

Introduction

BURT KIMMELMAN

Several of the essays in this volume pay particular attention to the social or political status of women in their time and place, from within the context of the Machaldian dispensation. Profeminine conversation—indeed, let us call it protofeminist discourse—must inevitably emerge in the late medieval love-debate or *jeu-parti*. The figures typically to be found in the *jeux-partis* require this, arguably, given the women who are involved in the dilemmas these poems illustrate. More subtly, however, and fundamentally, these debates establish an *other* perspective. Considering such alterity, might it be possible to claim that only with the emergence of early feminist discourse in European literature could true fiction come into its own? In Guillaume de Machaut's work and that of his successors, surely, the female character's disappointment at what the fictional Guillaume has wrought within his poems—deftly choreographed by the real-life poet so that his actual oeuvre cannot be ignored—lies at the heart of a dynamic in which something beyond an earlier fabulism, for all its marvelous enchantments, might come into being.

Some of the essays in this book approach this overarching conceptualization of fictionality directly. Specifically, they take up various related aspects of Machaut's legacy, especially as established by his judgment series. The salient features of that legacy include the focus on fame and authorial reputation; and, within this context, there is both the intra- and extratextual *self* to be contemplated, along with the emergence of an *I* possessing ontological fullness. The Machaldian poem manifests a shifted cultural

understanding that comprehended a poetic machinery, one in which the poet (the real Guillaume) and the poet's *I* (his intratextual confection) together modulate the flow of literary, social, and even political power, within the text and sometimes beyond it. The flow is most often realized through the institution of patronage. The dramatizations of the patronage system become integral within a conceptualization of authorship that is nearly modern, not so readily recognizable as medieval. In the work of Machaut and his heirs we find the problematizing of authority, the theatrics of the very notion of *judgment*, the late medieval *dit's* capacity to leave judgment to its reader, as well as the thought-provoking ambivalence of an un-concluded *jeu-parti*.

Just as Guillaume de Machaut wished readers to be aware of the man as author of the work (in which, often, a poet named Guillaume is to be found), he also wished them to be cognizant of this poet's entire *corpus* (the implications of this term intentional). It may be fair to say that his interest extended to readers and writers who would live long after he had passed away. The synergy of point of view and identity in the judgment series of poems, the individual poems but especially the series as an inter-connection that forms a larger oeuvre, provides the ground for the poet's creation of his collected works (for which the occasional poem *Prologue* will be written by him). This is something audacious and new. Like the judgment series, it is something that will cement his reputation.

The essays gathered in this volume represent a further continuation of the series beyond the collection of his work he engineers for himself. The contributions to this present volume in turn address the imaginative achievement Machaut holds up for our contemplation, with present-day scholars joining the community of readers, fictional or otherwise, who have been fashioned by the man Guillaume de Machaut. Quite possibly he hoped for writers to come after him, be they poets or clerks, not only to appreciate his literary prowess but also, in their own ways, to perpetuate his imaginative creations in their own work, lending his literary achievement a dignity beyond that achieved by his own considerable powers of authorship.

That influence, at least in a broad sense, can be seen as having no necessary limits. In "Proust and the Amorous Fountain: Secret Architecture or Suppressed Source?" Camille Naishe discusses the possibility of Marcel Proust's connections to Machaut, with the fountain that figures

so centrally in *In Search of Time Lost* understood as a reflex of the eponymous fountain in *La Fonteinne amoureuse*. In R. Barton Palmer's study, "Authorial Second Lives: Machaut, Chaucer, and Philip Roth," the matter at hand involves larger questions of literary history. Nevertheless, the self-regard and shifting of identity within and beyond the text proper, in Roth's novels, leads Palmer back to Machaut whose construction of the inner-outer self can pose, as might be said is a noticeable feature across the postmodernist literary spectrum, the seduction or trap of narcissistic compulsion. A response to certain broad trends within the fictionalizing activity in the late Middle Ages, Machaut's creation of a second self, who straddles the boundary between textuality and the surrounding cultural space jointly inhabited by writer and readers, creates such a possibility.

The other essays in this collection concern themselves exclusively with the literature of the late Middle Ages, taking up aspects of Machaut's influence variously in the late medieval world by tracing his legacy in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, Christine de Pizan, Alain Chartier, Martin Le Franc, as well as the anonymous author of *Le Tresor amoureux*.

The reader of Machaut's judgment series will become aware of the poet's crucial presence within the poems' narratology. This presence is dramatic but also signals thematic, related, matters. The remaining essays in this book situate themselves along two fault lines to be found in the landscape of the *jeu-parti*. These fault lines disclose two qualities of the deep underground. They are indicators of, outside the poem proper, how matters of judgment and authority underwent significant changes in the late Middle Ages.

Lewis Beer's "Polarized Debates, Ambivalent Judgments: The *Jugement Behaigne* and the *Confessio Amantis*," examines the tension between idealism and pragmatism in Machaut and Gower, whose implications for the love-debate genre are explored. These two works may seem to distinguish themselves from earlier love-debates by "settling" the conflict presented with a conclusive judgment; nevertheless, Beer asserts, they retain the fundamental ambivalence of un-concluded *jeux-partis*. Likewise Douglas Kelly, in "Judgment at Court: Open Thought and Prudent Dissimulation in the Anonymous *Livre du Tresor amoureux*," suggests that the *dit's* most original contribution may be that it leaves judgment to its audience and readers. In discussing this almost universally ignored *dit* that

is noteworthy for its original, straightforward treatment of judgment and qualified judges, Kelly notes that the love motif becomes a model for debating and judging larger issues, even as readers are accorded a larger role in their evaluation.

Rosemarie McGerr examines the role of kings as judges in literary mirrors for princes or treatises on the education of rulers, especially in the fourteenth century. In “The Judge as Reader, the Reader as Judge: Literary and Political Judgment in Dante, Machaut, and Gower” she tracks the evolution of the “mirror” form and argues that a resultant hybridization allowed for new ways of exploring the motivations and measures of royal judgment, including its relationship to divine models of judgment and theories of human perception. The poetic personae of these poets are literally judged within the poems themselves, even as the works figuratively authorize a process of self-judgment for their readers. Literary judgment thus finds itself linked to political judgment, highlighting the notion of reading as an exercise in moral self-improvement, with the development of good judgment its most important goal.

“True Colors: The Significance of Machaut’s and Chaucer’s Use of Blue to Represent Fidelity,” Elizaveta Strakhov’s contribution, examines issues surrounding the legibility of identity as constructed by social reputation. Her essay takes account of contemporary heraldic law treatises that link disputes over heraldic insignia with nascent intellectual property rights as a way of understanding how the two poets focus on the notion of fame. In so doing she shows that color metaphors in their writings figure their own concerns about the ability to have personal control over authorial reputation. Similarly, Helen Swift’s “Courting Controversy?: Poetic Manipulations of Politics in the Mid-Fifteenth Century” shows how Martin Le Franc’s *Le Champion des dames* explores the interactions between literary and political authority in late-medieval France. This work explores in depth the tradition refounded by Machaut and taken up by other writers of the period like Alain Chartier, including, as Swift argues, the intermingling or amalgamation of poetic and political authority. Somewhat alike, “Bohemian Gower: *Confessio Amantis*, Queen Anne, and Machaut’s Judgment Poems,” by Linda Burke, analyzes Gower’s adaptations of the *dits amoureux* of Machaut and his followers. She maintains that this choice of genre was ideally suited for an appeal to a particularly powerful female reader, as suggested by late medieval profeminine discourse. In focusing

on the relationship between the *Confessio* and Machaut's judgment poems, as well as Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, Burke takes into account this discourse in general in this period, and points out the possible respective roles played by Anne of Bohemia in the creation of these poems.

In "Le Contraire Effacies': Challenging Literary and Political Authority in Guillaume de Machaut, Alain Chartier, and Medieval French Debate Poetry," Emma Cayley also focuses on Chartier, especially his self-positioning within the Machautian tradition. Cayley examines literary and political authority in his writings as well as in a number of subsequent fifteenth-century poetic debates. The culture of literary, political, and intellectual debate, filtered through the works of Machaut and Christine de Pizan, constitutes the backdrop for Chartier's literary debates. Burt Kimmelman also argues for the centrality of this nexus of literary and political authority. His essay "The Machaut Map: Geoffrey Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, the Diegetic Self, and Pre-Renaissance Individualism in Northern Europe" analyzes the Machautian legacy in the oeuvres of Geoffrey and Christine. Guillaume, he argues, understood his poetry as cultural capital. And this conception of the writer's function decisively shaped the practice of text-making for poets of the next generation, as a series of sociopolitical acts that are not meant to be understood in strictly aesthetic terms. The status of the patron is not diminished by such textualizations, so Kimmelman asserts. But the poet is elevated through composition that engages the political as well as the literary.

Machaut invented gestures of self-fashioning that were widely imitated, freeing fabulation from its dependence on preexisting *matières* and making possible a fictionalization of the self whose effect can be seen in not only a modernist preoccupation with authorial experience but also in postmodernist games-playing, in precisely the forms of metafictionality that contest a too easy separation of art from life. Machaut, in short, deserves to be remembered not merely for his astonishing range and the enormity of his creative production, a virtuosity none of his contemporaries come close to matching. He also made possible future forms of the novelistic in which an author and individual who could be fully acknowledged, tacitly understood and accepted, would emerge, a literary development traced by Palmer at some length.

The question of agency for the actual flesh-and-blood Guillaume de Machaut is arguably a *sine qua non*. The need for and the consequent

act of judgment was a literary topos that Machaut revived and renewed. Furnishing a fictional framework in which the institutionalized roles of literary production and reception could be dramatized, the Machaut judgment poems played a pivotal role in the emergence of what became the novel from earlier forms of fabulizing that had occulted the author's presence and ignored the social process of reading/evaluation. The most characteristic and honored forms of late medieval fictionalizing are inconceivable without this formal and thematic breakthrough. The different essays collected in this volume attest that fact.

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