

The Vulgar Cycle: The Raunchy Tales of King Arthur and His Knights



The Vulgar Cycle of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table by O. Thomas Gift

★★★★★ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English



File size	: 2644 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 229 pages
Lending	: Enabled



The Arthurian legend, with its tales of chivalry, courtly love, and heroic quests, has captivated imaginations for centuries. However, there exists a lesser-known but equally intriguing side to the Arthurian lore: the Vulgar Cycle. This collection of medieval tales presents a far more bawdy and raunchy take on the legendary King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

Origins and Authorship

The Vulgar Cycle emerged in the 13th century, primarily in France and Italy. Its origins can be traced to oral storytelling traditions and popular romances. Unlike the more refined and polished texts of the earlier Arthurian tradition, the Vulgar Cycle embraced vulgarity, humor, and earthy realism.

The authorship of these tales is largely anonymous, but some scholars attribute them to a group of minstrel poets known as jongleurs, who performed these stories for entertainment at courtly gatherings and town squares.

Thematic Elements

- **Courtly Excess:** The Vulgar Cycle revels in the lavish lifestyle and debauchery of King Arthur's court. Knights indulge in gluttony, drunkenness, and promiscuity, subverting the idealized notions of chivalry.
- **Farcical Humor:** Misadventures, slapstick comedy, and sexual innuendos abound in the Vulgar Cycle. Arthur's knights often find themselves in absurd and embarrassing situations, eliciting laughter from the audience.
- **Satire:** The tales subtly critique the social and religious norms of the time. They expose the hypocrisy and corruption within the court and the church, using humor as a tool for social commentary.

Main Characters

The Vulgar Cycle features a cast of familiar and unfamiliar characters from the Arthurian legend.

- **King Arthur:** A far cry from the noble and wise king of other tales, Arthur in the Vulgar Cycle is a gluttonous, lascivious, and often clueless ruler.
- **Sir Lancelot:** The legendary knight is depicted as a womanizing philanderer, engaged in numerous illicit affairs with the ladies of the court.
- **Sir Gawain:** Arthur's nephew is transformed into a boastful and cowardly braggart, constantly seeking adventure but failing miserably.
- **Queen Guinevere:** Arthur's unfaithful wife is portrayed as a manipulative and promiscuous woman who engages in multiple love

affairs.

Significant Stories

The Vulgar Cycle encompasses a wide range of tales, some of the most notable include:

- **The Quest for the Holy Grail:** A bawdy parody of the sacred quest, featuring knights who engage in drunken brawls, sleep with prostitutes, and ultimately fail in their mission.
- **The Marriage of Sir Gawain:** A comical tale of Gawain's ill-fated attempt to marry an ugly but wealthy giantess.
- **The Death of King Arthur:** A raunchy and chaotic retelling of Arthur's final battle and his knights' subsequent escapades.

Legacy and Influence

Despite its vulgarity and bawdy humor, the Vulgar Cycle has had a profound impact on Arthurian literature and popular culture. Its raunchy tales have influenced later works such as the Italian poet Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso" and the English playwright Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

In recent times, the Vulgar Cycle has seen a revival of interest, with scholars and contemporary writers exploring its literary and cultural significance. It continues to offer a unique and entertaining perspective on the Arthurian legend, challenging traditional interpretations and showcasing the diverse nature of medieval storytelling.

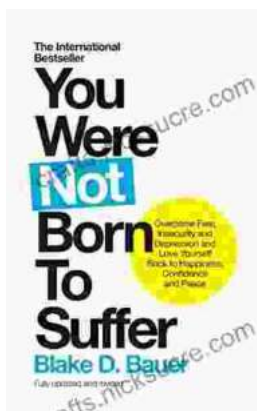
The Vulgar Cycle of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table is a fascinating and irreverent collection of medieval tales. It offers a glimpse into the bawdy and humorous side of Arthurian lore, subverting the idealized notions of chivalry and presenting a more realistic and earthy portrayal of the legendary characters. Through its exaggerated humor and social commentary, the Vulgar Cycle remains an entertaining and thought-provoking contribution to the Arthurian corpus.



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