

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This comparative study examines a medieval love story, *Floire and Blancheflor*, and shows how medieval writers from Spain, France, Italy, England and Scandinavia reworked this story from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries to develop and emphasize social, political, religious and artistic goals, while maintaining its entertaining qualities. It shows the importance of a little-known medieval Spanish version to the development of the story throughout Europe, and especially as a precursor to Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo*, and it examines important issues in the development of prose fiction in medieval and Renaissance Europe. This study is unique for its breadth of coverage of one story and for its inclusion of Spain as a significant participant in the development of medieval narrative.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE 32

Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE 32

General Editor: Professor Alastair Minnis, Professor of Medieval Literature,
University of York

Editorial Board

- Professor Patrick Boyde, FBA (Serena Professor of Italian, Cambridge)
 Professor John Burrow, FBA (Winterstoke Professor of English, Bristol)
 Professor Rita Copeland (Professor of English, University of Minnesota)
 Professor Alan Deyermond, FBA (Professor of Hispanic Studies, London)
 Professor Peter Dronke, FBA (Professor of Medieval Latin Literature, Cambridge)
 Dr Simon Gaunt (University of Cambridge)
 Professor Nigel Palmer (Professor of German Medieval and Linguistic Studies,
Oxford)
 Professor Winthrop Wetherbee (Professor of English, Cornell)

This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c. 1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

Recent titles in the series

- 21 *Medieval Dutch Literature in its European Context*, edited by Erik Kooper
 22 *Dante and the Mystical Tradition: Bernard of Clairvaux in the “Commedia,”* by Steven Botterill
 23 *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, edited by Peter Biller and Anne Hudson
 24 *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the “Aeneid” from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*, by Christopher Baswell
 25 *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille’s “Anticlaudianus” and John Gower’s “Confessio Amantis,”* by James Simpson
 26 *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, by Joyce Coleman
 27 *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical text*, by Suzanne Reynolds
 28 *Editing “Piers Plowman”: The Evolution of the Text*, by Charlotte Brewer
 29 *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800–1300, in its European Context*, by Walter Haug
 30 *Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century*, by Sarah Spence
 31 *Lies, Slander and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker*, by Edwin Craun
 32 *“Floire and Blancheflor” and the European Romance*, by Patricia E. Grieve

A complete list of titles in the series can be found at the back of the book

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Floire and Blancheflor
and the European Romance

PATRICIA E. GRIEVE

*Associate Professor of Spanish Literature and Chair,
Columbia University*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521431620

© Cambridge University Press 1997

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997

This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Grieve, Patricia E.

Floire and Blancheflor and the European romance / Patricia E. Grieve.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in medieval literature; 32)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 43162 X (hardback)

1. Floire et Blancheflor (Romance) 2. Romances – History and criticism.

I. Title. II. Series.

PN690.F56G75 1997

809.1'02 – dc20 96–19750 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-43162-0 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-43162-X hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02767-0 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-02767-5 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blanche-flor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For my parents

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>Preface</i>		<i>page</i> xi
<i>Introduction</i>		1
Part One	<i>Floire and Blancheflor as Peregrinus</i>	13
1	Texts and origins	15
	The French manuscripts	17
	Critical opinions: early versions and origins	18
	<i>Flores y Blancaflor</i> in Spain: the prose romance and the Chronicle	20
	<i>Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor</i> : the story	23
	<i>Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor</i> : vernacular prose historiography	27
	<i>Floire and Blancheflor</i> in Scandinavia	36
	Lexical dilemmas	39
	Conclusion	50
Part Two	The road to conversion	52
2	Cunning and ingenuity or Divine Intervention?	53
	The selling of Blancheflor	57
	Blancheflor in the tower	65
	The judgment of the lovers	72
3	Signs, wonders and the telling of the tale	86
	Imagery of narrative: pilgrimage, garden and conversion	89
	Imagery of narrative: representations of cunning and ingenuity	111
	The changing role of the narrator	118

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

	Narrative discourse in <i>Il Filocolo</i> : Readers, writers and storytellers	123
	Conclusion	131
4	Routes of conversion: time and space	134
	Moral geography and spiritual redemption	134
	From pagan court to Christian kingdom: <i>Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor</i> and <i>Il Filocolo</i>	138
5	Generic crossroads	159
	The European versions of <i>Floire and Blancheflor</i>	161
	Weaving the narrative: memory, myth and history	167
	Weaving the narrative: multiple discourses in <i>Il Filocolo</i>	171
Epilogue	Poetics of continuation	182
	The strangest treason: genealogy and textual lineage	182
	“Stuffed with Ymagere”: <i>Emaré</i>	190
	Keats’s <i>The Eve of St. Agnes</i>	191
	The legend of Flores and Blancaflor in Judeo-Spanish ballads	193
	<i>Flores y Blancaflor</i> and courtship folktales in twentieth-century Spain	198
Appendices	A. <i>Crónica de Flores y Blancaflor</i> : the reign of King Fines and King Flores	202
	B. Table of important characters and place- names in major European versions of <i>Floire and Blancheflor</i>	204
	<i>Bibliography</i>	210
	<i>Index</i>	231

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

This study began as a seminar assignment in a graduate class, a comparison of the sixteenth-century Spanish prose romance *Historia de los dos enamorados Flores y Blancaflor* with the two French poems traditionally presumed to be closest to a lost French original, and from which the Spanish version was purportedly translated.

Bibliographical research for the class assignment went almost too swiftly, for no one had written anything on the Spanish text except for Bonilla y San Martín in the general introduction to his edition. This is, of course, not a new situation in Hispanic literary studies. A.D. Deyermond's oft-cited article on "The Lost Genre of Medieval Spanish Literature" called attention to Hispanists' frequent disregard for "translations" in general and the romance in particular. Dieter Mehl pleaded the case for Middle English romances that suffered similar scorn from the pens of those who compared them unfavorably with the French "originals": "It is worth asking, however, whether the English romances are no more than mere translations and whether, in addressing a completely different audience, the English authors did not create a new literary type that should be judged by other standards than the French 'originals'" (2).

At first, my intention was to write an article rescuing the Spanish prose romance from near-oblivion, but Butler Library's interlibrary loan provided me with José Gómez Pérez's article, "Leyendas medievales españolas del ciclo carolingio," from an obscure and now defunct Venezuelan journal. The article contained a transcription of a lengthy interpolation of the romance of *Flores y Blancaflor* in a fourteenth-century reworking of an Alfonsine chronicle – *Estoria de España*, the history of Spain written in the court of Alfonso el Sabio in the thirteenth century. José Gómez Pérez came across the fourteenth-century manuscript during his tenure as a bibliographer and researcher at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, but none of the extensive literary criticism about *Floire and Blancheflor* includes knowledge of this chronicle-version. Gómez Pérez did nothing to introduce it into the mainstream of *Floire and Blancheflor* criticism; indeed, as late as 1979 Roberto Giacone, understandably unaware of the existence of the Spanish Chronicle,

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

failed to include it in his schema of the European versions of the tale (“*Floris and Blauncefleur: Critical Issues*”); Marvin J. Ward’s 1983 “*Floire et Blancheflor: A Bibliography*” contains under Spain, in the manuscript category, “none extant” (47).¹ The rediscovery of the Spanish manuscript was crucial to my own study, for the chronicle-version is more than just another witness to the popularity of this medieval love story: it is the fullest example extant of what Karl Christ and Roberto Giacone postulated in 1916 and 1979, respectively, to be the earliest known version of the legend, and it opens the door to vexed questions of the relationship between the European versions, in particular between the Castilian and Scandinavian ones, and between Boccaccio’s *Il Filocolo* and the Spanish Chronicle itself. In its own right, it is a fascinating version of the legend that helps us to understand the composition of medieval narrative in general. The Spanish prose romance, once the focus of my research, receded into the background in light of the rediscovery of the chronicle manuscript through Gómez Pérez’s transcription.

I am grateful to Columbia University for a year’s leave and to the Council on Research in the Humanities for summer grants in 1986 and 1988, to the Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de España for a travel grant in 1986 which allowed me to transcribe the text of the chronicle-version of *Flores y Blancaflor* in the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, and to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a grant in 1987.

I thank the following libraries and curators for their help in securing the sometimes hard-to-find manuscripts and printed editions of *Floire and Blancheflor*: the Butler Library; the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid; the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, especially Manuel Sánchez Mariana, Julián Martín Abad and Paloma Fernández; Jaime Moll of the Real Academia Española; the Sorbonne; the British Library, especially Dennis Rhodes and Geoffrey West; the Hispanic Society of America; and the library of Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London.

Among the scores of people here and abroad who have helped me in so many ways throughout the various stages of this project, I am very grateful to Michel Garcia, Samuel Armistead, Joan Ferrante, Félix Martínez-Bonati, Teodolinda Barolini, Kathy Eden, Victoria Kirkham, Dwayne Carpenter, Ivy Corfis, Kenneth Baxter Wolf, Robert Hollander, Harvey Sharrer, Clive Griffin, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Marie Collins, Deborah Compte and Theodore Faunce, and the audience of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar at Westfield College, now Queen Mary and Westfield. Robin Bower went above and beyond the call of duty by reading the entire manuscript. I would like to thank the editors at Cambridge University Press, Katharina Brett, Kevin Taylor, Rosemary Morris and Ann Rex – and

¹ José Fradejas Lebrero refers briefly to the existence of the chronicle-version in a study of fourteenth-century romances, and supports the idea of a Hispanic origin for the tale, but unfortunately does not give identifying details (“*Algunas notas*” 313–14).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02767-0 - Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance

Patricia E. Grieve

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

especially the reader of my typescript, A. J. Minnis, for their support of this project, and their generous advice and judicious counsel, the importance of which readers of *Floire and Blancheflor* know only too well. Very special thanks, as ever, go to Alan Deyermond, whose class first introduced me to *Floire and Blancheflor*, and whose wisdom and kindness have guided me ever since. Anticipating possible negative criticism from his readers, Boccaccio referred them to the “true” author of *Il Filocolo*, the priest Ilario. Alas, I have no Ilario, so the shortcomings of this work remain my own.

I thank, also, my research assistants, Molly Bernstein, Robin Bower, Christine Duvernet, Myrna Ortiz, Angela Weisl, Elizabeth Chamberlain and Andrea Parra, for all their help and for their gracious willingness to track down “just one more” obscure note or reference on Floire and Blancheflor. I am grateful to Emily Francomano for her heroic effort on the index. I thank, finally, my husband, Jeffrey Hildner, for his advice and support, and for listening to “just one more” version of *Floire and Blancheflor*, and Emily Madison Hildner, who makes it all worthwhile.