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**Review Essay: Arthur, Ross G., and Noel L. Corbett, trans. *The Knight of the Two Swords: A Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Romance***

Judith Barban  
Winthrop University

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Tarabotti, among others. Unfortunately, the series' editors have not considered any English, Spanish, or Scandinavian writers (see *Die europäische Querelle des Femmes*). The German Anna Maria van Schurman's *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings* will so far be the only exception to the rule that seemingly this "querelle" was carried out only by Italian Renaissance women. This notion definitely needs to be corrected, and the editors would be well advised to search for translations of German, English, Spanish, and other language-texts by women from the early-modern period. Georg Christian Lehms composed a lengthy encyclopedic treatise about praiseworthy women from Antiquity to his present (his book was printed in 1711). Other German writers followed his example and would deserve to be included in this series as well. At this point, however, the reader will be thankful for the brilliant scholarly work and excellent philological preparation of Agrippa's declamation, Cereta's various writings, and Moderata's treatise.

Albrecht Classen

University of Arizona, Tucson

Arthur, Ross G., and Noel L. Corbett, trans. *The Knight of the Two Swords: A Thirteenth-Century Arthurian Romance*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1996. 188 pp. + notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.

Assessed by Gaston Paris and other early twentieth-century French medievalists as imitative and superficial, *Li chevalier as deus espees* has remained in relative obscurity for well over half a century. Until 1973, when Robert Toombs Ivey presented a thoroughly researched critical edition of the Old French work as a doctoral dissertation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the only edited version of the text was the Wendelin Foerster edition of 1877 (reprinted by Rodopi in 1966). Both Foerster's book and Ivey's unpublished dissertation are available primarily through interlibrary loan. Until a new edition appears in print, the Arthur/Corbett English translation will provide medievalists ready access to a work that clearly deserves critical reevaluation.

Although written in octosyllabic rhymed couplets, the work approaches the style of a prose romance more closely than that of an early Arthurian poem. Thus a translation into English prose rather than poetry is appropriate and effective. The translators took the liberty of dividing

the 12,353-line poem into twenty-nine chapters, each with a title reflecting the principal episode recounted in that portion of the narrative. Except for these two divergences, Arthur and Corbett have remained faithful to the letter as well as to the spirit of the text. The convincing translation is remarkable in its sensitivity to the peculiarities of the Old French language (specifically, Francien, with Picard influences) and offers intelligent solutions to some of the thornier passages. Suppleness of language is achieved without sacrifice of content. For example, "quinte de guerre" in the first line is defined by Greimas (*Dictionnaire de l'ancien français*) as "sorte de redevance" but is translated here simply and unobtrusively as "cost of war." The Arthur/Corbett translation includes an introduction to acquaint the reader with the poem (its contents and accessibility), a brief but helpful glossary, and a concluding page of textual notes. For a more in-depth linguistic analysis of the original poem and for a more complete presentation of its critical background, curious readers will have to consult the Ivey dissertation.

Any reader of *The Knight of the Two Swords* who is familiar with the works of Chrétien de Troyes will immediately recognize the influence of the twelfth-century poet on the anonymous author. One can detect motifs from other earlier Arthurian romances, such as *Durmart le Gallois*, *La Vengeance de Raquidel*, *Li Bias Desconnues*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, and the *Perlesvaus*, but the author's most conspicuous appropriations are from Chrétien's *Perceval*. The adventures of Gawain alternate with those of Meriadeuc (a main character of *The Knight of the Two Swords*) as they do with those of Perceval in Chrétien's poem. Among the noteworthy parallel episodes in the two works are the night of unconsummated love and the punishment of Arthur's knight Girflet for his mockery (Kay, in the earlier poem). Furthermore, the adventure at the Lake of Jumeles suggests a synthesis of the grail castle and the white-haired queen episodes from the *Perceval*. Other borrowings from Chrétien's *Yvain* and *Lancelot* are also in evidence.

Unquestionably, *The Knight of the Two Swords* does not measure up to Chrétien's works in poetic quality, lacking the delicacy of sentiment, the poignancy of emotion, the elegant wit, and the overall charm of Chrétien's verses. There is little character development, sparkling conversation, suggested symbolism, or insight into universal human nature. However, *The Knight of the Two Swords* is not without its merits, two of which are immediately perceived: first, it is a well-constructed narrative, a complex tale told with clarity and a fine balance between sweeping

action and static description; second, and most interestingly, the narrative is replete with proverbial expressions and curious minutiae of daily life. Details concerning clothing and armor, food and meals, social customs including expected courtesies and etiquette, the treatment of guests, and the care of horses, though usually nonfunctional in the story, intrigue the modern reader as they enliven the work.

In the introduction the translators state their hope that this book will "stimulate critical study of the work," a work which, in this reviewer's opinion, should assume a more notable place in the Arthurian canon. Arthur and Corbett summarize: "As an imaginative poem filled with scenes of medieval life, as a lively exponent of the Arthurian genre, or as the reflection of the aristocratic mentality of the landed classes in thirteenth-century France, *The Knight of the Two Swords* simply deserves to be better known; a reading of it will amply repay the curious student, the literary scholar, and the lover of medieval culture."

Judith Barban  
Winthrop University

Baum, Wilhelm. *Rudolf IV. der Stifter. Seine Welt und seine Zeit*. Styria, Graz-Cologne-Vienna, 1996. 399 pp., 58 illustrations. DM 58.

After having published his monograph on the Tyrolean Duchess Margarete Maultausch in 1994, Wilhelm Baum here presents a new historical biography, this time of the Hapsburgian Duke Rudolf IV (1358-1365). Traditional historiography has not paid enough attention to this personality, although Rudolf played quite a significant role in the arena of fourteenth-century international politics. Rudolf's conflicts with Emperor Charles IV and the development of the Hapsburgian empire were the focus of his brief rulership.

In a way *Rudolf IV* does not invite much commentary because it is basically a cut-and-dry biographical monograph. It consists of the following chapters: (1) the beginning of Rudolf's political career; (2) the *privilegium maius* and the conflicts between Rudolf IV and Charles IV; (3) the development of an "Austrian State"; (4) Rudolf's relationship with Italy, his acquisition of Tyrol, and his death. At the end we find extensive bibliographies of the primary and secondary sources, endnotes, a time table, Rudolf's itinerary, and a register of persons and locations.