

Review Article

THOMAS BINKLEY'S *CHANSONS DER TROUBADOURS*

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Reprinted from
ROMANCE PHILOLOGY,
Volume XXXI, Number 2, November 1977
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literary tradition, R. and H. help the reader seize the subtle shifts and blends in these personae, and they delineate the changing tones of each voice.

Can this edition qualify as definitive? Probably not, for, as Cons wisely observed, "nous aurions une édition 'définitive' que nous ne le saurions pas, ou du moins ne pourrions en être sûrs" (84). R. and H. make no claim for definitiveness; instead they echo Marot's doubts: "Hélas ! malgré nos efforts, nous sortons de cette édition avec plus de points d'interrogation et plus de tourments que nous n'en avions à l'abordage" (I, 2). Villon's dig at his three "orphans" seems to apply ironically to those seeking to interpret his poems: *Tousjours n'ont pas clerks l'au dessus* 1289.

Nevertheless, R. and H. have provided the edition we needed for so long, together with a meticulously thorough commentary which should be read by everyone interested in late medieval French. Perhaps future scholars will be able to supply solutions for the textual and historical problems which eluded today's team of experts. The risks R. and H. took in editing and interpreting were great, and the cyclical past history of Villon editions suggests that a new period of attempts at purification will follow this major edition. With luck, any forthcoming revisions will live up to the high quality of the text and commentary now available. For the present, let us be grateful and hope that R. and H. — or someone else as learned and as philologically sensitive — will replace the rest of the Longnon-Foulet edition with a new text of both the *Lais* and the *Poésies diverses*. Then and only then can we have a valid full-scale study of Villon's poetics. [MARY B. SPEER, *Cranbury, N.J.*]

THOMAS BINKLEY'S *CHANSONS DER TROUBADOURS*

IN UNIVERSITY literature courses, reading medieval lyric poetry and music-drama without listening to them is a practice as common as it is absurd. The exceptional step taken by the editor of *RPh* in publishing for the first time in this journal a record review (five-record set by Thomas Binkley and his *Studio der Frühen Musik* [M.-L. Hansen, May 1976]), was, therefore, an event all the more noteworthy since the records chosen for review are of exceptional excellence and philological importance.¹ Binkley's work marks a significant progress in the performance and recording of medieval secular music and poetry; my remarks here call attention to an earlier Binkley release (1970), which promises (and deserves) to become a classic among students and specialists of troubadour lyric.

¹ As early as 1961, however, there appeared in *RPh* a full and useful "Biblio-Discography of French and Provençal Poet-Musicians of the Middle Ages", by Edwin Jahiel (XIV:3, 200-207), listing 30 European and American LPs, their contents, and 32 standard anthologies of medieval French and Occitan lyric. J. offered no evaluative remarks, however, and noted, with appropriate prudence, that "this discography does not necessarily endorse all the records listed, since the quality of the performances is variable" (207).

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Recorded in Germany, *Chansons der Troubadours*^{1a} contains songs by Peire Vidal ("Baron de mon dan covit"), Giraut de Bornelh ("Leu chansonet'e vil"), Bernart de Ventadorn ("Can vei la lauzeta mover"), Raimbaut de Vaqueiras ("Kalenda maia"), the Comtessa de Dia ("A chantar m'er"), the anonymous "Veris ad imperia" and "A l'entrada del temps clar", and some instrumental dance songs. There is great variety in the arrangements and performance styles, from the exalted solemnity of the hymnic "Can vei" (tenor solo) to the exciting, dramatic turbulence of the first instrumental *salterello*. Here the dazzling virtuosity displayed by B. and his colleagues in their command of medieval instruments (lute, vielle, rebec, *chitarra saracenic*a etc. — all of which are of Near Eastern origins²) is as impressive as is the strikingly effective use of the countertenor in, e.g., "Baron", a feature which lends greater sharpness and intensity to the melody line, giving it an unaccustomed brightness and relief comparable to the contrast, for modern ears, obtained by the use of D for B^b trumpets in Baroque orchestral music.

The arrangements illustrate the three major components of troubadour music. ARABIC settings and styles³ predominate in "Baron", "Kalenda maia", the opening section of "Leu chansonet", and in "A chantar", with its distinctly Moorish flavor (excepting the instrumental interludes between stanzas, taken from elsewhere in the troubadour MSS). ECCLESIASTICAL influences emerge in the melody of "Can vei", which Jean Beck believed to be based on motifs taken from the *Officium Beatae Mariae*.⁴ POPULAR (as defined by Jeanroy and, more recently, by Dronke⁵) is the treatment of the works rooted directly or indirectly in dance songs — the *salterellos*, the two anonymous *baladas* — "A l'entrada" and its Latin contrafactum "Veris ad imperia" — and the instrumental interludes of "A chantar m'er".

Latin "Veris ad imperia", a short (one-minute) piece of polyphonic conductus, is the only example of polyphony in the album. Leading directly into

^{1a} Stereo, "Das Alte Werk", Telefunken SAWT 9567-B. Teldcc (Telefunken-Decca) Schallplatten GmbH., Heussweg 25, 2 Hamburg 19, W. Germany.

² For the vielle, these are more remote; its immediate ancestors are Western. For its (supposed) Egyptian origins via the Greek (Byzantine) *kithara* (*lyra* in Italy), see C. Sachs, *History of Musical Instruments* (N.Y., 1940), pp. 275f., and K. Schlesinger, *Instruments of the Modern Orchestra and Precursors of the Violin Family* (L., 1910, 1969). Note that for the Romans, the *kithara* (Moorish *githara*, *guitra*, Sp. *guitarra*) and the *fidicula* (Sp. *vihuela*, Fr. *vielle*, It. *viola*, G. *Fiedel*, E. *fiddle*), for which Sachs suggests a W. Asiatic origin, were the same instrument. Cf. n16 below.

³ B. describes in his liner notes the

Arab *Nuba* [which was] taken as a model for the creation of the accompaniments, since it is a form which seems to have changed little since the time when Arabian culture exerted such a positive influence on Western Europe. The Introduction (*Mayalia*) in the *Nuba* begins with a free section (*Burghia*) which presents the material of the song, its mode, and the salient characteristics of its melody; this is followed by a *Tuzia* in which the rhythm is established. The interludes between the stanzas (*Atuachi*) are either formed from the same material as the song or independently conceived.

⁴ *Le Manuscrit du Roi* (Philadelphia, 1938; repr. N.Y.: Broude Bros., 1970), II, 99. According to Beck, the opening motif "est celui du *Kyrie eleison* de cet office" (loc. cit.); J. A. Westrup likens the same motif to the opening phrase of the *Kyrie* of the *Cum júbilo* Mass (*New Oxford History of Music*, gen. ed. Dom Anselm Hughes [Oxford, 1954], II, 237).

⁵ Alfred Jeanroy, *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au moyen âge* (P., 1925₃), pp. xvii-xviii; Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric* (Oxford, 1968₂), pp. xv-xvii, and the whole of Ch. I ("The Unity of Popular and Courtly Love Lyric").

“A l'entrada”, with which it shares the melody, the theme (both are *reverdies*), the strophic form (both are *baladas* — a form, and term, of popular origins) of five heptasyllabic verses followed by a refrain, and even the choral tag (“eya”) at the end of each of the first three verses of each strophe, the Latin polyphonic piece is juxtaposed with its vernacular monodic model to underline the inter-relatedness and mutual influences of the various traditions: popular and ecclesiastical, Latin and vernacular.⁶

This brings us to the philological relevance of B.'s record. While one may listen to the *CT* for pleasure alone, it is also valuable for the study and teaching of Occitan lyric. Everyone accepts the dictum that it is impossible to understand the nature of LYRIC poetry or to appreciate examples of it by reading texts in isolation from the music;⁷ two reasons account for the fact that this pedagogical commonplace is so often ignored in practice. First, the specialist in philology and literature is likely to feel himself less at home in musicology; e.g., Frappier (having just asserted the primacy of the music [*n*7, above]) confessed: “Avouons d'ailleurs que cet élément essentiel, la composition musicale, est celui qui nous échappe le plus dans la poésie lyrique du Moyen Age”. But ignorance is no excuse, says Davenson, taking aim at the likes of Diez and Jeanroy.⁸ The second reason, more compelling, is that most of the over 30 recordings of troubadour and trouvère lyrics currently available are woefully lacking in authenticity, and often totally at odds with the spirit of the works. Conceived after an image of the Middle Ages now outmoded, they are characterized by a lifeless and boring musical pseudo-primitivism. The rigidity of phrasing, lack of variation in dynamics and rhythm, and tiresome repetition of simplistic (or stylistically inappropriate⁹) ornamentation motifs, together with a more or less complete disdain, in the vocal parts, for authenticity in pronunciation (although there is no lack of archaizing touches) — all of this justifies the reluctance of

⁶ But placing “Veris ad imperia” before “A l'entrada” is misleading, since the latter is the source of the former. See Friedrich Gennrich, *Grundriss einer Formenlehre des mittelalterlichen Liedes* (Halle, 1932), pp. 85f.; *Lateinische Liedkontrafakta* (Darmstadt, 1956), I, 7, and II, 10; also, *Die Kontrafaktur im Liedschaffen des Mittelalters* (Langen bei Frankfurt, 1965), p. 29.

⁷ Note Frappier's reminder:

Les troubadours et les trouvères ont été des musiciens autant que des poètes... Coupées de leur mélodie, les strophes de nos vieux poètes risquent de perdre la moitié, si ce n'est les trois quarts, de leur originalité... Folquet de Marseille disait assez joliment: “Une chanson sans musique est comme un moulin sans eau”, etc. *La Poésie lyrique en France aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (P., 1960 [written in 1949]), p. 3.

The reader, whatever his taste in vocal music — Schubert or Sinatra, Brahms or Brassens, Fauré or folk — need only imagine his favorite song without the music: This is what it is like to READ troubadour songs.

⁸ “Ces poètes ont été aussi des musiciens; il faut bien le dire, puisqu'on l'a souvent oublié: j'admire la tranquille conscience de ces graves érudits qui ont consacré des années, de gros volumes, à la poésie lyrique des troubadours sans accorder d'attention à leur musique, comme si l'incompétence était une excuse... Si, des deux éléments, l'un devait primer l'autre, ce serait plutôt la musique, puisqu'on nous rapporte, de tel ou tel, ... que leurs chansons furent célèbres par la beauté des airs, bien que leurs vers n'eussent que peu de valeur”. H.-I. Marrou [pseud.], *Les Troubadours* (P., 1961, 1971), p. 79.

⁹ Cf. the appoggiaturas, arpeggios, and motifs of a distinctly Baroque (or later) flavor served up by the classically-trained conservatory musicians in the improvisation sections of the earlier recordings of medieval secular music.

philologists and musicologists alike to take these recordings seriously. "It COULD NOT have sounded like that!" is the reaction most of these records elicit, a reaction anyone who has listened to earlier recordings of troubadour music shares with Solange Corbin.¹⁰ Although we cannot know exactly what the troubadour songs DID sound like, B.'s *CT* compels one to declare: "That's what it COULD have sounded like". And this is a major step forward.

Taken together, B.'s recordings of medieval secular music¹¹ accomplish what specialists have already done for painting and architecture, literature and philosophy: a definitive shattering of the myth of the primitivism or "naïveté" of medieval artistic expression. That it has taken longer to do so in vernacular secular music than in the other domains is understandable. The superiority of B.'s recordings is due to his more satisfactory (although still necessarily incomplete) resolution of a number of interrelated problems peculiar to this material. First, the notation: the MSS containing troubadour lyrics give only an unmeasured melody line, with no indication either of rhythmic values or accompaniment; the restoration of these is left to the imagination and musicological expertise (assuming they are so endowed) of the arrangers and performers.

What interests us [says B. in his liner notes to the *CT*], is the full sound picture of Troubadour music, and this must be reconstructed with the help of three kinds of evidence. First, the notation: we must not be confused into thinking that this represents the entire music. Second, our knowledge of Arab performance practices today; the importance of Islam influence on European culture in the 10th to 13th centuries applies to music no less than to poetry.¹² Third, our knowledge of medieval French and Italian performance styles as derived from the Greco-Roman traditions, particularly that of the Church.¹³

Implicit in these remarks is an indirect criticism of the incomplete or inappropriate approach of B.'s predecessors, and a justification of his own well-tempered eclecticism here. The musicologist and the philologist, when not completely ignorant of each other's domain, are likely to impose the categories with which

¹⁰ E.g., in her remarks on one earlier theory of rhythmic interpretation:

Cette théorie aboutit elle aussi à une désastreuse monotonie...La régularité qui naît de cette scansion artificielle rend la musique inerte. Cependant le répertoire des troubadours a connu un succès foudroyant dès ses débuts, et cela avec l'aide de sa musique, QUI NE PEUT DONC AVOIR ÉTÉ EXÉCUTÉE DE FAÇON AUSSI RIGIDE QU'ON SEMBLE LE CROIRE. Il n'est pas vraisemblable que l'Allemagne eût copié un genre aussi sec, et, disons le mot, un peu ennuyeux.

In Pierre Bec, *Nouvelle Anthologie de la lyrique occitane du moyen âge* (Avignon, 1970), pp. 76f. (my emphasis).

¹¹ *Frühe Musik: England, Flandern, Deutschland und Spanien*, SAWT 9432-B, *Frühe Musik: Italien, Frankreich, Burgund*, SAWT 9466-B (1966); *Westliche Musik um 1300*, SAWT 9405-A (1966); *Minnesang und Spruchdichtung c. 1200-1320*, SAWT 9487-A (1966); *Carmina Burana*, SAWT 9455-A, *Zweite Folge*, SAWT 9522-A (1969); *Musica Iberica 1100-1600*, 2 records SAWT 9620, 9621; and the 5-record set mentioned above, comprising the songs of the *Camino de Santiago*, the *Roman de Fauvel*, and the *Chansons* of Guillaume de Machaut (1973).

¹² Enter at last — and with startling and refreshing results — the "thèse arabe" in the recorded performance of troubadour lyric. The current state of the Arab question is summarized succinctly in the works of Bec (45-53, 72-77) and Davenson (79-95, 113-131) cited above.

¹³ For the "para-liturgical thesis", see Jacques Chailley's bibliography in *L'École musicale de Saint Martial de Limoges* (P., 1960 [written 1952]), pp. 415-417, and his articles: "Les premiers troubadours et les Versus de l'école aquitaine", *Rom.*, LXVI (1955), 212-239, and "Notes sur les troubadours, les Versus et la question arabe" in *Mélanges de linguistique et de littérature romanes à la mémoire d'István Frank* (Saarbrücken, 1957), pp. 118-128.

they are familiar on the subject matter with which they are not. B. draws heavily from both domains, and this is the key to the superiority of his reconstructions over those of his predecessors. Rare indeed is the musicologist–record producer with the command of philology and literary history demonstrated by B.'s familiarity with and successful exploitation of the recent contributions by scholars like Gennrich, Chailley, and the Arabists. Especially noteworthy in B.'s recordings is a degree of authenticity in pronunciation heretofore lacking: the phonetic precision of the Old Provençal on the *CT*¹⁴ is as refreshing (and pedagogically useful) as is the impeccable Picard in B.'s *Robin et Marion* (*Westliche Musik um 1300*).

The problem of instruments is handled by B.'s group with intelligence and taste. This problem is twofold: which instruments to use (the MSS do not specify), and how to use them (voicings, styles of performance — particularly in improvisation). While some may feel that B.'s arrangements draw too heavily on the formal patterns, harmonic structures, and motifs of Near Eastern improvisation styles,¹⁵ others will disagree (here we have the whole gamut of questions not of the FACT of Arabic influences, but of the DEGREE of their importance). But no one will quarrel with the group's ideal of authenticity in the choice of instruments (a photograph of which appears on the record-jacket, with the name of each instrument and the date and place of its construction).¹⁶ The attempt has been made to avoid anachronism of pitch and timbre, of the type commonly heard today on recordings of old music played on modern instruments. Also carefully avoided is the problem of stylistic anachronism in improvisation referred to earlier (*n*9).

The record is not without flaws, most of which are minor and fail to detract noticeably from its overall quality. Occasionally there are slips in articulation ("Los" for "Lo bel Narcissus" in v. 24 of "Can vei"), and misprints in the accompanying texts ("peu" for "pen" in v. 42 of "Leu chansonet"; the performer correctly sings "pen"). Most of the mistakes are in editing; these are due not to B., but to André de Mandach, responsible for the "Wissenschaftliche Ausarbeitung und Überwachung der Texte".¹⁷ But even here the mistakes or

¹⁴ The mezzosoprano's German accent is distracting only once, in the last two verses of "A chantar m'er", spoken unaccompanied (the rest of the song is sung by the countertenor).

¹⁵ Questionable, e.g., is the compatibility of the Arabic *Nuba* form, in which B. casts "Kalenda Maia", with the harmonic structure of this piece, characteristic of the paraliturgical style of the St. Martial school. See Chailley (1955), p. 239.

¹⁶ For the widespread use of Arabic instruments in 13th- and 14th-c. France, as apparent from the frequent iconographic and literary references to, e.g., "leüs, rubebes et kitaires / Et...en pluseurs lieus nacaires [nakirs]" (Adenet le Roi, *Cléomadès*), lutes and rebecs in the *R. de la Rose*, "rubebes, leuths, vieles" in Eustache Deschamps, etc., see Th. Gérold, *La Musique au moyen âge* (P., 1932), pp. 371–391.

¹⁷ Regrettably, Mandach does not identify the eds. on which he has based his texts. Such indications would have been easy to provide, and their omission in a record obviously intended for specialists is all the more serious given the abundance of sometimes widely-varying eds. (Gennrich lists 25, as of 1960, for "Can vei" alone; at least two more [Nichols, 1962; Lazar, 1966] have appeared since then). The eds. used here seem to have been the following: D'Arco Silvio Avalle, *Peire Vidal: Poesie* (Milano & Napoli, 1960), No. 24, for "Baron de mon dan covit";

faulty emendations are not always Mandach's (e.g., Bartsch's "tout m'a se" for "me" in v. 13 of "Can vei", not a var.). To Mandach, however, must be charged the erroneous *crementar* for *cremetar* (TRÈMÈRE) in v. 19 of "A l'entrada",¹⁸ and the mispunctuation in v. 35 of "A chantar": "No sai si s'es orgolhs o mals talens" is a statement, not a question. These are trifles; there is only one really glaring mistake: the curious designation of "Veris ad imperia" as a "Gebet an die Geburtsgöttin Hekate". Here Mandach has combined two errors to produce an embarrassing monstrosity. The proper reading of v. 8 ("Suspirat lucinia") requires the knowledge that CL *kji* in LUSCINIA 'nightingale' was pronounced /s/ in the Latin of 13th-c. France, whence the orthographic reduction to LUCINIA in the text. Having misread *lucinia* as "Lucina", Mandach further blunders by translating: "Hecate sighs" ("Die Hekate seufzt"), confusing Hecate, goddess of the NIGHT, with Lucina, bringer to the LIGHT (whence "goddess of childbirth", an epithet associated alternately with Juno or Diana, *Dea lucina*). In any case, the nightingale here has nothing to do with Lucina, still less with M.'s "Geburtsgöttin Hekate"!

Again, these shortcomings are due to Mandach and previous editors, not to B., and although weaker philologically than musicologically, the *CT* remains, all things considered, the best yet in its field. It is exciting to listen to, worthwhile to study, and, from a purely technical angle, superbly realized, with virtuoso musicianship in the execution and supreme musicality in the recording. In the impossibility of attaining total authenticity in the restoration of medieval secular music, B.'s *CT* provides the closest approximation to what the medievalist's research and aesthetic sense tell him (by analogy with what we know of the Middle Ages' stunningly sophisticated achievements in literature and the plastic arts) is the real essence and spirit of medieval expressivity. It thus provides a much-needed corrective to the rigid and insipid realizations of B.'s predecessors, deluded by their erroneous perception of the long-underrated "medieval mind".

A. Kolsen, *Sämtliche Lieder des Troubadours Giraut de Bornelh* (Halle, 1910-35), No. 48, for "Leu chansonet'e vil", with the substitution of only one var. (*per* for *de*, v. 36), which appears in 11 of the 16 MSS; C. Appel, *Bernart von Ventadorn, seine Lieder* (Halle, 1915), pp. 249-257, and Bartsch-Koschwitz, *Chrestomathie provençale* (Marburg, 1904₆), cols. 68-70, for "Can vei la lauzeta mover", retaining Koschwitz's substitution in Bartsch's text of the obscure var. "Aissi-m part d'amor" for "de leis" in v. 53, and introducing an indefensible emendation of the *senhal* and the rest of the first verse of the *tornada* ("Tristans, ges no-n aurette de me") to "Tristeza no-n aurette de me", whereas the var. (in 5 of the 21 MSS) reads "Triteza non aue de me" (both vars. are unanimously rejected by modern editors); G. M. Dreves et al., *Analecta hymnica Medii Aevi* (Leipzig, 1886-1922), XXI, 36, for "Veris ad imperia" (distinctly inferior to the ed. in Dronke [II, 352]; Dreves's misreadings no doubt contributed to the incoherence of Mandach's trans.); Bartsch's *Chrest. prov.* (Elberfeld, 1880₄ or Berlin, 1892₅) for "A l'entrada del temps clar" and "A chantar m'er", substituting, in the latter, only one normally-rejected var., "del nostre partimens" for *de* *nostres* p.; J. Linskill, *The Poems of the Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras* (The Hague, 1964), No. 15, for "Kalenda maia", with the interversion of stanzas III and IV (as in Bec's printing [*Nouvelle anthologie*] of Linskill's text).

¹⁸ Curiously, the same mistake — but it is a MISPRINT — haunts Nelli-Lavaud's printing (*Les Troubadours* [P., 1966], II, 28-30) of the Bartsch-Koschwitz text (cols. 121f.). Neither Bartsch in the early eds., nor Koschwitz in his revision of the *Chrest. prov.*, prints *crementar*, nor did Nelli-Lavaud intend to, as shown by their footnote: "*cremetar*, subst. verbal, cf. *crenta*, *cremta*, *craindre* (Mistral)" (29).

As Mary-Louise Hansen remarked with respect to B.'s 1973 recordings, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating", and the listener would do well, in his *dégustation* of the *CT*, to sample, by way of comparison, some of the less savory versions available elsewhere of the same selections found in this album.¹⁹ Apart from disclosing the relative superiority of B.'s recording, such comparisons are also pedagogically useful. The wide divergence they display in the conception and execution of the "same" materials, points up a fundamental characteristic of medieval poetic invention and transmission, demonstrating unforgettably the musical homologue of what Paul Zumthor calls the "mouvance" of medieval texts.²⁰ [JONATHAN BECK, *Emory University*]

¹⁹ I would suggest comparing B.'s versions with the following. "Kalenda maia": cf. *History of European Music*, I: *Music of the Early Middle Ages*, Schola Cantorum Londiniensis, Edgar Fleet, Dir., Orpheus Stereo OR-349 (N.Y.: Musical Heritage Society, n.d. [c. 1965]), and *French Troubadour Songs, Italian Folk Songs*, Yves Tessier and Cynthia Gooding, Elektra EKL-221 (N.Y., n.d.); "Can vei la lauzeta mover": cf. *Music of the 12th and 13th Centuries*, Brussels Pro Musica Antiqua, S. Cape Cond., EMS-201 (N.Y., 1951), Russell Oberlin on *Troubadour and Trouvère Songs*, Expériences anonymes, EA-0012 (N.Y., 1957), reissued by the Musical Heritage Society, *Music of the Middle Ages*, I, MHS-675 (N.Y., n.d.), and records 9, 11, and 17 in E. Jahiel's "Biblio-Discography" (p. 202); "A l'entrada del temps clar": cf. *The Central Middle Ages*, Pro Musica Antiqua, S. Cape Dir., Archive, ARC-3002 (Brussels, 1953); the two *salterellos*: cf. *Central Middle Ages*, for II, and *Medieval Roots*, New York Pro Musica, Noah Greenberg Dir., Decca Stereo DL-79438 (N.Y., 1971), for I and II.

²⁰ *Essai de poésie médiévale* (P., 1972), Ch. II, esp. pp. 70-74.