*Highlights of European Literature:* ***Introduction***

**Main Focus of Lecture:**

This class focuses heavily on the idea of Europe and literature. What is Europe? And what are some different ways to approach our conceptualizations of Europe? Special emphasis on the notion of displacement.

**European Literature and Dynamic Exchange**

* Maps
  + Notice how “nation” borders have completely changed during their existences
* Battle of Hastings (1066)
  + Replacement of Anglo-Saxon society with Norman society after defeat of King Harold (Anglo-Saxon King) by William of Normandy
* The Angevin Empire

**Europe as Narrative of Displacement**

* Myth of Europa
  + The name “Europe” comes from the Greek myth of Europa in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Zeus is in love with Europa and comes to her in the form of a Bull. She doesn’t know it is him, but is captivated by his look. She goes to him and eventually mounts his back. Zeus takes off into the air with Europa on his back taking her away from her homeland. The name Europa, therefore, already has connotations of displacement.
  + Note that Europa is an Asian Woman (from Phoenicia or modern day Lebanon) – **“A Vagrant Asian exile game Europe its political and cultural identity”**
  + The etymology of Europa in Akkadian and Phoenician also suggest “evening” and “to go down”
* Christianity
  + Jesus Christ is from Asia (Bethlehem)
  + Moreover, Jesus was a refugee at his birth
* Virgil’s *Aeneid*
  + Another example is Virgil’s *Aeneid* which tells much about displacement (for instance, Aeneas fleeing Troy).
* Miscellaneous
  + “What the fictional origins of Europe tell us is that its origins are external to itself, that it always relates to its ‘other’ and finds its very origin there.”

**Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136)**

* Background
  + Born around 1100 (possibly in Wales)
  + Writes *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) in 1136.
  + Geoffrey says that though there are some historic texts of Britain preceding him, there is not much said of the kings or of Arthur legend. Says he received an ancient text (written in British aka Welsh) that tells stories of Brutus, the first King of Briton, and others. Says he will translate into Latin
* Who are the Britons?
  + These are the Celtic people who had be living on the islands (of present day UK) at least since 7th century B.C.
  + Important History: In 43 AD, there was the Roman invasion which largely assimilated the occupants of the islands
  + Important History: In 5th century AD, Anglo-Saxons invade. This pushes the Britons to the fringes of the islands (Modern day Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall)
  + Because of this, many migrate to pieces of France (Brittany) and Spain (Britonia)
* Briton History
  + Interesting, while the Anglo-Saxons had a written history, the Britons did not have a complete one in 1136.
  + A few writers had developed some Briton history:
    - Gildas’ *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain* for instance tells the history of Britain from Roman conquest to his own time 6th century). Note: this is written as sermon with religious purposes (though history has important role)
    - Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* tells a history of the Christian church in the 7th century. Discusses Roman Invasion and also Celtic Christianity
    - Note that the Anglo-Saxons were Christianized beginning in 497 AD and completed before 700 AD
* What is the *History of the Kings of Britain* about?
  + Considering the incomplete history of Britain, Geoffrey starts by discussing the mythic origins dating back to Brutus, the first King of Britain (myth then spread over France and Britain)
  + Appeals to Christian Authorities: Says the Celts were Christianized as of 1st Century
  + Appeals to Norman Kings: Says there is a royal tradition preceding the Anglo-Saxons
  + 215 surviving manuscripts

**Wace, *Roman de Brut* (1155)**

* Translation into Poetry
  + After Geoffrey’s publication, the *History of the Kings of Britain* is picked up and translated by Wace.
  + Wace translates it into Norman-French and according to his tradition of verse
  + Roughly 15,000 lines and around 30 surviving manuscripts still exist
* Other Alterations?
  + Interestingly, Wace also adds some to the narrative (The idea of the Round Table)

**Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136) (Continued…)**

* Who is the first king Brutus?
  + Myth goes back to the story of Aeneas and Brutus and their flee from Troy. Being exiled after the Burning of Troy, Aeneas founds Italy and Brutus has another journey. He first goes to Greece to free Trojan Slaves, then sails to Albion, defeats giants and renames the island “Britain” after himself.
* What are some significant features of this text?
  + It inscribes the history of the Britons into a history of the Roman Empire (as with the story of Brutus) 🡪 Tells History of Britain from founding till 6th and 7th century (Anglo-Saxon control)
  + Can possibly be seen as Britain’s “national epic” when compared with Virgil’s *Aeneid,* Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and even Epic of Gilgamesh
* How many books are in this history?
  + 12
* What is significant about books 9-12?
  + Story of King Arthur’s reign (reign possible beginning at turn of the 5th century, according to John Morris)
  + King Arthur defeats the Saxons and conquers much of Northern Europe
  + King Arthur has to leave to fight the Roman Empire, but while he is gone, Mordred seduces Guinevere and seizes the throne
  + Arthur returns to fight Mordred at the Battle of Camlann and kills him. In the process, however, Arthur is mortally wounded and is brought to the island of Avalon
  + Constantine, Arthur’s cousin takes over the kingdom. The Saxons eventually return but do not interrupt the Britain kings until the death of Cadwallader (in 7th CE).
  + Other key figures: Merlin and Caliburn (Excalibur)

**Chrétien de Troyes (12th century)**

* Moving from History to Chivalric Romance
* Texts written:
  + *Erec and Enide* (1170)
  + *Yvain, the Knight of the Lion* (1177-1181)
  + *Lancelot, the King of the Cart* (1177-1181)
  + *Perceval, the Story of the Grain* (1181-1190, unfinished)
* How are these stories written?
  + Punished in Old French and use octosyllabic rhyming couplets
  + Adds more of a psychological depth to the characters and focuses on separate stories of the Knights
  + Follow structure of order-disruption-restoration
  + Arthur occupies marginal position
* What is Chivalric Romance?
  + Loyalty to God, Lord, and Lady
  + Idea of Courtly Culture: Love, loyalty, tournaments, honour
* Other important ideas:
  + Can be seen as precursor of the modern novel (1600)

**Layamon, *Brut* (1190)**

* Translation
  + Roughly 45 years after Wace’s translation, Layamon translates the translation
  + From (allegedly) Welsh (text Geoffrey says he finds story in) 🡪 to Latin (Geoffrey’s publication) 🡪 to Norman-French (Wace’s translation) 🡪 to Middle English (Layamon’s translation of Wace)
* How long is it?
  + Roughly 16,000 lines but has a longer section on Arthur’s life than Wace

***Tristan* (13th Century)**

* Published by Gottfried von Strassburg
* One of the great narratives of the German Middle Ages
* Rhyming Couples, but remained unfinished
* Influence on Others
  + See influence on Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (1857-59)

***Parzival* (13th century)**

* Continuation of Chivalric romance tradition
  + Middle German translation/adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes’ romance
  + Author: Wolfram von Eschenbach
* Reception?
  + Most popular vernacular verse narrative in medieval Germany
* Themes?
  + Emphasis on Courtly Love and Humility
* Influence on Others
  + Wagner’s *Parsifal* in 1882 references and was influenced by this narrative. Would go on to have a deep influence on Mahler, Strauss, Schoenberg, Britten, Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky

**Vulgate Cycle (13th century)**

* Unknown Authorship?
  + Written in Middle French
* Arthurian Literary Cycle
  + A group of stories focused on common characters
  + Arthur, himself, plays a marginal role.
  + Common stories include Quest for Holy Grail, Lancelot-Guinevere affair, etc.
  + Elaboration of Christian elements
* How many manuscripts?
  + Roughly 150 and current project to digitalize them

**Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* (1859-85)**

* What is this?
  + 12 Narrative Poems
  + Reinterprets Arthurian Legend for Victorian audience
  + Dedicated to Albert, Prince Consort
  + Arthur as embodiment of Victorian Ideals who fails to lift his Knights at Camelot to the same ideal level (betrayals of Lancelot and Mordred)
  + Gothic, Dark, Lost World

**Thomas Malory’s *Morte Dartur* (1469)**

* Background
  + Thomas Malory was a Solider (knighted in 1441) and member of parliament (1443)
  + Negative Side: Thief, Kidnapper, and Rapist who was imprisoned in 1452
  + Writes *Morte Dartur* while in Newgate Prison (1469-1470)
* From Manuscript to Print (*The Death of Arthur)*
  + Instead of being written in verse, Malory reworks some of the most famous Arthurian tales into prose
  + Includes translations/interpretations from the *Vulgate Cycle*
  + Supplemented by Malory’s own original material (the Gareth Story)
  + Best-known work of English-language Arthurian literature today
* William Caxton
  + Publisher (possibly the one to have introduced the printing press in England in 1476)
  + 1485 – one of the first books published by him is Malory’s text)
* Style
  + Historical Fantasy
  + Historicity questioned
* Popularity wanes until 19th century
  + 1816: *Morte Dartur* reprinted for first time since 1634