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Facing the Other

Medieval Challenges in Retelling the Trojan Tale

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One of the hidden pearls of Middle English literature is the *Seege or Batayle of Troye*, dated to the fourteenth century. Originally a (songbook?) romance, it was later copied as the introduction to a historiographical treatise and, elsewhere, into a broader collection of folktales. It is now extant in a total of four manuscripts.[1] Three versions of that poem[2] depict Achilles as a black warrior strongly associated with 'Otherly' creatures, including a witch mother, and who swears by "Mahoun" (Mohammed):[3]

> Achilles answered the king: "All that I can, I will do. I swear, Sire, by god Mohammed [...]." Achilles' mother was a witch. She taught her son a fair trick: how he should keep himself whole and sound and come back from battle

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[1] For a complete edition of all manuscripts, with extensive introduction, see Barnicle 1927. Selected studies on literary context, sources and narrative structure are provided by Hofstrand 1936, Atwood & Whitaker 1944 and McDonald 2000. On Achilles in the *Seege*, see also Atwood 1942.

[2] Besides L, also the E and A manuscripts. Scholars generally assume the L redaction to be the closest representative of the original. This still bears the characteristics of a composition for an oral context: Barnicle 1927, xxxiii– lvi. On interventions regarding Achilles, see also Scheijnen 2023.

[3] The text passage is discussed at more length in chapter 1.2. It also quoted and discussed by Schoess in this volume (chapter 2.4).

> without a wound. Achilles secretly did then as his mother had taught him. With witchcraft and necromancy, his mother bathed him in the water of hell. Suspended by the feet, she thrice dipped him down, body and blood, head and crown. But the soles of his feet were where his mother held her hands. And his head was black as Mohammed, from feet to crown, and his entire body was as hard as flint.[4]

In more than one sense, this peculiar characterisation draws the reader's attention – especially given that, as a Greek warrior, Achilles is an enemy of the Trojans with which English medieval readership would have associated itself. Why is Achilles so clearly Othered? Does this imply a tone of intended racism – and can we use such a modern concept at all in the analysis of medieval texts? What does this case tell us about the religious ideologies at play, both in the originally 'pagan' storyworld and in the cultural-historical context in which this poem was composed, copied and received? And does such rewriting occur more widely in medieval Troy narratives? Are there differences across genres, language traditions or, more broadly, between the (Latin-oriented) vernacular west and the Byzantine east? Such questions lie at the core of this Enchanted Reception volume.

1.1 "MEDIEVAL TROY IS NOT A CLASSICAL CITY"[5]

Tales of Troy form a major narrative cluster in world literature. Since Homer (eighth century BCE), the story has survived thanks to its adaptability to new socio-cultural contexts.[6] Its rich and multiform path through hexameter poetry, tragedy, imperial prose and so many other genres across both

[4] *Seege* 1332–1352: "Achilles onswerde þe king þer-to, / 'Al þat y may, y wol do. / Y swere, sire, by god Mahoun, / [...]' / Achilles modir was a wiche, y-wis; / Heo tauȝte hire sone a fair coyntise / How he scholde him kepe hol and sounde / And come fro bataile wiþ-oute wounde. / Achilles dude þo pryvely / As his modir him tauȝte witerly. / Wiþ wiche-craft and nygremancy þer-til / His modir him baþede in þe water of helle, / And was honged by þe feet / & þries deopped adoun / Body and blod, hed and croun, / Bote þeo soles of his feet / þer his modir hondes seet. / And his hed was blak as Mahoun / ffro þeo feet to þe croun / And al his body was hard as flynt". I quote from the L manuscript as edited by Barnicle 1927. The translation is my own.

[5] Benson 1980, 3.

[6] Goldwyn 2015; Sweeney 2018.

the Greek and Latin literary histories hardly needs to be pointed out here; neither does the richness of visual artistry that accompanied it. This volume is concerned with the particular changes that this colourful tradition underwent when entering the high Middle Ages between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. In both the more Latin-inspired west and the Byzantine Greek east,[7] this was a period of renewed literary interest and creativity during which Troy received important attention. Without over-generalizing, it is safe to say that this happened in a decisively new and different socio-cultural world than that in which classical and late antique Troy literature had developed.

Of particular interest are considerable changes to the story, inspired by its renewed and increased political importance for the historical 'transmission of power' or *translatio imperii*:[8] a notion that had gradually developed since the earlier Middle Ages. Virgil had already established Aeneas and the legendary Trojans as the historical ancestors of the Romans. Medieval powers (including the Byzantines, who considered themselves *Romanoi*),[9] sought political legitimation by further exploiting this concept and developed elaborate Trojan genealogies (e.g. Brutus was invented as the forefather of the British).[10] Troy became the first chapter of history. This notion changed the medieval understanding of historiography[11] and was crystalised in the influential work of writers such as Geoffrey of Monmouth (*De gestis Britonum*: "On the deeds of the Britons", twelfth century)[12] and Wace (*Roman de Brut*,

[7] Clear distinctions between 'east' and 'west' (or 'Europe') are in themselves ideologically charged and are refuted by, for example, recent global approaches to the Middle Ages (Heng 2018, 5; Heng 2013). Meanwhile, the mutual interactions and potential influence between both 'traditions' (as they have traditionally been perceived) have firmly been established and offer potential for further investigation (see below). As Nilsson points out, however, the scholarly traditions pertaining to these respective literary systems have developed in different directions and at different paces (2004, 10).

[8] Witalisz 2011, 28, 41.

[9] Jeffreys 1980, 470–472; Nilsson 2004, 14.

[10] Witalisz 2011, 28, 41; Sweeney 2018, 114–116.

[11] "While [his predecessors] chose to start from the creation of the world, Geoffrey's work opens with the pagan heroes of Troy" (Lewis 2020, 398). See also Ingledew 1994; Simpson 1998; Keller 2008; Goldwyn 2018.

[12] Smith 2020.

twelfth century)[13], as well as in a Byzantine chronicle tradition that had bloomed starting with Malalas in the sixth century; this latter also formed the basis for the Slavonic Troy tradition.[14] All of these developments incited renewed interest in the Troy story and led to a rich output of literature commissioned by royal courts.[15]

Indeed, political appropriation increased the need to customise the ancient mythological story to medieval standards. This literary challenge lent itself particularly well to the romance genre, resulting in several influential Troy reworkings. In the medieval Greek as in the (mostly) vernacular western tradition, the story of Troy was transformed into a romance. For the medieval Greek tradition, Manasses' chronicle treatment of the Trojan war (twelfth century) already interacted in important ways with the contemporary novelistic tradition.[16] Later centuries yielded several full-blown Greek Troy romances, including the *Byzantine Achilleid* or *Tale of Achilles* (fourteenth century), and the *Byzantine Iliad* or *Tale of Troy* (fourteenth to fifteenth century). These texts, too, developed under the direct influence of (or in interaction with) local non-Troy romances;[17] some even open a dialogue with specific literary works such as *Digenis Akritas* and the Palaiologan romances.[18]

These medieval Greek Troy romances display dynamics of reworking similar to those that can be identified in the vernacular west: the stories were Christianised (e.g. Paris is hosted by monks in *Tale of Troy*) and romanticised (e.g. Achilles takes part in tournaments, dressed as a Byzantine nobleman and very much in love in *Tale of Achilles*). These developments seem "highly influenced by a western kind of romance tradition".[19]

[13] Le Saux 2020.

[14] Nilsson 2004, 13–18. On Malalas, see also chapter 6.1 (Goldwyn) in this volume.

[15] The court of Eleonor of Aquitaine took a central position in this (Jeffreys 1980; see also chapter 3 of this volume: Hölzlhammer). More generally, also Ingledew 1994, 695–696; Sweeney 2018, 116–120.

[16] Nilsson 2004, 18–22.

[17] Nilsson 2004, 26–28; Constantinou 2019. Nilsson points out that the transmission network of the *Byzantine Iliad* is also much richer than this (2004, 31–33).

[18] Lavagnini 2016; Goldwyn & Nilsson 2019.

[19] Goldwyn & Nilsson 2019, 199.

A pioneer in this western tradition was Benoît de Sainte-Maure (twelfth century), who medievalised the story in vernacular French.[20] He presented his *Roman de Troie* as "true",[21] explicitly abandoning Homer in favour of the chronicle-like accounts allegedly authored by the alleged eye-witnesses Dictys and Dares, much as Malalas had done in the sixth century.[22] Dictys and Dares' alternative prose accounts of the Trojan War (probably dated to the first centuries CE) had created fertile ground for such a new romance approach. Besides their increased attention to the political and chronological developments of the war, the Olympian gods in their versions no longer took active roles in the narrative. Thus, they already tackled what would become an important point of criticism against Homer's more mythological approach. In their footsteps, Benoît further shaped his own poem according to the standards of medieval popular romance: he zoomed in on important love plots, generally updated armour and war techniques and integrated Christian chivalric values into the behaviour of the heroes, who became 'knights':[23]

> [Benoît] set the tone for the next three centuries, transforming the epic heroes into knights of Christendom and presenting the defeated Trojans rather than the victorious Greeks as heroes of war.[24]

In the thirteenth century, Guido delle Colonne translated Benoît into Latin using a more historiographical and ideologically charged tone;[25] this endeavour was so successful that it overshadowed Benoît's work in certain

[20] Witalisz 2011; Green 2002. Jeffreys (1980, 275, 278, 281–82) wonders if Eleonor of Aquitaine's commission of the *Roman de Troie* may have been inspired by (among other elements) her witnessing of this renewed popularity of the (Comnenian) novel in the east.

[21] Burgess & Kelly 2017, 6–7.

[22] Griffin 1908; Levenson 1979. For the Byzantine reception of Dictys and Dares, see also chapter 6.1 (Goldwyn) in this volume.

[23] Yiavis 2016.

[24] Wilflingseder 2007, 1 (referring to Scherer 1963, xiii).

[25] This change in tone is addressed in chapters 2.3 (Schoess), 6.3 (Goldwyn) and 7 (Hoogenboom) of this volume.

contexts.[26] Together, these two authors formed the start of a rich transnational romance reception of Troy. It came to include countless versions in other western vernacular languages (e.g. German,[27] English,[28] Dutch, Russian, Spanish). In medieval Greek, the Franco-Greek society and crusader community of Morea produced a Byzantine translation of Benoît (*War of Troy*, thirteenth century),[29] which bridges the Byzantine and western Troy literary traditions.[30]

All of the developments described above fall under the umbrella of 'the Matter of Troy', defined by Ingela Nilsson as "the legendary subject matter and not the textual-literary references (...) to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*". Essentially, then, these Troy romances are based on "non-Homeric" story material, often explicitly drawn from Dictys and Dares.[31] Homer remained an influential name in medieval literature ranging across both the geographical east and to the west, though his legacy was frequently problematised: vernacular romances tend to mention Homer's name as a source *not* to be trusted.[32] Alleged eye-witnesses such as Dictys and Dares are explicitly favoured in his stead, as early as in Benoît's prologue to *Roman de Troie*. This becomes a popular trend in romance literature.[33] The Byzantine relationship with Homer can, in certain instances, be deemed similarly problematic.[34] However, his importance in this latter tradition remained more complex, as Homer maintained a significant role in the educational system.[35] As Adam Goldwyn points out in this volume:

[26] Griffin 1908 ; Benson 1980, 9–31; Keller 2008, 133–136.

[27] Also chapter 3.4 (Hölzlhammer) of this volume.

[28] Also chapter 2 (Schoess) of this volume.

[29] Nilsson 2004, 29; Jeffreys 2019. Also chapter 3.3 (Hölzlhammer) of this volume.

[30] Papathomopoulos & Jeffreys 1996, li.

[31] Nilsson 2004, 11, 16–17.

[32] See Griffin (1908, 40–41), whose goal it is to trace "Un-Homeric elements in the Story of Troy". Medieval Homer reception is also discussed by e.g. Wells 1916, 106; Simpson 1998, 411; Witalisz 2011, 68–70. For Homer's Latin reception in the Middle Ages, see Ferrari 2021, 329.

[33] E.g. Benson 1980, 15–19; Burgess & Kelly 2017, 6–7.

[34] Nilsson 2004, 12.

[35] Demoen & Verhelst 2019, 177.

> Homer was at once among the central texts of the Byzantine education system and of Byzantine identity, yet was also culturally distant in ways that made it difficult for Byzantines to understand both linguistically and ideologically.[36]

Besides chronicles and romances, Nilsson therefore defines a third type of medieval Troy literature, that of the commentaries and paraphrases: textually oriented genres that build upon the Homeric epics in order to explain and contextualise them for the new medieval socio-literary era.[37] Allegorical interpretations of the ancient epics offered one avenue into this, as discussed by Baukje van den Berg in this volume.[38] By means of their critical yet exegetical approach, Eustathios and Tzetzes importantly injected Homer with new philosophical and pedagogical meaning in the Greek Middle Ages.[39]

Their literary production may start from a different background than the 'matter of Troy' literature, but it was not isolated from it. What binds the reworkings in all of these genres and transnational traditions together is a strong need to integrate the Troy story from the original, mythological sources into a new socio-cultural system with a new set of ideological values. Given the renewed historical-political importance of Troy in that context, this reintegration is both a necessary and a particularly challenging and delicate endeavour that requires significant literary creativity and, in some instances, substantial rewriting.

1.2 BETWEEN SELF AND OTHER

When reading through the rest of the *Seege* text mentioned in the first paragraph of this chapter, it becomes clear that the black Achilles certainly is one of the most prominent instances of cultural rewriting in this brief poem. This recasting of Achilles entails a few adaptations of the original mythological character that were likely inspired by more familiar elements from medieval folktale and religion (e.g. his mother as a witch instead of a pagan

[36] Chapter 6, page 140.
[37] Nilsson 2004, 12.
[38] Chapter 5.
[39] Cardin 2018. On Eustathios, see chapter 5 (Van den Berg) of this volume; on Tzetzes: chapter 6 (Goldwyn).

goddess, hell instead of Styx as a source of supernatural power).[40] Although clearly controversial even within the medieval reception of the *Seege*,[41] these interventions may have helped the medieval audience to understand and immerse themselves in the text.

Of particular interest is this text's tendency to 'Other' the enemy. This is a widespread practice within the romance tradition, and examples abound within the Middle English literary tradition from which the *Seege* text stems. Guy of Warwick slays eastern giants to protect his native land and Christian religion.[42] In *King of Tars*, a child is born a formless lump and can only change to have human features after his Muslim father converts to Christianity, which causes his skin (literally!) to turn from black to white.[43] Richard *Cœur de Lion* consumes Turkish flesh as an ideological statement during his military campaign in the east ('crusader cannibalism').[44] In all of these cases, an underlying plot of rivalry between the western and undeniably Christian 'Self' and the eastern, or Muslim, 'Other' inspires characterisation elements or plot events that seem aimed at consolidating an ideological, geographical and cultural identity at the expense of groups who do not fit into that image. Today, we would not hesitate to call such mechanisms racism. Indeed, several recent studies have argued for the usefulness of that concept in the literary interpretation of pre-modern texts, despite the risks of anachronism. In 2015, Cord Whitaker concluded that:

> The question of race's relevance is solved: yes, the Middle Ages have been thoroughly raced. The question at hand is, exactly how are they raced? Not whether, but how is medieval race-thinking different from modern racism?[45]

In several pioneering studies, Geraldine Heng has gone on to answer that latter question. The mechanism of denigrating Others with the result of estab-

[40] Scheijnen 2023.
[41] See Barnicle (1927, xxxvii–lvi) for a detailed comparative analysis of the existing manuscripts.
[42] Wilcox 2004, 232; Lumbley 2020, 391.
[43] Gilbert 2004; Miyashiro 2019, 3.
[44] McDonald 2004b; Heng 2018, 120.
[45] Whitaker 2015, 7.

lishing a hierarchy between identities is clearly present in medieval writing. However, where the term 'racism' can help modern readers to grasp some of the unease possibly evoked by such practices, it is crucial to map out and understand precisely *which* ideological parameters define these medieval 'Self' vs. 'Others'.[46] For example, we might investigate which specific connotations Achilles' black skin evoked in medieval times, as compared (and opposed) to today. For although vehicles and effects of discrimination can be similar, each era and cultural system has its own underlying mechanisms and motivators for Othering practices. For the Middle Ages, Heng points out that *religion* was a crucial driving force underlying racism. She underlines the Church's "Universalist ambitions (...) to become a 'State without Borders'".[47] The establishment of Christianity as the one and true religion resulted in a discourse against several different religious groups, such as Jews (within the European west) and Muslims (presented as an antagonistic force situated in the east). The above-mentioned Middle English romances, as part of the contemporary cultural system, were influenced by such surrounding socio-political ideologies. They contribute to this discourse by, for example, reshaping certain characters as Others. They may emphasize alien features (e.g. underlining specific traits of Jewish physiognomy or associating certain religions or geographical locations with monstrous appearances or practices) or argue their enmity towards the dominant ideological system: "For medieval English writers, an imaginary enemy who was 'wholly Other (dark skin, incomprehensible language, pagan culture)' was necessary as an 'unproblematic body to define oneself against'".[48] Skin colour, in this context, was not so much an indicator of ethnicity (as it is today) as it was of (im)pure religion: blackness stood for sin.[49] This helps us to understand the associations that the peculiar characterisation of a black Achilles may have evoked for its audience.

The case of the *Seege* is only one small example of the complex and multiform reworkings of the matter of Troy in the Middle Ages. It helps to illustrate the many ways in which Troy's new socio-cultural role influenced the

[46] Heng 2018, 3, 27. See also Heng 2003.
[47] Heng 2018, 3.
[48] Salih (2019, 15) refers to Cohen (1999, 84).
[49] Whitaker 2015; Heng 2018, 181–91; Lumbley 2020, 372.

understanding of Other and Self, and by extension of ideological value and identity itself, in the storylines that were transmitted from antiquity.

In the case of Troy literature, moreover, the challenge was particularly complex. The ancient Trojans are in fact *distant* from the medieval setting in ideological mind-set and time (and, particularly for the west, also in space), but their new function as ancestors also requires them to be somehow 'familiar'.[50] In this light, a story set in the pagan east of the Trojan shores finds itself "dangerously close to the Other",[51] located on a "disjunction of the pagan heroic past into a Christian chivalric present".[52] The story needs to be conceptually transformed politically, from the Trojan 'abroad' to the European 'home', and religiously, from the pagan past to the Christian present.[53]

As the *Seege* case has illustrated, medieval Troy romances attempt to domesticate the characters and their political and cultural environment by concrete literary interventions in the texts, in order to underline the 'sameness' of the Trojans to the contemporary context: enemies are characterised in discriminating ways,[54] the ancient gods are called 'false', heroes operating or living in or around Troy are dressed and behave as medieval knights,[55] the Trojan Hector becomes the mirror of an ideal contemporary prince.[56] Important 'updates' are also carried out with regard to gender, so multiple strong, independent or powerful female mythological characters are rewritten to fit the current medieval *mores*.

Just like non-Troy romances, then, and perhaps in a way more ideologically charged, Troy romances reflect on medieval political and religious identity. Also the other contributions in this volume offer ample illustra-

[50] Harper 2010, 154.

[51] Salih 2019, 5, 34–35. See also Federico 2003, 2.

[52] Witalisz 2011, 72.

[53] This contemporary religious antagonism is also tackled at length in chapter 2 of this volume, where Schoess argues that the representation of idolatry in Troy literature can be interpreted as a vehicle to criticise other contemporary religions, including Islam. Schoess proposes to also read the *Seege* fragment quoted above in this light (chapter 2.4).

[54] "Trojans found and represent order and hierarchy: noble male warriors overthrow monsters" (Salih 2019, 33).

[55] McDonald 2004a; Harper 2010.

[56] Witalisz 2011.

tions of such practices, in which ancient characters receive new meaning to underline contemporary values, for example regarding good male or female behaviour (Van den Berg and Goldwyn),[57] love (Hölzlhammer and Söderblom Saarela),[58] chivalry (Hoogenboom),[59] and appropriate religious practice (Schoess and Wright).[60] It is this volume's aim to scrutinise the ideological implications underlying such reception and rewritings more broadly.

1.3 Enchanted Troy Reception: Goals and Scope of this Volume

This volume offers a series of cross-cultural, in-depth studies of twelfth- to fifteenth-century medieval Troy narratives, mainly romances, that are situated across a wide range of language traditions. The main goal is to highlight how the classical reception of religious and supernatural elements, events and characters took form in the Middle Ages and how such developments were embedded in the contemporary socio-cultural (and notably Christian-political) ideological context. While many commendable studies in the blooming field of post-classical Troy reception take a broadly diachronical approach,[61] our **synchronical focus** allows us to dig deep into medieval socio-cultural specificities *and* the local differences among contexts. Besides the famous literary highlights of the period (e.g. Benoît, Guido, Tzetzes and Eustathios), lesser-known texts and authors are included (e.g. the Irish tradition),[62] as well as comparative analyses of texts within the same language tradition (e.g. Middle English[63] and German[64]). The volume subscribes to the **transnational perspective** that has long since proven its relevance for medi-

[57] Chapters 5 and 6.
[58] Chapters 3 and 8
[59] Chapter 7.
[60] Chapters 2 and 4.
[61] E.g. Thompson 2004; Ford 2007 (on the reception of Homer during the Renaissance). See also collections of studies on Homeric pre- and sequels by Simms 2018 (including studies on Tzetzes, Henryson and medieval genealogies) and by Goldwyn (ed.) 2015 (discussing a.o. Chaucer). Sweeney (2018) discusses the origins of the Troy story, its reception across the ancient world and how it became an icon afterwards.
[62] Chapter 4 (Wright).
[63] Chapter 2 (Schoess).
[64] Chapter 3 (Hölzlhammer).

eval studies.[65] By offering chapters on 'western' (Scheijnen, Schoess, Wright and Hoogenboom)[66] as well as on 'eastern' (Van den Berg)[67] text material, and by including three contributions that discuss both together (Hölzlhammer, Goldwyn and Söderblom Saarela),[68] we also contribute to the endeavour of building bridges between the 'eastern' Byzantine and 'western' vernacular traditions, which on a scholarly level are often still segregated. The focus on **specifically Troy literature** within this scope is uniquely our own. Existing in-depth studies on medieval Troy tend to concentrate on only one literary tradition and its sources, favouring a clearly coherent corpus of texts.[69] The strength of this volume lies in the opposite approach: it tackles one central theme, cross-culturally analysing sample texts and case studies from the different traditions, and without aiming to be exhaustive; thus, the transnational relevance of our research question is highlighted while the results point at a wide range of potential answers in the various literary traditions under scrutiny. Our choice to focus on Troy's medieval **dealings with the ancient supernatural**, mythological and polytheistic traditions brings up the impact of Christianisation as a major ideological theme for this volume.[70] Susannah Wright points out that medieval knowledge about the Trojan tradition would have been most readily available in monastic settings,[71] and Baukje van den Berg illustrates how such contexts stimulated active reflection on the ancient texts at hand.[72] All chapters in one way or

[65] E.g. Agapitos & Mortensen 2012 (investigating the rise of medieval fiction in a wide scope of Greek, Latin, Old Norse and Serbian texts); Moore 2014 (Old French romance analysed through comparison with Byzantine literature); Cupane & Krönung 2016 (on the eastern Mediterranean as a multilingual and multicultural zone); Lodén 2021 (the influence of Old French romance in medieval Sweden).

[66] Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 7 of this volume.

[67] Chapter 5 of this volume.

[68] Chapters 3, 6 and 8 of this volume.

[69] E.g. Benson 1980 (on the reception of Guido delle Colonne in Middle English); Smith & Henley 2020 (on Geoffrey of Monmouth); Wilfingseder 2007 and Witalisz 2011 (both on Middle English Troy narratives); Lavagnini 2016 (on medieval Greek literature).

[70] Other ideological perspectives are adopted by e.g. Federico 2003 on "Fantasies of Empire"; Keller 2008 on "Selves and Nations".

[71] Chapter 4.1 of this volume.

[72] Chapter 5.

another show how this Christianizing influence resonates with reworked Troy characters and plot lines.[73]

If the overall goal of this volume is then to examine 'enchanted Troy reception', each of these terms carry literary-historical background and imply scholarly challenges that need to addressed. With **'ENCHANTED'**, this volume refers to the wide array of supernatural elements present in the ancient source texts as well as in the medieval literary products. The ancient tradition is mythological and embedded in a polytheistic religious system. In the most influential literary Troy traditions, this situation is so self-evident that plot-lines are necessarily influenced and partially defined by the results of a rich amalgam of supernatural powers.[74] Certain ancient authors (such as historiographers) did not support this strongly mythological approach to the Trojan War[75] and medieval literature often favoured more rationalizing accounts like those of Dictys and Dares (mentioned above).[76] However, the challenge remained that many mythological names, creatures and concepts were part of the tradition, but had become plainly alien to this new medieval audience. One strategy to address this was to consider how elements from the ancient supernatural world related and could perhaps be translated to medieval folklore: so-called 'domestication' (see Wright).[77] On a more subliminal level, moreover, Christianity needed medieval authors, scribes and translators to reflect on the inevitable polytheistic 'paganism' in the Trojan story.[78] Questions about worship and religious practice needed to

[73] For other studies on religious appropriation, Christianisation and dealing with paganism in medieval literature, see e.g. Kirner-Ludwig 2015; Salih 2019. It also forms a central matter of interest for the ERC projects Novel Saints and Novel Echoes, hosted at Ghent University between 2014–2019 and between 2019–2024.

[74] Examples discussed in this volume include the supernatural nature of Achilles (chapter 1.2: Scheijnen), the Olympian divine apparatus (chapter 4.2: Wright), several powerful female characters from the *Odyssey* (chapter 6: Goldwyn) and Amazons (chapters 7: Hoogenboom and 8.1–8.2: Söderblom Saarela).

[75] Kim 2010, 22–46.

[76] For an extensive overview, see e.g. Merkle 1996.

[77] Chapter 4 in this volume.

[78] Such unease with the mythological tradition is tangible in, for example, chapters 1 (Scheijnen on Achilles' invulnerability), 2 (Schoess on idolatry), 3 (Hölzlhammer on the horrific ending of the Medea story), 4 (Wright of the Olympian gods and

be answered from a contemporary moral and cognitive perspective.[79] The new socio-political value system of chivalry and sovereignty formed an important framework of influence in this regard (see Hölzlhammer and Hoogenboom in this volume).[80] Gender roles and sexuality, in particular, were put under scrutiny.[81] The literary result could lie in (allegorical) exegesis, criticism, plain rewriting or even the omission of passages, characterisations, or even entire plot lines. Lilli Hölzlhammer shows how even translations within the same tradition can take different approaches, ranging from shortening problematic passages to justifying characters' behaviour by modifying their plot lines.[82] Goldwyn dedicates chapter 6 to the re-writing or un-writing of Odyssean characters. On the other hand, Eustathios also recommends actively continuing to learn from this rich inheritance (Van den Berg in this volume). On a deeper, more implicit level, this volume's 'enchanted' focus therefore extends to an investigation of the larger ideological reception of the ancient Troy story in a new socio-cultural environment, of which the ethics were crucially shaped by the religious factor of Christianisation. The answer as to how to deal with 'enchanted' reception therefore could also lie in rationalisation, de-mythologizing and disenchantment (e.g. Goldwyn and Söderblom Saarela in this volume).[83]

The second key word, **Troy**, is understood as a concept in this volume: an arsenal of interrelated myths that existed before and exists beyond any cultural production and came to comprise a scope of stories from generations *before* until decades *after* the legendary Horse. While not all equally well-known and certainly not always situated on Trojan soil in the strict

fantastical elements), 6 (Goldwyn on powerful women in the *Odyssey* story), 7 and 8 (Hoogenboom and Söderblom Saarela, both on the Amazons).

[79] E.g. idolatry (chapter 2 in this volume: Schoess) and worship more generally (chapter 4.3: Wright).

[80] Chapters 3 and 7.

[81] E.g. chapters 3 (Hölzlhammer on the emotional dynamic between Medea and Jason), 5 (Van den Berg on prudence, manhood and good monastic behaviour), 6 (Goldwyn on female agency), 7 (Hoogenboom on the Amazon Penthesilea's interaction with the knightly and courtly environment) and 8 (Söderblom Saarela on courtly love and medieval gender reflections).

[82] Chapter 3 of this volume.

[83] Chapters 6 and 8.

sense of the word, these stories as a collection form the subject of this volume. As we will see, some of the tales situated 'in the margins' of the tradition (e.g. the adventures of Jason and Medea, which are related to the first sack of Troy by the Argonauts)[84] may be more prevalent in certain medieval contexts than elements that took central stage in the ancient tradition. As the continued reception of Troy even until today shows, a crucial aspect of the story cycle's survival is that each generation selects the elements and characters most appealing for elaboration and reworking.[85] The Middle Ages, in addition to a political lens, crucially zoomed in on values such as chivalry and Christian decorum. One of the most recent waves of Troy literature in our own twenty-first century opts for a gendered focus on the often-neglected female gaze (e.g. Atwood's *Penelopiad*, Miller's *Circe*, Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* and many others).[86] As such, Troy is and remains universal intellectual property.

A related question is our understanding of the literary transmission and the exact identification of the **RECEPTION** of these stories. What, for example, is the exact relation of medieval scribes with the ancient tradition? As discussed above, prologues to many romances (importantly including Benoît and Guido) explicitly discuss sources: Homer is often refuted, while Dares may be highlighted as a credible eyewitness. However, prologues serve a literary purpose that seldom reflects the entire reality of reception. For example, there is rarely any awareness of transnational transmission *within* the Middle Ages. Guido's influential work adopts similar viewpoints as Benoît's, but never mentions how his own work is essentially an (adapted) translation of the latter.[87] As several contributions in this volume indeed show, the medieval approach to 'translation' is quite different from our modern understanding of the concept. Being one of the most important roads of textual transmission for the Troy tradition in the high Middle Ages as, for example, the rich transnational legacies of Benoît and Guido demonstrate, each version within this network is in important ways unique

[84] Chapter 3 (Hölzlhammer).

[85] Kermode 1975, 44.

[86] See also chapter 6 (Goldwyn) in this volume.

[87] Barnicle 1927, 226–227. Schoess (chapter 2) and Hoogenboom (chapter 7) offer comparative studies between both works in this volume

and subject to the creativity and interpretation of the translator. Goldwyn therefore points out that translation should also be understood as a *cultural* (not only a linguistic) process.[88] Medieval translators are seen to make important interventions in content, style and length. Hölzlhammer usefully distinguishes between the 'narrator' within the text and the 'translator' who, despite adopting more or less the same story, can place his own accents.[89] Modern translation theory can, as Wright argues, be adapted to better understand textual shifts between such transmissions.[90] However, not all the materials discussed in this volume can be clearly traced to older sources. The literary inspiration for the *Seege*, for example (discussed both in this chapter and by Sophie Schoess in the next), seems to derive from a "fluid amalgam" of sources,[91] with an originality in certain passages that has thus far not been traced back to other existing material.[92] Other texts, conversely, explicitly enter into dialogue with existing literary work, for example to reinterpret it. Van den Berg offers a reading of Eustathios and Homer in this regard.[93] This brings us to an important question on the other side of the reception process: the various audiences of medieval Troy texts. While this first chapter of the volume opens with a minstrel song, ample other socio-cultural contexts, such as the study of Troy in a monastic setting (Wright, Van den Berg),[94] the relevance of this literature to royal courts (Hölzlhammer, Goldwyn, Hoogenboom)[95] or a female readership (Söderblom Saarela)[96] are also taken into consideration. Importantly, such audiences had not only text available, but also illuminations to enrich the new interpretations of the story (as Schoess discusses).[97] Even the modern scholar's gaze should be understood as an audience, as several chapters argue: our current understanding of, for

[88] Chapter 6 of this volume.
[89] Chapter 3.1.
[90] Chapter 4.2.
[91] McDonald 2000, 183.
[92] This discussion has been summarised in Scheijnen 2023.
[93] Chapter 5 of this volume.
[94] Chapters 4 and 5.
[95] Chapters 3, 6 and 7.
[96] Chapter 8.
[97] Chapter 2.

example, gender (e.g. Goldwyn, Hoogenboom and Söderblom Saarela)[98] or racism (this chapter) necessarily influences any interpretation.

All of this leads to a rich variety of approaches to 'Enchanted Troy Reception' in this volume. The authors have been free to choose their own corpora and angles, which has led not so much to an exhaustive list of texts or approaches, but to a rich collection of in-depth studies that, as a whole, exemplifies shared theoretical interests and will hopefully stimulate future interdisciplinary dialogue. The table of contents is structured to support this aim. Rather than grouping the contributions by obvious parameters such as chronology, language tradition or geographical location, we have chosen a conceptual order in which each chapter has an associated link with the previous and following chapters, based on a common view, a similar angle or a question they share.

In the next (second) chapter of the volume, **Schoess** investigates "Pagan idols and Christian anxieties in medieval Troy narratives". It shares with this chapter an interest in prejudices against contemporary Islam in the Middle English tradition. The third chapter, by **Hölzlhammer**, shifts focus to the German tradition, with "Narrating and translating Medea in medieval romances: Narrative strategies in Greek, medieval Latin, and Middle High German translations of the Roman de Troie." Translation theory forms a methodological pillar in both this study and the next, by **Wright**. "Troy translated, Troy transformed: Rewriting the *Aeneid* in medieval Ireland" points out the literary importance of the monastic context, which immediately connects it to the chapter by **Van den Berg** on "Athena disenchanted: Eustathios of Thessalonike on Ethical and Rhetorical Prudence in Homer and Beyond". Eustathios' intellectual appeal to adopt an active learning spirit when consuming ancient texts, is carefully balanced by the next chapter's focus on rather more invasive literary practices in Byzantine culture. **Goldwyn** discusses "The sexual politics of myth: Rewriting and unwriting women in Byzantine accounts of the Trojan War". It shares an interest in manifestations of misogyny and gender rewritings with Hilke **Hoogenboom**, who focusses on "Penthesilea and the Last Stand of Chivalry in Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae".

[98] Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

That the Amazons draw special attention in the Middle Ages, connects this chapter to the last of the volume: with "Disenchanted reception: Amazonian diversities in medieval receptions of myth", Ellen **Söderblom Saarela** offers a concluding reflection on several recurring themes that have been broached in the other contributions. Between myth and stories de-mythologised, between enchanted reception and disenchantment, it is precisely the multitude of potential significances and new meanings that this volume hopes to demonstrate for the enormous literary playground that the high Middle Ages from Ireland to Byzantium (and beyond) have provided.

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