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Adolescence, anxiety and amusement in versions of Paris et Vienne

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Adolescence, anxiety and amusement in versions of *Paris et Vienne*

Abstract : *Idyllic romances such as Paris et Vienne, which exists in three different versions, explore the tensions created by depicting young lovers in conflict with their parents on the issue of whom they want to marry. Whilst the original version, as preserved in Paris, BnF fr. 1480, uses comedy in order to present the hero and heroine as tricksters whose flouting of parental authority evokes ambivalence in the reader, the Burgundian redaction (Brussels, KBR 9632/3) reduces this emphasis on the couple's duplicitousness by ending the tale with a lengthy retrospective validation of Paris as chivalric hero and true aristocrat. By contrast, the shorter version of Paris et Vienne, which is extant in Paris, BnF fr. 20044, largely strips the narrative of its capacity to amuse and extracts from the tale an uncompromisingly serious message about the moral dilemmas and emotional anguish undergone by young lovers intent on pursuing their personal desires.*

Résumé : *Les romans idylliques, tels que celui de Paris et Vienne, qui existe en trois rédactions différentes, explorent les tensions créées lorsque deux jeunes amants s'opposent à la volonté de leurs familles en matière de mariage. Alors que la version originale (e.g. Paris, BnF fr. 1480) utilise l'humour afin de peindre les amants sous les traits de trompeurs, effet qui n'aurait pas manqué de susciter une certaine ambivalence chez le lecteur médiéval, la rédaction bourguignonne (Bruxelles, KBR 9632/3) essaie de modifier cette impression du couple en ajoutant à la fin du récit une longue justification rétrospective de la prouesse et de la noblesse du héros. En revanche, la version plus courte de l'histoire (Paris, BnF fr. 20044) élimine la plus grande partie de l'humour du texte original afin d'en tirer une leçon morale de portée plus sérieuse sur les angoisses subies par les amants en quête de leur propre destin affectif.*

Idyllic romances, tales which feature the struggle of a pair of young lovers to overcome parental opposition to their relationship¹, were highly popular with medieval audiences from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, two of the most famous early examples being *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Aucassin et Nicolette*. One late medieval idyllic romance which was widely disseminated in Europe through its various printed editions and translations is *Paris et Vienne*. In this tale, Paris, the eponymous hero, who is of lesser birth than Vienne, the heroine, being the son of her father's vassal, earns the affection of his beloved first by serenading her and then by fighting incognito in a series of tournaments in her honour. However, due to the refusal of Vienne's father, the dauphin, to allow the couple to marry, they each have to resort to an elaborate ruse in order, finally, to obtain his consent. Thus, Paris, who has been exiled from court, uses his disguise as a Saracen to help free the dauphin

¹ M. Lot-Borodine, *Le Roman idyllique au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Picard, 1913 ; M. Vuagnoux-Uhlig, *Le Couple en herbe. Galeran de Bretagne et L'Escoufle à la lumière du roman idyllique médiéval*, Geneva, Droz, 2009 ; *Le Récit idyllique, aux sources du roman moderne*, ed. J.-J. Vincensini and C. Galderisi, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2009.

from imprisonment in the Holy Land and obtains the promise of Vienne's hand as a reward. Vienne, for her part, makes herself physically repellent to her father's preferred suitor, the son of the duke of Burgundy, by placing rotten chicken meat under her armpits, thereby maintaining her fidelity to Paris until he returns home to marry her².

This romance first appeared in French in the first half of the fifteenth century in a version which is preserved in a group of six manuscripts. Authorial credit for this work is claimed in a prologue by one Pierre de la Cépède, of Marseille, who states that he was responsible for translating the text into French in 1432 from a Provençal version, which he asserts was itself a translation from the Catalan. Traces of the tale's putative Provençal (though not Catalan) origin can certainly be seen in the spelling used in some of the earliest manuscripts (such as Paris, BnF fr. 1480), but this spelling was altered in later copyings in favour of more northern French forms³.

The manuscripts of this group are all very similar in content, except for one written at the Burgundian court in the mid-fifteenth century which emanated from the Lille workshop of the illuminator known as the Maître de Wavrin⁴. This Burgundian redaction (Brussels, KBR 9632/3), differs from all the others in this group in being sub-divided into chapters which are systematically introduced by a large red capital letter for the first word of each chapter and which are frequently accompanied by a rubric summarising the episode's contents, as in all the romances that were produced at the Wavrin workshop at this time⁵. It also contains two interpolated episodes which are not found in the other manuscripts of the tale that belong to this group. The first of these offers a brief account of the sights seen by Paris on his way from Genoa to the Holy Land, whilst the second provides a lengthy description of the jousts and festivities organised to celebrate the couple's wedding when they are finally given permission to marry⁶.

Apart from the six manuscripts in this group, the tale of Paris and Vienne also exists in a second, shorter French version which survives in a single manuscript (Paris, BnF fr. 20044)⁷ and the printed editions of the tale in French which date from 1487 onwards. This shorter version, which is half the length of the longer, would seem to have been the basis of all the subsequent translations of the story, such as

² J.-J. Vincensini, « Désordre de l'abjection et ordre de la courtoisie : le corps abject dans *Paris et Vienne* de Pierre de la Cépède », *Medium Ævum*, 68/2, 1999, p. 292-304.

³ See R. Kaltenbacher, « Der altfranzösische Roman *Paris et Vienne* », *Romanische Forschungen*, 15/2, 1904, p. 321-688. All references to this edition, hereafter referred to as *K*, will be made in the body of the text and quotations will amend punctuation and spelling as necessary.

⁴ A. Naber, « B. R. 9632/3 – Une version bourguignonne du roman de *Paris et Vienne* », *Rencontres médiévales en Bourgogne (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)*, 1, 1991, p. 19-27.

⁵ A. Naber, « Les manuscrits d'un bibliophile bourguignon du XV^e siècle, Jean de Wavrin », *Revue du Nord*, 72, 1990, p. 23-48 ; and *id.*, « La culture livresque dans quelques romans de chevalerie bourguignons », *Eulalie*, 1, 1998, p. 39-44.

⁶ See *K*, p. 632-633 for the first of these interpolations, and p. 633-646 for the second.

⁷ See *Paris et Vienne, romanzo cavalleresco del XV secolo*, Parigi, Biblioteca Nazionale, ms. fr. 20044, ed. A. M. Babbi, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1992. All references to this edition, hereafter referred to as *B*, will be made in the body of the text.

that of William Caxton into English (1485)⁸. It omits the authorial prologue, lacks the prophetic dreams that the young lovers have at key moments in the narrative and contains far fewer dialogues and descriptions of tournaments. Like the Burgundian version, it is systematically divided into chapters, each with its own succinct heading, but it also differs from all the manuscripts of the longer version in dating the events it recounts to 1271, a claim which is completely without historical foundation. Although scholars are divided as to which of the two French renderings of the story is the original – for some, the shorter, « primitive » version came first⁹, whereas for others, the shorter redaction is a simplified version of the earlier, longer one¹⁰ –, the codicological tradition itself supports the second of these views since the manuscripts of the longer version are all older than that of the shorter.

One reason why this slimmed-down version of *Paris et Vienne* was adopted in all the French printed editions of the tale and was used as the basis for the printed translations may be the general tendency of such editions of romances to abbreviate their manuscript sources¹¹. However, there may also be another reason for this proliferation of versions and for the preference given to the shorter redaction in the print and translation traditions, one which I want to explore here. As Leah Otis-Cour has recently argued¹², idyllic tales such as *Paris et Vienne* can be seen as « canoniquement correct[s] » in putting the Church's championing of individual consent above that of the aristocratic practice of parents choosing marriage partners for their offspring for the purposes of maintaining dynastic status, irrespective of their child's wishes. However, given that the robust defence of the notion of consent in these works would have been problematic for an aristocratic audience, they often employ elaborate narrative strategies – such as the belated revelation that a seemingly less noble partner is in fact of suitably high birth – in order to reconcile the child's desire for marital autonomy with their need to be accepted back into society. As Douglas Kelly has observed, such strategies in romances like *Paris et Vienne* and in the *nouvelles* of the fifteenth century – which can also include having a higher authority, such as a king or a high-ranking male relative, bring an end to the conflict between parent and child – are necessary in these texts because the actions of the young lovers constitute a marked deviation from the social norm, one which

⁸ *Paris and Vienne. Translated from the French and Printed by William Caxton*, ed. M. Leach, Early English Text Society, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1957. For studies of this translation, see W. T. Cotton, « Fidelity, suffering and humor in *Paris and Vienne* », *Chivalric Literature : Essays on Relations between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. L. D. Benson and J. Leylerle, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980, p. 91-100 ; and H. E. Hudson, « Constructions of class, family, and gender in some Middle English popular romances », *Class and Gender in Early English Literature : Intersections*, ed. B. J. Harwood and G. R. Overing, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 76-94.

⁹ *B*, p. 16-17.

¹⁰ Leach, ed. cit., p. xvi.

¹¹ Ph. Ménard, « La réception des romans de chevalerie à la fin du Moyen Âge et au XVI^e siècle », *Bulletin bibliographique de la Société internationale arthurienne*, 49, 1997, p. 234-273.

¹² L. Otis-Cour, « Mariage d'amour, charité et société dans les 'romans de couple' médiévaux », *Le Moyen Âge*, 111/2, 2005, p. 275-292.

would have provoked both amusement and anxiety in the medieval audience¹³. For Kelly, comic genres such as the *nouvelle* were intended by and large to produce the former response, thus defusing the threat posed by such youthful autonomy through farce. Conversely, although more serious genres such as romance may make some use of humour, as is the case in *Paris et Vienne*, they are nonetheless more likely to have painted an unsettling picture of the consequences of departing from these accepted social norms. Ultimately, however, even in these romances it is not always easy to discern which of these two possible responses is meant to be evoked in the audience. As Kelly himself observes: « dans ces romans, l'anomalie peut susciter soit le rire soit l'inquiétude, ou bien on peut hésiter entre les deux »¹⁴.

In an earlier study of this tension between amusement and anxiety in the treatment of adolescence in the longer version of *Paris et Vienne*, I argued that this work uses humour as the chief means by which to convey a moral message about the problems created when a young couple's desire for marital self-determination comes in conflict with parental authority¹⁵. This critical attitude towards adolescence in *Paris et Vienne* would seem to be informed by late medieval discourses on the troubling nature of youth as a period in the human life-cycle which is characterised by disobedience, deceitfulness, argumentativeness and immoderate sexual passion¹⁶. From its playful prologue, with its reference to supposed multiple sources, to its highly improbable ending, where the heroes die at an extraordinarily advanced age, the romance gives an amusing account of the young couple's defiance of their parents, their use of trickery to achieve their goals, their violent verbal outbursts, and their excessive love that borders at times on idolatry. Furthermore, this longer version of the tale makes extensive use of both parody and irony: whilst Vienne's conflict with her father over her wish to withhold her consent to an unwanted marriage is presented as a parodic account of a virgin-martyr's defiance of a tyrannical parent, Paris's Saracen disguise is shown, ironically, to work far better as a way of winning Vienne's hand than his earlier use of chivalric incognito since it allows him to trick her father into giving his consent to their marriage. If Paris and Vienne are depicted in light-hearted, anti-heroic guise¹⁷, despite their story ultimately arriving at a happy ending, it is their respective confidants, the long-suffering Odoardo and Ysabeau, who act as the voices of reason in the narrative in their attempts to persuade the young couple to moderate their feelings for each other and to end their dispute with Vienne's father. According to this interpretation of the longer version of *Paris et Vienne*, the threat posed by the rebellious couple to the authority of the father is thus undermined through the use of humour which serves to

¹³ D. Kelly, « La norme et l'anomalie dans le roman au milieu du XV^e siècle », *Du roman courtois au roman baroque*, ed. Emmanuel Bury and Francine Mora, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2004, p. 353-366.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹⁵ R. Brown-Grant, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages: Gender, Morality, and Desire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 79-128.

¹⁶ A. Sobczyk, *L'Érotisme des adolescents dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge*, Louvain, Peeters, 2008.

¹⁷ J. J. St Clair, *Paris et Vienne: lexical choice, narrative technique, and meaning in a roman d'aventure of the fifteenth century*, Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1976.

problematise their status as exemplary figures and even to subvert idyllic romance as a defence of adolescent autonomy.

However, if the tale can be read in this way, Michelle Szkilnik has recently argued that it is also open to another interpretation, one in which parental authority itself is subverted, given that the couple's chief antagonist, Vienne's father, is hardly shown in a very positive light¹⁸. Such a reading of the longer version is certainly in line with Kelly's argument about the difficulty of deciding whether such tales are meant to be taken simply as a pleasurable form of amusement or as a more serious interrogation of social norms. Yet, the fact that the story of Paris and Vienne does not exist in a single version but in several suggests that the text's potential subversiveness to which Szkilnik draws our attention, may have been the source of considerable anxiety to its late medieval audience and so required revision if it was to be made less ambiguous in its moral import. Thus, whilst both the Burgundian and the shorter renderings of the tale follow the same basic narrative as that of the longer version, they nonetheless adopt a variety of different strategies for reducing the troubling potential of this text to be read as an apology for adolescent dissent. As we shall see, the Burgundian redaction does this by attenuating the longer version's emphasis on the lovers' use of trickery to obtain their goal by adding a long, interpolated description of the wedding jousts that significantly alters the ending of the narrative and the lesson to be taken from it. Similarly, the shorter version of *Paris et Vienne* turns this tale into a much more serious analysis of inter-generational conflict than that found in the longer version. This it achieves by depicting the couple as courtly lovers rather than as adolescents, by foregrounding the problem of their social inequality and the effects of their transgression on their own sense of well-being, and by showing the lovers' less duplicitous attitude towards the dauphin himself.

Apart from the Burgundian redaction, the majority of manuscripts of the longer version of *Paris et Vienne* end with a very rapid dénouement. Once the two families have been reconciled with their respective children and the couple's marriage has been agreed upon, the tale briefly recounts that the kings of France and England, plus various dukes and barons, attend the wedding ceremony, and describes the three days of jousting that take place to celebrate it. Whilst Paris and Odoardo's feats at these jousts are mentioned in passing, there is no special emphasis placed on their being judged the victors. The tale finishes with a very quick summary of the rest of the couple's lives, noting the numerous children that they had, the titles that their sons inherited, the marriages made by their daughters, and the pious deeds of almsgiving that Paris and Vienne performed before their deaths.

In the Burgundian manuscript, by contrast, the chivalric and courtly ceremonies that accompany the wedding are retold in much greater detail, to the extent of adding almost 10% to the length of the total narrative. Antoinette Naber has claimed that the pages of this long, interpolated episode « n'ajoutent en fait rien

¹⁸ M. Szkilnik, review of Brown-Grant, *op. cit.*, in *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, accessible at <http://crm.revues.org/index11464.html>, p. 2.

de nouveau au récit »¹⁹. Yet, in fact, this enhancement of the narrative radically changes the final impression of the text that the audience takes away from it since, although the Burgundian version follows the original in recounting the fortuitous piece of trickery that brings about the happy ending for the lovers, it is not this that now lingers here in the reader's mind. Instead, rather than bringing the narrative to a close on the somewhat ambivalent note that the dilemma of how to reconcile adolescent rebellion with parental authority has been dealt with thanks to the lovers' duping of the dauphin, this version pays far greater attention to retrospectively validating Paris's worthiness as a marriage partner for Vienne. Indeed, given that the question of what was thought to constitute « vraie noblesse », namely birth or worth, was being actively discussed in various literary and moral works produced at the Burgundian court in this period²⁰, the ending of this version of *Paris et Vienne* makes its own important contribution to this debate whilst at the same time assuaging any lingering anxieties in the reader's mind about how the conflict between the generations has been resolved.

Practically every detail in this interpolated episode serves to reaffirm the social hierarchy and to reintegrate Paris within it by means of an elaborate display of family and class solidarity²¹, particularly between Vienne's father and his new son-in-law. Thus, the dauphin publicly explains to the king and all the other nobles why he has come to accept Paris as Vienne's suitor, declaring that the hero was not only his liberator from the hands of his Saracen captors, but that he was also the knight who distinguished himself in his incognito of plain white arms at the two great tournaments: « Sire, vey le chevalier par qui je suis sauvé et mis hors des mains des ennemis de la foy. C'est cellui qui vainqui le tournoy a Vienne et gaigna l'escu de cristal, c'est cellui qui vainqui le tournoy a Paris et gaigna les trois bannieres et c'est cellui a qui j'ay donné ma fille » (K, p. 634).

As if to reinforce a point that Vienne herself had originally made about Paris's having proved himself as being as worthy of marrying her as the son of the king of France, since his prowess compensated for his lesser birth, this interpolated episode consistently positions Paris in close proximity to the king and others of the same rank. Thus, in the king's *entrée* into the town prior to the wedding, it is noted that « Apres a l'autre costé dextre du roy chevauchoit le roy d'Angleterre et le roy de Sezille. Et en la moyenne d'eulx deux chevauchoit Paris » (K, p. 635). Similarly, at the feast after the wedding jousts Paris is shown being seated between two kings: « Le roy fist cest honneur a Paris que a ce soupper il le fist seoir entre lui et le roy d'Angleterre » (K, p. 645).

Furthermore, it is not just Paris whose merit is retrospectively validated but also that of his father who had been so viciously rebuffed by his lord, the dauphin,

¹⁹ Naber, « B. R. 9632/3 – Une version bourguignonne du roman de *Paris et Vienne* », art. cit., p. 22 (see note 4).

²⁰ A. J. Vanderjagt, *Qui sa vertu anoblist: The Concepts of noblesse and chose publique in Burgundian Political Thought (Including Fifteenth Century French Translations of Giovanni Aurispa, Buonaccorso da Montemagno, and Diego de Valera)*, Groningen, Jean Miélot & Co., 1981.

²¹ For a similar view of aristocratic literature as a utopian imagining of upper-class solidarity, see S. H. Rigby, *Wisdom and Chivalry: Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Medieval Political Theory*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2009, p. 288.

when he tried to request Vienne's hand in marriage for his son. Messire Jacques is now treated as being as meritorious as his son and is described in similar terms to those used for Paris himself, being « de hault affaire, [...] hault homme et de belle estature de son aage et de moult beau contenance » (K, p. 635). Once again, it is the king himself who puts the seal of approval on both the worthiness of Paris's biological family and the rightfulness of his being accepted into his adopted family through marriage when he reveals that Paris is the winner of the two wedding jousts and announces: « Fleur de chevalerie, bien est tenu a Dieu le pere et la mere qui vous engendra, car a vaillance n'avez pas failly. Et bien est heureux nostre beau cousin le daulphin d'avoir ung tel beau filz preux et hardy » (K, p. 645). Effectively acting, in Kelly's words, as the « instance supérieure » who brings about the resolution to inter-generational conflict²², the king is thus depicted in the narrative as the irrefutable guarantor of Paris's worth.

By ending with this lengthy description of the wedding jousts, the Burgundian manuscript thereby shifts the reader's attention away from the rather unchivalric trickery that had brought Paris's quest to a satisfactory conclusion in favour of reminding the reader of the deeds of prowess that caused Vienne to fall in love with him in the first place. The way in which the theme of chivalric incognito is recast here underlines this point as it shows that, no matter how well the hero might seek to hide his identity, his reputation now speaks for itself since his valorous feats cannot be mistaken for those of any other knight. Thus, despite his and Odoardo's best efforts on the first day of the wedding tournament to disguise themselves in green armour, Paris's brilliance on the field of battle soon arouses the suspicions of both the king and the dauphin that it is indeed he who has won the day. For this reason, at the end of an equally distinguished second day of combat on the hero's part, a rather comical « ambush » of the two knights is arranged by the king and the dauphin at which Paris and Odoardo are unmasked and their deeds openly acknowledged and praised.

Yet this emphasis on the public nature of the display of Paris's prowess also introduces a new element into the narrative: the need for him no longer to fight solely in order to prove himself in Vienne's eyes but to do so as part of his taking on a more socially useful role, one involving something more than simply his own personal satisfaction. This theme of serving the « chose publique » was a staple of late medieval political thought and, as I have argued elsewhere²³, was a key influence on other pre-marital romances of the period such as *Ponthus et Sidoine* and *Cleriadus et Meliadice*, which were very popular at the Burgundian court. Unlike the other manuscripts of the longer version of *Paris et Vienne* which never broaden out their exclusive focus on the young lovers' private pursuit of love, the Burgundian redaction stresses how Paris is rewarded for his prowess with the very highest of military offices, that of constable of France. As a mark of the extraordinary honour that this represents, Paris receives this office from the king at the behest of the previous incumbent of the post, whom he had beaten in the joust the day before and who exclaims that « je ne say au jour duy homme ou monde a qui se elle estoit a moy a donner que je la baillasse devant que je en eusse fait le present

²² Kelly, art. cit., p. 361.

²³ Brown-Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 15-78.

au bon chevalier Paris » (*K*, p. 646). The hero's exemplary conduct in this public role is underscored by the fact that he holds this office for fifty years and proves himself to be the most distinguished constable of France up to the time of the famous Bertrand du Guesclin (*ibid.*), all such references to his military apotheosis being exclusive to this particular version of the text.

If the extended dénouement of the Burgundian redaction of *Paris et Vienne* encourages the reader to draw from this romance a moral lesson about true nobility proving itself through chivalric prowess, rather than finishing on the less edifying notion of trickery being its own reward, the shorter version goes even further in presenting this tale as a moral exemplum on the perils of adolescent deviation from the social norm. Omitting the original's playful and ambiguous authorial prologue in favour of proceeding directly to present the tale as if it had a factual, historical origin, the shorter redaction creates a very different relationship for itself with the reader, thus stressing the far greater seriousness of its account of a young couple's thwarted desires.

Significantly, the hero and heroine in the shorter version are not portrayed as being quite so young as they are in the longer redaction where Vienne is said to be only eleven years old and Paris sixteen. Here she is described as being aged only twelve and Paris fifteen when they first meet and, when the possibility of her being married to another suitor is first mooted, she is fifteen years old and he eighteen. This shift of emphasis away from the couple's extreme youth is important as it is matched by a difference of tone in their own attitude towards love. Unlike the longer version which presents their youthful passion as an immoderate burning desire, their love for each other is portrayed here in less excessive terms as being more like that of classic courtly lovers who are separated by circumstance, such as those in the works of a Chrétien de Troyes. The amorous vocabulary employed in the shorter version thus tells of their being constrained to love as, for example, when Paris is described as finding his undeclared passion deepen with every passing day: « mais tant plus aloit et plus luy croissoit l'amour en son cuer » (*B*, p. 59). In similarly courtly style, much is made of their suffering in parallel, unbeknownst to each other, until they can eventually reveal their mutual feelings: whilst Paris is said to be « moult desireulx de veoir Vienne, car moult amours le destraignent » (*B*, p. 82), Vienne is portrayed as languishing « comme celle que amours destraignent » (*B*, p. 84).

Compared to the longer version, in which the heroine is largely presented as a tempestuous child, Vienne is here shown to be far more of a resolute *domna* figure exerting her will over her loving servant Paris, as can be seen in the rubric of chapter XVI which baldly states « Coment Vienne disoit a Paris qu'il seroit son mari » (*B*, p. 88). Likewise, there is far less prevarication on her part when she insists that the hero should arrange for his father to ask the dauphin for her hand: « Je vueil que incontinent vous deissiez a vostre pere qu'il parle a mon pere et luy diré qu'il me donne a vous pour fame » (*B*, p. 89). Once their separation has been enforced, the representation of their love for each other takes on a more Tristanian colouring: avoiding the parodic excesses of Paris's prostration found in the longer version, the lovers here are simply shown to be evenly matched in the miserable existence that each is forced to lead when deprived of the other's company: for Paris, life is « triste et douloureuse » (*B*, p. 98) whilst Vienne « passoit son temps a grant douleur » (*B*,

p. 102). By focussing primarily on the couple's constancy in love instead of their youthful, idolatrous fervour for each other, the shorter version thus unequivocally presents Paris and Vienne as the heroes of the tale, ones who are fully deserving of the reader's sympathy.

An additional consequence of presenting the couple's love in this more sober, unhappy fashion, rather than in terms of adolescent excess, is that it accentuates the seriousness of the lovers' having come into conflict with parental authority. Indeed, the shorter version is altogether much more explicit than the longer about the problematic nature of this dispute and it is much more conscious of the transgression posed by the unequal status of the two prospective marriage partners. Paris in particular is shown to be highly aware of his presumptuousness in loving the heroine as he openly expresses his regret that «il n'estoit pas de si grant lignee comme Vienne» (*B*, p. 59). Moreover, the fact of his social inferiority is developed in this version into far more of a pragmatic justification of the hero's use of incognito which, in the longer redaction, appears at times to be gratuitous. Thus, here it is his confidant Odoardo who persuades Paris to disguise himself at the two tournaments where he fights in honour of Vienne on the grounds that his use of incognito will actually redound more greatly to his lady's glory than if he were to present himself openly as her champion, since he is of distinctly lesser birth than her: «Et, se vous y allez et feussés congneu, le Daulphin ne les aultres ne vous priseroient pas tant pour ce que vous n'estes pas de si grant lignee comme les aultres. Aussi, se vous y allez descouvert, et Vienne a l'onneur, pour vous peu luy sera prisé, et, se elle a l'onneur par ung chevalier qui ne soit congneu, tant plus luy croistra l'amour en son courage devers luy, qui tant d'onneur luy avra fait» (*B*, p. 70). Vienne's own confidant, Ysabeau, similarly reiterates the problem of Paris's lower social standing when, on discovering that he was the victor in the two tournaments, she reminds Vienne that «nonobstant que Paris ait tant de bien, toutesfoys devez considerer qu'il n'est pas egal en vous en lignaige ne en estat [...] et auxi car il est vostre vaissal et subgiet et ne fait mestier a vous» (*B*, p. 81). Even the smitten heroine herself is forced to acknowledge this inequality when she tries to put a positive gloss on Paris's inferior status by stressing how his valorous actions on the field of combat bring much honour to his lord, the dauphin: «est grant honneur a mon pere qu'il ayt pour vaissal le milleur chevalier du monde» (*B*, p. 82).

The reduced place given to dialogues and descriptions of tournaments in this shorter version also means that the key issues raised by the narrative are consistently foregrounded to the extent that the lovers' anxieties about the potential scandal which their actions will provoke are ever-present. Thus, whilst Vienne is adamant about refusing to give her consent to a marriage with her father's choice of suitor, the son of the duke of Burgundy, when she exclaims to Paris that «vous scavez bien que mariage n'est nul sans consentement de deulx parties», she also expresses her horror at the idea of a union between them that is not properly sanctioned by matrimony: «vueil qu'il se accomplisse par enurs et vollenté de Dieu honnestement et non en pechié ne en deshonneur de moy» (*B*, p. 88). Accordingly, at every stage of their attempt to be together, the lovers are shown to be thoroughly conscious of what is at stake in terms of the distress and dishonour that they are likely to cause their families. On asking his father to intercede on his behalf with the dauphin, Paris is only too aware that what he is requesting is «doubteuse» (*B*, p. 89), a view with

which Messire Jacques readily concurs, stating that his request is indeed a « folie » (*ibid.*). Likewise, on finding that his elopement with Vienne has been thwarted by an impassible river, Paris not only sincerely avows his fault but also bitterly regrets not having sought his confidant's advice before embarking on such a dishonourable venture, an emphasis which is notably lacking in the original : « Hee mon pere ! Hee ma mere ! comment sera de vous quant le Dauphin scaira que je luy ayré robé sa fille chere ? O mon doulz compaignon Odouart, et pourquoy ne me conseillé ge a vous avant que je feisse ceste follie ? » (*B*, p. 96). The hero's keen awareness of the transgressive nature of his behaviour, which he expresses in a letter to Odoardo sent from his exile in Genoa, even leads him to see his lack of success in his amorous endeavours as a sign that he and Vienne are being punished by God for their actions, « puisque a nostre Seigneur n'a pleu que ayons acompli nostre vollenté, porter le nous convient en pascience » (*B*, p. 105). Moreover, his separation from his beloved takes on a distinctly penitential tone, one that is much more developed in this version of the tale than in the longer version, as when he learns that Vienne has been imprisoned by her father for refusing to marry his choice of suitor and declares : « Ne fust pas mieulx raison et justice que je que ay fait le mal portasse la penitance ? » (*B*, p. 117).

The young couple's chief antagonist, Vienne's father, is depicted in just as negative a light in the shorter version as in the longer in terms of his brutal dismissal of messire Jacques, since the tale recounts how « meu de grant felonnie, ne luy laissa achever ses parolles, mais le print fort aprement » (*B*, p. 90). However, there is also greater acknowledgement here of the seriousness of this inter-generational conflict : not only is the dauphin presented in less exaggeratedly tyrannical fashion than in the original but far greater attention is paid to his suffering as an anguished parent. Sympathy is thus expressed on more than one occasion for the dauphin's distress on discovering that his daughter has attempted to elope, « il cuyda yssir hors du sens et toute sa court fust troublee *et n'estoit pas sans cause* » (*B*, p. 95, my emphasis), and for his continuing unhappiness at being unable to change Vienne's mind no matter how severely he punishes her : « tant plus faisoit de mal a Vienne et tant plus luy endurecissoit le cuer, de quoy le Dauphin avoit moult desplaisir, *et non pas sans cause* » (*B*, p. 111, my emphasis).

This more sympathetic treatment of the dauphin in the shorter version of *Paris et Vienne* is also matched by a difference between the two renderings of the tale in their representation of his unfortunate imprisonment. In the longer redaction, it is the dauphin himself who offers to act as a spy when the king of France and the pope first moot the idea of launching a crusade, the effect of this being, as Michelle Szkilnik suggests²⁴, that he comes across as a kind of « arroseur arrosé » whose duplicitous mission ends in ignominy when he is outsmarted by the suspicious Sultan (*K*, p. 568). In the shorter version, by contrast, it is the king and pope themselves who entrust this difficult mission to the dauphin whose plight also garners far more sympathy from the reader since his failure is attributed to his having been betrayed by fellow Christians rather than to his having come up against a cleverer opponent than himself : « a la fin, luy vausist petit son travail, car aucuns

²⁴ Szkilnik, art. cit., p. 2.

mauvaiz crestiens, pour argent qu'il prisrent, le dirent au soudain de Babiloyne » (*B*, p. 121).

However, perhaps the greatest difference between the two versions of the romance is the way in which Vienne's defiance of her father is treated. Far from adopting the original's parodic portrayal of the heroine as a trickster who denies to the dauphin's face that she had tried to elope with Paris and who attempts to present herself as a kind of virgin-martyr whose only reason for not wanting to get married is her wish to devote herself to God, the shorter version omits much of Vienne's duplicitousness in her dealings with her irate parent. Instead, she not only stresses her desire for reconciliation with him by begging for his forgiveness on the grounds that her love for Paris is too strong to resist, « amours folles m'esforcent de aymer celluy » (*B*, p. 99), but she openly defends her refusal to marry given that her one and only love is Paris himself: « au monde n'a personne que j'ayme tant comme celuy que vous menassés tant » (*B*, p. 100). Although Vienne does here resort to the same stratagem as in the longer version of using the rotten chicken meat to repel her would-be suitor, she nonetheless reiterates her fidelity to Paris rather than passing herself off as an aspirant bride of Christ and thoroughly duping her suitor into thinking her some kind of saint, as she does in the original: « je suis mariee, mais vous n'estes pas celuy a qui mon cuer est octroyé [...] et vous dy que vrayement, pour celluy que je desire, je seuffreray plus grans painez que ne sont cestes » (*B*, p. 115).

Even Paris's attitude towards Vienne's father is handled slightly differently in the two versions as there is far less evidence in the shorter redaction of the multiple ironies involved in the disguised hero's rescue of the dauphin, his mortal enemy. Only once does the text refer here to the hero's intention to make personal capital out of the dauphin's unfortunate situation when he learns what has happened to him: « quant Paris eust ouy cecy, fust moult esbahy et n'en fist nul semblant, mais dist en son couraige que son adventure pourroit encore venir a perfection » (*B*, p. 122). The important final reconciliation scene is also different in the two versions in that both hero and heroine in the shorter redaction beg immediately for the dauphin's forgiveness, with Paris abandoning his Saracen disguise at the earliest possible opportunity: « veez cy Paris vostre indigne vaisal et subgetz, filz a missere Jacques et, puis qu'il a pleu a monseigneur que je soye venu en ceste adventure, je demande vostre misericorde » (*B*, p. 137). The completeness with which paternal authority is restored at the end of this version is made clear in the fact that, following the briefly recounted marriage ceremony, Paris does not replace the dauphin as ruler with anything like the same rapidity as he does in the longer version: « Et vesquirent ung grant temps en grant amour et après le Dauphin mourust et resta Paris Dauphin » (*B*, p. 139). Indeed, it is a sign of the power that Vienne's father continues to wield long after the couple's wedding that it is he who decides to whom their daughter should be married, thus providing a somewhat ironic but salient reminder of the fact that he could not do this with his own daughter: « Et Paris eust de Vienne troys enfans, c'est assavoir deulx filz et une fille, laquelle fille le Dauphin colloca moult noblement a mariage » (*ibid.*).

The important part played by late medieval idyllic romances such as *Paris et Vienne* in exploring the tensions created by depicting young lovers in conflict with their parents on the issue of their free choice of marriage partner cannot be

overstated. Even within the single example of this work, the three different redactions that exist of *Paris et Vienne* demonstrate the variety of approaches that the writers of such romances could take when dealing with such anxiety-inducing matters. Whilst the longer version of this tale exploits many of the resources of comedy in order to present the hero and heroine as tricksters whose flouting of parental authority may or may not evoke the reader's sympathy, the Burgundian version attempts to reduce this emphasis on the couple's duplicitousness by introducing a lengthy and retrospective validation of Paris as chivalric hero and true aristocrat. This type of validation celebrating both the worth of an individual and the restoration of social harmony at court, which is also present in other contemporary romances dealing with pre-marital love between couples of unequal birth, such as *Cleriadus et Meliadice*, may add little to the development of the narrative but it performs a vital ideological role within the text²⁵. The shorter version of *Paris et Vienne* differentiates itself even more markedly from the potentially subversive message of the original, which may also be the reason why, in addition to its relative brevity, it was preferred by the translators and printers who ensured its popularity among its late medieval and early modern audience. Largely stripping the narrative of its capacity to amuse, this version turns the tale of Paris and Vienne into a means of conveying an uncompromisingly serious message about the moral dilemmas and emotional anguish undergone by young lovers intent on pursuing their personal desires. Whilst the longer version is perhaps the one that affords the modern reader the most enjoyable retelling of the story, the fact that it underwent two considerable revisions shortly after it first appeared suggests that this amusement was not felt by its late medieval readers to come without a troubling price.

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²⁵ I am indebted to Michelle Szkilnik for pointing out this important parallel between these romances and I would also like to thank S. H. Rigby for his comments on successive drafts of this article.