

УДК 7.04:305-055.2:821.133.1"04/14"

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Зміст і образ: гендерна тематика в іконографії пригодницької літератури Середньовіччя

**Image and Narrative: Gender Theme in the
Iconography of Medieval Courtly Literature**

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<http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1068626>

Анотація. Готична ілюмінація, яка охоплює широке коло тем і сюжетів, з одного боку, покликана візуалізувати утопічний світ, створений у текстах романів, з іншого боку, вона представляє паралельний ілюстративний нарратив. Жіночі образи відіграють значущу роль у цьому світі. Героїні куртуазних романів, наділені активним, дієвим характером, мотивують розвиток сюжету, а яскрава і багата образність ілюстративних циклів слугує інструментом, за допомогою якого можна реконструювати уявлення про ідею жіночності в придворно-аристократичній культурі Середньовіччя. У статті зроблено спробу охарактеризувати образи жіночих персонажів у зв'язку з соціокультурними архетипними ідеями, ґрунтуючись на ілюстративних матеріалах з манускриптів Національної бібліотеки Франції BN MS Français 95, BN MS Français 117, Arsenal 3479, Arsenal 3477, BN MS Français 112 (1), 112 (2), 112 (3), BN MS Français 226, BN MS Français 9123, BN MS Français 99, and BN MS Français 115. Ці ілюміновані манускрипти слугують засобом, за допомогою якого стає можливим встановити семантичні межі в трактуванні образу жінки в куртуазній культурі: жінки і влади, жінки і кохання, жінки і світу надприродного, жінки і пригод, жінки і материнства.

Ключові слова: ілюмінація, ілюстративні цикли, артурівські романи, гендер, куртуазна культура.

A woman in the works of medieval fine arts, in particular, on the illuminated pages of manuscripts, is a constant character. Her multifaceted image, however, does not remain the same, it is transformed under the influence of historical, social and cultural circumstances which form the world-view of the people of that age.

Theme of chivalry and chivalrous culture in its historical realia and in various mythological and literature contexts takes noticeable place in medieval studies. Scholar research on chivalry owes long-lasting history. The first attempts to comprehend the knightly estate and its ethos were made by contemporaries themselves, in particular, in the treatise of Ramon Llull of the late XIIIth century. The Book of the Order of Chivalry provided a theoretical justification for the knightly ideal, which existed only in the literature of the *chanson de geste* and the courtly novel. A new surge of interest in medieval chivalry theme occurred in XVIIIth century contributed by the historical works of P. Honore de Sainte-Marie (1718) and J.-B. Lacourne de Saint-Palais (1759–1760). But a truly fundamental, multidimensional study of the phenomenon of chivalry and knightly culture was given by the scholarship of the XXth century. Research by Rua [1], Cohen [2], Blok [3], Duby [4-6], Flory [7], Kin [8], Cardini [9], Contamin [10], Pasturo [11] constitute its classical historiographic base. And despite the seemingly total elaboration of the phenomenon in all its nuances, with each new generation of scholars it is experiencing another renaissance.

Iconographic studies in Arthurian literature were started by Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hubert Loomis [12] and Jaques Ivon [13]. Today arthuriana has entered the circle of scholar studies in medieval field and it has well-developed and detailed bibliography. Historiography study by Norris Lacy considers very carefully history of Arthurian studies in humanities [14]. Among current studies dealing with visual side of the topic are those that belong to authorship of Sophie Cassagne-Brouquet [15], Keith Busby [16], Alison Stones [17-21], Irène Fabry-Tehranchi [22], Barbara Lupack [23], Terry Nixon [24] and others.

The concept of chivalry with its clearly outlined behavioral and ethical model, with its motivated ideological elitism, with its semantically-filled subject world, fits perfectly into the sphere of studies of mentalities and cultural identities that are read primarily through artistic representations. The ideas

that characterize knightly culture can be followed through artistic representations, mainly in illuminated manuscripts that survived in big amount. Gender aspect in scholarship is mostly under consideration of historians and literature historians. This paper attempts and aims to reveal the features of iconography Arthurian illustrative cycles in the context of the establishment and development of ideological and ethical models in knight's environment of medieval Europe. An interdisciplinary research model represents a synthesis of the iconographic, semiotic, historical, and anthropological methodological approaches applied in the article, and by examining solid number of illustrations that belong to different manuscripts from Lancelot-Grail cycle the author gains sense of novelty required in the study's field.

In artistic culture of the XIIth c., both verbal and visual, there takes place creation of the image/images of woman which are filled with the corresponding semantic contents. With the appearance of the phenomenon of courtesy and affirmation of its norms and ideals female images acquire positive connotations inspired by the sum of transformations in the secular culture. In general, chivalrous and courteous social cultural model is characterized by a certain closed nature in the sense that it produces norms of conduct and aesthetic ideals and uses them itself, they often acquire the form of cult.

Chivalrous cultural model with its interpretation of femininity in its artistic manifestation is subordinated to the norms of the ideal, both ethical, behavioural and aesthetic one, dictated by the requirements of the code of honour and ideas of beauty which are theatrical in their essence. Secular literature of the Gothic Middle Ages was called to verbalize that ideal and decorate it, to introduce an ideal knight and a beautiful lady into the dimension of extraordinary, fanciful, and wonderful. It is in such conditions that bravery, courage, dedication and readiness to overcome obstacles for the sake of serving the ideal with the knights are properly manifested and that courteous virtues of beautiful ladies are disclosed, at the same time they are opposed to characters and heroes who are the embodiment of diametrically opposite features (dichotomy of world outlook used to be a characteristic feature of medieval human being in general) – intriguing, hypocrisy, meanness. Chivalrous novel consistently discloses and supports the images of courteous characters – a typical and predictable image, at the same time the

deeds of characters are subordinated to the norms and requirements of chivalrous ethos, their motivation and implementation, however, are based on the principles of individualism.

The so-called classical Arthuriana synthesized mythological and real ideas about the exemplary chivalry and became a part of verbal and visual culture of the symbolic Middle Ages. The Arthurian literature – both that written by authors and anonymous one – accumulated different cultural and social norms, in particular, gender ones. On the one hand, the sum total of women's types in literary Arthuriana is a kind of reflection of life realia, and on the other hand – in texts and illustrative cycles there has been formed a system of women's images which can be considered to be an embodiment of idealized, mythological norms and ideas. Pondering over the cultural sense of Arthurian legends, it is desirable to take into account the specific nature of medieval perception: very many things in that epos seem to be irrational, contradictory, there constantly intertwine polar oppositions – dull and comic, bodily and spiritual, earthly and heavenly, good and evil. «The picture of the world» was not uniform for all the social strata, knights, clergy, commoners and peasants existed in quite separated systems of coordinates, and that left an imprint on the medieval culture. At the same time medieval Christian world outlook smoothed those actual discrepancies, transferring them into the sphere of comprehensive superworld categories.

The Arthurian world in the French novel tradition exists, frankly speaking, beyond any clear temporary measures, it is not localized geographically: Arthur is present where there exists the spirit of chivalry, and vice versa – it can exist only under the patronage of its guarantor – King Arthur, and his kingdom becomes a kind of poetic and moral utopia. Gothic illumination which embraces a very wide range of topics and plot lines, is, on the one hand, was aimed to visualize utopic reality created in the texts of novels, and on the other hand – in illustrations to the novels about the Knights of the Round Table there appears the world going beyond the narrative discourse. The image of a lady occupies an important place in this world. The heroines of novels and miniatures are active in the event collisions and perform the role of inspirers who in some way influence the development of plot lines, and, thus novel plots with their bright verbal and visual imagery became a tool on the way to reconstruction of ideas about courteous femininity in its different manifestations.

A compiled cycle of Lancelot-Grail unites numerous variative novel plot lines in which there are tens of characters. Considering female images in illustrative cycles to Arthurian novels, let us analyze the key figures which can be considered the embodiment of a certain sum of archetype ideas: Guinevere, Igraine, Laudine, Lunete, Vivian, Morgan le Fay.

In the illustrative cycles for illuminated Arthurian novels of the XIIIth – XVth c. permanent presence of women in the majority of depictions is the characteristic feature. Artists, while reproducing the general story line, accentuate the collisions based on mutual relations, in particular, love affairs, and on the adventurous idea. The image of woman often plays if not the key role, then at least the role of the same importance as the image of characters-knights Lancelot, Evaine or Gawain. Semantic boundaries of the artistic image of woman in courteous culture in general and in Gothic illumination to courteous novels as a kind of mirror of chivalrous-courteous identity, in particular, are quite wide, which enables to separate some groups of images in which woman acts both on-camera and off-camera: woman and power, woman and love, woman and the world of supernatural, women and adventurism, woman and maternity.

Arthurian novels depict the world which is an elite one in social and cultural sense, the events takes place at the royal court, in castles, and those events are created by the knights and ladies, whose genealogy is of exclusively a noble origin. It is on the idea of vassalage and dedicated suzerain serving, in this case – the king who united the Knights of the Round Table that the idea of chivalrous identity is primarily based. In the illustrative series to the novels there permanently is present the image of king and queen, and it is very much variable. The image of Arthur in terms of artistic semantics can be characterized rather as a static or even a passive one, while the image of Queen Guinevere is, on the contrary, an active one, and her roles are distinguished for their exceptional variability, this is Guinevere-queen, Guinevere-the queen of heart and Guinevere-betrayer. Illuminators of Arthurian novels necessarily introduce into the illustrative cycles miniatures of the representative type which depict Guinevere whose image corresponds to classical ideas of the queen's functions. In particular, such are the illustrations of the scene of wedding of Arthur and Guinevere which can be interpreted as symbolic depiction of the

legitimacy of her queen's status (François 105, fol. 231; François 95, fol. 273; François 9123, fol. 239). A typical composition for the stylistics of French illumination of the XIIIth c. is horizontal frame construction with a limited number of characters, in the centre of which there is depicted the royal couple in front of the priest. A characteristic sample here is the miniatures of the matrimony of Arthur and Guinevere with "saint graal (histoire du)", illuminated in the north of France at the end of the XIIIth c. (this is one of the most famous ones in the historiography of Arthurian manuscripts, which fact was mentioned as far back as by Loomis) (François 95, fol. 273) and Uther Pendragon with Igraine from the same manuscript (François 95, fol. 152). Samples of illumination of the end of the XIVth – XVth c. are deprived of schematic nature and conciseness characteristic of early Gothic samples, the scenes are introduced into a specific spatial environment, as, for instance, in the miniature with the depiction of the scene of matrimony of the Fisher King and Arcade (François 112 (1), fol. 28v). Typical for illustrative cycles of Arthurian novels are also representative static compositions in which the king and the queen are depicted side by side on the thrones surrounded by the train or without it (Arsenal 3479, fol. 478) Miniatures of manuscripts dated the XIIIth. c. are often composed as a historated initial (François 123, fol. 80; François 770, fol. 246). These are static compositions with frontal depictions of the crowned king and queen. Guinevere was traditionally depicted as a young, nice woman whose image can be considered to be a benchmark of courteous aesthetics. Besides some purely representative scenes, in which the image of Guinevere is within the framework of the notion of the «ruler», «queen», miniatures are made in which she is depicted as the «hostess of the castle», she is sitting together with Arthur at the head of the banquet table, Guinevere is separated among the spectators of chivalrous tournaments as the chief person. Chivalrous culture is characterized by regulation and ritualization of all the aspects of social life, semiotics and commitment to the rules of conduct. Cultural chivalrous identity compares well with the theatrical nature, «reader-orientation» which was embodied in the life of the royal court, depiction of which is one of the most popular and important topics in the miniature of the «Arthurian cycle». The plots with tournaments, banquets, court ceremonies also belong to obligatory

ones in the illustrative cycles of all the versions of the chivalrous novels. The image of woman in this context constitutes an integral part of novel iconography. The figure of the Lady in the scenes of court life plays a crucial role, it becomes a symbolic embodiment of a festive, theatrical aspect courteous chivalry's life. Miniatures with depictions of tournaments can be considered to be a sample of composition, when a female personage acts, so to say, off-camera: a miniaturist places a compositional and semantic accent on the battle scene, however the image of Guinevere and ladies from her train at the platform motivates the very action (François 111, fol. 91; François 112 (1), fol. 184). The group of images in which ideas about the duties and everyday life of the queen are visualized are also miniatures with the scenes where Guinevere accompanies Arthur while hunting (François 122, fol. 65v; François 9123, fol. 210; François 95, fol. 281v), hosts knights together with Arthur in their castle (François 105, fol. 199v; François 95, fol. 277).

Late medieval Arthurian literature, in particular, French one, is primarily based on courteous novel tradition, the main plot line discloses the events connected with relations and love of the knight and the Lady of One's Heart (but for «the search of St. Grail» where there dominates a mystical and spiritual element). In the iconography of «Arthurian» novels one of the leading places is committed to the topic of love and love triangle «seignior-vassal-seignior's wife». Most frequently the characters of love collisions in miniatures to Arthurian novels are Lancelot, Guinevere and King Arthur. Guinevere embodies the archetypal sum of ideas about the Beautiful Lady: she is an absolute worshipping object, she holds a higher social status than the knight in love, she is the love of the suzerain, she requires constant sacrifice and readiness to make deed after deed, and, finally, she corresponds to a stereotypical aesthetic ideal which has been described in detail by an Italian researcher R. Renier. Laudine from «Evaine...» is also within the classical ideas of this type, but her image as compared to the image of Guinevere is a passive one, it is not that vividly individualized. Most frequently Evaine is depicted as standing on his knees in front of his wife asking for forgiveness (François 1433, fol. 118). Lunete, the maid of Laudine, is an active character instead (François 1433, fol. 69v; François 1433, fol. 90). In a courteous system of values the very taboo love is considered to be a benchmark, and in the

Arthurian cycle Guinevere is the Beautiful lady, Lancelot is a fine amant, Arthur is the victim of adultery. In novel iconography there are different ways of depicting this classic love triangle, which include purely formal representations, in particular in the miniature of the XIIIth – XIVth c., when Lancelot, Guinevere and Arthur are depicted as sitting side by side, quite often Lancelot is embracing the Queen or addressing her, the artist consciously separates them as a couple (Arsenal 3479, fol. 484; Français 112 (1), fol. 101). In the illumination of the XVth c. with final confirmation of the narrative nature miniaturists solve such scenes in a purely situational key. Illustrators depict intimate plots: lovers are depicted in a bedroom, they, while sitting side by side in bed, exchange rings which can be considered a symbolic act of courteous love blessing, while again – in the background the back of king leaving the bedroom is shown. Such illustrations reflect the essence of courteous relations when the lady is married and holds a higher social status than the knight in love, and her husband who is a sovereign does not guess about the marital infidelity (Français 115, f. 370v). Depicting intimate scenes between Lancelot and Guinevere, miniaturists introduce into the composition one more character who catches them red-handed, for instance, Morgan le Fay, in order to stress the element of prohibition and to show that on the way to the lady's heart the knight has to overcome obstacles and to fight enemies (Français 111, fol. 109). In illustrative cycles the topic of courteous love prevails, the majority of miniatures, even the ones in which the knight and his lady are not depicted directly are interrelated in terms of the plot with love stories of characters, the majority of scenes are the scenes of battles with abductors (Français 112 (1), fol. 172; Français 115, fol. 376v), there are many scenes with Guinevere who receives a note from or sends a note to Lancelot (Français 115, fol. 483). Not only does love for the Beautiful Lady inspire the Knight for the deeds, but also is the reason for his misfortune – when Guinevere drives Lancelot away, he goes mad (Français 111, fol. 120; Arsenal 3479, fol. 567; Français 118, fol. 258; Français 122, fol. 211v).

Cultural self-identification of courteous chivalry is closely connected with adventurism. The image of woman in this context has got variable semantic load: woman acts as an inspirer for the sake of whom knights make adventures, woman is a kind of trophy obtained through testing and adventures, and woman can also

be a companion. A great number of miniatures in the manuscripts of Arthurian cycle are dedicated to journeys. The motif of going by sea and by land, going to known and far-away places, looking for adventures and facing uncertainty and danger, compulsory imprisonment of the character by his enemies and liberation are the obligatory determinants of courteous artistic imagery, both literary and artistic. The most popular motif in illumination is liberation of the abducted Beautiful Lady: Lancelot fights the Guard of two bridges and crosses the river across the Sword Bridge in order to get to the castle of Meleagant who imprisoned Guinevere (François 112 (1), fol. 164; François 122, fol. 1; François 119, fol. 321v). In the miniature of the XVth c. there are particularly many narrative scenes done in a bright festive manner in which there are depicted knights in armour, riding astride and being accompanied by a lady or several ladies (François 111, fol. 79), also the scenes when the knight meets a women on his way are depicted (François 119, fol. 416). The motif of imprisonment is also connected with the adventurous element. Miniaturists most frequently reproduce plots where it is women that act as «imprisoners» – Morgan le Fay imprisons Lancelot, pseudo-Guinevere locks Arthur in the tower (François 110, fol. 264; François 111, fol. 92v). Woman's image is a kind of stimulus for the adventurous line both in the text of the novel and in the visual row attached to it.

Belonging to the world of supernatural is of crucial importance for the formation of literary identity of "Arthurian" characters, in particular female ones. In Arthurian novels the notion of religious miracle gets crystallized, it being the embodiment of the image of Saint Grail, it is it that serves as a high idea uniting the majority of novels of the cycle, embodying absolute religious and mystic nature. For the first time Grail appears in the castle of the Fisher King, and in a solemn ceremony it is brought out by the Lady of Grail – that is the image which is embodied in different novels of the cycle by different characters, most frequently this is Elaine of Corbenic, daughter of King Pellès, who later on gave birth to Lancelot's son Galahad, a virtuous and pure who was the only one who could attain Saint Grail. In the «Story of Grail» by Chretien de Troyes in Grail there was a miraculous wafer which restored life energy. And in the Middle Ages when Arthurian novels were written only the representatives of the male sex were entitled to give the sacred Host. Women could only touch the sacred dishes during the communion of bed patients. In the Arthurian novels the Holy Virgin was entrusted with the

Grail with the Host (François 12577, fol. 18v). Not only has the image of the Virgin got some relation to miracle, but it is also part of that miracle.

Also, in the text and in the illustrations there actively function magicians and fairies. One of them is Morgan le Fay, the Lady of the Lake, Viviana. They are depicted as young beautiful women who have a permanent influence on the events determining their course. In the «magic» fable of Arthurian novels there is used the element of opposition of male and female magic, reflected in the relations of Merlin and Viviana: Merlin, having passed all his knowledge to the young magician, becomes the victim of love for her and her magic art – she imprisons Merlin and deprives him of his might. Morgan le Fay also in most of the novel versions, but for the early ones, appears as an evil magician able to take on new shapes. However, in the illustrative cycles her appearances have rather positive connotations.

The topic of motherhood in Arthurian literature is rather marginal and is again connected with the world of supernatural – it is reflected in the plots of upbringing of Lancelot, and he was grown up and brought up by the Lady of the Lake (François 113, fol. 156v). Most frequently the scenes where Lancelot leaves her estate as already a grown-up lad are depicted (François 114, fol. 352), less frequently there are pictures with children (François 117, fol. 1). Also, there can be pointed out a small group of images in which the Lady cares for and treats a wounded knight.

The lists of chivalrous novels with magnificent illustrations were done upon the request of the royal court and noblemen and they were aimed to meet the tastes and aspirations of the chivalrous elite. Often so to say the «authors of the idea» and the clients were women themselves, and they surely influenced formation of the aggregate image of femininity – both literary and artistic one.

The image of woman formed in Arthurian literature and illuminations go beyond the purely literary and artistic discourse and exists at the crossroads of the real, mythological and cult experience of the Gothic epoch, its semantic load embraces a very wide range of the then cultural and social notions and practices – power, love, adventure, mystic, family.

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ANNOTATION

Bohdana Hrynda. Image and Narrative: Gender Theme in the Iconography of Medieval Courtly Literature. Gothic illumination, which embraced a wide range of topics and plots, was, on the one hand, focused on visualizing a Utopian world as reflected in the texts, and, on the other hand, in illustrations to the novels regarding King Arthur's court parallel narration appears. The images of women take on greater significance in this world. Heroines of novels are active, not passive characters, and they perform the role of encouragers, which in turn influences the development of story lines, hence the plots of these novels, with their bright visual imagery, came to be tools for the

reconstruction of ideas about courtly femininity in its various manifestations. In this paper, I will explore these ideas through examining the illustrations from the Lancelot-Grail cycle as manifested in such manuscripts as BN MS Français 95, BN MS Français 117, Arsenal 3479, Arsenal 3477, BN MS Français 112 (1), 112 (2), 112 (3), BN MS Français 226, BN MS Français 9123, BN MS Français 99, and BN MS Français 115. These illuminated manuscripts will serve as a means to explore the semantic boundaries of the female image in the context of courtly culture, as well as to point out groups of images of on-camera and off-camera woman: woman and power, woman and love, woman and the world of the supernatural, woman and adventurism, and woman and maternity.

Keywords: illumination, illustration cycles, Arthurian novels, gender, courtly culture.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Богдана Гринда. Содержание и образ: гендерная тематика в иконографии литературы Средневековья. Готическая иллюминация, которая охватывает широкий круг тем и сюжетов, с одной стороны, призвана визуализировать утопический мир, созданный в текстах романов, с другой стороны, она представляет параллельный иллюстративный нарратив. Женские образы играют значимую роль в этом мире. Героини куртуазных романов, наделены активным, действенным характером, мотивируют развитие сюжета, а яркая и богатая образность иллюстративных циклов служит инструментом, с помощью которого можно реконструировать представления об идее женственности в придворно-аристократической культуре Средневековья. В статье сделана попытка охарактеризовать образы женских персонажей в связи с социокультурными архетипическими идеями, основываясь на иллюстративных материалах с манускриптов Национальной библиотеки Франции BN MS Français 95, BN MS Français 117, Arsenal 3479, Arsenal 3477, BN MS Français 112 (1), 112 (2), 112 (3), BN MS Français 226, BN MS Français 9123, BN MS Français 99, and BN MS Français 115. Эти иллюминированные манускрипты служат средством, с помощью которого становится возможным установить семантические границы в трактовке образа женщины в куртуазной культуре: женщины и власти, женщины и любви, женщины и мира сверхъестественного, женщины и приключений, женщины и материнства.

Ключевые слова: иллюминация, иллюстративные циклы, артуровские романы, гендер, куртуазная культура.



1. King Arthur and Queen Guinevere enthroned Français 9123, fol. 265v Histoire du Saint Graal France, Paris, ca. 1315 – 1335 BnF;
2. Lancelot embraces Guinevere Français 118, fol. 219v Lancelot du Lac France, Paris, 15 century BnF;
3. Lancelot's madness from love Français 122, fol. 211v Lancelot du Lac Quest del Saint Graal Mort de Roi Artu Belgium, Hainaut, 1344 BnF;



4. Lancelot meets the Lady near the Cross of Geant Français 119, fol. 416 Lancelot du Lac France, Paris, 15 century BnF;
5. Lancelot, a prisoner of Morgane Français 114, fol. 341v Lancelot du Lac France Ahun 15 century BnF;
6. Marriage of Arthur and Guinevere Français 105, fol. 231 Histoire du Saint Graal France, Paris. 14 century BnF;
7. Tournament at Camaalot Français 111, fol. 91 Lancelot du Lac Queste del Saint Graal Mort le Roi Artu France, Poitiers, ca. 1480 BnF;
8. Viviane with little Lancelot Français 113, fol. 156v Lancelot du Lac France Ahun ca. 1470 BnF;