the ‘material realities of gentry economic existence’ and pointedly juxta-
pose the ideal performance of largesse in *Amadace*. In the Heege manuscript, which
belonged from the sixteenth century to a sub-gentry family, *Amadace* is differently
interpreted as ‘a fantasy of social advancement’; but what if the family had acquired
the manuscript along with ‘property’, as Johnston hypothesizes, ‘through an
advantageous marriage’? That would be another story.

The book’s repetition of its material, sometimes verbatim, is occasionally
obtrusive, and Johnston’s interpretations of the ‘gentry romances’ can seem
somewhat forced (as in the insistence that gentry heroes achieve economic
independence by exertion of will), but the focus on gentry ownership is a welcome
contribution to discussion of the production and reception of this important
genre.

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PHILLIPA HARDMAN

Megan Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford:

Megan Leitch’s study of mid- to late fifteenth-century romances in *Romancing
Treason* looks at a wide range of texts influenced by the political landscape of the
Wars of the Roses, arguing for the existence of a literary culture preoccupied with
anxieties over treason. Leitch’s ambitious work seeks to address the importance
of understudied prose romances of the period, as well as illuminate the way
Malory’s *Morte Darthur* engages with treason and resonates with contemporary
secular literature. The book’s re-examination of this undervalued literary period
contributes to late medieval scholarly research by establishing the characteristics
of a late fifteenth-century literary culture beyond Malory.

Following an introductory chapter which situates the book’s argument
within current scholarship, the second chapter helpfully lays a basis for Leitch’s
analysis of treason in Wars of the Roses romances by considering contemporary
correspondence, chronicles, and political verses, revealing the ever-present fear
of social instability and treason in the discourse of late fifteenth-century English
society. She begins by displaying the importance of horizontal treason in these
non-literary texts and finishes the chapter by convincingly showing how the texts
were used to control how accusations of treason were issued and enforced. The
subsequent chapters look at representations of treason in late fifteenth-century
romances. Chapter 3 establishes the ways in which overlooked romances of
the period – *Siege of Thebes*, *Siege of Troy*, and the prose *Melusine* romances –
concentrate on treason more didactically than their fourteenth-century forebears.
The chapter skilfully shows how these prose romances focus more on treachery
than their sources and offer a new secular framework for ethical instruction by accusations of treason and repetitive use of treason words.

Chapter 4 focuses on Malory’s Arthurian cycle, intelligently arguing that Malory was contributing to a wider contemporary genre which reshaped romance material to comment on a politically unstable society. Leitch illustrates how Malory used treason as a mode of establishing ideals, engaging treasonous characters to test the community with actions opposite to chivalric fellowship. The chapter goes on to display the frequent performative use of ‘traitor’ words in dialogue, highlighting unknighthly behaviour through the persistent publicizing of treason. Leitch also uses her argument about treason rhetoric to intriguingly suggest that Malory questions institutional conceptions of loyalty, hypothesizing that he critiques unhelpful legal systems in recognition of contemporary fears of being falsely accused. Chapter 5 reflects on the literary patterns of late fifteenth-century texts that are demonstrated in the previous chapters, illustrating how Caxton’s translated romances show an awareness of contemporary English literary tastes, containing parallel anxieties about trust, fellowship, and treason. Finally, Leitch’s Post Script argues that this preoccupation with treason dwindles in sixteenth-century romances.

Romancing Treason is a stimulating and scholarly examination of the framework used to address treason in Wars of the Roses romances. Leitch convincingly re-evaluates the continuation between medieval and early modern literature while offering an enriched understanding of a distinct literary culture beyond Malory during the mid- to late fifteenth century.

University of Leeds

MARY MICHELE POELLINGER


Cynthia Turner Camp explores how late medieval English hagiographers, such as the Wilton chronicler, Osbern Bokenham, Henry Bradshaw, and John Lydgate, selectively reconfigured the early English past as a means of reframing monastic institutional identities and to effect the ‘ethical betterment’ (p. 123) of the individuals living within them. Taking as her corpus the Middle English lives of five native saints, Camp traces the development of these legends through their Latin and Old French antecedents, their codicological contexts and illustrated forms. Deploying a range of disciplinary approaches, Camp surveys in an impressive manner a breadth of material underpinned with a sound theoretical understanding. While her introductory explanation may be somewhat overblown,