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Philip Handyside, *The Old French William of Tyre*. Leiden: Brill, 2015. 290 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliography and index. 115.00€ (hb). ISBN 978-9-0042-5688-0.

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Working in Jerusalem between about 1170 and 1184, William, archbishop of Tyre, wrote a far-ranging and voluminous history of the First Crusade (1095-99) and the Latin East—the states founded in the Holy Land by the crusaders—down to his own day. He composed his account in sophisticated Latin, and had a readership of similarly learned clergy in mind.[1] In its original Latin form, William's *Historia* did not circulate widely in the Middle Ages. There are only a few extant manuscripts of his account, all produced around 1200, none of which were copied outside England and France. Using those manuscripts, R. B. C. Huygens produced an edition of the *Historia* in 1986 that scholars generally regard as definitive.[2]

In the years and decades after William of Tyre lay down his pen in about 1184, his work inspired the composition of a series of linked Old French texts relating to the history of the crusades. At some point in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, an anonymous translator rendered William's vast *Historia* in its entirety into Old French. This French translation is generally known in modern scholarship as the *Estoire de Eracles*, or simply the *Eracles*, as its first line contains a reference to the seventh-century Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. Like William's *Historia*, the narrative of the Old French version ceased in 1184. After the *Eracles* was produced, however, a number of authors picked up the history of the Latin East and wrote continuations which extended the narrative of crusade history past 1184 and into the thirteenth century, and these are generally tacked on to copies of the *Eracles* in manuscripts. Modern scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to the Old French continuations of William of Tyre because they provide unique accounts of events that took place after the narratives of William's *Historia* and the *Eracles* had terminated.[3] Most significantly, these continuations describe the build up to and course of the battle of Hattin in July 1187 and detail how Saladin captured much of the Latin-held territory in its aftermath.

In contrast to the continuation texts associated with William of Tyre's *Historia*, the *Eracles* has received far less attention, hitherto being the focus of short studies such as those by John H. Pryor (1992) and Bernard Hamilton (2003).[4] Handyside's study, then, constitutes the first full-length analysis of the *Eracles*. While Handyside does refer to the Old French continuation texts, for the most part he leaves them firmly to one side in order to maintain his focus on the *Eracles*. The aim of the book is to compare the text of the *Eracles* with William of Tyre's original Latin account and to establish whether there are similarities or differences between the two texts in terms of style, emphasis, and content. The influences on Handyside's approach and arguments are evident throughout. The book is based on the author's 2012 doctoral thesis, which itself formed part of a wider AHRC-funded project on the Old French William of Tyre texts and was carried out between 2009 and 2012 at Cardiff University under the direction of Professor Peter Edbury. Professor Edbury supervised that doctorate, and the influence of his work on the Old French texts associated with William of Tyre's *Historia* are apparent in how Handyside goes about his task.

Handyside notes at the very outset of his book that modern historians have largely overlooked the *Eracles* because it describes the same events that William of Tyre included in his *Historia*. Why consider material second-hand, then, when the original first-hand account is available? The author suggests that there are three chief reasons why the *Eracles* merits closer scrutiny. Firstly, the French author had a different outlook compared to William. William was a highly-learned prelate, who most probably expected that his audience would consist of readers like himself. Moreover, William wrote from the perspective of an inhabitant of the Latin states in the Holy Land. In contrast, the author of the *Eracles* wrote in France and, it seems, with the aim of appealing to an audience including secular aristocrats. As a result, the author of the *Eracles* often re-casted and shifted the emphasis of William's account. Secondly, Handyside argues that the *Eracles* contains original material that deserves to be taken seriously. Thirdly, he asserts that the *Eracles* represents neglected evidence for thirteenth-century ideas about the history of the crusades and, above all, is a valuable source considering how William's message disseminated in Latin Christendom in the Middle Ages. This is because of the remarkable popularity of the *Eracles*, known in over fifty manuscripts dating before 1500. Those manuscripts—most of which contain continuations—were produced both in Europe and the Holy Land, in what remained of the Latin East after 1187.

The book is structured into two parts. Part one consists of fifteen short chapters that provide thematic comparisons between the *Historia* and the *Eracles*, and discuss the French text's provenance and the perspective and possible motive of the translator. The findings of these chapters largely confirm the suggestions made by Pryor and Hamilton in their earlier studies of the *Eracles* (see for example chapter fifteen on the dating of the translation). In considering the coverage of this part of the book, one feels it would have been useful to have more discussion of the literary context and possible purpose of the translation. This, it should be noted, could not have been carried out on the contents of the text itself. The author of the *Eracles* says nothing about himself, meaning that his background, perspective, and aims must be inferred from his alterations to the *Historia*. Rather, a closer engagement with modern work on vernacular texts produced in thirteenth-century France—the rich corpus of modern scholarship on the *chansons de geste* and Gabrielle Spiegel's studies of prose historiography of that period both spring to mind—might have given Handyside more material to work with in terms of interrogating the values and ideas on display in the *Eracles*. This is not to suggest that both those strands of scholarship are not mentioned by Handyside; they are, but only in passing. Part two is more technical, using the opening sentence of a number of sample chapters to establish a new manuscript stemma and highlighting the manuscripts that contain the earliest versions of the text. This part of the book is the fruit of hard work with the manuscripts and will provide a valuable basis for the preparation of a future edition of the *Eracles*, one that is most faithful to the original translation. This, one suspects, will be the enduring achievement of this book.

NOTES

[1] See Peter Edbury and John G. Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[2] William of Tyre, *Chronique*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986). There is also a translation of William's account into English: William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

[3] See Margaret Ruth Morgan, *The Chronicle of Ernoul and the Continuations of William of Tyre* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), and, more recently, the work of Peter Edbury, for example, his "The French Translation of William of Tyre's *Historia*: The manuscript Tradition," *Crusades* 6 (2007): 69-105.

[4] John H. Pryor, "The *Eracles* and William of Tyre: An Interim Report," in *The Horns of Hattin: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Jerusalem and*

Haifa, 2-6 July 1987, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar (Jerusalem: Variorum, 1992), 270-293; Bernard Hamilton, "The Old French Translation of William of Tyre as an Historical Source," in *The Experience of Crusading, Volume 2: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*, eds. Peter Edbury and Jonathan Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93-112. There are two modern editions of the *Eracles*, though, as Handyside argues in his book, both are deficient. The first was published in volume one of the *Recueil des historiens des croisades* in 1844, as a kind of running footnote to William of Tyre's *Historia*. The second is *Guillaume de Tyr et ses continuateurs, texte français du XIII^e siècle, revu et annoté par Paulin Paris* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1879).

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