



German Romance V: Erec (Arthurian Archives)

Hartmann von Aue

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Erec is the earliest extant German Arthurian romance, freely adapted and translated into Middle High German by the Swabian knight, Hartmann von Aue, from the first Old French Arthurian romance, Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide. Hartmann's work dates from c. 1180, but the only (almost) complete manuscript dates from the early sixteenth century, copied into the huge two-volume Ambraser Heldenbuch, now housed in Vienna - the most comprehensive extant compilation of medieval German romances and epics, commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I. Otherwise, only a few earlier medieval fragments survive. Erec tells the story of a young knight at King Arthur's court, whose early prowess wins him high repute, and a beautiful wife, Enite. He falls into disrepute because of his excessively zealous devotion of his time to her. Alerted to his notoriety, he embarks on a series of symbolic adventures, which eventually lead to his achieving a new balance between the claims of love and those of society. Far more than a simple translation, Hartmann's first attempt at an Arthurian romance is notable for its zest and gusto. This is the first edition with a parallel text translation into English; it is presented with explanatory notes and variant readings.

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