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Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician*. Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 2011. ix + 367 pp. Illustrations, music examples, notes, bibliography, and index. \$59.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN-10-0801449332.

Review by Jennifer Saltzstein, University of Oklahoma.

The scholarly bibliography devoted to the fourteenth-century French poet and composer Guillaume de Machaut is copious and wide-ranging. Over the past decade, Elizabeth Eva Leach has emerged as a prolific critical voice in Machaut studies, offering insight into his *balades*, counterpoint, and notation, as well as philosophical issues of grammar and ontology as they apply to themes present in fourteenth-century music. In her monograph, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician*, Leach seeks to provide an updated companion to Lawrence Earp's indispensable *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research*.<sup>[1]</sup> Whereas the book's title might lead readers to expect a conventional biography and overview of Machaut's musical and poetic works, Leach offers something quite different. The true aim of this book would appear to be less biographical than methodological, illustrating the benefits of integrating the study of Machaut's poetry, music, and manuscripts.

This purpose is latent in the book's subtitle, "Secretary, Poet, Musician," which signals three primary occupations Machaut held over the course of his long life. The products of these three intertwined medieval pursuits fall between modern disciplinary boundaries. Leach argues that the divisions between art history, literary studies, and musicology, which she refers to as "the modern academy's fractured disciplinarity" (p. 325), serve Machaut's works poorly. Modern scholarship "dismembers" Machaut by trisecting his corpus; her goal is to, in a sense, "remember" him by exploring his works through all three disciplinary lenses simultaneously. Leach's readings combine literary analysis and music analysis with consideration of the *mise en page*, ordering, and materiality of the manuscripts that transmit Machaut's works (the "technology of the book"), showing how these can inflect and contribute to literary and musical meaning. Cross-disciplinary approaches to the medieval manuscript have often been subsumed under the heading of the "New Medievalism" or "New Philology," and have previously been adopted by musicologists such as David J. Rothenberg, Anne Walters Robertson, and particularly Emma Dillon.<sup>[2]</sup> Within literary studies of Machaut's oeuvre, this integrated approach is exemplified by Sylvia Huot's seminal monograph, *From Song to Book*, and is also key to Deborah McGrady's recent study of Machaut's *Voir dit*, *Controlling Readers*.<sup>[3]</sup> Leach contributes to this growing body of research, offering an integrated perspective on Machaut's works.

Leach does not provide an exhaustive overview of Machaut's corpus. Rather, she chooses a series of themes found throughout his music and poetry as the nuclei around which her own readings are arrayed. The book's core is comprised of three chapters entitled "Creation" (chapter three), "Hope" (chapter four), and "Fortune" (chapter five). Although these interpretations touch on nearly all sectors of Machaut's output, they are focused most attentively on his prolog, *balades*, and two *dits* in particular: the *Voir dit* and the *Remede de Fortune*. Many of the individual

analyses in these chapters can be found in Leach's prior publications, but they are rethought and reframed such that readers familiar with her work will be rewarded with new insights. Among the most novel and productive of these is the substantial evidence Leach provides that Machaut's songs, particularly the *balades*, often present in miniaturized form ideas that are central to his overall poetics. Leach compellingly interprets a number of pieces that, when examined through both their text and their music, offer a pithy distillation of the didactic message Machaut directs at courtiers in his *dits*.

This phenomenon occurs within individual polytextual songs as well as across small "song cycles" of related works that are linked through intertextual connections, codicological placement, or both. B29 encapsulates the message of Machaut's prologue; B12 and B13, when read against one another, impart the message of the *Remede de Fortune*. Leach argues that these songs contain a distillation of Machaut's most important lessons; they can be performed and absorbed perhaps more readily than the long narrative poems. In her words, B13 presents "a gnomic, emblematic, cogent, and harmonious statement of the most important tenet of Machaut's courtly doctrine. Given that it lasts under six minutes and could be sung by two people—or even by a single vocalist playing his or her own instrument—its performance at court could have been easily achieved, permitting it to serve a much-repeated didactic purpose, simultaneously consoling, edifying, and enjoyable" (p. 138). Her interpretation focuses on the didactic functions of Machaut's works in their courtly context and, along those same lines, she suggests a compelling pedagogical framework for musicologists and literary scholars to combine the study of Machaut's *dits* and *balades* in the classroom.

Framing the central three interpretative chapters are three others whose overall purpose is methodological or historiographical. Chapter one provides a review of the secondary literature on Guillaume de Machaut. Leach sidelines earlier studies that had relied on Machaut's literary works to fill in historical gaps. Based on accounts of the surviving documentation, she concludes that very little is known about Machaut's life. Leach summarizes at length a recent and somewhat heated debate between Calvin Bower and Anne Walters Robertson over the length of Machaut's residency in Reims, siding with the former in his conclusion that Machaut was not in residence on a permanent basis until about 1360. This debate has consequences that Leach returns to later in chapter six.

In chapter two, Leach outlines the historiography of Machaut studies in music and literature. Her account stresses that the scholarship proceeded on parallel tracks. Late nineteenth-century philologists such as Alfred Jeanroy were dismissive of what they saw as Machaut's banal recycling of themes from troubadour and trouvère song. Later, modernists such as Robert Guiette lauded Machaut's formal sophistication. Nineteenth-century musicologists viewed Machaut's counterpoint as primitive because of its lack of tonal organization, whereas the "emancipation of the dissonance" in the modernist circles of the mid-twentieth century allowed greater appreciation of his musical language. Leach argues that the focus on the manuscripts that transmit Machaut's works was necessary to integrate the two disciplinary trajectories into "the Machaut of the Book" (p. 70).

Chapter six ostensibly deals with issues of death and commemoration, examining works such as B32 and the *déplorations* written in Machaut's memory. The most substantial preoccupation of this chapter, however, is a disagreement among musicologists surrounding Machaut's religious convictions and their relevance to the analysis of his works. Robertson's interpretation of Machaut's motets takes center stage, and Leach attempts to chart a middle ground between Robertson's account and its recent critics. The discussion (as well as several others in chapter

six) is arguably digressive, motivated somewhat flimsily by the issue of Machaut's will and the controversy surrounding his donation in support of a weekly Lady Mass at Reims cathedral.[4]

Since this book is directed self-consciously at a multi-disciplinary audience, it is worth briefly discussing its accessibility. Most of the republished material was drawn from articles in musicology journals geared toward specialist audiences; some of these analyses were quite technical in their original guise. Leach has made a heroic attempt to bridge the disciplinary divide by providing a detailed glossary of technical music-analytical terminology. Yet non-musicologist readers driven to this glossary will often find that to grasp an individual definition such as "directed progression," they will need to refer to as many as six other definitions. It would have been more helpful to literary scholars and art historians if Leach had included short explanations of these concepts within the text along with brief illustrations. Musicologists, on the other hand, will find some analytical discussions in the book quite vague, for example, the argument in chapter three that B29 is a musical "patchwork of highly characteristic Machauldian melodic gestures," a claim that is never demonstrated with any specificity (p. 117). Later references in this section to musical quotations, rhythmic motives, and other musical references are never identified by measure numbers that would allow readers to locate them in the score (p. 118). Space for these explanations could have been made by shortening the protracted plot summaries of the *dits*, which are sure to test the patience not only of literary scholars, but also the many musicologists familiar with these works. Further, literary scholars may wonder why Leach did not bring her readings of the *dits* more directly into dialogue with previous interpretations, noting her departures from and/or disagreement with other published accounts.[5]

In a book that includes a lengthy discussion of Machaut's posthumous reputation, both by his immediate successors and later scholars, it is a shame that Leach did not include a more meaningful examination of Machaut's literary and musical antecedents and influences. Recent research by Ardis Butterfield, Mark Everist, and Jacques Boogaart has encouraged us to reconsider the relationship between thirteenth- and fourteenth-century musical repertoires, arguing for greater connectedness than was previously assumed.[6] Although Leach notes that the *Dit de la panthère d'amours* by Nicole de Margival, who cites Adam de la Halle as an *auctor*, is a "clear precedent" for the authorial persona of Machaut, she offers little detail regarding this connection (p. 79). Her discussion of Adam de la Halle is similarly brief (p. 247-249). Yet overall, Leach's study is rich and well-executed. It is only natural in such cases to wish that the author had taken on more.

## NOTES

[1] Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1995).

[2] See David J. Rothenberg, "The Marian Symbolism of Spring, ca. 1200-ca. 1500: Two Case Studies," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59(2006): 319-398; Anne Walters Robertson, *Guillaume de Machaut and Reims: Context and Meaning in His Musical Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Emma Dillon, *Medieval Music-Making and the Roman de Fauvel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Dillon provides a helpful review of literature on the "New Philology."

[3] Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987) and Deborah McGrady,

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*Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and His Late Medieval Audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

[4] Some readers will also find this segment of the book reductive. It is framed in political terms, pitting American religiosity against European secularism. Although she claims her discussion does not hinge on the personal religious convictions of the scholars involved, Leach notes that in the most polarized of the recent exchanges on this issue, between Robertson and Bowers, the authors' position on religion "fit their national contexts perfectly" (p. 282 fn. 62).

[5] This is especially true in the interpretation of the *Voir dit*, which has a massive critical bibliography. Leach addresses the role of gossip, for example, without discussing McGrady's extensive analysis of this topic in *Controlling Readers*.

[6] See Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Mark Everist, "Motets, French Tenors, and the Polyphonic Chanson ca. 1300," *Journal of Musicology* 24(2007): 365-406; idem, "The Polyphonic *Rondeau* c.1300: Repertory and Context," *Early Music History* 15(1996): 59-96; and Jacques Boogaart, "Encompassing the Past and Present: Quotations and their Function in Machaut's Motets," *Early Music History* 20(2001): 1-86.

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