

CONTINENTAL REVIEWS

DOSS-QUINBY, Eglal, Gaël SAINT-CRICQ, and Samuel N. ROSENBERG, eds. 2020. *Robert de Reims: Songs and Motets*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. ISBN 9780271087184. Pp. 142, tables, and musical examples.

When Hans Tischler published his gigantic *Trouvère Melodies with Lyrics: Complete Comparative Edition* in 1997, he did specialists of Old French song a favor: the project gathered together a *summa* of information on this important poetic tradition. Nevertheless, it did not make smaller, more focused editions like the one under review here obsolete. While these more focused editions need not always present a poet — medieval textuality was, after all, a collaborative enterprise — the notion of the author was important in poetic literary circles.¹ Although slim, this edition provides a treasure trove of information on the songs and motets of Robert de Reims as well as the textual and cultural contexts in which they survive. The editors' efforts provide tantalizing leads for further study.

The last edition of Robert de Reims was published by Wilhelm Mann at the turn of the twentieth century, and a new edition is badly needed. Of course, when Mann published his edition, first as an independent doctoral thesis (1898) and then as a long article (1899), he didn't know what we know now about trouvère song, and he therefore omitted much. First of all, Mann left out Robert's music, which was the normal practice of the day: philologists edited texts and musicologists edited melodies in separate volumes. Today, such a division is all but impossible. More significantly, Mann failed to see how Robert's motets gave rise to song continuations and presented muddled texts, thereby presenting a flattened image of the trouvère's productivity or even of a technically inferior poet. The exact opposite was true. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Mann's philological method rooted in neo-Lachmannism may have been the predominant approach of his day, but the resulting edition clearly demonstrates how methodological

1. This is not to be confused with the focus — almost obsession — of earlier philologists with correct attribution. Rather, the notion of authorship in the vernacular was on the rise, and while attributions were often incorrect, the function of attribution was often ideological (HEBBARD 2021).

dogmatism can do a disservice to individual texts. Mann never addressed the specific material conditions in which Robert's texts are preserved and transmitted, and, consequently, he obscured rather than shed light on this trouvère's work.

Robert's *oeuvre*, both words and music, presents significant editorial challenges. The editors here have wisely chosen an approach that suits the particular textual situation rather than make Robert's lyric fit into some general methodological theory. They clear up the rather confused picture presented in the Mann edition. The challenge on the musical side comes with the fact that Robert composed both monophonic songs and motets: the latter relied on rhythmic modes, whereas monophonic song followed, we believe, a declamatory style that emphasized the verbal side of the song when necessary. Moreover, more than one melody sometimes survives for the songs as well. Should these melodies be edited to produce an "original" melody or should all melodies be presented? If the latter, how? In what order? On the textual side, Robert obviously earned great admiration and inspired continuators to add stanzas to his monophonic songs. Sometimes they even "converted" a motet into a song and added stanzas. The so-called "conversion" process was hampered by the motet's inherent musical complexity, which meant these "converted" stanzas took on strange formal qualities. The stanzas that were thereby appended only imperfectly duplicate the musical and metrical patterns of the motet. The various textual — by which I mean both musical and verbal — layers of Robert's corpus calls for an eclectic editorial method.

As it turns out, one manuscript contains all but one of Robert's songs — Trouvère manuscript X (Paris, n.a.f. 1050; a.k.a. "Chansonnier Clairambault") — and the textual and musical versions in that manuscript justify choosing it as a base manuscript. The manuscript dates from the middle of the thirteenth century and preserves readings in a central Francien dialect, which was likely close to Robert's speech. When additional stanzas are interpolated into songs in other manuscripts — this is the case for *Bien s'est Amors honie* (RS 1163, 1215, 1217) and *Plaindre m'estuet de la bele en chantant* (RS 319, 320) — those are presented in the apparatus under Textual Variants.² The reading of one manuscript is presented (usually the older manuscript) without major intervention. In this way, the editors clearly delineate the various textual layers to Robert's *oeuvre*.

The text of each song is presented first in Old French followed by translations in English and modern French. The translation into both mod-

2. RS numbers refer to the standard catalogue of trouvère songs in SPANKE 1955.

ern languages is something that strikes this reader as innovative. Usually, translations appear in the language of the introduction and apparatus, English in this case. Perhaps we will see other editors follow their example. In some cases, the formatting aligns texts and translations on the facing page, but this appears to be coincidental rather than programmatic. Usually, facing-page translations are utilized in medieval vernacular editions, but since two translations are supplied for each text, this custom would have been difficult to adopt. While this layout makes consulting the original texts and translations somewhat bothersome, readers who struggle with Old French will find them very helpful. The editors intervene only minimally, and their translations are meant to convey the literal meaning of the text and its tone. Once again, the reader will be met with what is left in the sources rather than some fictive or ephemeral reconstitution.

The musical editor, Gaël Saint-Cricq, wisely chose to present the monophonic songs using stemless noteheads on staves without bar lines but motet melodies with mensural notation. The debate over mensural notation of monophonic songs raged for most of the twentieth century with Hendrik van der Werf championing non-mensural readings and Hans Tischler doggedly pushing for the application of rhythmic modes no matter what system is used in the manuscript. With the passing of Tischler in 2010, the debate has been all but abandoned with non-mensural notation for monophonic songs having won out. True, some *trouvère* songs were notated mensurally in certain manuscripts — especially Paris, BnF French 845 (*Trouvère O*) — but no one insists any more that those settings be applied across readings. Where more than one melody survives, the editor includes full editions of minority melodies after the primary melody. This reviewer was a bit surprised to see texts and translations precede melodies, since the reverse has been the standard practice for at least two decades. That said, Saint-Cricq's musical analysis in the introduction is illuminating and a model for future studies.

In the apparatus of each song, the reader will find a great deal of helpful information. The editors address issues of generic classifications, versification, musico-poetic form, as well as refrains and other citations and borrowings. Of course, they also supply the usual information regarding manuscripts, cataloging and previous editions, rejected readings, and variants, both textual and musical. All of this information will be of value when it comes to subsequent studies of Robert's work.

Specialists of Old French songs and related fields — medieval music, Old French literature, and history — will find the edition very useful. The fortuitous appearance of the work is marred only by the passing of Samuel

N. Rosenberg during its production. He will be missed, but his work will continue to inspire countless others in the future.

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