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Antoine de La Sale, *Jean de Saintré. A Late Medieval Education in Love and Chivalry*. Translated by Roberta L. Krueger and Jane H. Taylor. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. 264 pp. Notes, glossary, selected bibliography, and illustrations. \$59.95 U.S. (cl). £ 39.00 U.K. (cl). ISBN : 978-0-8122-4586-8.

Review by Estelle Doudet, Université de Grenoble Alpes

Jean de Saintré is one of the most important pieces of prose fiction of the Late Middle Ages. Written in 1456, the book tells of the education that the young Jean de Saintré receives from an attractive lady, Madame des Belles Cousines. Jean grows into an accomplished knight, famous for his skills in tournaments and his courage in battles. Unfortunately, one day he learns of Madame's romantic involvement with a plump abbot and he then decides to ruin her reputation.

Celebrated by Julia Kristeva in 1970 for its modernity, *Jean de Saintré* is characterized by an original generic hybridity.^[1] A fictionalized biography inspired by a historical knight of the fourteenth century, this chivalric novel ends ironically like a *fabliau*. The tale of Jean and Belles Cousines is mixed with moral lessons about vices and virtues and filled with descriptions of courtly protocol. The romance seems always to be turning into a didactic compilation, and vice versa.

Antoine de La Sale (c. 1389-1460) spent his life in service to French aristocratic dynasties. Among other duties, he was preceptor for Jean of Anjou, son of King René, for whom *Jean de Saintré* was written. His anthology *La Salade*, composed in 1441-1442, provides political examples and military advice to the young prince Jean de Calabre. *La Sale*, in 1451, depicts moral tales in an allegorical *salle* (or large room). *Jean de Saintré*, the most famous of his works, shows the same didactic bent. But La Sale, who travelled widely in France, Italy, and England, also knew the charms of distraction and fiction. The marvelous tale of the Sybil's grotto and an account of a trip to the Lipari Islands are included in *La Salade*. In *Jean de Saintré*, the chivalric novel aestheticizes an aristocratic culture already in decline.

Six remaining manuscripts, including La Sale's personal copy, and four printed editions of the sixteenth century emphasize *Jean de Saintré's* success. The novel was previously translated into English in 1862 and 1931. It is therefore time for a new, modern translation to provide access to this important work. In that regard, Roberta Krueger and Jane Taylor offer to English-speaking readers a work matching every expectation. Its introduction is rich and precise, especially about La Sale's career and sources. The translation is clear and elegant. The notes and bibliography give useful tools, especially to students. A glossary of chivalric terms completes the book and a few well-chosen illustrations make it pleasant to read.

NOTE

[1] Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1974).

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