TEMA

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Medieval Literature of Oral Transmission: The Arthurian Legend. G. Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales

La literatura medieval de transmisión oral: La leyenda Artúrica. G. Chaucer: Los Cuentos de Canterbury.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote / The droghte of March hath perced to the roote": few lines in English literature are as widely known as these, and few begin a book that brings together so many voices. They open the Canterbury Tales, written by Geoffrey Chaucer at the end of the fourteenth century. Yet the pilgrims who set out for Canterbury ride through a country whose imagination had long been shaped by another kind of story: tales of a king, a round table, a sword, a grail and a doomed love, told and retold by minstrels, clerics and poets for centuries. This topic studies those two worlds and the bridge between them.

I will organise the topic in five steps. First, I will explain what "oral transmission" means for medieval literature and why it matters. Secondly, I will trace the Arthurian legend from its uncertain origins to Sir Thomas Malory. Thirdly, I will place Geoffrey Chaucer in the England of his time and examine the Canterbury Tales: structure, text, pilgrims, tales, their link with Arthur and their reception. Fourthly, I will discuss the pedagogical and didactic implications of the topic, and finally I will draw a conclusion.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted: Larry D. Benson's edition The Riverside Chaucer (Houghton Mifflin, 1987, and Oxford University Press, 1988); Piero Boitani and Jill Mann's The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer (Cambridge University Press, second edition, 2003); W. R. J. Barron's collective volume The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature (University of Wales Press, 1999); and Dinah Birch's The Oxford Companion to English Literature (Oxford University Press, seventh edition, 2009). I have also used British Library, Britannica and university resources and, for the educational framework, the LOMLOE and the Royal and Extremaduran Decrees I will cite in section 5.