Tristram And Iseult Cycle Of The Arthurian Legend In English Literature

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Abstract
A discussion of the Tristram and Iseult cycle in English literature would be incomplete without a short but comprehensive history of the evolution of the Arthurian legend as a whole. Little is known of the beginnings of the great international epic. A great number of people are of the opinion that it sprung up as the outgrowth of an illiterate age, and was based on legendary tales and medieval mythological verse. However, we find in Gurteen's "The Arthurian Epic" the statement that "as we advance in our summary of the Arthurian Epic the true character of the work will be brought out in bold relief, and we shall see that instead of its being an inartistic collection of monastic legends it is, on the contrary, a grand religious prose-poem of marvelous power and beauty, the production of some of the most learned and gifted Trouveres of the Plantagenet era." (1)

It is certain, however, that the popular tales were at an early date connected with it. From the time of Nennius' history to the "History of the Kings of Britain" by Geoffrey of Monmouth there is little evidence as to the evolution and growth of the story of Arthur. In Geoffrey we find the fully developed story and it may be supposed that he received a fairly comprehensive tale, which had been adorned with historical and popular traditions. Geoffrey, who was of Welsh and Norman descent, probably added some interesting anecdotes to the story and in this way created an interest in the debatable historical figure of Arthur.

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Tristan and Iseult tells the story of a Cornish knight, Tristan, who travels to Ireland to bring back the lovely princess Iseult for his uncle Mark to marry. En route, the two young people fall in love. Some legends have it that the lovers mistakenly ingested a love potion that made them fall eternally and irrevocably in love. When they reach their destination, Iseult marries King Mark but continues her affair. There are various versions of the end of this story – Some end in tragedy with both dying, while others have them escaping, begging the king for forgiveness and living happily ever after. Whatever the outcome, the story has had an indelible impact on Western romantic and tragic traditions. It was also incorporated into Arthurian legends. Tristan and Iseult is an influential romance story, retold in numerous sources with as many variations since the 12th century. The story is a tragedy about the adulterous love between the Cornish knight Tristan (Tristram) and the Irish princess Iseult (Isolde, Yseult, etc.). The connection between Tristan and Iseult and the Arthurian legend was expanded over time, and sometime shortly after the completion of the Vulgate Cycle (or the Lancelot-Grail) in the first quarter of the 13th century, two authors created the vast Prose Tristan, which fully establishes Tristan as a Knight of the Round Table who even participates in the Quest for the Holy Grail. A new English translation of Bédier's Roman de Tristan et Iseut (1900) by Edward J. Gallagher was published in 2013 by Hackett Publishing Company. Tristan and Iseult or Tristan and Isolde, etc., may also refer to: Tristan und Isolde, 19th century opera by Richard Wagner.