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Deborah McGrady and Jennifer Bain, eds., *A Companion to Guillaume de Machaut*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012. xx + 414 pp. Tables, figures, examples, bibliography, and index. €159.00 (hb); \$218.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-9004-22581-7.

Review by Jared C. Hartt, Oberlin College Conservatory of Music.

The current state of Machaut studies is at an all-time high. With the recent publication of the monograph *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* by Elizabeth Eva Leach, the ongoing project “Machaut in the Book” spearheaded by Deborah McGrady and Benjamin Albritton, and the in-progress edition of Machaut’s complete musical and poetic oeuvre led by R. Barton Palmer and Yolanda Plumley, it is fitting—and extremely well-timed—that a companion to this magisterial figure of the *Ars Nova* be compiled.[1]

Editors Deborah McGrady and Jennifer Bain have set an ambitious goal for themselves in this volume of eighteen essays: “As the first collection to propose itself as an introduction to Guillaume de Machaut that would endeavor to provide the non-specialist with a broad overview of his corpus and its treatment in modern research, the present *Companion* also strives to sketch out new avenues of scholarly inquiry” (p. 7). The contributors, many of whom are Machaut specialists, are thus challenged with providing on the one hand an accessible overview for scholars new to Machaut—and given the book’s title, *A Companion*, this ought to be its primary objective—while on the other hand providing stimulating dialogue for scholars already fluent in Machaut’s musical and literary language. Some contributors lean decidedly more in one direction than the other, but on the whole the authors and editors strike an appropriate balance of overview and groundbreaking scholarship throughout.

One of the most useful portions of the volume for the reader unfamiliar with Machaut is its introduction. McGrady and Bain succinctly summarize what little is known of Machaut’s biography, describe his poetic and musical oeuvre, provide an overview of his manuscripts, and paint a clear picture of the current status of Machaut scholarship. Throughout, the editors unsurprisingly point frequently to Lawrence Earp’s *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research*. [2] In fact, they propose that “the present collection positions itself as complementary to this essential scholarship” (p. 6). Although some editorial inconsistencies creep in here, for example, the use of “14<sup>th</sup> century” and “twentieth century” in the same sentence (p.10), these twelve pages should be regarded as essential reading for the Machaut novice, as they provide the necessary framework and context for many of the ensuing chapters.

The book proper divides into five sections. The first, which puts “Machaut in Perspective,” begins with Helen Swift’s exploration of the “Poetic I.” Setting the stage effectively by elucidating the prevalence of the autobiographical in Machaut studies, Swift goes on to demonstrate that *je* in fact assumes various guises throughout his oeuvre. The reader may be frustrated here and elsewhere—except, in fact, for Kirsten Yri’s contribution appearing much later in the volume—that modern French passages are not translated. (However, all of the Middle French quotations are also rendered in English.) Anne-Hélène Miller’s contribution follows a consideration of pre-humanism in Machaut’s time directed primarily at the non-specialist. The section concludes with Elizabeth Eva Leach’s essay, “Poet as Musician,” where Leach notes that Machaut has traditionally been regarded first as a poet, and only secondarily as a musician. She deftly (and rightfully) argues, though, that “poet and musician are completely fused in the

figure of Guillaume de Machaut, to the extent that they are [...] co-constitutive of each other within his output” (p. 51).

Section two, “Select Works in Disciplinary Dialogue,” features two pairs of complementary essays. The first pair is launched by Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, who provides an intensely close reading of one of Machaut’s most well-known compositions, the rondeau “Ma fin est mon commencement.” One of the many highlights of the chapter includes her observation that the physical act of turning the manuscript (MS G, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 22546) upside down in order to read its text in fact “reveals [the rondeau’s] meaning, namely a form, the circle” (p.70). We learn in a footnote that a reproduction of the folio in question is found in “Bain essay” [sic] (p. 70, n. 7). Admittedly, this reader missed this useful information on a first reading of the chapter. On the whole, more in-text dialogue between the essays throughout the volume would make for a more effective, and indeed interactive, reading experience.[3] Co-editor Jennifer Bain’s contribution follows, which places the same rondeau in context for the Machaut novice, provides a translation of the poetry, and clearly describes the work’s unique palindromic form. (To gain even more from Cerquiglini-Toulet’s expert analysis, I would recommend first reading this opening portion of Bain’s chapter. In fact, the ordering of these two chapters seems backwards, especially given the volume’s aim of appealing to the non-specialist.) Bain also clearly describes the sonorous language of Machaut and persuasively argues that many of Machaut’s musical compositions—such as the rondeaux and motets—were likely written for reader-listeners. That is, these aurally complicated works were likely read, as well as listened to, by the audience.

The second pair of chapters in section two turns to the concept of debate in Machaut’s poetry. Emma Cayley’s essay, also sensitive to the non-specialist, situates Machaut’s *Jugement* poems in the context of the debate genre as a whole, thereby providing a clear overview of the “debating climate” in medieval France (p. 105). Benjamin Albritton approaches an understudied genre in Machaut’s corpus, the *lais*, by examining the love-debate genre in three of these works alongside two of his *dits*, *le Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne* and *le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*. Particularly interesting for the specialist is Albritton’s convincing demonstration that “Par trois raisons” and “Amours doucement” also employ love-debate conventions, an observation which until now has gone unnoticed by scholars.

The four chapters in section three, “Situating Machaut’s Music,” succeed handsomely in providing a detailed picture of Machaut’s musical output. Mark Everist’s chapter expertly contextualizes each of the major musical genres one at a time (motets, *Messe de Nostre Dame*, *Hoquetus David*, and vernacular song). Indeed this contribution ranks among the most useful and informative for the non-specialist wishing to glean an overview of the composer’s musical oeuvre. Yolanda Plumley follows with an equally clear exposition on Machaut’s use of self-citation. Through a thoughtful analysis of another Machaut rondeau, “Dame, se vous n’avez aperceü,” she elucidates a complex set of inter-relationships found between it and several other of Machaut’s musical and poetic works. Alice Clark next addresses how one might hear and read Machaut’s motets. In her analysis of his first motet, “Quant en moy vint premierement / Amours et biaute,” Clark highlights many of Machaut’s interesting and unique compositional processes, such as specific audible cues that signal tenor repetitions. The lengthiest essay of the collection, Lawrence Earp’s detailed consideration of text declamation, rounds out the section. After outlining normative patterns of declamation, Earp meticulously demonstrates how Machaut frequently deviates from these “norms,” often for expressive purposes.

Whereas section three focuses on Machaut’s music, section four seeks to contextualize the poet’s vast corpus of literature. R. Barton Palmer begins with an engaging analysis of the *Confort d’ami*, while Daisy Delogu follows with an exploration of several of Machaut’s poetic works, which “call upon his readers to take part in the production of poetic meaning, and thereby prepare his public for participation in the social and political realms” (p. 262). Zrinka Stahuljak turns to a much-needed discussion of the *Prise d’Alexandre*, a work penned late in Machaut’s life that has been largely ignored by scholars. Julie Singer’s essay on the poet’s shorter *dits* concludes the section. While some of the scholarship in this

portion of the volume effectively sets the stage for the non-specialist, Machaut novices would do well to read first the relevant portions of Earp's *Guide to Research* mentioned above.

The trio of essays in section five, "Tradition and Reception," begins with one of the volume's most clearly written and systematically organized essays, Barbara Altmann's survey of Machaut's lyric poetry. A go-to chapter for the non-specialist, it also recounts the state of Machaut's reception by his—and our—contemporaries alike. Kirsten Yri then traces the history of the numerous recordings of Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*, discussing the various performance practices employed in recordings of the *Messe* over the past sixty years. Curiously, several of the footnotes in this chapter yield incomplete bibliographical information (notes 3, 13, 56 and 61). The section—and book—concludes with co-editor Deborah McGrady's exposition of "Machaut's Material Legacy." As in the volume's first chapter, untranslated modern French passages may slow down the general reader. Otherwise, her contribution constitutes one of the volume's highlights: it stresses the importance of examining manuscripts compiled after Machaut's death in order to shed light on the reception of his poetry and his status as a poet in the Middle Ages.

The breadth of subject matter and the expertise with which it is covered throughout the volume's eighteen chapters are to be highly commended. Given the book's intent to provide an overview of the scholarly treatment of Machaut's corpus in modern scholarship, its lack of an essay (or two) concentrating on art-historical topics is peculiar. On the whole, however, the editors have done a formidable job at rounding up such a highly impressive group of established scholars, and these authors have provided a substantial body of rich, stimulating scholarship. I recommend the volume for non-specialists and specialists alike, for it will be of great use to both types of readers as the various musical and literary fields of Machaut studies continue to develop in the coming years.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

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Emma Cayley, "Machaut and Debate Poetry"

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#### SECTION III: SITUATING MACHAUT'S MUSIC

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#### SECTION IV: CONTEXTUALIZING MACHAUT'S LITERATURE

R. Barton Palmer, "Guillaume de Machaut and the Classical Tradition: Individual Talent and (Un)Communal Tradition"

Daisy Delogu, "'Laissier le mal, le bien eslire': History, Allegory, and Ethical Reading in the Works of Guillaume de Machaut"

Zrinka Stahuljak, "History's Fixers: Informants, Mediators, and Writers in the *Prise d'Alexandre*"

Julie Singer, "Instrumental Comparisons: Machaut's Shorter *Dits*"

#### SECTION V: TRADITION AND RECEPTION

Barbara K. Altmann, "Guillaume de Machaut's Lyric Poetry"

Kirsten Yri, "Performing Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*: From Modernist Allegiances to the Postmodern Hinterland"

Deborah McGrady, "Machaut and his Material Legacy"

#### NOTES

[1] Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011). For information about the "Machaut in the Book" project, see <http://www.stanford.edu/group/dmstech/cgi-bin/drupal/node/135>, and for details about the new complete Machaut edition, see <http://machaut.exeter.ac.uk/?q=node/1510>.

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

[3] Surprisingly, the translator of Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet's essay is not named in the chapter, nor anywhere else in the volume as far as I can tell. A perusal of the publisher's website, however, reveals Jeannette Patterson to be the chapter's translator. See <http://www.brill.com/companion-guillaume-de-machaut>.

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