



Wirnt von Gravenberg's Wigalois: Intertextuality and Interpretation (Arthurian Studies)

N. Thomas

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Arthurian romance flourished in medieval Germany, but the pre-eminence of Wolfram von Eschenbach has perhaps overshadowed some of his successors. This book focuses on Wirnt von Gravenberg's Wigalois, the later thirteenth-century Arthurian romance. It argues that whereas authors such as Der Stricker and Der Pleier follow the example of Hartmann von Aue by limiting themselves to an exploration of the pragmatics of the (fictional) chivalric value-system, the lay ethicist Wirnt chooses to examine the spiritual dimension of knightly existence, a theme first broached in the German context by Wolfram in his Grail romance, Parzival. Wirnt frames his romance as a corrective to that of his predecessor by creating a form of kingship for his hero which is more practicable than Wolfram's millennial 'Grail realm'. Rejecting the notion of an ideal space altogether, Wirnt's naturalistic descriptions of his hero's kingship give expression to a harmonisation of Arthurian and theocratic elements. The author thus suggests that Wigalois is not so much a paler imitation of Parzival as a creative confrontation with the thought-world of its more famous predecessor.

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