Hudson, Harriet. 2023. *William Caxton's "Paris and Vienne" and "Blanchardyn and Eglantine."* Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications. Pp. 352. ISBN 9781580445566.

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Harriet Hudson's edition of William Caxton's *Paris and Vienne* and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* has been published as part of the Middle English Texts Series (METS). Organised by the Rossell Hope Robbins Library at the University of Rochester, in collaboration with the Department of English of the same university and the Teaching Association for Medieval Studies (TEAMS), and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the project seeks to produce material aimed at teachers and students. Since its origins in 1990, the titles published have been texts that can be considered canonical, but which have not been made available before in editions fit for the classroom.

This is not the first edition that Harriet Hudson, Professor Emerita of English at Indiana State University, contributes to the series. In 1996 she published *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour* (Hudson 1996), which was also printed by the Medieval Institute of the Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A second edition of this book appeared in 2006 and was made available online by the Robbins Library Digital Projects. During the last few decades, she authored several articles on Middle English romance that are mandatory bibliography for anyone interested in the topic (Hudson 1989, 1994, among others). In the present volume, her ample expertise in the area is evident in the critical apparatus, which provides well-organised information about a series of different aspects of the works: from Caxton's biography and a table showing the list of the romances and chivalric treatises he translated, to codicological descriptions of the extant copies and a glossary of selected Middle English words.

The works in question are two chivalric romances which emerged in fourteenth-century France (south and north, respectively) and which were translated from French into English, and printed by William Caxton in 1485 and 1489: *Paris and Vienne* and *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*. Both are extant in single copies: London, British Library, C.10.b.10, and the imperfect Manchester, Rylands Library, Incunable 15027, respectively. As the first merchant to set up a printing shop in England, and as a prolific translator of texts that were already a commercial success on the continent, Caxton's contribution to the fashioning of

the English literary canon is undeniable. These two romances are good illustrative examples of the characteristics of late-medieval romance, with their plots involving lovers who are separated, live several adventures, and are reunited in the end. The stories are both entertaining and instructive, as the characters serve as moralising examples of good manners, courtly love, and chivalry; or as counter-examples when they deploy pride, wrath, or stubborn behaviours. In a number of aspects, *Paris and Vienne* presents an originality which its counterpart lacks; it has a stronger, active heroine, realistic everyday details and a recognisable geography, and a more tolerant understanding of Muslim characters. In this respect, it seems like *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* is the backdrop against which the originality of *Paris and Vienne* becomes visible.

Both of Caxton's translations have been edited before. Before the present one, the last critical edition of *Paris and Vienne* was the one prepared by MacEdward Leach for the Early English Text Society (Leach 1957). In 1992, Anna Maria Babbi edited the short French version of the romance, preserved in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Français 20044 (Babbi 1992). Finally, in 2015, Rosalind Brown-Grant and Marie-Claude de Crécy edited the Burgundian version of the long romance, extant in Brussels, KBR 9632/3 (Brown-Grand and de Crécy 2015). In the case of *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, the most recent critical edition was produced by Leon Kellner (1890). After that, some studies and editions of other texts have contributed to the scholarship on the subject, such as Rosa Anna Greco's edition of the French prose *Blancandin* romances, short and long (Greco 2002). This is all noted by Hudson in her introductions to each text, and the most recent findings are incorporated into her presentation and analysis of the romances.

The book is organised in the following way: a general introduction; the introduction to *Paris and Vienne*; the edited text; the explanatory notes; and the textual notes; then, the same structure for *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, with the exception that this text also includes Caxton's dedication and table of contents before the main text; finally, an appendix with a prologue present in some French manuscripts of *Paris and Vienne*; a bibliography; a glossary of the most recurrent Middle English words; and a list of works which can be of interest. Just before each edited romance, there is a facsimile reproduction of the first folio of each extant copy of the editions by Caxton, a detail which brings closer to the reader the original material form of the texts.

The general introduction provides an account of Caxton's life and his career as a printer, including his patrons and aristocratic connections, with an emphasis on his consciousness of the use of translation as an instrument for broadening the audiences of literary texts. Hudson then compares the elements that the romances have in common, which are to be expanded later on the individual introductions: from their emergence in late medieval France, to the similarities

of their plots and function. In both cases, the narratives seek to both educate and entertain their audience. The plots include two sets of courtly lovers who are generally models of good behaviour and include characters who give didactic advice to lovers; in the first romance, aimed mostly at adolescents, and in the second one, which includes advice on the governance of states, as a mirror of princes. Both can be considered, in some ways (for example, in the presence of an identifiable geography) as precedents of the historical novel. Both include numerous adventures, combats and tournaments. Nevertheless, the romances are contrasted as well: in content (Hudson explains their almost opposite ways of depicting the religious others) and physical form (the two extant copies present quite different layouts). The last section of the general introduction is dedicated to the translation criteria, which is designed to make the text more legible without modernising the lexicon or speech.

The introduction to *Paris and Vienne* details, first, its origins in the Angevine court of the late fourteenth century, and the fact that it was already known to Spanish audiences by 1405. The oldest surviving version is the one written down in prose by Pierre de la Cépède of Marseille in 1432. The romance was a big success in the following two centuries, and it was translated and printed in eight other languages. Hudson then moves on to summarise the plot, a useful aid for those venturing for the first time into Middle English, and analyses its use of realistic details as a way of moving away from the conventions of earlier, highly stylised chivalric romance. Finally, she points out two areas in which the romance presents further originality: its way of presenting Muslim characters and its gender dynamics. In the first case, it is possible that southern French audiences had some contact with Muslim people through Spain, so the characters present more realistic details and less grotesque stereotyping. The word chosen for them is *Moors* instead of the more negative *Saracens*. In the second case, Vienne is not a passive heroine, but rather one who acts to advance the action, and takes after some hagiographical characters. In this respect, the romance offers strong models of courteous behaviour but also of moral and spiritual conduct. The introduction ends with practical details on the publication history and scholarship on the romance, the sources used by Caxton, and a codicological description of the surviving copy.

The text itself comes after this introduction and is arranged in ways that facilitate its study. There are footnotes clarifying difficult words and translating a few Latin phrases. The rubrics are marked in bold, and the folio numbers are embedded in the text. All of the chapters and paragraphs are numbered, which makes it easy to reference a specific passage. All of these decisions are replicated in *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*. After the romance, there are explanatory notes to the text, revised and adapted from MacEdward Leach's (1957) edition; and, finally, notes comparing this with other extant versions in manuscript and print.

The introduction to *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* gives an account of its origins in northern France in the early thirteenth century, as an anonymous verse romance which draws on the traditions of the *chanson de geste* and on some of Chrétien de Troyes' works. The earliest surviving version is extant in four verse thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts. The text was later adapted into prose in the Burgundian court of Duke Philip the Good. Caxton's translation was commissioned by the duchess (and mother of Henry VII) Margaret Beaufort, who, like Philip, might have had personal and political reasons for enjoying this story in particular. Hudson presents this text as sentimental and pedagogical, with a plot that is repetitive and a narrative which is formulaic and redundant. The plot takes place all around Europe, in the Baltic and around the Mediterranean, and the education that the characters, who are already models of courtly manners and self-control, receive (and the audience through them) is political as well as sentimental. The religious others are described here with the highly negative word *Saracen*, and laden with stereotypes originated in the Crusades, including that of the Saracen princess who betrays her family and converts to Christianity. In the romance, the gender dynamics are constructed in a way in which women are mediators used to support the harmony of masculine (patriarchal) communities; even when the conventions of courtly love establish an illusion of women ruling over men.

Again, the introduction ends with the scholarship and publication history of the text, a presentation of Caxton's translation, a codicological account of the only witness and a list of sources. Since the witness is incomplete, Hudson fills in the blanks with her translation of Paris, BnF, MS Français 24371. The edited text itself presents the same criteria as *Paris and Vienne*, and there are both extensive explanatory notes at the end, and a series of notes on the textual variants of the different versions.

The book ends with an appendix of the prologue of Cépède to *Paris and Vienne*, which does not appear in Caxton's edition (Caxton drew on the short versions of the romances, which did not include the prologue), translated from Paris, BnF, MS Français 1480, a bibliography of works cited, a glossary of selected words, and a list of titles which can be of interest, including the ones that integrate the METS series.

The way this book is conceived helps to highlight the role of early printers in the shaping of literary canons. In particular, it brings attention to the importance of the work of William Caxton, and particularly of his translations, in the creation of the English canon; an influence that individual printers in the continent, where the market was far larger, did not necessarily have. However, Hudson does not forget to place Caxton in a wider network of readers and patrons, and to position the texts as part of long literary traditions rooted in the Middle Ages. It also brings attention to the treatment of female characters and the religious others in the

romances. Finally, thanks to the codicological descriptions of the witnesses, the facsimile reproduction of their first folios, and the incorporation of elements such as rubrication, folio number and table of contents into the edited romances, it is possible to get a better grasp of the material reality of these texts when they first circulated. Overall, it is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on late medieval romance, incunabula, translation studies, and gender studies; that will help introduce the study of these areas, and above all of early printing, into the classroom.

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