger on an ending [j]—reflected artistic choices that may always be under development. What sounds, within the plausible palette I had assembled, struck me as most musically charged? It is worth noting that this orthographic variation, and the creative musical freedom it inspired, is only accessible if the performer works from a facsimile or a literal transcription with no corrections by the editor; when reading poem as score, the choice of edition is just as significant as when studying a standard musical work.

I created working phonetic transcriptions and word-for-word translations [Fig. 3] of my pronunciation choices in IPA, to serve as a memory aid for me and guidance for future performers who might lack the necessary resources for thorough language study. Ironically, unless future performers are able to recognise the artistic subjectivity and experimentation that produced them, these transcriptions will help to "fix" the pronunciation of the songs I studied just as the *chansonniers* have fixed the content of the extant troubadour melodies for today's historically informed musicians. Nevertheless, the transcription process itself was invaluable as a vehicle for developing and refining my ability to read and interpret the linguistic music contained in the poems.

After studying the language and structure of the poems in such depth, during the course of which I committed the texts to memory, I was ready for the actual process of *trobar*. I began by reciting the lyrics repeatedly aloud, immersing myself in their sound and flow. As my spoken interpretation developed, I repeated increasingly smaller fragments of poetry (down to a single word, sometimes even a single syllable), listening to and heightening the rhythmic, melodic and dynamic contours that emerged. In this way I began to identify speech-derived, approximate melodic gestures for those fragments of text. These gestures then guided me in improvising increasingly pitch-specific melodic phrases, during which I maintained a speechlike vocal production to keep the subtle linguistic-melodic nuances as clear as possible. For example: the first two words of the seven-syllable line "Ara vei

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16   Bruckner, Shepard, and White's (1995, 96) edition of the song "Na Carenza al bel cors avinen" is a good illustration of this; the text displays deviant spellings that seem to clearly indicate the work of a foreign scribe.

I.

I have	been	in	grievous	worry/perplexity	
Estat	ai	en	greu	cossirier	a8
[e'stat	aj	en	grew	cusir'jer]	

for	a	knight		that	I had,	
per	un	cavallier		q'ai	agut,	b8
[per	yn	kaval'jer		kaj	a'gyt]	

and	I want	it to be (for)	all	time	known	
e	vuoil	sia	totz	temps	saubut	b8
[e	vuɔjl	'si·a	totz	tems	saw'byt]	

How	I	him have		loved	to	excess.	
cum	eu	l'ai		amat	a	sobrier.	a8
[kum	ɛw	laj		a'mat	a	subr'jer]	

Now	I see	that I	am	betrayed/deceived	
Ara	vei	q'ieu	sui	trahida	c7'
['ara	vej	kjɛw	syj	tra-'ida]	

For	I	not	to him	gave	my love	
car	eu	non	li	donei	m'amor	d8
[kar	ɛw	nun	li	dun'ej	ma'mor]	

Wherefore	I have	been	in	great	torment	
don		ai	estat	en	gran	error	d8
[don		aj	e'stat	en	gran	e'rror]	

in	bed	and	when	I am	clothed.	
en	lieig	e	when	sui	vestida.	c7'
[en	'ljejtʃ	e	kan	syj	ve'stida]	

Fig. 3

q'ieu sui trahida" ("now I see that I am betrayed," ['ara vej kjɛw syj tra 'ida] in IPA), developed a falling-rising contour, wherein the two syllables of ['ara] initiated as an exclamation in middle chest voice that descended in a sighing gesture through the [r], after which the one-syllable dipthong of [vɛj] began on the same pitch area to which ['ara] had descended, scooping slightly upward to complete the sound of the [j]. Through repetition and exaggeration these two approximate melodic gestures eventually became fixed as a descending perfect fourth followed by an ascending whole step, the final pitch an unstressed lique scent.

The next step was to arrange these melodic gestures and phrases into a whole that reflected the larger musical structure of the verse. According to John Stevens (1986, 499), "the [troubadour] did not set the words of the poem to music; he set its pattern. It was this pattern, a purely numerical structure of stanzas, lines and syllables, which preceded both the melody and the poem." As I spoke and sang the words, I responded to linguistic patterns with melodic ones. Rhymes inspired repetition of melodic fragments and pitches. Striking consonant and vowel combinations induced vocal effects like ornaments, slides and particular rising or falling intervals. Refrains produced repetition of an entire melodic phrase. Rarely remembering exactly what I had previously sung, my composition took the form of improvised variations upon an increasingly solid melodic frame.

Though linguistic music guided my creation and arrangement of melodic gestures, when it came to style I was forced to confront the chronological and cultural distance between me and the artists whose process I was trying

to experience. My process of *trobar* was what John Haines described as "… a work of the imagination whose inspiration is in the past but whose workshop is wholly in the present."[17] Though well aware that I was inescapably influenced by my twenty-first century perception of what constitutes "medieval," I modelled my choice of sound world after the characteristics of extant troubadour melodies as they are interpreted in modern transcriptions and recent historically informed recordings. It was difficult to avoid modern musical language that implied functional harmony and difficult not to become engrossed in the creation of melody for its own sake. My ear occasionally attempted to "find" in the poetry qualities of genres more familiar to me (i.e., a sonnet structure in iambic pentameter). I was also frequently tempted to imitate well-known troubadour melodies, unconsciously responding to similarities in poetic structure with contrafacts of my own creation; this final temptation I did not resist, because, as already discussed, the imitation of other melodies was likely a part of *trobar* for the troubadours themselves. The artistic results of my process of *trobar* restore unnotated troubadour songs to a compelling musical existence which not only compares convincingly with original melodies and avoids the compromises associated with contrafacture, but also successfully achieves the intimate relationship between words and music coveted by early and contemporary performers alike.

But why stop here, having arrived at a deeply personal realisation of a score that no other performer will be able to reproduce exactly, even via precisely the same process of *trobar*? Why not transcribe the results into a more transferable kind of score or remain even closer to the original source and literally transcribe the spoken linguistic music? This latter is not a new technique, and some scholars view medieval vernacular song as belonging to the same traditions as classical oratory, plainchant, and possibly even Arabic Quranic recitation, all of which tread the boundary between speech and song.[18] With such an ancestry, the notated troubadour melodies from the *chansonniers* could be understood as a stylistically enhanced formalisation of an expressive declamation of the poetry. By developing a musical recitation, attempting to notate it, and finally distilling a rhythmic and melodic framework out of the result, it might be possible to rediscover lost melodies by working backwards from the text.

This idea raises questions of feasibility and relevance. Western musical notation and musical vocabulary is ill-equipped to capture the subtleties of linguistic music, which moves "not by notes, but by slides, in which no graduated distinction of tones, or semi-tones can be measured by the ear; nor does the voice dwell distinctly, for any perceptible space of time, on any certain or uniform tone …" (Chapman 1818, 2). Were a precise transcription possible (such as a

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17 Haines (2004a, 291–292) is referring to the popular Occitan-inspired ensembles in Southern France who claim the medieval troubadours as their artistic and cultural heritage.

18 Quintilian describes a particular orator who required an attendant musician to provide notes from a pitch pipe during his speeches (Stevens 1986, 381). Stevens also discusses the relationship between early chant notation and nuances of spoken sound, calling chant a stylisation of the "music" of speech (ibid.).

computer analysis of a recording might yield), a human performer would be unable to precisely read and reproduce it. Such a transcription, capturing a single moment in a continuum of dynamic motion, is relevant and helpful only if recognised for what it is: one among many realities. And, on the other hand, if such a precise transcription executed multiple times were to reveal consistent musical content in the spoken recitation of a poem, why formally notate what is inherent to the score in its poem form and can be trusted to emerge in live performance?

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of historically informed performance practice, the most valuable contribution of reading troubadour poems as scores is not the substance of the melodies it yields. These, like all modern reconstructions of medieval music, are unavoidably influenced by the performer's twenty-first-century perception of what medieval music should sound like. Rather, the true value of this performance practice lies in the relationships it forges between the words of the song, the melody of the song, and the performer of the song. The process of *trobar* itself, for which the concept of poem as musical score serves as the essential point of departure for a modern performer, results in a deep familiarity with the song simply through repetition and exquisite attention to word sounds and poetic structure. By interpreting the linguistic music according to medieval definitions and allowing the melody to reflect linguistic sound and pattern rather than linguistic meaning, a musical richness appears that is was previously concealed.

Reading troubadour poems as scores and using them as a guide to play the game of *trobar* today, centuries removed from its inventors, yields a new performance practice that represents the most complete combination of primary sources. These are: surviving words, surviving melody, medieval definitions of music, and—perhaps most importantly from the perspective of the performer—the creative essence of *trobar*, in which the creative input of the performer as composer is embraced. By restoring these songs to a musical existence drawn from their linguistic *armonia*, reading the troubadour poem as musical score does not initiate, but rather continues and revitalises a composition process begun by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. To follow the philosophy of Claude Sicre, a living troubadour from modern Occitania: "the best way to perpetuate the *art de trobar* … is to create new songs."[19]

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19 Haines (2004a, 287) includes in his history of troubadour performance practice the work of modern Occitan folk-fusion groups like Claude Sicre's Massilia Sound System. In an interview with Haines (2004b, 149), Sicre compared his work to that of the historical performance movement: "Historically, I do not care [if my music is descended from medieval troubadour song], that is not important. But when I listen to a piece by [here he names an "historical" performance group], I feel like I am at a first-class funeral, whereas when I listen to my version, I feel as if the troubadour wrote it fifteen days ago."

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