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RÉSUMÉ – En 1780 pour la *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, Louis-Élisabeth de la Vergne, comte de Tressan (1715-1783), remania en “miniature” le roman de *Jehan de Saintré* (1456) par Antoine de La Sale. Notre analyse des révisions importantes – omissions, notes historiques, approfondissement psychologique des personnages, interventions d’auteur, et modifications explicites de l’intrigue – effectuées par lui montre comment Tressan reconfigure un roman courtois médiéval pour plaire au grand public des lecteurs de son siècle.

ABSTRACT – Louis-Élisabeth de la Vergne, comte de Tressan (1715-1783) recast Antoine de La Sale's *Jehan de Saintré* (1456) in “miniature” for the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans* in 1780. Close analysis of the author's substantial revisions – cuts, explanatory footnotes, character development, narratorial interventions, and explicit reworkings of the plot – shows how Tressan refashioned a medieval courtly fiction to appeal to a broad range of eighteenth-century readers.

ANTOINE DE LA SALE'S *PETIT JEHAN DE SAINTRÉ* AND THE COMTE DE TRESSAN

Libertinage, gallantry and French identity in an eighteenth-century adaptation

For Jean-François Bastide, general editor of the eighteenth-century literary digest the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*¹, medieval and other early fictions represented fertile ground for modern authors, a “pays de conquête où l'on peut se permettre tout ce que l'on veut”². Since most readers would not have known the original, preserved in manuscripts or incunables held in private libraries, nothing prevented an author from imposing his tastes on the narrative as he abridged it into an “extrait” or a “miniature”, in keeping with the *BUR*'s goals of making all manner of epics, romances, and other narratives throughout history accessible to and comprehensible for a broad public of readers. The vast “pays de conquête” of medieval romance proved irresistible for the elderly Louis-Élisabeth de la Vergne, Comte de Tressan (1705-1783), former childhood companion of Louis XV, retired statesman and military officer, who became a prolific adaptor of medieval romances for the *BUR* and other venues from 1775 until his death (Figure 1). His adaptation of *Saintré*, signed by the Comte de Tress** under the category of “Romans de Chevalerie” in 1780³, was enormously popular, appearing in a variety of formats from the original serial publication, to deluxe leather-bound volumes and modest paper editions, naming only Tressan when an author

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- 1 Hereafter referred to as *BUR*. The collection can be accessed online through Gallica or in a reprint edition by Skatkine, *La Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, 28 vols, Geneva, Slatkine, 1969.
 - 2 As cited by R. Poirier, *La Bibliothèque universelle des romans; rédacteurs, textes, public*, Geneva, Droz, 1976, p. 88.
 - 3 M. le Comte de Tress**, *Extrait de l'histoire et plaisante chronique du Petit Jehan de Saintré d'après la comparaison de l'original avec l'édition donnée par Morel, en 1724*, *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, January 1780, vol. 2, p. 65-225; Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1969, vol. X, p. 79-119.

is named at all. (Among Tressan's other medieval adaptations are *Amadis de Gaule*, published separately with Pissot in 1778, *Huon de Bordeaux*, and *Gérard de Nevers*.)¹ Despite the appearance of four complete editions of La Sale's romance based on early printed editions or manuscripts in 1724², 1830³, 1843⁴, and 1890⁵, most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers probably knew *Saintré* as Tressan's sentimental romance rather than as La Sale's didactic compilation⁶.

Nineteenth-century editors of La Sale's original judged Tressan's miniaturization quite harshly. "Une traduction mutilée", said Lami-Denoan of Tressan's *Saintré* in his 1830 edition of La Sale's romance⁷, which takes pains to restore descriptions of tournaments, feasts, and costumes that Tressan had omitted, and prints the book in gothic type with added ornamentation and illustrations. "Impitoyablement abrégée", lamented Guichard in his 1843 edition of La Sale's *Saintré*, although he confessed that had Tressan published the work in its original form at the time, "un tel livre n'eût point été lu"⁸. In his 1890 edition, Hellény accused Tressan of giving the work "la couleur libertine qui plaisait à ses contemporains", thus assuring the book's success in "boudoirs" for half a century, where rather than being displayed for visitors' curiosity it had to be hidden "au plus profond des bibliothèques"⁹. "Méconnaissable... extrêmement réduite, galante et mondaine, d'une fausse et perverse

1 The publication history of Tressan's *Gérard de Nevers* parallels that of his adaptation of *Saintré*. A 1727 edition of the medieval text by Gueullette precedes Tressan's "miniature", entitled *Les apparences trompeuses*, in *BUR*, July 1780. Subsequent editions appear in a variety of formats throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Tressan's *Saintré* and *Gérard de Nevers* often appear in the same volume. There are also musical and theatrical renditions of Tressan's *Gérard de Nevers*.

2 Antoine de La Sale, *L'Histoire et plaisante cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré, de la jeune Dame des Belles Cousines, sans autre nom nommer*, ed. T. Gueullette, Paris, Mouchat, 1724, 3 vols.

3 Antoine de La Sale, *L'Histoire et Cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles Cousines, sans aultre nom nommer*, ed. Lami-Denoan, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1830.

4 Antoine de La Sale, *L'Hystoyre et plaisante cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles Cousines sans autre nom nommer*, ed. J.-M. Guichard, Paris, Charles Gosselin, 1843.

5 Antoine de La Sale, *L'Hystoyre et plaisante cronicque du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles Cousines par Antoine de la Sale*, ed. G. Hellény, Paris, L. Sauvaitre, 1890.

6 For an excellent overview of post-medieval editions and adaptations of *Saintré*, see M. B. Speer, "The Literary Fortune of the *Petit Jehan de Saintré*", *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 22, 1975, p. 385-411.

7 *Saintré*, ed. Lami-Denoan, p. 1.

8 *Saintré*, ed. Guichard, p. v.

9 *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. Hellény, p. VIII.

naïveté”, charged Haugmard in his 1910 transposition into modern French¹, although he conceded that Tressan deserves our gratitude for allowing readers to taste the charm of hitherto unknown works: “remercions-l’en”². According to Tressan’s nineteenth-century editor, if he was snubbed by cultivated readers, his works were nonetheless widely read: “La destinée de M de Tressan, comme écrivain, fut d’être jugé sévèrement par les gens de lettres et lu avec avidité par les gens du monde”³. Indeed, for Henri Jacobet, it was precisely Tressan’s intermediary position between the intelligentsia and middle-brow culture, that made his “œuvres de vulgarisation” so influential, helping to create what was then called “troubadour” style not only in the novel but also in painting, drama, and the minor arts, such as fashion⁴.

Literary historians since Jacobet have endorsed this more generous view of Tressan’s accomplishments and influence, even as his work has remained relatively little studied. To be sure, Tressan lacked the erudition and gravitas of the eighteenth-century scholar La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, whose ventures into medieval language and history were truly pathbreaking⁵. But Tressan frequented *salons* and learned circles and corresponded sporadically with *philosophes*, in particular Voltaire; like Sainte-Palaye and other *épée* and *robe* aristocrats, he embraced certain new philosophical ideals without seeking to upset the existing social order. Lionel Gossman has portrayed Tressan as something of a

1 Antoine de La Sale, *L’Histoire et plaisante chronique du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la jeune dame des Belles Cousines par Antoine de la Sale, transposée littéralement en français moderne avec avertissement et notice*, ed. L. Haugmard, Paris, Sansot, 1910, p. v.

2 *Saintré*, ed. Haugmard, p. v.

3 V. Campenon, “Sur M. de Tressan et sur ses ouvrages”, in *Œuvres du Comte de Tressan, précédées d’une notice sur sa vie et ses ouvrages par M. Campenon, de l’Académie française*, 10 vols, Paris, Nepveu, 1822-1823, vol. 1, p. xxiv.

4 “Sa situation intermédiaire entre le monde et les lettres a donné à son œuvre de vulgarisation plus de portée”: H. Jacobet, *Le Comte de Tressan et le genre troubadour*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1923, p. xii.

5 L. Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment: The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968. On the way that Sainte-Palaye’s personally-abridged copies of Chrétien’s romances from his reading of the manuscripts served as sources for *BUR* adaptations, see M. Colombo Timelli, *Lancelot et Yvain au siècle des Lumières. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye et la Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans*, Milan, LED, 2003. On Sainte-Palaye’s historical interest in medieval romance, see K. Busby, “An Eighteenth-Century Plea on Behalf of the Medieval Romances: La Curne de Sainte-Palaye’s ‘Mémoire concernant la lecture des anciens romans de chevalerie’”, *Studies in Medievalism*, 3, 1, 1978, p. 55-69.

maverick, “a thoroughly worldly and irreverent character, a friend of the *philosophes*, the author of some elegantly libertine adaptations of medieval romances, and a wag whose propensity for satirical verse got him banished from court on several occasions”¹. Roger has described Tressan’s crucial role as an anonymous contributor to the *BUR*, one who worked particularly closely with the new general editor Bastide after falling out with the more scholarly Marquis de Paulmy, the founding editor whose personal library supplied their literary sources until 1778, when Paulmy ceased contact with the *BUR*². Although Poirier dismisses Tressan’s efforts post-Paulmy as “caricatures” rather than straightforward “miniatures”³, he recognizes the scale of the *BUR* enterprise – a corpus of 926 titles in 224 volumes of around 200 pages each, produced over the course of 14 years, from July 1775 to June 1789 – as one of the most important bibliographic enterprises of the eighteenth-century⁴.

More recently, Véronique Sigu has hailed the *BUR* as a publishing venture as ambitious in its scope and aims as the *Encyclopédie*, and has urged critics to view the project seriously in its own terms⁵. As it attempted to present all fictions from Antiquity and the Middle Ages to the present day, the *BUR* combined the erudition of eighteenth-century scholarship with certain progressive goals of the Enlightenment; it promoted a new kind of cultural history and capitalized on the vogue of the novel. Drawing upon the literary content of private aristocratic libraries, such as those of Sainte-Palaye and Paulmy, the *BUR* made these materials accessible to popular audiences, who received instruction in the history, customs, and social institutions of the past. According to Sigu, novels of medieval chivalry were especially prized as offering examples of exemplary conduct to eighteenth-century aristocrats, both in

1 Gossman, *Medievalism*, p. 59.

2 For details of Paulmy’s break with Tressan, see Poirier, *La Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, p. 14.

3 Comparing Tressan’s version of *Perceval* with that of Paulmy, Poirier, *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, p. 80, evaluates Tressan’s text as “une caricature en langage de petit maître, amusant certes, mais qui dénature complètement la version originale”.

4 Poirier, *Bibliothèque universelle des romans*, p. 6-7. For an analytic study of the contents of the *BUR*, see A. Martin, *La Bibliothèque universelle des romans, 1775-1789: présentation, table analytique, et index*, Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1985.

5 V. Sigu, *Médiévisme et lumières: le Moyen Âge dans la “Bibliothèque universelle des romans”*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2013.

the courtly comportment of knights towards ladies¹ and in the valorous service of knights in military service²; the knights were always presented as “efficient” agents and never as threats to royal power, as a “modèle politique et moral à l’aristocratie de cette fin du dix-huitième siècle”³. At the same time – and here Sigü specifically invokes Tressan’s *Saintré* as an example – the medieval knights in the *BUR* became heroes who transcended their aristocratic family origins to promote French national identity during a period when France was entangled in bitter, violent disputes with England. Medieval knights such as Saintré became the incarnation “du courage français, la source de la fierté nationale, d’un sentiment patriotique qui dépasse toute notion de classe”⁴.

Mentioned at several points by Sigü but never analyzed in full, Tressan’s *Saintré* seems to embody many of the *BUR*’s explicit and implicit goals. Its long-standing appeal to both popular and elite audiences through the mid-nineteenth century invites us to take another look at this work. Although many elements of the original are radically altered, Tressan re-casts La Sale’s courtly values for new readers, much as medieval *remanieurs* were apt to do. Through his extensive cuts, footnotes, authorial interventions, and substantial modifications, Tressan composes an engaging sentimental romance for eighteenth-century sensibilities, one that evokes nostalgia for the bygone glories of medieval chivalry, revives a dream of French military valor, and fondly depicts a slight but earnest and talented young knight whose amorous desires are awakened and kindled for years only to be cruelly rejected. If Antoine de La Sale refashions a knight into a courtier, as Michelle Szkilnik suggests⁵, Tressan follows suit, creating a contemporary hero who rises to prominence at court, commands respect as a general who defends France and models the best qualities of an eighteenth-century gentleman. Tressan moves La Sale’s *Saintré* from the late medieval court to the eighteenth-century boudoir, transforming a celebrated but minor pseudo-historical knight who was himself an image of waning chivalric glory into a symbol that not only revalorizes the nobility but

1 Sigü, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 122.

2 Sigü, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 155-160.

3 Sigü, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 186.

4 Sigü, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 231.

5 M. Szkilnik, *Jean de Saintré. Une carrière chevaleresque au XV^e siècle*, Geneva, Droz, 2003, p. 139-152.

also prepares the way for the young Romantic hero. In his slender yet deft recasting of *Saintré*, Tressan exploits the multifaceted charms of the original, mixing nostalgia for the past with the sentimental and social stirrings of a new era and opening up medieval fiction to the diverse reading publics of the modern novel.

One can discern a similar strain of nostalgia for the past glories of chivalry and courtly splendor in La Sale's medieval romance, which glorifies the life of a knight who lived a hundred years earlier than the time of composition. It is perhaps not without consequence that both the medieval romance and the eighteenth-century adaptation are end-of-career fictions for their authors, written when they were respectively 70 (La Sale) and 74 (Tressan). Both narrators express admiration not only for the hero's youth, his slight but agile frame, his good looks and pleasing manners, but also for his rapid rise to high status at the king's court and his astonishing success as a knight – accomplishments that might have stirred up nostalgia or regret in the elderly authors. La Sale and Tressan were both introduced to court life in their youth; La Sale entered service in the court of Louis II of Anjou at age 14; young Tressan was educated in the company of Louis XV, before his majority. La Sale transferred to the house of Luxembourg in 1448 after more than forty years of service to Anjou, provoking feelings that he describes as “très desplaisante merencolie”¹. *Saintré* was written for his former pupil, Jean de Calabre, son of King René. Two more works followed *Saintré*, one of them, *Le traité des anciens et des nouveaux tournois*, explicitly recalling with nostalgia chivalric practices that were already on the wane².

By Tressan's time, of course, warfare had been considerably transformed and chivalric enterprises were viewed as historic phenomena, worthy of recollection for the example of valor they could inspire and as a reminder of the aristocracy's useful social function. As we learn from biographical accounts, Tressan's late career as an adaptor of chivalric fictions seems to have compensated for a rather rocky career as courtier and royal soldier³.

1 Antoine de La Sale, *La Sale*, ed. F. Desonay in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, Paris, Droz, 1941, p. 1.

2 Antoine de La Sale, *Le traité des anciens et des nouveaux tournois*, ed. S. Lefèvre, in S. Lefèvre, *Antoine de la Sale, La fabrique de l'œuvre et de l'écrivain*, Geneva, Droz, 2006, p. 299-324; on La Sale's “nostalgia” see p. 278-280.

3 The first biography appears to be the “Vie du Comte de Tressan”, signed anonymously by l'Abbé V**** in *Œuvres posthumes du Comte de Tressan*, 2 vols, Paris, Desray, 1791,

(He allegedly developed a youthful passion for medieval French chivalric romance in the Vatican library, while on a diplomatic mission.) On the one hand, Tressan was a member of Louis XV's and Queen Marie Leczinska's inner circle; he frequented several prominent feminine *salons*, notably those of Madame de Tencin and Madame Lambert, and befriended the deposed King Stanislas of Poland. But Tressan also managed to offend the Queen and then Mme de Pompadour, the king's mistress, with disrespectful verse¹; he was involved in a scandal involving the defense of Rousseau against a detractor, whom Rousseau eventually pardoned². Although he was elected to the Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris in 1749 for his treatise on electricity, a coveted election to the Académie française eluded him until a few years before his death. Although his military career had a promising start, he was passed over at several points for promotions. Wounded at the battle of Fontenoy in 1744, he asked the king for the honor of always fighting on the front as befitted his rank³. He participated in the sieges of Tournai, Bruges, Ghent and Oudenarde⁴. Then, at some point after 1745 and especially after 1756, his military assignments involved supervision of outposts rather than front-line combat. When tensions broke out with the English, he was first assigned to survey troops in Boulogne⁵ and later, as affairs heated up again, he was assigned to command troops and oversee supplies in the eastern provinces, in Bitche and Lorraine, perhaps, it is surmised, because Madame de Pompadour's favorites were promoted over him⁶.

To console him for his apparent demotion, Voltaire wrote to him that "cinquante mille livres de rente [à Bitche] sont plus que cent cinquante à Paris"⁷. Beyond the spectacle of the *philosophes*, advised Voltaire, his friend

vol. 1, p. 3-44. Later accounts borrow from this early work, adding salient details; see Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. III-XXXIV; H.-A.-G. de Tressan, *Souvenirs du Comte de Tressan, Louis-Élisabeth de la Vergne, d'après des documents inédits réunis par son arrière-petit-neveu, le Marquis de Tressan*, Versailles, Henry Lebon, 1897. For a synthesis of these and other biographical accounts, see Jacobet, *Le Comte de Tressan*, p. 194-231.

- 1 According to Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. XVIII, and his great nephew, *Souvenirs du Comte de Tressan*, p. 194-231.
- 2 Jacobet, *Le Comte de Tressan*, p. 208-210.
- 3 Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. XII.
- 4 Jacobet, *Le Comte de Tressan*, p. 202-203.
- 5 Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. XIV.
- 6 Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. XVI.
- 7 Voltaire, cited in H.-A.-G de Tressan, *Souvenirs*, p. 103.

would have more time to cultivate his genius¹. Tressan eventually lost even the salary of lieutenant-general and retired in 1764 to Lunéville, to the court of King Stanislas (who died in 1766)². Tressan's appointment by Stanislas as Director of the Académie de Nancy in 1751 seems to have provided some of the intellectual stimulus he lacked in living so far from Paris; he was also named to the royal societies of London and Edinburgh, in 1753. At the end of his life, Tressan installed himself in a country house in Franconville, where he dedicated himself to his family; in declining health, he was subject to frequent attacks of gout. His collaboration with the Marquis de Paulmy on the *BUR*, beginning in 1775, must have come as a timely distraction and a welcome source of additional income³. In any case, Tressan launched himself into writing with enthusiasm, as his great nephew reports: "On n'imagine pas avec quelle rapidité il écrivait ces divers ouvrages dont le succès se soutient encore aujourd'hui [...] il ne s'est jamais donné pour un interprète très scrupuleux, mais il a excellé dans l'art de rajeunir les récits de nos vieilles chroniques"⁴. *Saintré*, published in 1780, was written during a particularly painful period, according to the editor, who introduces the *BUR* extract by asking, "À l'âge de soixante-quatorze ans passés; dans un lit depuis deux mois; tourmenté, par moments, des plus vives douleurs de la goutte; croira-t-on qu'on ait pu faire ce qu'on va lire?"⁵

Tressan praises his source's historical details – explicitly acknowledged in the "Avertissement de l'auteur" – not only for all the information these provide about "des mœurs, des parures et des usages de la cour de ce temps" and "des préparatifs des grandes fêtes, des grands défis d'armes de province à province"⁶, but also for the mention of noble families – "les Montmorency, les La Trémouille, les Duras..." – who

1 Voltaire, cited in H.-A.-G. de Tressan, *Souvenirs*, p. 105.

2 Campenon, "Sur M. de Tressan", p. xix.

3 Poirier, *Bibliothèque universelle*, p. 17, suggests that both Paulmy and Tressan had financial reasons to launch the *BUR*, as they were "désargentés" and living "en semi-disgrace", and that their social position as noblemen required anonymity. Not only could they not associate themselves with a commercial enterprise, but the genre of the novel itself had the reputation of "légèreté" and "facilité".

4 M. de Tressan, *Souvenirs*, p. 194.

5 *Petit Jehan de Saintré, BUR*, janvier 1780, vol. 2, p. 65.

6 Tressan, "Avertissement de l'auteur", in Le Comte de Tressan, *Œuvres du Comte de Tressan*, ed. M. Campenon, Paris, Nepveu, 1822, vol. 8, p. 5-128, at p. 7-8. Subsequent references to Tressan's *Histoire et Plaisante Chronique du Petit Jehan de Saintré et de la Dame des*

have maintained their illustrious stature, “les mêmes vertus militaires et le même éclat” (p. 8). Tressan seeks not only to renew a sense of youthful vigor, but also to rekindle and revive the glory of aristocratic families and ultimately, as we shall see, to vaunt a particularly French national identity.

Tressan approaches his source with both respectful admiration and open license from the start. He deems *Saintré* “le plus estimable” of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century romances, “le Roman le plus instructif, le plus national que nous ayons” (p. 8). But he laments that it is far too long, entangled with “des ronces longues et multipliées où le faux goût du temps et l’érudition la plus triviale, la plus étrange, et la plus assommante, les enveloppent” (p. 7). Tressan prunes accordingly, explicitly removing forty to fifty pages of Madame’s instructions on Christian doctrine and the seven deadly sins, for fear that the reader would be bored:

Nous craindrons d’ennuyer le lecteur bien plus que nous n’espérons l’édifier, si nous rapportons les quarante à cinquante pages que l’auteur emploie à rendre compte des doctes leçons que la dame des belles-cousines donne à son jeune amant. (p. 30)

He retains only the sin of lust (p. 30-31). He eliminates most of the elaborate details about Jehan’s acquisition of clothing, livery, and equestrian trappings. Madame generously provides Jehan with *écus* but does not deliver detailed instructions about how to spend them. Tressan reduces both the number of Saintré’s chivalric exploits and their length and complexity. Although the adaptor is delighted to see the names of many noble families cited in the original, with their blazons described exactly as they are in his day (p. 68), he omits the lengthy call of arms for the Prussian Crusade, a list of heraldic emblems and battle cries from dozens of regions in France, as well as from Spain and the German Empire, that comprises nearly thirty pages in the Misrahi / Knudson edition¹. The romance’s later battle scenes, the narrator opines, are

Belles-Cousines, indicated on the title page as *Jehan de Saintré*, will be to this edition of the text. Page references will be indicated in parentheses in the text.

1 Antoine de La Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. J. Misrahi and C. A. Knudson, Geneva, Droz, 1978, p. 190-216. Subsequent references to La Sale’s *Saintré* will be to this edition and will be indicated within parentheses as (MK).

“une longue et servile imitation” of earlier exploits, presenting “une monotonie proluxe” (p. 70, n. 1). Tressan prefers to cut to the love story. As a result of these major deletions, *Saintré*'s structure as a didactic compilation enclosing treatises of moral conduct and a handbook of chivalry is effectively gutted. The adaptor refers interested readers to the 1724 edition for the full story in greater detail.

Yet in keeping with the aims of the *BUR* to appeal to both erudite and popular readers, Tressan attends carefully to *Saintré*'s historical context. His critical apparatus, which includes the “Avertissement”, historical explanations within the text, and footnotes, reflects the era's growing interest in social and cultural history, an approach that the *BUR* was eager to promote¹. Thus Tressan frequently attempts to provide helpful commentary, sometimes emphasizing parallels and continuity with eighteenth-century society and sometimes drawing attention to unusual, surprising, or “bizarre” features of medieval life. Such contextualization follows the lead of Gueullette, who prefaced his edition with a lengthy description of chivalric titles². Tressan repeats Gueullette's assertion that the historical setting must have been the court of Charles VI or Charles V, rather than that of King John and Bonne de Bohème³. The court of Charles VI's queen, Isabeau de Bavière, Tressan surmises, would have been more amused by such an “histoire gaillarde” than good King John and his virtuous wife Bonne de Bohème⁴.

Within the text, sixteen footnotes strategically placed throughout the story offer commentary about, among other things, royal banquets (p. 11); chivalric terminology (p. 15, 17, 47, 50); the way that medieval *arrière-cabinets*, such as Madame's *oratoire*, could be as pleasant as the most tranquil and delicious “boudoirs” of Tressan's contemporaries (p. 27); and the bizarre, extravagant, ridiculous and sexually suggestive aspects of certain items of medieval clothing (p. 32). Tressan cannot

1 On the *BUR*'s conception of history, see Sigu, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 97-119. On new approaches to history among Enlightenment scholars, see Gossman, *Medievalism*, p. 153-171.

2 Gueullette, “Avertissement”, *Saintré*, ed. Gueullette, p. A-Diii.

3 This confusion originates from La Sale's error in referring to the dukes of Anjou, Berry and Burgundy as King John's brothers rather than his sons, as Gueullette points out, “Preface”, *Saintré*, ed. Gueullette, p. Eii. However, Charles VI's reign post-dates the historical *Saintré*'s death in 1348, as recorded by La Sale.

4 Another confusion created by La Sale is the designation of Bonne as John's queen; Bonne died before John's coronation; she was thus never queen.

refrain from interjecting that he once owned an ax like the one used by the hero (p. 52). He includes references to Rabelais (p. 82) and Boccaccio (p. 94) and a comment on how the admirable moral comportment of the Spanish resembles that of the French (p. 56).

At times, Tressan's fictional inventions are underscored and authenticated by pseudo-historical explanations, as in his enhanced portrait of the Queen's doctor, Hue. Tressan transforms La Sale's obliging but thoroughly professional doctor into a lady's man, who is quick to offer a witty epigram and "propos gallant", along with his prescriptions; many ladies consulted Dr. Hue without needing to, we learn (p. 73). When the doctor attends to Belles Cousines, who languishes after Jehan's departure for the Prussian Crusade, Hue invents the term "vapeurs" to describe her ailment after modestly examining Madame by feeling "une partie de ses charmes" (p. 74). The narrator explains that the expression "vapeurs" became so popular that many ladies of the court developed the same symptoms: "Jamais expression ne devint plus promptement à la mode, et n'eut une plus longue durée". (p. 76) Although "vapeurs" appears in late medieval medical writings to describe humidity from the humors that may rise to the head¹, La Sale does not employ the term, nor does he analyze Madame's malaise in depth. Tressan's fanciful etymology confers authority on the doctor and the adaptor as experts in feminine psychology. Attempting to bridge the gap between medieval and contemporary sensibilities, Tressan appeals directly to female readers in his audience.

Yet at other times Tressan follows details of his source quite precisely, proof that he works directly with the 1724 edition, as he asserts, and not from memory. Jehan sits on a "petit lit de repos" (p. 19) in Madame's chambers, just as he sits on a "petit lit" in La Sale's *Saintré* (MK, p. 7). When Belles Cousines interrogates the youth about who his lady-love is, he is dumbstruck, unable to do more than twist his belt between his fingers, "en tortillant sa ceinture avec ses doigts" (p. 21), which repeats La Sale almost verbatim, "fors de entorteillier le pendant de sa ceinture entour ces doiz, sans mot parler..." (MK, p. 8). As in La Sale, Madame uses an "épingle" to pick her teeth, as a signal that Jehan should come

1 "Humidité causée par les humeurs, qui n'est pas évacuée et qui peut monter au cerveau"; See "Vapeurs", 3. MED. A, *Dictionnaire du moyen français*, <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>. Accessed 28 August 2014.

to her room, and he rubs his eyes in assent (p. 60). But when Madame gives Jehan a key to her room, Tressan adds a note of mystery: “Vous en ferez usage”, says the lady, “quand le mystère et la nuit envelopperont le palais”. (p. 38).

As Pierre Demarolle has noted, the principal effect of Tressan’s many changes is to transform a chivalric romance into a “roman d’amour”¹. Mary Speer, in her fine account of Tressan’s adaptation, deems the new work “a simplified psychological novel”². Following earlier critics’ character analysis further, one could say that Tressan heightens the drama between Madame and the youth, by deepening the physical and psychological intensity of their affair and complicating the power play. Madame’s show of virtuous widowhood does not occasion an ironic exemplum about a widow in ancient Rome who outlived 22 husbands, as it does in La Sale (MK, p. 6). Instead, Tressan elicits sympathy for the young widow’s plight: he explains that Madame’s elderly husband had been “odieux”, and that her marriage had been spent almost entirely in tears; nonetheless, she consequently knew something about what was at stake in flirting with Jehan. “Ainsi elle était un peu coupable; mais sommes-nous assez innocents nous-mêmes pour ne pas aimer à l’excuser?” (p. 17) asks the narrator indulgently.

In La Sale’s original, Madame has a bold mission to shape Jehan into an exemplary knight and make him her devoted servant; she pursues him quite purposefully from the outset. In Tressan, a much less manipulative young woman is the often-unwitting victim of passions that have only been partially awakened in her. Jehan and Madame observe one another for two years without realizing that they are infatuated with each other; it is only when Jehan is 16 and the day is so torrid that the ladies have opened their collars, that Jehan, standing behind Madame at her little *tabouret*, cannot help noticing and sighing at the “nouveaux charmes qu’il admirait pour la première fois”, evidently her bosom (p. 16). The princess turns and observes Jehan’s “trouble”; Jehan blushes and drops his plate in order to “cacher son désordre” (p. 16).

1 P. Demarolle, “La réécriture de *Jehan de Saintré* d’Antoine de La Sale par le Comte de Tressan: Décapage ou décryptage d’une écriture opaque?”, *C’est la fin pour quoi sommes ensemble: hommage à Jean Dufournet: littérature, histoire et langue du moyen âge*, ed. J.-C. Aubailly, E. Baumgartner, F. Dubost, Paris, Champion, 1993, p. 399-408, at p. 399.

2 Speer, “Literary Fortune”, p. 402.

At the moment that Madame sees Jehan's tears flowing on his lily and rose cheeks, she decides to lavish the favors upon him that will bring him distinction, justifying her amorous longings as generosity (p. 17). Physically overwhelmed by feelings and sensations that are completely new to him, Jehan's erotic imagination takes flight, as he thinks "sans cesse" about the lady's beauty: "Son cœur palpait, son imagination s'allumait, lorsqu'il se peignait ce collet-monté comme un mur d'albâtre entourant un parterre embelli par les plus belles fleurs" (p. 16): the *Roman de la Rose* in the flesh, as it were. The narrator delights in describing each stage of the couple's nascent love, as if he were breathing behind Jehan's shoulder, admiring the lady's fortress himself. In La Sale, Saintré's love affair, initially at least, is confined by the lessons of deadly sins and cardinal virtues; expressions of affection are rather restrained. But Tressan's version abounds with tears, sighs, beating hearts, and trembling bodies; he intensifies the psychological effects of love, adding *frisson* while respecting the bounds of decency, but leaving no mistake as to what is going on.

We have focused on Tressan's creation of a sentimental novel, but it could also be argued that he has created a quintessentially nationalistic one, on the eve of a Revolution and an Empire that will bring France into conflict with much of Europe. There are only four main combat sequences, each a different kind of chivalric encounter that pits French chivalry against Spain, Poland, England, and the infidels in Prussia, each an opportunity for the author to offer strong opinions about national character. The Spanish, as we have seen, share superior moral attributes with the French (p. 56). The Polish charm through the nobility and simplicity of their costume, which both courtiers and ladies emulate (p. 60-61). The English, on the other hand, are turbulent bullies, unheeding of chivalric protocol (p. 64) and unable to control conflict even amongst themselves (p. 65). Jehan's natural modesty inclines him to punish "l'orgueil effréné d'une nation impérieuse, jalouse de la sienne" (p. 66), forcing the arrogant Britons to surrender. Finally, Jehan, having been knighted by his lady, leads an elite army of five hundred men against the Saracens in Prussia, in humble obeisance to the king and in support of "notre sainte religion" and "l'antique honneur de la chevalerie française" (p. 70). Jehan's modesty, deference, and his careful attention for princes and former lords in his command

endow him with special powers: “Jamais général d’armée ne fut plus aimé et mieux obéi” (p. 70).

Such attributes in a commander would not have been unwelcome in the regiments of Tressan’s day. As an officer who was shortchanged in his military ambitions, who never received the plum assignment he desired, as a close friend of the deposed King Stanislas, Tressan perhaps uses Saintré as a vehicle to express regret at missed opportunities for leadership. If his indulgence towards Madame may have appealed to female readers, his sympathy for the young knight may well have appealed to aristocratic men who felt blindsided by social transformations in a country on the cusp of revolution. Saintré, imposing despite his slight stature, unfailingly courteous and ready to uphold his country’s cause, embodies national pride as much as he does the aspirations of a class, as Sigü has suggested specifically of Tressan’s *Saintré*, as well as of other *BUR* chivalric heroes¹.

The most striking disparity between La Sale’s narrative and Tressan’s adaptation occurs in the last episodes of the romance, when Madame betrays Jehan while he undertakes his last *emprise*. In *Saintré*, as we recall, these events take place during the last quarter of the narrative, after Jehan has departed on an independent adventure, without leave of the lady or the king, provoking the king and Madame’s displeasure and the lady’s infidelity with a transgressive abbot (MK, p. 243-269). When Jehan returns, Madame des Belles Cousines spurns him; during dinner with Madame and Jehan, the abbot insults the honor of all knights and wrestles Jehan twice to the ground. Jehan parries by tricking the abbot into donning armor at his dinner table so that the spurned knight can knock his opponent quickly off his feet and pierce through the abbot’s tongue and both cheeks with a dagger in retribution (MK, p. 298). In what is arguably his most vengeful action, Saintré later tells the story of his betrayal and revenge at court as a shocking bit of news, purportedly from Germany, concerning a wicked lady whom he does not name. When he then lays the blue sash of loyalty that he had taken from Belles Cousines across her lap, he publically shames Madame by revealing that she is the subject of the scandalous story that the Queen and her ladies have just heard. The moralizing narrator warns “toutes

1 Sigü, *Médiévisme et lumières*, p. 229.

dames et demoiselles” to heed the example of the “noble dame oiseuse qui par druerie se perdist”:

Et cy commenceray la fin de ce compte, priant, requerant et suppliant a toutes dames et damoiselles, bourgoises et autres, de quelque estat que soient, que toutes prenent exemple a ceste si tres noble dame oiseuse qui par druerie se perdist, et veuillent bien penser au dit commun qui dist: Onques ne fut feu sans fume, tant fust il en terre parfont. (MK, p. 307)

In Tressan, Jehan’s last adventure is the Prussian Crusade, undertaken with full royal approval and with no mention of any attempt to assert independence from the lady. So when Madame betrays Jehan, it is all the more shocking: “la plus lâche, la plus atroce des infidélités” (p. 72), says the narrator who steps forward to confess that he trembles to write the rest of the story:

Hélas! Comment pourrons-nous raconter, sans frémir mille fois, la trahison cruelle qui allait percer le cœur le plus loyal et le plus fidèle? La plume tombe presque de nos mains; et nous ne doutons pas que le sentiment douloureux qui nous affecte ne passe bientôt dans l’âme de nos lecteurs. (p. 71)

From this point forward, Tressan’s narrator struggles to explain events in terms that do not reflect badly on Madame, and by extension, all women. Thus, when Jehan departs, Madame is not at first angry. Rather she misses him badly, emotionally and physically, in ways that the author does not explicitly spell out but that we may imagine constitute sexual longing: “elle éprouvait d’autres regrets moins nobles et plus impérieux peut-être” (p. 72). Worried, agitated, turning sleepless in her bed, her color fading, plunged in a deep reverie, she plays “machinalement” with the pin which served her so well in the past (p. 72). (Needless to say, all of this is Tressan’s invention.) Since her lover is no longer there to respond to her signal, she can hardly bring her beautiful arm to her mouth: “un poids énorme lui paraissait appesantir son bras: bientôt, froide et presqu’inanimée, elle se laissait retomber languissamment sur son lit” (p. 72). Readers understand, along with Dr. Hue, that Madame nurses a broken heart and experiences sexual deprivation in her lover’s absence, maladies best remedied by a return to her country house, where she meets an enterprising abbot at a nearby monastery.

In La Sale’s *Saintré*, the abbot is a rather comical figure, and Madame’s infatuation with him reflects poorly on her judgment. Tressan’s abbot,

developed at greater length, is a more appealing man, if equally hypocritical, and Madame's seduction is perhaps more forgivable. In Tressan, we learn that Madame visits the abbey on her own initiative for the express purpose of seeking pardons (p. 79), evidence of her devotion. The abbot is the 26 year old son of a wealthy landowning farmer – “un riche laboureur propriétaire des environs” (p. 80) – who amassed power by defending local residents against “les curés envahissants” and who, although illiterate himself, promoted his children's education. His second son is “un vrai prodige”, with a fine voice and strong stature who promises to become “une des lumières de l'église” (p. 81) and who excels in many duties of his station. For Tressan, the abbot resembles the young Eudemon in Rabelais's *Gargantua* and provides a suitable model for Houdon or Rubens (p. 82). Described as the deserving offspring of a clever peasant and the avatar of an exemplary Renaissance youth, well-liked by his brothers in the monastery particularly after he becomes keeper of the wine-cellar, the abbot incarnates the admirable qualities of Rabelais's Frère Jean and anticipates the hypocritical narcissism of Julien Sorel. In the narrator's detailed portrait, the abbot's sartorial elegance provides cover for his baser instincts:

Le fils du digne laboureur, élu tout d'une voix, fut béni par son évêque, porta la crosse de la meilleure grace; ...sa longue robe, d'une serge fine et blanche comme la neige, formait des plis agréables sur les beaux contours de sa taille forte, mais élégante; ses yeux perçants et pleins de feu aurait pu faire soupçonner que cette longue robe cachait des pieds de chèvre, s'il ne s'était fait une habitude de la lever, et de laisser voir un bas blanc bien tiré, et les deux jambes les mieux faites et les plus nerveuses. (p. 83)

The narrator excuses himself for having spent so long in describing the education, morals, and physique of the abbot:

On nous reprochera peut-être d'avoir été trop long dans les détails de l'éducation, et dans la peinture des mœurs de la figure de damp abbé, mais il faut l'avouer, nous ne pouvons pas nous empêcher d'aimer cette dame des belles cousines, si généreuse, si tendre, si sensible. (p. 84)

He does so only doing as a way of “multiplying excuses”, as he puts it, for “une grande princesse” (p. 84) and he shudders to think of what honest readers will make of her: “Hélas! Nous frémissons de l'idée que bien d'honnêtes lecteurs vont prendre d'elle” (p. 84).

As he did recounting the nascent love affair of Madame and Jehan, Tressan heightens the sensuality of Madame and the abbot's early encounters. Madame admires the abbot's dignity and majesty as she kneels before him, but the abbot does not dare to meet her "yeux touchants" (p. 85) with his own; his gaze pays homage instead to "d'autres charmes" (p. 85) (which considering her placement beneath him can only be her bosom), and his eyes begin to sparkle. When the Abbot insists that Madame spend at least one night in the monastery, according to custom, he throws himself at her feet, and begins to kiss the hem of Madame's gown, "avec une ardeur que la vue de deux jolis pieds augmenta bientôt encore" (p. 89). In La Sale's fiction, the abbot and the lady tread each other's feet under the table (MK, p. 249). In Tressan, the monk's gesture is at once more delicate and more erotic: the Abbot prostrates himself in a state of "désordre", which we are told is more appealing to Madame than his ecclesiastical dress (p. 89).

Tressan's abbot is more physically robust and alluring and Madame more sensually receptive. When the abbot comically defeats two young monks in a wrestling match and deposits them at Madame's feet, she cannot help compare the abbot's physique to Jehan's "taille fine et légère", and think of Jehan only as a young page, "peut-être même un joli polisson" (p. 90). When the abbot dresses to go hunting, his costume reveals "toutes les perfections de sa taille" (p. 92). Although the author refrains modestly from going into details about what transpires that evening, he tells us that Madame has "nouveaux secrets auxquels Saintré n'avait de part" (p. 94); that the abbot is "plus empressé [...] mais moins respectueux" the next morning (p. 94), and that both abbot and lady had need of the pardons that the Church bells announced it was time to seek out (p. 94) – an amplification of La Sale's allusions to the "pardons" that Madame seeks from Lord Abbot and the "absolution" that he gives her (MK, p. 255-256).

In La Sale's tale, Madame receives Jehan cruelly when he eagerly rushes to her side after his final victory; she rebuffs him and orders him to be silent, with no explanation as to what has transpired (MK, p. 273). Tressan, once again, hints more broadly at the sexual undercurrents between the lady and the abbot. Madame reveals to Jehan that she has experienced pleasures during his absence that she has never known before: "jamais mon âme ne fut plus tranquille que depuis que je goûte

des plaisirs qui m'étaient inconnus" (p. 99). When the abbot strips to wrestle in *La Sale*, he reveals thighs as thick and hairy as a bear's, "monstrant ses grosses cuisses pelues et velues comme un ours" (MK, p. 281), to comic effect. As the abbot prepares to wrestle in *Tressan*, he flaunts his masculine attributes brazenly: "L'auteur rapporte qu'il ne conserva pas même le dernier vêtement que la décence lui prescrivait de garder en présence des dames" (p. 105). Ladies Catherine, Ysabelle and Jehanne must cover their eyes with a kerchief since, as the narrator explains in a footnote, fans did not yet exist "dans ce temps grossier" (p. 105). With such heightened erotic overtones, *Tressan's* narrative moves *La Sale's* fabliau-like scene into the domain of titillating libertinage.

Up to this point, *Tressan's* changes have been to intensify the sexual charge, to elaborate on social interactions, to deepen the psycho-social tensions between Madame, the abbot, and the young knight without radically modifying the story. But the scandalous ending – the public shaming of Madame before her ladies after Jehan tells the story and produces the blue sash – proves too "odious" for *Tressan* to repeat. His final footnote, reproduced in all the complete versions, begs permission to change the story: "Nous aimons trop Saintré pour le rendre odieux par une vengeance toujours impardonnable" (p. 122). When a knight inflicts harm on another knight, *Tressan* explains, he shares some of the risk; but he should never cruelly attack a weak and defenseless woman. We recall that *La Sale's* narrator decries female perfidy just after the woman's outing, as if to justify Jehan's actions. *Tressan* turns to his female readers and defends them against badly behaved men, making a final display of gallantry and implicitly exemplifying the advanced moral standards of his eighteenth-century readership:

O sexe enchanteur, ornement de la nature, charme de toute la société, vous pouvez avoir quelquefois des torts; mais malheureux l'homme mal né qui ne fait pas vous plaindre et vous pardonner. (p. 123)

Tressan's gallant modification is to omit the lady's public shaming. After Jehan has finished telling his story, instead of placing the blue sash on Madame's lap for all to see, he allows the lady alone to catch a glimpse of it. Saintré is "piqued", but he remains courteous and discreet, as we see in the story's final lines:

Saintré, piqué de ce qu'elle avait pris un ton très haut en prononçant ces dernières paroles, lui laissa entrevoir un bout de cette même ceinture qu'elle seule aperçut: et il la cacha presque aussitôt. Ce fut la fin de sa vengeance et de son amour. (p. 122)

Tressan's conclusion profoundly alters the medieval tale's final narrative twist. Rather than bring the harsh light of public censure to bear on Madame for her treachery, only Jehan, the lady, and of course readers know that Belles Cousines herself is the subject of Jehan's story. A shocking scene of public shame becomes a flicker of private guilt, an open scandal an intimate secret. The spiteful retribution of a young man against a faithless lady who represents the wiles of femininity is domesticated as an act of gallant discretion. As he revisits La Sale's fabliau-like ending, Tressan recasts the medieval text's misogynist slur against unfaithful women into the narrator's indulgence and display of *politesse*. Tressan thus appeals explicitly to female readers. The hero of so many chivalric exploits, the consummate courtier, has been transformed into an eighteenth-century gentleman, and Tressan's book is perfectly poised to enjoy its enormous success.

Tressan's *Saintré* remained popular throughout the major social and historical transitions in late eighteenth-century history and up until the mid-nineteenth century, appealing to male and female readers, high-brow and more popular. In 1780, the same year as the *BUR* serial, Tressan's miniature appears as a work in its own right, as one of 35 in-18 volumes of literature published by order of the Comte d'Artois, younger brother of Louis XVI and the future King Charles X; other volumes in the series include Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, La Fontaine's *Fables*, and Tressan's *Gérard de Nevers*¹. Tressan's collected chivalric romances and other writings on early literature are published in four in-12 volumes in 1782; *Saintré* appears along with *Dom Ursino le Navarin* (Tressan's only original fiction), and *Gérard de Nevers* in the third volume². In 1787, an anonymous paper edition is published for the *Bibliothèque universelle des dames*³; a reader

1 There are four copies of this in-18 edition in Paris, including one deluxe vellum edition; Tressan, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré par M le Comte de Tressan par ordre de Msgr le Comte d'Artois*, Paris, Didot l'ainé, 1780.

2 Tressan, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, in *Corps d'extraits de romans de chevalerie*, vol. 3, Paris, Pissot, 1782.

3 Tressan, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré d'après la comparaison de l'original avec l'édition donnée par Morel, en 1724*, La Bibliothèque universelle des dames, Cinquième Classe, vol. 14, Paris,

may pay an additional fee to have her name printed on the title page, as does Madame la Vicomtesse de Vintimille¹. Post-revolution, a new edition is published by Didot Jeune in 1791² and in 1796³, with four illustrations by Moreau le Jeune. A small paper copy, with an abridged *Avant-Propos*, fewer footnotes and no final explanatory note, appears in Geneva in 1792⁴.

Tressan's *Œuvres choisies* appeared in 10 volumes in 1787, with two volumes of posthumous works added two years later⁵; 30 years later, during the Bourbon Restoration, his *Œuvres complètes* were edited in ten volumes by Campenon⁶. In the latter collection, *Saintré* appears in volume 8 with *Gérard de Nevers*, an essay on pre-Christian romances, and *Robert le Brave* (a posthumous work written by Tressan's son) (Figure 2). *Saintré* is also published separately in popular editions: in a tiny in-32 *Édition mignonne*, published in 1827⁷, without the preface or notes, and in another small in-16 paper edition in 1830 published by Lequien fils that does contain the critical apparatus, as well as two illustrations (Figure 3)⁸. Tressan's *Saintré* appears with his *Gérard de Nevers* in a compact

Serpente, 1787.

- 1 The page preceding the title page reads "Bibliothèque de Madame la Vicomtesse de Vintimille. Romans. Tome Quatorzième". The Vicomtesse's copy resides in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France as Z-2H139.
- 2 Tressan, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles Cousines, extraite de la vieille Chronique de ce nom par M. de Tressan*, Paris, Didot, 1791. The volume is described as an "Édition ornée de figures en taille douce dessinées par M. Moreau le jeune". There are four engravings, untitled, the same ones that appear in the 1796 edition with descriptive titles. This edition has an abbreviated "Avant-Propos" and some of the footnotes, but not the final explanatory footnote. Three of the Moreau engravings appear in different places in yet another edition from the same period, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles Cousines*, Paris, Lepetit et Guillemard l'aîné, 1792.
- 3 *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles Cousines, extraite de la vieille Chronique de ce nom par M. de Tressan*, Paris, Dufart, An 4, 1796.
- 4 M. de Tressan, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles-Cousines, extraite de la vieille chronique de ce nom*, Geneva, Libraires Associés, 1792.
- 5 *Œuvres choisies du comte de Tressan: avec figures*, 10 vols, Paris, Rue et Hôtel Serpente, 1787-1789; *Œuvres posthumes*, 1791. The ten-volume collected works contain illustrations, two per volume, by C. P. Marillier.
- 6 *Œuvres du Comte de Tressan précédées d'une notice sur sa vie et ses ouvrages*, ed. F. N. Campenon, Paris, Nepveu, 1822-1823.
- 7 Tressan, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la Dame des Belles-Cousines, extraite de la vieille chronique de ce nom*, Paris, Lugan, 1827.
- 8 Tressan, *Histoire et plaisante chronique du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles-Cousines*, Paris, Lequien fils, 1830.

paper-bound volume with an abbreviated “Avant-Propos” identifying the court as that of Charles VI, but without the explanatory final note; the volume contains a single engraving, “Saintré cachant avec ses mains ses yeux brillants des feux de l’amour fit semblant de sangloter” serving as frontispiece¹. In 1846, Campenon’s “Sur M. de Tressan et ses ouvrages” is republished with *Saintré*²; three years later, a very spare paper edition is published with no “avertissement d’auteur”, and only four brief historical notes; the final explanation about Jehan’s gallantry is omitted³. These are by no means the only versions in which Tressan’s *Saintré* circulates; it is often bound with another work, with other chivalric romances⁴, or more contemporary fictions, as when it finds its way into the periodical *Les veillées littéraires*, in 1849⁵. This version of the romance includes five engravings that illustrate dramatic moments or characters: “Le Boudoir”, on the opening page (Figure 4), shows Jehan and Madame touching as they converse (p. 1); three pages from the end, “Damp abbé” coquettishly reveals a handsome leg in one image; Jehan fights Enguerrand in another cameo; and below this, Jehan vanquishes five Bretons (all on p. 12). Finally, in the “Vengeance de Saintré”, Jehan kneels with his dagger over the abbot as Madame and one of her ladies look on (p. 13); there is no “Avant-Propos” or “Avertissement”, no final justification of the modified ending, and only a few notes. No longer presented as a medieval “miniature”, the romance appears here as a full-length novella by the Comte de Tressan, along with Benjamin Constant’s *Adolphe* and Goethe’s *Werther*, also bound in *Les veillées littéraires* that year. Little Jehan de Saintré has achieved the status of a romantic hero.

1 Tressan, *Histoires du petit Jehan de Saintré et de Gérard de Nevers par Tressan*, Paris, Salmon, 1824.

2 Tressan, *Histoire et plaisante chronique du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles Cousines*, Paris, Paulin, 1846.

3 *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles-Cousines par le Comte de Tressan*, Paris, Boulé, 1849.

4 For example, see *Histoire et plaisante chronique de Petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles-Cousines*, in *Collection des romans de chevalerie mis en prose française moderne*, ed. A. Delvau, Paris, Librairie Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1869, vol. 3, p. 312-336. The editor dubs le Comte de Tressan a “dérangéur des romans de chevalerie” in his remarks about his own translation of *Amadis* at the beginning of the third volume of the collection (vol. 3, p. 11), yet the version of *Saintré* that he prints is clearly Tressan’s, without notes and without attribution.

5 Le Comte de Tressan, *Histoire du petit Jehan de Saintré et de la dame des Belles-Cousines. Les veillées littéraires illustrées: choix de romans, nouvelles, poésies, pièces de théâtre, etc., etc., des meilleurs écrivains anciens et modernes*, Paris, J. Bry aîné, janvier 1849.

Tressan's "petit Jehan" also appears in other artistic forms. Young Saintré is the subject of a curious "romance", a brief narrative poem in *sizains*, composed by MÉRARD DE SAINT-JUST, in year 6 of the Revolution¹. He is the leading man in a vaudeville comedy "imitated" from Tressan by Dumersan and Brazier, and performed in 1817². Few elements of Tressan's abridged romance remain, save Jehan's youth, his military prowess (here against the Saxons at the gates of Paris), and his appeal to ladies. Jehan's name also appears in the title of an 1893 *opéra comique* by Jules Barbier and Pierre Barbier; the comic operetta features Jehan as a young page admired by the Queen's attendants at the court of King René. Once again, little of Tressan's story has survived, with the curious exception of the Queen's physician, Messire Hue, and the malady of "vapeurs"³. With his youth, his slight figure, but outstanding prowess, his success with a well-placed lady, Jehan manages to embody qualities that are quintessentially and nostalgically "French" from the last days of the ancien régime to the Second Republic.

We have seen how the early scholarly editors of La Sale's *Saintré* felt obliged to put Tressan in his place; the negative assessment reappears in the 1926 edition by Champion and Desonay, who characterize the author as "un admirateur fanatique doublé, hélas, d'un travestisseur malheureux de la littérature française" and who condemn the tone of the book as "tout imprégné de l'esprit frivole, voire même un tantinet grivois, du XVIII^e siècle", even as they begrudgingly acknowledge the adaptor's popularity⁴. But Misrahi and Knudson make no mention of Tressan in their 1965 edition, and by now, interest in the ten known *Saintré* manuscripts, in La Sale's authorial presence throughout his works, finely demonstrated by Sylvie Lefèvre⁵, and in the romance's complexities and its reflection (or refraction) of fifteenth-century social history⁶ have

1 S.-P. MÉRARD DE SAINT-JUST, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré et la Dame des Belles-Cousines, Romance. Suivie de celle de Gérard de Nevers et d'Euriart, sa mie, et d'autres chansons*. Paris, Moller, An VI (1798). BnF Ye 27621.

2 *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré et la Dame des Belles cousins, comédie mêlée de couplets, en trois actes en prose et à spectacle*, par MM. Dumersan et Brazier. Présenté pour la première fois à Paris sur le Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, le 31 mars 1817, Paris, Barba, 1817.

3 *Jehan de Saintré, opéra comique en deux actes*, poème de Jules Barbier et Pierre Barbier; musique de Frédéric d'Erlanger, 1893.

4 F. Desonay, "Notices Critiques", in Antoine de La Sale, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*, ed. P. Champion and F. Desonay, Paris, Édition du Trianon, 1926, p. XI-LVII, at p. LIII.

5 S. Lefèvre, *Antoine de la Sale*.

6 For a recent overview of the literary and historical questions raised by La Sale's novel, and critical responses to these, see R. L. Krueger and J. H. M. Taylor, "Introduction", in

all but eclipsed memories of Tressan's sentimental hero. Apart from Speer and Demarolle, whose studies we discussed earlier, few scholars mention Tressan as part of the *Saintré* bibliography today, and perhaps rightly so. His sentimental chivalric romance bears little resemblance to La Sale's late medieval didactic compilation. But Tressan's enthusiastic retelling of the medieval story deserves its place in the history of medievalism and in that of popular fiction. By refashioning La Sale's chivalric biography as a popular novel for the boudoir, by infusing the narrative with sensuality, patriotism and modern sensibility, Tressan kept the story of Saintré alive in the public consciousness as one of the "plus charmantes productions de l'ancienne littérature"¹, perhaps inspiring more serious scholars to return to the sources and to restore Antoine de La Sale's *Jehan de Saintré* as a masterpiece of late medieval fiction.

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Antoine de La Sale, Jehan de Saintré: A Late Medieval Education in Love and Chivalry, trans. R. L. Krueger and J. H. M. Taylor, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, p. VII-XXV.

1 Guichard, ed., *Saintré*, p. VI.