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The Romance Of Tristan: The Tale Of Tristan's Madness (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

This edition contains perhaps the earliest and most elemental version of the tragic legend of Tristan and Yseult in a distinguished prose translation. Alan S. Fredrick summarizes missing episodes and includes a translation of 'The Tale of Tristan's Madness.' For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

It is usually the case that within a page or two of reading an introduction, the reader knows whether or not they are in the hands of a reliable editor and translator. Alan Fredrick inspires such confidence. His is a scholarly, readable prose translation, adequately but not overwhelmingly annotated. Beroul's account of the Tristan and Yseult legend (in others, the lovers' names appear variously as Tristram, Isolde, Iseut, etc.) is the oldest extant version, although it now exists only in fragmentary form. Its fascination lies partly in that it belongs to an older form of storytelling, with quite different conventions from modern forms. So be prepared for characters dying more than once, events occurring out of sequence, and plenty of unapologetic author intervention. Some of the

plot elements are wonderful, and have been borrowed and reworked ever since, by Shakespeare and others. Some have become interwoven with the Arthurian cycle. Read this if you are interested in seeing how the art of fiction has evolved in Europe through the ages, or if you enjoy fables that have a folksy (and sometimes vulgar) flavor.

Though the story of Tristan and Iseult predates even this particular telling of the story, it is the earliest extant version we have, and it suffers not at all from its age. Full of love, battle, humor (and there are some great points of humor in the book), and a visit from Arthur's knights, this is a classic tale of romance and betrayal. Any fan of Arthurian myth should read this timeless tale that has inspired so many to write books, music, and poetry. Even before there was the story of Romeo and Juliet, there was this story of star crossed lovers.

Romance of Tristan is a great read. Takes you back to the 11th and 12th Centuries and describes a somewhat tragic love affair between Tristan and the King's wife, Yseult (Isolde). The King is Tristan's uncle, and Tristan is a great knight in King Mark's court, so this adds to the story's impact. Tristan and Yseult are fatalistic lovers, drawn to each other by a 'love potion', and constantly plotting their meetings even under serious auspices of the King and his courtiers. The plots and tales and protocols of that time in history are vividly described and Beroul uses many characters to paint the tale. It appears that Beroul is largely sympathetic to the fugitive lovers and his bias is clearly against the ones who try to harm or plot against them. I would recommend reading the introduction of this book for some good insight from the translator and for his insights into the original 12th century text. This translation makes for a fast and captivating read.

From the publisher Penguin comes a translation of the Romance of Tristan by Beroul that seems to be aimed at the general population. The translator, Alan. S. Frederick, sought to "strike a balance between a version which is readable in Modern English prose and one which is still recognizably Beroul's poem." While not a definitive edition or completely accurate to the original text, it is a version that the general audience will find delightful to read. The introduction provides a setting for the book, and fills in details that many who are not familiar with medieval literature would find helpful. The analysis within the introduction also provides an added dimension so that the reader would be able to fully appreciate the text with minor guidance. The summary of earlier episodes of the story also lessens the confusion often associated with reading a medieval text. The style of the translation is conducive to smooth reading and avoid copious footnotes that often lead to reader

frustration. The division of chapters with informative titles also makes the text enjoyable to read. The story is translated to paragraph form, a refreshing contrast with line by line translation in other versions which seems boring and dull. An translation of a separate tale, the madness of Tristan is also included to make the tale complete. It seems no effort is spared to make the text readable. The difficulty of this text is less than that of a Harry Potter novel. I would recommend this book to all readers looking for a simple and enjoyable tale of medieval romance. Thanks must be given to god and Penguin publishing for opening up this legendary medieval tale to a wider audience.

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