

NEW BOOK NEWS

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Contact: Virginia Davidson-Merritt

Tel: 0442 3244 Telex 826261
01-405 8577

CURIAL AND GUELFA

Translated by Pamela Waley

This is a translation of an anonymous fifteenth century Catalan historical romance, written between 1440 and 1460. The unknown author was thus a contemporary of Sir Thomas Malory and like him was fascinated by tales of courts and tournaments, of knights errant and fair damsels. But whereas the *Morte d'Arthur* is restricted to a reworking of traditional material, this is a historical novel, set in the thirteenth century - some two centuries before it was written - and it reflects the personalities and events of that age as well as the interests and politics of his own time. The adventures of the hero, Curial, take him from Italy to Germany, France, Sinai, Greece, Jerusalem, England, Tunisia and Turkey - strangely, never to Spain. The author's rather ingenuous enthusiasm for classical antiquity adds a characteristically Renaissance tone to a novel which also contains much humour, whose characters are far more convincing and complex than is usual in medieval fiction and in which there is surprisingly strong criticism of the activities of jousting and tournaments. It is a classic of European literature and this translation now makes it accessible for the first time in English.

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9 Winchester Terrace, Winchester, Mass. 01890, USA

George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd.
8 Napier Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia

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PO Box 18, Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 4TE., England
40 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LU, England.