

Rewriting Arthurian Romance in Renaissance France: From Manuscript to Printed Book. Jane H. M. Taylor.

Gallica 33. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014. xiv + 278 pp. \$99.

In this superbly researched and engagingly written book, Jane Taylor explores the reception of Arthurian romance in Renaissance France. No scholar is better qualified to undertake such a project than this specialist of medieval Arthuriana, who so fully understands the subject matter and so skillfully negotiates the terrain between twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arthurian romances in manuscript form and their reconstructed versions in sixteenth-century imprints. But Taylor's objective reaches beyond such comparative analyses as she probes the broader issue of emerging Renaissance traditions

and reformulations of literary taste, which she convincingly measures through a rigorous analysis of the strategies employed by author-translators, editors, and publishers (*marchands-libraires*), often working collaboratively in producing revised versions of Arthurian romance as they anticipate, follow, and even shape audience preferences. The theories of Michel de Certeau, Roger Chartier, Pierre Bourdieu, and others often inform Taylor's considerations of cultural processes and sensitivities in well-integrated fashion.

Chapter 1 takes up Pierre Sala's radical abbreviation of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* (1522) and recasting of a prose *Tristan* (ca. 1527), notable for the textual shift in emphasis from erotic love to a celebration of male camaraderie and chivalric complicity, perhaps to engage readers' new interest in the philosophy of friendship, and in their illuminated manuscript form. Assessing the risks, assets, and market sense of scribe-editors, printers, and compositors, chapter 2 explores printshop technologies in the repackaging of Arthurian romances: the adoption of hybrid-book formats, joint publishing ventures, procurement of privileges, and exploitation of celebrity endorsements. How these mechanisms operated in textual recovery shapes subsequent discussion. Antoine Vêrard's success as a (co-)publisher of high-quality, folio-size volumes of Arthurian romances in the early years, with editions of the 1488 *Lancelot* and 1489 *Tristan*, is the focus of chapter 3. Here Taylor distinguishes between ad hoc text editing by experienced compositors and an editor's more substantial pruning, while tracing shifting patterns in publisher-consumer relations through insightful paratextual analyses. Resuming the study of editorial detail as a sign of changing tastes, chapter 4 examines less accessible romances that required further modifications, concentrating on how the textual disorder and obscurity of the *Prophéties de Merlin* was managed by Vêrard and his collaborators in their 1498 edition by a refined typography and page layout. The re-commodification of the *Histoire du saint Greal* by Galliot du Pré and his associates in 1516 involved serious textual hybridization and condensation for a readership that preferred narrative over moralization, as Taylor convincingly demonstrates.

Chapter 5's scrutiny of lesser-known romances, Claude de Nourry's 1520 edition of the *Roman de Giglan*, and the 1530 prose edition of Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval* by Galliot du Pré and associates, exposes a circumspection about less than exemplary behavior and elimination of the original irony. The 1543 publication by Denis Janot and associates of the best seller *Amadis de Gaule* signaled a waning interest in Arthurian romance (chapter 6). Its cliff-hanging adventures, spectacular scenarios, and sentimentalism, conveyed by translator Nicolas d'Herberay des Essarts's stylistic elegance and exuberant language, targeted readers' taste for incident rather than reflection, and shrewdly advertised French heroism returned home (from Spain) in multiple, high-quality folio editions. Chapter 7 explores failed revival attempts — Jean Maugin's 1554 *Nouveau Tristan* and publisher Benoît Rigaud's 1591 pocket-sized edition of *Lancelot* — that misjudged audiences now attracted more by single-hero, single-issue fictions than multinarrative romances.

Taylor's work is a model of scholarly research, writing, and presentation. She is at once original in her analyses and carefully measured in her claims. Her arguments are always buttressed by impressive textual and paratextual readings as she compares medieval manuscript versions and evolving printed versions of a text and skillfully extrapolates new understandings and theories about the reception of Arthurian romance in the Renaissance. Taylor uncovers and teases out multifarious and complex interconnections in her discussion but does so with admirable clarity, judiciously placing her most complicated textual and paratextual evaluations into three appendixes and providing in her remarkable notes background assessments that helpfully contextualize her developing argument. The book will be of great interest to a wide variety of scholars and students interested in Arthuriana, the transition from manuscript to print cultures, sixteenth-century literary translation and adaptation, the technology of the printed-book trade, and publisher-consumer relationships in the Renaissance.

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