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Review of Levelt, S. (2021) The middle Dutch “brut”: an edition and translation

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The Middle Dutch "Brut": An Edition and Translation. Sjoerd Levelt.
Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021.
176 pp. £80.

While diplomatic editions of printed primary sources are becoming increasingly scarce in the era of widespread digitization, Sjoerd Levelt's edition of the first chronicle of Britain printed in Dutch proves that they are still of high value. Its skillful English translation, expansive explanatory notes, and scholarly introduction make this text easily accessible to a readership that is not familiar with Middle Dutch and the early modern Netherlandish context that influenced the presentation of English history in this chronicle. This edition is highly relevant for anyone working on the *Brut* tradition, the Wars of the Roses, Anglo-Dutch relations in the late medieval and early modern period, and the reception of Jacob van Maerlant. Levelt's precise examination of the text sheds new light on each of these topics, and invites further scholarly inquiry.

The text that Levelt describes as the Middle Dutch *Brut* was in all likelihood compiled between 1465 and 1468 in the Utrecht region, but it only saw print as an appendix to a translation of the Latin chronicle *Fasciculus temporum*, printed in Utrecht in 1480. The author remains anonymous, but the text was ostensibly redacted for print by the publisher, Johan Veldener, a close contact of the important Anglo-Dutch go-between William Caxton. The compiler used various sources, including a prose *Brut* chronicle and prominent Middle Dutch author Jacob van Maerlant's thirteenth-century chronicle *Spiegel Historiael*. Not all sources could be determined, however: for some particularities, such as the biography of the central figure, Albina, which deviates from other known accounts, the Middle Dutch *Brut* seems to be the only reference. As argued by Levelt, the author might have misremembered source materials earlier consulted. Striking omissions are also signaled in the edition, such as the remarkable absence of the figure of Merlin.

One of Levelt's most interesting observations is related to the Wars of the Roses. The Middle Dutch *Brut* presents a markedly Pro-Lancastrian image of historical events. By the time it saw print, however, Edward VI had consolidated Yorkist hold on the throne. The Middle Dutch *Brut*'s Lancastrian take on events appears to be a hapax in the *Brut* tradition at large and asks for more scholarly attention, as does a potential link to the County of Holland, also mentioned by Levelt.

This diplomatic edition, based on a consultation of five extant copies of the *Brut*, gives the transcription of the Middle Dutch and its English translation on facing pages, with each page corresponding (in most cases) to one page in the 1480 printed source; this layout facilitates consultation. The woodcuts are also

reproduced alongside the text. The manuscript rubrications that figure in several of the extant copies of the 1480 print have not been indicated, but they could have been—alongside the sometimes colored woodcuts—an interesting topic for further book-historical study. The publisher of the edition deserves praise for having ventured to imitate important elements from the layout of the 1480 print, such as the circles surrounding the names in the text's central genealogical tree. Virtually every line of the chronicle receives further explanation in the notes in the back of the edition, which give further information on the individuals mentioned in the text and potential sources, and which brim with precious references to existing scholarly literature on the topic in question.

Although some parts of the introduction might be challenging for students, this edition of the Middle Dutch *Brut* is definitely suitable for classroom use. The explanatory notes abound and require little background knowledge, explaining, for instance, the names Albion and Albina, and even Assyria. The rich bibliography is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the current state of *Brut* scholarship. Specialized scholars and students alike will find an interesting read in this edition, which promises to spark valuable new contributions to our understanding of late medieval chronicling culture.

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Vindicatio Aristotelis: Two Works of George of Trebizond in the Plato-Aristotle Controversy of the Fifteenth Century. John Monfasani, trans.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2021. xiv + 1086 pp. \$180.

In 1976, John Monfasani offered to scholars—in unprecedented depth—the extraordinary life of intellectual passions of George of Trebizond in a still fundamental monograph. A few years later, in 1984, he published what can be regarded as a monumental appendix to that first book, the *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*. This volume included a wealth of George-related material: letters, prefaces, orations, scholia, and much more. Still, Monfasani was not satisfied with this output because the *Collectanea* did not include the edition of George's major writings. It was during the recent pandemic that the volume Monfasani prefigured in 1984 finally appeared: *Vindicatio Aristotelis* offers “two works of George of Trebizond in the Plato-Aristotle controversy of the fifteenth century.” The two works are the *Protectio Problematum Aristotelis*, and—of course—the *Comparatio Philosophorum Platonis et Aristotelis, et de Aristotelis*