

**Krueger, Roberta L., ed. 2023. *The New Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. xviii + 308. ISBN 9781108749589.**

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*The New Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta L. Krueger, is a successor to *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, published in 2000. It is intended to update the series, drawing on the expanded canon of medieval romance as well as new theories and approaches within the field. Its chapters take a cutting-edge approach to medieval romance analysis. Some focus on largely understudied areas of romance, such as romances of the Mediterranean or later medieval and post-medieval texts which are often dismissed as lacking the ingenuity of romances by big-name writers like Chrétien de Troyes or the *Gawain* poet. These chapters advocate for a broader appreciation of the popular genre, and often rethink how romances can be categorised by language, type, or style. Chapters organised by language, provenance, or period are accompanied by chapters focused on theory or type of analysis, including work on the fast-developing fields of gender studies, critical race theory, and the study of emotions. Through these chapters, the book illustrates the progress medieval romance studies has made in the past several years.

As a survey of the field, *The New Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* is a good introduction to various aspects of medieval romance studies and a useful guide for students and scholars from other disciplines seeking a broad overview of the present state of the field. Several of the chapters cover the basics of romance studies—manuscripts and verse, Arthurian romance, crusading romance—providing a baseline for new scholars of romance. In addition, chapters on Iberian romance, Italian romance, German romance, and later French romance act as introductions for the medieval romance scholar more knowledgeable about French and insular romance (as many of us are) as well as the romance novice. Some chapters introduce their subjects with one case study, whilst others take a survey approach, briefly touching on the most important texts in their area. Regardless of approach, these chapters define and complicate romance types and classifications. They are thus at their strongest when challenging the boundaries put in place within the genre of romance. Moreover, while many chapters are primarily introductory, they also open new avenues of research, inviting the reader to consider questions not yet explored.

Anchoring the collection are several chapters on the context, style, and form of romance. Laura Ashe's "For Love and For Lovers': The Origins of Romance" discusses the beginnings of the genre and what defines a romance. Ashe includes the observation that the term *romance* describes the language of romances, rather than narrative features, and covers the early history of romances from antique romances adapted from historical epics to the big names in romance like Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. In addition to this important background for students of romance, Ashe considers how

the genre comes to be at the intersection of lyrics and epics. By importing the values and perspectives of lyric poetry to narratives taken from epics, romances create a unique aesthetic—unique enough to later be satirised by romance writers.

The next two chapters consider the tools of romance: Keith Busby's "The Manuscript Contexts of Medieval Romance" and Jane Gilbert and Ad Putter's "Matters of Form: Experiments in Verse and Prose Romances." Busby takes as his starting point the difference between reading romances in modern critical editions and how students encounter romances in their original manuscript contexts. He then briefly reviews the types of manuscript contexts students might encounter, such as the fragments of Thomas's *Tristan* romances or single-item codices of lengthy romances or cycles. Though the subject of romance manuscripts is broad, this chapter captures the key points in manuscript studies and opens up new avenues for scholars of medieval romance.

Gilbert and Putter's chapter similarly provides the tools necessary for the study of romance's form—verse or prose—while establishing a framework for future study. Like Busby, Gilbert and Putter begin from the perspective of a modern student, who may not be accustomed to medieval verse or even the ways in which medieval prose was used and understood. They provide an overview of developments in verse and prose across the vernaculars and how we might use formal features to understand romance narratives. Finally, they allow room for speculation and further exploration as to how different forms of verse and prose came to be of use in different parts of Europe and in different romance traditions.

To complete the first part of the book, Sylvie LeFèvre's chapter "Authors, Narrators, and Their Stories in Old French Romance" asks whether premodern narratives can have a "narrator." LeFèvre discusses the use of author identification, first person *je*, and commentary on the narrative to distinguish the romance's speakers from their characters. This is a particularly thorny aspect of medieval romance, and difficult to approach from a modern perspective, but LeFèvre's carefully chosen case studies successfully demonstrate the many possibilities present in medieval narrative. As in previous chapters, this framework opens up space for further analysis of how narrators treat their stories, and where irony, commentary, or internal conflict transform medieval romance.

The next few chapters review types of romance, organised by narrative and theme. Elizabeth Archibald tackles the topic of Arthurian romance, the biggest and most influential romance type during and after the Middle Ages. Her chapter, "Arthurian Transformations," covers the many changes found to the Arthurian narrative and its characters. By focusing on the flexibility of the tradition, Archibald is able to show the wide variety of narratives that fall under the Arthurian umbrella, and where the evolution of Arthurian romance leads to intriguing questions and areas for further study.

While Arthurian romance is a staple of most studies of romance, Sharon Kinoshita considers "Mediterranean romance," a new category from the relatively new field of Mediterranean studies. Kinoshita considers whether it constitutes a category at all—after all, it covers multiple languages, cultures, and topics. Does "Mediterranean romance" refer to romances written in Mediterranean regions, or romances about the Mediterranean? Kinoshita explores how the Mediterranean context for one case study, *Floire and Blancheflor*, affects the romance, such as the prominent role of merchants or the ability to change identities. Just as Arthurian romance has its familiar character types, themes, and narrative arcs, so does Mediterranean romance exploit its own set of

conventions. By bringing Mediterranean studies to romance, Kinoshita's chapter demonstrates a valuable new form of analysis.

Lee Manion's "The Crusading Romance in Britain" turns to the influence of the crusades on romance. Manion begins with an overview of the crusades in history, emphasising the diversity of experiences and motivations. This diversity is then reflected in romances based on crusades or crusading ideology. Manion takes *Richard Coeur de Lion* and *Guy of Warwick* as his examples, contrasting the military efforts and semi-historical nature of *Richard Coeur de Lion* with Guy's individual mission. As with the previous chapters on Arthurian and Mediterranean romance, this chapter's emphasis on diversity within a category, rather than boundaries or limitations, shows the flexibility of the romance tradition as it interacts with historical practices.

Crusading romance forms a good segue into the book's next few chapters on theoretical approaches in romance studies. Nahir I. Otaño Gracia's chapter "'Making Race' in Medieval Romance" explores the use of critical race studies in romance criticism. Otaño summarises the history of critical race studies and premodern literature, showing its important interventions in the field. She then explores two areas of medieval romance, French literature and Welsh literature. In both cases, Otaño discusses the portrayal of giants in comparison with the portrayal of different ethnic groups, demonstrating how both types of characters are dehumanised. This discussion goes beyond individual characters to how such dehumanisation creates systems and hierarchies; in particular, Otaño notes how Welsh romances fight anti-Welsh bias by denigrating other communities including Jews, Muslims, and Irish.

Kathy M. Krause's chapter on gender in romance similarly focuses on the construction of categories across romance instead of individual portrayals of characters. Krause begins with masculinity, detailing how it is constructed in French romances of adventure and closely tied with the performance of chivalry. While this remains a constant throughout the romances Krause discusses, she notes how it is complicated and nuanced across different romances, including where satire tests its limits or where masculinity comes into conflict with other expectations for a knight. Krause then turns to romance's female characters, exploring the different roles they can play outside of the expectations for chivalric masculinity, and where the passive role for women is challenged and interrogated. Through her many examples, Krause shows the wide variety of portrayals of gender in romance and how gender studies can illuminate these nuances.

In "Emotions as the Language of Romance," Megan Moore draws on theories regarding human emotions, particularly the work of Stephanie Trigg, which distinguishes affect (the biological component), feelings (how the body experiences these biological changes), and emotions (how feelings are communicated between people). Deliberating on the idea of emotions as communicated feelings, Moore explores how romances show the complications of communication, such as when a lover's feelings are doubted as insincere. She argues that the genre fascinated with courtly love in fact hinges on negative emotions and mistakes of communication; the narrative depends on emotions being misunderstood, leading to grief, shame, hate, and other negative emotions. It is this complexity of emotions that drives romance, adding intrigue and richness to stories of love and lovers.

Three chapters on regional variations in romance form the next section of the book. Covering Iberian, Italian, and German romance, they serve as useful guides for the student or scholar whose knowledge of romance is primarily based on French and

English, a trend in scholarship that many of the book's other chapters reflect. David A. Wacks begins his chapter, "Medieval Iberian Romance," with an acknowledgement of the limitations of scholarship on Iberian romance, which primarily focuses on received Arthurian romance translated from French into Castilian and then further adapted in the *Amadís de Gaula*. Wacks broadens his survey to include Hebrew and Arabic texts, arguing that Iberian romance should be read "less as a stable genre with a canon and more as a set of conventions and tropes that authors recombined in novel ways" (167). In this way, "Medieval Iberian Romance" is in close dialogue with Kinoshita's chapter on Mediterranean romance, though Wacks covers a greater number of texts, romances (mainly Arthurian) across Hebrew, Arabic, and Castilian, noting how chivalric tropes and romance narratives are adapted to each culture and literary tradition. By dipping in and out of different texts, languages, and tropes, Wacks demonstrates the great variety of Iberian romance and how different traditions inform each other.

Laura Chuhan Campbell's chapter, "Medieval and Early Modern Italian Romance" similarly explores a genre in flux. Campbell focuses on how features of romance are imbued with contemporary Italian values: Merlin's prophecies suggest critique of the Holy Roman Emperor and Church corruption in *Les Prophecies De Merlin* and Tristano is exalted as defender of justice as well as a lover and knight in *La Tavola Ritonda*. Campbell's third case study, *L'inamoramento de Orlando* has the broadest argument, observing how the text combines the *chanson de geste* and romance tradition, Classical mythology, the Arthurian Otherworld, and humanism. Transcending genre, *L'inamoramento de Orlando* critiques both the hero quest of romance and the clear religious divisions of *chanson de geste*, allowing for the kind of flexibility found in romances of the Mediterranean and noted by Kinoshita and Wacks.

Albrecht Classen's "German Medieval Romance" takes us away from the Mediterranean to another regional tradition. Classen begins with the literary and social contexts of German romance, including proto-romance texts such as bridal-quests and heroic epics, as well as the rise of courtly themes and the decline of crusading enthusiasm. He then provides a chronological survey of key periods in German romance, the "Classical," thirteenth-century, and the late medieval romances, highlighting key authors and works. Classen acknowledges the difficulty of covering the whole of German romance in a chapter; however, in capturing key context and movements in the development of the tradition, his summary provides a strong base for a student of romance.

The last chapters of *The New Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* consider the legacies and afterlives of romance. Patricia Clare Ingham's chapter, "The Ends of Romance in Chaucer and Malory," explores how the genre of medieval romance contributed to the work of two of medieval England's most famous writers. Ingham shows how "The Knight's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" in *The Canterbury Tales* use features of romance to tackle the difficult subjects of violence and victimisation. For Ingham, the fantastical features of romance are not escapist, but are necessary for dissecting painful topics. She also notes how Chaucer critiques the genre through the lightness of Sir Thopas and the excessiveness of "The Squire's Tale." Her reading of Malory's *Morte Darthur* similarly considers his use of genre, particularly his editorial work connecting various parts of the Arthurian tradition into one cohesive narrative. She notes its cultural commentary, and how the combination of different traditions leads to a complex narrative with competing portrayals of knighthood and chivalry.

Jane H. M. Taylor's "French Romance in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance" takes the opposite approach, defending romances previously disregarded. Jane Taylor examines the gaps that these romances fill in the genre and how they combine romance traditions, notably the Arthurian tradition, with pseudohistory and commentary on governance. She observes changes in the tradition as it moves into the Renaissance, including new portrayals of gender and the effects of printing. Like many of the chapters in this book, "French Romance in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance" serves as a useful introduction to understudied romance and relevant points of analysis.

Craig Taylor's chapter, "Romance in Historical Context: Literature and the Changing Values and Norms of Aristocratic Society" touches directly on these points, comparing developments in courtly values in history and in literature. Craig Taylor dismisses rosy-coloured views of knighthood and chivalry, providing examples of poor knightly behaviour from history and critiquing idealistic post-medieval portrayals. In dividing the literary tradition from historical evidence, Craig Taylor focuses on the context of romance rather than the texts themselves. Nevertheless, his chapter delves into the mindset of the romance audience, providing important context.

Finally, Susan Aronstein discusses the modern legacy of medieval romance in "Romance in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Popular Culture." Romance as a genre is well-suited to adaptation, and Aronstein notes the proliferation of medievalist quests, especially in film. She then provides a timeline of Arthurian adaptations, demonstrating how each addresses the issues of its time, from Columbia Studios' 1949 *The Adventures of Sir Galahad*'s portrayal of post-war American values to Netflix's 2020 series *Cursed* and its critique of the patriarchy and nationalism. By contextualising these narratives to discuss their individual contributions to the tradition of romance, Aronstein shows how romance narratives continue to evolve in the modern era.

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