

FROM HEROIC EPIC TO COURTLY LITERATURE

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Annotation *This thesis examines the transition from heroic epic traditions to courtly literature in the development of world literature. The study analyzes the aesthetic and ideological transformations that occurred during the Middle Ages, when the heroic ideal was enriched by the culture of chivalry and courtly values. Particular attention is given to the themes of love, loyalty, and moral virtue that became central in courtly literature. The paper also highlights the formation and significance of courtly literature in European literary history.*

Аннотация *В данной работе рассматривается процесс перехода от героического эпоса к куртуазной литературе в развитии мировой литературы. Анализируются эстетические и идейные изменения, произошедшие в средневековый период, когда героический идеал был дополнен культурой рыцарства и придворными ценностями. Особое внимание уделяется темам любви, верности и нравственных добродетелей, характерных для куртуазной литературы. Также освещается формирование и значение куртуазной литературы в европейской литературной традиции.*

Annotatsiya *Mazkur tezisdagi jahon adabiyoti taraqqiyotida qahramonlik eposidan kurtuaz (saroy) adabiyotiga o'tish jarayoni tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda o'rta asrlar adabiyotida yuz bergan estetik va g'oyaviy o'zgarishlar, qahramonlik idealining yangi ritsarlik madaniyati bilan boyishi hamda sevgi, sadoqat va axloqiy fazilatlarining badiiy ifodasi ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, kurtuaz adabiyotining shakllanishi va uning Yevropa adabiyotidagi o'rni yoritiladi.*

Keywords: *Heroic epic, courtly literature, chivalric culture, medieval literature, court literature, love motif, hero image, literary evolution*

Ключевые слова: *Героический эпос, куртуазная литература, рыцарская культура, средневековая литература, придворная литература, мотив любви, образ героя, литературная эволюция*

Kalit so'zlar: *Qahramonlik eposi, kurtuaz adabiyot, ritsarlik madaniyati, o'rta asrlar adabiyoti, saroy adabiyoti, sevgi motivi, qahramon obrazi, adabiy evolyutsiya.*

The formation of Arthur's image as a great monarch was most significantly and fundamentally influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1095–1155), who, in his work *Historia Regum Britanniae*, gave this image its definitive form. This Latin pseudo-historical treatise holds truly revolutionary significance for the Arthurian tradition, as it

is here that Arthur is first portrayed not merely as a military leader (*dux bellorum*), but as a fully-fledged King of Britain, a ruler endowed with dynastic legitimacy. The transformation of Arthur's image from a Welsh war leader into a great medieval monarch, the legendary founder of Camelot and a symbol of the "golden age" of chivalric valor, took place between the 12th and 15th centuries through the works of writers from Europe and the British Isles. This process established Arthur as the central figure of courtly culture, the ideal Christian ruler, and the patron of a renowned brotherhood of knights, among whom Lancelot and Gawain are particularly prominent. It is precisely this romanticized and chivalrically enriched interpretation of the Arthurian legends that has left the most profound imprint on cultural memory and English literature. The work of Geoffrey of Monmouth draws on a variety of sources, including *Historia Brittonum* by Nennius, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by Bede, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* by Gildas, medieval Welsh genealogies, poems attributed to Taliesin, and other Welsh traditions. However, Geoffrey, reworking these sources with a rich artistic imagination, transformed them into a coherent historical narrative. Geoffrey of Monmouth claims that in his work he relied on a very ancient book written in the British language, which, according to him, was provided to him by the Archdeacon of Oxford. Most modern scholars, however, regard this claim as a literary device employed to lend the text authority and credibility. Miles Russell, in his 2017 study *Arthur and the Kings of Britain: The Historical Truth Behind the Myths*, provides a detailed analysis of this issue. In *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Arthur is portrayed as a powerful conqueror: he not only unites Britain but also creates an empire extending to the European continent. Geoffrey describes Arthur's coronation, his marriage to Guinevere, and the establishment of the royal court in the city that would later become known as Camelot. However, Geoffrey himself does not use the name "Camelot"; he refers to Caerleon-on-Usk as Arthur's primary royal residence.

The systematization and artistic presentation of the myths surrounding Merlin and Arthur, carried out by Geoffrey of Monmouth, contributed to their wide popularity, which persists to this day. For this reason, he is often recognized by scholars as the principal creator of the Arthurian canon. Works dedicated to Arthur are generally conventionally divided into "pre-Geoffrey" and "post-Geoffrey" texts, that is, those composed before Geoffrey or under his influence. *Historia Regum Britanniae* achieved extraordinary dissemination in medieval Western Europe. In 1929, Acton Griscom counted 186 surviving manuscripts of the work; subsequently, additional copies have been discovered. The work acquired a rich and enduring "afterlife" through numerous translations and adaptations. Among these are *Roman de Brut* (1155), *Brut* (early 13th century), and several anonymous Middle Welsh versions known as *Brut y Brenhinedd*. This work by Geoffrey of Monmouth was created during the establishment of Norman rule in Britain under the Plantagenet dynasty. Members of

this dynasty endorsed Geoffrey's composition because it recounted the rulers of Britain who preceded the Saxons and were, according to the narrative, genealogically descended from the Roman emperors. Seeking to emphasize his connection with the legendary sovereign, Henry II of England gave one of his grandsons the name Arthur. The legend of a genetic link to the mythical Arthur was actively promoted by Edward I of England. Contemporary sources report that he hosted five feasts "in the spirit of the Knights of the Round Table." Furthermore, Edward justified his claims over Scotland by asserting that the territory had once belonged to Arthur's kingdom. In honor of Arthur's legendary chivalric brotherhood, Edward I established the Order of the Garter. In 1296, taking advantage of the absence of an heir following the death of King Alexander III of Scotland, Edward invaded Scotland with his forces and declared its annexation to England in the name of King Arthur. The political use of Arthur's image continued in subsequent eras. As a result of the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485), Henry VII of England came to power, founding a new dynasty—the Tudors. To consolidate the legitimacy of his rule, Henry VII married Elizabeth of York, the eldest daughter of Edward IV of England, but he also sought additional means to justify his claim to the throne. Like Edward I, he soon declared himself a descendant of King Arthur. To convince the nobility and the court of the legitimacy of his actions, Henry VII fought under a banner depicting the red dragon, the symbol of the power of Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father. When Henry VII's firstborn was born, he was given the name Arthur—in honor of his alleged illustrious ancestor.

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