

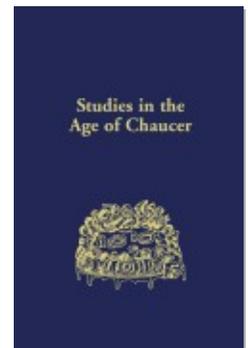


PROJECT MUSE®

The Poems of the Troubadour Bertran de Born ed. by William
D. Paden, Jr., Tilde Sankovitch, Patricia H. Stäblein
(review)

Rupert T. Pickens

Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Volume 9, 1987, pp. 245-247 (Review)



Published by The New Chaucer Society

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.1987.0032>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/658827/summary>

Each volume ends with a table of proper names and a glossary of the words not understandable to the present-day average French-speaker.

The first two volumes happen not to contain any source of Chaucer's fabliaux (which could be deduced from their titles), but they can now be checked by reading the detailed summaries or editions. We are looking forward to seeing the edition of fabliaux 35, *Gombert et les deus Clercs*, and 80, *Le Meunier et les deus Clercs* (apparently two different texts, since B and C have both: *Gombert* . . . : A, B, C, H; *Le Meunier* . . . : B, C), where we shall probably gain more information on Chaucer's source for *RvT*. The edition of the six versions with their notes will perhaps enable us to gain a clearer view of the material he used and the way he transformed it.

A new edition should, of course, correct the very rare misprints (e.g., vol. 1, p. 352, line 220, *leçons*) and also revise Morawski's quotation (vol. 1, pp. 318, 452): according to them it represents no. 2378, *Tierce foiz c'est droiz*, whereas for Elisabeth Schulze-Busacker (*Proverbes et expressions proverbiales dans la littérature narrative du Moyen Âge français* [Paris, 1985], p. 335) it is 2379, *Tierce mis paste set* . . .

We wish a long life to the *NRCF* and look forward to seeing the next volumes.

JULIETTE DOR
Université de Liège

WILLIAM D. PADEN, JR., TILDE SANKOVITCH, and PATRICIA H. STÄBLEIN,
eds. *The Poems of the Troubadour Bertran de Born*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1986. Pp. xxii, 574. \$65.00.

Limited space cannot do justice to this necessary and long-awaited edition by a team of researchers at Northwestern University. The book begins with an exhaustive analysis of the life and times of Bertran de Born, his cultural and geographical milieus. Such considerations are crucial in studying a body of poetry the satirical and political content of which, not to mention the circumstances of its production, depends both on the troubadour's relations with noble and royal families and on contemporary events. The introduction continues with enlightened discussion of Bertran's importance in contemporary Occitan literature and his subsequent role in literary

tradition. With respect to the latter, particular attention is paid to the Italian tradition culminating with Dante and, in modern times, to Ezra Pound. Treatment of these matters, consistently precise and scholarly, is enhanced by numerous pertinent maps and tables. In the main part of the book, each of the forty-seven songs (arranged insofar as possible in order of composition as suggested by internal evidence wisely interpreted) is fully introduced, competently translated, and amply annotated. The book concludes with extant melodies transcribed by Hendrick van der Werf, tables of historical data, a glossary, a complete bibliography, and an index.

The editors establish their canon with judicious care. Equal care and seriousness are manifest in their concern for editorial principles. Rejecting both reconstructive methods as unproductive and the presentation of "an encyclopedic repertory" of texts as unfeasible (pp. 86–87), they base their texts on single manuscripts. Two criteria govern their selection of bases: "quality of the text" (the text chosen requires the least emendation) and, in cases when two manuscripts with different versions appear equally reliable according to the first criterion, "homogeneity of the edition" (i.e., preference is accorded the manuscript that has already provided the greater number of base texts, p. 95). Not surprisingly—and somewhat regrettably—the *chansonniers* produced in Italy, where the tradition appears more consistent than in the Occitan territory (thanks to a larger number of "mechanical" and "near-mechanical" copies), give an overwhelming majority of the texts (25 from *A*, 9 from *I*, for example, but only 3 from *C*). The introductory matter for each song includes clear indications of strophic order and provides significant variants. Thus the scholar, mindful of the practical concerns behind the first criterion and the objective, yet arbitrary nature of the second, can have confidence in the texts at hand. However, the editors do not always resist the temptation to create new versions of their own (with a *tornada*, well attested in all manuscripts except the base, in song 2, an extraneous stanza in song 6, a seriously extraneous *tornada* in song 8, etc.), pointing out the need (frequently, in all objectivity, justified, as in song 2) for "secondary bases" (p. 95).

Despite such minor objections, Paden, Sankovitch, and Stäblein have, by all standards, produced a monumental edition, well conceived, carefully and thoroughly executed, eminently scholarly and delightful to read. In no small measure is the delight I feel in working with this book due as well to the high production values evident throughout and to imaginative design and layout. The editors have given us a magnificent book in its

writing; we are also indebted to the University of California Press for giving us a magnificent book-object worthy of their enterprise.

RUPERT T. PICKENS
University of Kentucky

ROBERT O. PAYNE. *Geoffrey Chaucer, Second Edition*. Twayne's English Authors Series, vol. 1. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., Twayne Publishers, 1986. Pp. ix, 153. \$14.95.

"The general perspective of the poem [*Troilus and Criseyde*]. . . has sometimes been characterized as 'middle-aged,' the outlook of a somewhat scarred survivor of youth and love who can look back on it with a mature mixture of sympathetic understanding and evaluative objectivity" (p. 83). The same judgment, *mutatis mutandis*, can be applied to the book under review. The general perspective of Payne's book can be characterized as "middle-aged," the outlook of a somewhat scarred survivor of thirty-odd years of Chaucer criticism who can look back on it with a mature mixture of sympathetic understanding and evaluative objectivity.

Those of us who entered the academic profession in the 1960s with an interest in Chaucer quickly learned a handful of prominent names. Among them, though much less flung about as a label or a brand in the "critical wars," was that of Robert O. Payne. There was, as I say, no "Paynesian" to join "Kittredgean," "Donaldsonian," or "Robertsonian," but *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (1963) was still one of the books we knew we had to read and one of the books we were glad we had read. The book evaded scholarly evangelism and tried, seriously and elegantly, to read Chaucer's poems on their own terms. So successful was the effort that whether we agreed or disagreed with the various readings (I remember assenting to about half of them) we always felt we had learned something—had not wasted our time.

Much the same judgment holds true of *Geoffrey Chaucer, Second Edition*. The book is worth reading, although there is a lot to question, a good deal to disagree with. Chief among the items to question is the bibliography. For a book published in 1986, it cites only one study later than 1979 (a book published in 1980); it is difficult, even for someone of Payne's stature,