

# Troubadour Poetry and Medieval Fin d'amor

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

Please Mute Cell Phones

- Arabic in Southern Spain
- Occitania in Southwest France
- Eleanor of Aquitaine
- Troubadour: Trovar, "to find"; discover composition and invention of verses
- Courtly Love: Andreas Capellanus "The art of Courtly Love"
- Jongleurs distinguished from Troubadours

## Origins of Troubadours



# Summary of Poetic Style

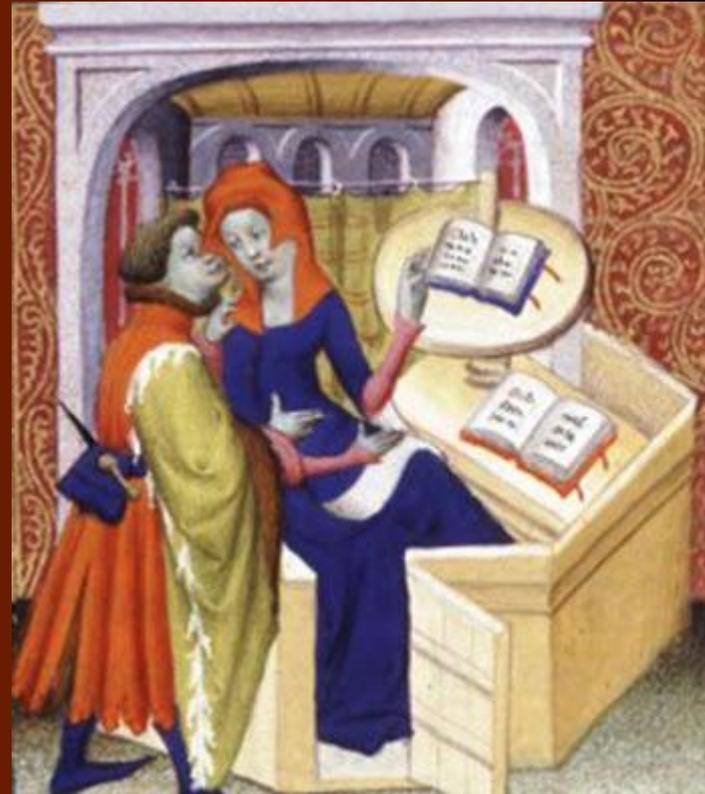
- Conventional topics
- Parting of lovers at dawn
- Cruelty of beloved to lover
- Malice of gossipers in court
- Musical quality; composed as entertainment at court
- Rhyme in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12 centuries was a novelty

# Female Poets

- Female jongleurs; Lowest class, even lower than male jongleurs; akin to prostitutes
- Troubadairitz, noblewomen rather than court professionals like the men
- Similar themes to the male poems but in the female voice of the beloved; no gender crossing roles

# Guillem de Peiteus (1071-1127)

- First known troubadour
- Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine
- Fought in Crusades and in Spain and with King of France
- Excommunicated twice by Church



# I'll Write a Verse about Nothing

- I'll write a verse about nothing:

Not about me or anyone,

Not about love or courtliness

or any other thing.

It came to me a while back

while sleeping on my horse.

[http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/coms de peiteu/guilhen de peiteu 04.php](http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/coms_de_peiteu/guilhen_de_peiteu_04.php)

# Observations on "I'll Write a Verse about nothing"

- Poet doesn't know anything because he was bewitched by a lady
- Sick with love (trope)
- Claims to have never seen her! And "she give me neither joy nor grief, and I don't care a bit..."
- His beloved is a secret: "I've made this verse on who knows who, And I'll send it to one who will send it to another one..."
- Uncertain whether the poem is a parody of courtly lyric, a philosophical riddle, or simply silly entertainment

# Guillem's "In the Sweet time of Renewal"

- Spring as a time of renewal for nature and for men
- Poet has received no message from lover and can neither sleep nor laugh
- Compares love to a hawthorn; Celtic fertility symbol used in Maypole;
- Metaphor of Love-War: beloved made a truce and "gave so great a gift to me, her gallant love and ring..."
- [http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/coms\\_de\\_peit\\_eu/guilhen\\_de\\_peiteu\\_10.php](http://www.trobar.org/troubadours/coms_de_peit_eu/guilhen_de_peiteu_10.php)

# Bernart de Ventadorn (1150-1180)

- The most celebrated troubadour
- We don't know much with certainty about him
- But it seems he was likely a part of the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine



# “When I see the Skylark moving”

- Skylark’s joy makes him envious of anyone who is joyful
- Thought he knew about love but he loves someone who will never love him
- Her eyes caused him to lose possession of himself; “so that I lost myself as in the fountain of fair Narcissus did.”
- Lost hope in women
- He is a wretch yet she will allow him to die, full of longing
- He is ready to die: “she’s killed me, I reply with death, and leave, since she’s not retained me...”
- Hidden Name: Tristan; Recalls Tristan and Isolde; May be the lady or another poet

# Beatriz, Comtessa de Dia (fl. c.1160)

- Wife of Guillem de Peiteus
- Fell in love with a troubadour, Raimbaut Count of Orange



“To sin of what I would not want I must”

- “To sing of what I would not want I must,  
For he whose friend I am so rankles me:  
I love him more than anything there is.  
To him my courtliness is of no worth,  
Not my grace, my beauty, esteem or wit;  
And so I am beguiled and betrayed  
As I would be if I were lowly born.”

- Claims to have her lover in no way
- It's not right that he loves another
- Now his merit and handsomeness trouble her because it attracts other women
- She is sending this song as a messenger and to find out why he is so cruel to her
- Reminds him that too much pride harms men

# “I have been in great distress”

- “I have been in great distress  
For a knight for whom I longed;  
I want all future times to know  
How I loved him to excess.

Now I see I am betrayed—  
He claims I did not give him love—  
Such was the mistake I made,  
naked in bed, and dressed.”

- Longs to hold him; be his pillow; like Floris to Blanchefleur—Floris is a Moorish Prince who loves a Christian slave, noble
- She is “giving my heart, my love, my mind, my life, my eyes.”
- Her “greatest longing is for you to lie there in my husband’s place, but only if you promise this: to do all I’d want to do.”

# Bertran de Born (1140-1215)

- Depicted in Dante's *Inferno*, canto 28 among "sowers of discord"
- Joined a failed revolt against Richard, Duke of Aquitaine and Poitiers and Henry II of England
- Castle was burned and taken prisoner; later earned Richard's pardon

# "I love the glad time of Easter"

- "I love the glad time of Easter,  
That makes leaves and flowers come out;  
And I love when I hear the joy  
Of the birds, which makes their song  
Resound throughout the woods;  
And I love when I see the fields  
Planted with tents and pavilions;  
And I truly rejoice when I see the countryside ranged  
With knights and horses armed for war."

- Loves war
- Loves the Lord on his horse leading the army
- “When the battle has been engaged, any truly noble man wants only to cleave heads and arms, better of dead than caught, alive.”
- Envoi: “Papiols, light-heartedly speed your way to Lord Yes-and-No; tell him he’s been at peace too long.”