as a liturgical service was formally "conducted" from one place to another. Their texts were metrical verses, like those of sequences from the same period. But their connection with the liturgy was so tenuous that by the end of the twelfth century, the term *conductus* applied to any serious, nonliturgical Latin song with a metrical text on any sacred or secular subject. An important feature of the conductus was that, as a rule, its melody was newly composed, not borrowed or adapted from plainchant.

Chanson de geste

The secular spirit of the Middle Ages comes through clearly in the songs with vernacular texts. One of the earliest known types was the *chanson de geste*, or "song of deeds," an epic narrative poem recounting the deeds of national heroes, sung to simple melodic formulas. A single formula serves unchanged for each line throughout long sections of the poem. The poems, transmitted orally, were not reduced to writing until comparatively late; virtually none of the music has been preserved. The most famous *chanson de geste* is the *Song of Roland*, the national epic of France, which dates from about the second half of the eleventh century, though its story belongs to the age of Charlemagne.

Jongleurs

The people who sang the *chansons de geste* and other secular songs in the Middle Ages were the *jongleurs* or *ménestrels* (minstrels), a class of professional musicians who first appear about the tenth century. These men and women wandered singly or in small groups from village to village and castle to castle, earning a precarious living by singing, playing, performing tricks, and exhibiting trained animals; they were social outcasts, often denied the protection of the laws and the sacraments of the church. With the economic recovery of Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, society became more stably organized on a feudal basis and towns sprang up. The condition of the minstrels improved, though for a long time people continued to regard them with a mixture of fascination and revulsion. "People of no great wit, but with amazing memory, very industrious, and impudent beyond measure," Petrarch wrote of them. In the eleventh century, they organized themselves into brotherhoods, which later developed into guilds of musicians offering professional training much as a modern conservatory does.

The minstrels were not poets or composers in the usual sense. They sang, played, and danced to songs composed by others or taken from the popular repertory, no doubt altering them or making up their own versions as they went along. Their professional traditions and skill played a role in an important development of secular music in western Europe—the body of song known today as the music of the troubadours and the trouvères.

Troubadours and Trouvères

Troubadours (feminine singular: *trobairitz*) were poet-composers who flourished in what is now the south of France and spoke Provençal, the *langue d'oc* (also

called *Occitan*). *Trouvères* were the equivalent in northern France. (The verb *trobar* in the southern dialect and its corresponding *trouver* in the north means "to find"; thus troubadours and trouvères were finders or inventors of songs.) Their art, taking its inspiration from the neighboring culture of Moorish Spain, spread quickly northward, especially to the provinces of Champagne and Artois. There the trouvères, active throughout the thirteenth century, spoke the *langue d'oïl*, the medieval French dialect that became modern French.

Neither troubadours nor trouvères constituted a well-defined group. They flourished in generally aristocratic circles (there were even kings among their number), but artists of lower birth might be accepted into a higher social class on the grounds of their talent. Many of the poet-composers not only created their songs but sang them as well; when they did not they could entrust the performance to a minstrel. Versions of the same song often differ from one manuscript to another, perhaps because the documents were written by different scribes at different times. More likely, however, different minstrels who had learned the song by rote modified it to suit themselves, which is what happens when music is transmitted orally for a time before being written down. The songs are preserved in collections called *chansonniers*, some of which have been published in modern editions or facsimiles. About 2,600 troubadour poems and about one-tenth as many melodies have been preserved. By contrast, we have some 2,130 trouvère poems, but at least two-thirds of their melodies are known.

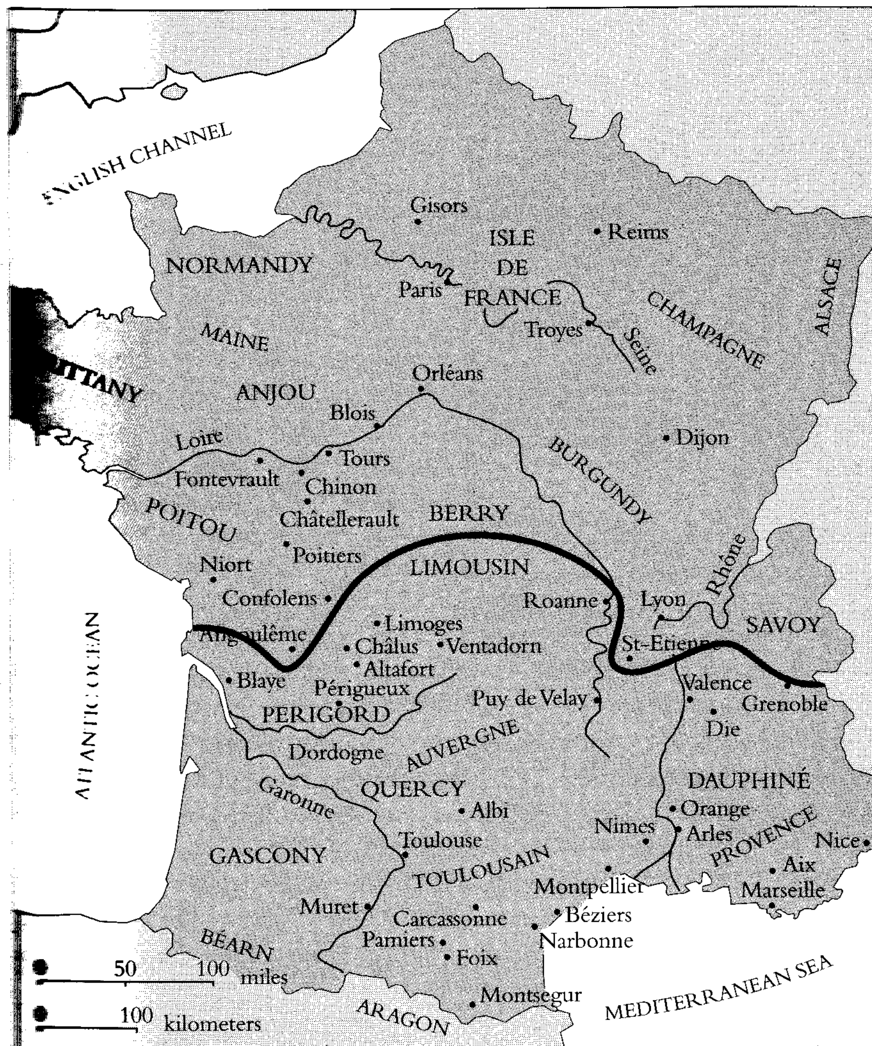
The poetic and musical structures of the songs show great variety and ingenuity. There are simple ballads and ballads in dramatic style, some of which require or suggest two or more characters. Some of the dramatic ballads were evidently intended to be mimed; many obviously call for dancing. In the dance songs, there may be a refrain to be sung by a chorus of dancers. The troubadours, especially, wrote love songs, the subject par excellence for their poetry. There are songs on political and moral topics, and songs whose texts debate or argue abstruse points of chivalric or courtly love. Religious songs, characteristically northern, appear only late in the thirteenth century. Each type of song included many subtypes that followed certain conventions about subject matter, form, and treatment.

Pastourelle

A favorite genre was the *pastorela* or *pastourelle*. The text is a variation on the following story: a knight pursues a shepherdess who succumbs after due resistance, or the shepherdess screams for help, whereupon her brother or lover rushes in and drives the knight away, not without blows given and received. In the earliest pastourelles, a narrator told the story. It was a natural step, however, to make the text a dialogue between the knight and the shepherdess. Later, the dialogue came to be acted as well as sung. If one or two episodes were added, and if the rescuing shepherd appeared with a group of rustic companions and the performance was decked out with incidental songs and dances, the result was a little musical play.

Robin et Marion

The most famous of such musical plays was *Jeu de Robin et de Marion* (about 1284) by Adam de la Halle (dates uncertain), the last of the trouvères. We do



◀ *Map of France showing the linguistic boundary between* langue d'oc *and* langue d'oïl.

not know whether the songs in this work were written by Adam himself or whether they were all popular chansons incorporated in the play. A few of them have come down to us in polyphonic settings. Typical of the tuneful songs is Marion's at the opening of the play, *Robins m'aime* (NAWM 8). It is a monophonic *rondeau*, a form that has unison choral refrains, here in the pattern ABaabAB. (In representing formal schemes, each letter stands for a distinct musical phrase: capitals for choral, lower case for solo performance).

The pastourelles and other narrative songs adapted folk material. The Provençal love songs, on the other hand, were aristocratic creations. Many were openly sensual; others hid sensuality under the veil of courtly love. The object of the passion expressed was a real woman—usually another man's wife—but she was adored from a distance, with such discretion, respect, and humility that the lover is made to seem more like a worshiper content to suffer in the service of his ideal Love. The lady herself is depicted as so remote, calm, lofty, and

◀ *Portrait of Adam de la Halle in a miniature from the Chansonnier d'Arras, which contains six of his chansons. The legend says "Adans li bocus made these songs." His family, from Arras, was known by the name "le Bossu" (the hunchback).* (ARRAS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE MUNICIPALE)

unattainable that she would be stepping out of character if she condescended to reward her faithful lover. It is significant that trouvère songs praising the Virgin Mary have the same style, the same vocabulary, and sometimes the same melodies that were used to celebrate earthly love.

One of the best preserved songs is *Can vei la lauzeta mover* (NAWM 9) by the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn (ca. 1150–ca. 1180). The second of its eight stanzas typifies the lover's complaints that are the main subject of this repertory.[6]

Ai, las! tan cuidava saber	Alas! I thought I knew so much
d'amor, e tan petit en sai,	of love, and I know so little;
car eu d'amar no·m posc tener	for I cannot help loving
celeis don ia pro non aura.	a lady from whom I shall never obtain any favor.
Tout m'a mo cor, e tout m'a me,	She has taken away my heart and my self
e se mezeis e tot lo mon;	and herself and the whole world;
e can se·m tolc, no·m laisset re	and when she left me, I had nothing left
mas dezirer e cor volon.	but desire and a yearning heart.

All the stanzas are sung to the same through-composed melody, which is conceived in the first church mode.

6. Text and translation are from Hendrik van der Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères* (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1972), pp. 91–95, which presents versions of the melody from five different sources, showing surprising consistency of readings. The dot splitting two letters of a word, as in no·m, stands for contraction.

Troubadour and Trouvère Melodies

The melodic settings of both troubadour and trouvère songs were generally syllabic with occasional short melismatic figures, mostly on the penultimate syllable of a line. Such a simple melody invited improvised ornaments and other variants as the singer passed from one stanza to the next. The range is narrow, frequently no more than a sixth and hardly ever more than an octave. Because the songs are chiefly written in the first and seventh church modes and their plagals, the entire body of works displays a certain coherence. The notation yields no clue to the rhythm of the songs. Some scholars maintain that they were sung in a free, unmeasured style, as the notation implies. Others contend that they were measured by long and short notes corresponding to the accented and unaccented syllables of the words. This divergence of opinion is shown by the five different transcriptions of the same phrase in Example 2.8. Most scholars now prefer transcription in even notes without measure bars.

Each poetic line of this song gets its own melodic setting. Two poetic lines of the same length may be set to phrases of different lengths because some of the syllables are treated melismatically. Through variation, contrast, and the repetition of short, distinctive musical phrases, a variety of formal patterns emerges. But these patterns do not fall neatly into categories such as those to come in the fourteenth century. Many of the troubadour and trouvère melodies repeat the opening phrase or section before proceeding in a free style. Phrases are modified on repetition, and elusive echoes of earlier phrases are heard; but the main impression is one of freedom, spontaneity, and apparent artlessness.

Some of these features are illustrated in *A chantar* by the twelfth-century troubadour Comtessa Beatriz de Dia (NAWM 10). In this strophic song, or

EXAMPLE 2.8 *Troubadour melody:* Reis glorios, *Guiraut de Bornelh (1173–1220)*

1. Reis glo - ri - os, ve - ray lums__ e clar - tatz__

2.

3.

4.

5.

Glorious King, true light and clarity.

canso, there are four distinct melodic components, arranged in the form ababcdb. The setting is syllabic, except that some syllables, particularly accented ones, receive two or three notes. The music for each poetic line comes to a distinct stop in nearly every line in a strong-weak pattern.

Refrains

An important structural feature of some trouvère songs is the *refrain*, a recurring line (or pair of lines) in the text, usually with a recurring musical setting. The refrain was an important structural element. The songs with refrains may have evolved out of dance songs, the refrains being those portions originally sung by all the dancers in chorus. Later, the original refrain was probably incorporated into a solo song.

Minnesinger

The troubadours served as the model for a German school of knightly poet-musicians, the *Minnesinger*, who flourished between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The love (*Minne*) of which they sang in their *Minnelieder* (love songs) was even more abstract than troubadour love and sometimes had a distinctly religious tinge. The music is correspondingly more sober. Some of the melodies are written in the church modes, while others veer toward major tonality. As nearly as can be inferred from the rhythm of the texts, the majority of the tunes were sung in triple meter. As in France, strophic songs were also very common. Their melodies, however, were more tightly organized through melodic phrase repetition. For example, in *We ich han gedacht* by Wizlau von Rügen (NAWM 11), the *Weise*, or melodic pattern, for singing the ten-line stanzas has a musical form that is obviously prompted by the rhyme scheme but that also gains its coherence from repetition:

Rhyme	*a a b/ c c b/ d e e d*
Melody	*a a b/ a a b/ c a a b*

Texts of the Minnelieder included loving depictions of the glow and freshness of spring. There are also dawn songs, or *Wächterlieder* (watcher's songs), sung by the faithful friend who stands guard and warns the lovers that dawn is approaching. Both the French and the Germans wrote songs of religious devotion, many of them inspired by the Crusades.

Meistersinger

The Minnesinger were succeeded by the *Meistersinger*, staunch tradesmen and artisans of German cities, whose lives and activities were portrayed by Richard Wagner in his opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, the art of the trouvères in France passed from the nobility to cultured middle-class citizens. A similar change took place in Germany during the course of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Hans Sachs,

the hero of Wagner's opera, is a typical figure—a sixteenth-century shoemaker in Nuremberg who composed thousands of poems and tunes for singing them. Some fine examples of Sachs's art have survived, one of the most beautiful being a commentary on the strife between David and Saul (1 Samuel 17), *Nachdem David war redlich* (NAWM 12). It is composed in a German poetic form called *Bar* that was taken over by the Meistersinger from the Minnelied. In bar form—aab—a melodic phrase, *a*, is sung twice for a stanza's first two units of text (called *Stollen*), and the remainder, *b* (called *Abgesang*), generally longer and sung only once, contains new melodic material.

Although the repertory includes some masterpieces, the art of the Meistersinger was so hedged in by rigid rules that their music seems stiff in comparison to the Minnelieder. The Meistersingers' guild had a long life, and was finally dissolved only in the nineteenth century.

Sacred songs

In addition to secular songs, there were also many monophonic religious songs in the Middle Ages that were not intended for use in church. Expressions of individual piety, they were composed to vernacular texts in a melodic idiom that was derived about equally from chant and from popular song.

Songs of Other Countries

The few surviving English songs of the thirteenth century show a variety of moods and suggest a much more extensive musical life than we can now reconstruct. From Spain, a beautifully illuminated manuscript collection prepared under the direction of King Alfonso el Sabio (the Wise) between about 1250 and 1280 preserves more than four hundred monophonic *cantigas*, songs of praise to the Virgin; they resemble in many ways the music of the troubadours.

Laude

Laude are Italian monophonic songs of a vigorous, popular character that are sung in lay confraternities and in processions by religious penitents. (Related to the laude are the *Geisslerlieder*, flagellants' songs of fourteenth-century Germany.) The lauda was still cultivated in Italy after the penitential craze of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—largely inspired by the ravages of the Black Death—had passed, and the texts were eventually given polyphonic settings.

Medieval Instrumental Music and Instruments

Dances in the Middle Ages were accompanied both by songs and by instrumental music, such as the *estampie*, a dance piece of which we have several English and Continental examples from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Sometimes monophonic and sometimes polyphonic, each of its several sections (*puncta*, or *partes*), was repeated, as in the plainchant sequence. The first state-