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Review of Helen Deeming, ed., *Songs in British Sources, c.1150–1300*, Musica Britannica 95.

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Helen Deeming, ed., *Songs in British Sources, c.1150–1300*, Musica Britannica 95. London: The Musica Britannica Trust and Stainer and Bell, 2013. lx + 226 pp. £95. ISBN 978 0 85249 935 1.

By the time of his death, John Stevens (1921–2002), emeritus professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University, had been working for over two decades on a study and edition of the trilingual repertory of song in medieval England from c.1150 to c.1350.¹ The initial products of that research were themselves so lengthy and detailed that the scope of the whole endeavour appears to have been enormous, and it is understandable if immensely to be regretted that the undertaking remained unfinished in his lifetime. The edition under review is the fresh work of a younger Cambridge-educated scholar, Dr Helen Deeming, to assay a part of what Stevens had projected.²

The target repertory is large enough that Deeming has made two strategic decisions. She has tightened up the time period by ending at c.1300 rather than at c.1350. And she has eliminated from consideration the large collections of songs found in purpose-copied books – those carefully ruled, systematically organised codices that were for the most part destined for corporate use or ostentatious gift-giving – in favour of a focus on the songs that ‘are found scattered, singly or in small groups, among many (principally non-musical) manuscripts’ (p. xxv), and which thus would have been mainly accessible solely to individuals for private contemplation and performance. The sources remaining within her purview include not only many isolated songs but also those in some small but discrete, integral booklets (e.g., the eleven song texts, seven provided with music, in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, 240/126; the fifteen or so compositions, plus music theory, of BL Harley MS 978; the dozen-odd works of BL Arundel MS 248; and the five compositions of BNF fonds français 25408), and some significant groups serendipitously entered onto

¹ See John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350* (Cambridge, 1986); the rear cover of the paperback edition states that ‘Songs of English provenance are referred to as appropriate but the particular study of the English repertoire is reserved for a subsequent volume’. Stevens, ‘*Sampson dux fortissime: An International Latin Song*’, *Plainsong & Medieval Music* 1 (1992), 1–40; the journal’s note on ‘Contributors’ states that Stevens ‘is currently writing a book on song in England during the Middle Ages’ (p. ii). Stevens, ‘Alphabetical Check-List of Anglo-Norman Songs c.1150–c.1350’, *Plainsong & Medieval Music* 3 (1994), 1–22; reference is made to ‘A book dealing with the whole question of songs and lyrics in early medieval England (in preparation)’ (p. 2). Stevens, ‘“Sumer is icumen in”: A Neglected Context’, in *Expedition nach der Wahrheit: Poems, Essays, and Papers in Honour of Theo Stemmler; Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Theo Stemmler*, ed. by Stefan Horlader and Marion Islinger (Heidelberg, 1996), 307–47: ‘This paper contributes to an edition and study, *Songs and Lyrics in Early Medieval England*, to be published by Cambridge University Press; it will present the tri-lingual repertory of songs, Latin, French and English, from c.1150 to c.1350, with texts, translations and music’ (p. 346, note 53). Stevens, ed., *The Later Cambridge Songs: An English Song Collection of the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 2005); in the ‘Foreword’ (p. v), Christopher Page refers to ‘SLEME: *Songs and Lyrics of Early Medieval England*’ as the grander, unfinished project.

² See Helen L. Deeming, ‘Music in English Miscellanies of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge (2005) and her significant and growing list of publications, for which see the website <http://pure.rhul.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/helen-deeming%28f5587d13-68f4-4d3c-b94c-3167546a388e%29/publications.html> (accessed 1 June 2014).

adjacent blank folios of some other kind of book (e.g., the six songs of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 34, fols. 151r–154v; the five songs and music theory of Evreux, Bibliothèque Municipale, Lat. 2, fols. 2r–6r; the five songs of the rear leaves of Evreux, Bibliothèque Municipale, Lat. 17, fols. 156r–159v; and the fourteen items entered into the seventeenth fascicle of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 1225).

Setting aside material from purpose-copied codices eliminates at one fell swoop nearly all monophonic liturgical chant, plus the polyphonic organa, monophonic and polyphonic conductus, and polyphonic motets.³ Inevitably, some sources fall in the cracks. That is, very fragmentary remains can be difficult to evaluate as pages from a substantial musical codex on the one hand or from a small cache of songs on the other. Deeming, for example, has generously included the monophonic and polyphonic sequences of Dorchester, Dorset Record Office, PE/NBY/MI 1, which may originally have been leaves from a liturgical sequentiary, while omitting the repertory of an equally fragmentary source of similar age, contents and possible origin, Worcester Cathedral Library, Additional 68, fragment xxx.⁴ There is a surviving part of yet another manuscript that Deeming could have considered: Worcester Cathedral Library, Additional 68, fragment xxix. This preserves a varied mix of Latin monophony and polyphony, including sequences, in a state that suggests a collector's grab-bag of songs, some copied over palimpsest, rather than remains from a carefully assembled codex.

At the same time, we can be grateful that Deeming made the sensible decision to include the two French songs and one English song from a front flyleaf of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G 22, despite the fact that the leaf may have originated in a full-fledged, substantial 'songbook' or chansonnier (pp. xxxi–xxxii and note 21). I would add, moreover, that purpose-copied codices may themselves receive miscellaneous, marginal additions that are relevant to Deeming's repertory,⁵ and that some kinds of liturgical collections may incorporate odds and ends in a

³ The very small number of liturgical plainsongs other than sequences that turn up has prompted her to exclude them. No organa fall into her net, and that seems unsurprising, but the stark absence of any conductus with concordances in the major conductus collections is noteworthy. Moreover, only two motets appear among her forty-two sources (one Anglo-Norman and one Latin). She has opted not to edit these (p. xxix and note 9), and making it a policy to exclude motets (pp. xxviii–xxix), Deeming also eliminates from consideration one additional Anglo-Norman motet (*Amor veint tout / Au tens d'este / ET GAUDEBIT*) that is now tucked in at the end of a source that otherwise fits her field of scope, i.e., BL Cotton Vespasian A.XVIII, fols. 164v–165r.

⁴ For monophony and polyphony side by side in a liturgical codex that otherwise transmits exclusively plainsong, see Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson liturg. d.3, fols. 68v–72v, which is a gathering of seven sequences, four monophonic and three polyphonic, within a Gradual of the Use of Salisbury dating to the later thirteenth century.

⁵ For example, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 497 is a non-musical fourteenth-century British manuscript whose flyleaves originated in a formal, purpose-copied, later thirteenth-century British codex of polyphonic conductus; at the bottom of one of the flyleaves, a monophonic sequence, *Gaude virgo salutata Gabriele nuncio*, has been added on empty staves by a contemporary hand.

way that formalises what was once perhaps someone's favourite small hoard of songs.⁶

What makes it into Deeming's edition is, all told, a very interesting and in many ways coherent anthology of songs. Bilingual and trilingual collections are a distinctive subset of her sources, in direct correlation with the much more numerous trilingual textual anthologies of lyrics without musical notation from this era.⁷ Almost all the surviving Anglo-Norman and Middle English songs are here, together with a very much larger number of Latin songs, primarily sequences but also a significant clutch of magnificent strophic songs and extended lai-type songs featuring progressive repetition. Many now appear in print for the first time. Deeming chooses to present the songs not in some order defined by parameters such as language, texture or form. Rather, she offers them in three broadly chronological tranches (sources of c.1150–1200, c.1200–1250 and c.1250–1300), within each of which the sources are presented not in some hypothesised finer chronological gradation, but rather in alphabetical order by city, library and collection, with their individual contents in source order. Thus the integrity of the song collection copied into any given source is preserved, and Deeming edits the same song twice when it occurs in two sources (or three times for Godric of Finchdale's *Seinte Marie virgine*) in order to preserve variant readings.

Just how many songs are offered up in this volume is more complicated to determine than you might think, and depends on how you count. Deeming's 'Index of First Lines' has sixteen entries for English songs, fourteen for Anglo-Norman French and eighty-five for Latin, for a total of 115. By lovely coincidence, this is also the number of entries tallied in the 'Table of Contents'; the quantity of multiple editions of the same music and text under different numbers (e.g., *Seinte Marie virgine* in three versions, nos. 3, 32, 78) is just balanced by the quantity of entries where under a single number there are edited several songs with contrafact texts and alternative interpretations of the intended rhythm (e.g., *Ave gloriosa mater* and *Duce creature* together are 83a, 83b, 83c, 83d). The total number of unique musical scores engraved for this edition, ultimately, is 127 by my count.

⁶ A relevant example is the Dublin Troper (Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 710), which is a sequentiary of c.1350 and thus admittedly outside Deeming's temporal boundaries. This book ends with a Marian sequentiary consisting of four series of pieces. The first series has twenty-four sequences in alphabetical order, the second has nine in mainly alphabetical order, and the third has twelve short items in no evident order. The fourth group consists of Philip the Chancellor's lai *Ave gloriosa virginum*, the lai *Omnis caro peccaverat*, and three strophic songs (*Angelus ad virginem*, *In ecclesiis celi*, *Scribere proposui*). All the songs of this final cluster are edited from some earlier source by Deeming.

⁷ A further trilingual musical collection is worthy of mention here. Binding materials in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 8 are from a very large codex (paginations on the surviving musical bifolio are 547, 548, 557, 558) whose appearance and contents suggest that the original was a purpose-copied, multi-gathering British motet codex of the later thirteenth century, something on the scale of the Montpellier codex. Deeming omits its remains from her edition, presumably because of their highly probable origin in a codex. Contents include a rhymed, English-texted score notation work a2, a single-texted English motet a2, an Anglo-Norman song a3, scraps from Anglo-Norman versions of motets, and hockets on Latin tenors.

Since the edition proceeds from source to source, an ideal way to use it is in conjunction with the online Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music, working back and forth from image to edition.⁸ This has its own virtue, but it means that the reader who is proceeding page by page from cover to cover will find the contents to be a bit of a jumble. To help grasp what Deeming has edited for us, I will exercise the reviewer's prerogative to make a conceptual rearrangement of her contents – in this instance, by language, taking up the Anglo-Norman songs first. The inattention of scholars to these songs in insular French has been profound in its silence, and it is simply terrific to have them here in good editions. In 1994 John Stevens provided an alphabetical checklist of Anglo-Norman songs spanning c.1150–c.1350 that omits only motets and a few other scraps;⁹ it was incorporated into Ruth Dean's 1999 catalogue of Anglo-Norman literature, which provides a broader context of nearly a hundred secular and devotional Anglo-Norman lyrics with and without music from sources of up to the early fifteenth century.¹⁰ Stevens's checklist has seventeen entries, and Deeming edits fourteen of them, omitting only two items of monophony (Stevens no. 4, *Chevalier mult estes*, an Anglo-Norman song of the right age but that survives only in a continental copy, and Stevens no. 10, *Margot margot*, a later refrain song from outside Deeming's time period), and the polyphonic refrain song *Volez oyer* (Stevens no. 17, from a purpose-copied volume of polyphony).¹¹

Of Deeming's fourteen, five are monophonic secular songs of courtly love, two are monophonic crusade songs, one is the insular French version of the prayer called the 'Prisoner's Song', and six are pious devotional songs (four of which are known to be contrafacts, two of which are based on polyphonic Latin-texted originals, and two are in sequence form). A mixed bag, indeed.

The Middle English songs are only somewhat less obscure. Essential context is provided by the items in Christopher Page's 1976 checklist of English song to c.1300, corresponding to the first eighteen songs in the 1979 edition by Dobson and Harrison, *Medieval English Songs (MES)*, which carries on into the early fifteenth century.¹² Omitting *Brid one breere* as a work of the early fourteenth century, and omitting also two motets, while counting Godric's songs as four rather than three, we arrive at Deeming's total of sixteen song texts from the period up to 1300. The larger backdrop for this mere handful of works is, of course, the immense catalogue of song verse without musical notation, and other poetry, in *The Index of Middle English Verse* (1943) and its *Supplement* (1965).¹³

⁸ The DIAMM database is launching a new online resource, 'Sources of British Song on DIAMM', that forms a companion to Deeming's print edition (www.diamm.ac.uk, accessed 1 June 2014).

⁹ Stevens, 'Check-List', 2.

¹⁰ Ruth J. Dean, with the collaboration of Maureen B.M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publications Series 3 (London, 1999).

¹¹ Stevens, 'Check-List', 2.

¹² See Christopher Page, 'A Catalogue and Bibliography of English Song from its Beginning to c.1300', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 13 (1976), 67–8; and Eric J. Dobson and Frank Ll. Harrison, *Medieval English Songs* (London, 1979).

¹³ Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943) and Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse* (Lexington, 1965).

Again, we have a very mixed bag. There is a secular *rota* or round canon at the unison with accompaniment, *Sumer is icumen in*, plus just one additional secular song, the two-voice *Foweles in the frith*, whose single stanza bewails the pangs of love. The sphere of the devotional, pious, penitential and prayerful is represented by four sequences and six strophic songs, along with the four single-stanza songs attributed to Godric of Finchdale. Five songs are known contrafacts of French or Latin originals. Deeming's excellent, conservative editions are a welcome foil to the more aggressive editorial interventions of *MES*.

Contextualisation against a larger backdrop of the eighty-five Latin songs that Deeming has culled is a knotty scholarly problem, because medieval Latin song is not under good bibliographic control. It is a variegated and untidy genre, operating in a vast field of discourse then and now, with contested definitions and boundaries, and it appeared under a slew of names, including cantus, cantio, cantilena, conductus, versus, sequence, hymn, planctus, lai, rondellus, rota and motet.¹⁴ One recent measure of the problem is the following. A research project, 'Cantum pulchriorem invenire: Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Music and Poetry', was started at Southampton University in October 2010 to investigate the genre of conductus, which is initially defined on the project's website by the all-embracing rubric 'Latin song', though this is then qualified to encompass solely those works which set 'a type of poetry called *rithmus*'.¹⁵ (*Rithmus* poetry is rhymed, strophic, accentual and syllable-counting.) The project's online catalogue of conductus is a database of 865 works, of which only twenty-eight are also found among the eighty-five Latin songs edited by Deeming, including most but not all of her strophic songs and lai-types while omitting most but not all of her sequences.

A reasonable way to move forward here is to agree that for twenty-first-century singers and scholars, Latin song is sung Latin – all sung Latin, full stop. Deeming's Latin songs represent the yield of a thorough canvassing of medieval British sources spanning 150 years for the songs that were squirrelled away advantageously in non-musical manuscripts. How skewed a view she offers of the presumably much larger repertory of Latin song that was eligible for this kind of preservation is unknown, but we must go with what we have in order to set out a baseline for further enquiry. Partitioning this unwieldy corpus can then proceed in many ways – subdividing by age, by location, by function, by sacred or secular content, by form, by text type (prose or verse), by versification scheme and so on. I myself would argue, conventionally enough, that a helpful way to categorise and contextualise is to begin first with musical form and move next to versification.

The largest formal category pertinent to Deeming's Latin songs comprises those sixty-two that exhibit progressive musical repetition, including eleven with the luxuriant musical repetitions and returns of the lai-type and fifty-one with the more

¹⁴ See John Stevens on this problem in *Words and Music*, 48–52. For the few Latin songs from before 1150 in British sources, see K.D. Hartzell, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1200 Containing Music* (Woodbridge, 2006) and Deeming's Introduction, xxix and note 12.

¹⁵ See the foundational description of this project at its website, www.conductus.ac.uk (accessed 1 June 2014).

disciplined double-versicle structure of the strict sequence. All of them have regularly versified *rithmus* poetry. A second formal category encompasses twenty strophic settings of regular *rithmus* poetry. And lastly there are a mere five through-composed songs. Two are short monophonic settings of a single strophe of prayer in regular *rithmus* poetry (nos. 56 and 105) and two are longer polyphonic settings of regular *rithmus* poetry that began life as motets with consistently patterned rhythmic declamation of a pre-established text (nos. 83a and 109).

The final through-composed song sets a text that is rhymed and accentual but never settles into any fully regular and repeated pattern of syllable-counts or strophic designs (*O labilis o flebilis hominis conditio*, no. 67). The nearest comparable texts are those of the early Latin motets in which a fluent versifier fashioned words to fit pre-existing music, producing local rhymes, accent patterns and line lengths but not creating a fully regular *rithmus*.¹⁶ Could this song, too, be a motet that has been transformed into a conductus-like work in simultaneous style by extending declamation of the text in rhythmic unison to all voice parts?

Deeming's edition begins with an extensive Introduction, Editorial Notes, and four facsimiles, and at the end she provides ample critical reports in her Textual Commentary. Each song has a reliable, freshly edited text, and a sturdy modern English translation immediately following the score that almost always accounts for every word of the original. To the highest practical degree the layout of each individual song is analytical, with each staff system representing a consistent number of verse units, with each of these verse units slightly compressed in spacing and given extra space between, with the vertical alignment of parallel verse units down the page, and with judicious left-indenting to help pick out larger strophic elements. This praiseworthy feature creates highly legible scores for both reader and singer. My biggest gripes are two very small ones. Providing the range of each song at the beginning would have been helpful. And manuscript foliations are reported with the edited song but not repeated in the Textual Commentary, so to assemble an overall picture of a given source one needs to copy that information over again by hand.

I would also mention a lost opportunity or road not taken. Early in the Introduction, Deeming declares that 'the songs share many musical and poetic characteristics that point toward a previously unrecognised but apparently vigorous culture of song-making in medieval Britain' (p. xxv). I took that to be a part of her agenda for the essay, but she goes no further along this line. Instead, towards the end, she floats a more qualified future prospect: 'the present edition hopes to facilitate work to identify the various trans-continental influences, as well as the distinctively insular characteristics, that may be evident among the songs in British sources' (p. xlv).

In fact, we have a pretty good notion of the insular characteristics of medieval English polyphony, but monophony is harder. Some songs of medieval England are never going to be recoverable – the lullabies of mothers and nurses, the worksongs

¹⁶ For an example, see the single-texted Latin motet with a similar text on the same theme, *O debilis o flebilis condicio miseri hominis* (Ernest H. Sanders, ed., *English Music of the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 14 (Paris and Monaco, 1979), no. 48).

of labourers, the marches of soldiers, the dance songs of friends and lovers. Songs from aristocratic and courtly circles also seem mostly not to have survived. Instead, whatever they heard at home or in childhood, the composers, consumers and collectors of Deeming's songs are likely to have encountered them in musically literate clerical environments. We may never be fully able to make out the uniquely indigenous features of their song-making, even as we discern their tastes in music from the songs (whether insular or continental in origin) that they saved and wrote down.

To my mind, the way forward in the hunt for insular characteristics is at the later end of Deeming's time period. Building on her admirable edition, but expanding its time frame to c.1350 and opening the door to collections of motets and liturgical plainsong, we may find idioms in the refrains and refrain songs in English, French and Latin used as motet tenors (e.g., *Dou way Robin, the childe wil wepe; Mariounette douche; O Bartholomee miseris*) that echo in newly minted Anglo-Norman, Middle English and Latin song, especially sequences.

Sequences themselves need more attention from scholars. There is a simple, tuneful melodic idiom appearing in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in a number of short sequences of three or four double versicles, mostly in the F tonality but also on G and sometimes D, that may well be insular.¹⁷ From Deeming's edition, *Gaude dei cella, Gaude gloriosa, Gaude salutata virgo, Salve celi ianua, Salve virgo sacra parens, Salve virgo singularis* and *Verbo verbum incarnatur* are especially worth considering in this light. This group, moreover, overlaps with some popular texts and tunes found in Deeming's edition that turn up in English polyphony of the thirteenth through to the fifteenth century, such as *Celum Deus inclinavit* (to the tune of *Salve virgo singularis*), *Dulcis Jesu memoria, In te concipitur, Missus Gabriel de celis, Salve mater salvatoris mater salutifera, Salve virgo sacra parens* and *Salve virgo singularis*. A further group of sequence texts and tunes comparable in age and melodic idiom, and in involvement with insular polyphony, which are often found mainly or exclusively in insular liturgical sources but were not captured for the present edition by Deeming's search criteria, would include *Ad rose titulum, Benedicta es celorum regina, De spineto nata rosa, Gaude virgo salutata, Generosi germinis, Jesu fili virginis, Mater ora filium* (from *Maria virgo concipitur*) and *Salve mater misericordie*. Deeming's musical hoarders loved Latin lais and strophic songs, but sequences above all; sequences fill almost half of the volume under review, and quite evidently were a popular kind of song. Some, surely, speak in an insular musical dialect.

In closing, I highly recommend that readers seek out and spend time with this stimulating edition. It challenges us to think and it gratifies us with a novel offering of diverse, often unfamiliar, and musically compelling medieval songs.

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¹⁷ On these song-like sequences, see the remarks by David Hiley and Ernest H. Sanders quoted in Peter M. Lefferts, 'Cantilena and Antiphon: Music for Marian Services in Late Medieval England', in *Studies in Medieval Music: Festschrift for Ernest H. Sanders*, ed. Peter M. Lefferts and Brian Seirup (New York, 1990), 247–82, at 263. Appendix III in that essay ('Texts Associated with Sequence, Offertory, Antiphon, Cantilena, and Motet') needs updating in light of Deeming's discoveries.