

Elizabeth Eva Leach. *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. xv + 367 pp. \$59.95. ISBN: 978-0-8014-4933-8.

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–77) served the much-travelled Jean de Bohème (d. 1346), enjoyed the patronage of members of the French royal house, and received a comfortable living as a canon at the cathedral of Reims. Fluent in clerkly Latin and the vernacular of French courtly poetry, Machaut looked to Boethius and the *Roman de la Rose* as models. He differed markedly from his contemporaries, however, in the central role played by music in his literary works.

Believing that modern divisions of medieval studies into specialized branches may have distorted our view of Machaut's integrated output, Elizabeth Eva Leach aims to reunite the various branches of Machaut scholarship to provide a complete picture of Machaut as a creative artist. Rather than a life-and-works biography, her new study offers a multifaceted investigation of key musical and poetic works in six thematically organized chapters.

Chapter 1, "Life. Guillaume de Machaut's Living," reviews the sparse documentary and literary evidence on Machaut's life, warning that his writings remain works of fiction rather than of factual history. Chapter 2, "Resurrection. Dismembering Machaut," surveys the historiography of the rediscovery of Machaut in the modern period. An earlier view of Machaut's poetry as a decadent reflection of the troubadour tradition has given way to an understanding of his originality that includes transformation and improvement of existing models as well as play with conventional formal elements. Recent Machaut scholarship has focussed on the interaction between his narrative and lyric poetry, the significance of interpolated lyrics and mythical or biblical exempla, and his interest in textuality, bookmaking, and scribal organization. In manuscript A, the point of departure for chapter 3, "Creation. Machaut Making," Machaut's collected works are self-consciously presented in an index and a prologue. The entire book project, including its technically advanced musical notation, epitomizes the textualization of vernacular court culture in the fourteenth century.

Chapter 4, "Hope. Loving," explores the focus on hope as a refuge from desire, while chapter 5, "Fortune. Suffering," concerns the negative force of Fortune. Complementary male and female perspectives on the power of Fortune appear in a pair of notated balades (balades 22 and 23), and are presented simultaneously in the upper voices of motet 8; here the supporting tenor, borrowed from a Passiontide chant, invites comparison of a lover's suffering with that of Christ on the cross.

In her sixth and final chapter, entitled "Death. Remembering Machaut," Leach mines Machaut's works for his personal attitudes toward death and salvation. As a corrective to a secular, rationalist agenda among twentieth-century scholars that has downplayed the role of the Church and religion in Machaut's life, Leach suggests Machaut composed his polyphonic setting of the Mass Ordinary not as a memorial for himself and his brother, but relatively early as a reflection of his "strong personal devotion to Mary" (279). Machaut was remembered after his death as a poet and rhetorician as well as a composer. Less obvious are verbal and musical citations in musical works and in treatises on music. Leach cites multiple resonances with Machaut's lyrics in an exploration of two balades on his death by Eustache Deschamps, set as a bitextual balade by the otherwise unknown composer F. Andrieu in a musical homage to Machaut's bitextual *Quant Theseus/Ne quier* (balade 34). A poetic model for Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, Froissart, and Oton de Granson, Machaut was cited in treatises on poetry in the fifteenth century, and his literary and musical works were still being copied. By the late fifteenth century, however, he was named only as

a breaker of notational rules (by Gaffurius) and by the end of the sixteenth century remembered simply as “a trouvère who lived around 1300 and composed a book of his love life” (325).

While some might find the links Leach proposes between music and text far reaching, most will applaud her view that interpretations of medieval music can now move beyond an understanding of its grammar (elucidated by Margaret Bent, Sarah Fuller, Leach, and others), to ideas about its rhetorical force (164n65). With its generous documentation of prior work, perceptive analyses, and imaginative new insights, Leach’s book should inspire students of medieval music to take a closer look at its poetic context, and literary scholars to explore music’s contribution to the elucidation of lyrical texts.

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