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RÉSUMÉ – Cette contribution examine la production imprimée de William Caxton dans les années 1470, alors qu’il est encore aux Pays-Bas, en particulier la manière dont le typographe déploie l’appareil paratextuel pour mettre en valeur le travail d’adaptation des ouvrages de Raoul Lefèvre. L’étude des stratégies paratextuelles permet de mesurer le rôle que les imprimeurs multilingues ont pu jouer dans la diffusion de romans bourguignons pour lesquels l'imprimerie ouvre de nouveaux débouchés.

MOTS-CLÉS – William Caxton, histoire de l’imprimerie, moyen âge tardif, *incunabula*, traduction, vernaculaire, multilingue, cour de Bourgogne

PAIRET (Ana), « ‘A good besynes’. La production translingue de William Caxton dans les Pays-Bas bourguignons »

ABSTRACT – This contribution examines William Caxton’s imprints in the Low Countries in the 1470s, particularly the manner in which the printer deploys paratextual devices to frame his translations of Raoul Lefèvre’s works. The study of Caxton's paratextual devices sheds light on the role that multilingual printers played in the circulation of Burgundian romances in the markets that printing opened up.

KEYWORDS – William Caxton, history of printing, late Middle Ages, *incunabula*, translation, vernacular, multilingual, Burgundian court

‘A GOOD BESYNES’

Caxton’s Translingual Production in the Low Countries

The activity of William Caxton as translator and multilingual printer in the Burgundian Low Countries illuminates the linguistic, textual, and cultural transfers enabled by early typography. Before setting up shop in Westminster in 1476, Caxton resided for more than two decades in the Low Countries, where he published the first two books printed in English: *The Recuyell of the historyes of Troye*[1] (hereafter *Recuyell*) and *The Game or Playe of chess*[2] (hereafter *Game*). While still active in Bruges/Ghent (c. 1474–1475), he also published *Le Recueil des histoires de Troies*[3] (hereafter *Histoires de Troies*), one of the earliest books printed in French. *The historie of Jason*[4] (hereafter *The historie*) appeared in England while a partner or former collaborator printed *L’Histoire de Jason* (hereafter *Jason*), the French source Caxton translated.[5]

1 On the chronology of Caxton’s Ghent/Bruges editions, see Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London: The British Library, 2010), p. 51.

2 The prologue of *Game* states that the translation was completed by the last day of March 1474. Caxton is probably not following the Burgundian calendar for which the year starts after Easter (in 1474, this fell on March 26). On Caxton’s French and Latin sources, see Christine Knowles, ‘Caxton and His Two French Sources: *The Game and Playe of the Chesse* and the Composite Manuscripts of the Two French Translations of the *Ludus Scaccorum*’, *MLR*, 49.4 (1954), 417–23.

3 Raoul Lefèvre, *Le Recoeil des histoires de Troyes*, ed. by Marc Aeschbach (Bern: Peter Lang, 1987). This critical edition includes descriptions of the 19 printed editions of Lefèvre’s work. For bibliographical references, see the British Library *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (ISTC) and Berlin Staatsbibliothek *Union Catalogue of Incunabula* (GW). References to Caxton’s incunabula printed in the Low Countries will be given as follows: Raoul Lefèvre, *Le Recueil des histoires de Troies* (ISTC il00113000).

4 Raoul Lefèvre, *The historie of Jason* [English], tr. William Caxton (ISTC il00112000) [Westminster: William Caxton, 1477].

5 Raoul Lefèvre, *L’Histoire de Jason: Fais et proesses du noble et vaillant chevalier Jason* (ISTC il00110930). On Caxton’s possible collaboration with the Burgundian scribe David Aubert, see Lotte Hellinga, ‘William Caxton, Colard Mansion, and the Printer in Type 1’, *Bulletin du bibliophile* (2011, no. 1), 86–114.

Both *Recuyell* and *The historie* were translated from prose works on the Trojan legend composed by Raoul Lefèvre to celebrate Burgundian rulership.[6] Started in the context of the dynastic marriage of Charles the Bold to Margaret of York in July 1468, Caxton's English translation of *Histoires de Troies* would shape the ways the merchant-turned-diplomat positioned himself as multilingual textual mediator. A milestone in the history of early vernacular imprints on several counts, Caxton's continental incunabula brings to light not only the connections between translation and the emergent art of printing but also the key role of multilingual textual production within early conceptions of the printer's trade.[7] Throughout this essay the term translingual will be used to emphasize the coherence of Caxton's production and his work across several vernaculars, as translator turned publisher. Building on Lotte Hellinga's scholarship,[8] I will examine Caxton's continental imprints in French and English as a precocious example of translingual printing. By reinforcing paratextual devices (incipit, prologue, epilogue) to frame his translation of *Histoires de Troies*, Caxton presents printing as a natural and timely extension of the 'good besynes' of translation.[9]

6 On manuscripts produced in the Low Countries in the last decades of the fifteenth centuy, see Scott McKendrick, 'Reviving the past: illustrated manuscripts of secular vernacular texts', in *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting*, ed. by Thomas Kren and others (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), pp. 71–73.

7 On translingual writing, see Steven G. Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 2000). For incunabula in French, see Andrew Pettegree and others, *French Vernacular Books. Books Published in French before 1601* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For editions in Latin and other vernaculars, see Andrew A. Pettegree and Malcolm Walsby, *French Books III and IV. Book Published in France before 1601 in Latin and in languages other than French* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

8 Lotte Hellinga and Wytze Gerbens Hellinga, 'Caxton in the Low Countries', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 11 (1976/77), 19–32; Hellinga 2010, pp. 19–51; Hellinga, 'The *History of Jason*: From Manuscripts for the Burgundian Court to Printed Books for Readers in the Towns of Holland', in *Texts in Transit: Manuscript to Proof and Print in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 304–65.

9 On Caxton's activity and practices as printer-translator, see Anne E. B. Coldiron 'William Caxton', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Vol. I: To 1550*, ed. by Roger Willis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 160–69 and 'Caxton, Translation and the Renaissance Print Culture', in *Printers without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambrige: Cambrigde University Press, 2015), pp. 35–106. See also Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'The printed transmission of medieval romance from William Caxton to Wynkyn de Worde, 1473–1533', in *The Transmission of Medieval Romance: Metres, Manuscripts and Early Prints*, ed. by Ad Putter and Judith A. Jefferson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 170–90.

To the best of our knowledge, books printed by Caxton and his collaborators in Ghent or Bruges are as follows:[10]

1. Raoul Lefèvre, *The recuyell of the historyes of Troye* (ISTC il00117000), [Ghent?: David Aubert?, for Caxton, c. 1473–1474].
2. Jacobus de Cessolis, *De ludo scachorum* [English], *The game and playe of the chesse*, tr. from Jean de Vignay's French version, (ISTC ic00413000), [Ghent?]: David Aubert?, for Caxton, 1474.
3. Raoul Lefèvre, *Le Recueil des histoires de Troyes* (ISTC il00113000), [Ghent?: David Aubert?, c. 1474–1475].
4. Petrus de Alliaco, *Meditationes circa psalmos poenitentiales* [French], *Les sept degres de l'echelle* (ia00479600), [Ghent?: David Aubert?, for Caxton, c. 1474–1475].
5. *Cordiale quattor novissimorum* [French], tr. by Jean Miélot, *Les quattres choses derrenieres*, tr. by Jean Miélot (ISTC ic00908000) [Bruges: Colard Mansion?, for Caxton].[11]
6. *Horae ad usum Sarum* [Latin] (ISTC ih00420000), [Bruges: Colard Mansion?, for Caxton, c. 1475–1476].
7. Raoul Lefèvre, *L'Histoire de Jason: Les Fais et proesses du noble et vaillant chevalier Jason* (ISTC il00110930), [Ghent?: David Aubert?, c. 1477].

Caxton's imprints in the Low Countries include several incunabula in English (*Recuyell*, *Game*) and in French (*Histoires de Troies*, *Meditationes, Les quattres choses derrenieres*). Some reference points in the chronology of early print allow us to further appreciate the pioneering dimension of Caxton's multilingual publishing venture within the broader context of vernacular imprints.[12] Starting c. 1475, book entrepreneurs in the Low Countries, France and Switzerland competed for the Francophone market, with Lyons and Geneva dominating French incunabula production, before Parisian typographers turned to printing in the vernacular.[13]

10 Hellinga, 2010, p. 51. *Cf.* Seymour De Ricci, *A Census of Caxtons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), pp. 1-8 and N. F. Blake, *Caxton and his world* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), pp. 224–39.

11 In keeping with the pattern of procuring parallel French and English versions, Caxton published *Cordyale or Four last thinges*, tr. Early Rivers (ISTC ic00907000), Westminster: Caxton, 1479.

12 On the hypothesis of decorated incunabula produced by Caxton for continental trade, see Holly James Maddocks, 'Illuminated Caxtons and the Trade in Printed Books', *The Library*, 22.3 (2021), 291–315.

13 The first book printed in French in Paris was *Chroniques de France* (ISTC ic00483000), Paris: Pasquier Bonhomme, January 1476/77. Incunabula in French were uncommon before 1480: 'only two of the first 162 books published were in French', note Pettegree and Walsby (2011), p. 12.

To the best of our knowledge, the chronology of romances printed in French is as follows: *Histoires de Troies*, c. 1474–1475; *Jason*, c. 1476; and *Pierre de Provence*, c. 1475–1478.[14] Adam Steinschaber printed *Mélusine* and *Fiérabras* in Geneva in 1478, the same year *Baudoin de Flandre* appeared in Lyons.[15] Colard Mansion was active in Bruges until 1484 but did not favour romance in his output.[16] *Histoires de Troies* was undoubtedly the first romance printed in French, possibly as early as 1474; printed in Ghent/Bruges, *Jason* (c. 1476) could also predate *Pierre de Provence*, which standard accounts identify as the earliest romance printed in French but whose year of printing (c. 1475) has not been confirmed. The limited number of works that Caxton published in French has contributed to obscure the chronology of early printed romance, whose birthplace is commonly thought to be Lyons. While this essay is not the place to dispute claims of birthright, it is worth underscoring the role of Caxton's production in the printed transmission of Burgundian fiction, both in French and in English translation, as well as the pioneering aspects in terms of multilingual transmission of the incunabula that Caxton printed in the Low Countries before establishing the printing press in England.

While scholars have established the pivotal role of Caxton's translations in England, the significance of his French imprints remains largely uncharted, in large part due to their perceived peripheral geographic status.[17] The fact that the two first books printed in English (*Recuyell* and *Game*) were translations of French works and were produced on the continent is a testimony to the cross-cultural vocation of early printing. While 'peripheral publishers' undisputedly played major roles in establishing and developing Francophone print culture, they have received

14 *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne* (ISTC ip00645130), Lyons: Guillaume Le Roy, c. 1475–1478.

15 *Livre de Baudoin comte de Flandre et de Ferrant fils du roy du Portugal* (ISTC ib00281500), Lyons: Barthélemy Buyer for Guillaume Le Roy, 1478.

16 Petrus de Alliaco, *Jardin de Dévotion* [French] (ISTC ia000478100) features the following colophon 'Primum opus impressum per Colardum Mansion. Brugis Laudetur onmipotens', quoted in *Colard Mansion: Incunabula, Prints and Manuscripts in Medieval Bruges*, ed. by Evelien Hauwaerts and others (Ghent: Snoeck, 2018), p. 20. For Caxton's relationship with Mansion, see L. Hellinga, 'William Caxton and Colard Mansion', in Hauwaerts, pp. 63–76.

17 Blake's discussion of Caxton's reprints notably excludes those books which Caxton printed in both French and English. N. F. Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 107.

limited critical attention, particularly those established in cities where printing in French was short-lived.[18] Translingual vernacular printing began in the multilingual Low Countries, with Caxton playing a major role as material agent and crafting a novel authorial persona as printer-translator.[19] It should give us pause that the two first printed books in English and one of the earliest incunabula in French were the works of an expatriate merchant who used translation as the cornerstone of his new trade.

Caxton dwelled some three decades in the Burgundian Low Countries, briefly sojourning in Cologne where he discovered the art of typography. Hailing from the Weald of Kent, he apprenticed with a textile merchant in London before moving to Bruges around 1453. Roughly a decade later he became governor of the English Nation of Merchant Adventurers, a London-based company that in the fifteenth century assembled English traders active in the southern portions of the Low Countries, then under Burgundian rule. Caxton's commercial activity placed him in frequent and close contact with the Burgundian court, and he found himself entrusted with several diplomatic missions under Edward IV of England who acceded to the throne in 1461. Caxton thus had the opportunity to witness firsthand the complex negotiations which led to the marriage in 1468 of the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold, with Margaret of York, King Edward's sister.[20]

Caxton quickly began to exert his influence in the cultural domain as a go-between. He put to good use his language skills to translate into English works composed in the French-speaking Burgundian court, facilitating Anglo-Burgundian cross-cultural exchange before himself introducing printing in England, a commercial and personal venture which he launched in 1476. Once settled in England, Caxton pursued the task of disseminating narrative works and devotional literature of the

18 Maria Colombo Timelli, 'Mises en prose et "éditeurs périphériques": quels titres pour quels lecteurs?', in '*"Cy commence ung livre emprainté…": Diffusion et réception de la littérature médiévale en langue française par l'imprimerie (1470–1550)*' (Paris: Garnier, in press).

19 For multilingual contexts in the Low Countries, see Malcolm Wasbly, 'Printing in French in the Low Countries in the Early Sixteenth Century: Patterns and Networks', *The Multilingual Muse: Transcultural Poetics in the Burgundian Netherlands*, ed. by Adrian Armstrong and Elsa Strietman, Cambridge: Legenda, 2017, pp. 54–70.

20 On Caxton's activities at the Burgundian court, see Hellinga 2010, pp. 19–32.

sort favoured in Burgundy.[21] When Caxton started translating Lefèvre's Burgundian romances there was precious little indication of the formative role he would play in the history of vernacular printing. Having witnessed the dealings that firmed up the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, he was instrumental in initiating Margaret of York in the culture of the ducal court where the myth of the founding of Troy played a key role, as affirmed by the establishment of the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1430.[22] Lefèvre had devoted two works to Trojan history, both composed under the patronage of Philip the Good: *Jason* and *Histoires de Troies.*[23] The lavish festivities that marked the 'marriage of the century' in July 1468 could not but allude to the legend of Troy, and multiple artistic and theatrical recreations ensued.[24] The project of cultural and political *translatio* on which embarked the onetime merchant turned diplomat was part and parcel of an intense climate of exchange that dominated for several months economic and artistic activity of the moment. Once the marriage had been sealed, Caxton seems to have found in the labour of translation a new mission that extended his self-appointed functions as merchant, diplomatic go-between, and cultural mediator.

The opening of *Recueyll* delineates the circumstances and chronology of Caxton's translation of Lefèvre's prose work:

> HEre begynneth the volume intituled and named the recuyell of the historyes of Troye / composed and drawen out of diyverces bookes of latyn into frensshe by the ryght venerable persone and worshipfull man. Raoul le ffevre. preest and chapelayn unto the ryght noble glorious and myghty prynce in his tyme Phelip duke of Bourgonye of Braband, etc. In the yere of the Incarnacion of our lord God a thousand foure honderd sixty and foure / And translated and drawen out of frenshe in to englisshe by Willyam Caxton mercer of ye cyte

21 For a scholarship review, see N. F. Blake 1991, pp. 9–18; Seth Lerer, 'William Caxton', *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 720–38.

22 On the legend of Troy at the Burgundian court see Estelle Doudet, 'Le miroir de Jason: la *Grèce ambiguë* des écrivains bourguignons au XV^e^ siècle', in *La Grèce antique sous le regard du Moyen Âge occidental*. ed. by Michel Zink (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, 2005), pp. 75–93.

23 There is little evidence that Lefèvre was Philip the Good's chaplain, as Catxon stated echoing French manuscript sources. See the introduction to Raoul Lefèvre, *L'Histoire de Jason*, ed. by Gert Pinkernell (Frankfurt, Athenäum, 1971). On Lefèvre's cultural environment at the household of Jean V de Créquy, see Hellinga 2014, p. 305.

24 Christine B. Weigthman, *Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, 1446–1503* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 30.

> of London / at the comaundement of the right hye mighty and vertuouse Pryncesse hys redoubtyd lady. Margarete by the grace of God,. Duchesse of Bourgoyne of Lotryk of Brabant etc. / Whiche sayd translacion and werke was begonne in Brugis in the Countee of Flaundres, the fyrst day of marche the yere of the Incarnacion of our said lord god a thousand foure honderd sixty and eyghte / And ended and fynisshed in the holy city of Colen the .xix. day of septembre the yere of our sayd lord God a thousand foure honderd sixty and enleven (ll. 1–7, p. 3)[25]

Caxton had begun his translation either in March 1468 during the negotiations that led to the betrothal, which transpired two months later, or, more likely, in March 1469, following the newly adopted calendar, as suggested by the mention of the title 'duchesse of Bourgoyne'. As recorded in the extended incipit, Caxton completed the work of translation and compilation in November 1471 in Cologne, where he relocated from July 1471 to late 1472. This stay proved critical for it was in this town, home both to a noted market and to a university, that printing had been introduced the decade prior and it was here that the merchant not only discovered the art of typography but conceived of one day himself entering the printers' trade.[26] Stepping down from his role as Governor of the English Nation in Bruges and temporarily moving to Cologne provided Caxton the opportunity to discover the commercial potential of the new print technology. He may even have launched his first publishing venture there, by financing the first edition of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' encyclopedia *De Proprietatibus Rerum.*[27]

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25 Raoul Lefèvre, *The Recuyell of the Hystoryes of Troy*, ed. by H. Oskar Sommer (London: D. Nutt, 1894), 1, p. 3. All quotations are from this edition. *Cf.* Walter J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 2–8.

26 See Severin Corsten, 'Caxton in Cologne', *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 11 (1975/6), pp. 1–18 and 'Paul Needham, William Caxton and his Cologne partners: an enquiry based on Veldener's Cologne type', in *Ars impressoria: Entstehung und Entwicklung des Buchdrucks: Eine internationale Festgabe für Severin Corsten zum 65 Geburtstag*, ed. by Hans Limburg and others (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1986), pp. 103–31.

27 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, Cologne: Johan Schilling for William Caxton?, c. 1471–1472. See *William Caxton, A small exhibition held in the Bodleian Library to commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the first book printed in the English language* (Oxford: The Library, 1976), pp. 5–6. The first edition in Latin of *De Propietatibus Rerum* bears no date or printer's name. In a verse epilogue of the English translation by John Trevisa (c. 1496), Wynkyn de Worde, who took over the Westminster print shop, acknowledged Caxton's contribution to the encyclopedia's printed transmission ('first printer of this boke / In laten tonge at Coleyn'). While paratextual discourse can hardly be

The sophisticated paratextual apparatus of *Recuyell*, the first book printed in English, includes not only an extended incipit, but also an authorial preface ('prologue') that Caxton signs, speaking mainly as translator, albeit one of a new kind, with an eye to the market and benefiting from the prestige of semi-fictionalized aristocratic patronage.[28] A literal translation of Lefèvre's prologue follows the translator's preface. Finally, as part of a deliberate framing strategy that further posits him as compiler and editor, Caxton adds a first-person epilogue for each of the three books comprising the *Recuyell*.

Printed in red ink, the incipit closely follows that of the source text, including the names and function of the author ('Raoul le ffevre, preest and chapelayn') and of his patron ('myghty prynce in his tyme') as well as the date of composition. However, the English translation adds strategic information on the Latin sources of Lefèvre ('composed and drawen out of diverces bookes of latyn into frensshe') who is consequently presented as a translator and compiler himself. This is precisely the sort of authorial figure upon whom Caxton appears to model his activity: by referencing Lefèvre's sources in his transposition and amplification of the French incipit, Caxton thus presents his own work as part of continuous project of *translatio studii.* Retracing the genealogy of *Recuyell* defines the French source text as itself a compilation and translation while confering prestige to Caxton's English translation by equating his vernacular source with Lefèvre's 'bookes of latyn.'

The extended incipit bringing together Lefèvre's and Caxton's signatures is followed by metatextual commentary. The translator's prologue is typset on the verso of the folio that contains the extended dedication, an editorial decision relayed and underscored at the bottom of the first

taken as hard evidence, de Worde's statement is as good a lead as any regarding Caxton's introduction to typography and the publishing trade during his stay in Cologne. On the lack of evidence for Caxton's participation in printing the Latin *editio princeps* of *De Propietatibus Rerum*, see Edward Gordon Duff, *Early English Printing* [1894] (New York: Georg Olms, 1974), pp. 1-2.

28 On Caxton's introductory pieces and the iconography of patronage in *Recuyell*, see William Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 90–102. On the information on social contexts provided in Caxton's paratexts, see Coldiron 2008, pp. 162–66. On cultural and linguistic mediation as figured in the *Recuyell*'s paratext, see Madeleine Jeay and Kathleen Garay, "At such a time as I was resident at Bruges': contacts littéraires entre William Caxton et la cour de Bourgogne à la fin du XV[e] siècle (1460-1490)', in *Les premiers imprimés français et la littérature de Bourgogne (1470-1550)*, ed. by Jean Devaux and others (Paris: Champion, 2021), pp. 102-104.

folio by the caption 'And on that other side of this leef foloweth the prologe'[29] (l. 22, p. 3). Thus is the shift in narrative frame made explicit. Deploying the authorial first person, the translator stages the genesis of his translation, introducing himself as a reader who has discovered 'many strange and mervayllous historyes' the novelty and style of which he greatly prizes. The pleasure to be derived from reading and, presumably, from translating Lefèvre's work comes from the alliance of new material and well-wrought prose: 'for the fayr langage of frenshe whyche was in prose so well and compendiously sette and wreton' (ll. 10–11, p. 4). Caxton adduces the recent composition of Lefèvre's work as he explains his decision to present this yet untranslated work to a diverse readership in England and on the continent:

> And for so moche as this booke was newe and late maad and drawen in to Frenshe / and never had seen hit in oure englissh tonge / I thought in my self hit shold be a good besynes to translate hyt into oure englissh / to thende that hyt myght be had as well in the royame of Englond as in other landes / and also for to passe therwyth the time. and thus concluded in my self to begynne this sayd wrke (ll. 13–20, p. 4)

It is in great part the work's novelty that pushes Caxton to embark in the business of translation, a commitment he describes as a timely and useful occupation, as much for himself as for his intended readers.

The phrase 'translacion and werke' referenced in the incipit alerts us to editorial tasks that overlap to some extent with the work of translation and compilation. The most significant instance is to be found in Caxton's rhetorical precautions at the transition from the second to the third book, itself the effect of compilation.[30] Present in two thirds of the extant manuscripts of Lefèvre's *Recueil*, the final book is based on Guido de Colonna's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287), which had been translated into both Middle French and Middle English. In the epilogue to the second book, Caxton feigns reluctance at translating a third and final book 'whiche treateth of the generall and last destruccion of Troye', on account of a verse rendition, *Troy Book* (about 1420) composed by John

29 See the facsimile and codicological description in William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer* 2 (New York: Franklin, 1863), pp. 3–4.

30 For a critical edition of the third book see Delphine Le Corfec's, *Caxton imprimeur. Le troisième livre du Recueil des histoires de Troyes* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université de la Sorbonne, École nationale des chartes, 2012).

Lydgate whom Caxton deferentially names: 'after whos werke I fere to take upon me that I am not worthy to bere his penner and ynke horn after hym. to medle me in that werke' (ll. 20–3, p. 502).[31] Via the modesty topos, the translator turned compiler inserts himself in a multilingual literary genealogy of the Troy legend, ultimately justifying his decision to include a translation of the third book contrary to his initial designs. Indeed, he accomplishes the task in order to follow the Duchess' wishes and to occupy himself ('eschewyng of idleness', l. 1, p. 503)[32] but also because of the intrinsic value of procuring a prose rendition in English:

> as ferre as I knowe hit is not had in prose in our tongue / and also paradenture, he translated after some other Auctor than this is / and yet for as moche as dyverce men ben of diyerce desyres. Some to rede in Ryme and metre and some in prose. (ll. 25–9, p. 502)

Caxton's manner of addressing the Latin and vernacular textual tradition of the Troy legend surpasses the conventions of the *captatio benevolentiae*. Indeed, at this textual juncture the translator portrays himself as a publisher of sorts, carefully assessing and articulating the need for a prose translation of the final destruction of Troy. As he retrospectively recreates the work-in-progress that is his translation, Caxton deploys a novel authorial voice that merges Burgundian and English literary conventions, highlighting the various editorial roles of the vernacular compiler on the one hand and of the translator on the other.[33] Furthermore, the merchant-turned-translator displays an acute awareness of the cultural mediation that translation entails. At this transitional historical moment in the production and circulation of printed goods, Caxton strategically provides a highly structured paratext, where he speaks at different entry points as compiler, translator, printer and as publisher. He introduces narrative and authorial devices that were seemingly without precedent in what was then the short history of vernacular printing.

Caxton's mediating role as multilingual reader, translator, and translingual printer influenced textual and visual renderings of the figure of

31 For a description of eleven of the fifteen manuscripts, see Sommer 1894, pp. xlvii–lv.

32 Saint Jerome's prescription to shun idleness is the overarching theme of the prologue to the *Golden Legend* (1484), where Caxton lists 'dyvers werkys and hystoryes translated out of Frensshe in to englysshe', in Blades, p. 165.

33 See *English Renaissance Translation Theory*, ed. by Neil Rhodes and others (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013), p. 218.

the aristocratic patron. Specifically, Caxton in his prologue underscores the personal interest Margaret of York took in the translation of *Histoires de Troies* and the encouragements she lavished upon the merchant to pursue this new activity, even as she took pains to correct his English: 'which se commanded me to amende and moreover commanded me straytly to continyue'. In what is no doubt a highly fictionalized scene, the narrator produces an account of the Duchess herself performing editorial tasks. Caxton updates the rhetoric of *exordium* through the topos of the work undertaken at the express wish of a powerful patron. In this way Caxton places *Recuyell* in a lineage of works commissioned by female patrons who exerted the role of cultural arbiter, such as *Partonopeu de Blois* and *Le bel Inconnu*. While Caxton formally dedicates *The historie of Jason* to Edward, Prince of Wales,[34] the prologue to that work includes yet another reference to Margaret of York's decisive role in the composition of *Recuyell*.

The Chatsworth-Huntington copy of *Recuyell* features a unique copper engraving in the tradition of presentation miniatures at the frontispiece of medieval manuscripts. The engraving depicts an author kneeling before a lady who accepts from his hands two books.[35] While we can assume that the two main figures in this scene are Caxton and Margaret of Burgundy, the print context generates ambiguity as to the nature of the books presented to the Duchess. Do the volumes contain the manuscript translation of *Recueil*, or both *Recueil* and *Histoire de Jason*? Are the books manuscripts or newly printed works? This visual ambiguity is likely intended, to the extent that patronage adds prestige and monetary value to the printed work. Engravings may have been used for customized print copies, a practice attested among such early

34 This dedication may be the first in a book printed in England, revealing Caxton's concern for royal patronage. See *Caxton in the Context of European Printing 1476–1976: A Quincentennial Exibition* (Manchester: John Ryland University Library of Manchester, 1976), note 51.

35 De Ricci, p. ii. On the engravings, see Hellinga, 'Reading and Engraving: William Caxton's Dedication to Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy', in *Across the Narrow Seas: Studies in the History and Bibliography of Great Britain and the Low Countries Presented to Anna C. Simoni*, ed. by Susan Roach (London: British Library, 1991), pp. 1–15, and Joseph A. Dane, '"Wanting the First Blank": Frontispiece of the Huntington Copy of Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67.2 (2004), 315–25. On the distinction bewteen presentation and dedication scenes see Michelle Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Publications, 1994), p. 102.

printers as Colard Mansion which blurs the line between the manuscript as object of aristocratic consumption and the printed book as market commodity. By inserting a presentation scene in a printed book, Caxton visually fuses the traditional function of the writer-translator who works at the behest of a patron with the novel function of the translator-printer.[36] Similarly, the act of translation bridges the role of the courtly writer and the that of cultural mediator which Caxton identifies as his 'besynes.' Another detail beckons. In the engraved image: below the volumes which the author hands over to the patroness sits on the floor a monkey. Its diminutive arms are outstretched towards the kneeling figure, and its knees bent at an angle as if to mirror the author's own pose. The simian reference is an intriguing iconographic detail that can readily be connected to the theme of idleness but may also have sociological overtones.[37]

References to Margaret of Burgundy's patronage occur both in the epilogue of the second book, which refers to political turmoil (possibly in a reference to the circumstances that led to Caxton's brief exile), and at the close of the compilation. In the epilogue to the third and final book, the Duchess is painted as the recipient and reader of the translation:

> Prayng her said Grace and all them that shall rede this book not to desdaigne the symple and rude werke. nether to replye agaynst the sayyng of the matters towchyd in this book / thauwh hit accorde not unto the translation of others which have wreton hit

In the material context of the printed book, the topical reference to readers' indulgence takes on a quasi-literal meaning, to the extent that printed circulation considerably widened the spectrum of intended readers. Caxton's aristocratic patron is far from being the sole addressee, as the opening of this epilogue makes clear:

> And for as moche as in the wrytyng of the same my penne is worne / myn hande wery and not stedfast myn eyen dimmed with overmoche lokyng on the whit paper / and my corage not so prone and ready to laboure as hit hath

36 On textual agency in early print, see Kathleen Tonry, *Agency and Intention in English Print 1476–1526* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), pp. 1–16.

37 While little evidence supports a metaphorical reading of the monkey as figure for the printer, a visual pun is not entirely out of the question. See Kuskin 2008, pp. 100–102.

> ben / and that age crepeth on me dayly and febleth all the bodye / and also be cause I have promysid to dyverce gentilmen and to my frendes to addresse to hem as hastely as I myght this sayd book / Therefore I have practysed and lerned at my greate charge and dispense to ordeyne this said book in prynte after the maner and forme as ye may here see / and is not wreton with penne and ynke as other bokes ben / to theende that every man may have them attones / ffor all the bokes of this storye named the recule of the historyes of troyes thus empryntid as ye here see were begonne in oon day / and also fynyshid in oon day / whiche book I have presented to my sayd redoubtid lady as a fore is sayd. (ll. 4–20, p. 700)

In a quasi-metamorphic scene that closes the *Recuyell*, the printer steps out of the shadows, and leaves behind both the book 'wreton with penne and ynke' and the translator's aging body. Just as the perspective of the printer replaces that of the scribe, so too does the potential recipient of the book shift from aristocratic patron to a wider readership, before returning to the first intended reader and fictional editor and closing the loop of manuscript patronage to print transmission. The art of typography allows not only broad distribution and simultaneous consumption by multiple readers but also immediate production, as encapsulated in the hyperbolic description of the printing process, 'begonne in oon day and also fynyshid in oon day'.

William Caxton's continental imprints shed light on the respective roles that translators and printers played as agents of textual and cultural production in the incunabular period. In the paratext of the Burgundian romance he printed in English in the Low Countries, Caxton speaks primarily as translator, presenting his own renderings of the Trojan legend as part of a process of *translatio imperii* and capitalizing on the prestige of aristocratic patronage, while simultaneously seeking to widen and diversify his readership through the medium of the printed book. Caxton's self-representation as a transligual textual mediator clarifies the dynamics of authorship and patronage at the transition from luxury manuscript production to the print trade. The limited but significant multilingual book production Caxton undertook in the Burgundian Low Countries durably marked the history of printing in both English and French, not only for its unprecedented nature but also by deliberately linking print as medium to translingual activity. Indeed, the decision to print a given book in more than one vernacular language became a trademark among printers of the Low

Countries. This specialization in multilingual vernacular printing dates to the early incunabular period, and more precisely as we have seen to Caxton's translingual imprints.[38]

Ana Pairet
Rutgers University-New Brunswick
apairet@french.rutgers.edu

38 For example, Jacob Bellaert who printed the Dutch translation of du *Recueil des histoires de Troyes*, (Haarlem, 1485) also produced a Dutch translation of *Roman de Jason*: *Historie van der vromne rider Jason* (Haarlem, c. 1483–1485) (ISTC il00111000), followed by a French version (c. 1486–1488). During the same period Gerard Leeu published the French version of *Recueil des Histoires de Troie* (Antwerp, c. 1486) (ISTC il00113500), followed by Caxton's *History of Jason* (Antwerp, 1492) (ISTC il00112100).