

Sullivan, Joseph M. *German Romance VI: Wigamur*. Arthurian Archives XXI. Woodbridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2015.

*Wigamur* is a handsome volume, presenting a skillful edition and translation by Joseph M. Sullivan.

An anonymous thirteenth-century German romance, *Wigamur* is probably the most completely developed example of the Fair Unknown motif in the medieval German tradition. Joseph Sullivan's edition provides the first translation into English, making more widely accessible this romance characterized by numerous marvelous elements, including a child abduction by a mermaid, Lespia, a wondrous rock-bath that tests chastity and virtue, a fountain of youth and plenty, and an eagle companion to the knight who eventually assumes his identity and proper place, first as Knight with the Eagle, and then as King Wigamur.

Sullivan's introduction discusses the three manuscripts containing *Wigamur*, one in nearly complete form, and two fragments, as well as earlier editions of the text. He then presents prior scholarship's generally negative assessments of the romance as a segue to his own discussion, which highlights the artistic merits and salient themes: its exemplarity as a Fair Unknown romance; the complex development of its main characters; and "the weaving of three core thematic programmes ... throughout the text" (xxi): the prominence of *reht*, or 'the proper' within the verse narrative; the tendency to weigh ties of blood and family over merit to legitimize kingship; and an emphasis on property and its proper use. The introductory sections are followed by the text, translation and notes.

Sullivan based his edition on the only (nearly) complete existing text contained in the manuscript Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 51.2. Aug. 4<sup>o</sup> (W), which dates from the second half of the fifteenth-century. Following current international trends in Medieval Studies, Sullivan chose a conservative method for his critical edition, preserving as much as possible the East Swabian language and orthography of the late manuscript, which was written in a legible Bastarda hand, but with numerous scribal inconsistencies. In the extensive notes section, Sullivan identifies and weighs the merits of previous scholarship's emendations, makes apparent his own interventions, and provides considerable background information on words, passages, and motifs.

There are at least two important merits of Sullivan's endeavor: 1) his edition and translation make this important, yet understudied, thirteenth-century romance in the German language available to a wider English speaking public. 2) His volume also makes accessible to English speaking researchers the previous German and French scholarship on *Wigamur*, most recently by Danielle Buschinger in her French edition, and Nathanael Busch, author of a 2009 normalizing critical edition and translation into modern German. Sullivan, a talented comparatist, invites us to participate in freshly appreciating and assessing this important medieval German romance.

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