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Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, Clotilde Dauphant, and Sylvie Lefèvre, eds., *Le Rondeaux entre XIII^e et XVI^e siècles. Une forme lyrique en liberté surveillée*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021. 222 pp. Bibliography and index. €35.00. (pb). ISBN 978-2-7453-5535-5. €35.00 (eb). ISBN 978-2-7453-5535-5.

Review by Helen J. Swift, St Hilda's College, University of Oxford.

This highly stimulating collection of essays on the late-medieval rondeau enriches, challenges, and fruitfully complicates scholarly understanding of the lyric form, offering diverse provocations for future critical engagement. Whilst helpful for identifying the dominant field of interest of the volume, my use of the label “late medieval” in fact runs counter to its title, which, rather than locating the form in terms of period, simply offers a date span encompassing the first continuous phase of the rondeau’s popularity in French literature, from its appearance, inserted in Jean Renart’s early-thirteenth-century *Le Roman de la rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, to its putative sixteenth-century transformation into another form (the epigram) by Clément Marot.

The opening essay spotlights the refrain, and the relationship between strophe and refrain, as the anchor of the volume’s analyses of the rondeau as a textual and musical form. It constitutes the key point of enquiry for its identity as a distinct form, especially in matters of length: the increasing length of strophes into the fifteenth century; the much-debated lengths of medial and final refrains; and the evolution from return-of-the-same refrain to use of a *rentrement* in which repetition of the initial word(s) of the rondeau’s first line fosters difference rather than similarity. The volume claims not to offer or rewrite the history of the rondeau, but nonetheless orders its essays chronologically, and corrects misapprehensions regarding the form’s development over time. For example, it counters a narrative of later decline with the assertion that the years 1450 to 1550 were “le temps du rondeau” (p. 167) and establishes that rondeaux constitute the majority of chansons after the fourteenth century. From a historiographical point of view, the collection advances methodological challenges for studying medieval rondeaux: how the ways in which they have been edited for modern publication have entailed misrepresentation (for example, in failing to relay that the majority of extant fifteenth-century rondeaux with music were polyphonic, as demonstrated by Isabelle Ragnard and Agathe Sultan); or how manuscripts themselves pose problems for deciphering *mise en page*; or for inferring refrain length from partial information, as shown in the chapter by Sylvie Lefèvre.

The volume’s most significant contribution is its rich, multifaceted, and cross-disciplinary interrogation of traditionally held tenets of the rondeau’s identity: its circularity, completeness, and autonomy, such that it emerges, in Ragnard and Sultan’s words, as “la plus mouvante des

formes fixes” (p. 106) and, as Lefèvre calls it, a “polytexte” (p. 34). Circularity is challenged by aspects of narrative movement, whether linear or labyrinthine in an authorial manuscript of Guillaume de Machaut’s collected works or taking the shape of a “mise en roman” (p. 161) in a story composed entirely of rondeaux. Circularity is nuanced by the way the form is “mis au service de discours plus larges” (p. 146) through its integration in prosimetra by Grands Rhétoriciens. It is transformed through a sixteenth-century reworking of the technique of *rentrement* such that “désormais, le rondeau n’est plus circulaire, mais tendu vers une pointe que prépare chaque strophe” (p. 202). Any sense of the rondeau’s completeness is problematised by its structural flexibility, which applies textually—such as in Paris, BnF fr. 840’s collection of Eustache Deschamps’s works in which it “se présente comme une forme incomplète” (p. 59)—as well as in the relationship between melody and text when examining the fifteenth-century interaction of musical cadence and medial refrain which yields a “lecture ouverte” (p. 115). The roles of copyist, reader, and performer in defining the form are thereby foregrounded. Dauphant’s assertion that “le rondeau ne peut exister seul” (p. 74) counters the idea of its autonomy with the various dialogues it entertains: for instance, intertextually thematic continuities within a given codex, the polyphonic texture of its vocal composition, or the sociability of a form that is “porteuse d’un effet de mémoire” (p. 185). Such a counter-narrative to rigid fixity is captured in the subtitle of the collection which proposes a “liberté surveillée,” identifying the rondeau in terms of freedom. The collection opens up for consideration the various agents, medieval and modern, by whom that freedom can be seen to be controlled: poets, both professional and amateur; scribes of text and music; prosodic theorists; editors; performers, audiences and readers—including, of course, scholarly critics.

The volume’s nine essays for the most part take as their focus the work of a prominent author, moving from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries: Guillaume de Machaut (Sieffert), Eustache Deschamps (Dauphant), Arnoul Gréban (Taku Kuroiwa), Jean Molinet (Frieden), Christine de Pizan (Cerquiglini-Toulet), and Clément Marot (Delvallée). However, this method and ordering are not deployed restrictively. For example, each essay makes clear the broader issues that its focused study addresses, such as the literary status of the rondeau without music considered through the different ways in which it appears across Machaut manuscripts (see Sieffert’s essay in particular). There is also methodological variety in their approaches: for instance, authors combine musicological and literary points of view to understand better the production and transmission contexts of rondeaux with music (see Ragnard and Sultan’s essay), or undertake detailed quantitative and metrical analysis that exposes how the formal rules for Deschamps’s own composition of rondeau are not set out in his *Art de dictier* (see Dauphant’s essay). The essays use a given work to elucidate its rondeaux, but also to articulate how study of the form advances critical understanding of the work itself or its author more substantially, whether through the compilation of Deschamps’s collected works, as in the case of Dauphant, or the organisational principles of Molinet’s *Art de rhétorique*, as discussed in Frieden’s essay. In the particular case of Christine de Pizan, it is not, in fact, her *Cent balades d’amant et de dame* that are at issue, but their rewriting through 105 *rondeaux cinquains* a hundred years later, at a moment of experimentation and expansion when “tout pouvait s’écrire ou se récrire en rondeaux, l’amour comme la morale” (p. 167). Such ambitious conceptual and material contextualisation of specific authors complements the essays that take lyric collections of unknown or uncertain authorship as their focus, such as the under-studied fifteenth-century rondeaux with music (Ragnard and Sultan) and the *Albums poétiques de Marguerite d’Autriche* (Basso).

The coherence, originality, and depth of the essays can, as the editors themselves note in the acknowledgements, be attributed in part to their genesis over a period of years after the original seminar series on the topic convened at the Sorbonne by Cerquiglini-Toulet, Dauphant, and Lefèvre. The editors note that one talk, on the Valentine's Day rondeaux of Charles d'Orléans, could not be included, and helpfully suggest how the reader may fill this gap. Given the chronological scope of the volume, it would have been fruitful also to feature an essay with a specifically thirteenth- or early-fourteenth-century focus. Another possible addition, which would have complemented the excellent overview essay by Lefèvre, might have been a coda or afterward that teased out future directions in scholarship.

Le Rondeau is quite different in aim and scope from the collection that precedes it in the same Champion series: Brigitte Buffard-Moret and Mireille Demaules's collection of essays entitled *La Ballade: histoire et avatars d'une forme poétique*.^[1] *La Ballade's* essays range from the Middle Ages to the present day such that the two volumes complement each other productively. Nonetheless, a coda to the more tightly focused *Le Rondeau*, for instance, could have gestured geographically towards a broader European context of rondeau composition and circulation (notably in England and Scotland), if not necessarily chronologically to post-sixteenth-century periods. It is already the case that the volume addresses nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarly reception of the rondeau through its editorial tradition, as well as opening with brief reference to Serge Gainsbourg and including analogy with Oulipian writers.

In *Le Rondeau*, Basso tells us that the form "est une dynamique d'engendrement" (p. 184). This volume of essays itself dynamises critical thinking about the rondeau and certainly deserves a widespread engagement that might engender future research that similarly combines methodologies and creates dialogue across disciplines. Thus it can be placed profitably in dialogue with the work of anglophone critics such as Ardis Butterfield, Sarah Kay, Philip Knox, Yolanda Plumley, and Emily Kate Price who are part of the most recent wave of scholarship seeking to re-energise the study of late-medieval French lyric.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Sylvie Lefèvre, "Aux armes, etc."

Mathias Sieffert, "Des rondeaux 'ou il n'a point de chant': poétique du rondeau sans musique chez Guillaume de Machaut"

Clotilde Dauphant, "Le rondeau, une forme incomplète: la présentation des rondeaux d'Eustache Deschamps dans le BnF fr. 840"

Isabelle Ragnard et Agathe Sultan, "Le rondeau musical, mouvances d'une forme fixe"

Taku Kuroiwa, "Remarques sur le triolets sans refrain intérieur dans les manuscrits du *Mystère de la Passion* d'Arnoul Gréban (*La Creacion du Monde* et la 'Première Journée')"

Philippe Frieden, "Le discours des formes: le rondeau chez Jean Molinet"

Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, "Le goût du rondeau: récrire les *Cent Balades d'amant er de dame* de Christine de Pizan dans les années 1500"

Hélène Basso, “Les rondeaux des *Albums poétiques* de Marguerite d’Autriche: le lyrisme comme jeu grave?”

Ellen Delvallée, “Technique du rentrement et devenir du rondeau: Marot et les ‘plus sçavans Poètes’”

NOTE

[1] Brigitte Buffard-Moret and Mireille Demaules, eds., *La Ballade: histoire et avatars d’une forme poétique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2020).

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