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Friedrich Wolfzettel, *La Poésie lyrique du Moyen Âge au Nord de la France (en annexe: France et Italie). Études choisies*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2015. 368 pp. 70.00€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-7453-2840-3.

Review by Marisa Galvez, Stanford University.

This is a valuable collection of twenty essays by Friedrich Wolfzettel on the lyric of northern France composed in Old and Middle French from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. It includes an annex of essays on the lyric of the Midi and Italy of the same period. A collection that spans over thirty years of the scholar's career, it gives a cohesive view of a particular moment. As Wolfzettel explains in his introduction, these essays treat *trouvère* lyric at a time when attention was turned toward Occitan lyric, and to the methodological turn towards *poésie formelle* advanced by Robert Guette and Roger Dragonetti at the end of the 1960s. With the publication of Jean Dufournet's *Anthologie de la poésie lyrique française des XIIe et XIIIe siècles* and *Chansons des trouvères* edited by Samuel Rosenberg and Hans Tischler, in collaboration with Marie-Geneviève Grossel, Wolfzettel explains it was time to return to the uncultivated "terrain" (p. 7) of the medieval lyric of northern France.[1] In keeping with the tradition of eminent scholars such as Alfred Jeanroy and Daniel Poirion, Wolfzettel joins synchronic structuralist studies of genre and form with historical and social function. These essays reflect the interest among Romance philologists in Germany, France, and North America to find the ingenuity of *trouvère* lyric even as they recognized the self-reflexive and closed nature of its formal uniformity posited by Paul Zumthor's foundational study *La Masque et la Lumière*. [2] This body of essays responds to this situation in that it argues for a certain "originalité" (p. 7) specific to this lyric, and reflects upon the historical specificity and adaptation of its genres and forms to different cultural and social environments. Indeed, the "fonction sociale" (p. 9) of formal and generic properties is a concept that underlies each essay, and Wolfzettel is invested in showing how a metaphor or figure operates within a closed system of conventions even as it is rooted in the ritualized or psychological everyday reality of a historical situation.

Indeed the organization of the volume allows one to trace the evolution of certain genres and verse forms of northern French poetry. Rather than by date of publication, the articles are organized chronologically according to subject matter or in a relevant position to the authors studied: for instance, the last three essays in the first section on *trouvères* cover genre and social and religious functions which complement the previous author essays. The first section covers the *trouvères* Conon de Béthune, Thibaut de Champagne, Richard de Fournival, Adam de la Halle, and Rutebeuf, and then proceeds to thematic essays. The second section contains studies of "La Second Rhétorique" and focuses on poets such as Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, Eustache

Deschamps, Charles d'Orléans, and Christine de Pizan. Finally, the annex treats the diffusion and adaptation of the courtly lyric of northern France to the poetic communities of northern Italy, such as the Sicilian School. For this reader, the organization allows poet, verse form, and genre to emerge from a concrete historical situation. While the classic studies of Alfred Jeanroy and Daniel Poirion trace evolutions of poetry [3], the collection raises the possibility that it might be more productive to foreground the originality and distinctiveness of this lyric by showing how each poet approaches a problem and responds to a given courtly convention in a way that is different from a troubadour or Italian poet of the Stilnovist school of poetry (*Dolce Stil Nuovo*). Alternatively, essays can synthesize problems of consciousness and style running throughout the lyric corpus of the *trouvères*.

Wolfzettel's approach of describing the historicity and distinctiveness of a poet's production despite the closed nature of "*poésie formelle*" (p. 14) is clear in the first essay on Conon de Béthune. Here Wolfzettel is mostly concerned with showing the "*structure cohérente*" of the poet (p. 17) defined by historical and autobiographical conditions against an idea of a "*jeu de bricolage*" of formal topoi (p. 17). He argues that Conon is unique in his capacity to challenge the ideological constraints of courtly genres, a move that Wolfzettel attributes to the influence of the troubadours. For understanding courtly lyric beyond the circularity of formal structures advanced by Paul Zumthor, Wolfzettel contends that it is essential to notice Conon's manipulation of register, rather than structure. In his position as "*fin amans*" or "true lover," Conon manipulates genres (such as the satirical *serventois*) and borrows from the troubadours' figures of sexual impotence in order to articulate his own poetic impotence due to his social condition in the court of the king. A consistent strength of Wolfzettel's scholarship is his comparison of troubadour to *trouvère* lyric. He demonstrates the absence of certain sexual registers in northern French lyric and how a poet like Conon responds to that absence. Not only does Conon enlist figures of sexual jousting borrowed from the troubadours (citing Ronald Akehurst) and adapts them to his courtly context, he also uses wild animal imagery to describe an unworthy woman ("*la leuve sauvage*," p. 22), an uncommon usage in *trouvère* lyric. The explicit use of non-courtly language and imagery in Conon's works allows the poet to critique the institution of courtly poetry and dedicate his true love to his patron the king. As the opening essay, this study of Conon's poetry reflects the major concerns of Wolfzettel: the necessity to show an intentional coherence against an empty play of forms and an emphasis upon the intertextuality of *trouvère* and troubadour lyric. Such productive dialogic intertextuality challenges the idea that the Old French tradition is inferior to the adjacent Occitan one.

Wolfzettel continues his emphasis on aesthetic choice in his study of the lyric of Gace Brulé and Thibaut de Champagne. While it is a given that the play with temporality is a feature of the *grand chant courtois* in the thirteenth century, in the essay he emphasizes the specific choices made by poets to expand upon the theme of memory. For Thibaut, memory serves to construct a self-contained self of past, present, and future, in opposition to the emergent narrative poetry of someone like Rutebeuf. He contrasts Thibaut's project of an elaboration of memory linked to the eternal life of the poet to the biographical intervention of Gace: the latter subordinates the profession of courtly love to real life experience (p. 35). This is an example of how Wolfzettel compares two poets to illuminate their distinct aesthetic choices.

In moving to more bourgeois and clerical poets such as Adam de la Halle and Rutebeuf, Wolfzettel does well to indicate major shifts, such as Adam's interest to verify the "*moi subjectif*" rather than to "*bien amer*" (p. 60) as a "poète de la ville, cleric et bourgeois, futur poète de cour et

poète religieux”? (p. 55). Clerical concerns of morality shape his work. As a poet between the court and the city, Adam relativizes the courtly tradition by introducing a reflection concerned with the epistemology of the love experience itself, related to but different from the Sicilian School and its Platonic models. Adam investigates the oxymoronic experience of sweetness and torture that anticipates the *Rime Sparse* of Petrarch. What Wolfzettel points out is Adam’s new focus on the distancing himself from courtly discourse by popularizing or moralizing certain courtly conventions.

Likewise, in his close readings of Richard de Fournival, Wolfzettel shows the poet’s innovative use of the Narcissus myth to critique courtly discourse. As this poetry is no longer about loving a lady but about the consolation and memory of that distant love, Wolfzettel reminds us of the innumerable tools at these poets’ disposal to critique the language of courtly love as an ethical exercise for having a critical voice about love, replacing the voice of the powerless lover.

From these poet-centered studies, Wolfzettel’s studies on forms and genre—non-lyric poetry of Rutebeuf and the *pastourelle*--shift to a different question, from “What is courtly poetry?” (the studies focused on poets) to “What is a lyrical form?” (the study of Rutebeuf’s *dit*). One almost wishes he would organize sections according to these kind of broad questions concerning his lyric corpus. Indeed, at a time when scholars are using various methodological and interdisciplinary approaches to courtly lyric across vernacular traditions, e.g., comparing homiletic or romance literature with courtly lyric (see the work of Jean-Charles Payen [4]), Wolfzettel’s historicist-structuralist approaches seem limited at times. To be sure, we are given a picture of the cohesiveness of this lyric corpus in terms of figures and metaphors, but one would like at times to see engagement with other competing forms of texts and global historical movements in France and beyond that might have intervened and shaped the lyric poetry of someone like Rutebeuf (see, for instance, the recent *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418* edited by David Wallace [5]).

Wolfzettel excels at tackling the essential questions concerning lyric: What makes lyric lyrical? What social conditions shape the evolution of a genre? Still one wishes these questions were foregrounded in these essays, as they are often buried within the depth of the analyses and review of scholarship. An exception to this is the Rutebeuf study, one of the most memorable essays of the collection, in which Wolfzettel ponders these questions overtly. He considers the musicality of lyric in various strophic forms versus forms such as the *dit* traditionally considered *non-chanté*. In the end, while it is clear that the *chanson courtoise* would have been destined to be sung, other verse forms independent of subject matter could have taken on various functions (moral, religious, satirical) and could be “*de formes virtuellement lyriques*” (p. 78)—meaning that their social function did not depend upon a musical performance, and could be read or chanted aloud regardless of length. Its lyrical quality could be staged in various formats and context. This is a fascinating idea and has been taken up in the scholarship of Emma Dillon, Ardis Butterfield, and Sylvia Huot.[6] Wolfzettel points to numerous forms such as the *litanie* that could have been sung or chanted in various situations, and suggests that similarly the *dit* might have various functions, despite its length. What is clear is that in the urban situation of Rutebeuf, the *dit* emerged as the “*instrument idéal d’une littérature engagée*,” an ‘engaged literature’ to replace the moral satirical lyric genre, the *serventois* (p. 81). Wolfzettel argues that the *dit*’s articulation of individual address registered differently than the earlier courtly lyric genres, thus it announced these genres’ limits in a new historical and social situation. In the case of the *pastourelle*, he shows how this genre emerges in the Old French tradition despite the different social context of

troubadour poetry. The mythic status of the *pastourelle* as a genre embodies the conflict between nature and civilization, the female victim as between these two symbolic poles, and Wolfzettel wonderfully explains the incorporation of popular elements into this courtly genre through this anthropological analysis—an example of the imaginative expansiveness of his scholarly approach.

In the last two essays of this section, Wolfzettel describes the translation of courtly lyric to religious lyric as one of conversion brought about in northern France by a change in the social function of lyric. Bourgeois urban lyric becomes more artisanal and addresses themes appropriate to a new cultural milieu: instead of the courtly lady, it is the "*puceille bourgeoise*" or the lover and love that are rendered more abstractly (p. 116). Here, one is surprised that Wolfzettel does not mention the studies of Payen, Michel Zink (on sermons) and others on vernacular religious lyric that elaborate on many of the themes of conversion but bring in other religious genres and theological concepts.[7] Likewise, the discussion of conversion in this poetry as poetic and aesthetic displacement, and as correction, merits further discussion. In general, this essay and "Quelques thèses sur le thème de la ville" are thorough overviews of the intertextuality of courtly and theological ideology in *trouvère* lyric and examine the shift of the poet's address from a courtly audience to an ecclesiastical or urban one. Wolfzettel takes into account the presence of new poetic institutions such as the *puy*s and *confréries* that cultivate religious lyric for feast days (much interesting scholarship has been done on these institutions[8]) and the integration of lyric into other public collectivities such as the theatrical culture of Arras (see the work of Jody Enders and Carol Symes).[9] The essay on the *ville* subtly traces the emergence of a new tension between the city and the country, and a language that adapts to new social conditions and an urban economy. The strength of his analysis in these essays is to show the complexity of a notion such as urban poetry; Wolfzettel describes the transformation of courtly poetry from an enclosed poetic world within a seigneurial environment in which aristocratic *trouvères* such as Conon and Thibaut were active to a different type of poetry in which a *trouvère* may speak of his *seigneur* but also address an urban collectivity that includes people of different social classes, doctors, clerics, and money changers. Religious poetry, urban poetry: Wolfzettel shows us how concepts of place and space (the *ville-campagne*, Paris in a *pastourelle*) are conceived and reconceived through genres such as the bourgeois *jeux-partis* of Arras and the *pastourelle* in a manner more complex than a representation of reality.

The second section examines the rise of a new kind of poetry that features an independent poet who consciously uses the art of poetry to give different values to the activity of the poet as creator. The first essay in the section entitled "La Second Rhétorique" (poetic works covering the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries) offers a synthesis of several studies by Jaqueline Cerquiglini, Paul Zumthor, L.W. Johnson, and others. Wolfzettel elaborates on major works that have defined the Second Rhetoric such as the tradition of "Arts de Seconde Rhétorique," and works of Eustache Deschamps and Guillaume Machaut. He poses fascinating questions about how the poet is a "*créateur*" (p. 156) and "*curateur de l'humanité*" (p. 154) based on the authority of the author, relying on the studies of Cerquiglini to elaborate on the concept of craft in the works of Machaut compared to, for example, to Rutebeuf. These kinds of insights and questions could be the starting point of far-reaching analyses on the nature of this pre-Pleïade poetry, especially in the concluding section of how the phenomenon of rhetorical "*abondance*" occurs in response to a new consciousness in the limits of or language (p. 161). Indeed, the anthropological analyses towards the conclusions of many of his essays, such as "Rhétorique de l'abondance," have significant aesthetic implications for the history of lyric, especially if they could be extended to the non-Continental situation (the direction of recent scholarship of Butterfield and others [10]). How

does the “*poétique du travail*” differ exactly from the craftsmanship foregrounded in the works of the troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel or the seriality of other kinds of *formes fixes* and poets such as the German Meistersingers?

The essay, “La Poésie comme cadeau,” strives to correct a blindspot in the scholarship on late medieval French poetry by describing how the focus on the historical development of the autonomy of the lyrical *je* has missed the contextual *performanciel* element of medieval lyric. He argues that the material contexts such as the exchange of letters in a narrative like the *Voir-Dit* of Machaut stage the lyric persona as a contextualized persona. Here again he relies mostly on the work of other scholars such as Poirion, Cerquiglini, and Rosemary Morris to make his claim that might have been theorized further using the work of these scholars. Wolfzettel also compares this situation of context to the development of Italian lyric that does not need a *cadre* to have a functional *je*. Here again one wishes he could enlist this comparative perspective more often to enrich his analyses of lyric in the French tradition. We could benefit from his insight into the different degrees of “*lyrisme autonome moderne*” (p. 183) in French versus Italian lyric of this period.

One of the strongest essays in this section is “La Poésie lyrique comme mode d’appréhension.” Wolfzettel describes a shift in lyrical subjectivity analogous to the introduction of a perspective in medieval art. The works of Guillaume Machaut, Charles d’Orléans, Jean Froissart, and Eustache Deschamps register a new kind of visual apprehension that differentiates between the internal and external eye, between an idealized lady and a lady sensed and seen in the world. The coherence of this argument and tight organization of this essay is to be compared with the other essays—here, the clarity of an original argument and limitations on the discussion of past scholarship articulates a major development in lyric poetry that has implications for other media and discourses of the period (such as natural science).

The studies of Machaut, Charles d’Orléans and Christine de Pizan in this section correlate with the author studies of the first section in that they synthesize the scholarship and highlight the most important original features of each poet’s work: Machaut’s professional status and the cultivation of his poetic persona and production in accordance with Nature; Christine’s female identity and how it shapes her concept of true love, and courtly language (*couverture*); the material imagination of Charles d’Orléans. In the essay on Charles d’Orléans, Wolfzettel extends the analysis of Poirion by probing the concrete, visual images that constitute the Other as opposed to the internal “I” of this poet’s discourse, and the affective usage of the four elements. The analysis of mercantile elements and mental furnishings (“*un univers meublé*” [p. 277]) that appear in the work of Charles d’Orléans, with gestures to similar themes in Montaigne, remind us that more work can be done on themes of poetic alienation and the construction of the internal poetic self from the late medieval period to the Renaissance.

Finally, the annex section raises fascinating comparative questions about French and Italian lyric traditions and highlights the investigative mode of Wolfzettel’s scholarship. In “Y-a-t-il une conscience historique dans la lyrique courtoise du Moyen Âge,” he argues that there is an implicit historical conscious in Northern French poetry (see the critical distance in the experimentation of genres such as the motet) compared to the explicit rupture exhibited in the poetry of the troubadours and the Stilnovists. He reinforces this contrast by likening the Sicilian School to this implicit experimentation of the French poets. “La Fonction de la dysfonction” argues that the Sicilian School creates a poetics of “*compétence*” (p. 313) based on their bourgeois status, with an

emphasis on poetic production, rather than the theological or spiritual reflections seen in the poetry of Guido Guinizelli and Cavalcanti. While these essays address specific questions influenced by the sociological approach of Erich Köhler and his school with regards to the Sicilian School, they remind the reader of disciplinary approaches that emerge more distinctly in Wolfzettel's comparative analyses. For this reader, they have a greater potential for a broader, theoretical impact on the study of vernacular lyric. A more cohesive book would extract these broader insights and questions into the nature of lyric and base them in the sociological and anthropological methods that punctuate the essays. Although this volume is historical in nature, in that it shows the scholarly community at a certain moment, one could imagine how the excellent readings of this lyric corpus would change if recent theoretical models of manuscript studies, global medievalisms, and reconceptualizations of "medieval French literature" were taken into account.

NOTES

[1] Jean Dufournet, *Anthologie de la poésie lyrique française des XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989); Samuel Rosenberg and Hans Tischler, (eds.) in collaboration with Marie-Geneviève Grossel, *Chansons des trouvères* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1995).

[2] Paul Zumthor, *La Masque et la Lumière* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

[3] Alfred Jeanroy, *Les origines de la poésie lyrique en France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1904); Daniel Poirion, *Le Poète et le Prince: l'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orléans*, (Grenoble: imprimerie Allier, 1965).

[4] Jean-Charles Payen, *Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale (des origines à 1230)* (Geneva: Droz, 1967).

[5] David Wallace (ed.), *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[6] See, for example, Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France 1260-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[7] Michael Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* (Paris: Champion, 1976).

[8] See, for example, Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the "Rose" to the "Rhétoriciens"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[9] See Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).

[10] See Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2009) and David Wallace, ed., *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, 2 vols. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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