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THE TROUBADOURS

An Introduction

The dazzling culture of the troubadours – the virtuosity of their songs, the subtlety of their exploration of love, and the glamorous international careers some troubadours enjoyed – fascinated contemporaries and had a lasting influence on European life and literature. Apart from the refined love songs for which the troubadours are renowned, the tradition includes political and satirical poetry, devotional lyrics and bawdy or zany poems. It is also in the troubadour song-books that the only substantial collection of medieval lyrics by women is preserved. This book offers a general introduction to the troubadours. Its sixteen newly commissioned essays, written by leading scholars from Britain, the US, France, Italy and Spain, trace the historical development and setting of troubadour song, engage with the main trends in troubadour criticism, and examine the reception of troubadour poetry. Appendices offer an invaluable guide to the troubadours, to technical vocabulary, to research tools and to surviving manuscripts.

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Preface

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is both a collection of self-contained essays and a textbook. The first three chapters offer an introduction to the historical context of the troubadour lyric, and then to the two main genres of the troubadour tradition, the *canço* and *sirventes*. The next five are broadly speaking literary-historical and offer an overview of the troubadours with chapters on the three main periods of troubadour production, on the women troubadours, and on Spanish and Italian troubadours, the aim being to show how the tradition evolved both in Occitania and abroad. The following five chapters give an account of the critical preoccupations of recent troubadour scholarship. The final three chapters deal, albeit selectively, with medieval reception. Each chapter gives a selective account of past scholarship, but also makes an original contribution to the field.

All references are keyed either to the bibliography or to Appendices 1 and 3. Unless otherwise stated troubadours are cited from the editions given in Appendix 1. The Appendices are intended both for reference and as tools for further research. Appendix 1 offers thumb-nail sketches of what is known of the lives and work of some fifty-six troubadours and includes references to the best available editions. Appendix 2 offers a glossary of Occitan terms. Appendix 3 is a critical introduction to research tools. Appendix 4 is a list of extant *chansonniers*.

We hope that *The Troubadours: An Introduction* can profitably be read as a book, but you may wish to consult it more selectively either by reading chapters on particular themes or issues, or by consulting the index of troubadours and their songs. Complete comprehensiveness has not, of course, been possible, but our aim

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Preface

has been to ensure coverage of non-canonical as well as canonical poets and to give a sense of the richness of the troubadour tradition beyond the dazzling, but nonetheless somewhat limited parameters of the twelfth-century *canso*.

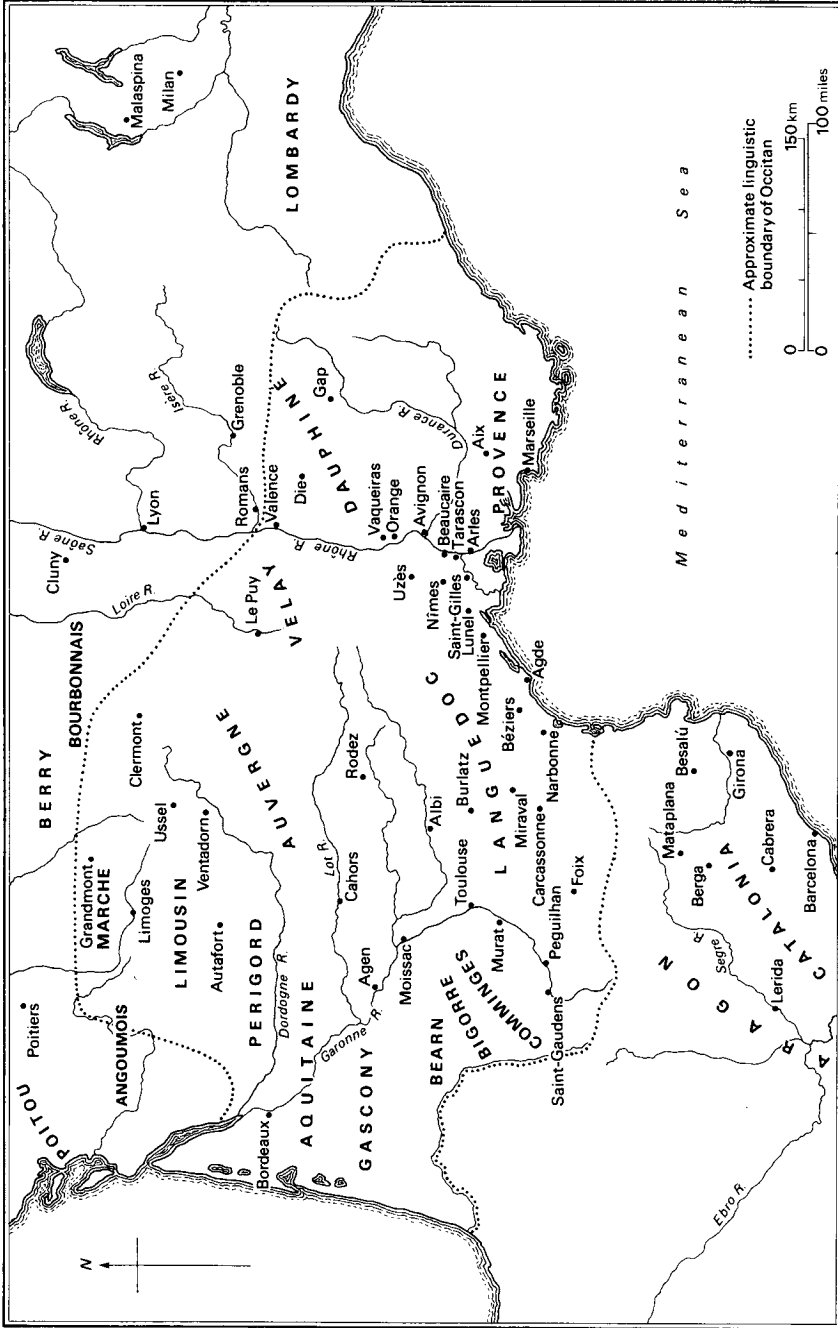


Figure 1. Map of Occitania and neighbouring Catalonia.