



The Etymology of Old Provençal *trobar*, *trobador*: A Return to the "Third Solution"

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FEW Romance etymologies have provoked as much and as sustained interest as that of *trobar*, *trobador*. Part of its allure has doubtless been the latent conviction that a clear etymon for *trobar* is *introuvable*, as Leo Spitzer once punned.¹ Other, less fanciful, factors have contributed to its attraction for scholars and its usefulness as a problem for students. Foremost among these have been the close connection between this issue of lexical origins and the equally difficult and controversial issue of the origins of the poetry *troubadour* designates, as well as the recurring ties, possibly adventitious, between research on this particular etymology and broader methodological concerns in both linguistic and literary-cultural history.

Of the various proposed answers to the question of where *trobar* comes from — none has received widespread acceptance — one can be singled out as having been conspicuously neglected, that of Julián Ribera, the Spanish Arabist. Before reassessing his conjecture it is necessary to discuss the inherent difficulties of this etymology and to review the two other principal solutions advanced, focusing on the three philological parameters that have lent the discussion its shape: semantic plausibility, phonetic viability, and attestation, which includes the more nebulous nature of what scholars' assumptions about the likelihood of any given provenience might be.

The semantic difficulties involve, first, defining just what *trobar* meant for the troubadours and, subsequently, finding a plausible etymon, with an appropriate meaning, from which it could have derived. Virtually all experts agree that *trobar* and its derivatives served to mean 'to find' as well as something different from that: the activity peculiar to troubadours. Beyond this tautological observation there is no agreement on the critical issues of what precisely this specialized meaning was, also on whether and, if so, how it may be related to the meaning 'to find' preserved in modern French *trouver*.

The matter of a phonetically viable etymon has been no less discouraging.

¹ "Trouver", *Rom*, LXVI (1940), p. 1.

There exists no attested Latin etymon for a likely antecedent. The documented Late Latin term which was once proposed is phonetically untenable. A reconstructed form offered in its stead raises other serious problems besides the lack of documentation, as will be shown below. Finally, the matter of attestation, which encompasses both semantic and phonetic issues, is in turn linked, sometimes surreptitiously, to the question of likelihood: Is it more likely, e.g., that the Old Provençal poetic term came from the fishing vocabulary of Late Latin, from the lexicon of Christian hymnody, or from Hispano-Arabic speech?

Our discussion of the three major etyma so far proposed will classify each one according to the meaning adduced for *trobar*. The more extensive reappraisal of Ribera's conjecture is to be preceded by a brief examination of the factors responsible for its having virtually been ignored and of the reasons for the present need for its vindication.

1. 'To find fish'/'To find'/'To find verses'. The earliest derivation of Prov. *trobar*, from the Late Latin fishing term *TŪRBĀRE* (AQUAM), was made by Friedrich Diez.² Its most enthusiastic proponent, however, became Hugo Schuchardt, who reasoned that the Late Latin phrase, meaning 'to disturb the water', came to mean 'to find fish'.³ From this, the broader meaning of 'to find' would have sprouted and the troubadours' use of the word would have come about, because they conceived of their poetic activity as 'finding' verses.

The unlikelihood of such semantic filiation was pointed out by critics, primarily Gaston Paris and Antoine Thomas. Although there was no explicit discussion of why the two different meanings were necessarily related, scholars, including critics of the *TŪRBĀRE* etymon, thereafter assumed that a single lexical item was at issue. The phonetic weaknesses of Schuchardt's base were cogently set forth by Thomas:⁴ The *TŪRBĀRE* > *trobar* derivation would hinge on metathesis of the /r/, highly unusual in that phonetic context; the change /u/ > /o/ > /ou/ would have been equally irregular; the development of /b/, yielding /b/ in Provençal, then /v/ in Old French, is improbable, since it is Lat. /p/ which would yield such results. Partially because Thomas agreed with Paris that the derivation was vulnerable on semantic grounds, and partially on account of his Neogrammarian bias, Thomas concluded: "Si *turbare* ne peut pas supporter l'examen phonétique, il ne compte plus, il est mort".⁵

The opposition to the Diez-Schuchardt proposal stemmed from its lack of merit in both the semantic and the phonetic analysis. As regards de-

monstrability, the etymon had the — albeit limited — value, over against its deficiencies, of being attested in Late Latin as a fishing term, but there were no traces of any intermediate stages to palliate the serious difficulties on both the phonetic and the semantic sides. Despite the severely damaging scrutiny it received from opponents and the general agreement that it involved, at best, a fanciful proposal, its canonized validity has never been completely dispelled.

II. 'To compose or invent'/'To find'. When Paris and Thomas launched their respective attacks on *TŪRBĀRE* they did so with a clear alternative in mind, **TROPARE*.⁶ Paris speculated that Class. *TROPUS* 'figurative use of a word' had developed in Late Latin a second, specifically musical meaning: 'variation on a melody'. From this semantic shift, he reasoned, came the liturgical meaning of Gr.-Lat. *TROPUS* as the musical ending of certain liturgical chants, probably developed as an *aide-mémoire*. The meaning of *TROPUS* in the *langue ordinaire* would have been 'mélodie, air, chant', Paris reasoned; by extension, newly-minted **TROPARE* would have meant initially 'to vary a tune' and subsequently 'to compose, invent, or find a song' in the lexicon of the troubadours. Finally there would have occurred the shift to 'finding', as a calque from *INVENIŌ*.

The difficulties besetting this series of difficult semantic leaps were not only pointed out by critics, but readily recognized by its proponents. Paris, who had rejected Schuchardt's proposal on the basis of semantic implausibility, concluded his argument in favor of the starred form as follows: "Les difficultés sémantiques que présente l'identification de *trouver* à **TROPARE* ne sont en somme plus grandes que celles que présente l'identification de *trouver* à *TŪRBĀRE*..."⁷ Significantly, Paris and Thomas supposed a sequential link between the *trobar* of Provençal minstrels and the verb for 'to find' that, typologically, was converse to that assumed by Schuchardt: **TROPARE* had a specialized meaning in the poetics of Provence at the outset and from that the more general meaning 'to find' developed.

Besides the difficulties pointed out by Paris' opponents and recognized by Paris himself, there emerges a further stumbling block when one realizes that the concept he glossed as 'variations dans une mélodie' and 'une queue musicale ajoutée à certains chants liturgiques' was not the trope but the sequence. Tropes were the glosses of liturgical texts sung in Gregorian plainchant, effectively chained to the original liturgical passage glossed. Sequences, on the other hand, sometimes viewed as musical building blocks, being the melodic variations found at the end of liturgical chants, were freer to become eventually original compositions, independent of any of the initial restrictions.⁸

² EWRS (Bonn, 1853), pp. 331f.

³ "Romanische Etymologien II", *Sitz.-ber. Wien*, CXL1 (1899), 54ff., and *ZRPh*, XXVI (1902), 385-94; XXVII (1903), 97-105; XXVIII (1904), 36-55.

⁴ "Problèmes étymologiques", *Rom*, XXXI (1902), 6-12; reprinted, with additional bibliography, in Thomas, *Nouveaux Essais de philologie française* (P., 1904), pp. 334-43.

⁵ *Rom*, XXXI (1902), 7.

⁶ Thomas, loc. cit., and Paris, *Rom*, VII (1878), 418f.; XXXI, 12f. and 625-30. All three notes are reprinted, with additional material, in Paris, *Mélanges linguistiques* (P., 1906), pp. 615-26.

⁷ *Mélanges linguistiques*, p. 619.

⁸ Cf. esp. Albert Seay, *Music in the Medieval World* (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y., 1975), pp. 51-5.

Paris and Thomas assumed that the strength of the etymon they proposed was its phonetic viability, which contrasted favorably with the weakness, along this axis, of *TURBĀRE*. As the cornerstone of their argument, and in light of other major difficulties, the indisputable phonetic validity of a hypothetical form is less a cogent argument than an article of faith. **TROPĀRE* > *trobar* is also woefully lacking in any — attested, possible, or likely — intermediate forms that might give credence to the complex series of semantic shifts proposed by the advocates of the etymon. The only related forms, *ATTROPARE* (in a single 5th-century text, meaning 'to interpret one Biblical text through use of another') and *CONTROPARE* (a "Visigothic" legal term meaning 'to investigate, examine, compare') do little to buttress the argument. Thomas, in what from today's vantage looks like a defensively Neogrammarian position, summed up: "Comment ne pas reconnaître, avec M. Schuchardt, qu'il y a de terribles hiatus sémantiques entre *contropare*, *attropare* et 'trouver' ? Je me déclare humblement incapable de les combler, mais cela n'affaiblit en rien ma conviction que 'trouver' vient de **TROPARE*".⁹

The unresolved problem was addressed over thirty years later by Spitzer, who felt uncomfortable, as many others must have, with the choices between two equally untenable solutions.¹⁰ He focused on some of the salient facets of the problem; as a result, while some of his substantive conclusions may be but little superior to those of Schuchardt or Paris, he contributed significantly to the shaping of a reasonably structured discussion of the problem. Spitzer demolished Schuchardt's *TURBĀRE* etymon for the benefit of the few still in need of conviction of its inadequacy. The fact that it was effectively removed from further consideration by Spitzer, who plainly had no Neogrammarian ax to grind, is significant in establishing the etymon's fragility *per se*, outside the context of the heated theoretical controversy over the regularity of sound change and the value of conjectural forms that had characterized the Paris/Thomas dueling with Schuchardt. Moreover, Spitzer backed **TROPĀRE* only as a regression from attested *CONTROPĀRE*, thus seemingly bridging the gap between the two postures, implicitly maintaining that the problem may be reliably solved only by discovery of a base that can be persuasively proven to have existed and shown to be phonetically acceptable. The specifics of the derivation from *CONTROPĀRE*, however, remained no more convincing than they had been for Paris and Thomas.

Spitzer's article further confronted two other problems that had not previously been explicated. The author opened the question of whether, as W. Meyer-Lübke had originally contended,¹¹ we have before us the case of a split etymon, and argued: "Il faut des raisons péremptoires pour admettre

⁹ *Rom*, XXXI, 7.

¹⁰ "Trouver", *Rom*, LXVI (1940), 1-11.

¹¹ *REW* (Heidelberg, 1911), §8992, where incidental reference is also made to a base *TROPA* 'game played by throwing dice', a Hellenism (*ZRPh*, XXVII [1903], 105).

des homonymes indépendants" (4). His inquiry led him to conclude, and the validity of this observation has remained unchallenged, that the 'to find' meaning clearly antedated that of the specialized lexicon of the troubadours. However, in regard to the particulars of what *trobar* came to mean (and Spitzer reckoned with a case of sequential derivation), he apparently supposed that — given the proximity, verging on synonymy, of the various meanings proposed — no semantic nuance could be conclusively inferred from the poetic texts.

In light of the impasse which Spitzer's piece only accentuated and deepened,¹² and in light of the continued concern with the origins of troubadour poetry, it is surprising to note that a third alternative, a conceivably satisfactory Arabic etymon proposed by Julián Ribera y Tarragó in 1928,¹³ failed to invite any further critical attention. The counted references to Ribera's proposal to be found in the writings of Romance scholars peremptorily dismiss it as a conjecture unworthy of serious consideration; but more often than not, it has simply been ignored.¹⁴ Before calibrating the worthiness of the etymon, however, we must weigh certain theoretical assumptions made by those who have felt justified in dismissing it, for up to now the decision of whether or not it merits acceptance has hardly depended on any scrupulous examination of the etymon itself.

To summarize a highly complex fabric of *prises de position*, whose details varied from scholar to scholar,¹⁵ one feels that the lack of further attention to Ribera's suggestion stemmed from the conviction that it was implausible, nay impossible, that the troubadours should have borrowed such a term from speakers of Arabic. This foreclosure of the possibility of lexical borrowing has been explained in a variety of ways, ranging from the troubadours' assumed inability to read Classical Arabic to their supposed hostility to Islamic culture. Widespread changes in scholars' attitudes toward this sort of issue have been stimulated by the deciphering of the *hargās* and the extensive work done in other domains of medieval Islamic-Christian relations over the last half-century. Let us briefly note some of the more significant changes in relevant assumptions as they related to the etymological riddle at hand.

Work done in linguistics, particularly sociolinguistics, has shown that

¹² "There exist other blind alleyways in etymology due to the absence of significant variants. In analyzing *trobar* (*trouver*), which in an extensive territory means, or meant, either 'to find' or 'to compose'...scholars still face a classic alternative, pointed out by the celebrated controversy between A. Thomas and H. Schuchardt..." (Yakov Malkiel, "Etymology and the Structure of Word Families", *Word*, X [1954], 267).

¹³ *Disertaciones y opúsculos* (M., 1928), II, 140-3.

¹⁴ Alfred Jeanroy, *La poésie lyrique des troubadours* (P., 1934), I, 75n2, refers to it in passing: "Les étymologies arabes assignées par M. Ribera aux mots *troubadour*...[and others]...ne convaincront certainement personne". Cf. n30, below. Among the many who have not noted the etymon even in passing we point out Guiraud, Spitzer, and Malkiel, in studies mentioned above and below.

¹⁵ We have discussed these problems in greater detail in "Close Encounters in Medieval Provence: Spain's Role in the Birth of Troubadour Poetry", *HR*, XLIX (1981), 43-64.

ideological and social-class relations among people do not invariably dictate any logically parallel linguistic relationship among them.¹⁶ White Americans borrow, perhaps sub- or unconsciously, features of Black English they consciously consider inferior; all the efforts of the *Académie Française* accomplish little to stem the tide of Anglicisms in French; Soviet and Latin American youth, in some instances vigorously and articulately *anti-yanki*, betray in both speech and musical taste the degree to which they are influenced by the language and culture of the presumed enemy.

Bilingualism is far from requisite for the loan of language forms, particularly of isolated forms such as lexical items quickly absorbed into the phonological and morphological structures of the host language. Moreover, despite the lacunas in our documentation for any period of time before the most recent, we recognize that most changes in language, whether one cares to explain them structurally or through contact of one language group with another, take place in speech. Official canons, whether they make direct or indirect statements about some change in a given language, must be appraised in terms of plausible relations with speech and with some possible vested interest. The latter point is doubly true in the event of a discrepancy between the official "line" and the realities of language change, particularly via borrowing.

It is inadmissible to maintain that the Arabic etymon for Prov. *trobar* is *a priori* untenable, either because of the antagonism in the politico-religious sphere that prevailed between Christians and Muslims; or in view of the unlikelihood that the troubadours would have had direct access to Classical Arabic texts; or else because they themselves do not cite Arabic models.

Our knowledge and appreciation of the extent of significant interaction between, on the one hand, Christians, speakers of some variety of Romance, and, on the other, inhabitants of the Peninsula, of whichever of the three religions, probably polyglot and surely not unfamiliar with the Islamic culture of Al-Andalus, has increased considerably of late. The emerging global picture is one rich in significant encounters in a wide spectrum of endeavors, from the relatively banal (intermarriages, exchange of singing slave-girls) to the culturally elevated (the Toledo School of translators, extant before Alfonso the Learned made it his own).¹⁷

Finally, despite vigorous disagreement over the nature and extent of such literary bonds as may have existed, few specialists at present would deny that such interaction could have taken place, particularly in the areas of orally transmitted or recited poetry. It is no longer unreasonable to con-

ture, against the background of such interaction, that speakers of one Romance dialect (Provençal, say) could have borrowed a term pertaining to entertainment from another group of Romance speakers (residents of Catalonia, perhaps) who in turn had close contacts with the prestigious bilingual culture of Arab-ruled Spain. Any fair consideration of the etymology should proceed on the basis of philological criteria. With these broad assumptions in mind we feel justified in returning to the third possibility, the Arabic etymon once proposed for *trobar*, *trobador*.

III. 'To make, play, sing a song'/'To sing'. At least three scholars engaged in etymologizing *trobar* have concluded that in the lexicon of the troubadours *trobar* had the specialized meaning 'to sing' or some slight variant thereof ('to play a song, sing a song, entertain by singing', etc.). The first scholar to claim that this was indeed the distinctive meaning of *trobar*, as part of the poetic lexicon of the troubadours, was Julián Ribera, in a paper absorbed into his *Disertaciones y opúsculos*, where he defined troubadours as "músicos-poetas que componían canciones en forma estrófica..." (140), identifying Ar. *ṭarab* 'song' as the etymological kernel of *trobar*.

Richard Lemay, while disagreeing with Ribera on which Arabic root had been the source of *trobar*, confirmed, through meticulous textual examination, his opponent's contention that the distinctive feature of the troubadours' activity was musical performance and the singing of songs.¹⁸ He showed, echoing Spitzer, that the separate meaning of 'to find' antedated any specialized poetic connotation and that the verbs, though homonymous, were by no means synonyms, or so much as related. Clashing with Spitzer on the precise meaning of *trobar*, he noted: "Par contre, employés en relation avec le nouvel art, les termes de *trobar* et de *trobador* ne désignent pas l'invention, la découverte, mais bien l'art de chanter ou de jouer d'un instrument pour accompagner la voix". Part of his most convincing exhibit are the following well-known verses by Marcabru:

Bel m'es con s'esclarzia l'onda	Lo chantz per lo(s) becs toronda
E geys auzels pel jardin	Mais eu trop miels qe negus...(995n2)
S'esjauzis segon son latin:	

Advancing from an entirely different methodological perspective, and apparently unaware of the work that Ribera and Lemay had done, Pierre Guiraud drew much the same conclusion five years later in an article on "Les structures étymologiques du *trobar*".¹⁹ Guiraud's analysis, closely based on Paul Zumthor's spadework, focused, as the title indicates, on the synchronic semantic paradigm into which *trobar* enters, and culminated in the statement: "*Chanter, aimer, trouver* sont sinon synonymes, en tout cas interchangeables" (412). The overlap with Lemay's conclusions becomes

¹⁶ Cf. esp., among many other sources, the œuvre of Uriel Weinreich and William Labov, as well as the relevant sections of Dell Hymes, ed., *Language in Culture and Society* (N.Y., 1964).

¹⁷ See Dorothee Metlitski, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven, 1977), esp. Chap. 1; A. J. Denomy, "Concerning the Accessibility of Arabic Influences to the Earliest Provençal Troubadours", *MS*, XV (1953), 147-58; and the lengthy Introduction to Fathi Nasser, *Emprunts lexicologiques du français à l'arabe* (P., 1966).

¹⁸ Richard Lemay, "A propos de l'origine arabe de l'art des troubadours", *Annales, économies, sociétés, civilisations*, XXI (1966), 990-1011.

¹⁹ *Poétique*, VIII (1971), 417-26.

clearer if one examines another text of Marcabru's, also cited by Lemay (995n3), which would support Guiraud's argument as well:

Lo Freitz frim e la bruina	Anz del chan la contesso.
Contra la gentil sazo	Ai!
Pels plais e per la gaudina	Ieu'm met de trobar en plai
	E dirai d'amor cum vai...

The consensus among these three scholars on the semantic scope of *trobar* was buttressed by other observations: Thus, there was agreement among them, which extended to other critics, that *trobar* denoted an action specific to that group of poets and distinctive from other poetic activities they were familiar with.²⁰ This assumption is strengthened by the fact that a derivative from that verb designated those poets, singling them out as distinctive and different from others. The minimally distinctive feature of the new poetry identified by *trobar* was the recitation of a song within a courtly and vernacular context. *Chanter* had been preëempted by ecclesiastic connotations; witness *plainchant*. Observe in this context that the German calque of *trobador*, namely *Minnesinger*, accurately reflects the association with singing of profane love songs.

This concurrence of opinions on the nuclear poetic meaning of *trobar* implies no parallel agreement on the etymon that engendered the word at issue. Guiraud, who downgrades traditional diachronic concerns, adduced the old *TROPĀRE base, with scant enthusiasm and clear awareness that positing that source for *trobar* contradicted many conclusions of his about how and why *trobar* meant what it did.²¹ Lemay and Ribera each postulated a different Arabic source for *trobar*, but their respective etyma, virtually synonymous, might also have been homonymous for a non-Arabic ear. In weighing these two hypotheses one should recapitulate some broad-gauged observations on the phonological, morphological, and semantic structures of Arabic, to the extent they would affect the vicissitudes of an Arabism in Romance.²²

The vast majority of Semitic words represent trilateral roots which des-

²⁰ Lemay, pp. 991f.; Guiraud: "Le problème, — et qui mystifie la critique — est que ce thème (Amour/Poésie/Chanson) est entièrement neuf dans la littérature, de même que le sont la métrique et la rhétorique du *trobar*...on doit conclure que nous ne savons d'où viennent ni cette façon nouvelle de concevoir l'amour ni les formes originales dans lesquelles elle s'exprime. Au moins savons-nous d'où viennent les mots" (418).

²¹ "Certes, il est difficile de relier directement la *chanson* au *trope*: les deux métriques et les deux thématiques sont différentes" (421).

²² We are presumably past the stage evoked by the following statement made by Jeanroy: "Puisque la poésie arabe est pour nous autres provençalistes un livre scellé, c'est à nos collègues arabisants à venir à nous" (*La poésie lyrique des troubadours*, I, 75). Besides the special dictionaries cited below, the reader may also refer to Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (N.Y., 1971). The authoritative work on Maghrebi Arabic, and on borrowings into Romance viewed in phonetic perspective, is Arnald Steiger, *Contribución a la fonética del hispano-árabe y de los arabismos en el ibero-románico y el siciliano* (M., 1932); unless otherwise noted, the information below is drawn from this work. Two other useful references are Fathi Nasser, *Emprunts*, and G. B. Pellegrini, *Gli arabismi nelle lingue neolatine* (Brescia, 1972).

ignate, in abstract fashion, a given semantic field. One resultant difficulty for the non-native listener is that the semantic sector designated by one root may encompass a spectrum of meanings not necessarily associated with one another in I.E. languages; at times it may seem difficult to grasp how such semantic variety could have been bracketed under one rubric. In sharp contrast to this obstacle for the outsider, the morphological system presiding over these roots is apt to be regular: Individual forms are predictably extracted from the appropriate root through use of set morphological patterns whose apparent irregularities in fact involve morphophonemically conditioned variants. Thus, to take as an example the root proposed by Ribera as the etymon of *trobar*, *ṬRB* corresponds to two semantic fields: (a) 'to provoke (or become affected with) emotion, excitement, agitation, or unsteadiness of the heart or mind by reason of extreme joy or grief or of intense fear or joy'; (b) 'to sing, make music, entertain by singing'.²³ While the former meaning predominated in Classical Arabic, the latter prevailed in the lexicon of Al Andalus.²⁴

Several forms derived from *ṬRB* deserve special mention. *MUṬRIB*, the agentive ('one who sings, singer'), continues to mean 'singer' in modern Arabic, corroborating the assumption that the 'singing' facet of the root was far from subsidiary. (Typologically, it runs parallel to *MUSLIM* 'he who surrenders', from *SLM* 'to surrender'.) The most commonly used verbal form is *ṬARABA*, which, in addition to serving as the 3d ps. sg. perf. ('he sang'), also designated the concept in the abstract. Finally, Ribera's choice was the action noun *ṬARAB* ('song') — the most widely attested form of all those listed by R. Dozy.

The predominance of the meaning 'to sing' in Hispano-Arabic, inexplicably, eluded the attention of Lemay. He felt that the meaning first listed in standard Arabic dictionaries was too abstract to qualify as the etymon of *trobar*. While such may indeed be the case, Lemay also overlooked a distinct semantic connection between the two meanings, one reminiscent of other kinds of cause-effect semantic bridges: Extreme joy or grief can indeed be produced by listening to songs. Historians of music in particular insist on this thread between the two meanings of the root.²⁵ Moreover, the effects ascribed to *ṬRB* in dictionaries of Classical Arabic recall those of troubadoursque *joi*. Guiraud stressed that the link between *trobar* and *chanter*, on the one hand, and, on the other, *aimer* and *joi* is singularly close, and at least one other scholar, aloof from this particular problem, has noted the vital thematic connection between the troubadours' *joi* and the *ṬRB* of Clas-

²³ E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1874), pp. 1835f.

²⁴ R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (Leiden, 1881), II, 29. Dozy's principal sources here were three glossaries from medieval Spain.

²⁵ Cf. especially Simon Jargy, *La musique arabe* (P., 1971), p. 50: "Le mot *Ṭarab*, qui a exprimé pour les Arabes de tout temps l'effet produit par la musique sur l'être humain, équivaut à l'incantation magique où la sensibilité psychique et affective atteint à un paroxysme que le langage humain ne saurait décrire".

sical Arabic poetry.²⁶ This further tie, if demonstrable, would certainly add to the weight of the argument.

Further evidence for the genetic affinity between *ṭRB* and musico-poetic terms in Spain flows from several texts pointed out by James Monroe.²⁷ In the Old Spanish version of *La doncella Teodor*, traceable to Arabic, we read: "...e aprendí tanner *laúd* e *canón* e las treýnta e tres *trobas*...". Although we lack the exact version from which this passage was translated, at least one version of the story involves *ṭRB* in this context. Additionally, in the late-15th-c. *Cancionero de Hernando del Castillo*, Juan Poeta, to whom a *copla* is addressed, figures as Juan *Taraví*. The persistent identification of *ṭRB*, in some form, with singing and poetry, is patent in either case. The further connection between the musical and the ecstatic semantic components of the root follows from the Arabic version of that tale.

It was perhaps through ignorance of these clear associations of *ṭRB* with 'singing' that Lemay postulated an alternative Arabic etymon, semantically closely akin: *ḍRB*. That root called to mind Lat. *TANGERE* 'to strike, beat' and, by extension, 'to play an instrument, play a song'. In the realm of musical performance and entertainment, the two concepts tended to become practically synonymous. Moreover, the phonetic affinity was, if I may be excused for punning, striking. While the last two consonants of the two roots, /r/ and /b/, had their counterparts in Romance, the *p* and *ṭ* were idiosyncratic to Arabic. A minimal pair of interdental fricatives, /ḏ/ voiced, /t̪/ voiceless, they are also "emphatics" or "domals", being articulated with some pressure of the glottis, and this slight velarization pulls back the point of articulation of a neighboring vowel.

In Maghrebi speech, characteristic stress and intonation patterns would have further considerably altered the shape of a word such as Class. *ṬARAB*: The stress, characteristically, shifts to the final syllable, with the final vowel also moving from /a/ to /o/ (/ṭorab /> /ṭorób/). Subsequent weakening and loss of the pretonic vowel follows, so that what is written in Class. Ar. as *ṬARAB* in fact becomes /ṭrob/ in allegro speech. The assimilation of such a form to the speech habits of non-natives, in this instance of speakers of Hispano-Romance (bilingual or not), would have further entailed the phonemic accommodation of the /t̪/ to a /t/. *ḌARAB(A)* would have followed an identical trajectory, except that at the point of adoption by Romance the initial consonant might have been absorbed as either a /t/ or a /d/. While Lemay (1998–1004) has found a MS attesting the intermediate form *drab* for *ḌARABA*, translated as *tangere*, examples of both are in existence.²⁸

²⁶ Moshé Lazar, *Amour courtois et 'fin-amors' dans la littérature du XII^e siècle* (P., 1964), p. 106. Lazar closely follows here A. J. Denomy's research.

²⁷ *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship* (Leiden, 1970), pp. 166f., n1.

²⁸ The information in the preceding paragraphs on the phonetics of vernacular Hispano-Arabic and of borrowings into Romance is substantiated, with appropriate examples, by Steiger (esp. 47–50, 86–91, 149f., 160–62, and 311).

Although there are few instances of verbs borrowed from Arabic, those on record confirm the contention of both Ribera and Lemay that such verbs jelled through the addition of *-ar* to a nominal form.²⁹ There is further corroborative proof of such borrowing in the abundance of other musical nomenclature transmitted in this direction, most of it well-known: *añafil*, *guitarra*, *laúd*, *tambor*, etc.³⁰ *Rebec* was even a direct borrowing from Arabic into Old Provençal; also, it has been proposed, though not unanimously accepted, that OProv. *sègle* is related to Ar. *ZAĞAL*.³¹

Given this crushing evidence we feel the conjecture originally advanced by Ribera can now be restated as follows: Class. Ar. *ṬARAB* 'song' was pronounced /ṭrob/ in the Arabic vernacular of Southern Spain. Its use by bilinguals and/or non-speakers of Arabic would have yielded the noun /trob/ and a verbal offshoot /trobar/ 'to make, sing, perform a song'. At that stage there could have occurred some blend with /trobar/ or /drobar/ from *ḍRB* 'to play or perform a song'; the admixture would have resulted in *trobar* — an element of the lexicon related to the sung vernacular poetry of the bilingual community whose *ḥargās* and *zağals* survived after adoption by the community of poets working with written Classical Arabic. The appeal to such a word, particularly where members of the bilingual community came into contact with those who had had no such intimate contacts with the "Moors", could well have acquired the additional *chic* of a foreign term as well as an association with the recitation of songs not only composed in a vernacular but essentially profane, or at least dealing with profane love. The subsequent adoption of such a lexical item, boasting a meaning distinct from that of other Latin-based musico-poetic terms and adorned with the *panache* of an exotic origin, might have taken place in any of the numerous instances where speakers of Provençal or Catalan rubbed shoulders with individuals familiar at first hand with the hybrid culture of Al-Andalus. The acceptance of this trajectory (Hisp.-Ar. *trobar* → OProv. *trobar*) in no way presupposes any parallel genetic link between the songs or poetic credos and practices of these two cultures, or even any specific detailed knowledge of them by individuals or groups suspected of having adopted the term.

This solution carries a number of advantages over the others that have been proposed over the years. It is viable phonetically and morphologically; requires no semantic contortions or leaps to arrive from the meaning of the base to that of its product. It is amply attested in a variety of ways: in the

²⁹ R. Dozy and W. H. Engelmann, *Glossaire des mots espagnols et portugais dérivés de l'arabe* (Leiden, 1869), pp. 2–3.

³⁰ Today's reader wonders why Jeanroy, in *La poésie lyrique des troubadours*, I, 75, would have made the following statement: "On ne constate enfin dans les deux langues, et cela me paraît tout à fait probant, aucun rapport entre les vocabulaires techniques de la poésie, de la musique, et même de la danse : aucun terme désignant soit une forme lyrique, soit un instrument, soit une danse, n'a passé de l'une dans l'autre". Jeanroy's peremptory dismissal of Ribera's etymon (cf. n14, above) was the footnote to such thinking.

³¹ Steiger, p. 328, and esp. Lemay, p. 997.

dictionaries of Classical Arabic, particularly those tilted toward the language of Spain; in the poetry of Al-Andalus; in later survivals, such as *MUTRIB* and *Taraví*. Intermediate forms needed for the transition assumed are regular and confirmed by parallel forms. Finally, the etymology favored assumes a series of steps for the transmission of a lexical item from Classical Arabic to Old Provençal that is thoroughly plausible with respect to the socio-cultural background.

One major problem remains unresolved: the provenience of *trobar*, *trouver* 'to find', and its possible links to *trobar*, *trobador*. "A titre de première approximation": *Trobar* 'to find' is a homonym whose genesis antedates the rise of innovative *trobar* 'to sing'. The homonyms remained distinct as long as there was in the air a distinct concept of *trobador* poetry that needed articulation. *Trobar* 'to find' at no time lost a distinctive referent whereas *trobar* 'to sing a profane song' was a concept that fossilized, dragging its signifier with it. The moot question of where that older *trobar* came from is still to be resolved, but we are confident that Spitzer's demand of peremptory reasons for postulating diverse etyma for two homonyms is fulfilled through rediscovery of a viable etymon which, without purporting to account for *trobar*, *trouver*, at least promises to settle the question of *trobar*, *trobador*.

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EDITORIAL POST-SCRIPT: OLD PROVENÇAL *trobar*, OLD SPANISH *fallar*

PERHAPS the single most appealing ingredient of María Rosa Menocal's spirited espousal of a half-forgotten etymological conjecture is her resolve to cut in two a frighteningly tangled lexical problem. That issue has become almost inextricably knotted chiefly because her predecessors have each tended to take it upon themselves to offer an explanation for all its facets, whether these investigators actually were, or were not, qualified and prepared to explore such a patch of ground.

There is, on the one hand, the familiar French verb *trouver* (OFr. *trover*) 'to find', at present of extraordinary currency and sweeping semantic range, which for over a century has been clamoring for etymological identification, inspiring major figures of historical linguistics to engage in protracted wrangling, sparring, and verbal dueling. And there is, on the other, OProv. *trobar* 'to compose, poetize', flanked by the agentive *trob-aire*, *-ador* 'poet-musician, troubadour' (occasionally acting as a minstrel), a word which has rayed out into such adjacent cultural areas as were vitally affected by medieval Occitan musical and poetic performances as well as literary models at the height of the Middle Ages. Witness Fr. *trouvère* and Sp. *trovador*, occasionally *trov-ero*, accompanied by a relational adjective of exquisiteness

in *-esco*, plus, on a less pretentious level, this cluster of semijocose formations: *trovar* 'to write verse', fig. 'to misconstrue, parody'; *trova* 'verse, lyric, love song, parody', [Am.] 'fib, lie', and *trovo* 'popular love song'. In Tuscan, one can readily distinguish, on the strength of the respective derivational suffixes, between (a) an Old French strain: *trov-ero*, var. *-iero*, and (b) a parallel Old Provençal strain: *trovatore* (made famous through the title of a popular modern opera), var. *-adore* — a minor imbroglio in itself; but Tuscan, much like Old French and Old Provençal, has placed at the disposal of its speakers only a single root morpheme, namely *trov-*, for 'finding' and 'composing', thus raising the same problem as did its congeners: Are we here confronted by a pair of independent homonyms, typologically comparable to (obs.) E. *cleave*₁ 'to adhere', remembered from a celebrated formula of the wedding ceremony (cf. G. *kleben* 'to stick'), vs. *cleave*₂ 'to divide into two parts by a cutting blow' (cf. the name of the corresponding tool, *cleaver*), two verbs which initially were not at all alike and only at a relatively late stage, through the whim of evolutionary circumstances, briefly assumed an identical shape before one of them started to dislodge the other? Or are we, conversely, witnesses to an unusual instance of polysemy, with, genetically, a single verb developing a pair of hard-to-reconcile meanings and, if this is so, should the analyst start from 'to find' or 'to compose' in his search for the word's distant origin and subsequent semantic itinerary?

By cutting the gordian knot the way she does, by bluntly declaring, that is, her temporary indifference to the ultimate provenience of *trobar*/*tro(u)ver* 'to find'; and by circumscribing her current preoccupation as centered about the use of *trobar* (and its offshoots) in reference to an artistic activity, the author plunges us into a — by now thoroughly familiar — world of the High Middle Ages, essentially the fabric of R. Menéndez Pidal's programmatic article "Poesía árabe y poesía europea", with Islamicized Southern Spain emerging as a focal area for a new-style aggregate of vocal, instrumental, and terpsichorean performing arts — its influence diffused toward the north of the Peninsula and even across and beyond the Pyrenees. Through a most remarkable coincidence (if this is the right phrase in such a context), some of the earliest stirrings of Romance vernacular lyrical poetry — to the accompaniment of music — in Christian Europe became directly observable, on Provençal soil, at but a slightly later juncture. Applying to this concatenation of events, and to the configuration of their record, the age-old *dictum* that temporal disparity, however moderate (*post hoc*), invariably prompts the critical mind to posit a causal link (*propter hoc*), one could have confidently expected some linguistically sophisticated cultural historians specializing in that period, which Julián Ribera assuredly was in the highest degree, to come up with some Arabic etymological base for *trobar* — accounting for the process of just one neatly detachable part of an enormously complicated whole, for the most part still left in a penumbra. They were greatly aided in this surgical endeavor by some serious blunders of strategy and tactics committed by their ideological opponents — those in search of a single, preferably simple, solution for a very convoluted problem.

What the "integralists" (starting with the pioneers of the comparative approach, such as Diez) have neglected to provide is some concrete historical context of comparably neat delineation into which *trobar* 'to find' — obviously old, as every participant in the debate, down to Dr. Menocal, has commonsensically admitted

— could have cogently fitted. To put it differently and more specifically, should one go back to the 2d, the 4th, the 6th, or the early 8th century (i.e., well ahead of the inception of Hispano-Arabic cultural symbiosis) in one's quest for the cradle of the controversial verb? And, after rejecting, with Schuchardt's *TURBĀRE*, also the fisherfolk as the plausible propagators of the innovation, to what alternative *milieu* should we turn in casting about for a suitable breeding ground? Also, are we really all that sure that, at the early cut-off point chosen along the chronological axis, Gallia Narbonensis — i.e., the future Provence — was the sole sought-for habitat?

If one decides to start with Late Lat., or Gr.-Lat., *CONTROPĀRE*, a technical term of artistic composition, then one misses a few intermediate steps between (a) the narrowly specialized meaning familiar, at best, to an élitist group of practitioners of a polished style and (b) the every-day word for one of the commonest experiences of the humblest human being, a semantic gap which makes the hypothesis implausible.

One point, incidentally, on which well-read literary scholars could enlighten etymologists, is the extent, if any, to which the two sharply polarized meanings of *trouver/trobar*, or the temporary coexistence of two separate verbs which happened to share that form, gave rise to puns, in medieval literary genres that invited punning. Certain probabilistic conclusions, though hardly any clear-cut decision, could be drawn from such verbal parlor games, as reflected in our written sources. Word play on *trobar/torbar* 'to trouble, disturb' is on record; for one example see F. M. Chambers' note in *RPh*, XXXV:3, pp. 489–500, at 496.

Conceivably the entire discussion could have taken a radically different course if, instead of puzzling over the provenience of *tro(u)ver*, etc., scholars had started with an inquiry into the reasons for the decay of the verbs for 'to find' previously available to Romans. The basic choice for speakers of Latin lay between *INVENĪRE/REPERĪRE* and *NANCĪSCĪ*.

The first partner of the former molecule cut loose from its ties to *VENĪRE* 'to come' so radically that Ernout and Meillet deemed it appropriate to grant it separate listing (*DĒLL*₄, p. 321a). To use the excellent glosses provided by those two scholars, *INVENĪRE* is best likened to Fr. 'tomber sur, rencontrer, trouver, découvrir', with folk speech favoring such phrases as *sē invenĪRE* 'se retrouver' and with Terence offering the helpful combination *INVENĪRE VIAM*. The writets cite Russ. *na-iti* as a telling typological parallel. *INVENĪRE* tended to be replaced by iterative-intensive *INVENTĀRE*, derived like *CAPTĀRE*, *DICTĀRE*, *QUASSĀRE* (favored in lieu of or beside *CAPERĒ*, *DĪCERE*, and *QUATERĒ*), a re-assignment which of itself would not have endangered the word; but the secondary meaning ('avoir des facultés d'invention ou d'imagination') asserted itself far more strongly with the transfer of the verb to a new conjugation class (cf. Fr. *inventer*, E. *invent*, etc.), making its continued use as the generic term for 'to find' (usually by chance) distinctly inadvisable.

Its partner *REPERĪRE* (the two verbs were used interchangeably by Plautus) underwent a similar process: the umbilical cord that once tied it to the verb *PARĒRE* 'to give birth' broke at a certain point — so violently as to allow its wholesale transfer to a different conjugation class (see *DĒLL*₄, p. 483b, where *IACĒRE* 'to cast' beside *AMICĪRE* 'to throw about, or around, one's garment' is adduced as the nearest parallel). *REPERĪRE*, isolated from its familial moorings, before long became a literary word — like E. *cast*, *shed*, *fling*.

Through a strange coincidence, the one verb which offered a slightly divergent range of semantic nuances (*DĒLL*₄ renders it by 'rencontrer, trouver, obtenir', which call to mind purposeful search as a precondition for actual finding), namely archaic *NANC-ĪRĪ-ĪRE*, showed no vitality, and its substitute, inchoative *NANCĪSCĪ*, extracted like *APĪSCĪ* 'to reach after, seize' and *PACĪSCĪ* 'to agree, contract, bargain', suffered from the start from certain ailments, as one can infer from the consistent absence of derivatives and compounds, and from the protracted wavering, in the niche reserved for the past participle, between *NACTUS* and *NANCTUS*. The only Romance language that shows traces of this ailing verb is, characteristically, Sardinian (Meyer-Lübke, *REW*₃, 5816).

Whatever the circumstances in each individual case, Latin, as if through a conspiracy, quickly lost one by one its three basic verbs for 'finding', a chain of losses precipitating a crisis, since no Western-culture language can be imagined as long remaining unequipped for this basic lexical need. Whenever such an epidemic of losses occurs, it is virtually predictable that speakers will grope for emergency solutions, promoting to a rank of prominence some long-hidden, inconspicuous words, or indulging in some otherwise bizarre-looking borrowing process.

Just how entirely "implausible" substitute words can be called upon, in an emergency situation, to make do, in the absence of more "suitable", hence more likely, replacements is demonstrated by the use of *espreitar* 'to ambush, stalk' in Portuguese. *Espreitar* is an adaptation to local conditions of OProv. *espleitar*, a cognate in turn of Fr. *exploiter*; the reason for the appeal made to an Occitanism to perform such a service as conveying the idea of 'ambushing' is, at first glance, not at all clear. As a matter of fact, the original local verb endowed with that meaning was *asseitar*, transparently a congener of OSp. *assechar*, mod. *acechar* < *ASSECTĀRĪ* 'to follow closely'. Now it so happens that, for "accepting", the speakers of Portuguese have been using *aceitar*, from iterative-intensive *ACCEPTĀRE* based on *ACCIPERE*. Originally, as long as *ss* served to express /s/ and *c*^e was tantamount to /s/, *asseitar* and *aceitar* were merely near-homonyms; but as soon as the complex phoneme was simplified through de-affrication, full homophony prevailed, a state of affairs apparently unbearable in the long run, for why would speakers otherwise have resorted to borrowing *espleitar*, then camouflaging it as *espreitar*? The classic examples of such disambiguating replacements made on the spur of the moment are of course, the intrusions of '[wild] pheasant' and 'vicar' upon the domain of 'cock' endangered by intolerable similarity to 'cat' in SW France, as established by J. Gilliéron and M. Roques.

It can be argued that if such were the case, other erratic or baffling instances of replacements of *INVENĪRE*, *REPERĪRE*, and *NANCĪSCĪ* should have come to light; and analogues of *trovar*, etc., as regards sheer irregularity, can indeed be pointed out. Thus, Ptg. *achar* is a perfect reflex of *AFFLĀRE*

'to blow on, breathe into', 'bear or bring to', so far as sound development is concerned, judging from such near-parallels as *inchar* < INFLĀRE 'to swell, puff up' and *encher* < IMPLĒRE 'to fill up, fill full' (cf. *preencher* 'to fill out'). As for the best real-life context, the retrieving of the quarry by hounds seems to involve a 'bearing to, bringing to' operation that smoothly lends itself to the alternative interpretation as 'finding'. OSp. *fallar* (> mod. *hallar*), on the other hand, causes two serious difficulties, one of which — namely the prothesis of *f* — that verb at least shares with a handful of other words (including *finojo* 'knee', conceivably from the stereotyped phrase *fincar los *enojos*). The remaining difficulty, however, uniquely places *fallar* in a separate category; it involves the unexpected emergence of a *-ll-* /*λ*/ in a slot where *-ch-*, exactly as in Galician-Portuguese, might have been expected. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the three clusters CL-, FL-, and PL-, placed word-medially after consonant in a Latin prototype, yielded OSp. and mod. *-ch-* /*č*/, to the rigorous exclusion of *-ll-* /*λ*/; witness *conchabar* (which ought to be spelled with a *-v-*) 'to join, unite' (with many colloquial figurative meanings, especially in New World Spanish) < CONCLĀVĀRE and *ancho* 'broad, wide; full, ample, lax, loose-fitting' < AMPLU 'full all round, spacious'. How one reconciles this development with the seemingly discrepant evolutions of, say, *llave* 'key' < CLĀVE and *clavo* 'nail' < CLĀVU is a different matter, which cannot be taken up at this juncture; suffice it to say that *ancho* and *conchabar* exemplify the same tendency as *choza* 'hut, cabin, lodge' < PLŪTEA and as *chubasco* (which also invites a revision of its spelling, in favor of *-v-* as the word's central pillar) 'shower' side by side with *lluvia*. Also related to this peculiar development — albeit less palpably so — have been words such as *macho*₁ 'sledgehammer' < MARTULU (-CULU), *macho*₂ 'male' < MASCULU, and the like, while the OSp. var. *maslo* has been traditionally set aside as semilearned (borrowed from the more pretentious language of veterinarians?). According to one school of thought, *ch-* and *-ch-* represent a much older layer than *ll-*, with *l-* and *cl-*, etc. involving individual divergences. Be that as it may, no other Spanish word, to my knowledge, contains *-ll-* as a representative of ancestral word-medial FL (PL, CL) after consonant. Whatever the vicissitudes of *hallar* may have been before its surfacing as *fallar* in medieval texts, its deviation from the straight path is fully as shocking as would be the diphthongization of *trobare* in rhizotonic forms on the assumption of its descent from TŪRBĀRE. Yet nobody questions the legitimacy of the AFFLĀRE basis, which owes much of its acceptability to Rum. *aflà*, to certain characteristic South Italian forms, etc.

The third cluster of substitute forms involves offshoots from the prep. CONTRĀ 'against': Fr. (*r*)*encontrer* (cf. E. *encounter*), It. (*r*)*in-*, *ris-contrare*, etc. The obvious model was INTRĀRE 'to enter', from INTRĀ 'inside'. SUPERĀRE 'to surpass', viewed in the perspective of the Latinist, was ex-

tracted from the adj. SUPERUS 'placed above', the opposite of INFERUS, rather than from the pref., prep., and adv. SUPER (see Ernout-Meillet, *DÉLL*₄, p. 668a); but in Old Spanish the surviving members of the family were *sobre* and (semantically reinterpreted) *sobrar* 'to exceed' > 'be more than enough', 'be left, remain', with the result that *encontrar* could the more easily be paired off with *contra*.

These are some of the thoughts that would occur to many late-20th-century readers of a chronicle of the lively old controversy. [Y.M.]