

The legend of Tristan and Isolde – the archetypal narrative about the turbulent effects of all-consuming, passionate love – achieved its most complete and profound rendering in the German poet Gottfried von Strassburg's verse romance *Tristan* (ca. 1200-1210). Along with his great literary rival Wolfram von Eschenbach and his versatile predecessor Hartmann von Aue, Gottfried is considered one of three greatest poets produced by medieval Germany, and over the centuries his *Tristan* has lost none of its ability to attract with the beauty of its poetry and to challenge – if not provoke – on the basis of its sympathetic depiction of adulterous love.

The articles in *A Companion to Gottfried's "Tristan,"* written by a dozen Gottfried specialists in Europe and North America, provide definitive treatments of significant aspects of this most important and challenging high medieval version of the Tristan legend. They examine aspects of Gottfried's unparalleled narrative artistry ("History, Fable, and Love: Gottfried, Thomas, and the Matter of Britain," by Adrian Stevens; "Between Epic and Lyric Poetry: The Originality of Gottfried's *Tristan*," by Daniel Rocher) and the important connections between his *Tristan* and the socio-cultural situation in which it was composed ("Gottfried's Strasbourg: The City and Its People," by Michael Batts; "God, Religion, and Ambiguity in *Tristan*," by Nigel Harris; "Humanism in the High Middle Ages: The Case of Gottfried's *Tristan*," by Alois Wolf). Other essays examine the reception of Gottfried's challenging romance by later poets in the Middle Ages ("The Medieval Reception of Gottfried's *Tristan*," by Marion Gibbs) and by nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors, composers, and artists – particularly Richard Wagner ("The Modern Reception of Gottfried's *Tristan* and the Medieval Legend of Tristan and Isolde," by Ulrich Müller).

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Jacket image: Tristan playing for the Welsh master, from manuscript R (99v). Reproduced from *Gottfried von Strassburg Tristan: Ausgewählte Abbildungen zur Überlieferung* (Göppingen: Kummerle, 1974) with the kind permission of the editors.

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The volume also contains new interpretations of significant figures and episodes in the work ("Gottfried's Adaptation of the Story of Riwalin and Blanscheflur," by Danielle Buschinger; "Duplicity and Duplexity: The Isolde of the White Hands Sequence," by Neil Thomas; "Interpreting the Love Potion in Gottfried's *Tristan*," by Sidney Johnson; "Performances of Love: Tristan and Isolde at Court," by Will Hasty; "The Female Figures in Gottfried's *Tristan and Isolde*," by Ann Marie Rasmussen). All the essays contribute to a comprehensive view of Gottfried's revolutionary romance, which provocatively elevates a sexual, human love to a summum bonum.

Will Hasty is Professor of German at the University of Florida. He is the editor of *A Companion to Wolfram's "Parzival,"* (1999), and author of *Adventures in Interpretation: The Works of Hartmann von Aue and Their Critical Reception* (1996), both published by Camden House.

