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CEST ROMANZ FIST CRESTÏENS CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES AND THE BIRTH OF THE FRENCH NOVEL

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The paper addresses three controversial issues in two romances by Chrétien de Troyes - *Yvain, or the Knight with the Lion* and *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart*. Both romances were written around 1176-1180 and because of their narrative continuity and complementarity could be considered as a diptych. First, we examine the evolution of Chretien's conception of love, "mysteriously" changing from his first romances to *Lancelot*; then we enter into the debate between *celtisants* and their critics about the Celtic influence in Chretien and consider Celtic sources of the two romances; we conclude the article, tracing out the fairy tale paradigm in both romances, which helps us reveal new meanings of the cart and the lion, operating as magic agents in the romances.

Keywords: Chrétien de Troyes, "Yvain, or the Knight with the Lion", "Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart", fin'amors, Breton Cycle, Celtic material, troubadours, trouvères, V. Propp, Mabinogion, parody

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Introduction

The literary legacy of Chretien de Troyes, French trouvere and the father of the classical Arthurian romance as we know it, never stops sparking critical interest of scholars. For us, two of Chretien's romance are of particular interest in this article - *Yvain, or the Knight with the Lion* and *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart*. Out of the wide range of issues discussed with regard to these romances, we have chosen three to focus on. We start, taking a close look at the evolution of Chretien's concept of love, which emerges as an ideal of marital love in *Erec and Enide* and *Cliges*, finds development in *Yvain*, and gets undermined and inverted in *Lancelot*. We interpret this shift in Chretien's position as a strategic move to please Marie de Champagne, the commissioner of the romance, and see parody implicit in the romance as Chretien's way of reconciling his commissioner's will with his own view of love. The second and the third parts of the article touch upon debates around the Celtic sources of the romances and their connections with folk - anonymous - literature. We strive to unearth Celtic fairy-tale roots of *Yvain* and *Lancelot* and emphasize the fact that contemporary scholarship and readership owe their acquaintance and fascination with many folklore sources to Chretien who was the first one to introduce into the written literature. At the same time, we show that the substance and the meaning of the romances are not exhausted by those folklore sources alone.

1.

Love in Chrétien's Romances

Chrétien de Troyes, the creator of the chivalric romance and the poet who sang of courtly love, chose love as his central theme in the 12th century when just few texts of so-called 'Matter of Britain' circulated in Europe. Why love? As C. Lewis wrote in his *Allegory of Love*, 'Before the close of the twelfth century we find the Provencal conception of love spreading out in two directions from the land of its birth. One stream goes down into Italy, and through the poets of the Dolce Stil Nuovo, goes to swell the sea of the Divine Comedy [...]. Another stream found its way northward to mingle with the Ovidian tradition which already existed there, and so to produce the French poetry of the twelfth century' [Lewis 1958: 22-23]. It is evident from Chrétien's famous prologue to his *Cliges* that he was not only familiar with Ovid's works but he even translated some of them:

Cil qui fist d'Erec et d'Enide,

Et les comandemenz d'Ovide

Et l'art d'amors en romanz mist,

Et le mors de l'espaule fist,

Dou roi Marc et d'Iseut la Blonde,

Et de la hupe et de l'aronde

Et dou rousignol la muance…[Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 291]

Out of all Chrétien's translations of Ovid, the most well known one was his rendition of Ovid's *The Art of Love* called L'*art d'amors*, which has been lost.

Another Ovid's work Chrétien-the translator turned to were no less known *Metamorphoses*. Chrétien mentions two of his translations from *Metamorphoses*. One of them is the story of 'The Shoulder Bite', which is held to refer to the Pelops legend included in Book VI. It is worth noting that in Ovid this legend is presented too briefly to become a basis for a separate poem. We may assume that Chrétien used an annotated text of *Metamorphoses* that included quotations from other ancient authors to complement Ovid's narrative (for instance, one of the mythographs of the second century A.D. contained such information)[3]. This work of Chrétien has not survived either.

The other translation from *Metamorphoses* is a tale of 'the nightingale and the hoopoo', in other words, the story of 'Philomena' - a loose paraphrase of yet another episode from Book VI. Curiously, in Ovid the two aforementioned myths are presented one after another. Can we assume that Chrétien had only that book of *Metamorphoses* at his disposal? At present, we lack data to answer this question.

The fate of that translation turned out to be more complicated than that of the two other ones. Chrétien's 'Philomena' came down to us as an insertion into the manuscript of *Ovid Moralise* (of the first third of the 14th century).

Let us add a few words about the last work by Ovid mentioned by Chrétien de Troyes, *Les Commandemenz d'Ovide, (Ovid's Commandments).* These 'commandments', or 'moral instructions', mentioned alongside *The Art of Love*, may be referring to another Ovid's work, *Remedia amoris (Cures for Love).*

Commenting on the last two verses of the prologue, S. Hofer notices that Chrétien refrains from uttering the names of the two famous lovers, changing Tristan's name for the name of Iseult's husband – king Mark [Hofer 1954: 99-108, 112-14]. Although Chrétien's romance about Mark and Iseult hasn't come down to us, we can assume that Chrétien's version of the

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[3] Hyginus Mythographus floruit ca. 180: LXXXIII. PELOPS. https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost02/Hyginus/hyg_fabu.html Accessed on 07.02. 2017.
'Pelops Tantali et Diones Atlantis filiae filius cum esset in epulis deorum a Tantalo caesus, bracchium eius Ceres consumpsit, qui a deorum numine uitam recepit; cui cum cetera membra ut fuerant coissent, umero non perpetuo eburneum eius loco Ceres aptauit'.

legend differed significantly from the traditional versions celebrating adulterous love. It is noteworthy that Chrétien's *Cliges* is often called 'Anti-Tristan' [Riboux 2001: 732], or 'Neo-Tristan' [Lazar 1964], because there Chrétien many times expresses, either implicitly or explicitly, his disapproval of the affair between Iseult and Tristan. Let us provide several examples of how Chrétien de Troyes challenges the legend of Tristan and Iseult and the conception of love underlying it.

The narrative on how love between Cliges's parents started, not accidentally, on the ship, contains such lines:

La reïne garde s'en prent

Et voit l'un et l'autre sovent

Descolorer et enpalir

Et soupirer et tressaillir,

Mais ne set por coi il le font

Fors que por la mer ou il sont [Chrétien de

Troyes 1994: 306].

We remember that it was the sea (*lameir*) that Iseult blamed for her malady, and medieval writers, for instance, Gottfried von Strassburg, cleverly punned on the homonymy of the meanings of this word.

Er sprach suoze unde lîse:

"Ei schoene süeze, saget mir:

waz wirret iu, waz claget ir?"

Der Minnen vederspil Îsôt,

"lameir«" sprach si "daz ist mîn nôt,

lameir daz swaeret mir den muot,

lameir ist, daz mir leide tuot".

Dô si lameir sô dicke sprach,

er bedâhte unde besach

anclîchen unde cleine

des selben wortes meine.

Sus begunde er sich versinnen,

l'ameir daz waere minnen,

l'ameir bitter, la meir mer.

Der meine der dûhte in ein her.

Er übersach der drîer ein

unde vrâgete von den zwein.

Er versweic die minne,

ir beider vogetinne,

ir beider trôst, ir beider ger.

Mer unde sûr beredete er [Gottfried von

Strassburg 1843: 302].

  Chrétien's Cliges excels Tristan himself in the swordcraft:

Cist ot le fust o tout l'escorce,

Cist sot plus d'escremie et d'arc

Que Tristanz li niés le roi Marc…[Chrétien de

Troyes 1994: 373]

      Fenice, the female protagonist of the Chrétien's novel, several times throughout the novel compares herself to Iseult, and this comparison, as we may guess, is not in favour of the latter.

Einz vodraie estre desmembree

Que de nos .II. fust remembree

L'amor d'Iseut et de Tristen,

Dont tantes folies dist l'en

Que hontes m'est a raconter.

Je ne me porroie acorder

A la vie qu'Ysez mena.

Amors en lui trop vilena,

Car li cors fu a dos rentiers

Et li cuers iere a un entiers.

Ensi tote sa vie usa

C'onques les dos ne refusa.

Ceste amors ne fu pas raisnable,

Mais la moie est si veritable

Que de mon cors ne de mon cuer

N'iert partie faite a nul fuer.

Ja voir mes cors n'iert garçoniers,

Ja n'i avra .II. parçoniers.

Qui a le cuer, cil ait le cors.

Touz les autres en met defors [Chrétien de
Troyes 1994: 384].

Later on, Fenice returns to that comparison with the similar intolerance and the finality of
judgement:

Se je vos aim et vos m'amez,

Ja n'en serez Tristanz clamez

Ne je ne serai ja Yseuz,

Car puis ne seroit l'amour preuz

Qu'il i avroit blasme ne vice.

Ja de mon cors n'avrez delice

Autre que vos or i avez

S'a apenser ne vos savez

Coment je puisse estre en emblee

De vostre uncle desasemblee

Si que ja mais ne me retruisse…[Chrétien de
Troyes 1994: 448]

It becomes more and more difficult to believe that these words are uttered by a young maiden
and not by moralizing Chrétien himself, and the protagonist appears to be trying not so much to

convince others as to make herself believe in her own righteousness, impeccability, and difference from the two 'scandalous' lovers who became proverbial.

Ja ovec vos ensi n'irai,

Car lors seroit par tot le monde

Autresi com d'Yseut la Blonde

Et de Tristen de nos parlé [Chrétien de Troyes

1994: 449-50].

In *Cliges*, a magic potion that played such a life-changing part in the lives of the two medieval lovers appears, and even twice, but for which purposes? First, to intoxicate the lawful husband of Fenice, king Alis (Chrétien seems to take pleasure in deploying an extended anaphor that starts with the word *neant*, 'nothing', to describe the deceived king). And for the second time – to plunge Fenice into a lethargic sleep, feigning her death and making people believe in it.

We will not dwell here on whether Chrétien succeeded in contrasting Tristan and Iseult to Cliges and Fenice. The history of literature has already given an eloquent answer to this question.

Chrétien's heroine is verbose, her speech is lofty and pompous, but the character looks artificial and lifeless, because Chrétien puts his own words into her mouth.

And when, in the final episode of the romance, Fenice and Cliges, very much like Tristan and Iseult, are caught sleeping, righteous Fenice exclaims in fear:

Ele tressaut et si s'esveille

Et voit Bertran, si crie fort :

«Amis, amis! Nos sommes mort!

Vez ci Bertran! S'il vos eschape,

Chaü sommes en male trape,

Il dira qu'il nos a veüz» [Chrétien de Troyes

1994: 485].

Why should righteous and pious Fenice be frightened? We remember how, in a similar situation, Tristan and Iseult were sleeping in the wood of Morois – dressed and separated by

Tristan's sword. That view had softened even Mark's heart, and he forgave the two lovers. Fenice and Cliges are sleeping naked.

S. Hofer noted that it was already in his first romance, *Erec and Enide,* that Chrétien started challenging the conception of love in the romances of Tristan and Iseult. He juxtaposes the matrimonial love of Erec and Enide with the adulterous love of Tristan and Iseult [Meletinsky 1983: 100]. Chrétien seizes the opportunity to compare and contrast his honoured heroes to the Cornwall lovers. Needless to say, Tristan and Iseult are inferior to them even in terms of appearance. Enide: Por voir vos di qu'Iseuz la blonde / N'ot tant les crins sors et luisanz/ Que a cesti ne fust neanz [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 73-74]. Erec: Onques, je cuit, tel joie n'ot / La ou Tristanz le fier Morhot / En l'isle saint Sanson veinqui, / Con on faisoit d'Erec enqui [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 99]. The wedding night: A cele premiere assemblee, / La ne fu pas Yseuz emblee, / Ne Brangien an leu [de li] mise…[Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 125] Similar examples can be found throughout the text[4].

Ideal love, according to Chrétien, is a love in which the knight's lady friend is at the same time his spouse, and the knight is a friend and a spouse of the lady, in the way it eventually happens in *Cliges*:

Et s'amie a femme li donent,
Andos ensemble les coronnent.
De s'amie a faite sa femme,
Mes il l'apele amie et dame,
Car por ce ne pert ele mie
Que il ne l'aint come s'amie,
Et ele lui tot autresi
Com amie doit son ami [Chrétien de Troyes
1994: 493].

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[4] Iseult seems to Chrétien a simple servant girl even in comparison with an unknown young girl encountered by chance in the woods: même une fille inconnu rancontrée dans la forêt est 'une dame tant bele, / Qu'Iseuz semblast estre s'ancele… '[Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 217].

Both in *Erec and Enide* and in *Yvain* the protagonists are a husband and a wife: in the former romance they set off on a quest, and in the latter, Yvain parts with his lady, but first marries her, thus turning his lady friend into a spouse.

So Chrétien believes that a happy married love is possible, which is yet another reason why A. D. Mikhailov claimed that Chrétien in his two romances objects «not to the impermissible or not courtly nature of love between the heroes, but to the pessimistic conception of the author of *The Romance of Tristan*; in his view, love has the right to be happy and this right can be exercised' [Mikhailov 1976: 76].

Chrétien argues not only with *The Romance of Tristan*. Let us not forget that the poetry of troubadours, which Deni De Rougemont called «eulogizing of tragic love» [Rougemont 1972: 54], reached its climax in the middle of the 12th century, and Chrétien paid his tribute to it, having written, after 1172, two canzones, probably, imitating Bernart de Ventadour (the first canzone) and disagreeing with him (the second canzone). Speaking about Tristan, we have to note that Chrétien couldn't resist comparing himself with Tristan: in the second canzone *D'Amors, qui m'a tolu a moi* Chrétien's lyrical persona speaks, 'Onques du buvrage ne bui/Dont Tristan fu enpoisonnez; /Mes plus me fet amer que lui / Fins cuers et bone volentez' [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 1220].

Probably, it was the poetry of troubadours that influenced the idea of *Lancelot*, Chrétien's fourth romance, which was completed by Godefroy de Lagny, a clergyman and, possibly, Chrétien's disciple (we will discuss Chrétien's reluctance to finish the romance further). M. Lazar writes about this romance that 'the love described in *Lancelot* totally accords with *fin'amors* of troubadours. All Lancelot's actions are driven by it …' [Lazar 1964: 242]. Other French scholars also call *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart* 'the most complete and perfect illustration of troubadours' ideology of love' [Analyses et réflexion sur Chrétien de Troyes, Lancelot Le Chevalier de la Charrette 1996: 35; cf.: Deron 1996: 5]. So, *Lancelot* rhapsodizes over the love that Chrétien so vehemently criticized several years earlier (needles to say, that in *Lancelot*, in contrast to Chrétien's first two novels, Tristan and Iseult are not mentioned even once) and which troubadours had been already eulogizing for several decades by that time. Did Chrétien change his attitude to adultery in the romance that, in G. Morgan's words, 'he failed to complete and that seems to contradict all that he otherwise wrote' [Morgan 1981: 172]? Reading

about the night that king Arthur's wife Guinevere and his knight Lancelot infatuated with her spent together, we tend to answer the question positively.

Si l'aore et se li ancline,

Car an nul cors saint ne croit tant,

Et la reïne li estant

Ses braz ancontre, si l'anbrace,

Estroit pres de son piz le lace,

Si l'a lez li an son lit tret

Et le plus bel sanblant li fet

Que ele onques feire li puet,

Que d'amors et del cuer li muet,

D'amors vient qu'ele le conjot.

Et s'ele a lui grant amor ot,

Et il .C. mile tanz a li,

Car a toz autres cuers failli

Amors avers qu'au suen ne fist,

Mes an son cuer tote reprist

Amors et fu si anterine

Qu'an toz autres cuers fu frarine.

Or a Lanceloz quanqu'il vialt,

Qant la reïne an gré requialt

Sa conpaignie et son solaz,

Qant il la tient antre ses braz

Et ele lui antre les suens.

Tant li est ses jeus dolz et buens

Et del beisier et del santir

Que il lor avint sanz mantir

Une joie et une mervoille

Tel c'onques ancor sa paroille

Ne fu oïe ne seüe…[Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 634]

However, if we recall that in the prologue to *Lancelot* Chrétien absolves from all the responsibility for both the idea and the content of the romance: 'Matiere et san li done et livre / La contesse', Chrétien's position may look more consistent. Not being able to deny Marie de Champagne, cleric Chrétien starts writing *The Knight of the Cart*, 'to grant the request of his patroness, a powerful lady of the 12th century, enticed by the new courtly ideal, the conception of love that, at least in the romance, subdues a man to the power of the woman he adores' [Deron 1996: 6]. That may explain why Chrétien was reluctant to finish the romance.

However, there is a couple of episodes in *Lancelot* that make us exclaim, using the words of another author of a novel in verse: 'Isn't he a parody, indeed?[5]

Here is Lancelot examining the comb he found with a lock of the queens' hair entangled in it and ruthlessly pulled out:

L'esgarde et les chevox remire,

Et cele an comança a rire,

Et quant il la voit, se li prie

Por qu'ele a ris qu'ele li die.

Et cele dit : « Teisiez vos an!

Ne vos an dirai rien oan.

- Por coi ? fet il. – Car je n'ai cure. »

Et quant cil l'ot, si li conjure,

Come cil qui ne cuidoit mie

Qu'amie ami, n'amis amie

Doient parjurer a nul fuer :

« Se vos rien nule amez de cuer,

Dameisele, de par celi

Vos conjur et requier et pri

Que vos plus ne le me celez.

- Trop a certes m'an apelez,

Fet ele, si le vos dirai,

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5 In the preface to a new edition of Chrétien's novels, published in 2002, Michel Zink says about «an over-exaggerated caricature» [Chrétien de Troyes 2002: 12].

De rien nule n'an mantirai.

Cist peignes, se j'onques soi rien,

Fu la reïne, jel sai bien,

Et d'une chose me creez

Que les chevox que vos veez

Si biax, si clers et si luisanz,

Qui sont remés antre les danz,

Que del chief la reïne furent,

Onques en autre pré ne crurent».

Et li chevaliers dit: «Par foi,

Assez sont reïnes et roi,

Mes de la quel volez vos dire?

Et cele dit: «Par ma foi, sire,

De la fame le roi Artu»?

Quant cil l'ot, n'a tant de vertu

Que tot nel coveigne ploier,

Par force l'estut apoier

Devant a l'arçon de la sele.

Et quant ce vit la dameisele,

Si s'an mervoille et esbaïst,

Qu'ele cuida que il cheïst.

S'ele ot peor, ne l'en blasmez,

Qu'ele cuida qu'il fust pasmez.

Si ert il, autant se valoit,

Molt po de chose s'an failloit,

Qu'il avoit au cuer tel dolor

Que la parole et la color

Ot une grant piece perdue.

Et la pucele est descendue

Et si cort quanqu'ele pot corre

Por lui retenir et secorre,

Qu'ele ne le volsist veoir

Por rien nule a terre cheoir.

Quant il la vit, s'en ot vergoigne,

Si li a dit: «Por quel besoigne

Venistes vos ci devant moi? [Chrétien de

Troyes 1994: 540-41]

In this rather hilarious episode, Lancelot looks more like a ridiculed and ridiculous knight of the rueful countenance, rather than like a valiant glorious knight who protects the wretched and the downtrodden. Chrétien appears to mock his hero and not to give any value to his feeling to the queen. In the same ridiculous manner Lancelot is shown to act at tournaments, where he, submitting to the queen's will, turns his back to his opponents, dodges their blows and behaves in a manner inappropriate for a knight, only not to make his lady angry and in an absolute submission to her whims:

Et lors contre un chevalier muet

Tant con chevax porter le puet,

Et faut quant il le dut ferir,

N'onques puis jusqu'a l'anserir

Ne fist s'au pis non que il pot

Por ce qu'a la reïne plot,

Et li autres qui le requiert

N'a pas failli, einçois le fiert

Grant cop, roidemant s'i apuie,

Et cil se met lors a la fuie,

Ne puis cel jor vers chevalier

Ne torna le col del destrier.

Por a morir rien ne feïst

Se sa grant honte n'i veïst,

Et son leit et sa desenor,

Et fet sanblant qu'il ait peor

De toz ces qui vienent et vont,

Et li chevalier de lui font

Lor risees et lor gabois,

Qui molt le prisoient ainçois,

Et li hirauz qui soloit dire:

«Cil les vaintra trestoz a tire»,

Est molt maz et molt desconfiz,

Qu'il ot les gas et les afiz

De ces qui dient: «Or te tes,

Amis! Cist ne l'aunera mes.

Tant a auné c'or est brisiee

S'aune que tant nos as prisiee ».

Li plusor dient: «Ce que doit?

Il estoit si preuz or endroit,

Et or est si coarde chose

Que chevalier atandre n'ose.

Espoir por ce si bien le fist

Que mes d'armes ne s'antremist,

Se fu si forz a son venir

Qu'a lui ne se pooit tenir

Nus chevaliers, tant fust senez,

Qu'il feroit come forsenez [Chrétien de Troyes
1994: 662-63].

Probably, it was the parody that helped Chrétien cope with the romance whose idea and meaning were alien to the poet of married love. And yet, *Lancelot* is the single romance where Chrétien wrote about adulterous love, even if at the command of Marie. Continuing to compare Chrétien's heroes with Tristan and Iseult, we need to note that Tristan's love did not yet fully meet the new canon of courtly love: the magic potion drunk by the lovers took off them all the responsibility for their feelings and actions. Therefore, in the survived fragments of the romance Tristan presents a passive hero: having won the blond Iseult for his uncle, he did nothing for

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Iseult to become his – it was the potion, that is, chance, that did everything. Unlike Tristan, Lancelot throughout the romance strives to acquire the queen's love. And unlike Tristan, Erec, Yvain and other knights who forsake knightly exploits for love, Lancelot liberated king Arthur's people, many of whom had languished for years in the gloomy kingdom of Gorre [Deron 1996: 30]. Without explicitly[6] comparing Lancelot and Tristan, Chrétien only once abandoned his ideal of 'lady friend – spouse' and wrote (even if not completed) a romance, totally driven by the conception of *fin'amors* (even if *cum grano salis*).

2.

Chrétien and Celts

Yvain and *Lancelot*, like all the romances of the so-called "Breton Cycle" are based on the "Celtic material", and in the opinion of some medievalists[7], bear remnants of Celtic mythology and Celtic folklore. Let us look at the examples of plots, motifs, and images that can be attributed to the Celtic tradition. Certainly, we can place among them the magic fountain, or the spring from *Yvain*, located in the land of Celts - Broceliande - that had been already described in literature before Chrétien. We are talking about Wace's well-known account of it in his *Le Roman de Rou*, which deserves to be quoted in full [Wace 1971: 121-22]:

…e cil devers Brecheliant

donc Breton vont sovent fablant,

une forest mult longue e lee

qui en Bretaigne est mult loee.

[…]

Le seut l'en les fees veeir,

se li Breton nos dient veir,

e altres mer(e)veilles plusors ;

aires i selt aveir *d'ostors*

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[6] However, it can be argued that the episode with the queen's bed sheets stained with Lancelot's blood (Lancelot cuts his hand trying to get into the queen's chamber) alludes to a similar episode in Tomas's *Tristan*, and thereby the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is compared with the love of Tristan and Iseult [See: Morgan 1981: 198-99].

[7] See: Loomis R.S. Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1927; Marx J. Les littératures celtiques. P.: PUF, 1959; Frappier J. Etude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes, P.: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1969.

e de grant cers mult grant plenté,

mais vilain ont *tot* deserté.

La alai jo merveilles querre,

vi la forest e vi la terre,

merveilles quis, mais nes trovai,

fol m'en revinc, fol i alai;

fol i alai, fol m'en revinc,

folie quis, por fol me tinc.

Let us note that Chrétien also mentions a peasant in his description of the fountain in the magic forest[8] (both in Wace and in Chrétien the word 'vilain' is used), who is a guide to the miracles that the author of *Le Roman de Rou* failed to find, while Chrétien found and described them, insisting, contra Wace, that the story of Calogrenant's quest is neither fiction, nor lies 'car ne veul pas servir de songe, / ne de fable, ne de menchonge' [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 716].

Parallelism between Chrétien's *Yvain* and the text *Owain, or the Lady of the Fountain* from the collection of Welsh tales *Mabinogion* can serve as yet another argument in favour of the 'Celtic theory' of *Yvain*'s origin. The manuscript of *Mabinogion* dates back to the 14th century, but there is no doubt that the texts it contains are older. In *The Lady of the Fountain,* there is a description of that very fountain to which Wace went looking for miracles and which served as a starting point for Chrétien's romance. Let us compare the two descriptions.

Yvain [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 723-24]	Mabinogion [The Mabinogion 1877: 8]
La fontaine venras qui bout,	Under this tree is a fountain, and by the side of
S'est ele plus froide que mabres.	the fountain a marble slab, and on the marble
Ombres il faut li plus biaus arbres	slab a silver bowl, attached by a chain of
C'onques peüst faire Nature.	silver, so that it may not be carried away. Take
En tous tans le fueille li dure,	the bowl and throw a bowlful of water upon
Qu'il ne le pert pour nul yver.	the slab, and thou wilt hear a mighty peal of
Et s'i pent .i. bachin de fer	thunder, so that thou wilt think that heaven and

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[8] Both the forest and the fountain were not invented by Chrétien. Today, the forest is known as Paimpont forest and is located 40 km southwest of Rennes. Although the fountain is not as fabulous as it was in the times of Chrétien, it still attracts many tourists and is known as the fountain of Barenton.

A une si longue chaaine

Qui dure dusqu'en la fontaine.

Les la fontaine trouveras

Un perron tel com tu venras,

Mais je ne te sai dire quel,

Que je n'en vi onques nul tel,

Et d'autre part une chapele

Petite, mais ele est mout bele.

S'au bachin veus de l'iaue prendre,

Et desus le perron espandre,

La venras une tel tempeste,

Qu'en chest bos ne remaurra beste,

Chevreus ne dains ne chiers ne pors;

Nis li oisel s'en istront hors,

Car tu venras si fort froier,

Venter, et arbres pechoier,

Plovoir, toner, et espartir,

Que se tu t'en pues departir

Sans grant anui et sans pesanche,

Trop seras de meilleur chaanche

Que chevalier qui i fust onques.

earth are trembling with its fury. With the thunder there will come a shower so severe that it will be scarce possible for thee to endure it and live. And the shower will be of hailstones; and after the shower, the weather will become fair, but every leaf that was upon the tree will have been carried away by the shower. Then a flight of birds will come and alight upon the tree; and in thine own country thou didst never hear a strain so sweet as that which they will sing. And at the moment thou art most delighted with the song of the birds, thou wilt hear a murmuring and complaining coming towards thee along the valley. And thou wilt see a knight upon a coal-black horse, clothed in black velvet, and with a pennon of black linen upon his lance; and he will ride unto thee to encounter thee with the utmost speed. If thou fleest from him he will overtake thee, and if thou abidest there, as sure as thou art a mounted knight, he will leave thee on foot. And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needest not seek it during the rest of thy life.

Another Welsh source that could have influenced Chrétien's *Lancelot* is *The Life of Gildas* written by Caradoc Llancarfan in the 12th century. It gives an account of St. Gildas the Wise's life and, inter alia, retells how Gildas helped Arthur to free queen Gwenhwyfar who was abducted and brought to Glastonia by the treacherous king Melvas. King Meleagant from Chrétien's romance can be easily recognized in Melvas. However, in Caradoc's narrative, Arthur

himself sets off to release the queen: 'The rebellious king had searched for the queen throughout the course of one year, and at last heard that she remained there. Thereupon he roused the armies of the whole of Cornubia and Dibneria; war was prepared between the enemies' [Ruys and Caradoc of Llancarfan 1990: https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/1150-Caradoc-LifeofGildas.asp].

Tellingly, while the Arthur of chronicles looks like a hero of an epic poem, in Chrétien's romances he loses all his heroic potential; therefore, Guinevere, at the beginning of the romance, places her hopes not on her husband, for the only thing he does is sighing and moaning, but on her knight:

Mate et dolante et sopiranz

Monte la reïne, et si dist

An bas por ce qu'an ne l'oïst:

« Ha! amis, se le seüssiez,

Ja, ce croi, ne me lessissiez

Sanz chalonge mener un pas! [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 506-07]

Moreover, the characters of *Yvain* and *Lancelot*, as the aforecited J. Frappier and R. S. Loomis hold, have Celtic past. For instance, in *Yvain*, the magic potion of Morgan le Fay is mentioned, which heals Yvain from madness. Morgan was first introduced into literature by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Vitae Merlini*. In Esclados le Roux, the unfortunate first husband of Laudine, Loomis and Frappier see the Irish solar deity, the patron of storms [Frappier 1969: 92], whose divine origin is manifested, as the scholars believe, by his gigantic height, exceeding Calogrenant's. As for Laudine and Lunette, Frappier directly calls them 'fairies, more or less adapted to the feudal and courtly society' [Frappier 1969: 73]. Indeed, Laudine who throughout the romance sees to her spring to make sure that it is well protected, may be bearing traits of a Celtic deity of water and Celtic sidhes [Meletinsky 1983: 67] associated with a spring and often seen near the water [Cross 1952: Motif F 265.1]. T. P Cross also mentions a traditional motif of the early Celtic literature: 'an offended fairy' disappears when the hero does not keep his promise [Cross 1952: Motif F 302.5.4], which can, to some extent, be compared with Yvain's breaking his oath, also leading to the disappearance of Laudine, albeit figurative. Naked and insane Yvain echoes the Merlin of Geoffrey of Monmouth form his *Vitae Merlini* (1150), text

with ancient Celtic roots [Le Goff 1999: 584], which portrays Merlin as a «silvan man» (silvester homo) who has lost his mind and lives the life Yvain will be leading three decades later[9].

Then when he had filled the air with so many and so great complaints, new fury seized him and he departed secretly, and fled to the woods not wishing to be seen as he fled. He entered the wood and rejoiced to lie hidden under the ash trees; he marvelled at the wild beasts feeding on the grass of the glades; now he chased after them and again he flew past them; he lived on the roots of grasses and on the grass, on the fruit of the trees and on the mulberries of the thicket. He became a silvan man just as though devoted to the woods [Geoffrey of Monmouth 1925: http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/vm/vmeng.htm].

It is from *Vitae Merlini* that Morgan Le Fay came into Chrétien's romance and with her magic potion cured wretched Yvain from his madness:

The island of apples which men call "The Fortunate Isle" gets its name from the fact that it produces all things of itself; the fields there have no need of the ploughs of the farmers and all cultivation is lacking except what nature provides. Of its own accord it produces grain and grapes, and apple trees grow in its woods from the close-clipped grass. The ground of its own accord produces everything instead of merely grass, and people live there a hundred years or more. There nine sisters rule by a pleasing set of laws those who come to them from our country. She who is first of them is more skilled in the healing art, and excels her sisters in the beauty of her person. Morgen is her name, and she has learned what useful properties all the herbs contain, so that she can cure sick bodies. She also knows an art by which to change her shape, and to cleave the air on new wings like Daedalus [Geoffrey of Monmouth 1925: http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/vm/vmeng.htm].

As for Lancelot, some medievalists see in the protagonist the Celtic solar deity Lugh[10], and in Guinevere – an agricultural goddess or a Celtic *sidhe*, whose abduction refers to the

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[9] J. Frappier maintains Yvain's madness has its origin in Ovid's [Frappier 1969: 75].

[10] See: Deron D. Premières leçons sur Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette de Chrétien de Troyes. Paris : PUF, 1996. P. 107; Meletinsky E.M. Srednevekovyj roman. Proishozhdenie i klassicheskie formy (Medieval romance. Origin and classical forms). Moscow, 1983. P. 42, 73.

distinctive Irish genre of abduction [Meletinsky 1983: 42, 73]. However, Meletinsky cautions us against drawing too close connections between heroes of Celtic folklore and characters of French medieval romances: 'accepting the Celtic hypothesis in principle, that is, assuming that Celtic heroic tales and mythological ideas behind them were the main arsenal of the Breton Romance Cycle, and that the French chivalric romance can be viewed, to a certain extant, as a result of the re-thinking of the Celtic heroic tale – assuming all this, I still think that not every element of the French novel goes back to one particular element of a Welsh mabinogion or Irish scel (saga), not every hero - to a certain deity of the euhemerized Celtic mythological pantheon» [Meletinsky 1983: 67].

Thus, Chrétien's romances have the Celtic past and Celtic roots, which, however, have gradually faded away and are no longer apparent, making room for new tendencies and influences.

3.

Chrétien and the Fairy Tale

E.M. Meletinsky in his monograph on the medieval romance pointed out that 'the significance of the fairy tale and all kinds of wandering plots, including the legendary ones, for the formation of the chivalric novel is basically beyond doubt' [Meletinsky 1983: 63] and considered the fairy tale to be 'the folklore equivalent of the chivalric novel' [Meletinsky 1983: 3]. Indeed, the culmination of *Yvain* - the violation of the prohibition imposed on Yvain by his wife Laudine - proves that the logic of the romance is comparable to the logic of the fairy tale, according to which such a violation is the plot trigger and a prerequisite for a conflict [Propp 2009; Le Goff 1999: 581-614].

It is not difficult to see that this romance of Chrétien combines all five plot types of fairy tales identified by V.Y. Propp [Propp 1946; Propp 2009]: 'tales of the serpent-slaying (the hero's struggle with a magic opponent)' - Yvain fights with a serpent, and also with a giant and two 'devils' in the episode with three hundred spinstresses; 'Fairy tales about finding and releasing a bride or a groom from captivity or from the magic spell' - Yvain saves Lunette as well as several other maidens, including the weavers, from sure and certain death; 'Fairy tales about a wonderful helper' - Yvain has both animate (the boorish shepherd, the lion) and inanimate helpers (Lunette's ring that renders its possessor invisible); 'Tales about a miraculous power or skill - throughout the romance, Yvain remains the strongest and the most skilful knight. The functions

of the characters of the fairy tale (according to Propp) and those of Chrétien's characters coincide: "absentation" (function No. 1 in the Propp classification), "an interdiction connected with the absentation" (No. 2), "the interdiction is violated" (No. 3), "the hero leaves home – departure" (No. 11), "the hero acquires the use of a magical agent – provision of receipt of a magical agent" (No. 14), "the hero, unrecognized, arrives home - unrecognized arrival" (No. 23), "a difficult task is proposed to the hero - a difficult task" (No. 25), "The task is resolved" (No. 27), etc. It is obvious that all the characters in this romance can be subsumed under a particular function, and the plot of *Yvain* is conditioned by these functions and takes us to the fairy-tale universe.

Let us look at one particular function in the romance – that of a magic helper, which is the lion.

How does the lion appear in the romance *Yvain, or the Knight with the Lion*? At the very beginning, before Yvain is introduced to us, we hear Calogrenant's story about his unfortunate adventure: he starts a fight with the keeper of the fountain whom he compares with the furious lion: 'fiers par samblant comme lions' (v. 486). The lion makes his second appearance in the middle of the romance, when Yvain is watching a fight between a lion and a serpent and is considering whose side to take [Chrétien de Troyes 1994]. The knight's logic is rather simple:

Vit .i. lion en .i. essart
Et .i. serpent qui le tenoit
Par le keu, si li ardoit
Toutes les rains de flambe ardant.
N'ala mie mout regardant
Mesire Yvains chele merveille:
A lui meïsmes se conseille
Auquel des deuz il aidera.
Lors dist c'au lyon secorra,
Qu'a enuious et a felon
Ne doit on faire se mal non.
Et li serpens est enuious,
Si li saut oar la goule fus,

Tant est de felonnie plains.

Che se pense Mesire Yvains

Qu'il l'ochirra premierement [Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 821-22].

Yvain decides to take the lion's side because the serpent's maw is belching out flames. He is going to kill the serpent first, but at the same time, does not rule out the possibility that he may have to kill the lion, too. But could Yvain have had more solid grounds for his choice? If we turn to medieval literature, we can find there a genre that provides descriptions of real and fantastic animals and their, often symbolical, qualities. We are talking about the genre of the bestiary, dating back to the *Physiologus*. In that text, which was created, allegedly, in the 2nd – 3d century A.D. in Alexandria and in the Middle Ages circulated in Europe in a number of versions, there are chapters devoted to both the lion and the serpent.

The *Physiologus* [11] compares the lion, the king of beasts, to Christ, who dwells in heaven just like the lion dwells in the heights of mountains. The serpent, on the other hand, is compared to the human, who is sinful and is recommended to follow the serpent's ways in order to redeem. Clearly, the lion has an advantage over the serpent. Choosing the lion, the knight made the right choice: the beast becomes his faithful helper and guardian. Like Adam, Yvain puts on clothes and acquires a new name instead of the old one that he had lost together with his glory and his wife. It is under the name of the Knight with the Lion that he performs his marvellous exploits for the sake of the humiliated and downtrodden (as Yvain, he cared rather about his own glory, winning for himself lands together with a wife who owned the magic fountain and, let us not forget, a rich fief). But the lion had changed the knight so much that he almost became a saint. The meek lion follows his saviour everywhere … - probably this relationship is based on the legend of St. Jerome, who, unlike other monks, did not get frightened of the wounded lion entering their monastery. All the monks ran for their lives, only St. Jerome stayed, examined the wounded paw of the beast and pulled out the thorn. After that, the grateful lion became the saint's permanent companion. The earliest record of this legend can be found in *Hieronymus noster* and *Plerosque nimirum*[12] – a Latin hagiography of the saint written in IX century, which was the

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[11] See: Physiologus. A Medieval Book of Nature Lore, transl. by Michael J. Curly. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

[12] For more details on the source and the legend see: Salter D., Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature, Woodbridge, Rochester, Boydell and Brewer, 2001. p. 11-24.

source of all the medieval hagiographies of St. Jerome. Due to this legend, in Western European paintings St. Jerome is almost always portrayed with a lion.

In Chrétien's romance, Yvain takes on the role of a saint, and this role gradually turns the knight into a saint. Yvain, with the lion's aid, transforms right in front of our eyes, and his fame spreads out across France – people turn to him for protections and in search of justice.

In *Lancelot*, unlike *Yvain*, it is an inanimate helper – the magic cart – that becomes a vehicle of the hero's transformation.

Let us take a closer look at the cart. This is what Chrétien tells us:

Si ot une charrete atainte.

De ce servoit charrete lores

Don li pilori servent ores,

Et en chascune boene vile,

Ou or en a plus de .III. mile,

N'en avoit a cel tans que une,

Et cele estoit a ces comune,

Ausi con li pilori sont,

Qui traïson ou murtre font

Et a ces qui sont chanp cheü

Et as larrons qui ont eü

Autrui avoir par larrecin

Ou tolu par force an chemin.

Qui a forfet estoit repris,

S'estoit sor la charrete mis

Et menez par totes les rues,

S'avoit totes enors perdues

Ne puis n'estoit a cort oïz

Ne enorez ne conjoïz.

Por ce qu'a cel tens furent tex

Les charretes et si cruex,

Fu premiers dit : Quant tu verras

Charrete et tu l'anconteras,

Fei croiz sor toi et te sovaigne

De deu, que max ne t'an avaigne [Chrétien de

Troyes 1994: 510].

Could the cart be so frightening for the people of the 12th century and could it be really seen as a bad omen? No historical facts confirm this[13]. Moreover, we have indirect evidence that the episode with the cart was absent from the text that, supposedly, could have been the source for Chrétien's romance and for the German version of *Lancelot* − from the romance *Lanzelet* by Ulrich von Zatzikhoven written in 1210-1220[14]. Some scholars suggest that when writing their romances, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven and Chrétien de Troyes drew upon the same Anglo-Norman manuscript where there was no episode with the cart, just like there is no such an episode in Ulrich's *Lanzelet* [Ulrich von Zatzikhoven 1996: VII-IX].

Chrétien invented a special world of his own, with special rules and customs, which 'has nothing to do with either the real life of the 12th century or the History, but which has the force of law for the characters of the romance completely dependent on the decisions and choices of the author, and which thereby creates a special space of the novel in the modern sense of the word' [Deron 1996: 2]. Drawing upon the fairy tale paradigm, Chretien introduced into *Lancelot* the ominous cart, which is both a test and a magic agent acquired after the test has been passed, to drive his hero, literally and metaphorically, through the process of transformation from a Knight sticking to the knight code into a Lover choosing his Lady's will over the principles of knighthood.

When in 1176-1181 Chrétien created his two romances that were set in the same chronotope, he, in fact, anticipated Early Modern literature with its multi-volume novels and characters wandering across books. In the 12th century, a trouvere from Troyes shaped the idea and the boundaries of the genre that was bound to have a most glorious future.

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[13] About the cart episode cf.: D.J. Shirt, Chrétien de Troyes and the cart, in: Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages: in Memory of Frederick Whitehead, Manchester University Press, 1973. p. 279-300; A companion to Chrétien de Troyes, edited by N.J. Lacy and J.T. Grimbert, UK, USA, D.S. Brewer, 2005. p. 58-59.

[14] See Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, Lanzelet, texte établi et présenté par D. Buschinger, Greifswald, Reineke-Verlag, 1996.

Likewise, a long-lasting and glorious future lay in store for the heroes of Chrétien's romances, the Knights of the Round Table[15].

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[15] The reception of Chrétien de Troyes's characters in literature, painting, and cinematograph is a broad and interesting topic. If earlier Romanticists were granted the priority in rediscovering the medieval literature, recent studies have shown that already in the 18th century La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, Comte de Tressan, Paulmy, Legrand D'Aussy were reading manuscripts of the 12th – 15th centuries and introducing them to the public (See e.g. M.C. Timelli, Lancelot et Yvain au siècle des Lumières. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye et la Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans, Milano, Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2003).

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