Title
Fullness and Gaps: Narrative Structure, Dialectical Poetics, and the Act of Reading Chrétien de Troyes

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Fullness and Gaps:
Narrative Structure, Dialectical Poetics, and the Act of Reading Chrétien de Troyes

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In loving memory of Robert Connolly and Mary and Art Ovrom

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Abstract

Fullness and Gaps:
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by

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Doctor of Philosophy in French and Medieval Studies

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Fullness and Gaps is a study of narrative structure in the five Arthurian romances of the canonical twelfth-century poet Chrétien de Troyes. In the Middle Ages, books were not printed but transmitted by scribes, owners, and oral performers who were not always concerned to leave the text as they found it. As a result, literary works underwent various forms of fragmentation and corruption as they migrated from one person or place to the next. My dissertation shows that the culture of fragmentation in the Middle Ages inspired an interest on Chrétien's part in the possible aesthetic ramifications of rupture. Interpreting fragmentation as a narrative device rather than a deficiency in the structure of the romances casts new light on the porous relationship between medieval writing and the poetics of textual transmission, while illuminating hitherto overlooked aspects of Chrétien's engagement with twelfth-century dialectical philosophy and his interventions in debates about gender equality, marriage and sexuality, and chivalric ethics. Yet his investment in such practices as division, omission, and incompletion also betrays a precociously modern compositional strategy that my dissertation compares to the use of silence and absence, or the "blank," in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, as theorized by Wolfgang Iser.

Introduction

The Devil in the Details

"Qui petit seime petit quiaut." In a way, the origins of this project in a microscopic reading of a single word from Chrétien's *Yvain* perfectly contradict this classic sentence, transplanted, in Old French translation, into the first verse of the *Conte du Graal* from the Bible (2 Corinthians 9:6). In an important seminar on Old French literature that I took with David Hult in my first semester of graduate school, I began to consider the extent to which Chrétien himself works in concert with the devil in the details, a figure who, in *Yvain* (*c.*1177-81), is given a specific name: Keu, Arthur's loyal but arrogant and bitter seneschal. Generally speaking, Keu's function in Chrétien's romances can be understood in terms of an embodiment of unbridled language, paradigmatically the mockery or *ramporne*. Indeed, Keu is perhaps best known for his serpentine tongue, which dispenses its metaphorical poison at every opportunity as if to prove the seneschal's valor verbally where he cannot seem to physically.[1] In my analysis of *Yvain*, which has recently appeared as a chapter in *New Medieval Literatures* 20, I argue for the significance of Keu's character in tandem with a proposed revision to our understanding of the central figure of the lion, the severed tip of its tail to be precise, which scholars have typically either ignored or taken as an ultimately gratuitous textual appendage.[2] My own more contextualized reading of the lion's tail against the background of Yvain's relation to Keu's character was initially founded on the uncanny verbal likeness of the two figures: of Keu and the "keue," which is the variant of the word for tail in Old French that is found in the base manuscript of Hult's edition of *Yvain* (MS. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF], fr. 1433). In brief, I came to the conclusion that the chopping off of the lion's tail in the middle of the romance, as Yvain is attempting to rescue the lion from a fire-breathing serpent, works figuratively to signify the end of Keu's tongue and its influence over Yvain's actions, marking an oft-noted evolution in the hero's character through a device which, by contrast, had gone unremarked: an overt discontinuity or disjuncture in the narrative.[3] While stressing the overarching coherence of what Tony Hunt has referred to as Chrétien's "ironic masterpiece," my finding in the end was that the structure of the poem could not be understood solely from the perspective of a traditional symbolic logic of unity based on the Greek verb *symballein*, "to throw together, join together, or reunite."[4] At the very heart of what Hunt, Jean Frappier, and

[1] In Chrétien's romances, there is also a clear tendency on Keu's part to jump at the chance to face foreign knights in single combat and to lose: see *Le Roman d'Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), lines 2230-62 and *Le Chevalier de la Charrette ou Le Roman de Lancelot*, ed. Charles Méla (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992), lines 171-267. Strictly speaking, Yvain is not a "foreign knight," but he has assumed a function outside of Arthur's court (defender of the fountain), and Keu does not recognize him.

[2] "*Lion-Keu-Coupé*: A Missing Link in *Yvain* or *Le Chevalier au Lion*," *New Medieval Literatures* 20 (2020): 1-45.

[3] As I shall discuss further in Chapter 3, Keu and the serpent are compared on many points. Here I would simply like to add, as an aside, that Keu's characteristic *rampornes* present an echo with another pair of words in Old French, *ramper* and *rampant*, which could, as in modern French, refer to slithering, though Chrétien never makes this association explicitly. See *ramper*, DEAF**,** https://deaf-server.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/lemme/ramper (accessed 04.06.21); "ramper," in *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (Aberystwyth University), https://anglo-norman.et/entry/ramper (accessed 04.06.21).

[4] Tony Hunt, "Chrestien and the *Comediae*," *Mediaeval Studies* 40 (1978): 120-56 (133).

many others consider to be Chrétien's *magnum opus*, we bear witness instead to an anti-symbolic gesture involving processes of separation and cutting.[5]

Since completing my study of *Yvain*, I have expanded the scope of the analysis to include Chrétien's four other romances: *Erec et Enide* (*c.*1170), *Cligès* (1176), *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*c.*1177-81), and *Le Conte du Graal* (*c.*1180-90). In the process, I have become increasingly interested in the status of various forms of division as structuring devices in their own right—that is, as intended poetic effects rather than unintended defects, as prior studies of Chrétien's romances might suggest (*infra*)—and in the contexts that lend themselves most readily to the analysis of this technique, three of which, spanning the distance between the historical and the theoretical, will divide my attention in the following preliminary presentation of our author's "dialectical poetics."

Questioning (with) Chrétien: Romance and Dialectics in Twelfth-Century France

Without a doubt, the spread—expansion and refinement—of dialectical thinking was one of the most important developments, at once for philosophy, theology, and vernacular literature, of the so-called twelfth-century "renaissance" or "revival" in France. In this sense, dialectics refers to a specific science of intellectual conflict resolution. Confronted with, for example, a pair or group of opposing sentences pertaining to one and the same theological concept—the tripartite nature of God, for instance[6]—but voiced by two or more different Patristic authorities, the student of dialectics would be asked to doubt and subsequently question the basis of the contradiction on any number of grounds, influentially delineated in the prologue to Peter Abelard's manual of dialectical philosophy, *Sic et Non*, whose earliest version probably dates from around 1122. A solution or resolution could then be reached by one of two essential means: "*ex negativo*, through the refutation of one of the elements of the antithesis, or transcendently through the semantic maneuver of a *coincidentia oppositorum*."[7]

Senso latu, dialectics implies that the definition and understanding of one thing depends on a consideration of its contrary. Thus, writing about a century after Chrétien, Jean de Meun uses a technical (scholastic) vocabulary to defend the importance of dialectical reasoning in—and for—his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*:

> Ainsinc va des contreres choses,
> les unes sunt des autres gloses;
> et qui l'une an veust defenir,
> de l'autre li doit souvenir,
> ou ja, par nule antancion,
> n'i metra diffinicion. (lines 21543-48)[8]

[5] Jean Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: SEDES, 1969), 23.
[6] Peter Abailard, *Sic et Non*, ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976-77), *Quaestio* VI (127).
[7] Tony Hunt, "Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature," *Viator* 10 (1979): 95-130 (108).
[8] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965-70); the above passage is printed in Lecoy's third volume.

In effect, Jean's romance can be read as an assemblage of seeming contraries which, as they jostle against each other, often exhibit a striking dialogism, implicitly inviting the sort of hermeneutic approach that receives a precise and explicit formulation in the above lines.[9] Catherine Brown, whose *Contrary Things* makes an important contribution to the study of dialectics and didacticism in medieval Latin and Iberian literature, states the following with Jean's closing instructions in mind:

> Although for us and for our students, it may be "natural" to see contrary things as obstacles to understanding, it is not always so in the Middle Ages. The opposition of contraries can be a puzzle, even a source of anxiety in the Middle Ages; it is seldom, however, simply an obstacle to understanding. It is instead a hermeneutic irritant, and, as Jean de Meun suggests, one of the very *conditions* for the production of knowledge and understanding (author's emphasis).[10]

In many cases, the dialectic of the *Rose* is presented polyphonically through the "magisterial" discourses of different allegorical characters (Reason, Nature, et al.), whose function is not wholly dissimilar from that of the conflicting authorities cited throughout *Sic et Non*.[11] Yet it is also operative in the relationship between Guillaume de Lorris's initial 4,000-line romance and Jean's continuation, which are ambiguously characterized in Amor's prophecy as continuous segments of a single text, imputable to two separate and named authors: "car quant Guillaumes cessera, / Jehans le continuera" (lines 10557-58). In fact, we might suspect that the latter is alluding to precisely this interplay of rupture ("cessera") and continuity ("continuera") at the point when he refers to the task of "diffinicion" (lines 21545, -48, -52), which in Old French could mean a definition and/or an ending. Falling only two hundred lines from the endpoint of the *Rose*, this passage points forward to the romance's reception, as well as providing a retrospective glimpse of the second author's creative enterprise—the establishment of a new poetic voice in simultaneous opposition to and "remembrance" of Guillaume's original romance, its contrary and a vehicle for definition *qua* narrative closure.

As for the twelfth century, Hunt has so far been the most vocal and eloquent scholar of the influence of the Aristotelian-inspired dialectical logic on literature in Old French, with an emphasis on Abelard on the one hand and, on the other hand, the "dioscuri" of courtly romance in the 1170s and 80s: Chrétien and his Anglo-Norman contemporary Thomas d'Angleterre.[12] As Hunt argues, the overlapping character of the three *artes* constitutive of the *trivium*, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, meant that *dialectica* had *a priori* relevance with regard to literary

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[9] For an excellent intertextual reading of Jean's *contreres choses*, see Nancy Freeman Regelado, "'Des contreres choses.' La Fonction poétique de la citation et des *exempla* dans le 'Roman de la Rose' de Jean de Meun," *Littérature* 41 (1981): 62-81.

[10] Catherine Brown, *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectics, and the Poetics of Didacticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

[11] As a means of speaking about one thing through another, dialectics is, in fact, comparable and often co-extensive with other double-edged discursive comportments, such as allegory and irony. For a discussion of "irony-as-dialectic" in the context of Chrétien, see the chapter of Hult's forthcoming work on vernacular authorship in the Middle Ages, *Authorizing Fictions: Stealth Narrative in the Medieval French Tradition*, that is devoted to Chrétien. As I am citing a draft of this chapter, I do not provide precise page numbers.

[12] On Aristotle's place in later medieval thought, in France and in England, see Kellie Robertson, *Nature Speaks: Medieval Literature and Aristotelian Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

expression: "Trivium est eloquentia," states the author of one manual.[13] In his classic reading of "the dialectic of *Yvain*," Hunt sorts through the many pairs of oppositions that underwrite the romance action, from the animal and the human to the courtly (the *courtois*) and the "villainous" (the *vilains*).[14] In two further studies of courtly dialectics, Hunt applies this perspective to the analysis of scenes of "ratiocination" in *Yvain* as well as in *Cligès*, Chrétien's second romance, the figure of the go-between in the former (Lunete), and related elements.[15]

In the first of the latter two studies, Hunt focuses his attention on the emergence of a dialectical literature in Latin: the twelfth-century *Comediae*, including such influential works as the *Pamphilus*, *De nuntio sagaci*, and Vitalis de Blois's *Geta* (*c.*1125-30), a learned elegiac comedy based on Plautus's *Amphitryon* that satirizes the recent "ascendance of dialectic" in France and thereby registers the tension between what Keith Bate calls the "traditional literary university of Orléans" and the "philosophical university of Paris."[16] The importance of these works as "bridges" between Latin and the vernacular is reflected in their widespread circulation, with manuscripts of the *Pamphilus* and the *Geta* numbering over sixty, and their spectral presence in Chrétien's *Cligès* and *Yvain*, both of which would postdate the *Comediae* per Hunt's redating of the latter.[17] (Other major medieval authors were well aware of these comedies as well, such as Chaucer, who draws variously on the *Pamphilus* and the *Geta* in the *Canterbury Tales*.[18])

The date of Chrétien's beginnings as a dialectical poet can be pushed back even farther, however, by way of a selective re-reading of the opening verses of his first romance, *Erec et Enide*. Though I will come back to this prologue in Chapter 1, I would like nevertheless to cite it in full here for reasons that will shortly become apparent:

> Li vilains dit en son respit
> Que tel chose a l'en en despit,

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[13] Hunt, "Aristotle," 106. See also Bernardus Silvestris, who says more or less the same thing in his commentary on the *Aeneid*: "Itaque gramatica inhitium eloquentie, dialetica dicitur provectus, rethorica perfectio atque ideo dicitur eloquentia Trivia" (*Commentum quod dicitur Bernardi Silvestris super sex libros Eneidos Virgilii*, ed. Julianus Jones and Elizabetha Jones [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1977], 31).

[14] Hunt, "The Dialectic of *Yvain*," *The Modern Language Review* 72.2 (1977): 285-99.

[15] Hunt, "Aristotle"; id., "Chrestien and the *Comediae*." See also Rupert T. Pickens, *The Welsh Knight: Paradoxicality in Chrétien's* Conte del Graal (Lexington: French Forum, 1977), who provides a less direct but no less compelling account of dialectical paradoxes, including what he calls "antinomy," in Chrétien's romances: "The philosophical and rhetorical concept of *antinomia* is originally a juridical paradox—'a contention of contrary laws,' each of which is valid. Many of the 'controversies' in Abelard's *Sic et Non* are confrontations of opposed points of view or doctrinal interpretations both of which are equally authoritative" (102).

[16] Hunt, "Chrestien and the *Comediae*," 145; *Three Latin Comedies*, ed. Keith Bate (Toronto: Published for the Centre for Medieval Studies by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1976), 5—as the name suggests, Vitalis "lived and wrote" in the Loire Valley (ibid., 3; all references are to the editor's introduction). Andreas Capellanus's *De amore* (1180s) may also be included in the category of twelfth-century dialectically inflected literature; see, for instance, Michael D. Cherniss, "The Literary Comedy of Andreas Capellanus," *Modern Philology* 72.3 (1975): 223-37 (231).

[17] Hunt, "Chrestien and the *Comediae*," 131-44; ed. Bate, 3. As Bate points out, the *Geta* was also "widely used in both classical and medieval *florilegia* and was frequently echoed or its episodes modified in other *comediae*" (ibid.). Later, in the fifteenth century, Eustache Deschamps would translate Vitalis's play into French as *Le Traité d'Amphitryon et de Geta* (ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire [Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie, 1870]).

[18] See Laura Kendrick, "Medieval Vernacular Versions of Ancient Comedy: Geoffrey Chaucer, Eustache Deschamps, Vitalis of Blois and Plautus's *Amphitryon*," in S. Douglas Olson, ed., *Ancient Comedy and Reception: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Henderson* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014): 377-96 (379).

Qui mout vaut mieuz que l'en ne cuide.
Por ce fait bien qui son estuide
Atorne a sens, quel que il l'ait;
Car qui son estude entrelait,
Tost i puet tel chose taisir
Qui mout venroit puis a plesir.
Por ce dit Crestïens de Troies
Que raisons est que totes voies
Doit chascuns penser et entendre
A bien dire et a bien aprendre,
Et trait [d']un conte d'aventure
Une mout bele conjunture
Par qu'em puet prover et savoir
Que cil ne fait mie savoir
Qui sa scïence n'abandone
Tant con Dex la grace l'en done.
D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
Que devant rois et devant contes
Depecier et corrompre suelent
Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent.
Des or comencerai l'estoire
Que toz jors mais iert en memoire
Tant con durra crestïentez.
De ce s'est Crestïens ventez. (lines 1-26)[19]

The scholastic colors of the passage are clear enough from such terms as "estuide," "estude," "aprendre," etc. More to the point, we are presented here with various oppositional pairs. Among the many sets of "contrary things" introduced in the prologue of *Erec et Enide* are the sharing and concealment of knowledge; relatedly, pleasure versus silence ("taisir" / "plesir"); and unity and completeness versus fragmentation and corruption—the expression "mout bele conjunture" and the verbs "depecier et corrompre."

This brings us back to the issues of coherence and cutting on which I opened above. The term *conjunture* (better known by its variant *conjointure*) especially has given rise to a whole school of criticism surrounding the structure and meaning of Chrétien's romances. Members of this "school" have typically taken at face value the author's formal and motivational critique of his predecessors, the oral storytellers who, having a greater concern for money than the quality of the narrative, have "hacked to pieces" and "corrupted" the story of Erec. Accordingly, the same scholars have identified in *conjointure* a viable and real alternative to the defective tradition from which Chrétien purports to take his distance. For Douglas Kelly, who has written extensively about the figure of *conjointure*, most notably in the context of the *Charrette*, Chrétien's "joining" is synonymous with the genre of romance as defined by the continuity of its episodes or the "joints" between them, a conclusion that others, such as Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, seem to second, if only in passing.[20] But Kelly is also quite clear about the elusiveness of

[19] *Erec et Enide*, ed. and trans. Jean-Marie Fritz (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992).
[20] Douglas Kelly, Sens *and* Conjointure *in the* Chevalier de la Charrette (The Hague: Mouton, 1966); id., *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), esp. Ch. 1, "Conjointure" (15-31). On

Chrétien's *conjointure*, a term which presents the difficulty of appearing only once in his entire corpus and the additional problem of lacking a positive definition provided by the author. Thus, in a passage to which I will return in Chapter 3, Kelly concedes: ". . . Modern fascination with the word masks a startling, even disturbing variety of meanings that are attributed to it."[21] Indeed, the omission by Chrétien of a more detailed gloss on the concept of *conjointure* has led to a surplus of definitions, to which Kelly himself has contributed mightily. While generally taking *conjointure* to refer to a harmonious and fully accomplished work, as opposed to one that is fragmented and corrupted, Kelly goes as far at one point as to make the following claim regarding the wedding night of Erec and Enide: "The consummation is a *conjointure*, a word for sexual intercourse in Old French."[22] The present state of lexicographical research on the subject would in fact reveal that this sense is unattested, and my best guess as to the basis of this reading would be that Kelly has knowingly conflated *conjointure* and another—similar but different—word in Old French, *conjoncïon*, which could have the desired meaning.[23] The issue here, it seems to me, is that once we equate *conjointure* with other terms, such as "roman" or "conjoncïon," all the philological constraints that confer specificity on this or that word, based on real usage, are lifted, and each is nothing more than what we make of it: what we want or need it to mean.

Somewhat more pertinently for my purposes, Hunt has defended the idea of a link between Chrétien's vision of synthesis by "juncture" and the logic of dialectical resolution:

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conjointure in Chrétien in particular, see also Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 17. In her excellent analysis of the *dit* genre ("Le Dit," *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* 8.1 [1988]: 86-94), Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet contrasts the divisive nature of the *dit* with the *conjointure* of romance: "Le roman comme genre est du côté de la conjointure et d'une narration au passé, le dit du côté de la disjonction et d'une énonciation au présent" (87). Cerquiglini-Toulet may very well be correct, insofar as she is not referring specifically to Chrétien in this instance. Apropos, certain other scholars have extended the meaning of "conjointure" by applying it to the analysis of later romances: see, for instance, Méla, *La Conjointure dans les romans du Graal, de Chrétien de Troyes au* Livre de Lancelot (Paris: Seuil, 1984); Donald Maddox, "Sens et conjointure armoriale dans le *Lancelot propre*," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 14 (2007), available online at https://journals.openedition.org/crm/2657?lang=en (accessed 03.02.21); id., "Coutumes et 'conjointure' dans le *Lancelot en prose*," in Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy, eds., *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994): 293-309. Of particular note, perhaps, is Sylvia Huot's *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 27-35, in which the author uses "conjointure" to describe scribal efforts to enhance the unity of manuscript books. This usage stands out in my view because it is descriptive and therefore accurate: Huot is very much examining the "joints" between individual works in manuscript and makes no grandiose claims as to the importance of *conjointure* for Chrétien or romance authors generally (though one may assume, of course, that she borrowed the term from Chrétien). To the contrary, her sense of "conjointure" pertains to scribes rather than authors.

[21] Kelly, *Art*, 15.

[22] Kelly, "Narrative Poetics: Orality, Rhetoric, and Performance," in Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, eds., *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005): 52-63 (55). As for the equation of *conjointure* and *roman*, Kelly tries to make the point that one of Chrétien's medieval readers, Renaut de Beaujeu, author of *Le Bel inconnu* (*c.*1200), suggests the interchangeability of the two terms by replacing the one with the other in the prologue to his romance, thus: "Veul un roumant estraire / D'un molt biel conte d'aventure" (ed. G. Perrie Williams [Paris: Champion, 1929], lines 4-5; cited from Kelly, *Art*, 15). However, Kelly does not seem to account fully for the complexity of Renaut's adaptation of Chrétien's statement: technically, in this instance, aspects of *conjointure* are associated with both the *roumant* of line 4 and the *conte d'aventure* of line 5, which is described as "molt biel."

[23] Takeshi Matsumura, *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015), 691-92 on *conjointure* and *conjoncïon*. For the former, Matsumura gives "enchaînement, comparaison de chaque circonstance, composition" (ibid., 691).

> That the *bele conjointure* of Chrestien's romances consists fundamentally of the ordering of oppositions, complementary and contradictory, is, I think, a legitimate inference from Brand's instructive study of Chrestien's narrative technique in terms of motif duplication. . . . If the recurrence of contrasts and correspondences is accepted as the constitutive feature of the *bele conjointure*, it is even more important to recognize how the interpretation of this narrative dialectic yields the *sen* [meaning] of the works.[24]

But what Hunt fails to mention in the above, and what I believe is absolutely vital to our understanding both of the prologue of *Erec et Enide* and Chrétien's poetic strategies more generally, is that this image of synthesis by *conjointure* is itself part of a dialectical opposition: unity versus disunity, the integral work and its corrupted or fragmented version, as we have seen above. This relatively minor specification has potentially broad ramifications, as it stands to fundamentally destabilize the non-dialectical understanding of literary form in Chrétien's corpus, which is to say the notion of an absolute difference between synthetic and analytic forms, the joined and the disjointed. Could it be that like the type of *enchaînement* for which the poet is now so well known, the actions of *depecier et corrompre* also factor into his style as a romancer—in other words, that Chrétien had wanted his readers to *question* the distinction rather than take it for granted? A literal interpretation of the prologue of *Erec et Enide* fails to support this idea. Between these lines, however, something else appears to be transpiring.

For Hunt, the relevance of the *Geta* to Chrétien's *œuvre* is not direct: "The interest of the *Geta*, for our purposes, lies not in any strict parallels to Chrestien in subject matter, but in certain similarities of spirit which enable us to see *Cliges* and *Geta* as essentially products of the same milieu."[25] Widening our focus to include the *Erec et Enide* would, however, suggest that the laxity of this reading is uncalled for. Following is the *Geta*'s prologue:

> Carmina composuit uoluitque placere poeta:
> Fallitur hic studio, carmina nulla placent;
> Fabula nulla placet: queruntur seria cunctis,
> Quemlibet immodicus alligat eris amor.
> Vincit amor census et nummis carmina cedunt.
> Multa licet sapias, re sine nullus eris.
> Si quem scripta iuuant, istis tamen inuidet ille,
> Et laudans ueteres nescit amare nouos.
> Utilius tacuisse foret quam scribere uersus:
> Scriptor enim precio scriptaque laude carent;
> Quem iuuat iste labor soli sibi scriptitet ille,
> Et sibi pulcher eat et sua solus amet.[26] (lines 11-22**)**

[24] Hunt, "Aristotle," 108; Wolfgang Brand, *Chrétien de Troyes: Zur Dichtungstechnik seiner Romane* (Munich: Fink, 1972).
[25] Hunt, "Chrestien and the *Comediae*," 144-45.
[26] *Geta*, ed. and trans. Étienne Guilhou, in Gustave Cohen, dir., *La Comédie latine en France au XII^e^ siècle*, 2 vols., (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1931), I: 1-57. References to the *Aulularia* will be to Marcel Girard's edition, which also appears in this volume (I: 59-106).

The similarities of subject matter between the two prologues are, in fact, remarkable, and I think it is quite possible that Chrétien drew a part of his inspiration for the opening salvo of *Erec et Enide* from that of the *Geta*. Thus, we note that Vitalis is every bit as concerned with the topic of "pleasing" through poetry as Chrétien. Like Chrétien, the Latin poet contrasts material gain with aesthetic pleasure, declaring that each person is bound ("alligat") by his love of wealth. Knowledge is likewise at the heart of Vitalis's rhetoric here, though it is said in this case that knowledge is less valuable than real (financial) worth. As in *Erec et Enide*, the transmission of wisdom is opposed with the poet's silence ("tacuisse"). And corresponding to Vitalis's mention of the *antiqui* ("veteres") and the *moderni* ("nouos"), we have in *Erec et Enide* the distinction between the incompetent court *jongleurs* of the past and the advent of something new and better, the poet's re-edition of the story of *Erec et Enide* (in addition to, arguably, the implicit interpellation of the *Geta* itself as a *materia remota*, a term for the raw materials of tradition that the thirteenth-century author Conrad of Mure compares to "unhewn stones and wood as yet unplaned and unpolished").[27] Finally, in the last lines of the *Geta*'s prologue, Vitalis rather comically argues his point to a conclusion by affirming that if one must write, then one should write for oneself, for the writer is the only one who will derive any pleasure from the beauty of what he writes. Chrétien's amusingly bold rejoinder is to praise his own romance in the strongest of terms, seemingly equating the durability of its—and his—future renown, among an implied and equally appreciative public, with the lifespan of the Christian faith itself.[28]

Apropos of the dialectical intersection of *conjointure* and *depecier* / *corrompre*, the two prologues are mirror images. In effect, there is hardly an aspect of this part of the *Geta* that Chrétien does not flip on its head, from his valorization of knowledge and form over money to the defense of the pleasure of poetry, as opposed to silence, and so on. If we accept that Chrétien was a reader of the *Geta*, then in the place of a traditional *translatio studii*, a simple transfer of knowledge from one place and/or language to another, there is an unmistakable muting of the Latin original, however cheeky Vitalis's intentions may have been in the first place. This in turn gives rise to a notion of textual modernity that is based as much on the act of piecing together the fragments of an oral tale as it is on the disassembling of another text. Otherwise put, is Chrétien not caught here in the very acts of fragmentation and corruption that he appears to criticize in his first breath as a romancer? Has he not committed his own sort of violence with regard to one source that he is simultaneously in the process of trying to overcome through the replacement of the *conte d'aventure* with a *mout bele conjunture*? Of course, a different reading could locate in Chrétien's treatment of the *Geta* the same restorative function apparently imputed to *conjointure* in *Erec et Enide*: he recovers the ability of poetry to please and its role in transmitting knowledge. But my point is that one thing does not exclude the other: creation and corruption go

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[27] *Die "Summa de arte prosandi,"* ed. Walter Kronbichler (Zürich: Fretz und Wasmuth, 1968), pp. 66-67; translation cited from Kelly, *Art*, 26. Elsewhere, Kelly simply translates the term as "sources" (ibid., 145).

[28] In the prologue of *Cligès*, Chrétien again gestures towards his fame by referring to himself not as "Crestïens de Troies" but as "Cil qui fist d'Erec et d'Enide" (line 1), as well as several other works (2-7), some but not all of which have come down to us, creating an authorial corpus without having to repeat the signature (in full); his first name alone appears in lines 23, 45. By tracing the transmission of *chevalerie* and *clergie* from Greece to France in the following lines of *Cligès*, Chrétien then claims for himself the glory of both the present and the future, while silencing the past: "Ce nos ont nostre livre apris / Que Grece ot de chevalerie / Le premier los et de clergie, / Puis vint chevalerie a Rome / Et de la clergie la somme, / Qui or est en France venue. / Dex doint qu'ele i soit retenue / Tant que li leus li embelisse / Si que ja mais de France n'isse / L'ennors qui s'i est arestee. / Dex l'avoit as altres prestee, / Que des Grezois ne des Romains / Ne dit en mais ne plus ne mains, / D'eus est la parole remese / Et esteinte la vive brese" (lines 30-44).

hand in hand. At once the text is for something and *against* another, a literary staging ground for the yes-and-no hermeneutics of twelfth-century dialectics.

What this implies, moreover, is that we must begin to rethink what it meant for an author like Chrétien to make a preexisting text his own. To innovate in this setting was not necessarily to advance in linear fashion towards a formal and semiotic plenitude hitherto unrealized, nor would doing so have been obvious in the textual culture of the Middle Ages (*infra*).[29] It would appear, however, that movements in the other direction could achieve something of this purpose as well. Consider Vitalis, who in the prologue to a second play, the *Aulularia* (*c.*1125-45), reveals that he has willfully shortened the names of the characters in Plautus's original so as to fit them into his verse:

> Qui releget Plautum mirabitur altera forsan
> Nomina personis quam mea scripta notant.
> Causa mea est facto: uult uerba domestica uersus;
> Grandia plus aequo nomina metra timent. (lines 11-14)

Later in his prologue, Vitalis comes back around to the topic of naming when taking up the question of his own authority versus that of Plautus:

> Hec mea uel Plauti comedia nomen ab olla
> Traxit, sed Plauti quae fuit illa mea est.
> Curtaui Plautum: Plautum hec iactura beauit;
> Vt placeat Plautus scripta Vitalis emunt.
> Amphitrion nuper, nunc Aulularia tandem
> Senserunt senio pressa Vitalis opem. (lines 23-28)

The ironies of this passage cannot be missed. Though insisting on the preservation of Plautus's good name and the subject of his original, Vitalis claims the play as his own in the

[29] For an alternate reading of "perfection" in medieval literature, see Kelly, *Art*, 125-45, who concludes that "The completed work is the perfect whole, with every part in its appropriate place; it is a *bele conjointure*, or *roman* in Renaut de Beaujeu's sense" (145). However, Kelly also offers an interesting discussion of incompletion and "excision" as potentially deliberate practices, especially in prose romance (ibid., 135-44). About Chrétien Kelly writes that it is "typical" for there to be a "narrative whole" (ibid., 144), with the proviso that "some romances are not abbreviated, but are really incomplete, like Chrétien's *Perceval*, the First and Second *Perceval* Continuations, and Wace's and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's chronicles" (140). Such a qualification arises from, among other things, Kelly's conviction that a sharp distinction can always be maintained between "corruption" and perfection, the latter being able to withstand voluntary forms of incompleteness: "If perfection is not explicit, it is clearly implicit and recognizable as such" (139). As for Kelly's sense of "perfection," he bases it on the use of the verb *parfaire* in Old French, such as in the *Charrette*, where the narrator employs a form of it in reference to the construction of Lancelot's tower prison: "An moins de cinquante et .VII. jorz / Fu tote parfeite la torz" (lines 6127-28). Kelly comments, "The completion of the *Charrette*—'parfinee'—is analogous to that of Meleagant's tower . . . The search for perfection in place of corruption completes the passage from *materia remota* to *materia propinqua* by the successive stages called *penser*, *unir*, *parfaire*" (*Art*, 135). According to the *Lexique* of the *Dictionnaire électronique de Chrétien de Troyes* (dir. Pierre Kuntsmann [Université de Lorraine: ATILF, 2014], available online at http://www.atilf.fr/dect [accessed 05.03.21]), however, this is the only use of *parfaire* in Chrétien's corpus. Moreover, *parfaire* and *parfiner* have slightly different meanings: "to finish or complete," on the one hand, and, on the other hand, "to completely finish." The latter has an obvious interest with regard to the ending of the *Charrette*: whereas the tower is built all at once (over a continuous period of fifty-seven consecutive days), the romance is completed in two phases. A more detailed treatment of these issues can be found in Chapter 4.

most direct way imaginable: ". . . illa mea est." Vitalis furthermore reasons that by "curtailing" (abridging) Plautus, where the Roman author's name is invoked as a synecdoche for his work, Vitalis only aims to enhance Plautus's renown by growing his readership.[30] But the verb "placeat" plainly recalls the prologue of the *Geta* (a work that Vitalis alludes to in line 27 of the *Aulularia*), in which the poet clearly states that poetry does not please, and the term "emunt," a conjugation of "to buy," takes us back to the primary, financial motive behind the literary enterprise as discussed in the first play, an argument whose absurdity from the perspective of Plautus, a long dead author, requires little explanation. Vitalis is simultaneously also diminishing Plautus's name in a more literal sense by giving himself the last word, replacing "Plautus" with "Vitalis": thus, the end line 28, "Vitalis opem," allows for an unmediated association of the second author's name with the new work.[31] Meanwhile, the different declensions of the originator's name ("Plautum," "Plauti," "Plautus") grammaticalize mutability, whereas by reserving his own name for use in the genitive (lines 26, 28), Vitalis is able to create the impression that his authority is somehow indeclinable, an effect that we might consider alongside Chrétien's "claim to fame" at the end of the prologue to his first romance, though the latter's modernizing gesture is introduced with a great deal more discretion since no authorial signature other than "Crestïens de Troies" is uttered in any form.[32] While the parallels between the *Geta* and *Erec et Enide* are no doubt the most striking, these lines from the *Aulularia* offer an additional challenge to the hierarchy of restorative/completive and corruptive/fragmentizing models of composition, which is all the more interesting since Vitalis employs the Latin equivalent of Chrétien's verb "trait" (line 13), "traxit" (24), to characterize the relationship between his text and Plautus's.

What we have in *Erec et Enide*, at any rate, is only one example—the first—of Chrétien's dialectical poetics, the analysis of which should no longer exempt Chrétien's "joining" from questioning. To be sure, I am not suggesting that this figure be ignored or forgotten from now on, or that it held no importance for Chrétien. Partly because of the crucial place that it has occupied in the critical tradition surrounding Chrétien's narrative corpus, and also because *Yvain* may be the most unified of the romances, I will come back to the term with some regularity in Chapter 3 especially. What I am arguing is rather that, insofar as it would be inappropriate to apprehend difference as an absolute phenomenon in the philosophical context of Chrétien's time, the long forgotten vices of *depecier et corrompre*, which will emerge over the course of this analysis as narrative devices in their own right, cannot convincingly be relegated to the secondary status of a foil in the interpretation of narrative form from *Erec et Enide* to the *Conte du Graal*.

[30] On the various methods of "curtailment" in Vitalis's play, see ed. Guilhou, pp. 62-64. As a result of the ensemble of the second author's interventions, the play would shrink to about half the size of the original (792 verses / 1,500).
[31] As Bate notes, "It has been shown quite clearly that [Vitalis] was mistaken as regards the *Aulularia*: he was really modifying a pseudo-Plautine text from the fourth century, the *Querolus sive Aulularia*" (ed. Bate, 3). This does not seriously affect my reading of the prologue, though it does add a layer to the dynamics of diminishment and corruption therein.
[32] In connection with Vitalis's "indeclinable" authority, it is rather interesting to note that Deschamps's translation, according to Kendrick, is "relatively faithful" compared to the Latin author's abbreviation of Plautus's text ("Medieval Vernacular Versions of Ancient Comedy," 377).

The Poetics of Textual Transmission, from Abelard to Chrétien

The comedies of Vitalis de Blois were not the only dialectical texts from the twelfth century to have crossed Chrétien's "desk" as he was establishing himself as a vernacular author. *Sic et Non*, Abelard's most daring and innovative work, mixing rational philosophy and Christian theology by asking readers to apply the tools of dialectical resolution to conflicting citations from the writings of the Church Fathers, would also have been included in the Champenois poet's reading materials.[33] Hunt sums up the importance of *Sic et Non* as follows:

> In the *Dialectica*, of course, Abelard laid far greater emphasis on the scope and operation of dialectic; but the *Sic et Non* remains more important for the contribution of dialectic to *sacra eruditio* because this had particularly to do with problems of interpretation, not just the letter of the text and its freedom from corruption, but attention to context, comparison with other works by the same author and by different authors, circumstances of composition, and so on.[34]

As noted by David Luscombe, these methods "are generally agreed to have proved an inestimable stimulus upon twelfth-century thinking," but they may also sound familiar to anyone practicing literary criticism today.[35] Perhaps most 'medieval' in the above—and most closely related to our developing discussion of Chrétien's engagement with dialectical thought—is the question of a text's "freedom from corruption."

Medieval books were not printed but transmitted by scribes, oral performers, and owners who were not always concerned or able to leave the text as they found it. Other fragmentizing creatures would creep into the picture over time: woodworms, fire, and water, to name three.[36] At a different yet parallel level, a lack of copyright and, relatedly, the "absence of the notion of plagiarism" created the conditions for imitations, rewritings, derhyming, and other modes of textual transformation.[37] As a result, literary and non-literary works alike underwent various forms of change, very much including corruption and fragmentation, whether literal

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[33] A concise example is *Quaestio* VI, on the Trinity: "Quod sit Deus tripartitus et contra" (127). The citations, of which there are two, are from Augustine: 1.) "Satis est christiano rerum creatarum causam non nisi credere bonitatem creatoris qui est Deus unus; nullamque esse naturam quae non aut ipse sit aut ab ipso, eumque tripartitum, patrem scilicet et filium et spiritum sanctum" (*In Enchiridion*, cap. XI); 2.) "Non quoniam Deus trinitas est ideo triplex putandus est; alioquin minor esset in singulis quam in tribus pariter" (*De Trinitate*, lib. VII, cap. VII). In theory, the solution could involve a retraction of one of Augustine's statements, or, if no other explanation could be found, we might suspect a scribal error. In this precise case, however, a simpler strategy seems available, which is lexical and semantic. In the question, the operative word appears to be "tripartitus," which reappears in the first citation. In the second one, a different term is used: "triplex." This observation might lead the reader to ask whether Augustine is distinguishing between the two words, only one of which, "tripartite," would suggest three equal parts. For an additional example, see Chapter 1.

[34] Hunt, "Aristotle," 104-105.

[35] David E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 13.

[36] For a recent essay on bookworm activity in medieval and ancient texts, see Emma Maggie Solberg, "Human and Insect Bookworms," *Postmedieval* 11.1 (2020): 12-22. Solberg provides useful analysis of the signs of such activity, with particular emphasis on *Sitodrepa panacea* (drugstore beetle), but makes several exaggerated arguments in pursuing her central objective of approaching the damage to manuscripts caused by insects "from the insects' perspective" (12; see also 16, 19). This objective is itself quickly betrayed: by interpreting worms as both readers and writers, Solberg employs a thoroughly anthropocentric logic throughout.

[37] Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 24.

(physical/material), figurative (textual), or both, as they migrated from one person or place to the next: "On est moins en présence d'un système que d'un ensemble, certes relativement cohérent, mais où ne cessent de se produire des glissements, des modifications partielles, des ruptures et, de temps à autres, des mutations," Paul Zumthor advances.[38]

Medieval writers were neither unaware of nor indifferent to the vicissitudes intrinsic to this itinerary, though the threat of textual change did not in every case elicit the same reaction. Contrary to Stephen G. Nichols's critique of modern philology on the basis that modern editors are alone, as far as the history of textual criticism goes, in their concern for the establishment of "a fixed text reflecting so far as possible the author's original intention," Abelard, as per Hunt, shared this concern from the first; *mutatis mutandis*, Zumthor discusses exceptions to the "law" of literary mobility in the Middle Ages, namely late-medieval authors such as Guillaume de Machaut and Charles d'Orléans, "chez qui ou dans l'entourage desquels perce un certain souci de contrôler ou de fixer le texte."[39] In a lengthy passage from the prologue of *Sic et Non* which I discuss in greater detail at the end of Chapter 1, the philosopher-theologian presents the alterations and flaws arising from the transmission of handwritten texts as a menace to the "truth" and a key source of inconsistency in the writings of the Fathers (91-99). In this, he follows Jerome's *Tractatus sive homiliae in psalmos* (turn of the fifth century), in which the saint effectively pursues a dialectical analysis of manuscript error. In Homily 11 ("On Psalm 77"), after identifying and emending a scribal conflation of the names Isaia and Asaph, Jerome walks us through the resolution of a contradiction in the Gospels of Matthew, John, and Mark, both cases that Abelard would go on to instance in his prologue (91-92):

> . . . there is a similar problem in Matthew and in John where it is written that our Lord was crucified at the sixth hour, whereas in Mark it is written that He was crucified the third hour. There seems to be a discrepancy here, but really there is none. The error was on the part of the scribes, for originally in Mark the sixth hour, likewise, was written, but many thought there was a gamma instead of an *επισημω*, the Greek number sign. Now, just as this was the scribes' error, it was, likewise, their error to write Isaia instead of Asaph (11.81-82).[40]

Blunders of this sort, designated more specifically as *corruptiones* by Abelard, were the result of inattention, misunderstanding, and more broadly a lack or failure of intention that could be attributed to the ignorance of scribes, "ignorantiam scriptorum" (92). For the two thinkers, Jerome and Abelard, such errors were therefore a *problem*, and the dialectical solution to a contradiction between two citations, one of which is prey to corruption, could only be achieved

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[38] Ibid., 58.

[39] Ibid., 72; Stephen G. Nichols, "What is a Manuscript Culture? Technologies of the Manuscript Matrix," in Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, eds., *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 34-59 (35). See also Nichols's "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1-10 (esp. 1-3). In Bernard Cerquiglini's *Éloge de la variante: histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), the putative source of Nichols's New Philology, Cerquiglini offers, through his reading of the term *textus*, a useful framework in which to consider Abelard's concern with textual fixity alongside then-current (eleventh- and twelfth-century) notions of scriptural authority (59). As Solberg has furthermore shown, figures such as Aristotle, Antiphanes, Isidore of Pelusium, and the author of a well-known riddle in the tenth-century Exeter Book all demonstrate their awareness of bookworms and the damage they were liable to do ("Bookworms," 15, 17).

[40] *The Homilies of Saint Jerome, Volume 1 (1-59 on the Psalms)*, trans. Sister Marie Liguori Ewald (Collegeville, MN: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

ex negativo, i.e., by showing, or inferring, that one statement is "wrong" (inaccurate) and the other one "right" (aligned with the truth, whatever it might be).

In addition to offering insights into medieval thought concerning the process whereby texts were copied and altered, Abelard's remarks, coming as they do in a theological context, lend credence to István Bejczy's recent claim, formulated in connection particularly with intellectual and monastic discourses, that

> . . . twelfth-century authors, whether reputedly "progressive" or "conservative," put an increasing emphasis on the intentions underlying virtuous or vicious behavior. . . . It is no coincidence that the Augustinian dictum "Have charity and do whatever you want" suddenly became popular in twelfth-century literature.[41]

This line receives a double mention in the prologue of *Sic et Non* ("'Habe' inquit 'caritatem, et fac quicquid vis'"; "Dilige, et quod vis fac" [98]), for instance, where it serves precisely to stabilize the distinction between good (charitable) intentions, bad (mendacious) intentions, and unintended action as it relates to the various stages of the writing process.[42]

Chrétien's position as a vernacular author treating, for the better part of his career, a largely secular, Arthurian *matiere* is another question. Following on my unsettling of the difference between *conjointure* and *depecier* / *corrompre* in the preceding, I would like to suggest that Chrétien's outlook on the nature and effect of corruption breaks with that of Abelard and Jerome: it comes closer to a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a convergence of opposites. As we shall see throughout the chapters to follow, Chrétien took an interest in the capacity of corruption to create new meaning through alteration and subtraction. The paradox here is that the necessary antonymy of intention and error has been dispensed with. For Chrétien, the stuff of what Abelard and Jerome called "error" (*corruptione*) could be turned to a poetic purpose or a new and different "truth": omissions, misquotations, the partial transmission of preexisting works, etc.

At the same time, such attributes may be sharply distinguished from what other scholars, inspired by psychoanalysis, have taken to calling the "textual unconscious." Paul Strohm understands the textual unconscious as being "effectively constituted by and extensively correlated with that which the text represses,"[43] and Nichols defines it in the following Lacanian terms, which echo to some extent with my own terminology, in a half-baked attempt to officiate the wedding of theory and philology whose antinomy his New Philology rejects:

> What I am suggesting is simply that the manuscript matrix consists of gaps or interstices, in the form of interventions in the text made up of interpolations of visual and verbal insertions which may be conceived . . . as "pulsations of the unconscious" by which the "subject reveals and conceals" itself.[44]

Since I will be arguing that Chrétien's 'mistakes' were the outcome of a specific poetic strategy, I will for the most part be uninterested in the unconscious channels of his writing, what it

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[41] István Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 70.
[42] See also note 113 below.
[43] Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Lollard Joke: History and the Textual Unconscious," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 23-42 (23).
[44] Nichols, "Introduction," 8.

"represses." For underlying this view of the text's repressions is the familiar notion of an ideal structure, in which the "gaps and interstices" would normally have no place and could not possibly, therefore, be *desired* by the author. Moreover, Nichols limits his focus to illuminated manuscripts (even as he gives titular prominence to the idea of a "manuscript culture," which suggests to me the primacy of the written, not the pictorial), whereas manuscript illuminations will not figure at the center of my analysis.

Another paradigm that bears mentioning at this point as a frame of comparison is what could be called the philology of the variant. In one of the most seminal early contributions to the understanding of the formal and semantic fluctuations intrinsic to the medieval text is Jean Rychner's 1960 study of the fabliaux, in which the Swiss master defines copyists' *variantes* relative to two other concepts (where the authorial original, theorized or real [extant], represents an implicit degree zero for all three): *remaniements*, or reworkings, and *dégradations*.[45] The variant, generally speaking, is a category of alteration that results in a distinctive "copy" of a given work, but not in a new "version."[46] Variants are often small and insignificant changes, such as alternate spellings, dialectal attributes (e.g., the use of *le* in the place of *la* with a feminine singular noun), etc. Though lacking premeditation, they are not erroneous ("Les variantes de copistes ne sont nullement des fautes de copie") but habit-induced or spur-of-the-moment adjustments.[47] Reworkings, by contrast, are understood in terms of real consequences for the text (ushering in a new "version"), their greater size, and a willful intervention: "Nous appellerons remaniements seules les transformations volontaires."[48] Degradations, finally, are the residue of the fabliaux' oral transmission: the written implications of performers' memorial "insuffisances."[49]

Building on Rychner, Zumthor offers a second and more permissive understanding of textual variants, which is related to the oft-cited concept of "mouvance," a technical term that Zumthor coined in order to account for the ways in which the literary work was shaped by the means of transmission, be they oral or written:

> L'abondance des variantes que comporte la tradition manuscrite de toute œuvre médiévale tient à l'imprécision des moyens de transmission, complication et cherté de l'écriture, rareté relative du matériel, absence de techniques de reproduction mécanique . . .Variantes à fleur de texte: mots, tours de phrases isolés; variantes portant sur des fragments plus considérables, ajoutés, supprimés, modifiés, substitués à d'autres; altération ou déplacement de parties; variantes dans le nombre et la succession des éléments . . .[50]

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[45] *Contribution à l'étude des fabliaux; variantes, remaniements, dégradations. I: Observations* (Neuchâtel: Faculté des lettres, 1960). As a response to Per Nykrog's "aesthetic" analysis of the fabliaux, Rychner sets out to examine what he calls "la vie réelle des œuvres" through the prism of their manuscript traditions (ibid., 7). Rychner's *Contribution* therefore ranks among the many unacknowledged precursors to the New Philology, whose scholarly origins Nichols situates around 1980 ("Introduction," 9).

[46] Rychner, *Contribution*, 38.

[47] Ibid., 40. The above summary cannot do justice to all the nuances of Rychner's study, such as his identification, between the two broad categories of "variantes légères" and "remaniements," of a hybrid class of variants which reflect "une vraie participation au texte" on the part of the copyist (44).

[48] Ibid., 63.

[49] Ibid., 99.

[50] Zumthor, *Essai*, 71.

Such mutations are variously classified as "linguistic" ("une substitution de formule" or "modification de la structure de l'énoncé"), "semantic" ("concernant soit la signification propre d'une phrase, soit le sens contextuel"), or "functional (e.g., "les changements d'envoi ou de dédicace").[51] Certain of these categories, such as the "déplacement de partie," will provide a useful framework in which to consider Chrétien's later compositions, as they can be seen to effect an interesting variety of internal structural variation and multiplicity.

On the whole, however, Zumthor does not seem especially concerned with the notion of corruption. Indeed, the theory of "mouvance" to which I referred above would suggest that, no matter the extent of a work's mobility, all of its manifestations have something essential and inalterable in common: "C'est pourquoi la *mouvance* même de l'œuvre, de texte en texte, de variante en variante, ne modifie jamais ce qu'a d'essentiel le poème. Elle déplace, retranche ou ajoute, mais ne peut atteindre ce qui fait exister ce chant et lui confère son sens" (author's emphasis).[52] For my part, I will be contending that such actions as "retrancher" and "déplacer" were an organic feature of Chrétien's writing—that they did not exist solely "au-delà du poète."[53] Yet insofar as I am also arguing that such formal attributes are an *essential* part of Chrétien's romances, I am not necessarily in disagreement with Zumthor. On the one hand, Zumthor does not, of course, downplay the potential importance of the *glissements* and *mutations* mentioned above, even as he describes the persistence of the medieval *œuvre* over time. We can imagine, moreover, that there are different degrees of variation and change, some of which go beyond the scope of *mouvance*: material fragmentation, systematic rewriting or error, such as is mentioned in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*, and so on. On the other hand, the very fact that Chrétien's "works" have survived so many stages of transmission (copying, reworking, editorial interventions) is a testament both to the paradoxes of literary history and to the broad validity and nuance of Zumthor's *Essai*.[54]

A later and still current, third conceptualization of the changing face of the medieval text was originally proposed by Bernard Cerquiglini in his *Éloge de la variante* and quickly certified, albeit in a speciously simplified form, by Nichols and company in *Speculum* 65: "Or l'écriture médiévale ne produit pas des variantes, elle est variance."[55] "Variance" is a calque on Zumthor's *mouvance* that Cerquiglini uses to refer to the inherent instability of medieval writing ("l'écriture médiévale") in the vernacular, from the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth century in particular.[56] Though closely related to *mouvance*, *variance* thus pertains primarily to the written medium, the medieval manuscript book or codex, as opposed, in Cerquiglini's critique of the limits of textual criticism, to the modern printed edition and its characteristic stability.[57] For Cerquiglini, medieval texts are characterized by a form of excess resulting from the mediating

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 240.
[53] Ibid., 72.
[54] On the relative fidelity of Chrétien's scribes, see, for instance, Cerquiglini, *Éloge*, 64. The history of the transmission of Vitalis's *Geta* is similarly paradoxical. Whereas Vitalis effectively excises half of Plautus's original text, Eustache Deschamps's French translation of Vitalis is more or less faithful (see note 32). In the context of Chrétien, it is worth recalling nevertheless that many of the works listed in the prologue to *Cligès*, if they ever existed, have not survived.
[55] Cerquiglini, *Éloge*, 111.
[56] See ibid., 64. In locating the cut-off between inherent instability and increased stability in the medieval text, Cerquiglini may be alluding to Zumthor's remarks about authorial involvement in manuscript production in the fourteenth century (*Essai*, 72 and *supra*).
[57] Cerquiglini, *Éloge*, 63.

role of scribes, whose subjectivity cannot be fully eradicated from surviving manuscripts without compromising the authentic "surplus de texte, de langue et de sens" therein.[58]

Cerquiglini's theory of a ubiquitous surplus need not imply, however, that he is denying the relevance of the author figure in the Middle Ages, as might be concluded from Nichols's reformulation: "In the act of copying a text, the scribe supplants the original poet."[59] If it did, then Cerquiglini would hardly be able to speak of the *Perceval* as "l'œuvre de Chrétien" without contradicting himself.[60] What could rather be said about Cerquiglini's "textuary" model is that it propounds a more inclusive hermeneutic and editorial ideology than traditional philosophies of text editing, from the nineteenth century to the time of the *Éloge*'s publication: the scribe does not "supplant" the original poet but variously exists alongside, on top of, and within the authorial voice.[61] Consequently, it would be futile to seek to establish an absolute or strictly hierarchical distinction between author and scribe, original and copy in the absence of a holograph or autograph manuscript. To the extent that both author and scribe were engaged in processes of transmission, rewriting, and so on, the prioritization of originality that Cerquiglini is calling into question would ultimately entail either a studied misapprehension of the nature of medieval writing or a global dismissal of nearly every text that has come down to us from the French Middle Ages.

As an authorial praxis combining elements of *mouvance* / *variance* (mobility and multiplicity), reworking ("transformations volontaires"), and *dégradation* (memorial and material), Chrétien's poetics of corruption, fragmentation, and joining offers a distinctive and yet unusually robust, coherent, and self-conscious illustration of the medieval text as an assemblage of variables. A part of the author's motivation may have been to "one up" Abelard's logic of corruption by reconfiguring the relationship between meaning and change/alteration, where "motivation" is taken in a radical or primordial sense; the specific reasons for which Chrétien may have wanted to compromise what I am calling the "fullness" of this or that romance will be dealt with later. But another consideration, which is related to texts' formal fluidity in the Middle Ages, is that all (medieval) writing, however deliberately it is executed, is vulnerable to error, be it scribal, oral, or authorial, a point that I will explore further, with Chrétien's help, in Chapter 5. (One can easily imagine a hyperbolic formulation in the style of Cerquiglini's one-liner about literary form in the Middle Ages: "L'écriture médiévale ne produit pas des erreurs" etc.) Already in the passage from Jerome cited above, however, the distinction between corruption and will begins to weaken, for it was with the *intention* of correcting a perceived error in the Gospel that

[58] Ibid., 69.
[59] Nichols, "Introduction," 8.
[60] Cerquiglini, *Éloge*, 64. I am slightly in disagreement with Patrick Moran on this point. For Moran, what Zumthor calls the *œuvre* disappears over the course of Cerquiglini's analysis ("Le Texte médiéval existe-t-il? Mouvance et identité textuelle dans les fictions du XIII^{e} siècle," in Anne Salamon et al., dir., *Le Texte médiéval. De la variante à la recréation* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2012): 13-25, 19. But imagine a multidimensional electronic edition of the sort proposed by Cerquiglini. Would each window on the computer screen receive a different title, be attributed to a scribe (or scribes) rather than to Chrétien de Troyes? Does Cerquiglini's call for the "consultation conjointe, par fenêtrage, de données appartenant à des ensembles disjoints" (*Éloge*, 79) not reflect precisely his acknowledgement, however tacit, of "l'unité complexe, mais aisément reconnaissable, que constitue la collectivité des versions [of the *œuvre*] en manifestant la matérialité" (Zumthor, *Essai*, 73)?
[61] Nichols, "Introduction," 8.

the offending scribe replaced "Asaph," a figure of whom, Jerome reasons, the copyist was probably ignorant, with "Isaia," with whom the scribe would have been familiar.[62]

Along the same lines, a marginal commentary in Codex O of Jerome's text locates an error in the saint's claim that the Word of God did not descend into hell at the same time as the soul of Christ: "This passage appears foreign to Catholic belief, since it has been accepted (*cum fide*) on faith, that the Word of God descended into hell simultaneously with the soul of Christ."[63] To this Dom Germain Morin, one of Jerome's modern editors, adds, "Jerome is, indeed, a great scholar and one excelling in doctrine; but he was a man and not infallible."[64] Intending one thing, like the scribe whose work he chides, Jerome ends up doing another. This and other examples go to show that *corruptione* was not exclusive to the post-production phases of literature. In other words, composition and transmission can be largely coterminous rather than discrete processes, as we have seen in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*, where, with apparently the same philological anxiety as Jerome and Abelard, Chrétien purports to resist and undo the violence of transmission even as he implicates himself in it. By my reckoning, Chrétien's distinctiveness in this context was to explore the fallibility of the text as something that could generate meaning—as well as "knowledge and understanding," to come back to Brown's remark—instead of obstructing it in every instance.[65]

Though distinctive, Chrétien was not altogether alone in this sphere of thought. Also in the twelfth century, a text by Aristotle, translated into Latin as *De Generatione et Corruptione* (*On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away*, *c.*350 B.C.E. for the Greek original), was experiencing a second wave of circulation, one that does not receive a mention in Hunt's work on the medieval *Corpus Aristotelicum* but which has recently garnered the attention of a number of medievalists.[66] It is now known that there were two Latin translations of this text in the twelfth century, the first by the Italian jurist Burgundio of Pisa (1110-93) and the second by Gerard of Cremona, with a *terminus ante quem* of 1187.[67] Around the time that Chrétien was launching his career as a poet, Averroës also wrote his Middle Commentary on the *De Generatione et Corruptione* (1172).[68] As far as I can tell, it cannot be established with certainty that Chrétien

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[62] Jerome, *Homilies*, 82. See also Rychner, *Contribution*, 42, who offers a fascinating *mise au point* concerning interpolations as sources of "incohérence," thereby complicating the distinction between *remaniement* and *dégradation*.

[63] Cited from Jerome, *Homilies*, trans. Ewald, vol. 2 (Collegeville, MN: Catholic University of American Press, 2005[2]), 35.

[64] S. Hieronymi Presbyteri, *Tractatus sive homiliae in psalmos. In Marci evangelium. Alia varia argumenta*, ed. Germain Morin (Turnhout: Corpus Christianorum, 1958); the above translation is cited from the notes to trans. Ewald, II: 35.

[65] In a different context, I have begun to consider this question from the perspective of the scribe as well: "Lancelot innocenté? Étude sur un témoin tardif de *La Mort le roi Artu* (MS. BnF, FR. 120)," *Romania* 134.2 (2016): 261-93.

[66] Joëlle Ducos and Violaine Giacomotto-Charra, eds., *Lire Aristote au Moyen Âge. Réception du traité* Sur la génération et la corruption (Paris: Champion, 2011). The emphasis of this volume is on the thirteenth century and beyond.

[67] For brief notices on the two twelfth-century translations of Aristotle's work, see Pieter de Leemans, "*Alia translatio planior*: les traductions latines du *De generatione et corruptione* et les commentateurs médiévaux," in Ducos and Giacomotto-Charra, eds., *Lire Aristote*: 27-54 (27-31).

[68] James K. Otte, "An Anonymous Oxford Commentary on Aristotle's *De Generatione et Corruptione*," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 326-36 (327); id., "Burgundio of Pisa. Translator of the Greco-Latin Version of Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione, translatio vetus*," in J.M.M.H. Thijssen and H.A.G. Braakhuis, eds., *The Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's* De generatione et corruptione. *Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999): 79-86; *Averroes on Aristotle's* De Generatione et Corruptione. *Middle Commentary and Epitome*, trans. Samuel Kurland (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1958). On the manuscript transmission of *De Generatione et*

knew or read either of the Latin translations of Aristotle's text. Nevertheless, the general argument of the latter would tend to demonstrate that the kind of thinking Chrétien was doing was to some extent already underway (or "in the air"), albeit in a different context geared more towards the natural world than the world of literature.[69] In Chapter 3, for instance, Aristotle "asks how we are to apply, to the generation of substances, the undeniable principle that what is must in some sense come from what is not."[70] "To help answer this question," as David Bostock further paraphrases, Aristotle raises another:

> . . . if destruction is going on perpetually, why has not the whole world been destroyed long ago? To this the answer is that the destruction of one thing is at the same time the generation of another, and this also answers the original question about what a substance is generated from: it is generated from *another* substance (author's emphasis).[71]

In Burgundio's translation, the coaxial revolutions of generation and corruption are rather felicitously phrased as a chiasmus: "[E]t est alterius generatio semper in substantiis alterius corruptio et alterius corruptio alterius generatio" (Lib. 1, Cap. 3).[72]

If it is uncertain whether Chrétien was a reader of Aristotle's treatise, the key concepts developed therein through the philosopher's discussion of the co-presence of destruction and generation may also be seen at work in a series of literary translations and adaptations from the third quarter of the twelfth century. I am thinking here of the narratives of the Trojan War and ensuing events as recorded in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (*c.*1123-39) and the influential *romans antiques*, namely *Le Roman de Brut* (Wace, *c.*1155), *Le Roman de Troie* (Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *c.*1165), and a third romance of which, as others have argued and I will attempt to confirm in Chapter 5, Chrétien had an intimate knowledge: *Le Roman d'Eneas* (*c.*1160), a relatively—yet certainly not entirely—faithful Old French re-telling of Virgil's

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Corruptione, see among others de Leemans, "*Alia translatio planior*"; Julia Barrow et al., "A Checklist of Manuscripts Containing the Writings of Peter Abelard and Heloise and Other Works Closely Associated with Abelard and His School," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 14-15 (1986): 183-302 (271).

[69] In a provocative discussion of Chrétien's role as author, Pickens has suggested a tendency on the part of literature to evolve alongside conceptions of nature: "As art imitates nature, so the generation of art imitates natural creative processes; in the course of history, poetics is redefined, in part, in accord with changing concepts of the natural world" (*The Welsh Knight*, 12). To this it could be added that, in theory at least, Aristotle's treatise pertains to "presque tous les phénomènes de la zone sublunaire" (Ducos and Giacomotto-Charra, "Enjeux et problématiques," in *eid.*, eds., *Lire Aristote*: 7-24 [7]). For a much more expansive analysis of the relationship between art and nature in medieval literature, particularly the *Roman de la Rose*, see Jonathan Morton, *The* Roman de la Rose *in Its Philosophical Context: Art, Nature, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). In Sarah Kay's brilliant work on animal skin, we are reminded that the two "worlds" in question routinely converge in the writing support that was parchment: *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). For the modern period, Ian Duncan has recently offered a study of the novel's formation against the background of scientific discourses on evolution and human nature, or what the author refers to as "the natural history of man": *Human Forms: The Novel in the Age of Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 2.

[70] David Bostock, "Aristotle on the Transmutation of the Elements in *De Generatione et Corruptione*," in Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., *Aristotle: Logic and Metaphysics* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 166-76 (reprinted from *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 13 [1995]: 217-29), 169.

[71] Ibid.

[72] *De generatione et corruptione. Translatio vetus*, ed. J. Judycka (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986); cited from *Aristoteles Latinus*, http://clt.brepolis.net.libproxy.berkeley.edu/ald/Default.aspx (accessed 03.24.21).

Aeneid by an anonymous poet and translator. The opening lines of the *Eneas* are a recap of the fall of Troy:

> Quant Menelaus ot Troie asise,
> onc n'en torna tresqu'il l'ot prise,
> gasta la terre et tot lo regne
> por la vanjance de sa fenne.
> La cité prist par traïson,
> tot cravanta, tors et donjon,
> arst le païs, destruist les murs,
> nus ne estoit dedanz seürs;
> tote a la vile cravantee,
> a feu, a flame l'a livree. (lines 1-10)[73]

At the other end of the romance, Alba is founded, then Rome:

> Eneas ot le mialz d'Itaire,
> une cité comence a faire,
> bons murs i fist et fort donjon.
> Albe mist a sa cité non;
> molt par fu riche, molt fu granz,
> ses anpires dura molt anz . . .
> Ascaniüs regna aprés,
> et puis fu si com Anchisés
> a Eneas ot aconté
> an enfer, et bien demostré
> les rois qui aprés lui vendroient . . .
> Molt furent tuit de grant pooir
> et descendirent d'oir an oir,
> desi que nez an fu Remus,
> de cel linage, et Romulus;
> frere furent et molt fort home.
> Cil firent la cité de Rome,
> que Romulus li anposa
> son nom, que primes li dona. (lines 10131-36, -41-45, -49-56)

In short, were it not for the destruction of Troy, Rome would never have been built. And indeed, Anchises's various roles—a casualty of the Trojan War who becomes in death a prophet of his line's rule over Rome, and who therefore acts as both a "helper" or guide for his son and an agent of narrative/political closure—betrays a causal link between the beginning, which is also an ending, and the ending, which is also a beginning. Similarly, were it not for the pruning of certain details from the *Eneas* and the rearrangement of others, the end of Gauvain's part of

[73] *Eneas*, ed. Jean Jacques Salverda de Grave, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925-29). While other editions of the *Eneas* have appeared since the publication of Salverda de Grave's revised edition (see ed./trans. Aimé Petit [Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997], as well as Francine Mora's and Wilfrid Besnardeau's bilingual edition [Paris: Champion Classiques, 2018]), the latter remains the most authoritative.

the *Conte du Graal* would not look quite the same (Ch. 5). The *Eneas* poet, as Chrétien could have gathered, was himself already implicated in an act of transmission *qua* corruption and generation, involving the simultaneous safeguarding and subversion, through translation and rewriting, of the Virgilian tradition. The exuberant additions that he made to the love story of Eneas and Lavine may be of particular note in this connection.[74]

Such ambiguity in turn suggests another possible element in Chrétien's reclaiming and elevation of what had formerly been rather harshly criticized in medieval theories of interpretation such as Abelard's. Inasmuch as the nascent genre of *roman* (*c.*1150-*c.*1170), which was coextensive with the pre-generic, linguistic sense of the term ("roman" as the vernacular), was made up predominantly of translations and/or adaptations of classical legends composed (or previously transmitted) in Latin, the very subject position of the romancer entailed a willingness to conceive of transmission and innovation, fidelity and betrayal on a much more supple basis than Abelard—that is, as profoundly isomorphic rather than mutually exclusive writerly postures in the "fluid space of artistic creation" that was Old French narrative.[75] Corruption, here very broadly construed, was not, in the scene that Chrétien would enter in the 1170s, a factor undermining the value of literary texts as much as it was a *modus operandi* and *scribendi*—one of the conditions for the emergence and expression of alternate forms of authority in the vernacular.

Viewed from this perspective, the interplay of unity and disunity in Chrétien's romances is foundationally intertextual. Very quickly, however, it came to be of a piece with the author's style, viewed internally. In this sense, too, a sharp distinction between composition and transmission is not desirable. This is to say that what Chrétien does with and to the textual tradition, implicitly and explicitly, he does to his own texts as well, introducing at many points in each narrative a gap, a disjuncture, a factual error, or an addition to the text that appears to originate in a space or a voice situated outside of the romance proper, thereby giving rise to a narrative structure as fragmented, paratactic, and corrupt as it may be harmoniously conjoined through *enchaînement*. In some cases, these features are marked: the narrator says that something will be or has been included in the text when, as we come to find out, it is not or has not been included. On many other occasions, the issue "speaks for itself," such as when, in the prologue of the *Conte du Graal*, a well-known sentence on Christian charity (lines 45-48) is incorrectly attributed to Saint Paul, rather than Saint John. A third category, under which, for instance, the

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[74] On this portion of the work, see, for instance, Noah D. Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 52-92. Raymond J. Cormier has also shown that "the Old French author selectively included parts of Servius' commentary, plus other anonymous, unattached scholia, as amplification, illumination, or simply reinterpretation of Virgil's epic poem" ("An Example of Twelfth-Century *Adaptatio*: The *Roman d'Eneas* Author's Use of Glossed *Aeneid* Manuscripts," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 19 [1989]: 277-90 [279]).

[75] The notion of a fluid space of artistic creation comes from Hult's discussion of the prologue to Benoît's romance in "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrette*," in Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, eds., *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* [Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989]: 79-96 [83]). Here it will be remembered that Chrétien had worked as a translator in the 1160s: see *Philomena*, ed. C. de Boer and trans. Olivier Collet, in Michel Zink, dir., *Romans suivis des Chansons, avec, en appendice, Philomena* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994). With regard to the ambiguous dynamics governing the relationship between texts from antiquity and their vernacular adaptations in the twelfth century, we might also think of Ronald G. Witt's remark that "Unlike later Italian humanism . . . the question of the extent to which moderns should strive to imitate ancient writers or develop their own means of expression remained an open one," though Witt is referring mainly to works composed in Latin (*The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 317.

ambiguously complete ending of the *Conte du Graal* would fall, is, by virtue of being based in the silence of the narrator, necessarily unmarked but prepared and accentuated nevertheless by related features present in the text.

Such conspicuous and yet largely overlooked authorial maneuverings put a significant strain on conventional philological vocabulary, medieval and modern, pushing readers to rethink the traditional alignment of authorial intention with some standard of formal perfection. To the problem of describing the way in which Chrétien radicalizes literature's formal imperfections, I propose two solutions. The first is to trace as rigorously as possible the variegated uses of the verbs *depecier* and *corrompre*, which, unlike *conjointure*, appear and reappear in all of Chrétien's poems. Most often, I translate them in terms of "fragmentation and corruption." On the whole, however, I try to avoid defining them too narrowly. Both, as we have already begun to see, are polysemes, so it has seemed preferable to present definitions on a case-by-case basis, and pragmatically—through exemplification. The second solution is to turn to an account of aesthetic and hermeneutic indeterminacy and modernity that has proven perhaps startlingly compatible with what I have made out above to be among the most "medieval" aspects of Chrétien's poetics.

Iser's "Leerstelle": The Premodern Blank

From composition and transmission, we now come to the question of reception, or, rather, we return to it, as Abelard's dialectical model is already a guide to the act of reading for his students and readers. Unlike Jerome and Abelard, neither of whom entertains the idea of taking corruption and meaning-making as potentially correlated processes, Wolfgang Iser offers a view of the gaps or "blanks" in literature as provocations to an active mode of interpretation rather than hermeneutic deterrents.[76] As opposed to Strohm and Nichols, moreover, Iser sees such attributes of the literary text as springing from a textual conscious rather than an unconscious. Since I will be spending a fair amount of time going over the relevant details of Iser's reception theory in the body of this study, I will limit myself in this section to a relatively brief consideration of the theoretical affinity between Iser and Chrétien, as well as some of the changes that it will be necessary to make to the former's general methodology.

At the time of the publication of *The Act of Reading* in 1976 (1978 for the English translation), a part of the novelty of Iser's approach to the study of reception lay in its openness to connecting the dots between the three major coordinates of literary analysis: author, text, and reader, all three figures having a significant part to play in the ordering and articulation of a literary message that remains incomplete before the audience actually opens the book and reads it all the way through.[77] The activity—or "act"—of reading is then construed as equal parts "objective," based on what is immanent in the written but unread text, and "subjective," which is to say contingent on an intervention by the reader. In this way, the text (and, through it, the author) can be seen to "steer" readers towards a particular type of interpretation

[76] In summarizing Iser's approach, I have in mind primarily the author's major contribution to the field of reception studies, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978; originally published as *Der Akt des Lesens* [Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976]).

[77] In attempting to distill the many ideas put forward in this work, I have found it useful to consult Robert C. Holub, "Reception Theory: School of Constance," in Raman Selden, ed., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 8: From Formalism to Poststructuralism* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 319-46 (326-34).

("Leserlenkung") centered around the indeterminacies that subsist in the literary text after its author has finished working on it. The connections between the text's various structural units (schemata) are therefore only "potential connections" and its completeness only exists in a state of possibility.[78] Using a somewhat denser theoretical idiom, Iser sums up the process as follows:

> The blanks break up the connectability of the schemata, and thus they marshal selected norms and perspective segments into a fragmented, counterfactual, contrastive or telescoped sequence, nullifying any expectation of *good continuation*. As a result, the imagination is automatically mobilized, thus increasing the constitutive activity of the reader, who cannot help but try and supply the missing links that will bring the schemata together in an integrated gestalt (author's emphasis).[79]

In its emphasis on the introduction of discrepancies by the author of the literary text and their resolution by readers, the Iserian "act of reading" exhibits a basic homology with the demystification of contradiction in Abelard and Chrétien. Among the other reasons arguing in favor of a dialogue between Chrétien and Iser is the way that both of them privilege the role of context. Iser's "wandering viewpoint" suggests that the reader's expectations are never simply fulfilled but remain subject to modification as what they have already read creates expectations as to what is to come which must then be reconsidered in the light of previously unseen, actual textual material, a process Holub refers to as "the dialectic of 'protention' and 'retention.'"[80] In a similar spirit, David Hult writes that "In Chrétien's poetic universe, codes are submitted to context; ideology is created, not simply reaffirmed."[81] Both Chrétien and Iser also partially elide issues of poetics (structure) and intertextuality. For Iser, one category of the blank implies a "minus function": the subversion of a reader's expectations that occurs when a text reproduces a theme or trope present in previous literature and subsequently empties it of its traditional significance, thus creating a blank. Iser's minus function could be compared to one of the categories of paradox that Pickens has examined in the context of the *Conte du Graal*: "According to the definition of hypomone, the anticipated structure is normal and traditional, while the actual is extraordinary."[82] The careful mangling of a Latin precursor text in the prologue of *Erec et Enide* exemplifies this function, but many others will come up in my discussion of, for instance, Chrétien's relationship with Thomas of Britain (author of the so-called "courtly" version of the *Roman de Tristan*), which furnishes a series of surprisingly literal textual "subtractions."

Despite these obvious similarities, several methodological qualifications are in order, the first of which relates back to a common historicist critique of Iser's conceptualization of the

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[78] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 182.
[79] Ibid., 186.
[80] Ibid., 110-11; Holub, "Reception Theory," 332. Iser borrows the term "protention" from Edmund Husserl (*Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, ed. Rudolf Boehm [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966], 52).
[81] Hult, *Authorizing Fictions*.
[82] Of course, the opposite development, whereby the extraordinary cedes to the ordinary, may also be observed in Chrétien's romances, for instance in the *Charrette*, where the ring that Lancelot wears has the power to free the person who beholds it from enchantment; it is not magical but anti-magical (lines 2335-53). Once Lancelot has crossed the Sword Bridge, for example, the lions guarding the entrance into Gorre are revealed to be an enchantment (lines 3125-29). This in some sense confirms what Pickens elsewhere concludes with regard to paradoxicality: "Chrétien draws his audience into a world of paradoxical reality in which the marvelous and the commonplace are regarded as necessary aspects of each other" (*The Welsh Knight*, 108).

reader.[83] If for Iser the blank is the seal of a certain literary modernity, modernity is understood a bit too narrowly: the minus function, for example, is a "deliberate omission" that is "typical of modern texts."[84] Here modernity is both an aesthetic category and—implicitly—an historical period (*grosso modo*, the nineteenth century and onward).[85] With that said, Iser certainly never states that one could not expand the scope of the analysis, say, to include the medieval corpus. But his orientation towards this specific period does mean that Iser, who unlike Hans Robert Jauss (also of the Constance School) was not a scholar of the Middle Ages, has not done the work of contextualization and close reading that would have been entailed had he concerned himself with the peculiarities of medieval textual culture and, in particular, the romances of Chrétien de Troyes.[86]

A second and related consideration is that Iser's reader does not exist outside of his theorization of their experience. To the point, Robert C. Holub writes that "What Iser wants is a way to account for the reader's presence without having to deal with real or empirical readers."[87] To be sure, a certain amount of distance is inevitable between the scholar of reception and the reader or readers whom they purport to ventriloquize.[88] Depending on one's perspective and values, the rift does not always signify negatively, provided that one acknowledge that there are important differences between historically disparate perspectives on a given text. Because of the access that we now enjoy to multiple manuscript witnesses of a given text (fifty-one for *La Mort le roi Artu* and over three hundred for the *Roman de la Rose*, for example), we can perform comparisons between different copies and versions of the text that a number of medieval readers, lacking access to more than one exemplar, would not have been able to undertake. In that instance, we might come closer to an authorial original, while increasing the gap between our reading and that of the author's earlier audiences. Along similar lines, Zumthor's objective in the *Essai* was to provide the twentieth-century reader with a means of approaching medieval literature "à la fois selon son propre système et pourtant sans anachronisme."[89]

Another way of phrasing this point would be to say that local informants (i.e., historical readers), though local, are not infallible, nor could the surviving records as to medieval acts of interpretation, such as commentaries, rewritings, or continuations, possibly represent the full range of interpretations that were pursued by readers at the time.[90] Moreover, from the voicing of the first line of Chrétien's inaugural romance by a peasant (a *vilains*) to the perhaps surprisingly

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[83] E.g., "Wolfgang Iser," in Vincent B. Leitch, ed., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010[2]): 1521-32 (1523); Holub, "Reception Theory," 333.
[84] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 209.
[85] Elsewhere in the analysis, Iser discusses works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (ibid., 100-101) and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (e.g., 65-68), as well as Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* (40-41).
[86] But see ibid., 77-78, where Iser lumps Chrétien together with other medieval romancers determined to uphold the "prevailing system" of courtly norms: "The courtly society was being challenged by changes in the feudal system. In order to reaffirm the courtly values, Chrétien made his knights embark on various quests, in the course of which these values were tested and proven; the knights then returned home, thus stabilizing the courtly society which they had left" (77).
[87] Holub, "Reception Theory," 331.
[88] On this point, see for instance Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 8; Arthur Bahr, "Miscellaneity and Variance in the Medieval Book," in Johnston and Van Dussen, eds., *The Medieval Manuscript Book*: 181-98 (181).
[89] Zumthor, *Essai*, 12.
[90] On local informants and their fallibility, see Nicholas Paige, *Technologies of the Novel: Quantitative Data and the Evolution of Literary Systems* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 63-78.

prominent roles given to a whole host of socially marginal and anonymous courtly and ascetic figures, including a jester (*Le Conte du Graal*), a herald (*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*), various messengers (*Yvain*, *Le Conte du Graal*), damsels (*passim*, but see especially *Yvain*'s Lunete), hermits (*Yvain*, *Le Conte du Graal*), and even a herdsman (*Yvain*), Chrétien's fictional worlds were likely designed to appeal to a more inclusive audience than the aristocratic boys' club, the kings and counts mentioned in *Erec et Enide* (line 20), for whom the previously circulated *contes* of Erec had been performed (Chrétien too was presumably in audience). And although, in the Middle Ages, the written medium implicitly addresses a "classe privilégiée," as Zumthor has argued, twelfth-century works like the romances of Chrétien de Troyes would undoubtedly have known an "intermediate" phase of reception, at which point they would have sometimes been consumed publicly and aurally (read aloud in a courtly milieu) rather than silently and privately (in written form).[91] In the former scenario, certain of these underrepresented groups may have constituted a real part of the author's public.

Instead of relying solely on theory or history (attested readings), I will want to suggest that the work of "steering" that Chrétien does also works on a critical level. By picking up on the intellectual and literary-historical clues that he has left behind, pointing us, for instance, toward the dialectical scene of the twelfth century, specific texts written by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, the material dynamics of medieval writing as pertaining to narrative form, and so on, it is possible to construct a theoretically valid, pseudo-historical hermeneutic persona and to inhabit thereby a role that is less problematically abstract than that of Iser's transcendental reader. This perspective will gravitate towards the learned, though it is important to recall that the distinction between the "popular-oral" and the "learned-written" can be tenuous in medieval romance.[92] In *Erec et Enide*, for instance, one of the underlying arguments of the prologue and the broader romance would seem to be precisely that knowledge is not the exclusive province of the educated or the wealthy, a decoupling that is borne out by both the peasant quoted in line 1 and Enide's character in the narrative proper.

More precisely, my "pseudo-historical" readerly persona will be calqued on the author's tacit and overt self-presentations as a reader. In accordance with Iser's notion of a "repertoire" shared by author and reader, we may assume that the texts or ideas that Chrétien has chosen to engage with were dictated to a degree by their broader importance for contemporary audiences and thus their ability to constitute a common referential framework. Without this shared footing of "conventions, norms, and traditions," the minus function, for example, would quite simply cease to function.[93] In Chapter 2, I shall suggest one further means of filtering my reading through a relevant medieval hermeneutic, namely by examining a sort of feedback loop that

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[91] Zumthor, *Essai*, 32. Zumthor, same paragraph, qualifies the notion of a "class" to say that "si même, comme il est probable, de grandes masses humaines furent peu touchées par la plupart de nos textes, ceux-ci n'en concernent pas moins un large éventail de publics divers." On the "intermediate mode of reception," see D.H. Green, "Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65.2 (1990): 267-80; the intermediate mode of reception is that "in which a work was composed with an eye to public recital from a written text, but also for the occasional private reader" (277).

[92] See Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 2 vols, I: 226 (on the *Roman de Renart*).

[93] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 69; *cf.* Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" (*Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, intr. Paul de Man [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), e.g., 22. While Jauss's theory of the horizon of expectations is more greatly attuned to history than Iser's minus function, the latter can, as I suggest above, be historicized; in this respect, it is also comparable to Abelard's understanding of the importance of what Hunt paraphrases as "attention to context, comparison with other works by the same author and by different authors, circumstances of composition" (*supra*).

becomes apparent in the manuscripts of Chrétien's *Cligès* between the author's representation of the process of textual transmission and the actual copying of the work in codices from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This corridor between the text of Chrétien's romance and its material contexts will allow for a greater degree of empiricism, while establishing a medieval precedent for my reading.

The last aspect of Iser's analysis that I would like to unpack here is the natural idiomatic teleology of the blank, which, in Iser's German as in modern English parlance, we are told needs "filling in." As Terry Eagleton writes with regard to Iser's theory,

> . . . the reader must construct the text so as to render it internally *consistent*. . . . Textual indeterminacies just spur us on to the act of abolishing them, replacing them with a stable meaning. They must, in Iser's revealingly authoritarian term, be "normalized"—tamed and subdued to some firm structure of sense (author's emphasis).[94]

In Chrétien's case at least, it strikes me that filling in all the blanks would be tantamount to reinstating the all-importance of *conjointure*, albeit this time from the standpoint of reader-response theory. Yet there are some instances in which the significance of the blank in Chrétien's romances appears to rest precisely on a form of indeterminacy that is "insatiable." As Pickens has shown for the *Conte du Graal*, for instance, the narrator's approach to the *matiere* is such that "some details are illuminated, while others, which the audience might expect to be a part of the matter (whether or not this is actually so), are passed over in silence."[95] Once filled in, these gaps would also be shorn of their appeal, and their depth of meaning would disappear. One particularly visible example of this difference comes with the omitted ending of the *Conte du Graal*, which has pushed many scholars to provide some sort of pastiche account of what has been left out: perhaps Perceval was supposed to return to the Grail castle; maybe his story would have ended on his marriage with Blanchefleur. The fact that we cannot know for sure, I argue in Chapter 5, is more important. And yet, the readers that were Chrétien's continuators in the thirteenth century were able to fill in the blank in a very real sense by supplying information that they perceived as having been unintentionally withheld by the Champenois poet, corrupting a corruption in a way that may recall the scribe singled out by Jerome for having failed to recognize the figure of Asaph: "And what did the scribe do? While amending an error, he made an error" (11.82).

Such acts of reading must be acknowledged not only because they have had a serious impact on Chrétien's reception over the centuries, as well as contributing to our understanding of the poetics of continuation in the Middle Ages and the importance of the figure of the Grail for medieval audiences, but also because they put us in a position to make a more substantive critique of Iser's theory. Even as he relies on J.L. Austin's speech act theory in formulating the idea of a repertory,[96] Iser does not take into account what Austin would refer to as "misfires": "When the utterance is a misfire, the procedure which we purport to invoke is disallowed or is botched: and our act (marrying, &c.) is void or without effect, &c."[97] Indeed, communication does not always go to plan, which is to say that an utterance of whatever kind can be

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[94] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996[2]), 70-71.
[95] Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 81-82.
[96] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 69.
[97] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 16.

unsuccessful, particularly from a perspective that is driven by the speaker's intention or our perception of it. My point is that the same thing could be said for blanks, whose communicative function Iser stresses.[98] Continuing with the marriage example, Austin isolates a subspecies of misfires, the "misexecution," that I would like especially to retain: "[T]he purported act is *vitiated* by a flaw or hitch in the conduct of the ceremony" (author's emphasis), by which I understand a failure to achieve the desired "uptake."[99]

Since we are dealing with a problem of reception rather than production (execution), however, perhaps the term "misappropriation" is better suited to describe this sort of hitch. Such a term of course implies a certain value judgment on my part, and not all readers will share my values. From a perspective championing the subjectivity of the reader over that of the author, which is the direction in which Iser ultimately leads us, any interpretation that fulfills the criteria of unity and consistency by creating an "integrated gestalt" is acceptable.[100] In contradistinction to the potentially boundless liberality of Iser's model, the reading of Chrétien's romances that I propose reflects the need for a more discriminating approach, one that recognizes the extent to which the reader's agency is productively shaped and constrained by the author, the history of texts (philology), and the circumstances of their composition.

A precise and relatively concrete example of the misappropriated blank can be found in the manuscripts of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* containing an interpolated passage of twenty verses that serves to emend an omission by the author. On two occasions, characters in the romance prophesy that the sword Perceval receives from the Fisher King will shatter in battle (lines 3078-81; 3599-601).[101] And yet, Chrétien's narrator never relates the moment of its shattering. In the *First Continuation*, the sword reappears, the blade having been broken in two (lines 1375-83).[102] Probably not long after the composition of the *First Continuation*, a scribe would go back and fill in the remaining portion of the blank, answering the outstanding question of how the sword came to be broken, an addition that occurs between lines 3860-61 of Charles Méla's edition of Chrétien's romance.[103] However, this scribe did not take the extra measure of adjusting the context of his interpolation for consistency. Thus, the addition is followed immediately by an instance of Chrétien's brevity topos in the *Conte du Graal*, a remark as to his decision to *truncate* the scene that we are reading: "La bataille fu fiere et dure, / De plus deviser n'ai je cure, / Que paine gastee me samble" (lines 3861-63). Not only has the scribe in question

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[98] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, e.g., 182: "Now indeterminacy arises out of the communicatory function of literature, and as this function is performed by way of the formulated determinacies of the text, clearly, the indeterminacies arising from the formulated text cannot be without a structure." Iser's concept of *Leserlenkung*, or "steering," is also suggestive of a communicative function.

[99] Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 17, 116-18 (on "uptake").

[100] As Eagleton points out, contrasting Iser with Ingarden and his interpretation of the reader as a kind of "handyman," "Iser is a much more liberal kind of employer, granting the reader a greater degree of co-partnership with the text: different readers are free to actualize the work in different ways, and there is no single correct interpretation which will exhaust its semantic potential," so long as each reading produces a text that is "internally consistent" (*Introduction*, 70).

[101] *Le Conte du Graal ou Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. and trans. Méla (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990).

[102] *The Continuations of the Old French* Perceval, ed. William Roach, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949). On this passage and its relation to the interpolation in the *Conte du Graal*, see Busby, "The Text of Chrétien's *Perceval* in MS. London, College of Arms, Arundel XIV," in Ian Short, ed., *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays* (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, Birkbeck College, 1993): 75-85 (80).

[103] This interpolation does not, however, appear in the base manuscript of Méla's edition; for a full transcription of the passage in question, see instead *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, ed. Roach (Geneva: Droz; Paris: Minard, 1959), lines 3926*a-t* (between lines 3926-27).

failed to appreciate Chrétien's carefully framed omission (about which more in Chapter 5), but he has unwittingly created a new and less felicitous incoherence that would fall under the category of what Rychner has brilliantly described as a conflict of secondary (scribal) and residual authorial motivations:

> Elle [l'incohérence] va de pair avec la présence d'éléments résiduels, c'est-à-dire dépourvus de leur motivation originale. Nous les avons mis au compte d'une attitude spécifique d'un auteur 'second', qui connaît l'histoire qu'il raconte, qui n'a plus à la bâtir ni à l'organiser, se laisse distraire par d'autres intentions et, finalement, ne prend plus garde à la chaîne continue de motivations.[104]

This type of blank (the "insatiable") is at least partly a consequence of Chrétien's often underestimated and sometimes quasi-mystical conception of silence, absence, and uncertainty as integral dimensions of both the courtly-chivalric and the interpretive experience. However, it also speaks more generally to the fact that the perfectly joined (or joinable) text, try as we might to uncover or co-create it, probably does not exist. In a pragmatic sense, the textual "mobility" that Zumthor describes in the medieval context implies that each "manifestation" of the literary work is incomplete with regard to the subsequent steps in the work's transmission, in other words, its ulterior manifestations: "plutôt qu'une structure, une phase dans un procès de structuration."[105] As Chrétien demonstrates by projecting the process of textual transmission onto the axis of composition, such incompleteness was not strictly conceptual (or 'processual'): it could also result in the erasure of entire text segments, for example. Even with a more fixed (modern) text in mind, however, Holub concludes from Roman Ingarden's phenomenological theory, which helped to inspire Iser's work, that

> . . . the amount of indeterminacy in any text is infinite; no matter how many gaps we fill in, there is always room for adding more detail, for eliminating new blanks as they arise from the non-conjuncture of schematized aspects.[106]

As Eagleton furthermore objects,

> There is absolutely no need to suppose that works of literature either do or should constitute harmonious wholes, and many suggestive frictions and collisions of meaning must be blandly "processed" by literary criticism to induce them to do so.[107]

And indeed, if the ideal of *mout bele conjunture* were met fully, the resulting text might well be less interesting, even boring, for the very *act* of interpretation would become moot without the

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[104] Rychner, *Contribution*, 142. For another example of such a conflict, see ibid., 25 ff., on the manuscripts of the *Male Honte*.
[105] Zumthor, *Essai*, 73; see also Kelly, *Art*, 142. While insisting on the structural importance of *conjointure* in Chrétien's romances, Pickens makes the following pertinent claim with Zumthor's *Essai* in mind: "In fact, Chrétien never claims to be a creator *ex nihilo*, but a *re*creator—esthetically, he is somewhat more like *natura naturata* than *natura naturans*; his work is not the result of formation, but of transformation, and it is continually subject to future regeneration through the related processes of translation and *mouvance*" (*The Welsh Knight*, 11; author's emphasis).
[106] Holub, "Reception Theory," 330.
[107] Eagleton, *Introduction*, 70.

stimulus of a *quaestio*—something less involved and much more passive. Is it not precisely this variety of the blank, the one that cannot be filled in any more than provisionally, that provides the ultimate justification for the author's boast in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*?

Fullness and Gaps: Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 tells the story of how corruption and fragmentation were first developed into narrative technologies in *Erec et Enide*. In the prologue of Chrétien's first romance, as we have seen, the poet announces his originality through a critique of his predecessors: whereas his romance will be constructed with subtlety and skill, the money-driven storytellers who have circulated the story of the knight Erec until now are accustomed to hacking it to pieces ("depecier") and making lacunae ("corrompre"). This highly distinctive lexicon of fragmentation and corruption subsequently reappears in connection with the heroine, Enide, and the silencing of her character by various male figures within the romance. Scholars so far have interpreted Enide's silence in the first half of Chrétien's romance as an endorsement of the lay ideology of marriage in the twelfth century, according to which women did not have the right to choose their partners. By contrast, I show that Chrétien consistently associates Enide's oppression with the corrupt source of his romance. Accordingly, the author affiliates his own poetic skill with the scenes in which Enide's character speaks out against the male social order.

The alternation of two different aesthetic modes in *Erec et Enide* gives the romance a dialectical structure, in which the authority of the female voice is established in relation to the old and increasingly "blank" model of male power. This dynamic may be observed most clearly and significantly in Chrétien's foundational appropriation of the vices of "depecier et corrompre." Thus, the poet calls attention in the final episodes of the text to the manner in which he has intentionally omitted a seemingly crucial portion of Erec's narrative: the reason, or "acoisons," for which he leaves court in search of adventure following his marriage—a "joint" whose importance the poet at once acknowledges and refuses. In others words, he enacts his resistance to the misogynistic oral tradition by co-opting and redirecting the means of a form of oppression that is both social and formal (textual). In the final section of this chapter, I return to Chrétien's relationship with Abelard in order to argue that the poet's conception of textual violence, in particular the term "corrompre," was modeled after Abelard's discussion of two related topics, error and lying, in the prologue of *Sic et Non*. This part of the analysis reveals a direct link between Chrétien's dialectical logic and his reflection on the process of textual transmission in *Erec et Enide*, while prying open a new perspective on the significance of Enide's character in the cultural context of the late twelfth century. Chrétien's nascent formal technique thus emerges as a radiant practice that can be seen to inform the audience on aspects of structure and intertextuality, as well as—and quite notably—the author's interventions in contemporary debates about marriage, gender equality, and chivalric ethics.

In the second chapter, I turn to the first stage in Chrétien's dialogue with Thomas's *Roman de Tristan*. According to my close reading of the opening section of Chrétien's second romance, the *Cligès*, it is a relatively faithful imitation of the legend of Tristan and Yseut. With the introduction of two new characters, Cligès and his lady, Fenice, however, there is an abrupt shift in the relationship between the *Cligès* and the *Tristan*. Through the figure of Fenice, Chrétien explicitly repudiates the fate of Thomas's adulterous lovers, constructing the narrative in such a way that his heroine may ultimately marry Cligès of her own volition and escape her

arranged marriage with the hero's uncle, Alis. The importance of Fenice's right to choose highlights Chrétien's support of the movement in twelfth-century France to rethink misogynistic social models, while exemplifying Iser's definition of the "minus function" as a means of performing literary originality by recycling traditional tropes, here from the *Tristan*, only to subvert them through rewriting. Like Fenice, whose name is a calque on "phoenix," Chrétien's text rises from the ashes of the *Tristan*. In this case, as with Enide, the politics of female subjectivity are imbued with an additional figurative significance through the text's comparison of Fenice's body to the parchment used to make medieval manuscripts. As a result of her choice to marry Cligès, Fenice is brutally tortured. By situating this scene in relation to Sarah Kay's groundbreaking work on the status of parchment as skin, I will show in particular how the violence done to Fenice's body is likened to manuscript damage. In this way, Fenice can be seen as being both "subjectivated" by Chrétien's romance (empowered by her freedom to choose Cligès over his uncle) and objectified as a canvas on which to represent the fragmentizing gesture of the *Cligès* vis-à-vis the *Tristan*. In the final part of this discussion, I expand on the notion of textual transmission as a form of torture through a study of five of the surviving manuscripts of the *Cligès*, wherein the tearing of the pages on which the scene of Fenice's interrogation is inscribed concretize Chrétien's metaphorical "manuscript poetics."

While I have already reviewed in some detail the findings of my third chapter, I would like, before going any further, to underscore one of the structural elements that the *Yvain* has in common with Chrétien's first two romances, which is the presence of a midpoint. In these three romances, a clear center can be discerned that is both thematic, highlighting the issues of gender and silence in the case of *Erec et Enide*, marriage, choice, and intertextuality in the *Cligès*, and the figures of the lion and its *keue* and the virtue of *pitié* in *Yvain*, and structural, by virtue of being placed consistently at the physical "heart" of the work.[108] While I will be arguing that the organization of Chrétien's poems can be approached from a number of different angles (in terms of episodism, through the lens of the "first verse" of *Erec et Enide*, etc.), my overall sense is therefore one of bipartition.

Inasmuch as the central passage, as a *mise en abyme*, provides information on the whole narrative, there is a natural temptation to take the midpoint as a precious and

[108] For examples of the midpoint in other authors' works, medieval and early modern, see Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 82 (on the *Eneas*); Michel Butor, *Essais sur les Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), e.g., 42 (on Montaigne); Charles S. Singleton, "The Poet's Number at the Center," *MLN* 80.1 (1965): 1-10 (on Dante's *Commedia*); François Rigolot, "La 'Conjointure' du *Pantagruel*: Rabelais et la tradition médiévale," *Littérature 41* (1981): 93-103; and Edwin Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's* Quart Livre de Pantagruel (Geneva: Droz, 1998), esp. 134. I will mention the additional example of the *Rose* in Chapter 3; influenced by this romance, Guillaume de Machaut would also write a text, *Le Livre du Voir Dit*, in which there is a readily discernable midpoint: see Karl Uitti, "From *Clerc* to *Poète*: The Relevance of the *Roman de la Rose* to Machaut's World," in M.P. Cosman and B. Chandler, eds., *Machaut's World. Science and Art in the XIVth Century* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1978): 209-34 (212 [*Rose*, *Charrette*, *Yvain*], 221 [*Rose*], 225 [*Voir Dit*]); and Kelly, *Machaut and the Medieval Apprenticeship Tradition: Truth, Fiction, and Poetic Craft* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2014), who refers to a "midpoint episode" in Machaut's book (57), and later to the "*traitié*'s mathematical midpoint" (128), with a very brief consideration of the dimensions of the midpoint and its movability in the manuscripts. Following Uitti, Rigolot identifies the "point médian" as a trait of the "tradition médiévale" writ large ("La 'Conjointure' du *Pantagruel*," 95). For further sources on the midpoint, particularly in Dante and Boccaccio, see ibid., n. 10.

unproblematic index of *conjointure*.[109] Taking his inspiration from Chrétien and the medieval tradition more broadly, François Rigolot for one argues with regard to Rabelais's *Pantagruel* and Dante's *Commedia*,

> . . . la "conjointure" numérologique [the existence of a "point médian," which according to Rigolot falls in chapter 17 of *Pantagruel* and in the seventeenth canto of Dante's text] n'est que la signature, le "chiffre" proprement dit, d'une conjointure beaucoup plus profonde et dont rend compte, aux niveaux thématique, structurel et métalittéraire, l'intertextualité du *Purgatoire* et du *Pantagruel*.[110]

In a series of three influential studies of Rabelais's "epics" published throughout the 1990s, Edwin Duval continues with the work of *déchiffrement* on an even grander scale. In the third of these, Duval frames his discovery of Rabelais's hidden design, which is understood to be just as rigorously centered as that of the *Pantagruel* and the *Tiers Livre*, using a terminology that resonates with Rigolot's notion of Rabelaisian *conjointure*:

> As in the two preceding books my purpose here has been to discover the coherence of both form and meaning in a work usually assumed to be fragmentary, disjointed, open-ended, and thus inconsistent, ambiguous, and perhaps even uninterpretable.[111]

The adoption of the concept of joining by scholars of the Renaissance not only reflects the immense vogue that the term *conjointure* was enjoying in France and North America in the 1980s and 90s, but it also gives us a sense of just how ironically enshrined Chrétien's distinction between the joined and the disjointed has become in contemporary literary studies. To use Eagleton's terminology, Rigolot and Duval constitute instructive examples of the authoritarian Iserian reader: open-endedness, disjuncture, fragmentation, inconsistency, and ambiguity are all characterized to some degree as obstacles to structure and meaning and hence to the vocation of the literary critic itself. As such, they must be abolished. (Still more striking is Duval's suggestion that features such as these might make a text "uninterpretable," even as they emerge as the very *raison d'être* of his interpretation.) In the end, it is not hard to see why the image of joining has been so empowering from a critical standpoint: ostensibly

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[109] While the term *mise en abyme*, which was originally used in heraldic discourse to refer to the representation of a shield placed at the center of an actual shield, or "set in escutcheon," would not be formally applied to literature before André Gide, poets' interest in this figure is attested as early as antiquity (David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], 21), and it could be considered as both a precedent for and an analogue of the midpoint in medieval literature. On the development and various forms of *mise en abyme* in Gide's *œuvre* and beyond, see especially Lucien Dällenbach's classic work: *Le Récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme* (Paris: Seuil, 1977; 15-55 on Gide).

[110] Rigolot, "La 'Conjointure' du *Pantagruel*," 96.

[111] Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's* Quart Livre, 11. Rigolot takes this remark as the starting point for his attempt to analyze the midpoint of the *Gargantua*, an homage to Duval's work on design: "The 'Design' of Rabelais's *Gargantua*: A Note on Structure and Meaning at Midpoint," in Jessica Devos and Bruce Hayes, eds., *The Construction of a National Vernacular Literature in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Edwin M. Duval*, special issue of *Yale French Studies* (134 [2018]): 11-19.

established as *the* criterion of narrative skill by one of the most renowned authors of the French Middle Ages and subsequently practiced to perfection, as the story goes, by such literary titans as Dante and Rabelais, *conjointure* seems to supply the key to a holistic and therefore definitive analysis of narrative structure, rendering accessible and localizable what was formerly so elusive: the whole "design" of the text, its one true and deepest meaning—a stroke of authentic artistic genius worthy of everyone's fascination.

If Chrétien stands at the origin of this paradigm, he is also, as is often the case, an outlier. For however much joining is achieved at and through the midpoint, for instance, it is likewise at this precise moment in the narrative that the various forms of *desjointure* tend to take shape or resurge. In *Cligès*, it is the image of nothingness, the word "neent," that dominates. In *Erec et Enide*, it is the vocabulary of fragmentation (*depecier*). And as I talk about in detail in Chapter 3, a striking number of terms having to do with literal and metaphorical cutting are concentrated in the middle of *Yvain*. From the standpoint of Chrétien's dialectical poetics, we should not be surprised to find *conjointure* and its enemy living in two chambers of the same house, to borrow a now classic metaphor from the latter part of Chrétien's *Yvain* (the house of Love and Hate, lines 6017-36).

In Chrétien's two remaining and most enigmatic "romans de la maturité," the *Chevalier de la Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal*, there is a further complication that had not affected *Erec et Enide*, *Cligès*, or *Yvain*. Indeed, though *Yvain* and the *Charrette* are generally the two most closely associated of Chrétien's romances, in the texts themselves, in the critical literature, and in the manuscript tradition,[112] I will contend that the *Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal* exhibit greater, if less explicit, similarities of structure and, to a certain extent, subject matter.

The complication that I am alluding to arises from a formal loosening of the ending of the narrative that is apparent in a rarely noticed progression from *Yvain* to the *Conte du Graal*. In the former, Chrétien's narrator ends by differentiating between Chrétien as author, who is here associated with a finished romance product, and any scribes who might in the future add something to the text:

> Del chevalier al lion fine
> Crestiëns son romant issi.
> Onques plus dire n'en oï,
> Ne ja plus n'en orés conter
> S'on n'i velt mençogne ajoster. (lines 6804-808)[113]

[112] *Yvain* and the *Charrette* were likely composed simultaneously, and their fictional chronologies also overlap, as is made clear by a series of three explicit references to the action of the *Charrette* in *Yvain* (see Chapter 3). This does not necessarily explain why they are transmitted together in six manuscripts (MSS. BnF, fr. 794, 1450, 12560, Chantilly, Musée Condé 472, Vatican Reg. Lat. 1725, and Princeton, Garrett 125), as noted in Hult, *Authorizing Fictions*.

[113] In this passage, Chrétien adds to his ongoing reflection on the intersection of corruption and intention, as well as what might be called "corruptive generation," by suggesting that such interpolations would constitute lies, a variety of speech act which, according to Abelard's prologue, implies an intention. Abelard cites Augustine, *Against Lying*: "Mendacium est falsa significatio vocis cum voluntate fallendi" (98). Here Augustine's "voluntate" could be compared the verb "velt" in Chrétien's text.

In the epilogue of the *Charrette*, by contrast, it is revealed to us that a continuator figure, Godefroi de Leigni, has intervened to supply the last one thousand or so lines of the text. By the logic of *Yvain*, are we to take the narrator's statement with a grain of salt, allowing for the possibility that someone, be it Chrétien's narrator or that of the second author, has resorted to lying? In the *Conte du Graal*, finally, the story of Perceval seemingly comes to an abrupt halt at line 6438, though when it does, we have reached a point in the romance where, as a matter of length, it would be appropriate for the action to come to a close, with Chrétien's first four romances averaging between six and seven thousand lines. Nevertheless, and quite fascinatingly, readers are subsequently presented with a second narrative strand, the story of Gauvain, whose proportions are ultimately such that one could almost be forgiven for mistaking this unexpected development for a new adventure entirely—rather than a continuation, a romance within—or on top of—the romance.

Notably, the pattern of increasing amplification that I have just identified has its origins in an authorial statement voiced in Chrétien's last complete work, *Yvain*, which could lend credibility to the idea that the author not only anticipated but orchestrated the simultaneous surplus and lack of closure in the *Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal*.[114] Of course, what he says in *Yvain* is in some sense perfectly opposed to what transpires at the respective ends of the *Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal*, but my point, once more, is that oppositions always beg the question in the dialectic of Chrétien de Troyes.

In Chapter 4, I tease out the implications of the *Charrette*'s two endings (lines 6130-46, the suspension of Chrétien's authorship, and line 7112, the end of Godefroi's continuation) for the broader structure of the work and, in particular, the idea of the midpoint as a physical center. The essential question here is how we are to locate and understand the middle of the work relative to the ending. Or rather relative to which ending? Is a center necessarily a singular phenomenon? A close reading of the romance, coupled with a survey of scholarship on the structure of the *Charrette*, will suggest the presence of not one but two pivotal scenes typifying the combination of narrative and commentary (metanarrative) that had come to characterize the midpoint in Chrétien's three complete romances, with a first "point médian" falling halfway through the text due to Chrétien, the episode relating Lancelot's legendary crossing of the Sword Bridge, and a second one about five hundred lines later—at the core of the combined text of Chrétien and Godefroi: the revelation of Lancelot's identity by Guenièvre in the course of the hero's first physical confrontation with her kidnapper, Meleagant.

The inclusion of a second midpoint in the *Charrette* grants important insights into both the notion of the midpoint and the author's late-career experimentation with multiplicity and fragmentation, rather than simple "joining," as original means of ordering—and disordering—the narrative. Throughout the romance, Lancelot's character passes through various physical (dis)guises: the knight of the cart, the Red knight, the worst knight, and the best knight. Consistent with the prologue's implicit comparison of Lancelot and Chrétien, the fragmentation of the knight's identity is matched on the level of the narrative by a sometimes nearly anacoluthon-like admixture of poetic performances: the passage from a series of loosely related and mythically inspired episodes prior to the hero's arrival at the Sword Bridge to the amatory intrigue

[114] On this aspect of the *Charrette*, see Hult, "Voice of Authority," 85.

and its more pronounced *enchaînement* thereafter; and the still more striking advent of Godefroi, whose intervention comes as both a response and a remedy to an omission by the first author, but which, by virtue of being claimed as the work of a different author, further complicates matters by making an addition of the sort that, in *Yvain*, is cast as a form of scribal treason. The many ways in which this authorial *drame* is integrated with the chivalric plot of the romance is suggestive of a possibility that has already been powerfully established, *mutatis mutandis*, by another scholar:[115] that Godefroi de Leigni may amount to an alias for Chrétien de Troyes, the fiction of a divided poetic voice ultimately allowing for the elaboration of two semi-autonomous narrative structures within a single text, each of them paradoxically complete with a middle and an ending. Viewed from this angle, the respective endings of *Yvain* and the *Charrette* articulate a dialectical *quaestio* implicating literary rather than theological authorities who appear to contradict each other: are we to believe Chrétien or Godefroi, or is it rather the very premise of this question that should excite our skepticism?

Finally, Chapter 5 builds on the work of Chapter 4 in order to show that the *Conte du Graal* may be read according to the same general pattern of middles and endings that I have just outlined for the *Charrette*. Such a perspective may seem to break definitively with the critical tradition, according to which the *Conte du Graal* was left incomplete due to Chrétien's premature death instead of a design on his part (a hypothesis for which no hard evidence can be produced). Yet an important part of my objective will be to revisit aspects of the author's style that have already been studied *in extenso*, but never in connection with the dialectical understanding of Chrétien's poetics, which allows for the possibility of a variety of closure whose logic is less dichotomous (complete versus incomplete) than ambiguous or indeterminate. Jean Frappier's work on the *Conte du Graal* will be an important resource in this connection, as will that of Roger Dragonetti, whose guiding question (can the *Conte du Graal* be read as a complete work?) and methodology are similar, but certainly not equivalent, to my own. My basic quibble with Frappier has to do with consistency of argumentation. If we can interpret everything but the missing ending of the *Conte du Graal* as one of Chrétien's most brilliant performances as a romancer, and if the author's stylistic signature entails an element of mysticism (the mysteries of the Grail, the thematization of silence, the symbolic aura that glimmers around otherwise seemingly ordinary events and objects, etc.), what is to stop us from approaching the romance's apparent lack of closure as a point of culmination in the narrative, a necessary or at the very least meaningful aporia (a blank), rather than an historical accident? With Dragonetti, the problem is rather that his central thesis, that the *Conte du Graal* may, in fact, be perfectly complete, suffers from a lack of contextual supports, both literary (the precedent set by the *Charrette*, the details of the manuscript tradition) and historico-cultural. Had it not been for both of these interventions, however, my own interpretation of Chrétien's last romance, however disputable it may prove to be, would never have been possible.

Basing myself upon the assumption that the suspension of Perceval's adventures in line 6438 and that of Gauvain's around line 9000 can be interpreted as endpoints that are functionally akin to the immurement of Lancelot and his duel with Meleagant, the two endings of the *Charrette*, I work backwards in order to examine the text's two

[115] Hult, "Voice of Authority."

implied midpoints, the passage in which Perceval witnesses the Grail procession and the intervention of the hideous damsel's character, which serves the crucial role of introducing the interlace structure of the second half of the romance. The two stories that make up the *Conte du Graal* are then taken as alternating illustrations of the central topics of the prologue: the Christian (*charité*) and the worldly or the Alexandrine (chivalry), which in my reading become an overarching dialectical opposition in the *Conte du Graal*. A new spin on an old idea surrounding the two main characters of Chrétien's last romance, this chapter is also substantially different from other approaches to the religious *matiere* in the *Conte du Graal* by virtue of its exploration of a corpus of theological, mostly monastic texts whose relevance to the theme of charity in Perceval's story has gone all but entirely unnoticed in the past.

A Note on Editions and Translations

The primary support for the readings that I have just summarized is the modern textual edition; for each text, I have chosen to work principally from the *livre de poche* edition (Lettres gothiques series), which generally offers an excellent text and translation based either on one of the manuscripts judged to be the "best" from a philological standpoint or on all extant manuscripts (the *Charrette*). A certain methodological irony must therefore be noted: in theory, a modern edition, no matter the exact principles of the editor, is by definition hostile toward the features of medieval writing that I am interested in, such as omissions. When, for instance, a scribe commits an eyeskip, it becomes the responsibility of the editor to note the error and fill in the missing line(s) using another manuscript witness. This is more of a paradox than a contradiction, as I will be approaching the blank as an authorial *leçon* and Chrétien's editors, whether knowingly or not, have by and large done the same. At the risk of repeating myself, this study pertains to a set of narrative devices, a poetic praxis, rather than scribal accidents or signs of material degradation (the purview of "fragmentology"), even though, at a conceptual level, the two categories are fundamentally related. Only when the manuscript tradition offers important alternatives to the text that I am using, which is not infrequent, or clues us in on a significant aspect of a romance's reception do I mention it.

Because Chapter 3 was originally written as an article for *New Medieval Literatures*, all passages in Old French have been translated into English.[116] For translations of the other romances, the reader is referred to David Staines, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*. It should be noted, however, that Staines's translations are based on Guiot's copy of Chrétien's romances and will therefore diverge occasionally from the base texts of the editions on which I will be relying in what follows.[117]

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[116] In addition, I have preserved aspects of the original formatting, including U.K. spellings, and bibliographical style of Chapter 3.

[117] *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. David Staines (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Before the creation of the *Lettres gothiques* series, the editions published as part of Champion's *Classiques français du Moyen Âge* series, all based on the Guiot manuscript (MS. BnF, fr. 794), were the essential version of Chrétien's romances used by most critics in the modern era: *Les Romans de*

Chrétien de Troyes d'après la copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. n. 794), ed. Mario Roques and Félix Lecoy, 6 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1952-1974). For a thorough review of these editions, see Hunt, "Chrestien de Troyes: The Textual Problem," in Busby et al., eds., *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), I: 27-40.

Chapter 1

"D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes" or Not: Language, Silence, and Error in the Composition of *Erec et Enide*

In a very basic sense, this chapter asks, "What is *Erec et Enide* about?" This is Chrétien de Troyes's first Arthurian romance, written in or around 1170. According to the prologue, the romance relates the story of Erec, the son of Lac, based on an oral source that has not survived: "D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes" (line 19).[118] More specifically, for Jean Frappier, it is about the hero's quest for perfection and thus an example of a theme "cher entre tous à Chrétien, celui du héros qui se forme, s'éprouve et atteint au sommet de lui-même."[119] By this reckoning, Erec alone is responsible for any evolution in his character. Similarly, Reto Bezzola's influential interpretation of *Erec et Enide* holds that, more than anything else, it is an account of (a) man's initiation into the chivalric life: "Le roman d'Erec et d'Enide . . . reflète l'initiation à la vie, initiation de l'homme à la vie du chevalier en première ligne."[120] Yet Chrétien's first romance also features a heroine, whose semi-eponymous or "cotitular"[121] status only emerges gradually. In fact, she is not mentioned, let alone named, at the point in the prologue where the narrator appears to delineate the poem's *matiere* (subject matter and/or source), as is typical of the opening lines of a medieval verse romance.[122]

In the following pages, I want to build on the critical tradition surrounding Chrétien's first narrative in order to complicate matters somewhat, as it were, by arguing that the author's initial silence with regard to Enide's character goes hand in hand with the composition of the romance as it is represented within the text itself. That is, I take this lacuna as an indirect means of signaling Enide's importance in terms of both plot and narrative structure, whereby Chrétien consigns her to the type of silence which, as many scholars have already noticed (*infra*), will characterize her throughout the first segment of the action, but not, as I shall insist, the text as a whole. As far as the opening verses of the romance are concerned, Enide is an example of what Wolfgang Iser calls the "blank": an omission whose indeterminacy does not thwart the production of meaning between text and reader but rather stimulates a particular set of interpretative acts geared toward what is silent, unknown, or otherwise absent.[123] By approaching the text in this way, I hope to reinterpret the topic of the romance as a moving target: rather than being fixed from the first, Chrétien's *matiere* is bound to the development of the narrative as such, a dynamic that we shall observe once again in, for example, the *Charrette*, with the belated revelation of the hero's (Lancelot's) name (Chapter 4). To ask what the poem is about is not a simple question after all. It is tantamount to asking what, and how, the text signifies.

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[118] *Erec et Enide*, ed. and trans. Jean-Marie Fritz (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992). Unless otherwise specified, all references will be to line numbers in this edition. Material cited from the editor's introduction and critical apparatus will be accompanied by a page number.
[119] Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1957), 92.
[120] Reto R. Bezzola, *Le Sens de l'aventure et de l'amour (Chrétien de Troyes)* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1947), 81.
[121] Zrinka Stahuljak et al. (also known as the "Chrétien Girls"), *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 113. On this point, see also notes 124, -35 below.
[122] On some of the areas conventionally covered by such prologues, see Barbara Sargent-Baur, "The Missing Prologue of Chrétien's *Chevalier au lion*," *French Studies* 41.4 (1987): 385-94, 385, where the author cites, among others, the example of Erec, here understood as "the main character."
[123] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

By situating this interpretation of Enide's character in relation to the philosophical, political, and literary contexts in which Chrétien was writing, I will show that the transformation of Erec's *conte* into *li romans d'Erec et d'Enide* (this, or a similar form involving both characters' names, being the title given in certain manuscript explicits as well as the first line of Chrétien's second romance—by both scribes and author, then, but curiously only ever after the fact)[124] rests upon a conflict between two versions of Enide's character and, by extension, two modes of composing a narrative, only one of which truly belongs to Chrétien. These versions differ at once, as we shall see, in form and/or medium (the written versus the oral) and in their respective depictions of gender and authority in language. More broadly, their alternation attests to a preliminary stage in the development of Chrétien's dialectical poetics and, in particular, his manner of defining things relationally rather than absolutely, through juxtaposition and combination. My discussion of these issues is divided into three main sections, which loosely follow the order of events in the narrative. In the first place, I examine the rhetoric of the prologue as well as the first part of the romance, where the hero Erec occupies center stage. My primary interest in this section lies in the way that the author pursues a formal and political critique of the oral text that inspired his romance—the "contes" mentioned above—by insetting a part of it, only to focus the audience's attention on its defects with respect to the silencing of Enide's character. In this part, I consider the dynamics of textual transmission, or what Chrétien at first decries as "corruption and fragmentation," against the backdrop of contemporaneous concerns about marriage and gender, traces of which can be found in the comportment of the romance's main characters. In the next instance, I turn to a close reading of the central section of the romance or the "midpoint," in which the recapitulation of Erec's *conte* gives way to an alternate aesthetic paradigm more closely associated with the portrait of the author in the prologue, the poetics of writing, and with Enide's character and *her* right to language. The readings that I propose in the first two sections of this chapter set the stage for a more fine-tuned analysis of Chrétien's philosophical and social engagement as viewed from the perspective of the prologue and its opaque positioning vis-à-vis the practices of omission, fragmentation, and silencing.[125] In the last analysis, it is by reimagining silence as an intentional act and a potentially valuable poetic resource rather than a source of error that Chrétien is able to establish his own voice in relation to tradition.

[124] This is the title of the work as it appears, for instance, in the explicit of Guiot's copy (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, French manuscript 794); see ed. Fritz, p. 524. Notably, there are three manuscripts in which some form of the full title of the work has been added in the top margin of the first folio, always in a later (no doubt modern) hand: BnF, fr. 1450 (fol. 140r), 1376 (fol. 95r), and 24403 (fol. 119r). In the case of BnF, fr. 24403, the title that has been added ("D'Erec et Enide") is clearly based on that which appears in the first line of *Cligès*. The explicit in BnF, fr. 1376 (fol. 144r), "E[x]plicit d'Erec et d'Enide," which is composed entirely in pen-flourished capitals, also emphasizes the importance of this title. Such additions are not, however, specific to *Erec et Enide* in these three codices, where titles appear to have been added paratextually (marginally) to the beginning of all of the works that they contain. This feature of the modern *mise en page* of *Erec et Enide* is nonetheless interesting for the way that it draws attention to the interpretative difficulties arising from the discrepancy between the informal title contained within the work and the one that Chrétien gives it at the beginning of the second romance.

[125] On this opacity, see also my discussion of Vitalis de Blois's comedies in the introduction (7-10).

I.1 Depecier et corrompre*: A Source of Error in* Erec et Enide

Central to the understanding of *Erec et Enide* that I would like to propose in this chapter is the opening discourse of error that appears in connection with Chrétien's source. Interestingly, the identification of the story is modified by a disparaging description of the form in which the poet received it. Picking up where we left off above, we read, "Que devant rois et devant contes / Depecier et corrompre suelent / Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent" (lines 20-22). Now, the two acts imputed to the anonymous *jongleurs* ("cil") of line 22 are highly distinctive at this point in time. In fact, this is, to my knowledge, the first time that the verbs "depecier et corrompre," "to hack to pieces and corrupt," are used to designate attributes of vernacular literature; based on later evidence, Douglas Kelly has glossed the two, respectively (and, as far as I can tell, appropriately), as a matter of "fragmenting in sources" and "keeping or making lacunae."[126]

And yet, their meaning in context and potential ramifications for the interpretation of the narrative to come have been for the most part eclipsed by scholars' interest in another term, "conjunture" (var. *conjointure*), which Chrétien employs in the prologue to refer to his own work as the author of a literature in the second degree: "Et trait d'un conte d'aventure / Une mout bele conjunture" (lines 13-14). What, then, could *it* mean? Prior interpretations of the term range from "(a very beautiful) composition" to "consummation . . . a word for sexual intercourse in Old French."[127] Most often, perhaps, the term has functioned as a side door into criticism on the Latin rhetorical tradition as a literary theory for medieval vernacular literature.[128] The difficulty, as noted above, is that the poet does not say what he means by "conjunture," which is perhaps what has so fascinated and mobilized critics in the past, and it does not reappear either in *Erec et Enide* or in any of the other romances as they have come down to us today. Neighboring forms come up, but only rarely, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

Rather than admitting defeat, or jumping to any conclusions, when it comes to determining the precise definition and relevance of Chrétien's 'conjuncture,' I would instead suggest that we try to see what happens when we preserve and appreciate its ambiguity as a potential, and potentially meaningful, omission on the author's part, or an additional blank of sorts. This raises an interesting question of hermeneutics and epistemology that is, I believe, already implicit in the rhetoric of the prologue, with its strong and well-known emphasis on the related figures of knowledge and proof via language. Here the topos of sharing one's knowledge rather than passing over it in silence is, in fact, commingled with the discussion of the form of the romance and its provenance, for it is through the improvements that Chrétien would make to the *conte d'aventure* that the reader is to understand, or know, the benefit of the diffusion of knowledge: "Par qu'em puet *prover et savoir* / Que cil ne fait mie *savoir* / Qui sa *scïence*

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[126] Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 127. On what Chrétien's attempt to emend the text might imply for the author's view of literary originality, see also Kelly's interesting analysis of the "archetypal idea" of the work in ibid., 102-104. For a fuller list of the possible meanings of both terms (*depecier*, *corrompre*), see Takeshi Matsumura, *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015), 758, 888.

[127] Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 113; Kelly, "Narrative Poetics: Rhetoric, Orality, and Performance," in Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, eds., *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2005): 52-63 (55). On Kelly's interpretation, see also Introduction (5-6).

[128] See, in particular, Kelly, *Art*, *passim*; id., "The Source and Meaning of *Conjointure* in Chrétien's *Erec* 14," *Viator* 14 (1970): 179-200.

n'abandone" (lines 15-17; my emphasis).[129] Coming precisely in the interval between the opposing images of "conjunture" and "depecier et corrompre", this rapid succession of terms pertaining to knowledge, and knowledge about knowledge, might serve in part, from the perspective of the reader, to project the quest for wisdom onto the level of the distinction between the *conte* and Chrétien's romance. How are we to *know* that there is a difference between the two? More precisely, given the poet's ironic silence regarding the meaning of *conjunture*, is there a means of apprehending the nature of the error(s) of the *jongleurs* singled out in the prologue, so as to shed light in the next instance on Chrétien's innovations in *Erec et Enide*?

Keeping these questions in mind, I would like to circle back now to the initial description of Erec's story in the prologue as a source of interpretative clues in its own right. What is perhaps most striking from this perspective, aside from the apparent novelty of Chrétien's critique, is that it is included with the statement of the work's subject matter: that, in a manner of speaking, the romance presents itself not only as the story of Erec, a written record of the knight's *conte*, but also—and simultaneously—as a reflection on the source and the lacunary structure that the actions of "depecier et corrompre" would suggest. An examination of the treatment of the romance's two main characters in this connection will help to demonstrate the figurative (metapoetic) significance of their actions, and the manner in which the text moves to correct and manipulate the flaws of Chrétien's predecessors as they concern Enide in particular.

I.2 "D'Erec . . . est li contes": A Source in Erec et Enide

One of the reasons for which Enide's character has attracted a good deal of attention from critics is that, in the opening sections of the romance in particular, she appears to receive very little within the text. Indeed, she would seem to bear witness to a particularly traditional view of women and marriage in twelfth-century courtly culture. I am thinking here of an important article by Peggy McCracken on silence, gender, and marriage in *Erec et Enide*.[130] In twelfth-century France, the transition between two different models of marriage was still ongoing: the one, typically referred to as the lay or aristocratic model, was founded on, among other things, "family control of the choice of marriage partner"; the second, ecclesiastical model, which was gaining traction around the time Chrétien composed his romance, theorized the necessary "free consent of both partners."[131] For McCracken, the romance "adds a profoundly conservative voice to twelfth-century cultural debates about changing marriage practices in France," namely through

[129] The sharing of knowledge also figures prominently in the prologue to Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (ed. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Françoise Vielliard [Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1998], lines 1-44), a text that Chrétien undoubtedly knew. Somewhat playfully, perhaps, Chrétien removes the idea from the erudite, classical (Latin) context in which Benoît had placed it, replacing Salomon with an anonymous peasant and making no claim to translate from Latin.

[130] Peggy McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife: Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*," *The Arthurian Yearbook* 3 (1993): 107-25.

[131] Simon Gaunt, "Marginal Men, Marcabru and Orthodoxy: The Early Troubadours and Adultery," *Medium Ævum* 59 (1990): 55-72 (57); McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife," 107-108. For further information on the two models of marriage and their history, see among others Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) and John T. Noonan, Jr., "Power to Choose," *Viator* 4 (1973): 413-34.

its depiction of marriage as an arrangement between men that does not require the consent of the lady.

On the face of it, Chrétien's text provides compelling evidence for this claim. The scene in which Erec and Enide encounter each other for the first time, which is also the moment where their marriage is set in motion, or arranged, seems especially eloquent in this regard. There Enide has no say in the matter, and she remains silent as her father offers her to Erec in marriage: "Ja de moi n'iroiz escondiz: / Tot a vostre commandement / Ma fille bele vos present" (lines 674-76). As McCracken puts it, "Enide herself does not participate in the agreement between Erec and her father; she has no voice in the choice of her marriage partner". The vavassor's wife, Enide's mother, who is briefly mentioned at the beginning of this passage (lines 397-401), does not speak here, either.[132] What remains relatively unclear at this stage in the criticism is whether or not, as McCracken goes on to suggest, the representation of the exchange between Erec and Enide's father necessarily amounts to an 'endorsement' of female silence and the lay ideology of marriage on the part of the poet and the entire romance.[133]

To the contrary, the dynamics of gender and language, namely masculine speech and authority, that inform the wedding arrangements in *Erec et Enide* are repeatedly, albeit subtly, linked to the figure of Chrétien's source as it is introduced in the prologue to the romance. The description of Erec's *conte* again represents a valuable source of information in this respect. I have in mind especially the narrator's specifications with regard to the topic of the oral narrative, its audience, and the motives of the storytellers, who, we remember, only tell stories in order to make a living. It is a story about a man, the son of a king, for men, kings and counts in particular, performed by men, and whose masculine grammatical gender is also poetically overdetermined by the rhyme in lines 19-20 ("contes" [tale] / "contes" [counts]). By the same token, one might add, it is *not* about Enide, whose character is entirely left out of this poetic "blurb." As an exchange of language between men that functions in part to silence the heroine, the portrait of the *conte d'aventure* that Chrétien offers in the prologue points forward to the interaction between Enide's father and Erec, as well as the wedding ceremony and celebrations themselves. As with the audience of the *conte*, the vavassor insists on having his daughter marry a king or a count: "ou roi ou conte" (line 532). More to the point, who should make up the audience at the wedding but a lengthy list of kings and counts? As he prepares to go over the names and identities of the guests, which come to occupy in excess of seventy verses, the narrator makes a conspicuous intervention, commanding his own audience to listen, as if we might otherwise miss the point: "Je vos dirai, or entendez, / Qui furent *li conte et li roi*" (lines 1928-29; my emphasis). The long passage that follows gives the comital and royal wedding-goers a veritable presence in the text by identifying each of the kings and counts as he arrives (lines 1930-2007), furthermore stressing that it is in front of them, "devant rois et devant contes" (as in line 20), that the wedding will be held.[134] In addition, we discover that it is precisely the type of financially driven

[132] McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife," 109. *Cf.* James R. Simpson, *Troubling Arthurian Histories: Court Culture, Performance, and Scandal in Chrétien de Troyes's* Erec et Enide (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 191, who argues that Enide's happiness at her father's decision to have her marry Erec "could also read as Enide sharing or at least not contesting her father's shrewd hunch about Erec." However, there is nothing in the text to suggest that she has a part in this decision.

[133] McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife," esp. 110, 124.

[134] Somewhat suggestively, Philippe Walter has also identified in this passage an example of the rhetorical concept of *copia*; see *Cligès*, ed. and trans. Walter, in Daniel Poirion, dir., *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1150, n. 3.

jongleurs criticized in the prologue who man the entertainment at the marriage of Erec and Enide: "Cel jor furent jugleor lié, / Car tuit furent a gré paié" (lines 2105-106).

These scattered and hitherto overlooked parallels between the narrator's characterization of Chrétien's source, the *conte d'aventure*, and the episode of the wedding suggest a tight link between the politics of gender and marriage that McCracken has examined in the context of Enide's character and the poet's sense of the fragmented and "corrupt" state in which he had encountered the oral account of Erec's story. More precisely, in emphasizing the marginalization of Enide and *her* voice in both cases, the text can be seen to elaborate a figurative understanding of the prologue's vocabulary of error, "depecier et corrompre," throughout the opening sections of the romance.[135] Enide herself has become the site of a certain variety of political and poetic corruption, a dramatic instance of silencing within the society depicted that is also reflected in the form of the text.

Not only is Enide denied a say in the marriage, she also remains entirely anonymous until the scene of the wedding, a point that Chrétien underscores by ironically placing the list of the names of all the kings and counts in attendance before that of the heroine, and by pointing out that he is telling us something which, remarkably, we did not already know: "Encor ne savoit nuns son non, / Lors premierement le sot on: / Enide ot non en baptistere" (lines 2025-27). Though the revelation of Enide's proper name might function at first glance to counteract the silence surrounding her character, it also points to the manner in which her identity is regulated and determined here by the reigning norms of marriage. Hence the heroine does not name herself, but remains the object of a discursive framework controlled by Arthur and the customs that he insists on upholding in the first part of *Erec et Enide*: "Quant Erec sa fame reçut, / Par son droit non nommer l'estut, / Qu'autrement n'est fame esposee, / Se par son droit non n'est nommee" (lines 2021-24).[136] These lines, which begin with the hero's "droit non," highlight the

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[135] Apropos, the Chrétien Girls have recently put forth, "If the 'very beautiful composition' (*mout bele conjunture*; l. 14) of this inaugural Arthurian romance trumps the messy and mangled fragments previously circulated by professional hacks 'who try to make a living by telling stories' (*qui de conter vivre vuelent*; l. 22), perhaps it is for the way it comes to accord cotitular status to the belatedly named Enide"; see *Thinking Through*, 113. I attempt to build on this argument, which is left tantalizingly undeveloped with regard to the relationship between Enide and Chrétien, while also taking my distance from the Chrétien Girls' interpretation. One of the greatest difficulties in understanding their reading is that McCracken, who is one of them, argues quite unequivocally in "Silence and the Courtly Wife" that *Erec et Enide* supports a feudal or aristocratic model of marriage in that it "disregards the increasing importance of individual consent to marriage in late twelfth-century France" (107), a point that is approvingly cited in the fourth chapter of *Thinking Through* (118) but then flatly contradicted: "Here *Erec et Enide* not only vindicates conjugal love versus adultery but demonstrates the complete compatibility between aristocratic interest and ecclesiastical stipulations for mutual consent and indissolubility" (129). On the other hand, the chapter on *Erec et Enide* in *Thinking Through* fails to address the apparent antinomy of an approach attempting to move beyond canonical interpretations coordinated around the figure of Chrétien as author and its own fundamental attachment to the concept of *conjointure*, which is attributed to "Crestïens de Troies" in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*. All that is said of Chrétien's *conjointure* in the introduction to the volume is that "the term *conjointure* in the prologue to *Erec et Enide* also evokes this context," that is, "the *translatio imperii et studii* from East to West" (5). This is a potentially interesting claim, especially in the context of *Cligès*, but requires some explanation here, as it would seem more obviously to designate a translation from orality to writing within the vernacular; see also my discussion of Vitalis de Blois above (7-10).

[136] One might compare the depiction of marriage in *Erec et Enide* to the custom of the hunt for the white stag, especially the kiss that Arthur's "bestows" in the end on the most beautiful lady at court (Enide, lines 1825-39). There, as with the arrangement between Erec and the vavassor, it is never a question of Enide's consent. On this episode, see Simpson, *Troubling Arthurian Histories*, 231-35, where the author notes that "Enide's appearance at court has many aspects in common with violent sexual assault . . ." (232). For a speculative analysis of the origins of

priority of masculine language in Arthur's kingdom while conveying Enide's lack of verbal/political subjectivity through her position as a grammatical object and the reduction of her character first to "sa fame," Erec' wife. On a more literal level, Enide is deprived of a voice in the first part of the romance in that she does not speak directly until line 2492, or well over a third of the way into the poem. Norris J. Lacy and E. Jane Burns have called attention to this aspect of Enide's character. As the former notes, "She has scarcely spoken, and her words have never been reported to us." And according to Burns, "The heroine, Enide, is perhaps best known for parading somnolently throughout the first 2000 lines of Chrétien's text in utter silence."[137]

And yet, in the light of the various echoes between the treatment of the heroine in the first part of the romance and the version of Erec's story that is disparaged in the prologue, it becomes increasingly difficult to speak of these 2000 lines or so as being "Chrétien's text," and only his. I would instead propose that the silencing of Enide until the famous scene in the bedchamber, to which I shall turn in the following section, also serves to convey a partial silence on the part of the author and, in particular, a critical incorporation of the source into the space of Chrétien's narrative. This surprising maneuver brings to light the problem, or what I have called the "error," in the *conte* precisely by reproducing it as a frame for the action and narrative to come.

In addition to the problematics of gender and marriage that we have already observed, it is worth noting finally the distinctly oral character of the so-called "first verse" of the romance, as well as the episodes that immediately follow it, as an additional trace of the original *contes* and thus a potential point of contrast to the vision of narrative and narrative structure that we might associate with Chrétien's status as a vernacular *writer*. To the point, Madeleine Jeay has argued that the immediate message of Chrétien's critique of the *jongleurs* is calqued on the attitudes that they themselves had to one another's work, "la médisance à l'égard de ses concurrents et la vantardise de celui qui doit convaincre qu'il est le meilleur," an ironic appropriation whereby the poet might be seen to affirm his own superiority partly as a function of his chosen medium as contrasted with that of the *conte*.[138] The term *conte*, as Kelly shows, had a considerable range of meanings in Old French, and was not, to my knowledge, generically specific.[139] Here it would seem to be defined conceptually in terms of its orality, which in turn implies certain qualities based on the characteristics of the dominant genres of oral poetry in the twelfth century. To begin with, there is the widespread practice of listing in the beginning of *Erec et Enide*, which recalls the parataxis of Old French epic, or *chansons de geste*, as Jean-Marie Fritz has pointed out.[140] Taken as an example of Jeay's "esthétique de la discontinuité," such piecemeal juxtaposition is, indeed, one way of understanding what it means for the

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Enide's name, see *Cligès*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla and Olivier Collet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), pp. 5-6.

[137] Norris J. Lacy, "Narrative Point of View and the Problem of Erec's Motivation," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 18.4 (1971): 355-62 (357); E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 158.

[138] Madeleine Jeay, in *Le Commerce des mots: l'usage des listes dans la littérature médiévale (XII^{e}-XV^{e} siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 136; *cf.* Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Orality and Performance in Early French Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 91-93, 180. See also Laurence Harf-Lancner, "Les Romans d'Alexandre et le brouillage des formes," in ead. et al., eds., *Conter de Troie et d'Alexandre: pour Emmanuèle Baumgartner* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006), 19-27 (21), who discusses some of the similarities between *Erec et Enide* and *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, in which the author's undertaking is contrasted with that of certain "troveor" (*The Medieval French* Roman d'Alexandre. *Volume II: Version of Alexandre de Paris*. *Text*, ed. Edward C. Armstrong et al. [Princeton: Princeton University Press; Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1937], line 37).

[139] For a relatively informative discussion of the meanings of *conte*, see Kelly, *Art*, 94-97.

[140] Ed. Fritz, p. 149, n. 1.

narrative to be "hacked to pieces."[141] This practice is not limited to the catalogue of kings and counts that we saw above, but such lists are notably concentrated in the first segment of the romance. Perhaps the most striking instance comes with the famous list of the heroic knights of the Round Table, which takes on an overtly enumerative form: "Devant toz les bons chevaliers / Doit estre Gauvains li premiers, / Li seconz, Erec li filz Lac, / Et li tierz Lanceloz dou Lac" (lines 1687-90). However, Chrétien's narrator only makes it through ten names before tellingly expressing his aversion to such enumeration: "Les autres vos dirai sanz nombre, / Por ce que li nombrers m'encombre" (lines 1699-1700). The list of knights' names reminds the reader of the orality and masculinity associated with the *conte* in the prologue and elsewhere at the same time that the tenth man further enriches the pun on *conter*, which in Old French could mean both "to recount" and "to count": "Gandeluz soit dismes contez" (line 1697); while made more or less explicit in this passage, this play on words is no doubt also implicit in the list of *counts* who are at the wedding (*supra*).

The organization of the first two episodes of the romance, the hunt for the *blans cers* and the custom of the sparrowhawk, likewise shores up the oral texture of the narrative at this point. Just after the king kisses Enide, the narrator signals a division in the text: "Ci fine li premerains vers" (line 1840). In a classic article published in 1934, Ernest Hoepffner observed that this term, "li premerains vers" (var. "li premiers vers"), also appears in medieval lyric poetry, where it refers to the opening stanza of a poem, a lyrical introduction of sorts.[142] As an additional vestige of orality in *Erec et Enide*, the designation of a first verse might be taken to accentuate the latent presence of the oral source within Chrétien's romance.[143] But I would also suggest that it silently raises the question of where to locate the divide between tradition and originality, the *matiere* of the source and that of Chrétien's narrative proper, as we have seen here that the author's rehashing of the *conte* does not end with the ending of the *premerains vers*, but rather extends into and beyond the scene of the wedding.

The episode of the tournament that follows the marriage of Erec and Enide might be interpreted in this connection as a culmination of the simple yet significant idea that, from the

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[141] Jeay, *Le Commerce des mots*, 35. For Jeay, discontinuity characterizes *chansons de geste* and *romans* alike, but see also Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, "Le Dit," *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* 8.1 (1988): 86-94, who contrasts romances to *dits* as "*conjointure*" to "disjonction" (87). At any rate, Jeay cites the prologue to *Erec et Enide* as a "polemical" denunciation of the fragmentary and disorganized nature of the oral tradition (36).

[142] Ernest Hoepffner, "'Matière et sens' dans le roman d'*Erec et Enide*," *Archivum Romanicum* 18 (1934): 433-50, esp. 433-34.

[143] *Cf.* Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, who states, "Ce prélude possède son unité . . . et le récit est si bien ajusté qu'à lui seul le 'premiers vers' mérite d'être loué comme une belle 'conjointure'" (86). Yet the first verse also sets in motion the marriage of Erec and Enide, a plotline that remains clearly incomplete at line 1840, so that, as Edward J. Buckbee has noted, "there is no real narrative pause at this point . . ." ("*Erec et Enide*," in Kelly, ed., *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium* [Lexington: French Forum, 1985], 48-88 [60]); see also Simpson, *Troubling Arthurian Histories*, 217. Given Chrétien's familiarity with the genre of the *grand chant courtois*, one might instead wonder if he could be offering an additional criticism of the *conte* based on the poetics of the lyric form. For as Paul Zumthor has shown, "Le lieu de la convergence dans le grand chant courtois, est la strophe plutôt que la chanson comme telle," revealing a tendency in sung poetry towards a strophic composition "en série d'unités relativement autonomes"; *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 193. On the contrary, the clear narrative enjambment in this case between the "premerains vers" and the following action makes it difficult to take the first part of verse 1840, "Ci fine," without a grain of salt. On the possible maladroitness of the *premerains vers* as a textual division, one might also consult certain proponents of the bipartite and tripartite readings of the text who, interestingly, do not locate the first division at this spot in the text: see Maddox, "Trois sur deux: Théories de bipartition et de tripartition des œuvres de Chrétien," *Œuvres et critiques* 5.2 (1980-81): 91-102 (91).

standpoint of the early parts of the narrative, "D'Erec . . . est li contes" (line 19). Like the marriage itself, the tournament at Danebroc (Edinburgh) functions to unite Arthur's barons, and it is presented in the text as an arrangement among men:

> Par seignorie et par hautesce
> Et por Erec plus honorer,
> Fist li rois Artus demorer
> Toz les barons une quinzainne.
> Quant vint a la tierce semainne,
> *Tuit ensamble communement*
> *Empristrent un tornoiement*. (lines 2118-24; my emphasis)

Despite the division of the barons into two camps for the purposes of the tournament, one led by Gauvain and the other by Méliz and Méliadoc (lines 2125-30), its preparation in the preceding passage would seem to convey an ideal of harmonious and exclusive masculine community reminiscent of that which Simon Gaunt has convincingly linked to the genre of the *chanson de geste*, specifically the anonymous Oxford *Roland*: "With compelling lyricism and poetic grandeur it promotes an ideal of a seamless and harmonious community of fighting men."[144] Further, as a theoretical training ground for battle, the tournament resembles the sharply gendered space of what Gaunt refers to as "the battlefield": "The battlefield is the space in which men are united, fight together and die together. There are no women there; it is a masculine space, in which the knight's duty is clear and unproblematic."[145] Equally in evidence in the scene of the tournament, therefore, is the type of "monologic masculinity" that Gaunt has imputed to the *chansons de geste*, where alterity is not absolute but "self" and "other" exist as part of the same group.[146] Take the temporary, artificial separation of Arthur's barons into two sides, for example, or the flattering list of resemblances between Erec and Absalom ("Il sembloit Asalon de face" [line 2262]), Solomon ("Et de la langue Salemon" [2263]), and Alexander the Great ("Et de doner et de despandre / Fu pareilz le roi Alixandre" [2265-66]), as well as a lion ("De fierté resembloit lyon" [2264]).[147] Similarly, the section of this passage which details Erec's renown after having been judged the winner of the tournament stresses unison rather than division or difference:

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[144] Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 26. Interestingly (if only incidentally), the passage the author adduces in this part of the argument employs the same adverb "comunement" that appears in *Erec et Enide* to describe the tournament as a communal enterprise (*La Chanson de Roland*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. Ian Short [Paris: LGF, 1990], line 1416 [*laisse* 110]).

[145] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 26.

[146] Roberta Krueger, in *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29, describes tournament scenes as "highly stylized presentations that dramatize female response," a motif that would go back to Geoffrey of Monmouth. In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien refers to the "ansaigne" (line 2134) given to participants by their ladies, but he does not describe in any detail the female audience of the tournament or their reactions.

[147] While the figure of the lion might appear to be an outlier in this list of biblical and historical kings (see ed. Fritz, p. 181, n. 1), its use to represent masculine ferocity is neither unprecedented nor unique in Chrétien's corpus; the Oxford *Roland* uses roughly the same comparison in its eighty-sixth *laisse* to describe Roland's state in the face of battle ("Plus se fait fiers que lëon ne leupart"; line 1111), and in *Yvain* the defender of the fountain is described, quite similarly, as being "Fiers par samblant comme lions" (*Yvain*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult [Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994], line 486).

Trestuit li chevalier disoient
Qu'il avoit le tornoi veincu
Par sa lance et par son escu.
Or fu Erec de tel renon
Qu'on ne parloit se de li non,
Ne nuns ne ot si bone grace. (lines 2256-66)

These lines provide a fitting conclusion both to the scene of the tournament and to the opening development of the romance more generally. In particular, the emphasis on chivalric prowess and the striking centralization of the knights' language around the figure of Erec, who is here portrayed as the sole topic of discussion, together recall the configuration of voice, gender, audience, and subject matter that is associated with the *jongleurs* in the prologue, effectively summing up the politics and "corrupt" courtly-narrative aesthetics that have so far characterized Arthurian society—and its literary culture—in *Erec et Enide*.

In Burns's reading of the romance, the critic speaks of "a rivalry between men's stories and women's stories that Chrétien's text works so hard to obscure," furthermore claiming that

> By highlighting the love story between his protagonists along with the hero's reputation and chivalric prowess . . . Chrétien diverts our attention away from one of the more difficult questions at the heart of his romance: the status of the woman's voice, her right to speak versus the necessity of keeping her silent.[148]

By contrast, I have attempted to show in this section how Chrétien elaborates upon his misgivings with respect to the *conte* of Erec throughout the first verse, the scene of the wedding, and the tournament, and it is precisely by problematizing Enide's status vis-à-vis the use of language, her relative absence and silence, that he does so. I have further contended that the author does not, therefore, appear to suggest the type of ideological alignment between his project in composing *Erec et Enide* and the politics of speech, gender, and marriage analyzed in McCracken's work. Rather, Chrétien takes his distance from a model of social and linguistic monologism that seems to imply at every turn the figurative corruption and fragmentation of the story as it concerns Enide's character. In the conjunction of factors that lead to the remarkable suppression of the heroine's voice for more than a third of the text, the poet gives his readers the means to understand, or know, the terms of the critique of both story and storyteller that he sets up in the prologue of the romance. How might this extended reflection on error and silence in turn help to illuminate the broader structure and sense of the narrative, that is, the nature of Chrétien's own voice and his conception of literary form? In what follows, I would like to expand on my argument that the lengthy performance of the *conte* within Chrétien's romance also serves as an important framing device for the remainder of the action, but not in the sense of a simple *mise en abyme*. On the contrary, it draws attention to a significant disruption in the poetics of the *conte* that occurs in later episodes.

[148] Burns, *Bodytalk*, 157-58.

II. Breaking the Silence: Chrétien and Enide

After the tournament to honor Erec, he and Enide leave Arthur's court for Carrant, where the knight's father, Lac, is sojourning (lines 2311-12). The division between the two courts is emphasized through the text's account of the couple's journey from one to the other, through mountains, forests, plains, and across rivers, lasting four whole days (lines 2308-10). In this way, it can be seen to anticipate a larger change in the narrative. As is well known, the events at Carrant constitute a crisis of sorts with respect to Erec's status as a knight and the relationship between Erec and Enide. Indeed, proponents of both the "bipartite" and "tripartite" interpretations of Chrétien's first romance, such as Donald Maddox and Lacy, have often agreed on this episode as a turning point in the development of the intrigue, although Enide's function therein has frequently been downplayed or elided in scholars' structural schemata. For Maddox, who proposes a reading of the text according to a pattern of bipartition, Erec here "succumbs to a phase of idleness before transcending his former glory in the achievement of an exemplary, communally beneficial knighthood."[149] Along the same lines, Lacy structures the second of three developments that would make up the romance into three episodes, beginning with what he labels, "Crisis: Erec's recreance."[150] More specifically, then, the crisis concerns in the first place Erec's abandonment of his chivalric career, a point that the text links to his love for Enide and his failure to continue participating in tournaments. This creates a striking contrast between the bedchamber at Carrant and the battlefield at Danebroc:

> Mais tant l'ama Erec d'amors
> Que d'armes mais ne li chaloit,
> N'a tornoiement mais n'aloit.
> N'avoit mais soing de tornoier:
> A sa fame aloit dosnoier,
> De li fist s'amie et sa drue. (lines 2430-35)

Erec's inactivity also has important ramifications for his reputation as a knight. His companions do not fail to notice the degradation in his comportment, and whereas they were previously united by his honor, they now speak in unison about how things have changed:

> Ce disoit trestoz li bernages
> Que granz duelx est et granz domages,
> Quant armes porter ne voloit
> Tex bers con il estre soloit.
> Tant fu blasmez de totez genz,
> De chevaliers et de sergenz,
> Que Enide oï entredire
> Que recreanz estoit ses sire
> D'armes et de chevalerie:
> Mout avoit changie sa vie. (lines 2455-64)

[149] Donald Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 14.
[150] Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes: An Essay on Narrative Art* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 75.

With the alienation of Erec from the rest of the men at court, there is an additional rupture in the seamless masculine community of performance and reception discussed above in connection with marriage and the ideology of gender in the epic genre as well as the opening of *Erec et Enide*. Namely, Enide now enters into the inscribed audience of the romance, and her separation and difference from the subjects of the speech in this scene are signaled by the narrator's stuttering specification in line 2460 that by "totez gens," all types of people, he means only the knights present and the other men, or *sergenz*, who are there to serve them. The use of the verb "entredire," which here signifies a discrete utterance whose intended public is by definition circumscribed, limited to the circle of those speaking (*entre-dire*), but which could also refer, more literally, to an "interdict" or prohibition, further evinces Enide's status as an indirect, unintended, or implicitly prohibited member of the audience.[151] Even as it brings back the familiar notion of a production and circulation of discourse among men (knights, kings, and counts), with not one knight voicing the criticism, but *trestoz li bernages* speaking, together and to each other, the *blasme* placed on Erec for his newfound idleness thus also marks the interruption of a speech chain that has until now been constructed in the image of the *conte*. Otherwise put, the change in Erec's conduct also brings on a crisis of language and narrative, and it is notably in this passage that Enide speaks directly for the first—but not the last—time in the romance. I shall therefore be interested here not only in the establishment of Enide's voice, but also the manner in which it reflects on Chrétien's compositional strategy in *Erec et Enide* as a direct response to what I have taken to calling the "error" in the source. In the central episodes of the romance, it is not only the heroine but also the author who breaks the silence.

II.l Enide's First Parole

Let us return to the circumstances surrounding Enide's inaugural speech act. That she should overhear the barons' discussion of Erec is all the more important, we learn, because it prompts her to relay the rumor of her husband's *recreance*. Significantly, though, she does not speak immediately out of a fear that Erec will respond poorly to her words: "De ceste chose li pesa, / Mais semblant faire n'en osa, / Car ses sire en mal le preïst / Assez tost, *s'ele li deïst*" (lines 2465-68; my emphasis). This implicates Erec once again in Enide's silence; the emphatic protasis placed at the end of this last line is perhaps particularly significant, for it suggests that the knight's reaction will have as much to do with the subject of the speech, *who* is speaking, as it does with what *she* says. However, Enide's voice is not, ironically, entirely distinct in this instance from that of the barons cited above; strictly speaking, what she says is at least partially a repetition of what they have already said. Building on John F. Plummer's interpretation of "bien dire" and "bien aprandre" in line 12 of the prologue in connection with Enide's function in the narrative, Tony Hunt has astutely linked her hesitation to a larger "dialectic" of concealment and revelation, the interplay of silence, speaking, and the broadcasting of knowledge, that would originate in the poem's liminary discourse on the sharing of wisdom.[152] Keeping in mind the

[151] On "entredire," see Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 1247.

[152] Tony Hunt, "Chrestien's Prologues Reconsidered," in Keith Busby and Lacy, eds., *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 153-68 (155-56); John F. Plummer, "*Bien dire* and *bien aprandre* in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*," *Romania* 95 (1974): 380-94. In the above scene of Chrétien's romance, the text employs forms of both "celer" (line 2469) and "taisir" (2504). Plummer analyzes many of the same scenes as this chapter but consistently takes the themes of "bien dire" and "bien aprandre" more literally than I do.

complexity of Enide's first *parole*, which does not emerge *ex nihilo*, but instead constitutes a striking example of double voicing, we might otherwise ask if the echo that these scholars have pointed out between the scene in which Enide speaks for the first time and the rhetoric of the prologue could point to an additional parallel between the heroine and the author in regard of the poetics of textual transmission. In its polyphonic and metalinguistic dimensions, Enide's appropriation of the court's language about Erec not only articulates an apology of her speech from the standpoint of her husband's hypothetical reaction to it, but it also harks back to the narrator's presentation of Chrétien in the prologue, where the author's "first words" serve similarly to transmit Erec's *conte d'aventure*. The structural and functional similarities between Chrétien's and Enide's voices are conveyed through the content of the latter's address. Simply put, if Chrétien's recapitulation of the *conte* allows for his readers to grasp the nature of the mistake committed by the *jongleurs*, then the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for Enide's transmission of the barons' accusation of *recreance* against Erec.

As for the precise terms in and on which Enide breaks her silence, it will also be worth noting here the somewhat peculiar way in which Chrétien has composed this passage, so as to separate the reception and reiteration of the rumor by some twenty-seven lines of *mise en scène* and to have Enide pronounce her speech not once but twice over the course of the scene in the bedchamber. She remains silent until, lying in bed one morning beside Erec, she remembers what the other knights have been saying about her husband:

> Bouche a bouche entre braz gisoient,
> Come cil qui mout s'entramoient.
> Cil dormi et cele veilla;
> De la parole li membra
> Que disoient de son seignor
> Par la contree li plusor. (lines 2473-78)

Just as the text of line 2474, in particular the verb *s'entramer*, lays stress on a feeling of mutual love, so the wording of the passage with regard to the bodily configuration of Erec and Enide, "bouche a bouche," would seem to intimate the possibility of a new discursive field in which the latter would exist on a par with the former as far as Burns's "right to speak"[153] is concerned. On top of this, the affinity between Chrétien's voice and that of the Enide appears to find further confirmation in the narrator's defensive analysis of the heroine's intentions before the fact: "Tel duel en ot et tel pesance / Qu'il li avint par mescheance / Que ele dist une parole / Dont ele se tint puis por fole"; "Mais," he continues, "ele n'i pensoit nul mal" (lines 2481-85). Thus, in the space separating the source (*trestoz li bernages*) and vector (Enide) of the news of Erec's idleness, Chrétien prepares the ground for the reception of Enide's voice by readers outside of the text by staging at least two interpretations of her discourse within it, one reading replacing another until we are finally presented with the heroine's words, whose significance is paradoxically denied by their author just as it is, I think, affirmed by *the* author. Indeed, Chrétien suggests the importance of Enide's *parole* for the interpretation of the romance through a striking form of dramatic irony that consists in placing the external readership in the privileged position of being the only audience for the following monologue, a first iteration of the first words spoken by the heroine:

> . . . Lasse, con mar m'esmui

[153] See once again Burns, *Bodytalk*, 157.

De mon païs! Que ving ça querre?
Bien me devroit sorbir la terre,
Quant toz li mieudres chevaliers,
Li plus hardiz et li plus fiers,
Li plus beax et li plus cortois,
Qui onques fust ne cuens ne rois,
A de tout en tout relinquie
Por moi tote chevalerie.
Donques l'ai je honi por voir;
Ne[l] vousisse por nul avoir. (lines 2492-502)

This passage begins with a throwback to Enide's departure from Laluth and ends with a contrast between what she believes has transpired and what she "would have wanted." In other words, it cultivates her verbal subjectivity at the same time that it recalls her lack thereof in previous episodes, so that what seems at first to place the blame for Erec's shame on Enide in fact displaces it back towards the knight. The change in the linguistic economy of the romance that takes place here also operates through the recurrence of what by now has become an ironic metanarrative shibboleth of sorts from my perspective in this analysis: the figure of the kings and counts who form the audience of the original *conte*, here invoked once again in the final part of the superlative in line 2498.

Immediately following these lines, there is a slight change in linguistic footing, as Enide now makes a direct address to Erec, who is still sleeping, but not soundly: "Lors li a dit: 'Con mar i fus!'" (line 2503). An additional irony emerges at this point, which is that Enide has been next to Erec the whole time, but he only wakes up to hear the last eight syllables of her speech. Moreover, the only thing separating this verse from the preceding is the narrator's specification of a new addressee, and the circular structure of Enide's discourse, moving anaphorically from the first to the second person ("con mar m'esmui" / "Con mar i fus") might suggest continuity in the speaking voice rather than interruption. For his part, Erec claims nevertheless that he has heard her "well" and that her words were "for" him, not somebody else: "Por moi fu dit, non por autrui; / Bien ai la parole entendue" (lines 2518-19). However, Chrétien's perspectival play in this passage is almost certainly designed to underline Erec's current incompetence as a listener and interpreter, an aspect that this passage has in common with subsequent scenes, and his character's dramatic insistence that Enide's "parole" was meant exclusively for him only shores up the disjuncture between his position and that of the reading public, giving readers the option of a better or less incomplete interpretation within the context of broader narrative developments.

Along these lines, it is interesting to note how the dialogue that comes between the first and second versions of Enide's account of the barons' discontentment points back to an earlier conversation between Erec and Enide's father as a point of contrast. When she temporarily refuses to repeat herself, Erec asks, "Dame, por qoi vos escondites?" (line 2524). As we have seen, this last term is used litotically, as a past participle, in the passage where Enide's father expresses no resistance, or "escondiz," to Erec's offer of marriage (line 674). In the first case, then, it is a matter of Enide's consent, or her right to speak. In this case, by contrast, Erec's ironic astonishment at his wife's silence and the distinctive phrasing of his question seem to indicate that to be a subject of language is also to be able to choose not to speak. Likewise, in a later passage to which I shall return in the last part of this chapter, Chrétien's narrator pauses to justify his own refusal to repeat certain details of Erec's story, citing a distaste for precisely the type of

repetition that Erec here forces Enide to commit (lines 6470-87). Thus what appears to be a divergence between the respective positions of Chrétien and Enide with regard to the use of language turns out to reveal yet another similarity between them, and when the latter does finally repeat herself, it is not condemnation but rather endorsement that is suggested by the text and context of what she says:

> Sire, quant vos si m'angoissiez,
> La verité vos en dirai,
> Ja plus ne le vos celerai;
> Mais je criem mout ne vos annuit.
> Par ceste terre dïent tuit,
> Li noir et li blonc et li ros,
> Que granz damages est de vos
> Que vos armes entrelessiez . . .
> Or se vont tuit de vos gabant,
> Viel et jone, petit et grant;
> Recreant vos apelent tuit.
> Cuidiez vos donc qu'il ne m'ennuit
> Quant j'oi de vos dire despit?
> Mout me poise quant l'en le dit,
> Et por ce m'en poise encor plus
> Qu'il m'en metent le blasme sus. (lines 2536-43, -49-56)

In this instance Enide's choice of words, especially the rhyme of "dirai" and "celerai," evokes once more the dialectic of silence and speech that Hunt has connected to the prologue (*supra*). But there are other resonances, indeed repetitions, worth detecting and unpacking here. I have in mind first of all the verb "entrelessiez," which also appears as part of the reflection on *estude*, study, learning, or effort, in the prologue's gloss on the peasant's proverb:

> Por ce fait bien qui son estuide
> Atorne a sens, quel que il l'ait;
> Car qui son estude *entrelait*,
> Tost i puet tel chose taisir
> Qui mout venroit puis a plesir. (lines 4-8; my emphasis)

In the first passage quoted above (lines 2536-56), both Enide and her silence and Erec and his abandonment of arms are implicitly compared to the interrupted *estude* imagined and warned against by the narrator in the prologue. The same lines also echo with the first three verses of the text, the proverb itself: "Li vilains dit en son respit / Que tel chose a l'en en despit, / Qui mout vaut mieuz que l'en ne cuide" (lines 1-3). Could Enide's language, which not only repeats Erec's followers' disdain, or "despit," for him but will in turn become an object of both her own and Erec's disdain be more valuable than one—than either of them—might think?

This question brings us to an important development in the relationship between Erec and Enide concerning speech and its absence: the injunction to silence. For reasons that will never be specified, Erec now commands Enide to prepare to leave Lac's court for a journey on horseback. The destination is also left unspecified: the text simply states, "Erec s'en va, sa fame en moinne,

/ Ne set quel part, en aventure" (lines 2762-63). The chiastic structure of the first line contrasts subject and object, Erec and Enide, as does the concentration of imperatives voiced by the former in the preparations for the adventure (e.g., "aparoilliez vos," "Levez de ci," "se vos vestez," "faites metre" [lines 2574-78]), and it is this context that Erec commands, most notably, that Enide not speak to him unless he addresses her first:

> Et gardez ne soiez tant ose,
> Se vos veez aucune chose,
> Que vos me dïez ce ne qoi.
> Gardez ne parlez ja a moi,
> Se je ne vos aresne avant.
> Grant aleüre alez devant
> Et chevauchiez tot a seür. (lines 2765-71)

I am not to first to remark on the startling nature of Erec's injunction. Most recently, the Chrétien Girls have commented,

> His words seem oddly excessive; after all, Enide has never spoken to him unless he demanded it – and even then with considerable reluctance. From a feminist-inflected perspective linking agency to speech, this moment marks the depths of Enide's abjection, legible as a raw expression of medieval patriarchal misogyny.[154]

So far in this analysis, I have attempted to show that a perspective "linking agency to speech" is already present from the first verse in *Erec et Enide*, and that it holds implications for our understanding of the relationship between Erec and Enide, as well as the inter- and intratextual dynamics between Erec's *conte* and the broader narrative of Chrétien's romance. In this light, I would suggest, more specifically, that Erec's proscription, coupled with the theme of adventure that is explicitly reintroduced here, be read as an additional instance of the spectral representation of the *conte d'aventure* within *Erec et Enide*. In other words, the hero's return to arms in this moment is also a partial reversion to the model of gender, language, and narrative structure that obtains in the early portions of the romance. However, whereas Enide remained silent until the scene in the bedchamber, effectively cut out of the story, she has now broken her silence and will continue to do so in her repeated violations of Erec's injunction, throwing an additional light on the unveiling in this stretch of the narrative of a novel aesthetic paradigm according to which the heroine's voice is neither marginal nor silenced but quite literally central.[155] While space will not allow to me go over all of the couple's adventures, I want to briefly examine the first two of them before turning to a more detailed analysis of the third one.

[154] Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 125.
[155] In *ibid.*, 2, the authors state their aim "to interpret 'Chrétien de Troyes' not as an author identified with a historical figure but as a body of texts attributable to this name"; my point above is rather to bring the study of patriarchy and misogyny represented through Erec's character to bear on the interpretation of Chrétien's compositional strategy as it responds to that of the anonymous *jongleurs* to whom he attributes Erec's *conte* in the prologue.

II.2 "Cele devant et cil darriers": The First Two Adventures

In keeping with Erec's commands, Enide rides in front of her husband. This means that she will see things that Erec does not, or before he does, even though she is not supposed to speak before he does. Whether or not this is meant to test Enide, as some scholars have suggested, is left entirely ambiguous. What is relatively clear is that Chrétien was alive to the irony of the situation, as can be gathered from the rhyme on "avant" and "devant" in lines 2769-70, both of which could signify either "in front of" or "before" in Old French. In addition, it is because of this command, because she is now too afraid to look at Erec—"Enhaÿe m'a, bien le voi, / Quant il ne vuet parler a moi; / Ne je tant hardie ne sui / Que je os resgarder vers lui" (lines 2787-90)—that Enide sees and says something in the next place. In other words, the lack of specification with regard to Erec's motivation leaves open the possibility that the injunction is not cleverly designed to tempt Enide to speak, but so clumsily formulated as to be to blame for its own failure, providing a possible counterpoint to the heroine's carefully thought out language. From this perspective, the relative positions of Erec and Enide—"Cele devant et cil darriers" (line 3119), as the text puts it further along—could instead be taken as a means of figuring the development in the relationship between the two main characters that occurs over the course of their adventures.

While she is not looking at Erec, Enide notices three knights approaching. The narrator specifies that they are thieves: "Uns chevaliers dou bois issi, / Qui de roberie vivoit; / Deux compaignons o lui avoit, / Et s'estoient armé tuit troi" (lines 2792-95). Erec has still not noticed them when, in the first violation of her husband's injunction, Enide speaks to warn him (lines 2841-44). She states as follows the reasoning behind her decision to disobey Erec:

> Dex, fait ele, que porrai dire?
> Or iert ja morz ou pris mes sire,
> Que cil sont troi et il est seus;
> N'est pas igaux partiz cist jeus
> D'un chevalier encontre trois. (lines 2829-33)

McCracken cites the last four lines as evidence of Enide's "ignorance of chivalric customs."[156] This judgment bases itself on the juxtaposition of her reasoning and the narrator's explanation that it was not customary at the time for two knights to attack one:

> Adonc estoit costume et us
> Que dui chevalier a un poindre
> Ne devoient a un seul joindre,
> Que s'il eüssent envahi,
> Vuis fust qu'il l'eüssent trahi. (lines 2822-26)

McCracken writes with regard to this passage, "In his defense of honor among thieves, the narrator characterizes Enide's reasoning as incorrect before it is even presented," as it would be "based on the fear of Erec being attacked by three men simultaneously."[157] Rather than taking the narrator's words at face value, we might wonder to what extent this custom is even relevant

[156] McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife", 114-15 (quoted at 115).
[157] Ibid., 115.

to the present circumstances, or if this could be an example of overlooked irony. The possibility of a disjuncture between theory and practice is registered through the text's insistence in this passage that it is not a question of two knights, but three. More to the point, I have not been able to find any proof that there is, in fact, such honor among the thieves; the text makes it clear that what motivates the first knight to attack alone is his desire to take possession of Enide's horse and the fact that he saw it first (lines 2809-18)—a system of dibs.[158] Notice finally that Enide has two reasons for wanting to warn Erec, the second of which provides an important gloss on the first. The two lines I am referring to read, "Cil le ferra ja par detrois, / Que mes sire ne s'en prent garde" (lines 2834-35). That is, the danger that Erec is in, according to Enide, has to do not only with the number of attackers but also with Erec's unawareness of the situation and, correlatively, the prospect that he will be caught off guard and attacked from behind without warning. On the one hand, Enide's second fear, which refers to the first knight, "cil," who is now advancing toward Erec, demonstrates that she is aware that the knights will not attack all at once. Her concern thus does not necessarily contradict the custom stated above but rather problematizes it: even if they attack one at a time, is it not still three versus one, an uneven match? On the other hand, Enide's notion that the first knight will not issue a formal challenge, or *défi*, not only appears warranted but would seem to show her knowledge of a different aspect of chivalric custom.[159] In this instance, Enide's warning acts as a substitute for the challenge that is never voiced by the oncoming aggressor, an utterance whose many justifications might explain Erec's simultaneous condemnation of and immediate forgiveness for his wife's transgression (line 2845-52).[160]

The second adventure in many ways resembles the first, although it poses a slightly different kind of challenge to readers of the romance concerning the specifics of the manuscript tradition. The couple has traveled less than a league from the site of the first adventure when five additional knights appear before them, whose motive is described in nearly the same terms as that of the first three: "Roberie querant aloient" (line 2927). For McCracken, Enide's logic is again "set up to be false even before she begins to deliberate about whether or not to disobey her husband's orders to warn him of danger."[161] As McCracken further explains,

> In the couple's second adventure Enide thinks that Erec has not seen five approaching robbers and convinces herself that she must risk Erec's displeasure and speak to warn him: "Dex! mes sire ne le voit mie!" (l. 2970). But in fact Erec sees the robbers before Enide does and pretends not to have noticed them.[162]

The critic correctly cites line 2970 of Guiot's copy of *Erec et Enide*, but I would argue that this version of the text itself clouds somewhat the sense of the passage with respect to Enide's

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[158] Along similar lines, Plummer, "*Bien dire* and *bien aprandre*," argues that "The brigand knights represent outlawry in its literal sense, as well as a perverted form of Erec's own station of knighthood" (385).
[159] The failure to issue a *défi* is associated elsewhere in Chrétien's corpus with knightly misconduct and shame: see especially *Yvain*, lines 489-94, where the defender of the fountain reproaches Calogrenant for this reason. In a similar way, the first attacker in this passage makes no noise until Erec moves towards him, and even then the former's cries are contrasted with the latter's challenge: "Cil le voit venir, si l'escrie. / Quant Erec l'ot, si le desfie" (lines 2855-56).
[160] On Enide's physical interventions in Erec's battles in later encounters, which serve to stress the way she protects Erec through both language and action, see Michelle A. Freeman, "*Cligès*," in Kelly, *Symposium*: 89-131, esp. 124.
[161] McCracken, "Silence and the Courtly Wife," 115.
[162] Ibid.

perception. For the same line, Jean-Marie Fritz's more recent edition, based on MS. BnF, fr. 1376, gives, "Dex! mes sire ne *les* voit mie" (my emphasis). In this, it agrees with all but two of the other manuscripts (BnF, fr. 375 and 794 [Guiot's copy])[163]—and accords with the surrounding passage in all seven complete witnesses of the text, as well as the privileged perspective that Enide enjoys riding in front of Erec. Indeed, the text makes it clear from the start of the passage that Enide sees all five of the robber-knights, whereas Erec notices only the first one:

> Erec *le* vit et semblant fist
> Qu'encor garde ne s'en preïst.
> Quant Enide *les* a veüz,
> Toz li sans li est esmeüz;
> Grant paor ot et grant esmai. (Lines 2957-61)

Likewise, Enide refers in the plural to those who are coming towards them, "cil qui vienent ça" (line 2974), and when she finally warns Erec, she mentions five knights, "cinq chevalier" (2983); only then does she specify that one of them, the fifth, is on the move (2986-88).[164] It is possible that Guiot, who is known among textual critics for his wilfulness as a scribe,[165] hoped to correct the apparent inconsistency between lines 2957 and 2970. Whatever the case may be, scholars have also seen fit to focus on Erec's character and his feigned ignorance rather than the discrepancy between what he and Enide see, or its implications for the way in which we read her decision to speak again. Basing himself on Wendelin Foerster's edition, which contains the same version of lines 2957-70 as BnF, fr. 1376, Hunt argues with respect to Erec's decision to pretend not to see the knight, "We therefore understand that he is testing Enide."[166] As with the departure from Carrant, however, Erec's motivation in choosing to remain silent is a detail that is specifically denied by the text, speculate though we might. Consistent with the first adventure, Chrétien's romance instead concentrates attention on the difference between the respective perspectives of the two main characters in what amounts to a poetic reversal of the dynamics of language and silence that had characterized the scene where their marriage is arranged: Erec is silent and his reasoning unstated, while Enide's second warning proves to be doubly justified by her husband's failure to share what he knows and her own, fuller knowledge of what lies ahead.[167]

As for Erec's reaction to Enide's *parole*, it is at once harsher and more conflicted than before:

> Bien saichiez que plus vos en hé,

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[163] See the critical apparatus in ed. Fritz, p. 240.

[164] The use in the above passage of the word "garde" in the expression "Qu'encor garde ne s'en preïst" (line 2958; compare 2835, "Que mes sire ne s'en prent garde") harks back ironically to Erec's usage of the verb "garder," with a prohibitive sense, in the context of the injunction (line 2768; see also 3003).

[165] See, for instance, Keith Busby, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), I: 93-108.

[166] Hunt, "Chrestien's Prologues Reconsidered," 156.

[167] Lacy, in "Narrative Point of View," offers a tripartite interpretation of the romance based on certain changes in point of view, arguing, for instance, "It is clearly through Erec that Chrétien filters the first third of the poem" (356), but he does not discuss the meaning of these shifts in perspective from the standpoint of Chrétien's relationship to the *conte*.

Dit le vos ai et di encor.
Encor le vos pardonrai or,
Mais autre foiz vos en gardez,
Ne ja vers moi ne regardez,
Que vos ferïez mout que fole.
Je n'ain mie vostre parole. (Lines 3000-3006)

With the rhyme of "encor" with "or" and the striking lexical enjambment of lines 3001-3002 through the repetition of this first term, the passage emphasizes repetition on the level of both the injunction and Erec's pardon. This, of course, runs counter to the knight's earlier, and similarly phrased, assurance, following Enide's first warning, that she would not be forgiven twice: "Ceste foiz vos iert pardonee, / Mais, s'autre foiz vos avenoit, / Ja pardoné ne vos seroit" (lines 2850-52). In other words, Erec is caught here in violation of his own word, a verbal irony that serves to destabilize *his* voice, authority, and the appropriateness of his orders even as he presents his strongest and most direct indictment of Enide's language: "Je n'ain mie vostre parole."

At first blush, Erec's newfound disgust at Enide's speech might be taken as a case in point of what Gaunt's analysis of gender and the romance genre has generalized as aporia in medieval romancers' "attitude . . . to women":

> Women are made into signs of such immense value that masculine identity is defined through women and this leads to apparently fulsome praise of them; yet at the same time *romanciers* do not like women. The ideal woman is represented as a fiction, and this fiction is underscored by a misogynistic model of femininity, according to which women are bad readers and consequently unworthy signs in a masculine discourse.[168]

Gaunt's comments take us back to McCracken's reading of Enide's character and indeed to one of the major issues raised by Chrétien's poem, which is whether or not the romance ought to be interpreted in terms of a unitary ideological framework, or if different parts of the work, or different characters, speak to divergent ideas of which some but not all may be aligned with the stance of the *romancier*. In effect, Erec's attitude to Enide and her language at this point in the narrative could be seen to reinforce Gaunt's reading of gender in romance, but it also shares certain attributes with the dynamics of gender in the epic genre ("monologic masculinity"), as we have seen that his character is more closely associated in the first half of the romance with the *conte* and *its* treatment of the heroine. To be sure, there is ample misogyny in *Erec et Enide*, but whether it is uniquely attributable to the *romancier* is another question.[169] By reexamining the

[168] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, 114

[169] As an example of Gaunt's "ideal woman," we might think of the depiction of Guenièvre in the beginning of the romance. There her character supports the male order of Arthurian society by offering counsel to Arthur. But there are important differences between her and Enide's relationships to language. Whereas McCracken has suggested that the queen appears as "an exemplary model for women's words in *Erec et Enide*" in that "what women say should not challenge an already established order" ("Silence and the Courtly Wife," 116), I would submit that Guinevere's speech is only exemplary with regard to the hierarchy of gender and the primacy of male language that is propounded throughout the first part of the narrative. On the one hand, the framing of Guinevere's first words, an account of the adventure involving Ydier and the perfidious dwarf, points back to the act of *conter* and the figure of the *conte d'aventure*: "L'aventure lor a contee / Qu'en la forest avoit trovee" (lines 323-24). On the other hand, the temporality of her counsel contrasts markedly with that of Enide's violation of the injunction to silence: whereas

development of Enide's voice and the parallels between her character and the figure of the poet, I have tried to argue that one of the defining features of Chrétien's first romance is the refusal of a straightforward alignment with the hero, a poetic *escondiz* that opens up the possibility of cultivating an alternate form of complicity between author and character.[170] In this connection, Enide often appears as a 'good' reader, especially when compared to Erec, and her inscribed readings of the world within the romance serve not only to license her transgressions of the injunction to silence but also to allow readers from without the text to understand Chrétien's relatively transgressive poetics in *Erec et Enide*.[171] Nowhere does the conflict between these two competing attitudes towards the heroine play out more significantly than in the couple's third adventure at the heart of the romance.

II.3 The Midpoint in Erec et Enide

The placement of the third adventure in the middle of the text argues for its importance with regard to our understanding of the romance. In fact, I would submit that this is the first example in Chrétien's romances of a midpoint, a key feature of the structure of *Erec et Enide* that has garnered little attention in the past.[172] Karl Uitti has discussed the function of the midpoint in Chrétien's romances as a "strategic locus" containing details or actions that are essential to the structure and interpretation of the text as a whole.[173] He cites the examples of *Yvain*, the *Charrette*, and *Cligès* but does not comment on the composition of *Erec et Enide*. And Michelle A. Freeman has gone as far as to claim that "With *Erec et Enide*, which seems to be arranged in three parts, or with the unfinished *Perceval*, it is difficult to settle on a given scene as a midpoint."[174] A part of the difficulty in locating a midpoint in *Erec et Enide* might stem from the length of the episode, which starts around line 3117 and continues all the way through line 3658 of 6950 in Fritz's edition. There is, however, one study published prior to the aforementioned work on the midpoint in Chrétien's romances that goes some way toward pinpointing a central moment in the text. Namely, it was Lacy who observed that Erec and Enide's interactions with count Galoain, or what he refers to as "the mock love test," "occur(s) almost exactly in the middle of their quest."[175] But what is perhaps most significant about the midpoint is that it does not represent an entirely unique development in the narrative. Rather, it is

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Enide speaks before Erec in each of their adventures, the queen only intervenes once Arthur, Gauvain, and the rest of the barons have tried and failed to come up with a solution to the quarrel over the identity of the most beautiful woman at court (lines 291-341).

[170] Elaborating on a point made by Frappier, Peter Haidu makes the following pertinent observation: "Speaking of style, Jean Frappier has pointed out that most of the preciosity for which *Cligès* has been criticized belongs to the characters rather than Chrétien: the same is true of their ideas and their values" (*Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in* Cligès *and* Perceval [Geneva: Droz, 1968], 104).

[171] For other examples as well as a theoretical elaboration of the notion of the "inscribed reader" of medieval French romance, see Krueger, *Women Readers*, 28-30.

[172] While I specify that this is the first example of a midpoint in the romances, it will be remembered that the first instance, overall, comes in Chrétien's one surviving translation, the *Philomena*, which reveals the identity of the translator in line 738 of 1474; see Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans; suivis des Chansons avec, en appendice, Philomena*, dir. Michel Zink (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994): 1225-67.

[173] Karl Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*," in Kelly, *Symposium*: 182-231, esp. 223 (author's emphasis). See also 207-208 on the midpoint and Chapter 3 (143).

[174] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 109.

[175] Lacy, *Craft*, 77.

distinctive because of the extent of its representation of a larger dynamic in the narrative.[176] That is to say, it calls attention to a change in the relationship between Erec and Enide and its implications for the organization and interpretation of the romance precisely in the way that it builds on the preceding action and, as we shall see below, anticipates the action of the second half of the romance.

The setting of the third adventure at Galoain's castle is not uninteresting in this regard. As James R. Simpson has rightly pointed out, "What is notable about Galoain's court is the absence of women,"[177] a point that is underscored through a partial contrast between the count's *chastel* and Arthur's court. Whereas the hunt for the white stag had culminated in a beauty contest among women (lines 1776-1840), here Erec's arrival is more disruptive than that of Enide because the count is threatened by an anonymous squire's insistence that Erec is the most handsome man he has ever seen (line 3223). As an exclusively masculine space, however, Galoain's court is also unexceptional. It evokes the politics of gender and language characteristic of the tournament field, the marriage of Erec and Enide, and the first two adventures in the forest, and in fact a part of Chrétien's point in transitioning more or less directly from scenes of wilderness to action that is set in the ostensibly civilized world of courtly life is to suggest a set of fundamental similarities between the two spaces and the types of (male) actors who populate them. Though he appears to distinguish himself from the five knights from the second adventure by requesting Erec's permission to speak to Enide (lines 3290-99), count Galoain likewise plots to take her from Erec. Once again, the hero remains unaware of the potential threat to his life and marriage ("Erec ne fu mie jalous, / Qu'il n'i pensa ne mal ne boise" [lines 3300-301]), confidently granting the request (3302-305). By contrast, Enide learns of the count's intentions as soon as he addresses her:

> Haÿ! fait li cuens, mout me poise
> Quant vos alez a tel vitance,
> Grant duel en ai et grant pesance.
> Mais se croire me volïez,
> Honor et prou i avrïez
> Et mout granz biens vos en venroit.
> A vostre beauté convenroit
> Granz honors et grant seignorie.
> Je feroie de vos m'amie,
> Se vos plesoit et bel vos iere;
> Vos serïez m'amie chiere
> Et dame de tote ma terre.
> Quant je d'amor vos doing requerre,
> Ne m'en devez pas escondire.
> Bien sai et voi que vostre sire
> Ne vos aimme ne ne vos prise. (Lines 3312-27)

In theory, Galoain's proposal, which is voiced in the conditional, presents Enide with a choice: if it pleased her, he would make her his wife, or she could opt to remain with Erec. And yet, other aspects of the count's language betray a different message, and one whose interest lies

[176] For a similar contention about the function of the midpoint in *Cligès*, see Freeman, "*Cligès*," 115.
[177] Simpson, *Troubling Arthurian Histories*, 316-17.

partly in its similarity to the details of the arrangement of Enide's current marriage. He begins by lamenting the conditions, or "viltance," in which Enide has been made to travel; similarly, Erec's first question for the vavassor has to do his daughter's 'vile' clothing: "Dites moi, beax ostes, fait il, / De tant povre robe [et] si vil / Por qu'est vostre fille atornee, / Qui tant par est bele et sennee?" (lines 505-508).[178] More importantly, Galaoin's eventual refusal to take "no" as an answer—"Ne m'en devez pas escondire"—replays the elision of female consent in the context of Erec's conversation with Enide's father, suggesting an additional and more disparaging parallel between his behavior toward his wife and that of the count.[179] The count's words thus seem to carry some interpretative weight despite the hyperbolic nature of his closing accusation: that Erec neither loves nor values Enide.

However, the two scenes are not analogous in all respects, for in this instance Enide does not silently accept Galoain's proposal but instead firmly rejects the 'offer,' criticizing him for misconduct: "Trop avez fait grant mesprison, / Que tel chose m'avez requise: / Je nou feroie en nule guise" (lines 3338-40). In keeping with the structure of the foregoing adventures, the count now threatens to have Erec killed if Enide does not agree to leave him:

> Bien est voirs que fame s'orguille,
> Quant on plus la prie et losenge;
> Mais qui la honist et laidenge,
> Cil la trueve meillor sovent.
> Certes, je vos met en covent:
> Se vos ma volenté ne faites,
> Ja i avra espees traites.
> Ocire ferai orendroit,
> Ou soit a tort ou soit a droit,
> Vostre seignor devant voz iauz. (Lines 3346-55)

Famously, Enide responds that she was only testing the count's love for her, a claim that the narrator immediately identifies as a lie:

> "Ne vos ai rien dit par orguil,
> Mais por savoir et esprover
> Se je porroie en vos trover
> Que vos m'amessiez de bon cuer.
> Mais je ne voudroie a nul fuer
> Qu'eüssiez tel traïson faite.
> Mes sire vers vos ne se gaite:
> Se vos ensi l'oceïez,
> Trop grant mesprison ferïez,
> Et je en seroie blasmee.
> Tuit diroient par la contree
> Que ce seroit fait par mon los.

[178] Here the rhyme on "atornee" and "senee" also constitutes an early echo between Enide's character and the discourse of learning and knowledge in the prologue, namely lines 4-5: "Por ce fait bien qui son estuide / *Atorne a sens*, quel que il l'ait."
[179] On the parallel between Erec and the count, see also Plummer, "*Bien dire* and *bien aprandre*," 386.

Jusqu'au matin aiez repos,
Que mes sire voudra lever;
Adonc le porroiz mieuz grever
Sanz blasme avoir et sanz reproche."
El pense cuer que ne dit boche. (Lines 3364-80)

Given the emphasis placed here on the related issues of pride, the circulation of language, and reproach, it is hard to believe that this passage is not intended in part to echo with the rumor of Erec's *recreantise* and the scenes that follow in which Enide criticizes herself for her excessive, or prideful, language. As Lacy has pointed out, "When Enide offends Erec by speaking of his recreance, she admits her guilt and acknowledges that she was acting out of pride" (see also lines 2585-606, 3104-14).[180] Furthermore, for Lacy the theme of "orguil" serves to relate Enide's self-reproaches to Galoain's misogynistic remarks: "It is notable that in the episode of the mock love test he accuses her of the very sin which, by her own admission, she had earlier committed."[181] But what are the implications of this comparison for the interpretation of Enide's character with respect to Galoain's murderous misogyny? Are we to believe that his association of "fame" and "orguil" reflects the view of romance and romancer in *Erec et Enide*, or that, as Lacy goes on to argue, the mock love test functions as a step in "Enide's expiation"?[182]

To the contrary, we have already observed the manner in which Chrétien's text subtly endorses the heroine's speech both in the case of her first *parole* and throughout the adventures so far. In my view, what this pattern of alignment would instead suggest about the instances in which Enide so harshly reprimands herself is a paradoxical crack in the complicity between Chrétien and Enide, whereby the vocabulary of shame, pride, and "outrage" or excessive language (esp. lines 2604, 3113) that she comes to attach to her own tongue is in fact more closely associated with the instances in which she expresses regret at having spoken than it is with her choice to speak in the first place, a different form of excess from that of which she is accused by Galoain and accuses herself. In other words, it is the excessive nature of the accusation itself that is brought out by the count's misogynistic response. The same terminology ("orguil" etc.) is notably never used by the narrator to describe Enide's language, and it is worth noting that Chrétien's narrator is not, generally speaking, in the habit of holding back when it comes to commenting on the way in which the other characters behave in words and in deeds, with the notable exception of Erec and the question of his motivation. What Lacy refers to as Enide's "admission" might thus be better termed an interpretation, and it is remarkable in this regard that the sole example of an explicit disagreement between Enide and the narrator, and thus the only instance in which Enide's status as a reader is seriously questioned, comes with his prospection of the negative stance that she will take on the first words that she speaks in the romance (*supra*).

As with the exclusive masculinity of Galoain's court, the midpoint is tellingly unexceptional in the dialogue that it stages between Enide's character and Chrétien's narrator, whose specification regarding Enide's intentions in falsely granting the count's request is also apologetic. Rather, what distinguishes this scene from prior episodes is the manner in which the text calls attention to the importance of the threat to Erec's life by repeating it several times over

[180] Lacy, *Craft*, 77.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., 76.

the course of the passage, as well as the precise vocabulary with which the narrator defends the necessity of Enide's decision to lie in order to save her husband. The other characters use various words and expressions to designate Erec's future death, such as "ocire" (line 3353), "grever" (3378), "de la teste decoler" (3390), and "desmembrer" (3472). This concatenation of terms pertaining to the death and dismemberment of the knight's body may already be enough to bring to mind the vocabulary of fragmentation and corruption, "depecier et corrompre," from the prologue of the romance. But I would like to retain in particular the narrator's second remark at the midpoint, which comes directly after Galoain swears to give Enide everything that she desires, for it appears to drive this connection home:

> Lors en a cele la foi prise;
> Mais pou l'en est et pou la prise,
> Fors por son seignor delivrer.
> Bien sot par parole enyvrer
> Bricon, quant ele i mist s'entente.
> Mieuz est assez qu'ele li mente,
> Que ses sires fust *depeciez*.
> De lez li s'est li cuens dreciez,
> Si la commande a Deu .c. foiz,
> Mais mout li vaudra po sa foiz
> Que il fïancié li avoit.
> Erec de ce rien ne savoit,
> Qu'il deüssent sa mort plaidier. (Lines 3411-3423; my emphasis)

The narrator's use of the verb *depecier* creates a powerful link between Enide's voice, the perilous situation in which Erec has here unknowingly found himself, and the poet's opening critique of the *jongleurs*' mistreatment of Erec's *conte*, whose eloquence is not limited to the action at the midpoint. It will be remembered that Enide's silence is figured in the first part of the narrative as a form of error in the fragmentary and corrupt version of Erec's story. In the ensuing adventures, by contrast, Enide's rise to prominence as a speaking subject in Chrétien's romance coincides exactly with a series of threats to Erec's life, where her silence is, in each instance, coextensive with the possibility of his death. From my perspective, then, the midpoint is most striking, not because it creates an analogy between the so-called mock love test to which the count is submitted and the trials that Erec may or may not have designed as a test of Enide's love,[183] but because of the way in which it glosses the relationship between figurative (textual) and literal (bodily) fragmentation through the narrator's choice of words to defend Enide's lie: if she did not speak, Erec would be hacked to pieces, *depeciez*. In the same way, it was the suppression of Enide's voice from the *conte d'aventure* that had led to its fragmentation and corruption in the first place.[184] In the midpoint, Chrétien thus provides his readers with the means of understanding the relationship between Erec and Enide not only as the two principal characters or as husband and wife but also as the representatives of two different types of narrative: simply put, one in which Enide remains silent and another in which she speaks. These

[183] This is at the center of Lacy's argument about the importance of the episode (*Craft*, 76-78).
[184] In Old French, the verb *corrompre* could also apply to the violation of a contract or an act incurring dishonor ("déshonorer, violer [une femme]"; see Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 758). Thus, while *depecier* appears to be the operative term here, we could also see in Galoain's efforts to take Enide away from Erec a form of corruption.

two versions of Enide's character are furthermore associated with the oral performers responsible for the violence done to Erec's story and with Chrétien's work as the author of a new, improved, and relatively unified romance, and as such I would suggest that the interactions between them stand to illuminate both the error in the source and, finally, the nature of Chrétien's conception of narrative structure in *Erec et Enide*.[185]

Along similar lines, Uitti has argued that the midpoint "usually bears on the protagonist's identity . . . or on the nature of the text."[186] In the case of *Erec et Enide*, the central moment of the text calls our attention at once to a development in both main characters and its implications for the integrity of the narrative. No longer denied the right to speak, Enide uses language to save Enide from Galoain and, in so doing, helps to ensure the unity of the romance as a reaction to the fragmentary nature of the *conte*. The unity of the first verse, the marriage, and tournament, we saw, was based on an ideal of masculine speech and community founded upon the marginalization of Enide's character. That the midpoint should feature yet another count, or *conte*, is significant in the light of the comital overtones of the oral account of Erec's exploits, not to mention the way in which the text relates the squire's message to Erec concerning the count's imminent arrival: "Devant corrut Erec conter / Que li cuens veoir le venoit" (lines 3258-59). In its careful configuration of gender, language, and chivalry, the midpoint is a living museum of many of the central problematics set in place from the prologue onward, and the secondary character of the count, resembling as he does both Erec's earlier guise and the audience of the *conte d'aventure*, becomes a deep background against which the change in the hero's comportment is brought into focus. In the terms of Iser's analysis of the act of reading, one might otherwise see him (the count) filling the role of a "minus function," signaling "omitted though expected narrative features."[187] Thus, at the same time that Enide's character undergoes an evolution from silence to speech, Erec's attitude to her voice can also be seen to shift. Rather than reproaching her immediately for her violation of the injunction, he identifies in her speech a form of proof: "Or ot Erec que bien se prueve / Vers lui sa fame lealment" (lines 3482-83).[188] The figure of proof represents an additional and, in my view, essential connection or 'juncture' between the midpoint and the prologue, namely the discourse of *prover et savoir*, as well as the fourth adventure, in which Enide rescues Erec from another perfidious count and thereby supplies him with the definitive proof of her love and loyalty (lines 4301-932).[189] In chapter 3, I will attempt to show how, in *Yvain*, Chrétien thoroughly questions the notion of proof through language, which often appears there to be inseparable from human mendacity. In the present context, proof is, rather, given a specifically linguistic valence, and in this key moment it takes the form of a lie, understood here as a form of resistance, dissent, and ingenuity rather than unethical speech. As we saw above, the topos of proof also assumes a metanarrative significance from the prologue onward. How, then, are we to know that Chrétien's compositional strategy moves the story past the fragmentary nature of the *conte*? Chrétien proves it just as Enide

[185] Given the parallels between Galoain and the *jongleurs*, it is worth noting how the covetousness of the eight robber-knights from the first two adventures (e.g., 2935-40) also recalls the performers' purely economic interests.
[186] Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*," 223.
[187] Iser, *The Act of Reading,* 209.
[188] As Lacy, *Craft*, 77 puts it, "Chrétien clearly intended the incident as a turning point in the story."
[189] On the shift in Erec's behavior toward Enide, see also lines 4920-22. Interestingly, if Erec's attitude to Enide's language evolves over the course of the narrative, his own linguistic comportment will continue later to associate him in certain respects with the aesthetics of the *conte*; see my discussion below of the scene in which he acts as his own narrator.

succeeds for the first time in proving herself to Erec through a *parole* that is placed at the precise center of the text as a token of the author's innovations in *Erec et Enide*.

But does this count as *conjointure*? On the one hand, the numerous echos between the midpoint and the rest of the romance are suggestive of something along the lines of a system of overarching junctures in Chrétien's romance, as is the reconciliation of Erec and Enide, which takes place most clearly over the course of the third and fourth adventures.[190] Moreover, the careful placement of the passage at the heart of the romance might point to a contrast between the *conte* and Chrétien's romance as a matter of orality versus writing.[191] Whereas the former was shown to have a fragmentary character, both in terms of its treatment of Enide's character and its tendency toward the parataxis of epic listing and the strophic divisions of lyric poetry, the manner in which the latter is centered around the third adventure would instead suggest a global plan for the work that encodes its own reception as a process of reading, as opposed to listening—a feature of the structure of the romance that might go hand in hand with the materiality of the manuscript book and the reader's ability to perceive or grasp, so to speak, the connection between material, or codicological, and narrative coherence.[192] With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the midpoint of *Erec et Enide* represents an impressively stable aspect of the manuscript tradition, situated in the central folios of all six of the seven complete medieval copies of the poem that I have been able to consult.[193] Whether this be a deliberate effect or not, Enide's curious situation throughout the first half of the romance between silence and speech also seems to index the transitional texture of work from the standpoint of reception, that is, the potential movement from the aurality of the courtly audience mentioned in the prologue to the type of silent or semi-silent private reading—*of writing*—for which I am arguing the poem was designed.[194] But Enide is both an object and a subject of interpretation, and one could advance that the striking emphasis on her powers of perception in the first two adventures creates a contrast between her position as a visual reader, who perceives in each case the "whole" stituation, with that of Erec, whose readings are strictly aural (based on what he hears) and assign meaning based on a partial knowledge of what is happening around him.[195] The possible association between the heroine and the coherence of the romance as a written work is all the more noteworthy given Roberta Krueger's astute analysis of the conventional devalorization of

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[190] On the implications of the fourth adventures for the representation of marriage practices in *Erec et Enide*, see the Chrétien Girls, *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes*, 129.

[191] For an analysis of the written nature of *conjointure* in the case of *Yvain*, see Christine Ferlampin-Acher, "Conter dans le *Chevalier au Lion*: Calogrenant, le *vilain*, Lunete, l'ouvrière de Pesme Aventure, qui est la voix du Maître?," in Amandine Mussou, Anne Paupert et Michelle Szkilnik, dir., *"Chose qui face a escouter": études sur le* Chevalier au lion *de Chrétien de Troyes*, *Actes de la journée d'étude organisée le 9 décembre 2017 par l'Université Paris-Diderot Paris 7 et l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3*: 73-83, online at http://www.univ-paris3.fr/publications-de-la-silc-section-%20francaise--393070.kjsp?RH=1329834238527 (accessed 07.06.2019).

[192] Jeay reads the written quality of Chrétien's narrative into the term *conjointure*, but cites only the prologue (*Le Commerce des mots*, 114). For an excellent discussion of the ability of writing to conjoin the reader and the writer in the context of Richard de Fournival's *Bestiaire d'Amour*, see Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 141-46.

[193] Indicated in parentheses is the full folio range in each manuscript followed by the placement of the middle passage, corresponding, in its entirety, to lines 3117-658 in Fritz's edition: BnF, fr. 794 (fols. 1-27ra, 12vb-14vc), 1450 (140r-158vb, 147vc-49rc), 1376 (95r-144r, 117ra-121ra), 375 (281v-95v, 287vc-88vd), 1420 (1-28v, 13rc-15vb), and 24403 (119-174bisv, 144vb-49rb).

[194] On the evolution of reading in the period, see Busby, *Codex and Context*, esp. I: 20-22. My understanding of how the author envisaged the interpretation of his romance might be compared to what Krueger, following Peter Rabinowitz, has called the "authorial audience" (*Women Readers*, 26).

[195] The injunction to silence, namely line 2766, anticipates the visual aspect of Enide's interpretations.

female speech in Old French verse romance, for instance, *Floire et Blancheflor*, a work that predates our romance by approximately two decades:

> Female speech is no longer an original source but a secondary one, derived from the ultimate authority of the clerk's writing. At the very moment that the narrator begins his own *mise en escrit*, he deflates the power of oral female presence whose world he has infiltrated to assert the primacy of clerical writing, and the transmission of culture between men.[196]

The situation is, I think, appreciably different in *Erec et Enide*. Enide's voice is at first secondary with regard to the words of Erec's companions, but then so is that of Chrétien in regard of the oral source. As I have further contended, it is the orality of the *conte* that is affiliated with the transmission of values among men, while it is *through* Enide's character that Chrétien affirms the superiority of his writing. There are, for that matter, various further articulations between the poet's work as outlined in the prologue and Enide that are worth mentioning briefly here. Thus, for instance, the only two words that are used to describe Chrétien's *conjointure*, "mout bele," are also the first two terms that the narrator employs to characterize the heroine, "qui mout ert bele" (line 398). Here she appears alongside her mother, both of them at work on an "oevre" that the narrator is not able to identify (400); this term could refer to a work of literature in Old French, and the related word "examplaire" that occurs shortly thereafter (419) to a literary model. We are told that Enide is Nature's unreproducible exemplar, but the artistic overtones of the passage are enough to suggest that she is also fundamentally involved in the production of Chrétien's inimitable narrative. Finally, Enide's original clothing, an old white tunic with holes in the elbows where it has been pierced through (*perciez*), is said to conceal the beauty of Nature's work (402-14), which may have recalled, for a twelfth-century audience, both the tattered state of the *conte* from which Chrétien would "extract" a beautiful or skillful narrative and the figure of Nature in Alan of Lille's roughly contemporaneous *De Planctu Naturae*, who wears a tunic that is also torn, or lacking in "conjoining" (*coniunctionis*), where man is represented. (Nature's allegorical status likewise echoes with Chrétien's representation of Enide in terms of a "poor" outer covering and a beautiful inside: "Povre estoit la robe defors, / Mais desoz estoit beax li cors" [lines 409-10].[197]) Enide's voice is therefore valorized in part by its resemblance to the poet's and its affinity with that of the narrator, but this need not imply a total displacement of Krueger's "female presence," or a "profoundly conservative" view of women and literature in *Erec et Enide*, for the reverse is also true: that by carving out a space in which Enide may speak, the romance lays claim to a poetic wholeness and originality that is not above but inseparable from her character. At the very least, Chrétien's response to the politics and aesthetics of the *contes* is indicative of a disruptive masculinity that

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[196] Krueger, *Women Readers*, 9.

[197] Alan of Lille, *De Planctu Naturae*, in id., *Literary Works*, ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 8.23. Kelly, in *Art*, 15-31, cites Alan's usage of *iunctura* in his chapter on *conjointure*, but does not mention this passage or its relevance to *Erec et Enide*. Claude Luttrell, in *The Creation of the First Arthurian Romance: A Quest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), esp. 17-19, points out the similarity between Nature's tunic and Enide's garment (the *chainse*), as well as other intertextual resonances in the portrait of Chrétien's heroine. He does not, however, analyze the significance of the tears in both robes in connection with Chrétien's discussion of narrative structure, or the way in which the allusion to Alan's text and, in particular, Nature's critique of man therein might bring out the gendered valence of *conjointure* in *Erec et Enide*.

operates to undo the faults in the story of Erec, the son of Lac, even if it cannot, in the end, fully escape the implications of its own literary filiation.

On the other hand, my reluctance to refer to the unity of Chrétien's first romance simply in terms of *conjointure* stems from the considerable difficulty in treating as separate the author's compositional strategy and its apparent opposite—the related topoi of fragmentation and corruption that are introduced in the prologue. Indeed, I hope to have demonstrated here that there is no understanding the concept of narrative unity in *Erec et Enide* without a thorough investigation of the text's origins in the *conte* of the poet's less talented peers and the meaning of the acts of "depecier et corrompre" that are attributed to them. In other words, these literary vices are gradually transformed into narrative devices within the differential epistemological framework of Chrétien's poetic thought. It is in part for this reason, I would submit, that the center of the text does not revolve around *conjunture per se*, but rather the negated prospect of further fragmentation, which the text alludes to through use of the verb *depecier*. This scene, which gestures back to the paradoxical assimilation of the *conte* into Chrétien's romance as a necessary point of contrast to the establishment of the heroine's verbal subjectivity, therefore also implicates the poet in a new splintering of the narrative, an irony suggestive of the ultimately "conjoined" nature of unity and disunity, *conjunture*, *depecier*, and *corrompre* themselves in *Erec et Enide*.[198] In proceeding to the final section of this chapter, I would like to elaborate upon the implications of Chrétien's complex engagement with his contemporaries and predecessors, including a work whose unspoken influence will help to elucidate the manner in which the author ultimately overcomes the error in the source precisely by making it his own.

III. Errors, Lies, and Intention: Abelard, Chrétien, and the Dialectic of Erec et Enide

The text to which I am alluding here is Pierre Abelard's *Sic et Non*, a renowned manual of dialectical philosophy that originated earlier in the twelfth century (c.1122-42) but was no doubt still in circulation at the time that Chrétien began his career as a poet. In a pioneering 1977 article entitled "The Dialectic of *Yvain*," Hunt argued for a connection between Chrétien's *Chevalier au Lion* and Abelard's *Sic et Non*, "in which," as he put it, "dialectic is presented as the most positive aid to understanding and interpretation, incorporating as it does *prima sapientiae clavis . . . assidua scilicet seu frequens interrogatio*."[199] As a form of non-oppositional logic that allows for the resolution of contradictions or "controversies," the dialectic of *Sic et Non* has an indisputable place in criticism on *Yvain*, where the distinctions between knight and narrator, man and animal, past and present, love and hate, etc. are frequently called into question,

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[198] For a different reading of the relationship between "conjointure" and "depecier et corrompre," see, for example, Kelly, "La Forme et le sens de la quête dans *Erec et Enide*," *Romania* 92 (1971): 326-58, esp. 327 and Freeman, *The Poetics of* Translatio Studii *and* Conjointure*: Chrétien de Troyes's* Cligès (Lexington: French Forum, 1979), 67, who accept at face value the opposition of the two.

[199] Hunt, "The Dialectic of *Yvain*," *The Modern Language Review* 72.2 (1977): 285-99, 285. While this article represents the first in-depth analysis of dialectics in Chrétien de Troyes, Hunt does not acknowledge the scholarship of Jean Frappier, who first pointed out the possibility that the narrator's answer to his own question as to whether or not Yvain and Gauvain still love each other is a translation of the title of Abelard's work: "'oïl,' vous respont, et 'nenil'" (line 5998 of *Yvain*); Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* (Paris: SEDES, 1969), 195. In what follows, I cite Abelard's text from Peter Abailard, Sic et Non*: A Critical Edition*, ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976-77). For English translations, I have consulted *Yes and No: The Complete English Translation of Peter Abelard's* Sic et Non, trans. Priscilla Throop, 2nd edition (Charlotte, VT: MedievalMS, 2008). For further discussion of *Sic et Non*, see the Introduction (11-13).

a point to which I shall return at some length in the third chapter. As a key to the acquisition of knowledge, *sapientia* or *savoir*, it is in theory equally if not more directly relevant to the interpretation of *Erec et Enide*. However, while Hunt's brief reading of the dialectic of "*teisir* / *dire*, *celer* / *aprandre*" has made some headway in this regard, he makes no mention of the details of Abelard's text as they might relate to the larger, structural opposition of Erec and Enide or the distinction between the *jongleurs*' errors and Chrétien's *conjunture* that they would seem to embody. Is this the story of Erec, or not? I began with this seemingly simple question in my title and would like to propose finally that the answer is both "yes" and "no." Its ambiguity between the two allows one to see what the shifting subject matter of the romance implies not only for Enide but also Erec, as well as the kind of thinking about poetry and meaning that ultimately emerges from the interactions between them.

This type of question, or *quaestio*, and answer structures Abelard's text, which contains up to one hundred and fifty-eight sections depending on the manuscript. Each of them exposes at least two disagreeing voices from among the church fathers on a given topic of debate, such as the singularity of God: "Quod non sit Deus singularis et contra" (126 [*Quaestio* V]). All of the topics covered are theological in nature, concerning points of biblical hermeneutics and Christian doctrine. Such coverage, however, is by and large limited to a carefully structured pool of conflicting citations coming from outside sources. Hence Jan Ziolkowski calls *Sic et non* "a kind of sourcebook," summarizing,

> Paradoxically, Abelard's *Sic et non* embeds none of its author's own writings or views, with the striking exception of the Prologue, where he educes principles to guide readers in evaluating authorities and in determining which to prefer in cases of such discrepancies.[200]

If, then, in subject matter there is little in common between Abelard and Chrétien, who, as Hunt's work would suggest, reoriented twelfth-century dialectics towards the courtly milieu, then we might look to the Prologue as a point of departure for dealing with the discrepancies in the latter's text, which would similarly appear to lack a resolution that is not in large part a function of the reader's response.

Abelard makes the point a bit more explicitly than Chrétien. As he concludes his delineation of the principles of dialectical reading, the teacher-author states that it is up to the audience, or the "diligent reader" (*diligens lector* [96]), to solve the controversies ahead, clarifying shortly thereafter the general purchase of the method on the quest for truth: "Dubitando quippe ad inquisitionem venimus; inquirendo veritatem percipimus" (103)—"by doubting we arrive at questioning; in questioning we perceive the truth" (25). As I stated at the outset, Chrétien also ascribes a didactic value to his romance in the prologue of *Erec et Enide* (lines 9-12) in direct connection with the opposition of the "conte d'aventure" and his own "conjunture," as well as the proof and knowledge that *can be* derived from the romance (13-17). For the wisdom that is conveyed by the romance is not, in fact, presented as simple data for the reader's taking, but as the result of the process of interpreting the text: a composition through which one may prove and know, "par qu'em puet prover et savoir," the truth—that it is wise to share one's knowledge. Here the text implicitly formulates a question, which might read something like "Should one share one's wisdom or not?," guiding its audience towards the

[200] *Letters of Peter Abelard, Beyond the Personal*, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), xxxv.

"right" answer while simultaneously displacing the burden of proof from the author to his readers and confronting them, in the next place, with contradictory statements on the issue at hand. In other words, Chrétien transforms the very object of Abelard's dialectic, the type of *sapientia* that can be acquired through doubting and questioning, into the topic of a new *quaestio* that is posed over the course of the couple's adventures in the middle of the romance. It also seems significant in this regard that *Erec et Enide* should feature two main characters, Erec *and* Enide, who together allow for the voicing of answers for and against, "yes" and "no." In each of their adventures, the question that arises is whether or not Enide should speak to warn Erec and thereby share her knowledge with her husband. Erec's initial answer, a resounding "no," comes both before Enide speaks, in the form of the injunction to silence, and after, when he reproaches her disobedience. Enide's speech in violation of the injunction to silence might be taken both as the "yes" to Erec's "no" and as a representation within the romance of the kind of skeptical attention Abelard aims to cultivate in his readers. Indeed, it is her apprehension and interpretations of the actions around her that lead the heroine to repeatedly interrogate and transgress Erec's injunction, a process which often includes one or more actual questions as well as an answer: "Dex! fait ele, que porrai dire?" (line 2829); "Dex! serai je donc si coharde / Que dire ne li oserai? / Ja tant coharde ne serai, / Je li dirai, nou leirai pas" (2836-39); "Et Dex, comment li dirai gié? / Il m'ocira. Assez m'ocie! / Ne lairai que je ne li die" (2976-78).

The precise principles with which Abelard provides his reader reveal further parallels between the act of interpretation as envisaged in *Sic et non* and in *Erec et Enide*, which in turn help to clarify the relevance of the conflict between Enide and Erec to the confrontation of literary voices that is at the center of Chrétien's romance. The philosopher gives his readers a range of strategies for reconciling the opposing responses that make up the body of the work (esp. 89-97), from considerations of semantics (polysemy and the role of context in the determination of meaning) to comparisons of the various writers in terms of their relative authority (a last resort). Of greatest concern for Abelard, however, based on the structure of the Prologue, is the prevalence of error, stemming from textual transmission in particular, as a source of contradiction in the writings of the Church Fathers. As with Chrétien's claim that the source of his romance has been "corrupted," the operative terminology in Abelard's discussion of error proves to be centered around an idea of textual corruption. For Abelard, the reader must consider the possibility that one of the texts in question has been corrupted, for instance, through the inscription of a false title or a deficiency in the writing itself:

> Illud quoque diligenter attendi convenit ne, dum aliqua nobis ex dictis sanctorum obiciuntur tamquam sint opposita vel a veritate aliena, falsa tituli inscriptione vel scripturae ipsius *corruptione* fallamur (91; my emphasis).

This goes for apocryphal texts whose titles include saints' names so as to have authority, and for certain parts of the holy testaments in which the writers have committed an error:

> Pleraque enim apocrypha ex sanctorum nominibus, ut auctoritatem haberent, intitulata sunt; et nonnulla in ipsis etiam divinorum testamentorum scriptis scriptorum vitio *corrupta* sunt (ibid.; my emphasis).

Sometimes, Abelard continues, errors due to the ignorance of scribes could then be reproduced in the writings of later fathers, as with certain passages of the Gospels:

> Quid itaque mirum, si in evangeliis quoque nonnulla per ignorantiam scriptorum *corrupta* fuerint, ita et in scriptis posteriorum patrum, qui longe minoris sunt auctoritatis, nonnunquam eveniat? (92; my emphasis)

Abelard concludes this section of the discussion by urging his readers to consider such faults of transmission as a key factor in determining when and how a text has come to be removed from the truth:

> Si itaque aliquid a veritate absonum in scriptis sanctorum forte videatur, pium est et humilitati congruum atque caritate debitum, quae *omnia credit, omia sperat, omnia sustinet* nec facile vitia eorum quos amplectitur suspicatur, ut aut eum scripturae locum non fideliter interpretatum aut *corruptum* esse credamus, aut nos eum non intelligere profiteamur (ibid.; second emphasis mine).

Above I pointed out that the terms that Chrétien uses, *depecier et corrompre*, to designate the errors in the *conte* from which he drew his own narrative in *Erec et Enide* are unprecedented in their metafictional acceptation. *Depecier* originated in Old French, where it was originally and most often employed to describe the fragmentation of an object, such as Roland's lance, or a wound inflicted upon a person.[201] In the context of the prologue, the verb also harkens back its own origins in the word *piece*, which could refer to monetary currency, and might be taken as a subtle expression of the connection that is suggested in lines 21-22 between the form of the *jongleurs*' story and their financial motives.[202] At all events, Chrétien's innovation in this instance was to apply the notion of hacking something to pieces to the form of a fictional narrative. While immediately linked to *depecier* in meaning, *corrompre*, it should be noted, is etymologically different because it had its lexical and semantic equivalent in medieval Latin, and it seems highly unlikely, from the standpoint of the yes-and-no dynamic underlying the dispute over language between Erec and Enide, that the resonance between Abelard's *corrupta*, *corruptum*, and *corruptione* and Chrétien's *corrompre* is mere coincidence. I would contend, rather, that the prologue of *Erec et Enide* deploys a similar notion of error in connection with the quest for knowledge as a means for the reader to better understand the collocation within the romance of two opposing depictions of Enide's character, confined to silence in the first place and then defined in large part by her ability and choice to speak the truth, a system of poetic proof that transposes Abelard's discussion of the keys to wisdom into a courtly-chivalric context. More than this, the dialectical structure of the romance elucidates the connection between Erec, Enide, and their divergent views on language and silence and the conflict between the oral performers and the author of the poem, who in this reading would replace the patristic citations of Abelard's text as a pair of conflicting but not contradictory voices. The metaphorics of error, gender, and orality throughout the opening segment of the romance, which resurface in the following adventures, are all the more significant in this respect as a hermeneutic aid to guide the audience towards a *narrative* reconciliation in much the same way that Erec eventually recognizes the value of Enide's voice after having disdained it.

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[201] *Roland*, line 837; Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 888.

[202] Chrétien was undoubtedly aware of the etymology of *depecier*, as can be observed in the rhyme on "depieche" and "pieche" in the middle of *Yvain* (lines 3381-82).

As an author in his own right, however, Chrétien chooses not to remain on the fringe of the narrative, unlike Abelard. His engagement with the original *conte* is not limited to a neutral evaluation of error but gives rise to a process of rewriting that functions at once to undercut the authority of the *jongleurs* and to cultivate his own authority under the sign of a *mout bele conjunture*. What this difference between the two thinkers suggests, despite their similarities, is that Chrétien and Abelard themselves disagreed on the precise nature of textual corruption. A final examination of both texts will allow us to see how Chrétien reworks the argument of Abelard's dialectic in order to reconcile 'joining' and corruption without sacrificing his critique of the *conte* and those responsible for corrupting it.

With regard to the alternating answers that appear in each part of *Sic et non*, John Marenbon has written, "The purpose of this arrangement is not to undermine authority . . . but to order the material which he wishes to use in his theological investigations."[203] In fact, it seems to me that one of Abelard's principal aims is to defend and preserve established authority, which he does through various means, as we have begun to observe, in his lesson on error: by distinguishing between writers and scribes; by asking readers to have faith in certain cases that a passage has been corrupted or unfaithfully interpreted or that they simply do not understand it, rather than passing a rash judgment on the saints; and, finally, by distinguishing throughout the Prologue between error and a neighboring yet different form of menace to the truth: lying. Abelard dwells on the distinction between error and lies, noting first of all that erroneous writing should not be confused with a will to conceal the truth: "Sed nec tamquam mendacii reos argui sanctos convenit, si nonnulla quandoque aliter quam se rei veritas habeat arbitrantes, non per duplicitatem sed per ignorantiam dicant" (97). Lying is distinct from error, that is, on the plane of intention. Here Abelard cites Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, *Against Lying*, and the *Enchiridion*, including the following passage from this last text:

> "Quantum enim ad animum eius attinet, quia non quod sentit hoc dicit, non verum dicit, quamvis verum inveniatur esse quod dicit; nec ullo modo liber est a mendacio qui ore nesciens verum loquitur, sciens autem voluntate mentitur." Item: "Omnis qui mentitur contra id quod animo sentit loquitur voluntate fallendi" (98-99).

Though equidistant from the truth, lying and error, Abelard summarizes in his own words, may be differentiated on the basis of the malice that is intrinsic to the former: "Aliud itaque est mentiri, aliud est errare loquentem et a veritate in verbis per errorem non per malitiam recedere" (99).

Turning back to *Erec et Enide*, we might notice that Chrétien's conception of lying is at once uncannily similar and diametrically opposed to that of Abelard. Thus, Enide's lie to count Galoain at the midpoint is glossed by the narrator in terms that nearly seem to translate the first part of Augustine's definition of a lie as quoted above—"El pense cuer que ne dit boche" (3380). However, this is not a condemnation of the speaker's malicious intention but rather the beginning of the narrator's *defense* of Enide's decision to lie, which he will pick back up again in line 3414. In *Erec et Enide*, it is instead the errors present in the source that are criticized with varying degrees of overtness from the prologue onward, such as at the midpoint, where Enide's lie is contrasted with the imagery of fragmentation, namely the act of *depecier* attributed to Galoain as it had been ealier to the *jongleurs*. The oral storytellers are therefore also notable for

[203] John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62.

the lack of intentionality that is implicitly associated with their work. In addition to the concept of "corrompre," the word "suelent," a form of the verb *solere* (or *soloir*), is used to describe their actions in line 21 and denotes a habitual, customary, or even perfunctory behavior that would only seem to be "intentioned" from the perspective of the *jongleurs*' desire to make a living. Here a distinction is suggested between financial and artistic motivations by the rhyme on "suelent" and "vuelent" at the rhyme (lines 21-22).[204] In the *Couronnement de Louis*, a *chanson de geste* that likely dates from the first half of the twelfth century, one finds a similar indictment of the slavish quality of the *joglere*'s work: "Vilains joglere ne sai por quei se vant / Nul mot en die tresque on li comant" (lines 4-5).[205] Unlike in Abelard, however, the uncritical nature of the *jongleurs*' performance here does not appear to excuse their errors, but only feeds into the contrast between them and Enide, whose intentional alteration of the truth saves Erec's life. In their ignorance, the oral performers whom Chrétien critiques do not come across as figures of authority in their own right, but they are more reminiscent of the scribes mentioned by Abelard. In this connection, one might compare their stories once again to Galoain's attempt to silence Enide and murder Erec, for it not until Enide dupes him, warns Erec, and the couple successfully flees that the count, who has lost sight of the difference between right and wrong ("Ou soit a tort ou soit a droit" [line 3354]), will realize his wrongdoing in a lengthy admission of guilt (lines 3624-52)—or, indeed, to Erec's *recreantise*, as the knight remains unaware of the problem with his idleness until it is pointed out to him and he concedes that Enide and those of his companions who have criticized him are in the right (2572-73).

Significantly, then, Chrétien's reflection on the distinction between lying and error as it concerns intention is not isolated at the midpoint. The poet resumes and elaborates upon it in another passage towards the end of the romance whose analysis I have expressly put off until now. The moment I am referring to is one of the rare instances in *Erec et Enide* in which the narrator comments explicitly on the form of the narrative, although to date it has not so much assisted as thrown off interpreters in this area of the critical commentary. Following the episode of the Joie de la Cour, Erec and Enide return to King Arthur's court, where the king commissions a full account of Erec's adventures. At this point the narrator does not cite the knight directly:

> Quant apaisiez fu li murmures,
> Erec encommence son conte.
> Ses aventures lor reconte,
> Que nule n'en i entroblie.
> Cuidiez vos or que je vos die
> Quex acoisons le fist movoir?
> Naie; que bien savez le voir
> Et de ce et de l'autre chose,

[204] Indeed, the same verb appears in Arthur's justification of the custom of the white stag as pure tradition, a practice that his ancestors upheld and so must he: "Ne je ne vuil pas que remaigne / La costume ne li usages / Que suet maintenir mes lignages / . . . / L'usage Pendragon, mon pere, / Qui fu droiz rois et emperere, / Doi je garder et maintenir, / Que qu[e] il m'en doie avenir" (lines 1800-802, 1807-10). For a discussion of certain common faults of oral transmission, see Jean Rychner, *Contribution à l'étude des fabliau; variantes, remaniements, dégradations. I: Observations* (Neuchâtel: Faculté des lettres, 1960), esp. 99-100.

[205] *Le Couronnement de Louis*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1920). According to Kay, "Who Was Chrétien de Troyes?," *Arthurian Literature* 15 (1997), 1–35, "non-noble troubadours" were subject to similar scorn: "They were not 'writers' as such; indeed contempt for 'joglars', who make their living by composing and performing, is a standard topos of their poetry" (7).

Si con je la vos ai esclose.
Li reconters me seroit griés,
Car li contes n'est mie briés. (Lines 6466-76)

This passage and, in particular, the narrator's insistence that he has already exposed the "true" reason ("le voir") for Erec's decision to set off on a series of adventures with Enide may seem shocking—not because he has so far in the story delayed sharing this apparently crucial detail with the audience, but rather because he warrants that to do so would be to repeat himself unnecessarily. Many scholars have taken the narrator at his word, seeking out in the foregoing passages of the romance the key to explaining Erec's motivation: perhaps, as has most often been argued, Erec intends to test Enide's love for him.[206] In effect, Erec will state at one point that he has tested her in every way: ". . . Ma douce suer, / Bien vos ai dou tot essaïe. / . . . / Et je resui certains et fis / Que vos m'amez parfaitement" (lines 4914-15, -18-19). However, to conclude that one of the functions, or effects, of the adventures was to convince Erec of Enide's love is appreciably different from the question of the knight's motivation, that is, the reason or "acoisons" for their departing from Carrant in the first place, which is never specified in these terms—or any others.[207] William Woods for example has remarked that Erec's actions following the scene in the bedchamber are "almost inexplicable" insofar as "he offers no explanation or excuse but says simply that he cannot act otherwise," while Lacy has described Erec's motivation as being deliberately obscured so as to stress the importance of Enide's "willingness to obey his commands without understanding the precise reasons for them."[208] The latter argument is difficult to follow given that Enide never obeys Erec's commands, but Woods can be seen to take the first step towards a simpler and more compelling solution to the so-called "problem" of Erec's motivation, which the critic does not, however, pursue to a conclusion.

What I believe has been missing from these assessments of Erec's behavior is the context of Chrétien's engagement with Abelard as well as the depiction of Enide's well-meaning mendacity at the midpoint. Just as the effect of the couple's adventures does not imply any particular motivation on Erec's part, an error and a lie, by Abelard's account, can be similar or equivalent in effect while differing precisely as a matter of intention or a lack thereof. Moreover, the *quaestio* form can easily be read into the passage pertaining to the narrator's comportment. Will he specify the true reason that motivated Erec? "No," he responds in line 6472, but that is because, he claims, he has already told us what it is ("yes"). In other words, it would not be wholly accurate to say that the narrator has obscured Erec's reasoning in ordering Enide to accompany him on his adventures because, in fact, he has omitted this detail altogether. Indeed, I would argue that the narrator is quite simply lying. Not only would this be in line with the

[206] Lacy, "Narrative Point of View," 355, provides a concise summary of some of the various published interpretations of Erec's motivation.
[207] *Cf.* Sarah Kay, "Commemoration, Memory and the Role of the Past in Chrétien de Troyes: Retrospection and Meaning in 'Erec et Enide', 'Yvain' and 'Perceval'," *Reading Medieval Studies* 17 (1991): 31-50, who argues that "Erec's story on his return is the reason for his departure; the act of commemoration, by directing attention back over the past, can alone endow it with meaning" (37).
[208] William S. Woods, "The Plot Structure in Four Romances of Chrestien de Troyes," *Studies in Philology* 50.1 (1953): 1-15 (8); Lacy, "Narrative Point of View," 360. Woods also poses a pertinent question concerning the possibility that the adventures function as a love test for Enide. While I have referred here to the "four" adventures that Erec and Enide go through because of their similarity in structure and tight succession, it is worth noting that they do not cease their journeying after the fourth adventure. Woods therefore asks, "If the purpose of the adventures is to test her love as Erec says later on . . . why can they not stop here since he acknowledges that he is sure of her love?" ("Plot Structure," 8).

pattern of complicity between Enide and the narrator, especially his earlier apology of lying, but it would also help to explain why the issue of Erec's motivation so appealed to Chrétien in responding to the *jongleurs* who had corrupted the story of Erec and Enide. Erec's lack of motivation puts him on a par with them as far as the absence of intention is concerned, while setting Chrétien's intentional deception apart as a mark of his skill and awareness as an author.[209] This point is further brought out by the figure of errantry in Chrétien's romance. As the narrator says before the adventures begin, Erec does not know where he and Enide are going (lines 2762-63). His actions are, in a very real sense, aimless at this point, and they might resonate in this way with Abelard's use of another term, *errare* (*supra*), which could refer to textual error or, as in the present context, to physical wandering. More to the point, Erec's error and errantry are related in this passage to the very type of discursive defects that characterize the *conte d'aventure* in the first portion of the romance. Here the narrator continues his account of Erec's inscribed *conte*:

> Qui le voudroit recommencier
> Et les paroles renuncier,
> Si con il le conta et dist
> Des trois chevaliers qu'il conquist,
> Et puis des cinq, et puis dou conte
> Qui li vost faire si grant honte,
> Et puis des deus jeanz après.
> Totes en ordre, pres a pres,
> Ses aventures lor conta
> Jusque la ou il afronta
> Le conte Oringle de Limors. (Lines 6477-87)

Both in its enumerative character (e.g., "et puis . . . et puis") and its failure to mention Enide's role in the adventures, Erec's *conte* commits a familiar sort of error, and one that functions in this case to highlight its difference from the author's depiction of the heroine, as well as the evolution in Chrétien's treatment of Erec. In this crucial moment, disguised as a generic rumination on the merits of brevity versus boring repetition, the narrator's lie points up the centrality of Enide's *parole* while at the same time indicating how Chrétien has rewritten the error in his source as an intentional facet of the knight's character. The timing of these changes is telling: the development of Enide's language, which begins in Carrant and continues throughout the adventures, coincides almost perfectly with the text's strategic silence with regard to Erec.

In so challenging the initial opposition of silence and speech, *conjunture*, fragmentation, and corruption, Chrétien brings the yes-and-no logic of Abelard's *Sic et non* to bear on his compositional strategy in *Erec et Enide*, modifying it advisedly so as to acknowledge his own implications in an act of textual mutilation while distancing the finished product of his romance from the errors of his predecessors through an elusive and indeed sometimes even mendacious intentionality. In the end, *Erec et Enide* is the story of Erec *and* it is not. For if, as I have contended in this analysis, one of the principal objectives of Chrétien's first romance was to

[209] It would be interesting to analyze Chrétien's later reference to Macrobius in the light of his valorization of lying. In preparing to describe Erec's robe, the narrator cites Macrobius so as, he states, to avoid accusations of lying (line 6733-35). But it remains unclear to what extent he follows the Latin author—or, rather, it is clear that he does not reproduce any of the details of the commentary; see ed. Fritz, p. 509.

stage the invention of his own voice as a romancer through the recovery of Enide's agency in language, then Erec could not remain the sole object of attention or the only subject of speech. So Erec does not see everything that Enide sees, and so Enide may speak in instances in which he has not already spoken; so, finally, are Enide's intentions in using language to warn and protect her husband made relatively plain where Erec's reasoning is left entirely opaque. This is not to say that Chrétien had already abandoned his commitment to the sort of literary unity that the narrator boasts for him in the prologue, or that he was advocating for the indiscriminate use of language, but rather that his dialectical sensibility made him alive to the paradoxical possibilities of a poetic economy in which words are understood to signify simultaneously in relation to other words, the words of others, and to the silences that they inevitably imply.

In this way, Chrétien's choice to omit Erec's motivation allows for a necessary clarification of Iser's general theory of the structural importance of silence in the literary text. According to this theory, the "blanks" are invariably meant to be filled in:

> They indicate that the different segments of the text *are* to be connected, even though the text itself does not say so. They are the unseen joints of the text, and as they mark off schemata and textual perspectives from one another, they simultaneously trigger *acts* of ideation on the reader's part. Consequently, when the schemata and perspectives have been linked together, the blanks "disappear" (second emphasis mine).[210]

Here I place the emphasis on "acts" in the plural to stress the potential multiplicity of such ideation, this time with respect to Erec's character. One type is borne out by the critics we encountered above who fill in this blank in Chrétien's romance by imputing a specific ethical impulse to Erec when he decides to depart from Carrant (*supra*); what we have here is a further example of what I referred to in the Introduction as a "misappropriated blank."[211] A very visible instance of such a reading is that of Peter Dembowski, whose prose translation of the passage at issue does some violence to the original text, as transmitted by Guiot (lines 6474-87):

> Croyez-vous vraiment que je vais vous répéter ce récit? Mais pas du tout, puisque je viens de vous le raconter dans tous les détails. Il serait long et fastidieux de recommencer et d'arranger le récit qu'Érec leur fit, à savoir pourquoi il avait quitté son pays, comment il avait défait trois chevaliers, puis cinq, puis par quelle aventure le comte avait voulu lui causer une si grande honte et comment il avait vaincu les géants (158).[212]

Clearly, the lines have been rearranged, as is not unusual in a translation. But they have also been rewritten in such a way as to resolve the ambiguities of the Old French.[213] According to this translation, the narrator has already provided all the details of Erec's story, just as Erec will, in

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[210] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 182-83.

[211] Iser elsewhere describes a similar temptation without specifying whether or not it may sometimes mislead the reader: "As a result, the imagination is automatically mobilized, thus increasing the constitutive activity of the reader, who cannot help but try and supply the missing links that will bring the schemata together in an integrated gestalt" (ibid., 186).

[212] *Erec et Enide*, ed. and trans. Peter F. Dembowski, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Œuvres complètes*, dir. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

[213] The editor's notes offer no commentary on his choice of translation.

Dembowski's reimagination of Chrétien's text, begin the account of his adventures with the reason for which he set out from Carrant.

I have attempted to resist the temptation to literally fill in the blanks in Chrétien's romance in order to demonstrate that what connects the scene in which the narrator relates Erec's account of his own exploits to Arthur and the beginning of the knight's adventures with Enide, the unseen or unstated "joint" between them, is itself a meaningful absence, and one that cannot truly disappear, as Iser's square quotes would already suggest, because it was never there to begin with. However, as an intentional omission of a character's intentions by the author, the passage in question can nevertheless be assimilated into the broader interpretative matrix of the romance, where the initial distinction between fragmentation and joining gives rise to a more nuanced, hybrid structure from which, as Hunt once put it, "a unified thought-pattern emerges, without internal contradictions."[214] To put this another way, the idea of coherence that arises at the intersection of source, subject matter, and narrative structure in *Erec et Enide* is selective, not totalizing or encyclopedic, entailing a necessary part of the fragmentary so as to permit the creation of a whole that is greater in meaning and more interesting than the sum of its parts, whether they be two, three, or more.[215] As Chrétien's contemporary Thomas d'Angleterre would say near the close of his *Roman de Tristan* (c.1173), "Seignurs, cest cunte est mult divers, / e pur ço l'uni par mes vers / . . . / Ne vol pas trop en uni dire" (lines 2257-58, -61).[216] For both Chrétien and Thomas, to be an author in the medieval culture of writing and rewriting was, at least in part, to be in a position to *choose* what to say and what to leave unsaid: a process of compositional decision-making that might license an enlargement of Elspeth Kennedy's seminal analysis of medieval editing to include, albeit on a larger scale than she discusses, certain facets of twelfth-century authorship.[217] More immediately, such a choice distinguishes both writers from Erec, who is said to recount all of his adventures without omitting anything ("Que nule n'en i entreoblie" [line 6469]), and yet in narrating unknowingly mimics the errors of the *jongleurs* who would—themselves unwittingly—hack to pieces and corrupt his *conte* in ways that did not, however, escape Chrétien's notice.

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[214] Hunt, "Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrestien de Troyes," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 8.4 (1972): 320-44 (321). Along the same lines, Stephen Greenblatt has recently remarked that "A good story can omit details, forgo motivation, sidestep analysis, and still remain utterly compelling"; *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), 16.

[215] It might be useful to contrast Chrétien here with the totalizing character of the prose Arthurian romances and *Le Roman de la Rose* in the thirteenth century and, a bit later, that of Guillaume de Machaut's *Voir Dit*; see Machaut, *Le Livre du Voir Dit*, ed. Paul Imbs and trans. Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1999), p. 21; Mary Franklin-Brown's analysis of encyclopedism in the *Rose*: *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 183-214 (Chapter 4); and Harf-Lancner, "Le Roman d'Alexandre et le brouillage des formes," esp. 22-23.

[216] Le Roman de Tristan *par Thomas*. *Suivi de* La Folie Tristan de Berne *et* La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, ed. and trans. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Short, with the edited texts of Félix Lecoy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003).

[217] Elspeth Kennedy, "The Scribe as Editor," in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, 2 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1970), I: 523-31. Consider the following passage, about the activity of medieval scribes, from the conclusion: "Many of them were prepared to make certain corrections in order to make sense of corrupt passages . . . According to their own or their patron's tastes they might enlarge upon certain aspects or abbreviate and condense" (531). Huot, *From Song to Book*, 27-35, has also compared "poetic composition and scribal compilation" in terms of *compilatio* and (or as) *conjointure* in a case study of manuscript BnF, fr. 1450. For a discussion of the notion of "amalgam" in the context of Thomas, see Kelly, *Art*, 102.

IV. Conclusion

At the same time that Chrétien's attention to the sounds and silences of literary voicing in *Erec et Enide* points forward to such theoretical work as Iser's on the blank in modern literature, it also urges us to remain attuned to the historical embeddedness of textual production and the act of reading.[218] Abelard's engagement with the reader may have appealed to Chrétien precisely because the Champenois poet was writing in a time characterized by division, transition, and tension in the courtly-clerical milieu: between men and women, different models of marriage, language and silence, orality and writing, fragmentation and *conjointure*, and so on and so forth. At each level, the text would seem to argue that one thing cannot be understood—or overcome—without the other, as the interpreter is drawn into a process of dialectical hermeneutics geared toward the interpretation of a romance and the contexts from which it emerged, rather than questions of Christian doctrine.

Chrétien thereby shifts attention from the determination of theological truth to an ongoing reflection on the problems and contours of a nascent literary field in the Old French vernacular. How and by whom the reading that I have proposed in this chapter may have been pursued in the poet's late twelfth century are questions that cannot be answered with certainty aside from saying that the audience was predominantly aristocratic and composed of both women and men, who would have been familiar with the major vernacular poetic genres of the time, namely epic, lyric, and romance, and perhaps with Abelard's *Sic et non*. However, I also hope to have demonstrated in this chapter that the process of composition as it represented in and by *Erec et Enide* cannot be divorced from the poet's own active interpretation—*his* close readings—of the texts, literary, philosophical, and social, from which he extracted the romance. As a result, the poem acts as a partial witness to the kind of reading that it seeks to stimulate in the audience outside the text. More obliquely, the variety of real critical responses elicited by the poem, some of them, such as those of McCracken and Plummer, Bezzola and the Chrétien Girls, almost perfectly opposed, attests to the ideologically evolving texture of the work, where concentrating on only one passage, section, or character can lead to a conflation of part and whole and, consequently, a loss of the romancer's "higher stylistic unity," to borrow a term from Mikhaïl Bakhtin's reading of the modern novel that may also be apt to describe the housing of contrary things within Chrétien's romance.[219]

In these ways, *Erec et Enide* enables the current medieval studies to continue in its efforts to unpack the history of romance in its philosophical and intellectual/theoretical implications, a current in the criticism that has dealt primarily so far with a later period of literary production

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[218] *Cf.* Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, who appear to propose the study of historical context as an alternative to that of Chrétien as author (2). Many of the early critiques of Iser's work on the reader revolved around the claim that the German critic's theory of aesthetic response was ahistorical and thus apolitical; see, for instance, the introduction to Winfried Fluck's "The Search for Distance: Negation and Negativity in Wolfgang Iser's Literary Theory," *New Literary History* 31.1 (2000): 175-210 (175-77), as well as my introduction (22-23). While I of course recognize that it is necessary to avoid removing the text from its historical context, I also believe that Iser's structural thinking is not antithetical to Chrétien's view of narrative structure and the hermeneutic process.

[219] Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 294-457 (262). I am thinking for example of Plummer's analysis of Enide's intelligence ("*Bien dire* and *bien aprandre*," beginning on 381), versus that of McCracken ("Silence and the Courtly Wife," 107-21; and Bezzola's view of the primacy of Erec's character (*Le Sens de l'aventure*, 81), as opposed to the Chrétien Girls' relative emphasis on Enide's cotitular status (*Thinking Through*, 113-29).

(starting with the *Roman de la Rose*).[220] In effect, Chrétien's first romance could be taken as an early token of those works, for instance Andreas Capellanus's *De amore* and Jean de Meun's *Rose*, in which, following Peter Allen's important analysis, one may identify an *ars legendi*, or an art of reading: texts which, as he puts it, "provide extensive and specific commentary on other works of their time"[221]—and a distant precursor to the late-medieval genre of the *dit*, which did multiple duty as narrative, lyric anthology, and poetic *traitié*.[222] In turning now from *Erec et Enide* to *Cligès*, I consider how we might trace the move from Chrétien's reworking of Erec's *conte* and the bend toward a literary dialectics therein to the detailed commentary that his second romance offers on Thomas's *Tristan* and—of course—itself.

[220] For recent work on the relationship between poetry and thought in the Middle Ages, see Jonathan Morton, *The* Roman de la Rose *in Its Philosophical Context: Nature, Art, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Philip Knox, Morton, and Daniel Reeve, eds., *Medieval Thought Experiments: Poetry, Hypothesis, and Experience in the European Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018); Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay (with Rebecca Dixon, Miranda Griffin, Huot, Francesca Nicholson, and Finn Sinclair), *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the* Rose *to the* Rhétoriqueurs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); and Dixon and Sinclair, eds. (with Armstrong, Huot, and Kay), *Poetry, Knowledge, and Community in Late Medieval France* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008).

[221] Peter L. Allen, "Ars Amandi, Ars Legendi: Love Poetry and Literary Theory in Ovid, Andreas Capellanus, and Jean de Meun," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989): 181-205 (197).

[222] Two illustrative examples are Machaut, *Voir Dit* and Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du duc des vrais amants*, ed. and trans. Dominique Demartini and Didier Lechat (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013). On this dimension of the *dit*, see Cerquiglini-Toulet, "Le Clerc et l'écriture: le *Voir dit* de Guillaume de Machaut et la définition du dit," in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, ed., *Literatur in der Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), 151-68.

Chapter 2

Chrétien Minus Thomas: The Body of the Text in *Cligès*

In the last chapter, I examined the relationship between unity and fragmentation as two facets of the poetics of *Erec et Enide*. There the author's signature concept of *conjointure* is not clearly defined in the prologue. Rather, it must be worked out by the reader, I argued, through the logical and narratological oscillations—the "yes" and the "no," as it were—of dialectical interpretation. To come back to the language of Iser's analysis, the notion of the seamless joining together of different narrative parts that would seem to be designated by the expression "mout bele conjunture" constitutes, in and of itself, a "blank" or seam in the fabric of the romance. In this way, the text signals very early on the irony in the initial opposition between incompleteness and plenitude in *Erec et Enide*, as well as Chrétien's interest in aestheticizing rupture as an essential component of narrative composition and interpretation. In filling in the gaps in the text, or in understanding when they are meant to be left blank, we may begin to speak of an idea of narrative structure that does not precede but coincides with the pursuit of a specific set of hermeneutic practices through which the poet exercises a paradoxical form of control over the work, that is, through the audience and their activities as readers. These practices, I have contended, entail a counterintuitive approach to the text geared towards the appreciation of absences, silence, and figurative and literal mutilation—features of the text that are, at first glance, perfectly at variance with the image of "conjuncture." Chrétien's compositional strategy therefore resonates with Iser's theory of aesthetic response, but it should also foster awareness of the historical contingencies and complexities of textual production and reception in a twelfth century with its literary forms and modes of thought. Within this framework, the purpose of this chapter is to show how one might go about adapting the same tools to the experience of reading the *Cligès* (1176), Chrétien's second Arthurian romance, which raises new concerns from an interpreter's standpoint even as it gestures back to and builds on those already discussed in the context of *Erec et Enide*.

Contrary to the argument of this chapter, *Cligès* has sometimes been thought of as an outlier in the author's corpus. This is due not only to the somewhat exotic setting of the narrative, but also the unusually explicit manner in which the story appears to comment on itself and the Tristan legends, a corpus whose influence can often be felt even when it is not directly acknowledged, or repudiated, by the text. In an oft-cited contribution to a "symposium" on the romances of Chrétien de Troyes from 1985, for example, Michelle A. Freeman begins her analysis of *Cligès* with the following disclaimer:

> I wish to alert the reader at the outset that *Cligés* does in a sense stand apart from the remainder of Chrétien's work. It does stand apart because through it Chrétien takes a look at his own poetic activity within a tradition of similar activity.[223]

Does this attribute, however, distinguish *Cligès* from Chrétien's other romances? In *Erec et Enide* the author is at pains to inscribe his own activity as a romancer within a specific tradition of orality and misogyny, highlighting his differences as a writer through the figure of Enide. In *Yvain*, my third chapter will argue, it becomes equally difficult to treat the development of the

[223] Michelle A. Freeman, "*Cligès*," in Douglas Kelly, ed., *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium* (Lexington: French Forum, 1985): 89-131 (90).

hero separately from that of the narrative as emplotted by way of inscribed scenes of interpretation, *mise en abyme*, and additional metapoetic devices.

In the following pages, then, I set out to reaffirm the place of *Cligès* within Chrétien's narrative—and lyric—corpus through an examination of the text's elaborate and self-conscious engagement with the Tristan legends, in particular Thomas d'Angleterre's *Roman de Tristan*.[224] I will compare Chrétien's dialogue with Thomas to the dialectical aesthetics characteristic of the transfer of Erec's story from oral performance to written work, as well as the attendant application of Abelard's theological philosophy to a literary problem. At the same time, I shall be interested in the evolution of Chrétien's textual thought as he now competes against the work of a different author and one who, like him, dealt in vernacular writing, as opposed to the *jongleurs* singled out in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*.

Between the composition of *Erec et Enide* and the time when Chrétien wrote *Cligès*, he pursued additional work in the realm of lyric poetry, the only attestations of which come with two short poems, or *chansons*: "D'Amors qui m'a tolu a moi" and "Amor tençon et bataille." In the Lettres gothiques series, the two are published together with *Cligès*.[225] Sarah Kay has furthermore contended in recent work on Chrétien's romances against the backdrop of the lyrics that the former may be understood, in their gravitations toward polysemy, *variance*, repetition, and unsolvable contradictions, as "long poems."[226] Most important for my interests in this chapter is the moment in Chrétien's "D'Amors qui m'a tolu a moi" at which the lyrical "I" makes an explicit reference to Tristan:

> Onques du buvrage ne bui
> Dont Tristan fu enpoisonnez;
> Mes plus me fet amer que lui
> Fins cuers et bone volentez. (Lines 28-31)

The successive images of the love potion and its effect on the person who drinks it, a loss of the ability to choose, evoke at once issues of intertextuality and intention that follow on the narrative and authorial commentaries enclosed within *Erec et Enide*. As someone whose actions are intended, resulting from "bone volentez," the present "I," the pronoun of both lover and lyric poet, insists on the distinction between himself and the legendary hero, whose behavior is, as is well known, out of his control once he has drunk the *buvrage*. We should note that it was also by

[224] To be sure, the references and allusions to the Tristan legends in *Cligès* are not limited to Thomas's version. They also involve Béroul's so-called "version commune (or primitive)." However, one of my assumptions here, which I shall support with examples, is that Thomas's romance was Chrétien's greatest and most direct source of inspiration. If indeed Chrétien was aware of multiple iterations of the story but chose to focus on one of them in his reworking of the tradition, his approach to the composition of the romance might, in fact, be compared to that of Thomas, who states a preference for the story as told by a certain "Breri" (Le Roman de Tristan *par Thomas. Suivi de* La Folie Tristan de Berne *et* La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, ed. and trans. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Ian Short, with the edited texts of Félix Lecoy [Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003], lines 2663-73). Unless otherwise specified, all further quotations from Thomas's *Tristan* come from this edition. On the importance of Thomas and Béroul for *Cligès*, see, in addition to Freeman, "*Cligès*," Ernest Hoepffner, "Chrétien de Troyes et Thomas d'Angleterre," *Romania* 55 (1929): 1-16.

[225] References to the lyrics and to *Cligès*, unless otherwise stated, will be to the following edition: *Cligès*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla and Olivier Collet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994); the lyrics are published at the back of the volume, with edition and translation by Marie-Claire Gérard-Zai.

[226] See Zrinka Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 15-39.

accident—"par erreur," as one of the text's editors and translators puts it[227]—that the couple consumed the potion in the first place, marking common ground between the characterization of Erec and the oral source in *Erec et Enide* and the poet's response to the figure of Tristan in "D'Amors qui m'a tolu a moi."

A similarly profound concern with choice and intention can be located in Chrétien's *Cligès*, where the heroine, Fenice, takes extreme measures to ensure that she will not suffer the same fate as Thomas's Yseut. As with Enide's relationship to language in *Erec et Enide*, Fenice's comportment in *Cligès* would thus seem to embody a specific response on the part of the author to the *Tristan*, revealing an important link between Chrétien's rewriting of Thomas and the transactions between different characters within the romance. However, Fenice's function in the narrative has rarely been examined in this light, and the status of Chrétien's romance with regard to the precursor text remains a source of aporia among critics, who have variously designated the *Cligès* as an Anti-Tristan, a Neo- or Super-Tristan, or a combination of both.[228]

I take this last possibility as a starting point in this chapter. In particular, I will reconsider the space between Chrétien, Thomas, and their respective texts as an additional staging ground for the style of dialectical poetics and hermeneutics introduced in *Erec et Enide*. In developing this idea, I draw inspiration once again from Iser's theory of the "minus function," a literary effect that derives from a careful manipulation of expectations and omissions: "The nonfulfillment of traditional narrative functions leads to 'minus functions' in that expectations are invoked in the reader as a background against which the *actual* functions of the text become operative."[229] More specifically, I will argue that the coherence of Chrétien's narrative as constructed against the background of Thomas's *Tristan* relies on processes of deliberate corruption and fragmentation that had emerged under the sign of the verbs "depecier et corrompre" in *Erec et Enide*, images that will continue to resurface in the other romances. As mentioned above, Thomas himself subscribed to a concept of selective compilation and reworking, attempting to unite a diversity of sources and the episodes contained within them, while avoiding the inclusion of excess narrative material: "Ne vol pas trop en uni dire" (line 2261), an authorial statement dealing with both poetic economy and the writer's desire or intention.[230] In brief, the complexity of Chrétien's response to the *Tristan* is that he appears to have both agreed with Thomas's sensibility as a poet and turned it against him.

In the first section below, I offer a reading of the prologue of *Cligès*, including the presentation of Chrétien as author and the discussion of the work's inspirations, and the opening action of the romance, the story of Cligès's father Alexandre. The division of the romance into

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[227] *Tristan et Iseut: les poèmes français et la saga norroise*, ed./trans. Daniel Lacroix and Philippe Walter [Paris, 1989], 1141, n. 1.

[228] On these terms, see among others Freeman, "*Cligès*," 98. In referring to a combination of the two views, I have in mind, for example, Anne Berthelot, who insists on Chrétien's condemnation of the adultery of Tristan and Yseut ("la vive répugnance de Chrétien de Troyes à l'égard des amants de Cornouailles"), while noting, "C'est cependant dans ce roman aussi que Chrétien affirme avoir écrit 'du roi Marc et d'Yseut la blonde'" ("D'Amors qui m'a tolu a moi," ed. and trans. Berthelot, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Œuvres complètes*, dir. Daniel Poirion [Paris: Gallimard, 1994], 1456-57, n. 2). But this view is undoubtedly the least developed of the three that I mention above.

[229] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 209 (author's emphasis).

[230] Apropos of verbal economy, it is worth keeping in mind that all of Chrétien's romances are probably considerably shorter than—in fact, with the exception of the *Perceval*, about half the length of—Thomas's, which, according to Félix Lecoy's oft-cited estimation, was originally composed of between 12,000 and 13,000 lines. See especially the introduction to ed. Short and Baumgartner, 9-10.

two narratives, those of the father and the son, raises questions about the nature and function of the main portion of the text, the story of Cligès and Fenice, and the shifting relationship between Chrétien's poem and the *Tristan*. In the first part of the text, one finds numerous allusions to Thomas's *Tristan*, and it is not until the beginning of Cligès's narrative—the body of the text, so to speak—that a clear departure from the Tristanian intertext appears to take place. This process of appropriation and distancing also centers around depictions of the *human* body, in particular that of Fenice. As she is compared and contrasted with Yseut's character and *her* body, Fenice becomes a key figure in Chrétien's negotiation of literary tradition and innovation, essential for understanding the minus function in *Cligès* and the literary dialectic involving Chrétien and Thomas. By way of an example, I turn in my next section to one of the central instances of rewriting in the poem: the midpoint scene in which Cligès's uncle Alis dreams, under the effect of a new potion, that he is having intercourse with Fenice. In reality, Fenice's body is not far away, but it is constantly out of reach. The ambiguity of the heroine's body between presence and absence, illusion and reality, comes back to the fore in a shocking episode found later in the text, where Fenice is tortured at length as a result of her refusal to be like Yseut. My reading of the torture concentrates attention on the mutilation (whipping, cutting, and burning) of Fenice's skin and the manner in which it may be seen to convey aspects of Chrétien's ongoing reflection on the potential antinomy of the idea of narrative unity, or *conjointure*, and the poetics of medieval textual transmission, with special scrutiny given here to the principal writing support of the French Middle Ages, parchment fashioned from animal hides (calves, sheep, and goats). Building on Kay's latest work on medieval readers' interest in the status of the manuscript page as animal skin and its similarity to human skin, my last section examines Chrétien's text through the lens of its manuscript tradition and the echoes therein between the representation of Fenice's body and the material profile of the manuscripts' "skin," or between metaphorical and real (physical) fragmentation.

".I. novel conte recomence"*: The Prologue and the First* Cligès

Perhaps the clearest evidence of *Cligès*'s fundamental integration into Chrétien's larger corpus, including his work as both a translator and a romancer, comes in the first ten lines of the romance:

> 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,
> .I. novel conte recomence
> D'un vallet qui en Grece fu
> Dou lignage le roi Artu. (lines 1-10).

This well-known passage, a literary CV of sorts, delineates Chrétien's prior works, overtly situating the "new story" in a textual line going back to *Erec et Enide* and beyond—and including a version of the Tristan legends that has not survived.[231]

With the following verses, the narrator breaks up the narrative into two parts, curiously announcing the deferral of what appears to be the main topic of the story, the "vallet" (Cligès) mentioned above, before the romance has even begun: "Mais einz que de lui rien vos die / Orroiz de son pere la vie, / Dont il fu et de quel lignage" (lines 11-13).[232] Here the discussion of the father's lineage is combined with a specification of the provenance of Chrétien's romance, a written source that the author ostensibly discovered in the library of Saint-Pierre in Beauvais (lines 18-23). Viewed from a slightly different angle, the shape of the narrative, starting with the story of the father (Alexandre) before moving on to that of the son, coupled with the earlier mention of King Mark and Iseut la Blonde, also recalls the progression of Thomas's *Tristan*, as Lacy and others have pointed out.[233]

Of course, the echoes between the two texts are not limited to this basic structural similarity. In effect, many scholars have already remarked upon the reappearance in Chrétien's romance of one of Thomas's most elaborate puns, a paronomasis performed by Yseut during the journey from Ireland to England and involving the terms *l'amer* or *l'amur* (love), *amer(e)* (bitter), and *mer* (sea).[234] In this passage, Tristan struggles to understand the meaning of what his interlocutor is saying, an act of intepretation that calls attention to the difficulty of translating love into *raisun*, or language, as well as the potential ambiguities of speech as opposed to writing:

> Tristran ad noté chescun dit,
> Mes ele l'ad issi forsveé
> Par "l'amer" que ele ad tant changee
> Que ne set si cele dolur
> Ad de la mer ou de l'amur,
> Ou s'ele dit "amer" de "la mer"
> Ou pur "l'amur" dïet "amer." (lines 46-52)

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[231] Interestingly, the name of the titular character in Béroul and in Thomas, Tristan, is omitted from the title given here for Chrétien's version of the legend. For Walter, this might suggest the originality of the work, or an elision of the adultery of Tristan and Yseut in favor of the "couple légal" (ed. Walter, 1137, n. 5).

[232] Later in the text, though still during the first part of the romance, the narrator reminds readers of the principal *matiere*: "Nez est Cligés, en cui memoire / Fu mise en escrit ceste estoire" (lines 2341-42).

[233] Norris J. Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes: An Essay on Narrative Art* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 81.

[234] This passage from Thomas's *Tristan* has only survived in the Carlisle fragment of the poem. Short has prepared two slightly different editions of this fragment (Mikhael Benskin, Tony Hunt, and Ian Short, "Un Nouveau fragment du *Tristan* de Thomas," *Romania* 113 [1992-95]: 289-319, esp. 300-314; *Tristan et Yseut: les premières versions européennes*, ed. Christiane Marchello et al. [Paris: Gallimard, 1995]: 123-27), one of which is reproduced in ed. Baumgartner and Short. Many of the lines in the Carlisle manuscript are fragmentary, and I have chosen to cite the edition of Short and Baumgartner because the editors' and translators' interventions are both more reasonable and more clearly explained than those of Walter (*supra*), though the latter also bases himself on Short's editorial work. For more information on the Carlisle fragment, see Benskin et al., "Un Nouveau fragment." Up until the rediscovery of the Carlisle fragment, it was the combined testimony of Gottfried (see note 236) and *Cligès* that alerted scholars to the possible origins of Chrétien play on "amer" in Thomas's *Tristan*. See Freeman, "*Cligès*," 103, who had noted the presence of the same play on words in Gottfried's poem before the recovery of the Carlisle fragment; and ed. Walter, 1141.

In Chrétien's romance, a parallel set of circumstances frames the relationship between Alexandre and Soredamors, both of whom accompany Arthur as he travels from England to Brittany. Each character remains perfectly unaware of what the other is thinking. By contrast, the queen, who is also aboard the ship, notices changes in both of their complexions (lines 541-43). In a throwback to the original scene in Thomas's text, she attributes their changing state to *la mer* (lines 545-46), rather than *l'amor*, prompting the narrator to intervene with a lengthy clarification that echoes with the above passage from the *Tristan*:

> Espoir bien s'en aperceüst
> Se la mers ne la deceüst,
> Mes la mers l'engingne et deçoit
> Si qu'en la mer, l'amor ne voit,
> Qu'en la mer sont et d'amer vient
> Et amers est li maus quis tient
> Et de cez trois ne set blamer
> La reïne fors que la mer . . .
> Einsint la reïne molt fort
> La mer encorpe, si la blame,
> Mais a tort l'en met sus le blame
> Car la mers n'i a rien forfet. (lines 547-54, -60-63)

In this elaboration on Thomas's rhetoric, the narrator pretends not to be concerned with the linguistic confusion brought on in the exchange between Tristan and Yseut by the relative homophony of love, bitterness, and the sea. The queen's error stems instead, we are told, from a misunderstanding of the *cause* of the behavior of Alexandre and Soredamors. On the one hand, this passage might simply be seen to provide further evidence of Chrétien's interest in the interpretability of motivation and intention, as with Erec's unspecified "acoisons" in *Erec et Enide*. On the other hand, it points up the subtle continuity between *Cligès* and *Tristan* at this point in the text. Indeed, the very discourse of "blame" (*blamer*, *blame* [x2]) in question here constitutes an ironic extension of the verbal action of Thomas's text, adding a fourth term to the mix with the rhyme on "blamer" and "la mer" in lines 553-54.

Since the rediscovery of the Carlisle fragment of the *Tristan* (notably the only surviving witness of the love avowal, which had represented a literal blank in the text, as Joseph Bédier once put it[235]), critics have reached a better understanding of Thomas's writing and Chrétien's engagement with the Anglo-Norman poet. Yet I believe this engagement is far more extensive than has previously been allowed. It is, in fact, apparent in the development of Alexandre's story from beginning to end. In *Cligès*, the prologue begins the portrait of Alexandre, describing him as "preuz" and "de haut parage" (line 14). The *Tristan* as transmitted by Brother Robert's Old Norse translation likewise opens with a portrait of Tristan's father, Kanelangres, as a young knight: "Il y avait en Bretagne un jeune homme d'une très grande beauté, bien fait de sa personne, extrêmement bien doué, puissant, et riche de beaux châteaux et forteresses" (1: 495).[236] The next thing that we learn about Alexandre is that he is so fierce and courageous that

[235] Joseph Bédier, *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*, 2 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot et Cie., 1902-1905), I: 149-50.
[236] References are to section and page numbers in Lacroix's modern French prose translation of Brother Robert's saga: Brother Robert (Frère Robert), *La Saga de Tristan et Yseut*, in *Tristan et Iseut*, ed. Lacroix and Walter: 484-

he refuses to be knighted in Greece (lines 64-67). Rather, having heard about King Arthur, whose reputation, the narrator explains, is unparalleled, he decides to leave for England:

> Oï ot fere mention
> Dou roi Artu qui lors regnoit
> Et des barons que il tenoit
> En sa compeignie touz jorz,
> Par quoi doutee estoit sa corz
> Et renomee par le monde . . .
> N'est riens nule qui le retieigne
> Qu'aler ne s'en vueille en Breteigne. (lines 68-73, -76-77)

Alexandre's movement across geographical boundaries, from Greece to England, is matched on the level of the writing by a continuing intertextuality which translates from one romance to another, a vernacular *translatio* made all the more legible, perhaps, by the cultural and linguistic ties between Thomas d'Angleterre and the *Engleterre* to which Chrétien refers from line 16 of *Cligès*. Kanelangres also hears of the power, wealth, and culture of England, the prowess and courtliness of its knights. He proceeds to leave Brittany, as Alexandre leaves Greece, in search of honor:

> On lui avait beaucoup parlé de l'Angleterre: c'était là un royaume grand et puissant, beau et célèbre, agréable et opulent, avec toutes sortes de chevaliers courtois . . . Ainsi désirait-il tout à la fois découvrir leur façon de vivre, leurs coutumes et leurs titres d'honneur, leur puissance et leurs armes, leur vaillance et leurs exploits (1: 496).

Once there, Kanelangres immediately seeks out King Marc and is welcomed at his court. In the same way, Alexandre travels from Southampton to Winchester to find King Arthur (291-303). In both cases the newcomer's observance of local customs is praised (2: 496; lines 314-18). In Thomas's *Tristan*, the hero's father meets the king's sister, Blensinbil, while in England. She attends a celebration at which Marc's men, including Kanelangres, participate in an informal tournament. It quickly transpires that Kanelangres is the most valiant among them, winning the competition and captivating every member of the all-female audience, including Blensinbil (498: 4).[237] Likewise, Alexandre encounters Gauvain's sister Soredamors at Arthur's court.

In addition to the similarities between the descriptions of Blensinbil's and Soredamors's physical and emotional states as they fall in love (e.g., "Sovent palist, et si tressue"; "En une hore aime, en autre het" [lines 462, 525 (Soredamors)]; "[C]ar son coeur et ses membres frissonnèrent à tel point que tout son corps en transpira . . . 'Ces deux choses, la chaleur et le froid, me torturent de concert'" [6: 500 (Blensinbil)]), both characters object to the idea of avowing their

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626. Episodes cited in translation have not survived in the Old French versions of the legend. There also exists a Middle High German adaptation of Thomas's version of the Tristan legends composed by Gottfried von Strassburg.

[237] The representation of the jousting competition in the *Tristan* (transmitted in the Old Norse saga) supports Roberta Krueger's analysis of reader response and the ideology of gender (*Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* [Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 29), as well as Simon Gaunt's account of romance and misogyny (*Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* [Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995], esp. 113). The passage in Thomas ends with a long *sententia* concerning the excessive and misplaced nature of female desire, as evidenced, according to the narrator, by Dido (4: 498-99).

love first: “Car il convient que ce soit lui,” Blensinbil states with respect to Kanelangres, “qui demande plutôt que moi je lui fasse de telles offres et couvre de honte et de déshonneur ma personne et toute ma famille” (7: 501), while Soredamors remarks about Alexandre, “Il ne me prie ne requiert, / S’il m’amast, il m’eüst requise. / Des qu’il ne m’aime ne ne prise, / Amerai le je s’il ne m’aime?” (lines 490-93).[238] Around the same spot in Chrétien’s romance, Soredamors proffers a lengthy gloss on her own name, interpreting its significance in a way that gestures beyond the definition she furnishes to suggest an additional, literary etymology. The first syllable, she explains, comes from the “color d’or,” whereas the second brings Love to mind (lines 965-70). Soredamors now adumbrates a theory of onomastic language use that corroborates Chrétien’s broader interest in speech (and writing) as act:[239]

> Car qui par mon droit non m’apele,
> Touz jors Amors me renovele,
> Et l’une moitiez l’autre dore
> De doreüre clere et sore,
> Qu’autretant dit Soredamors
> Come sororee d’Amors. (Lines 971-76)[240]

More specifically, the division in two of the name resonates with the presentation of Tristan’s character, whose name is likewise broken down into two syllables: “[D]ans cette langue ‘trist’ signifie triste, et ‘hum’ signifie homme, et son nom a été changé du fait que Tristam est plus joli à prononcer que Tristhum” (16: 508-509).

While space will not allow me to unpack all of the thematic, narrative, and lexical overlaps between the story of Kanelangres and Blensinbil in the *Tristan* and that of Alexandre and Soredamors in *Cligès*, it is worth noting some of the most striking resemblances between the scenes in which Tristan and Cligès enter into the action. They are both conceived in England (and Cligès is born there) before their parents leave for Greece and Brittany, respectively; and in Thomas’s narrative as in *Cligès*, the narrator pauses to reaffirm the main topic or character of the romance:

> Alors qu’ils [Kanelangres and Blensinbil] étaient pris dans l’angoisse de leurs peines—elle, en raison de ses tourments, lui, en raison de ses blessures—, ils étaient en train d’engendrer cet enfant qui vécut et sur le sort duquel tous ses amis pleurèrent, et qui est à l’origine de cette histoire (12: 505).

> Tant fu la semence en son germe
> Que li fruiz vint a sa nature
> D’enfant ; plus bele creature
> Ne fu nee n’avant n’aprés.
> L’enfant apelerent Cligés.

[238] While the versions of the *Tristan* transmitted by Brother Robert and Gottfried are generally very close to the original, it is unfortunately impossible to establish the full extent of Chrétien’s borrowings from the precise language of Thomas’s text in the case of scenes which only subsist in a translation or an adaptation.

[239] See, for instance, *Le Chevalier au Lion ou Le Roman d’Yvain*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: LGF, 1994), p. 13.

[240] For more on the name Soredamors, see Roger Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 26.

Nez est Cligés, en cui memoire
Fu mise en escrit ceste estoire. (Lines 2336-42)[241]

Particularly in this last passage from *Cligès*, the poet chooses words that function sylleptically to refer at once to the birth of the hero and the genesis of the romance that we are reading. In fact, Chrétien would use precisely the same metaphorical field ("semence," "germe," "fruiz") to introduce the *Conte du graal* (lines 1-9: "seime" [x2], "semence" [x3], "fruit"), his final romance.[242] However, whereas the imagery of germination used to figure the composition of the romance in *Perceval* is logically placed in the first verses of the poem, one cannot help but notice its deferral, for over two thousand lines, in *Cligès*. One of the most important issues this common lexicon raises has to do with the dimensions and function of Alexandre's narrative within the narrative. At first glance, the relationship between the stories of Alexandre and Cligès may seem as self-evident as that between father and son. By the same token, though, we might wonder why it was necessary to devote more than a third of the poem to the former, as opposed to the situation in *Erec et Enide*, where the hero is simply introduced as the son of Lac in the prologue. For the sake of argument, is it possible to imagine the romance without the "first Cligès"? Otherwise put, is the opening movement of the romance in some sense superfluous with regard to the interpretation of Cligès's narrative *per se*? Alternatively, is Chrétien's text merely beholden to the generic traits of the so-called "genealogical romance," or if not, what purpose do the first 2400 lines or so serve in the light of the subsequent episodes of the romance and its literary-historical context?

The potential complexity of the function of Alexandre's *conte* is already suggested by the somewhat abrupt manner in which it is introduced in the prologue. It does not appear as a part of Cligès's narrative, but as an interruption or deferral of the main action of the text, as reflected in the adversative phrase "mais einz" (line 11), denoting separation rather than contiguity.[243] That is to say that the apparently self-explanatory link between Alexandre and Cligès may, in fact, represent a significant blank in the structure of the romance. Thinking back to the prologue and *premerains vers* of *Erec et Enide*, one could compare this blank to Chrétien's initial silence with regard to Enide's character, whose subjectivity in language is not cultivated until her departure with Erec from Carrant. It will be remembered, though, that Chrétien's recapitulation of Erec's *conte* was not gratuitous but rather gave rise to a dialectical narrative structure in which to rethink literary, social, and intellectual antitheses. Along the same lines, I want to argue that the

[241] The work presented in this section on the parallels between Thomas and Chrétien builds on that of Freeman ("*Cligès*") and Anthime Fourrier (*Le Courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Âge*. *Tome I*: *Les Débuts [XII^e siècle]* [Paris: Nizet, 1960]). For a different reading of the transition from the story of Alexandre to that of Cligès, see ed. Walter, who argues that, "À travers cette formule de transition, Chrétien souligne la bipartition de son récit. Il emprunte ce procédé de composition aux arts poétiques de son temps » (1151, n. 2 to page 230). Walter refers to Edmond Faral's research on the medieval Latin poetical arts, but Faral actually describes patterns of bipartition and tripartition as effects of both "formules toutes faites qui s'offraient à tous les artisans" and "genié individuel," not just knowledge of Latin theory. Further, Faral's claim that bipartition is a generic characteristic of the "roman généalogique" (a modern designation) does little to explain the relationship between "l'histoire amoureuse de deux héros" and "celle de leurs parents," or that between the *Tristan* and *Cligès*. See Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle. Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: É. Champion, 1923), 60.

[242] Cited from *Le Conte du graal ou Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Méla (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990).

[243] The deferral of the main action of the text in both *Cligès* and, to some extent, *Erec et Enide*, might be seen to prepare the particularly nebulous introduction to *Yvain*, where it is famously difficult to draw the line between the prologue and the narrative proper (Chapter 3).

blank interstices of Chrétien's second romance recruit readers to an active role in the "combination" of episodes, as Iser would put it, especially with regard to Chrétien's reworking of Thomas's *Tristan* as it is variously reflected and depicted in the text. There is thus a fundamental similarity between the dialogic poetics of *Erec et Enide* and *Cligès*. If, however, the recycling of narrative material in *Erec et Enide* is characterized by a rather overt critique of the source from the beginning, the revival and reworking of the *Tristan* in *Cligès* does not present itself immediately as a critical operation. As a result, readers' expectations with regard to the affinity or lack thereof between Chrétien's and Thomas's respective works are more thoroughly—and indeed unexpectedly—manipulated.

From this perspective, I will contend that Chrétien's *Cligès* articulates a response to the *Tristan* that cannot be limited to any one of the prefixes—"neo-, super-, or anti-"—that have previously been called upon to encapsulate the author's stance with respect to Thomas's romance. Freeman's similar approach is "to avoid ascribing a label, whether Anti, Neo, or Super, to *Cligès*."[244] However, I believe that it is worthwhile to consider the textual circumstances that were able to produce such a contradictory critical tradition, one which might recall the collation of authoritative responses to a given question in Abelard's *Sic et non*. Not unlike the ideology of gender and language in *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien's intertextual practices in *Cligès* are multiplanar. I mean to say not only that the romance engages with a large volume of other works in Latin and the vernacular, references to which have been documented by, among others, Freeman, Anthime Fourrier, and Jean Frappier,[245] but also that the work possibly representing Chrétien's greatest inspiration in *Cligès*, the *Tristan*, is not submitted to a consistent critique, revision, or amplification throughout the romance. The significance and the interest of the *Cligès*'s response to Thomas's *Tristan* lie instead, in my view, in its apparent inconsistency. As we shall see, its reception by Chrétien varies from one part of the text to another, from the story of Alexandre and Soredamors to that of Cligès, Alis, and Fenice, and this variation in turn stands to shape the hermeneutic posture of the audience outside of the fiction in important but little discussed ways.

Iser's theory of the minus function in modern literature offers a compelling framework within which to reconsider both the character of intertextuality in *Cligès* and the relevance of the German theorist's work to medieval poetics and narrative structure. So far, references to the *Tristan* have appeared largely affirmative in that the various scenes discussed above contain rewritings of a number of Tristanian motifs, without their being directly problematized or criticized. Rather than locating in the first part of *Cligès* a decisive mode of intertextual dialogue, however, we might follow Iser in distinguishing carefully between "traditional" and "actual" narrative functions, applying the first term especially to the growing tradition of Tristanian material in the twelfth century and specifically to Thomas's "courtly" version of the legend. For Iser, this distinction does not represent an opposition. To the contrary, it is by evoking a conventional narrative "function" or a prior text or group of texts that the author is able to manipulate expectations and accentuate his difference from tradition, that is, by establishing a

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[244] "*Cligès*," 99. For a case in point of the analysis of *Cligès* as an Anti-Tristan, see Walter's notes to his edition of the text: ed. Walter, 1154 and Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 37. *Cf.* Michelle Reichert, *Between Courtly Literature and Al-Andalus:* Matière d'Orient *and the Importance of Spain in the Romances of the Twelfth-Century Writer Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Routledge, 2006), who argues that "Fénice and Cligès are not antithetical to Tristan and Iseult, nor even superior to them on a moral level, but . . . they *hyperbolize* their negative aspects" (77; author's emphasis).

[245] Freeman, "*Cligès*"; Fourrier, *Le Courant réaliste*; Jean Frappier, *Le Roman breton. Chrétien de Troyes: Cligès* (Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1951).

frame of reference that can then be transgressed.[246] Without a frame of reference *to transcend*, there can be no such transgression, a paradox that Iser refers to as a "brand of modernity."[247] Yet a part of my goal in this reflection is to take in an aesthetic acceptation a set of terms, "modern," "modernity," etc., for which Iser has insisted on an historical circumscription, or, to put this another way, to demonstrate the historical mobility of a narrative device without removing the text in question from the medieval contexts of which it bears the traces.

How does the treatment of the *Tristan* shift as we move into the story of Cligès? If, in other words, Alexandre's narrative is not only an expository genealogical context for the main figure of the romance, but also a partial transmission of preexisting, or "traditional," narrative topoi, where the birth of the son coincides with the birth of a new romance, what are the "actual functions" of Chrétien's text—minus Thomas's, and how are they embodied by the characters who are introduced over the course of the second part of the narrative? In response to these questions, I would like to continue to explore Peter Allen's concept of the imbrication of literature and literary criticism in the medieval context, showing how Chrétien's romance offers extensive commentary on the *Tristan* that goes beyond the level of allusion, comments which, by virtue of being woven into Chrétien's composition, are also interpretively eloquent with regard to *Cligès* itself.[248]

The Body-Text: Alis, Fenice, and Cligès

In the central section of *Erec et Enide*, the heroine's character becomes the site of an extended rumination on literary form and authorial intention framed in response to Chrétien's putative source, the *conte* of Erec. In this section, I want to show how *Cligès*'s Fenice, who will marry Cligès in the closing passage of the romance, plays a similar role in the internal hermeneutic apparatus of Chrétien's second romance, drawing our attention to a change in the narrative that takes place with the transition from Alexandre to Cligès, the extended front matter of *Cligès* to the "body" of the text. However, whereas the sense of fragmentation and rupture, "depecier et corrompre," that surrounds Enide's character is mainly figurative, stemming from her silence, a lack of verbal subjectivity which then links up with both the threat of bodily harm to her husband and the form of the text, the elevation of disunity or *desjointure* to the status of a narrative device can here be seen more clearly through representations of the body. In this instance, the text skates from the literal to the figurative rather than *vice versa*.[249]

The status of the human body as a metaphor for ideal textual form has a long history in Latin rhetoric, a point to which I shall return briefly in the next chapter, and has thus come to be

[246] See Iser, *The Act of Reading*, esp. 208-12.
[247] Ibid., 208. The examples adduced in support of Iser's argument include generic narrative technologies, such as "There once was" (contrasted with "There is no longer" [ibid.]). The relative preservation of what Iser would call the "traditional" in the opening of *Cligès* might be said to produce a more pronounced form of the minus function than in *Erec et Enide*, while also hinting at a somewhat more, though certainly not entirely, positive attitude on the part of the author toward the work of his Anglo-Norman peer.
[248] Peter L. Allen, "Ars Amandi, Ars Legendi: Love Poetry and Literary Theory in Ovid, Andreas Capellanus, and Jean de Meun," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989): 181-205, esp. 197.
[249] For an analysis of "disjunction," here put in relation not with Chrétien's "joining" but rather with the "fonctions de communication et de véridiction" in Thomas's romance, see Christiane Marchello-Nizia, "Une Nouvelle poétique du discours direct: le *Tristan et Yseut* de Thomas," *Linx* 32 (1995): 161-71, esp. 168-69.

placed in direct association with the concept of *conjointure* in Chrétien's romances.[250] The body of the heroine is also central to the plot of Thomas's *Tristan*, but it is not characterized in that case by perfect coherence or invisible joints. Rather, it is defined by its division between two men. Thus, the predicament resulting from Tristan's accidental consumption of the philter is an early and classic instance of the adulterous love "triangle" that would also come to feature prominently in literature on Lancelot and Guinevere in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: Chrétien's own *Charrette*, the vulgate Arthurian romances in prose, etc. As Tristan is accompanying Yseut to England, where she is supposed to join Marc and consummate their marriage, an unwitting page fills Tristan's glass with the *breuvage*, he drinks half of it, and gives the rest to Yseut (46: 557-58). Yseut will remain married to Marc despite her love for Tristan, and it is in this sense that her heart and body come to diverge: the one occupying only one place (Tristan), the other split between husband and lover, Marc and Tristan.[251]

Chrétien's interest in the connection and potential division of heart and body, *cuers* and *cors*, is written large in both *Yvain* (Chapter 3) and *Cligès*. His treatment of this courtly-lyrical topos, however, also marks a divergence between the respective plots of *Cligès* and Thomas's *Tristan*. In fact, along with the love potion and the nature of intention in love, it can be said to rank among the key details in Chrétien's reading, and transformation, of the latter text. In *Cligès*, the triangle consists of Cligès, Fenice, and Alis, Alexandre's brother who is mentioned in the prologue but does not play a notable role in the action until the death of his father, the emperor of Constantinople, at the beginning of Cligès's story (lines 2347-49).

Before his death, the emperor sends messengers to England to seek out Alexandre and bring him home (lines 2351-56). Yet all but one of them drown when a storm takes their ship by surprise (lines 2351-62). The only survivor is a supporter of Alis whom the text describes as a "felon" and a "renoié" (renegade, line 2362). The renegade returns to Greece to report that everyone who was with him, including Alexandre, has perished (lines 2365-72)—a strategic lie. When Alexandre turns up alive, he and his brother eventually reach a peaceful agreement: Alis will keep the title of emperor, but Alexandre will govern (lines 2513-29). A final condition—that Alis promise to Alexandre never to get married so that Cligès may become the next emperor of Constantinople (lines 2527-39)—is tacked on before the pact is finalized. Almost as soon as Alexandre reappears, however, he disappears again—and for good. In effect, the passage pertaining to Alexandre's and Alis's agreement is directly followed by the arrival of the allegory Death, who takes the lives of both Alexandre and Soredamors (lines 2553-81). Their deaths route the conclusion to Alexandre's story through the Tristanian intertext and *its* ending, where Yseut, like Soredamors, dies "from love"—that is, in reaction to the death of her lover (lines 3233-37).[252] At the same time, the brevity and opacity of Alexandre's death, which the narrator attributes without further explanation to an illness that cannot be cured, might suggest for this passage a narrative function not unlike that of the blank: a provocation to consider the disappearance of two important characters as an indication of some additional rupture at this point in the romance.

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[250] Approximately the same metaphor would also appear in one of Montaigne's essays: "Tout ainsi qu'en un beau corps, il ne faut qu'on y puisse compter les os et les veines" (De l'institution des enfans," in *Les Essais*, ed. Jean Balsamo, Michel Magnien, and Catherine Magnien-Simonin, with Alain Legros, Paris, 2007, 179).

[251] On the separation of heart and body, see especially line 1193 in the passage entitled "La Salle aux Statues."

[252] Lecoy also provides the ending of the poem as attested in the Sneyd fragment (ed. Baumgartner and Short, lines 3235-94).

With the removal of Alexandre and Soredamors from the text, a new amatory configuration appears in *Cligès*, one that is conditioned by the disappearance of the emperor's brother. In Alexandre's absence, Alis is gradually convinced by his men's "bad counsel" ("mauvés conseil" [line 2595]) to get married, forgetting the promise that he had made to his brother. In particular, Alis's counselors advise him to marry the daughter of the emperor of Germany, whose name, as we discover in the following passage, is Fenice. In a prefiguration of one of the central problems of the text and a throwback to the scene in which Enide's marriage is arranged in *Erec et Enide*, however, the emperor tells the messengers sent to communicate Alis's proposal that he must come in person and with significant reinforcements, for Fenice has already been "given" to the duke of Saxony (lines 2632-33). More importantly, when Alis and his forces do arrive in Regensburg (Ratisbonne), Cligès and Fenice meet for the first time and fall in love even as preparations are being made for the emperor's marriage, a situation which can only recall the *innamoramento* of Tristan and Yseut in Thomas's *Tristan*. It is also at this point—in the description of Cligès—that we find the first explicit reference in *Cligès* to Tristan:

> Ce fu Cligés, qui en lui ot
> Sen et biauté, largece et force.
> Cist ot le fust o tout l'escorce,
> Cist sot plus d'escremie et d'arc
> Que Tristanz li niés le roi Marc,
> Et plus d'oisiaus et plus de chiens. (Lines 2740-45)[253]

And yet, this passage might be seen as a pivotal moment in the romance with regard to Chrétien's recycling and rewriting of the Tristan legends in the sense that it is does not place the hero on a par with Tristan but rather functions to set him apart. Michelle Reichert summarizes, "Cligès surpasses Tristan in that which Tristan does best—hunting and chivalry."[254] Similarly, the narrator presents Fenice's character in the following terms:

> Fenice ot la pucele non,
> Et ne fu mie sanz reson,
> Car si com fenix li oisiaux
> Est de touz les autres plus biaux,
> N'estre n'en puet que uns ensemble,
> Ausint Fenice, ce me semble,
> N'ot de biauté nule pareille. (Lines 2681-87)

While the full figurative significance of the heroine's name will only become apparent at a later moment in the romance, namely in the passages dealing with Fenice's false death and resurrection, the above gloss is nevertheless interesting as a means of stressing her uniqueness, as opposed to identifying the obvious similarities between Fenice and the figure from the *Tristan* whom she most resembles (Yseut). In this way, the initial portraits of both main characters evoke the Tristanian intertext broadly underpinning the story of Alexandre and Soredamors and

[253] This is an example of a passage that might combine references to both major Tristanian romances of the twelfth-century: see Béroul, *Le Roman de Tristan* (ed. Walter), lines 1279-80 and Brother Robert, 21-22: 515-18.
[254] Reichert, *Between Courtly Literature and Al-Andalus*, 77.

transform it into a blank, where the precursor text, as a frame of reference, begins to be transcended.

This change in the relationship between Chrétien and Thomas is also, if somewhat more subtly, reflected in the narrator's relatively lengthy rumination on the possibility that two hearts can inhabit one body, a lesson in courtly reasoning that sets the stage for Chrétien's treatment of the relationship between heart and body in the case of Cligès and Fenice. The rather remarkable passage that I am referring to reads as a polemical excursus in response to those who believe that it is possible to "give" one's heart to somebody else. Having noted that Cligès has given his heart to Fenice, the narrator promptly corrects himself:

> Doné? Non a, par foi, je ment,
> Car nus son cuer doner ne puet,
> Autrement dire le m'estuet.
> Ne dirai pas si com cil dient
> Qui .II. cuers a .I. cors alient,
> Qu'il n'est voirs ne estre ne semble
> Que .I. cors ait .II. cuers ensemble;
> Et s'il pooient assembler,
> Ne porroit il voir resembler.
> Mais s'il vos i plest a entendre,
> Bien vos savrai le voir aprendre,
> Coment dui cuer a .I. se tienent
> Sanz ce qu'ansemble ne parviennent.
> Sol de tant se tienent a .I.
> Que la volentez de chascun
> De l'un a l'autre se trespasse,
> Si vuelent une chose a masse,
> Et por ce [qu']une chose vuelent
> I a de tex qui dire suelent
> Que chascuns a les cuers andeus,
> Mais uns cuers n'est pas en .II. leus.
> Bien puet estre li voloirs uns
> Et s'a adés son cuers chascuns,
> Ausi com maint home divers
> Puent ou chançonete ou vers
> Chanter a une concordance.
> Si vos pruis par ceste semblance
> C'un cors ne puet .II. cuers avoir
> Por autri volenté savoir,
> Neporec se li autres set
> Quanque cil aime et quanqu'il het. (Lines 2774-804)

More precisely, the narrator has not made an error but has caught himself in a lie: "je ment," a verb that one will have recognized from *Erec et Enide* and which betrays the deliberateness and indulgent nature of what he ironically characterizes as a digression (lines 2809-10). In addition to the dialectical tenor of the narrator's remarks, which pertain essentially to the difference between

literal and figurative language ("No," two hearts cannot occupy a single body, but "yes," the expression does exist; see also Abelard's semantics [Chapter 1]), these verses are notable inasmuch as they refer us so repetitively to the concept of will, intention, or desire (*volentez* [x2], *vuelent* [x2], *voloirs*) that is also found in "D'Amors qui m'a tolu a moi" (*supra*). There, the poet's view of love and poetry, based on *bone volentez*, runs counter to the representation of Tristan's love for Yseut, which not only results from an error but negates the ability to choose. In this light, the narrator's "proof" stands in contrast to both the opinion of his unnamed contemporaries and the depiction of love in the *Tristan*, and it is interesting to observe how the idea of the impossibility of dividing the heart between two places would also have harked back to Marc's predicament, sharing Yseut's body but not her heart, for medieval readers conversant with the Celtic tradition. Once again, however, what we might expect from a discourse on the duplicity of the heart is only obliquely present, a "background" of expectations transformed into a blank, to use Iser's terminology.[255] In addition, the narrator's chosen simile or "semblance" is significant in the way that it relates the anatomy of love to sung poetic activity, unison and polyphony (where "concordance," line 2799, evokes the origin of *cuer* in Lat. "cor" [heart], which also sounds like OFr. "cors" [body]), bridging fiction and metafiction in preparation for what is undoubtedly one of the most striking and explicit instances of Chrétien's reworking of the *Tristan* in *Cligès*.

With its placement in the center of the text and the manifold metapoetic readings that it has elicited in modern criticism (more on this below), the midpoint of *Cligès* is as if not more readily apparent than that of *Erec et Enide*. As in Chrétien's romance, moreover, the midpoint is by no means isolated from the preceding action but lengthily prepared by some three hundred verses. Having noticed a change in Fenice's complexion, the heroine's *mestre* Thessala (line 2956), the woman who raised her from childhood and who is also trained in magic and medicine, approaches her. Fenice decides to divulge her "condition" to Thessala, an admission that echoes contrastively with the refusal to specify Erec's motivation in *Erec et Enide*: "Li dira quex est l'achesons / Por coi a pale et teint le vis" (lines 3012-13). Enide explains that she is experiencing a paradoxical form of torment that she desires—"Mes anuiz est ma *volentez*" (line 3029; my emphasis)—and pain upon which her health depends (line 3030). Thessala quickly understands that Fenice is suffering from love (lines 3049-52), a diagnosis that is related by the narrator:

> Est certeine chose qu'ele aime,
> Car tuit autre mal sont amer
> Fors solement celui d'amer,
> Mais cist seus torne s'amertume
> En douçor et en soatume,
> Et sovent retorne a contraire. (Lines 3054-59)

As Kay has pointed out, "the equivocal rhyme of *amer* ('bitter') with *amer* ('to love') . . . keys this passage to the recently discovered Carlyle fragment of the Tristan story".[256] As further noted by Kay, Chrétien's prosody also anticipates the subsequent passage in which Thessala prepares a potion for Alis.

The potion that Alis consumes differs considerably from the one that the lovers drink in Thomas's *Tristan*. To begin with, the character who drinks it is not one of the lovers, but rather

[255] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 209.
[256] Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 37.

the third party, Fenice's future husband. In fact, Thessala creates it precisely in order to allow Fenice to avoid having to sleep with him and betraying Cligès. Appropriately, it is in this passage that we find the second explicit reference to the *Tristan* in the form of a refusal on the part of Fenice to arrive at the same fate as Yseut:

> 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. (Lines 3099-3105)

That this extended literary allusion should be voiced not by author or narrator but instead by a character within the fiction demonstrates, among other things, the importance of the figure of Fenice for the thematization of Chrétien's reception of the *Tristan*. So too does her use of the verb *raconter*, a term denoting storytelling of the sort that is associated with the author's transmission of prior literature, as in this snippet from the prologue to *Cligès*: "Crestiens comence son conte, / Si com l'estoire le reconte" (lines 45-46).[257] But this passage also exemplifies a particular narrative technology in Chrétien's romances, whereby "shameful" narrative tasks—another example being Calogrenant's inscribed narration in *Yvain* (Ch. 3)—are delegated to characters, an effect of polyphony that at once conceals and reveals the voice of the author.[258] Through the heroine's choice of words, in which we thus also sense Chrétien's presence, the reference to Tristan and Yseut is suspended between the inside and the outside of the text, the fictional continuum in which Fenice, like Yseut, exists and the perspective of the poet and the reader to whom he mediates information about the narrative through the characters. More precisely, Fenice's mention of the main characters of the Tristan legend performs the minus function in miniature. Taking stock of the potential similarities between Yseut and herself, Fenice will briefly recount Yseut's predicament, but only in order to measure her difference from her Tristanian counterpart, acknowledging expectations, through a reading of her own situation in comparison to that of Yseut, so as to subvert them in the next place. In an ironic development, Fenice's attempt to avoid behaving in a way that would recall the love of Tristan and Yseut requires that she retell part of their story. Perhaps the simultaneous incorporation and alienation of Thomas's romance at this point in Chrétien's can help to explain what motivated the scribe of MS. Tours, Bibliothèque municipale 942 of *Cligès* to remove the heroine's reference to the *Tristan* altogether, heeding her reluctance to rehash the details of the relationship between Tristan and Yseut by simply deleting her hypothetical dismemberment as well as her reasoning

[257] For more on the representation of narrative acts in Chrétien's romances, see "Commemoration, Memory and the Role of the Past in Chrétien de Troyes: Retrospection and Meaning in 'Erec et Enide', 'Yvain' and 'Perceval'," *Reading Medieval Studies* 17 (1991): 31-50, as well as my response to Kay's article in Chapters 1 and 3.
[258] See also David Hult's discussion of Chrétien's use of other voices, or his inhabitance of others' voices, in the *Charrette*: "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*," in Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, eds., *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989): 76-96, esp. 89-96.

with regard to the unity or disunity of heart and body in the *Tristan* and in her situation.[259] From my perspective, however, this poetic omission only accentuates the significance of the details of Fenice's discourse, which speaks to Chrétien's own interest in writing through rupture.

In effect, Fenice's inscribed interpretation of the conflict between her love for Cligès and the marriage that her father has arranged with Alis further articulates between the literal difficulties with which she is presented on the level of plot and Chrétien's negotiation of the relationship between his own text and Thomas's poem as a function of *conjointure*, or rather the sort of disunity or fragmentation that haunts Chrétien's first poem. I am thinking first of all of Fenice's striking use of the term "desmembree" in the lines cited above, an image that also appears in the central development of *Erec et Enide* (line 3472). Fenice here invokes the prospect of literal dismemberment as a preferable alternative to the type of division that Yseut's body undergoes in the *Tristan*, shoring up the connection between the form of the text and the poetics of the body:

> 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.
> Mais ce ne repuis je savoir
> Coment puisse le cors avoir
> Cil a qui li cuers s'abandone,
> Quant mes peres autrui me done,
> Ne je ne li os contredire.
> Et quant il iert de mon cors sire,
> S'il en fait rien que je ne *vueille*,
> N'est pas droiz qu'un autre i acueille,
> Ne cil ne puet fame espouser
> Sanz sa fiance trespasser,
> Einz avra, s'en ne li fet tort,
> Cligés l'empire aprés sa mort. (Lines 3106-30)

Placed at the beginning of the development leading up to the midpoint of the romance, Fenice's discourse on Yseut in connection with her own situation with Cligès, Alis, and her father, treats issues of fidelity, choice, love, and marriage that are at the center of the poem. But

[259] The omitted passage corresponds to lines 3099-245 in ed. Méla and Collet and is accommodated rhythmically through the addition of a verse; see the critical apparatus in *Cligès*, ed. Stewart Gregory and Claude Luttrell (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 1993), p. 113, which identifies but does not gloss this variant.

it is also a rather conspicuous statement about the relationship between one and two, integrity and division, potentially applicable to Chrétien's elusive concept of joining together different narrative themes and parts. Indeed, what begins as a literary polemic surrounding the union of heart and body and the speaker's (Fenice's) desire to reserve both for Tristan soon opens out onto questions of politics and biopolitics that connect the present passage to the ending of Alexandre's story, destabilizing past readings of the heroine's purely amatory motivation, as well as her culpability and duplicity with regard to Alis. Reichert's interpretation of Fenice's behavior holds that she is not "morally" superior to Yseut, for she "still deceives her husband in order to pursue an adulterous relationship."[260] In a similar spirit, Haidu, in discussing Fenice's character, focuses on her "duplicitly," pointing out, with respect to the scene of Fenice's false death and resurrection, that "it is difficult to believe how critics have considered Fénice the incarnation of Chrétien's moral ideal."[261] While I would argue that Chrétien had little interest in "moral" ideals in general, Haidu, by interpreting Fenice largely in terms of her deceptiveness, self-interest, and her preference for Cligès, overlooks other important aspects of the heroine's ethics in relation to Alis and Cligès.[262] To follow the details of the text, one of Fenice's desires is to retain control over her body, implying a right to choose to whom she will "give" herself. Thus, in lines 3119-26, the threat of being given to Alis (by her father), who would have power over her body despite her wishes ("que je ne *vueille*"), contrasts markedly with the narrator's earlier remarks on giving one's heart to someone else. Furthermore, the opposition of choice and arrangement, objectivity and subjectivity, in this passage recalls the dynamics of gender and silence in *Erec et Enide*, offering a partial apology of Fenice's conduct that builds upon Chrétien's first romance. On the other hand, her address to Thessala exhibits a more overtly political dimension in the sense that Fenice is equally, if not especially, concerned with the implications of her marriage for Cligès's future. As she points out in lines 3127-30, Alis cannot get married without breaking his promise to Alexandre. Were Fenice to sleep with Alis, Cligès would eventually be disinherited, a possibility that she firmly refuses to entertain: "Ja de moi ne puisse enfes nestre / Par coi il soit deseritez" (lines 3146-47). In fact, Fenice goes as far as to state that she would rather be buried than diminish Cligès's honor ("Mais je n'ai pas Cligés si vil / Qu'ainz ne volsisse estre enterree / Que par moi perde une denree / De l'ennor qui soë doit estre" [lines 3142-45]), an additional prefiguration of the scene of the false death, where she will be buried alive.

In addition to connecting the dots between many of the themes and episodes of the first half of the poem and pointing forward to subsequent developments in the narrative, Fenice's long monologue in response to Thessala's diagnosis represents in my view a particularly significant step in Chrétien's reaction to the *Tristan.* Not only does her insistence on preserving Cligès's claim to the throne add a political layer to story that is not a part of the Tristan legends, but the sheer consciousness and complexity of her reasoning with regard to the prospect of marrying Alis serve more generally to distinguish her decision from the type of love without intention characteristic of Tristan and Yseut.[263] This point is driven home by the context of the

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[260] Reichert, *Between Courtly Literature and Al-Andalus*, 77.

[261] Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in* Cligès *and* Perceval (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 92-93.

[262] Haidu locates three "demands" in Fenice's address to Thessala: "First, that she endure no *partage* . . . Second, granted that she will have only one man, she would prefer Cligès. Three, she wants Cligès without harming her reputation" (ibid., 104).

[263] For a rigorous lexical and philological analysis of desire in Thomas, see David F. Hult, "Thomas's *Raisun*: *Désir*, *Vouloir*, *Pouvoir*," in Daniel E. O'Sullivan and Laurie Shephard, eds., *Shaping Courtliness in Medieval France: Essays in Honor of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 107-22.

heroine's remarks, which refer to the Tristanian intertext while also being directly juxtaposed with the making of the potion for Alis, Chrétien's first twist on Thomas's *breuvage*. Indeed, it is precisely at this moment—following Fenice's request to employ whatever means necessary to keep her from having to sleep with Alis—that Thessala states her plan to make a potion powerful enough to trick the emperor, as reported by the narrator:

> Lors li dist sa maistre et otroie
> Que tant fera conjuremenz
> Et posons et enchantemenz
> Que ja de cel empereor
> Mar avra doute ne poor,
> Des qu'il avra beü d'un boivre
> Que cele li donra a boivre,
> Et si gerront ensemble andui,
> Mais ja n'iert sole avec lui
> Qu'ausint ne puist estre a seür
> Com s'entr'eus .II. eüst .I. mur.
> Mais de seul tant ne li anuit
> Se par songe a lui se deduit,
> Car quant il dormira forment,
> De lui avra joie en dormant,
> Et cuidera tout entresait
> Que en veillant sa joie en ait,
> Ne ja rien n'en tendra a songe
> N'a fauseté ne a mençonge.
> Einsint de lui se deduira
> Qu'an dormant veillier cuidera. (Lines 3150-70)

Not only is it Alis who ingests the potion in *Cligès*, and not Fenice and Cligès, but Chrétien's version of the love potion will not function in the same manner as Thomas's—that is, to make Alis fall in love with Fenice. Instead, this *boivre* will induce a dream so real that the emperor will believe that he is deriving pleasure from a body that is beside him but that he never touches. Moreover, the potion is not administered accidentally but deliberately to Alis. Or rather, Chrétien takes this opportunity to play once again on the difference between intended and unintended language and action, conjuring up the Tristanian intertext while taking his distance from it. For while Fenice and Thessala intend the potion for Alis, Cligès—like the boy who serves Tristan in Thomas or Tristan himself, who then gives the beverage to Iseut—remains unaware of the true nature of the *boivre* even as he pours it into his uncle's cup (lines 3263-67), a dynamic of erroneous transmission. Thessala also convinces Cligès to conceal the provenance of the drink, that is, to lie to Alis, but about what exactly he does not know (lines 3235-62). That the script Cligès is given should state that he found the *boivre* on accident—"par aventure" (line 3248)—might be interpreted as a linguistic prop in the drama of intention and error staged across these lines, one geared toward helping readers see past the literal.

With all of this in mind, I would like to return now to the reception of Chrétien's second midpoint in the critical literature on *Cligès*, especially the readings proposed by Freeman and Mihaela Voicu of the figurative significance of the potion and the dream. Freeman has written

extensively on this passage, with an emphasis on the figure of Thessala, arguing, for instance, that "The expectations of the reader are thwarted and reoriented when the midpoint of *Cligès* focuses on a Greek woman, the sorceress Thessala, Fenice's servant and nurse."[264] What is potentially surprising in this reading, one supposes, is that the central passage of the work would not pertain to the identity or function of the eponymous hero or to Fenice, but rather to a secondary character. In order to justify a possible deviation from theorizations of the poetics of the midpoint in Chrétien's romances, including her own, Freeman posits an elaborate parallel between the Greek sorceress and the author, the potion and the poem:

> Her [Thessala's] identity is not significant in terms of her personal history; we are only introduced to her. But as encompassed in the narrative sequence of *Cligés*, she does represent an alternate identity and a new name for a constant figure of the text: the poet-narrator of the Prologue. Thessala, in her permutation of the *Tristan* potion, reveals in a novel and significant fashion his identity in relation to the text and in his service to the audience.[265]

Like Thessala, Freeman warrants, Chrétien (or the figure to whom she refers as the "poet-narrator")

> uses a number of rich imported materials, such as the *Tristan* corpus, the *Roman d'Eneas* and Ovid. Chrétien also mixes and "grinds up" his material, as in his handling of elements taken from these texts. Just as Thessala makes her mixture of imported ingredients clear, so does Chrétien have the audience recognize the clarity of his recombination of a number of textual transferences.[266]

While it is true that Chrétien combines references to a variety of existing texts in *Cligès* as elsewhere, the potion in and of itself, as the critic specifies, recalls one key poetic ingredient in particular, the *Tristan*.[267] One may therefore quibble with the generality and hyperbole of Freeman's comparison of Thessala to Chrétien. In the end, she even goes as far as to claim that they are facets of the same character "just as Yvain and Le Chevalier au Lion or Lancelot and Le Chevalier de la Charrette are each one and the same person, though seen at different times and in different perspectives . . . They are similar and similarly presented in the narrative."[268]

Yet a more substantive line of questioning, following Voicu's comments on the scene in which Alis consumes Thessala's potion, might base itself on matters of stylistics. Freeman remarks that "the midpoint's revelation is not an isolated phenomenon in this romance, but rather

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[264] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 109.
[265] Ibid., 111. On the function of the midpoint, see ibid., 109 and Karl D. Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*," in Kelly, ed., *Symposium*:182-231, esp. 207-208, 223.
[266] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 113.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid., 111. To take the example of *Yvain* that Freeman uses above, the relationship between Yvain and the Le Chevalier au Lion is not a question of perspective but rather character evolution (see Chapter 3). Of course, Chrétien does not become Thessala in the same way that Yvain evolves into Le Chevalier au Lion, and although the author clearly enjoyed blurring the line between the respective realms of character and poet, I would insist that he never lost sight of it entirely. This is not to say that Freeman's comparison is invalid or uncompelling, but that it is exaggerated.

part of a *conjointure* of similar moments."[269] More specifically, what she designates as the middle of the poem, Thessala's preparation of the potion, is not set off from the following action but functions on a basic level to prepare the scene of Alis's erotic illusion, an episode found even closer to the numerical center of the poem (lines 3268-3333) that may also be more eloquent with regard to the interpretation of the romance as a whole than the potential echoes between the descriptions of Thessala as sorceress and Chrétien as author.[270] Voicu has read the scene in question as the midpoint proper of the work, observing that it is situated "juste au milieu du roman."[271] For Voicu, whose interpretation of the poem is coordinated around the concept of illusion and the elusiveness of the characters' reality, "Le long passage que Chrétien développe sur l'illusion érotique d'Alis représente, à plusieurs égards, la quintessence du roman."[272] What, then, does the passage reveal about the motif of illusion, and in what other ways does the poet draw attention to the importance of this moment in the text?

We remember that in *Erec et Enide* the text signals the significance of the threat to Erec's life by repeating the point several times over the course of a brief passage; in *Yvain*, a similarly dense repetition is also a feature of the midpoint (Chapter 3). Along similar lines, Voicu has noted the insistent repetition in *Cligès* of the term "neent" ("nothing") in the center of the poem. Here the narrator relates Alis's experience as he dreams: seeing, holding, etc. nothing after having drunk the potion:

> Tenir la cuide, n'en tient mie,
> Mais de neent est a grant ese,
> Neent enbrace et neent baise,
> Neent tient et neent acole,
> Neent voit, a neent parole,
> A neent tence, a neent luite.
> Molt fu bien la poisons confite
> Qui si le travaille et demaine.
> De neent est en si grant poine,
> Car por voir cuide et si s'en prise
> Qu'il ait la forteresce prise. (Lines 3312-22)

Repeated no fewer than ten times in seven lines, the word denoting "nothing" is given a paradoxical presence at the heart of Chrétien's poem. In the light of an earlier comparison of Cligès to Ovid's Narcissus, Voicu takes the term as an emblem of literary self-referentiality or *littérarité*:

> On dirait un miroir à multiples facettes, qui reflète l'illusion, qui la capte, pour la renvoyer aussitôt sous-tendre différents épisodes de l'œuvre . . . La répétition

[269] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 115.
[270] In fact, the account of Alis's dream spans the exact center of the poem in Guiot's copy, composed of 6,664 verses (versus 6,700 in ed. Méla and Collet). To be sure, the placement of the scene is only one among other indications of its importance, and while in general the structure of Chrétien's romances seems remarkably precise in regard of the midpoint, medieval readers would not have had access to verse numbers in the same way that readers today do. But see also my discussion of the midpoint of *Erec et Enide* in Chapter 1.
[271] Mihaela Voicu, "*Cligès* ou les miroirs de l'illusion," in Danielle Quéruel, ed., *Amour et chevalerie dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes. Actes du colloque de Troyes, 1992* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995): 231-46 (237).
[272] Ibid., 237.

> obsessive de "néant" dans le passage cité ci-dessus et l'allusion à Narcisse placent donc le texte sous le signe de l'autoréflexivité.[273]

But what does it mean, more specifically, to "capture" nothing? And if this apparently key passage is nothing more than a reference to the poem as literary artefact, *as* "nothing" in Voicu's sense of the term, then why should it interest readers of the romance? Do these lines function solely to highlight the part of fiction, or illusion, in Chrétien's poem?

Rather than take the side of either Voicu or Freeman, I would like to suggest a third possible reading of the midpoint of *Cligès* situated at the crossroads of their respective interpretations, appear though they might to have very little—or nothing—in common (the one emphasizing Chrétien's role as a literary magician, turning bits and pieces of various source texts into a new substance, the other seizing upon the nothingness of a quasi-fractal poetic language consisting of indeterminate layers of artifice from which readers may derive a certain pleasure). Indeed, although I strongly agree with Voicu that the midpoint of *Cligès* is intended to offer a commentary on the romance, I want to argue—keeping in mind Freeman's thesis concerning the inherently dialogic nature of poetic activity in *Cligès*—that this passage necessarily also concerns the relation of Chrétien's text to the *Tristan*, or what I have taken to calling the "minus function" in *Cligès*. As a passage pertaining to the interpretation of an absence, conveyed by the very term "neent," the midpoint of *Cligès* is undoubtedly the most explicit example in Chrétien's second romance of the blank, confronting interpreters inside and outside of the text with a highly visible lack, situated at one of the principal junctures in the romance. However, Alis mistakes his vision of Fenice's body for reality, an erroneous interpretation that one might think to compare to Erec's defective reading of Enide's *parole* in *Erec et Enide*. Voicu remarks in passing on the possible divergence between the perspective of Alis and that of Chrétien's readership, stating,

> Alis est trompé par la potion mais, au fond, tout comme le lecteur, il n'étreint qu'une fiction (à la seule différence près que le lecteur sait ou devrait savoir jouer le jeu de la "fiction"). Car le propre de la fiction, c'est justement d'être néant![274]

The view of Chrétien's fiction as being self-consciously gratuitous, delighting in its own lack of meaning, is not limited to Voicu's analysis but also guides one of the main pieces of criticism on *Yvain* or *Le Chevalier au Lion* that I shall discuss in the following chapter, Peter's Haidu's book on symbolism from *Erec et Enide* to the *Perceval*. As with Haidu's reading of the antisymbol based on the figure of the lion's tail in *Yvain*, Voicu's argument for the negation of meaning in *Cligès* fails to acknowledge the *substance* of the midpoint despite the appearance of a representational and structural vacuum, a point which is suggested within the text by the surprising proliferation of the word "neent." Taken at face value, "neent" is an empty signifier, and one might therefore be tempted to follow Voicu's interpretation. And yet, in terms of Chrétien's intertextual play in *Cligès*, the word is also referentially situated: nothing refers to something.

In addition to the basic echo between the potions affecting Tristan and Alis, the scene of the latter's dream in *Cligès* presents at least two further reminiscences of Thomas's *Tristan*. The first passage relates the theatrical night of Yseut's wedding day. In order to avoid sleeping with

[273] Ibid., 237-38.
[274] Ibid., 242.

the king (for now), Yseut begs her servant, Brangien, to take her place in the royal chamber (lines 119-27).[275] Brangien agrees, dresses up as the queen, and gets into bed (lines 128-33). Notably, Yseut's ploy is not presented as a means of staying a virgin or remaining faithful to her lover, which are clearly Fenice's objectives in *Cligès*. Rather, the *Tristan* makes it clear that the stratagem is designed to prevent Marc from discovering that Yseut is no longer a virgin: a temporary dissimulation rather than an "out." It is for this reason precisely, the narrator states, that Brangien, who is still a *pucelle*, is so well suited to the task (lines 127-28).

To come back here to my discussion of the reasoning behind and implicit defense of Fenice's choice *not* to sleep with Alis, this difference in the sexual politics of the nuptial bed in the *Tristan* and in *Cligès* is all the more interesting when viewed from the angle of twelfth-century marriage practices. In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien took a clear interest in the ideas surrounding matrimony in the late twelfth-century, even showing support for the Church's view of female consent. Now, for the twelfth-century Italian monk Gratian, who was responsible for "codif[ying] and systematiz[ing]" an authoritative collection of canon law (some version of which Chrétien may well have been familiar with), the consent of both parties was not the only requirement for a marriage to be considered valid.[276] As Jeffrey Richards explains, "There were," in fact, "two stages necessary for its validation: consent (spiritual) and consummation (physical). If either were not present, the marriage was invalid."[277] Importantly, the status of the marriage of Alis and Fenice, as well as the entire question of whether or not an adultery is committed by Chrétien's heroic couple, therefore needs reconsidering, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the *Tristan*. Unlike Yseut, who, fearing that her servant will betray her and refuse to leave the nuptial bed, eventually replaces Brangien, sleeps with the king, and thereby consummates their marriage (lines 146-50), Fenice will never sleep with Alis. (Here a notable similarity emerges between the two romances despite key differences: just as Alis fails to differentiate between body and dream, in the end Thomas's Marc does not notice the difference between Brangien and Yseut.[278]) As in *Erec et Enide*, then, two versions of the heroine are imagined, and the pointed contrasts between them, coupled with the conjugal contexts of Chrétien's poem, ultimately serve the apology of his heroine.[279]

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[275] The text of Thomas's *Tristan* in this portion of the romance is, of course, fragmentary. The reading that I propose above is based upon Short and Baumgartner's reconstruction of the original.

[276] This description of Gratian and his work on canon law follows Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence, and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 27.

[277] Ibid.

[278] There is enough surviving text from Thomas's romance to suggest that Marc's lack of discrimination is due, in part at least, to the wine he has consumed. His inebriation then distinguishes itself ironically from Tristan's state after having drunk the potion, which of course causes him to love one, and only one, woman. Magic and intoxication are also linked in *Cligès*, where the *boivre* is presented to the king as (and presumably in) wine.

[279] The twelfth-century debate on marriage and consummation, otherwise known as the Paris-Bologna controversy or the *consensus-copula* debate, involved two key figures: Gratian (in Bologna), whose *Decretum* or *Concordia discordantium canonum*, dates from about 1140, and Peter Lombard (in Paris), his *Libri IV Sententiarum* appearing roughly ten years later. Unlike Gratian, Lombard did not believe that physical consummation was required for a marriage to be considered valid or "complete" (*perfectum*). The resolution issued later in the century by Alexandre III (1159-81) held, in brief, that consummation was not essential but "integral," an opaque distinction suggestive of the continuing importance of physical consummation in the eyes of the Church. While it is difficult to say to what extent Chrétien followed the debate, it is highly conceivable that he encountered one or both of these texts at some point before the composition of *Cligès*. Both written using a dialectical method similar to that of Abelard, as reflected in the full title of Gratian's work, they may have been all the more appealing to Chrétien's sensibilities as a poet and a thinker. In the end, however, whether or not the ambiguous status of Fenice's marriage amounts to a reference to contemporaneous theological debate is not paramount. At any rate, the terms of the controversy help to

The second moment from the *Tristan* that might come to the reader's mind in the context of Alis's erotic dream comes down to us via the Turin manuscript of the romance[280] and is often entitled "La Salle aux Images (or Statues)" in modern editions. The resonance between it and our passage in *Cligès* is again remarkable, although the differences between them are also revealing with respect to Chrétien's "neent." Before a statue, or *himage*, of Yseut, Tristan remembers the pleasures and the pains of love, as follows:

> . . . e les deliz des granz amors
> e lors travaus e lor dolurs
> e lor paignes e lor ahans
> recorde a l'himage Tristrans.
> Molt la baise quant est haitez,
> corrusce soi quant est irez,
> que par penser, que par songes,
> que par craire en son cuer mençoinges,
> que ele mette lui en obli
> ou que ele ait acun autre ami,
> que ele ne se pusse consiurer
> que li n'estoce autre amer
> que mieuz a sa volunté l'ait.
> Hicest penser errer le fait,
> errur son corage debote . . .
> Quan que il pense a l'image dit;
> pois s'en desseivre un petit,
> regarde en la main Ysodt,
> qui l'anel d'or doner li volt,
> vait la chere e le senblant
> que au departir fait son amant.
> Menbre lui de la covenance

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illuminate the complexity of what has frequently been reduced in criticism to a straightforward marriage in *Cligès*, as well as the ideology of consummation that seems to inform, or derive from, Chrétien's text. Two features of the romance in particular come to mind in addition to Alis's dreamt-of intercourse with Fenice. The first is the high incidence of the term "pucele" (a young girl, i.e., a virgin) in *Cligès*, which is carefully distinguished on a sexual level from "dame," as in Thomas. It is in this way that the narrator refers to Fenice when he reveals her name, "Fenice ot la pucele non" (line 2681), as is also the case in many subsequent passages. One particularly salient example comes when the narrator states Cligès's proper name while still designating Fenice as *pucele*: "De la pucele et de Cligés / M'estuet parler des ore mes (lines 2811-12; see also 2845, 3004). In the lines immediately preceding the account of Alis's dream, such usage multiplies (lines 3292, 3307, -10, with "neent" occurring from 3313 onward). Fenice herself also makes the *pucele* / *dame* distinction quite clearly (lines 5174-78; see also the following section). Secondly, the notion of *una caro*, also called *unum corpus*, so central to Gratian's writing on marriage and adultery might be seen to anticipate Chrétien's discussion of the unity of the body in connection with the relationship of Cligès and Fenice in *Cligès*, as opposed to its division in Thomas's *Tristan*. As John Alesandro puts it, "In the twelfth century, the concepts of 'one flesh' and the physical consummation of marriage became even more significant as the Church addressed and resolved (to a certain extent) a fundamental disagreement about marriage . . ." This account of the debate and, in particular, Gratian's contribution is based on Alesandro's rigorous analysis of *una caro* in **"**Una Caro and the Consummation of Marriage in the *Decretum Gratiani*," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Kanonistische Abteilung* 98.1 (2013): 64-148, quoted at 65.

[280] On this manuscript, see *Tristan et Yseut: les premières versions européennes*, ed. Christiane Marchello et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 1240.

qu'il ot a la deseverance:
hidonc plure e merci crie
de ce que pensa folie,
e siet bien que il est deceu
de la fole irur que il a eu.
Por içe fist il ceste image
que dire li volt son corage,
son bon penser e sa fole errur,
sa paigne, sa joie d'amor,
car ne sot vers cui descovrir
ne son voler ne son desir.
Tristran d'amor si se contient:
sovent s'en vait, sovent revent,
sovent li mostre bel semblant
e sovent lait, come diz devant.
Hice li fait faire l'amor
que met son corage en errur. (Lines 1095-109; 1127-50)

The narrator's long account of Tristan's experience with the statue brings together a number of the most salient themes from Thomas's text as it has been pieced together—the passion and separation of the lovers, Tristan's jealousy, amorous folly, anger, desire, and the sadness inherent to his character, as conveyed by a recurrent play on words.[281] Also significant, in terms of Chrétien's encounter with Thomas's text as I imagine it to have taken place, is the central place accorded in this passage to the rhetoric of error (*errer*, *errur* [x3]), a throwback to the accident at the origin of Tristan's love for Yseut that may also license a comparison between Tristan's errant emotions and thoughts in the absence his lady and Alis's dream of Fenice. (The figure of the *songes* in line 1101, rhyming with *mençoinges* in the following line, further keys the two passages to each other: the same rhyme occurs three times throughout Chrétien's romance, each time either in anticipation [lines 2065-66] or direct reference [3167-68, 6555-56] to Alis's illusions).[282] And in a more basic sense, the *Salle aux images* links up more or less directly with both the scene of the wedding night in the *Tristan* and the middle passage of *Cligès* in its representation of the heroine's body, which is once again replaced, this time by a statue.

In a pertinent and only slightly exaggerated assessment of the challenge in analyzing the relation between Cligès and Tristan in terms of a unitary interpretative paradigm, Freeman states the following:

> It is by far the thorniest problem to sort out when dealing with this narrative [*Cligès*] because it is a relationship that it is complex, difficult to isolate, at times tedious to articulate, always subject to hypothesis, and one which has been argued and reargued for close to a century.[283]

[281] See p. 82 above. On the history of this wordplay, see the introduction to the edition and translation of Thomas's text by Short and Baumgartner (p. 10).
[282] According to the critical apparatus in the edition of Méla and Collet (p. 234), this rhyme exhibits no variance (other than orthographical) in the manuscript tradition.
[283] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 98.

While I by no means wholly disagree with Freeman's point, what I would add to it, vis-à-vis the vestiges of Thomas's text at the midpoint of *Cligès*, is that the difficulty in mapping out the overlap between the two romances, according to the type of one-to-one correspondence that a verb like "isolate" would suggest, represents a hermeneutically productive "problem." Otherwise put, the interference between these two stories may be so hard to isolate because it now *resists* isolation. As I believe, Alis's dream is not simply based on the potion concocted by Yseut's mother, nor is it straightforwardly inspired by the events that transpire on the night of Yseut's wedding, for it also evokes the *Salle aux images*, a scene which, like the dream, toes the line between reality and representation (or hallucination).

It is in this sense, then, that the meaning of Chrétien's "neent" is neither entirely negative nor totally positive with regard to Thomas's text. In its resonance with at least three moments in the latter's romance, the passage relating Alis's dream cannot be reduced to a simple rewriting of any one of them: it is elusive because it is multiple, overlaying different moments from the original text and thereby creating a virtual co(n)text that readers can see but not touch, so to speak. And if we trace the movement from one echo or intertextual "juncture" to the next following the organization of Thomas's narrative, an interesting pattern emerges surrounding the presence or absence of Yseut's body. In the first case, the potion given to Tristan by accident brings him and Yseut together in a real, physical sense. In the second, Marc believes that he is sleeping with Yseut when it is in fact another woman. Lastly, it is not to Yseut but a statue of the heroine that Tristan shows his affection. In *Cligès*, it is not with the woman next to him that Alis interacts but a dream vision: "neent." My point here is that Chrétien has taken the topos of the absent body to a new extreme. Rather than referring himself to the depiction of the heroine's body in Thomas's text, he has elaborated a fourth scene functioning at the same time to expand upon the *Tristan* and to subtract it from his own romance, cultivating a frame of reference that is ultimately transcended or transgressed through the reduction of Fenice's body to a state of nothingness. The paradoxical configuration of Alis and Fenice at the midpoint of *Cligès*, lying next to each other and yet separated by an irreducible distance, reflects in this regard on the simultaneous presence and absence of Thomas's *Tristan* in Chrétien's romance. More to the point, it offers an additional and concise figuration of the author's minus function: a manner of engaging with literary tradition that is multifaceted, evolving from the kind of allusion and citation that obtains in many sections of Alexandre's story to something much less direct and more difficult to grasp, much like the corporeal evolution of the lady across both romances. For that matter, the theme of the gradual separation of husband and wife, lover and lady in the *Tristan* appears as a highly appropriate locus of attention for an author working through the relationship of his own text to another, midway between separation and togetherness. With an acute understanding of the impossibility of fashioning something from nothing, Chrétien has instead created "nothing" from something. In other words, the stories of Cligès and Tristan are connected by the spaces that separate them, a series of "potential connections" that powerfully illustrate the relevance of Iser's blank to Chrétien's practices as a writer.

In reading the central section of *Cligès*, however, it is not only Iser and his retrospective purchase on the interpretation of Chrétien's poetics but also Abelard and *his* potential bearing on the Champenois poet's compositional strategy that may strike readers interested in the intimacies of poetry and dialectics. On the one hand, the text here voices a fundamental affirmation of Fenice's choice to love Cligès, not Alis, in a significant departure from the representation of Tristan's love for Yseut, gesturing back to the centrality of error and intention in both *Sic et Non* and *Erec et Enide*. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the rapport between Chrétien and

Thomas, two vernacular literary authorities, might best be characterized in its time as dialectical.[284] With *Erec et Enide*, as we have seen, the dialectical structure of the work produced a narrative poetics drawing unexpectedly on forms of fragmentation and rupture, *depecier et corrompre*, as sources of coherence or *conjointure*, a term for which I have advisedly chosen not to attempt a clear-cut definition. From the passage dissecting the relationship between heart and body to the implicit ruminations on Chrétien's rupture with tradition at the midpoint, the interplay of two apparently opposed compositional paradigms also animates the *Cligès*. I turn now to what is in my view the most intricate example of this formal dialectic in the story of Cligès, a moment found later in the text that registers Chrétien's evolving interest in the intertwining nature of composition, reception, and transmission in the literary milieu of twelfth-century French—including, of course, literature in Anglo-Norman.[285]

Graphic Images: Writing and Torture in Cligès

If the hermeneutic or metahermeneutic value of the middle passages in Chrétien's romances is not confined to the central scene itself, as Freeman, Voicu, and I can all agree, then it is my goal in this stage of the analysis to demonstrate how we move from the emperor's oneiric encounter with Fenice to the scene of the heroine's torture, which I believe to be of equal importance for at least two reasons. The first is that it reframes Chrétien's textual dealings with the Tristanian legend according to a vocabulary and a set of images recycled from *Erec et Enide*, which thus reveal a significant degree of coherence between the two poems in terms of the author's ideas about poetic (both formal and thematic) innovation and the dialectical attitude to tradition by which it was conditioned. Yet there is also a relatively new element in the reflection that takes shape over the course of the second half of the romance with respect to literary medium. In brief, whereas the prolonged critique of the *jongleurs* in *Erec et Enide* concerned primarily the deficiencies of an *oral* tradition, which in turn helped to tease out the link between narrative unity and the structure of the written work, the way in which Chrétien's *Cligès* comments upon itself in the scene in question deepens this view of the circulation and transmission of writing to take into account the considerable instability and constant vulnerability of the written word and the physical book in the Middle Ages. Engaging with recent work spanning the analysis of text and manuscript tradition, while incorporating my own archival findings, this section will examine how the discourse on narrative source and structure in *Cligès* can be illumined by a consideration of the material character of medieval writing.

The figurative joints between the passage relating Fenice's false death and torture and the account of Alis's dream are numerous, ranging from the obvious to a series of more subtle similarities. Here Fenice collaborates once more with Thessala in order to achieve a more

[284] While the link between Abelard and Chrétien in *Cligès* may seem less direct than was the case in *Erec et Enide*, the kind of dialectical narrative logic, structure, and vocabulary observed in the latter is equally prominent in the former. Helen Laurie has furthermore contended that aspects of the representation of love in *Cligès* were calqued on the *Letters* of Abelard and Heloise: see "*Cligès* and the Legend of Abelard and Heloise," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 107 (1991): 324-42.

[285] Important recent work stresses the foundational role played in the twelfth century by French literature produced in England: see, for one eloquent example, Simon Gaunt, "French Literature Abroad: Towards an Alternative History of French Literature," *Interfaces 1* (2015): 25-61, esp. 26-40. The circulation of Thomas's romance in France supports Gaunt's argument in favor of a "centripetal" literary history (ibid., 26).

definitive (and indeed permanent) separation from Alis. Moreover, the passage is framed by an additional reference to Tristan and Yseut, again voiced by Fenice:

> 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'amor 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. (Lines 5195-204)

These lines associate the potential division of the heroine's body between Alis and Cligès and the refusal to be like Tristan and Yseut, an association that should by this point in the text be familiar.[286] The way in which Tristan and Yseut are evoked, not as characters *per se* but rather as names (esp. lines 5195-97, which one could translate as, "You shall never be called 'Tristan,' / nor I 'Yseut'"), is also noteworthy as a reminder of the origins of the heroine's name in "fenix," a being that is, by definition, *sui generis* (line 2685); Fenice and Yseut cannot be members of the same metaphorical species. As before, the plan is founded on the lady's *volenté*: "Quant Cligés ot sa volenté, / Si li a tot acreanté / Et dit que molt sera bien fait" (lines 5215-17). At first, Cligès proposes that they escape to Brittany, arguing that they will receive a warmer welcome there than Helen did in Troy (lines 5233-38). Significantly, however, Fenice's "reading" of this proposal identifies a different possible comparison: "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" (lines 5244-47). These lines, which resonate with the mention of "Iseut la Blonde" in line 5 of the prologue, further demonstrate the metafictional importance of Fenice's character vis-à-vis Chrétien's reaction to the Tristan legends, while inscribing what we might call the author's intertextual priorities. Indeed, Chrétien's romance presents numerous possible echoes with prior literature, but it is to the *Tristan*, time and again, that the text appears to give the leading place. It is all the more unsurprising in this light that the strategem Fenice opts for—to feign illness, then death, be buried in a sepulcher that Cligès will have constructed for her, and escape to a place (as yet unspecified) where no one will discover the two (lines 5265-303)—should center around a second potion, one that Fenice will consume and that will allow her to "faire morte" (5267), play dead.[287] In this part, even more so than in the preparations for Alis's dream, Chrétien underscores the deliberateness of Fenice's strategy by casting her as the architect of the scenes to follow, voicing some thirty-nine continuous octosyllables of narrative exposition through her character.

There is, however, one significant detail in the narrative that the heroine fails to anticipate in this monologue. This is, of course, the curious and *ex abrupto* arrival of three doctors from

[286] The lines directly preceding the above passage likewise underscore the unity of the lovers in heart and body: "—Dame, donc sunt ci ovec nos / Andui li cuer, si com vos dites, / Car li miens est vostre toz quites. / —Amis, et vos ravez le mien, / Si nos entracordommes bien. / . . . / Vostre est mes cuers, vostre est mes cors" (lines 5166-70, -86). The placement of this love avowal just before the creation of the second potion surely also gestures towards the *Tristan* (Thomas's "Premiers aveux d'amour"), though it reverses the sequence of events.

[287] Fenice's idea is not without irony, as it would seem to be far more reminiscent of the *Tristan* from the reader's standpoint than is Cligès's initial suggestion.

Salerno during the episode where Fenice feigns her illness. The doctors stop at the sound of the cries and tears of the people in Greece, who are mourning the imminent loss of Fenice (lines 5735-43). When the doctors hear that Fenice is refusing all medical attention, they remember the story of the wife of Salomon: "Lors lor sovint de Salemon / Cui sa femme tant enhaï / Qu'an guise de mort le tr[a]ï" (lines 5796-98).

Now, it is often been argued that the most remarkable thing about the doctors' diagnosis is that it is accurate: that they are "right." Perhaps it was Haidu who made this argument in the strongest terms, going as far as to posit the "excellence" of the physicians, a detail that is not (unsurprisingly) in the text:

> Before turning to the gruesome details of the examination, let us stress that the three excellent physicians from the greatest center of medical culture of their time are entirely correct in the diagnosis. Not only have they understood Fénice's "illness" before laying eyes on her, they have even traced it back to its literary source![288]

With respect to the ensuing action, where the doctors are discovered as they torture Fenice's body, Haidu furthermore states,

> If Chrétien calls them *li felon ribaut* (5919) and congratulates the ladies of the palace who toss them out of a window with *Einz mialz nel firent nules dames* (5966), he has made quite sure before presenting us with the scene of Fenice's "martyrdom" that we understand how right the three men are.[289]

Given Chrétien's concerns with proof and knowledge, apparent in *Erec et Enide* and elsewhere in the corpus (Chapter 3), however, how "right" can the doctors be before they even examine the patient's body? The text hints at this problem through a conspicuous syntactical turn at variance with the doctors' confidence: "*Espoir* autel a ceste fait" (line 5799)—"Celle-ci a *peut-être* agi de même," per Méla and Collet in modern French (my emphasis). And as Haidu would seem to acknowledge, the agonistic description of the three as *felon* and their brutal deaths do not exactly amount to a ringing endorsement of their practices on the part of narrator or author. One might also turn the doctors' "literary" analysis against them. Is it not peculiar that three physicians should cite another text, Haidu's "literary source," rather than some sort of medical wisdom in assessing Fenice's condition? An alternate interpretation might take the doctors' diagnosis as an additional example of inscribed misreading in *Cligès* and thus as a challenge to readers of the romance to see what these characters, like Alis before them, cannot. What is most striking from this perspective is not the diagnosis as Haidu and others have understood it—that Fenice may only be pretending to be dying (a good guess)—but the motivation that the doctors erroneously impute to Fenice, analogized here to the source or cause of an illness: that she has betrayed, *traï*, her husband like the wife of Solomon. As I have already

[288] Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, 94. See also Naomi Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other: Jewish-Christian Relations in *Cligès* and MS Michael 569(*), *Speculum* 91.2 (2016): 374-421 (407), who claims about the doctors, "It is not so much their Salernitan origin as their devastating ability to 'read' Fenice's 'death' as a deceitful ruse that aligns the doctors with Jewish stereotypes and the Christian anxieties they aroused."

[289] Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, 94. The line numbers Haidu references correspond to lines 5923 and 5970 in Méla and Collet's edition.

contended in the context of the marriage and the midpoint, Fenice's actions can only with difficulty be qualified as treacherous, since the text calls into question the validity of Fenice's marriage to Alis by underscoring her virginity (*supra*). In fact, Fenice makes this point again in the passage preceding her false death, reminding readers that she is a *pucele*:

> Et sachiez bien, se Dex me gart,
> Qu'onc vostre uncles n'ot en moi part,
> Car moi ne plot ne lui ne lut.
> Unques encor ne me quenut
> Si come Adam conut sa femme.
> A tort sui apelee dame,
> Mes bien sai, qui dame m'apele
> Ne set que je soie pucele. (Lines 5171-78)

Moreover, Fenice's intentions in avoiding physical contact with the emperor are framed quite differently elsewhere in the text than they are by the doctors, that is, as a means to protect Cligès's claim to the throne against Alis's violation of the agreement reached with Alexandre—and to preserve the integrity of her body instead of dividing it between two men, as Yseut had done. A part of the point here is, I think, to convey the irony in diagnosing a disease that does not exist, for if in fact the doctors are "right" in their assumption, what business do they have evaluating Fenice's actions—that is, passing an ethical judgment? Chrétien makes his readers work harder to find the truth than the doctors, and it is interesting to observe on this note how the specifics of the diagnosis allow for the audience to question it on textual and intertextual, as opposed to medical, grounds.[290] It is reminiscent in this regard of Cligès's attempt to relate his story to that of Helen and Paris, a comparison that is ultimately trumped by Fenice's reference to the legend of Tristan and Yseut. Similarly, a blank opens up between the doctors' literary "diagnosis" of the resemblance between Fenice and the wife of Solomon and the context with which Fenice herself, who acts in many ways as the voice of intertextuality in *Cligès*,[291] has provided the audience. She is inspired not by the unfaithfulness of Solomon's wife, but by Yseut, who is positioned here as the true (negative) exemplum.

The reflection on intention and error that runs through the scene of the doctors' arrival, coupled with Fenice's repeated references to Yseut and Tristan, represents a powerful *mise en scène* for the following portion of this episode, dealing with the torture of the heroine at the hands of the doctors from Salerno. When their leader, or *maistres*, places his hands on Fenice's chest and side, he feels her heart beating and concludes that she is still alive (lines 5808-15). The *maistres* promises to bring Fenice back to life and prove that he has done so by making her speak; should he not succeed in reviving her, he adds, the emperor may torture or hang him (lines 5820-24). The *maistres* now insists that everyone except for his two colleagues leave the room so that they may examine the patient *priveement* (lines 5838-45, esp. 5841). Once they are alone in the room with Fenice, the three doctors proceed to tear off her clothing by force—"a force," without using scissors or a knife, as specified in the text (lines 5854-56). They then attempt to coax her into speaking, telling her that they are certain she is alive and that they will

[290] Howell, by contrast, argues that the "truth" of which readers of the text are aware is the same as that perceived by the doctors ("Reflecting [on] the Other," 407).
[291] Earlier in this episode, Fenice also cites Saint Paul. On this reference and Fenice's interpretation of the passage in question, see Voicu, "*Cligès* ou les miroirs de l'illusion," 240. See also Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 127-28.

help her conceal her deceitful intentions, language that the narrator is quick to identify as a lie (lines 5874-75).[292] Having failed to make her speak, the doctors throw her from the coffin where she lies and brutally strike and beat her, but she still does not say a word (lines 5882-85). They threaten to submit her "feeble" body to such monstrous torture as has never been seen before (lines 5886-91) and repeat their initial accusation as to the treacherousness of Fenice's actions, using a vocabulary of *folie* that also brings to mind the passion of Tristan and Yseut (lines 5892-5902). Finally, the torturers turn their attention to their victim's skin, or flesh (*char*). They whip and beat her flesh until it has been pierced and her blood runs down to the ground (5904-12), boil lead, and pour it onto her palms while it is still boiling (lines 5922-26).

While many scholars have already remarked upon the excessive and shocking nature of the scene of Fenice's torture, there has been little if any discussion, to my knowledge, of the way in which the heroine's wounds relate to Chrétien's reflection on the poetics of textual transmission, specifically in the context of his rewriting of the *Tristan*.[293] I would like to draw attention in this regard to the terminology that the narrator uses to describe the mutilation of Fenice's flesh in particular:

> Et tant li batent sa char tendre
> Que il en funt le sanc espendre.
> Quant des coroies l'unt batue
> Tant que la char li unt rompue
> Et li sanc contreval li cort . . .
> Lors dient que il lor estuet
> Feu et plom querre, sel fondront,
> En la main geter il voldront
> Ençois que parler ne la facent. (Lines 5907-11, -16-19)

Among the most striking elements in this passage is the choice of "rompue," "broken" or "torn apart," to refer to Fenice's skin as she is being tortured. Related to "corrompre," as both a possible synonym and its Old French etymon,[294] the verb "rompre" reveals a possible connection between this scene and the lexicon of textual mutilation, especially corruption and fragmentation, introduced in *Erec et Enide*. If the echo in this line is only partial, it is repeated and in some sense completed by Enide, who states the following to Cligès in the wake of her torture: "Merveille iert se vive en eschap, / Car molt m'ont li mire blecie, / *Ma char rompue et depecie*" (lines 6194-96; my emphasis). Cursing the allegory Death when they hear of the empress's illness, the entire city of Constantinople similarly exclaims in unison, "Trop est Dex de grant patience / Quant il te soefre avoir poissance / Des soës choses *despecier*" (lines 5723-25). The concentration of this highly distinctive lexicon in the mouths of at least three characters or groups of characters in this stretch of the narrative, including that of the narrator, channel the audience's attention toward a specific and poetically charged imagery. In specific, Fenice's words and their variations liken the "error" of the doctors to that committed by the incompetent

[292] Here the doctors' discourse revives the dynamics of gender and language at work in *Erec et Enide*, particularly their insistence that Fenice must not refuse their offer ("Nel devez mie refuser" [line 5873]). In this instance, however, they are trying to force her to speak, not to remain silent; but see also Chapter 1, 49.
[293] For a reading of the anti-Judaic valences of the torture scene, see Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other," esp. 405. Haidu also offers an analysis of the "horror" of this scene in *Aesthetic Distance*, 95-96.
[294] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015), 3015.

jongleurs in *Erec et Enide*, asking readers to consider the potential figurative importance of the whipping and cutting of the skin with regard to Chrétien's response to tradition in *Cligès*.[295]

In this regard, I believe that it is useful to think back to the other dominant form of division or disintegration invoked throughout Chrétien's second romance: the trope of separation in the story of Tristan and Yseut and specifically the repartition of the queen's body between Marc and Tristan, which contrasts with the extensive commentaries on the oneness of Cligès and Fenice, in body and in heart. As Fenice makes clear, this episode is designed as an escape not only from Alis but also, and by the same token, from the fate suffered by Thomas's legendary couple (*supra*). In other words, Chrétien responds here to the figurative corporeal fragmentation of the heroine in the *Tristan* with a scene of literal rupture and tearing apart, which Fenice must endure in order to keep her amorous body *intact* and preserve the singularity of her relationship with Cligès.[296]

In this classic instantiation of the author's dialectical poetics, the unity of character and text is expressed through and even *as* disunity. To be clear, however, I am not suggesting that Chrétien aligns himself with the doctors. On the contrary, the narrator condemns them and their actions repeatedly in a quasi-béroulian manner, and the vocabulary of transmission that resurfaces in this passage, as noted above, creates a *rapprochement* between the three physicians and the silencing force of the *jongleurs* in the first part of *Erec et Enide*. What we might rather say is that Chrétien is using this scene at once to point up the problem with the source and to transform it into a device that suits his own purposes, willfully admitting to the type of literary violence to which he has subjected Thomas's text in composing his own. As at the midpoint, this maneuver involves a process of subtraction. In the beginning, Fenice's body is whole and untouched, even if it appears lifeless. With the arrival of the doctors, this wholeness becomes contingent upon her speaking, revealing her love for Cligès in what would amount to a capitulation to the tragedy of Yseut's character. In the next place, it is her choice *not* to speak, her commitment to avoid the predicament of Tristan's lady, that brings about the ripping off of her clothing, the piercing of her skin, and the pouring of blood from her wounds.[297] Likewise,

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[295] Note also the narrator's use of the verb *malmetre* in reference to the doctor's violence in line 5935 (quoted in following note). In the epilogue of the *Charrette*, Godefroi de Leigni employs the same verb in connection with the text: "Tant en a fet, n'i vialt plus metre / Ne moins, por le conte malmetre" (lines 7111-12; see Chapter 4, 179-80).

[296] In this passage, Fenice's earlier claim that she would rather be dismembered than be like Yseut, a sentiment that might easily be taken at face value as hyperbole, is tested and given a surprisingly concrete meaning. This points once again to the importance of choice in Chrétien's rewriting of Thomas. Indeed, the text suggests that Fenice could speak even while under the effects of the potion, but that she chooses not to. Haidu has proposed a different reading of this detail: "Chrétien does not explain why she remains silent and does nothing to prevent them, but he does not need to: we know the simple answer is that she cannot, even if she wants to. . . . she cannot stop the punishment because of the plan devised according to her own cunning" (*Aesthetic Distance*, 96). On the contrary, the narrator never says that she has lost the ability to speak as he describes the state of her body after she has taken the potion, only that she is *not* speaking: "Ne se croule ne ne dit mot" (line 5705). Similarly, at the point where the doctors threaten to put her entire body over a fire to roast, he states, "Cele se taist ne ne lor vie / Sa char a batre n'a malmetre" (lines 5934-35), a reflexive construction that seems to stress the character's resolve rather than her inability to produce language.

[297] Perhaps the sexual politics of the scene are also significant in the sense that Fenice's continuing virginity is contrasted with the forceful removal of her clothing and a state of unexpected nakedness. As noted in Chapter 1 (n. 182), the verb *corrompre* could refer to sexual violence in Old French, e.g., in Wace's *Roman de Rou*, ed. Anthony J. Holden and trans. Glyn S. Burgess (West Yorkshire: Société Jersiaise, 2002), II: line 4257.

Chrétien's romance cannot be completed without removing something from the canvas—as it were, the parchment—of Thomas's text.[298]

The figurative significance of Fenice's body as a surface for the representation of the intertextual dynamics between Chrétien and Thomas comes into greater focus when one considers the importance of skin as a support for writing in the Middle Ages. Writing chiefly about the bestiary tradition in medieval French and Latin literature, Kay has recently published a fascinating study of the place of animal skin in medieval aesthetic and hermeneutic practices. Among the main properties of the manuscript book that interest Kay is the intrinsic vulnerability of the parchment page: the risk of its being cut or otherwise damaged either in production or over the course of reception. This view of the animal hides on which medieval texts were composed and transcribed is founded on the etymology of "skin," from the Greek *cutis*: "The skin is that which is uppermost in the body, so called, because in covering the body it is the first to suffer from an incision."[299] Kay argues compellingly that it is precisely this vulnerability that underscores the status of parchment as skin: "Skin's essence is to be vulnerable and to expose to injury the body which it covers. The scrapes, cuts, and tears in manuscript folios are what make apparent their essence as skin,"[300] an excellent insight into the aesthetic importance of a set of material traits that have often been thought to hinder rather than shape, let alone enhance, the reading process. Now, while Kay's analysis of skin deals primarily with the poetic and visual representations of non-human skin in the bestiaries from the thirteenth century onward, I would like to advance the possibility of deepening this analysis in a slightly different literary-historical context, for the depiction of the torture of Fenice's skin in Chrétien's *Cligès* may be seen to create a comparable awareness in readers of the close relationship between written narrative and the skin on which it was transmitted. To be clear, Kay's detailed work on the lexicon of skin in the bestiairies leads her to conclude that *pel* and *peau* (*pellis* in Latin) were the words most commonly employed to talk about skin, human and animal, in her corpus.[301] However, at least one of her examples, drawn from Philippe de Thaon's *Bestiaire*, points to the presence in medieval French of an additional term used to designate skin: *char*.[302] It is interesting but not essential for the sake of this chapter to dwell on the range of possible differences between *peau* and *char* and their respective specificities, since at all events Fenice's flesh presents certain striking similarities to the skin of which Kay speaks in relation to the bestiaries.[303] In line 5704,

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[298] The close and paradoxical relationship between the unity of Chrétien's text and the figurative fragmentation of Thomas's is further signaled by a pattern of interlace which links the false death of Fenice to the construction of Jehan's tower, where the lovers eventually repair and which has often been understood in the criticism as an emblem of narrative structure or *conjointure*. See, for instance, Freeman, "*Cligès*," 116-19.

[299] Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 87.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid., 88.

[302] Ibid., 53. The passage cited from Philippe's bestiary, pertaining to the hydrus, is the following: "Le ydrus en verté / nus signifie Dé; / Deus pur redemptiun / prist incarnatiun, / car devint enpudnete / et puldre enboëte. / De boe vint limun / e de char quir avun; / Deus de char fud vestud / dunt Satan fud vencud" (*Bestiaire*, ed. Luigina Morini [Paris: Honoré Champion, 2018], lines 665-74).

[303] With regard to *char* in particular, I have in mind especially the traditional associations between flesh and desire, on the one hand, and flesh and Christ on the other. Fenice's torture and resurrection have led to frequent comparisons of her character to Christ, as, for instance, in Howell's article, where the author warrants, "Like Mary's son, she endures torture, symbolic death, and burial, and is ultimately drawn alive from her own tomb. The name 'Fenice' (Phoenix), suggestive of her resurrection from near and apparent death, deepens her association with Christ" ("Reflecting [on] the Other," 408).

the narrator describes a seemingly hypothetical situation to convey the strength of the second potion: "Si a le vis si pale et blanc / Com s'ele eüst perdu le sanc, / Ne pié ne main ne remeüst, / Qui vive *escorchier* la deüst" (lines 5701-704). The verb *escorchier*, "to skin or flay," not only emphasizes the role of skin as a covering for the body, but it also likens the flesh of the heroine to that of an animal whose hide is removed.[304] Later, during the torture, the doctors strengthen this association when they threaten to place her body above a roasting fire until it has been entirely "grilled," *greïllie* (lines 5932-33). More broadly, the whipping, cutting, and burning of Fenice's *char* points up its status as that which is most vulnerable—as skin or flesh.

Several additional factors from the passage relating the torturer's actions would tend to support a reading of the heroine's skin as a surface for figuring the process of medieval writing. The very arrival of the doctors coincides with a seemingly innocent and generic reaffirmation of the written source that nevertheless calls the reader's attention to the contextual significance of the poet's medium of expression at this moment in the poem: "Si com tesmoigne li escriz, / Sont venu .III. fisicien / De Salerne molt ancien, / Ou lonc tens avoient esté" (lines 5736-39). In her discussion of the bestiary Pelican, Kay notes the "association of bloodshed with writing."[305] Fenice's *char* is *rompue*, and it bleeds onto the floor, blood squirting from her shoulders—a "graphic" image, to say the least (lines 5910-12). The last stage of the torture, pouring molten lead and carbon across Fenice's palms, may seem an oddly specific form of brutality, yet this detail could be interpreted as being entirely appropriate given the significance of the hand as a writing instrument and the importance of carbon and lead for the making of ink and pigments in the Middle Ages.[306] In this context, we should also keep in mind the beginnings of Chrétien's theorization of a poetics of writing in *Erec et Enide*, where the silent unity of the written word contrasts with the boisterous masculinity, fragmentariness, and multiplicity of the oral tradition. As hinted at above, the same situation is reworked in the scene of torture: three men demand that Fenice speak, and when she does not, they move to the silent surface of her body, as if to embody the transition from one form of fragmentation to another, the sloppy and unrecorded ephemerality of the spoken word to the torn skin of the parchment page.

My view of the figuration of *Cligès* as an intentionally damaged version of the *Tristan*, one in which we may observe the dialectical mechanics of the author's minus function, raises an additional question from the standpoint of *Cligès*'s medieval reception. If Chrétien's understanding of the mutability and vulnerability of literary form affected the way he wrote and reflected on his relationship to tradition, could it have also shaped the act of reading among early audiences? Also in her discussion of the Pelican (here in Pierre de Beauvais's so-called Long Version of the *Bestiaire*), Kay shows how textual content and manuscript poetics align in two codices in particular:

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[304] According to Matsumura's *Dictionnaire*, in Old French *escorchier* would refer first of all to the removal of an animal's skin but could also work for humans (1328).

[305] Kay, *Animal Skins*, 93.

[306] See Raymond Clemens's and Timothy Graham's excellent *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 19-20, 30-33. Might the avian overtones of Fenice's character also be eloquent in this regard, as the majority of quills in Chrétien's time were made from birds' feathers? Feathers figure at three moments in the text (lines 4474, 4846, 6032), and Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 15-29 (Ch. 1, "The Changeful Pen") have underlined the double meaning of "plume," "plumage" and "pen," in the context of the lyrics and *Cligès*. The third appearance of feathers in the poem (in the description of the sepulcher that Jehan builds for Fenice, "Un lit de plume a dedenz mis / Por la pierre qui estoit dure" [lines 6032-33]) is perhaps the most interesting in the light of Howell's commentary on Fenice's sepulcher: "In Jewish tradition, damaged and torn books are to be laid to rest in a depository, or *genizah*, within the synagogue prior to being granted a cemetery burial" ("Reflecting [on] the Other," 418).

> The copy in BnF Arsenal 3516 contains on fo. 200r an illustration configured like that in the Clayette manuscript, again with the flow of blood framed in the near circle described by the parent and the nest; but now the piercing of the Pelican's skin is accentuated by a small hole in the column above it, the punctured Viper on the facing page, and the Woutre in flight from a naked man on the verso. In the even more physically compelling Montpellier, BUM MS H 437, the Viper appears on one side of fo. 200 and the Pelican on the other, the whole page being traversed by an enormous stitched tear . . . The skin of the page coincides with both these instances of skin that is cut, as though the tear itself were sexual and guilty on the recto but sacrificial and redemptive on the verso.[307]

Along the same lines, Nancy Vine Durling's interpretation of the passion lyrics in British Library, MS. Harley 2253, where "The holes in the parchment have been exploited in order to focus the reader's attention even more intensely on Christ's wound as she or he reads the various poems," describes the page as "a skin that has been exploited by the scribe as a kind of analogue to Christ's wounded body."[308] To return to *Cligès*, it so happens that one of the oft-noted and most prominent characteristics of the manuscript tradition of this romance is the presence therein of fragmentation and damage of various other sorts.[309] Indeed, the latest criticism on *Cligès* has stressed the potential interest of this aspect of the manuscripts. In particular, Naomi Howell's reading of MS. Michaels 569(*) attempts to demonstrate how the patching of a Hebrew text using eleven strips from a copy of *Cligès* gives rise to a complex Jewish-Christian interaction both textual and cultural.[310] The following case studies broaden the scope of the *étude de manuscrits* to include several other important copies of the text, while focusing in on the scene of Fenice's mutilation and its metapragmatic meaning, or the way in which its transmission in manuscript might allow us to further historicize the reading that I have put forth here based on the text alone. Of the manuscripts of *Cligès* that I have been able to consult over the course of my research (seven in all),[311] fully five invite commentary as tokens of the chance or intentional alignment of poetic discourse and physical make-up. The order in which we approach them does not particularly matter, but I will begin with the oldest manuscript, calling attention to any similarities between the different codices.[312] In the last place, I return to MS. Michaels 569(*) before analyzing an illumination of Fenice's body from a copy of *Le Roman de la Poire* that further illustrates the dynamics of textual transmission operating across text and margin in the manuscripts of *Cligès*.

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[307] Kay, *Animal Skins*, 93.
[308] Nancy Vine Durling, "British Library MS Harley 2253: A New Reading of the Passion Lyrics in Their Manuscript Context," *Viator* 40 (2009): 271-307 (280, 291).
[309] For descriptions of the manuscripts, see ed. Méla and Collet, pp. 25-29; ed. Gregory and Luttrell, vii-xxii; Terry Nixon, "Catalogue of Manuscripts," in Keith Busby et al., eds., *The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), II: 1-85, esp. 18-39; and Alexandre Micha's classic study, *La Tradition manuscrite des romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 28-64.
[310] Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other."
[311] These include all of the copies of the text held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, as well as the Bibliothèque municipale de Tours.
[312] I follow Méla and Collet in matters of dating.

Manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1450 dates from around 1250. It is remarkable as one of only two manuscripts to collect all five of Chrétien's romances. In this case, however, they have been skillfully fragmented by the scribe, who has placed them within Wace's *Roman de Brut*, thereby creating a super-text in which Chrétien's narrative works are spliced together to appear as "episodic tales in the midst of a vast historical account, extending from the destruction of Troy to seventh-century England."[313] But in BnF, fr. 1450 fragmentation is both a literary device—in fact, it is a terrific example of the attempt to enhance textual coherence by paring the original narrative, very much in the style of Chrétien himself—and a material reality. The passage that concerns us is found on fol. 205r (Fig. 1). In the third column, the text recounts the moment during the torture of Fenice at which her skin is pierced through, *rompue*, for the first time. Three lines below, midway down the righthand margin of the folio, a small hole appears in close proximity to the text, both puncturing the parchment and forming a sort of marginal punctuation that would have encouraged readers to draw the connection between the flesh of the character and the skin of the text. In this instance, the resonance between the text and the material state of the codex is almost certainly coincidental, for it becomes clear in reading the verso that the damage postdates the production of the manuscript; thus, on fol. 205v, the blue design within the painted initial ("O") in the first column has been cut through towards the bottom:

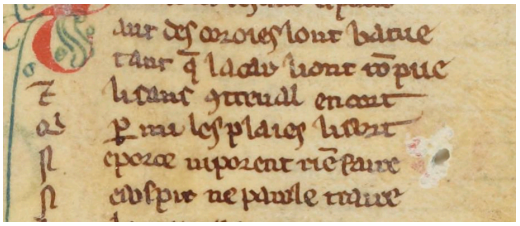

Figure 1. MS. BnF, fr. 1450, fol. 205rc.

Figure 2. MS. BnF, fr. 1450, fol. 205va.

In Figure 2, as with the articulation between human and animal/textual bodies on fol. 205r, the hole in the parchment falls just below the account of how the doctors get a taste of their own medicine. Defenestrated by the city's women, an act of which the narrator heartily approves, all three have broken—*depecies*—necks, ribs, arms, and legs, the fragmentation of their bodies translated syntactically by the expansive polysyndeton of line 5969:

Par les fenestres contreval

[313] This is Hult's description (unpublished). On the scribe of BnF, fr. 1450, see notably Lori Walters, "Le Rôle du scribe dans l'organisation des manuscrits des romans de Chrétien de Troyes," *Romania* 106 (1985): 303-25 and Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 27-32.

Les ont enmi la cort lanciez
Si qu'a toz trois unt depecies[314]
Cols et costez et braz et jambes.
Einc mielz nel firent nules dames. (Lines 5966-70)

This detail, though modest in size and likely devoid of any artistic intention, nevertheless converts the cuts or incisions in Fenice's flesh into a visible phenomenon within the book. The coherence between text and margin arises precisely from what is not there—a material absence that mirrors the blanks within the poem and renders concrete the metaphor that Chrétien has set up in the romance.[315]

Several other copies of *Cligès* offer similar testimony to the value of this sort of material deficiency. Also dating from the middle of the thirteenth century is BnF, fr. 1374, a manuscript containing a variety of texts in Old French as well as Occitan.[316] In it, on fol. 59, a tear in the lower margin has been stitched together and the thread removed, leaving a sizeable scar on the parchment (Figs. 3-4). This type of repair suggests that the rupture occurred at the time of the manuscript's confection:

> Another form of damage commonly encountered in the leaves of manuscripts consists of gashes that may have been produced at the time the skin was flayed from the animal. Often such gashes were sewn together with thread; sometimes the thread still remains . . . but in many cases it was subsequently removed.[317]

In addition, this likely means that the damage would have been visible to all readers of the book, from the thirteenth century to the present. The location of this feature directly beneath the beginning of the passage in which the doctors whip and burn the heroine's skin makes it a perfect frame for the action to come, valorizing a fault in the processing of the animal skin.[318] Keeping in mind Durling's comments about the exploitation of holes in the parchment to aesthetic ends in Harley 2253, one is led to wonder if such a felicitous coincidence of damage to the page and damage to the heroine's skin in BnF, fr. 1374 could indicate a successful appropriation of the "faulty" folio in question here by a scribe or manuscript planner. As far as the larger interplay of joining and separation, tearing and stitching in Chrétien's poem is concerned, this facet of BnF, fr. 1374 is all the more meaningful for the way in which it gives material expression to the dialectic.

In BnF, fr. 12560, a manuscript from the third quarter of the thirteenth century containing three of Chrétien's works (*Le Chevalier au Lion*, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, *Cligès*), a small but visible hole appears between verses on fol. 117r-v. On the verso of this leaf (Fig. 5), the

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[314] The word used in this spot in Méla's and Collet's base manuscript is "peceiez." I have chosen to incorporate the variant from BnF, fr. 375 (fol. 279vd) because of its appropriateness in the context (conveying the irony of the doctors' punishment), its importance in Chrétien's vocabulary (here and throughout the author's corpus), and because it has not previously been remarked upon (Méla and Collet do not include it in their critical apparatus).
[315] Another pair of small tears in fol. 204va of the same manuscript, while slightly less directly juxtaposed with the tearing of Fenice's skin, heightens the effect described above.
[316] *Parise la Duchesse*, *Cligès*, *Le Roman de Placidas*, *La Vengeance de Notre-Seigneur*, *Le Roman de Girart de Vienne* (Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube), *Le Roman de la Violette* (Gerbert de Montreuil), *Le Roman de Florimont* (Aimon de Varennes).
[317] Graham and Clemens, *Introduction*, 13.
[318] The arrival of the doctors is recounted beginning on fol. 59r toward the bottom of the first column.

blemish hovers above the commencement of the doctors' violence, that is, in the midst of their false plea to let them help Fenice and some fifteen lines up from their throwing her from the coffin. The careful placement of the writing around the hole is suggestive of yet another instance in which the rent in the parchment predates the copy of the text, preserving the legibility of the text while allowing its handlers to read between the lines in a rather literal sense.

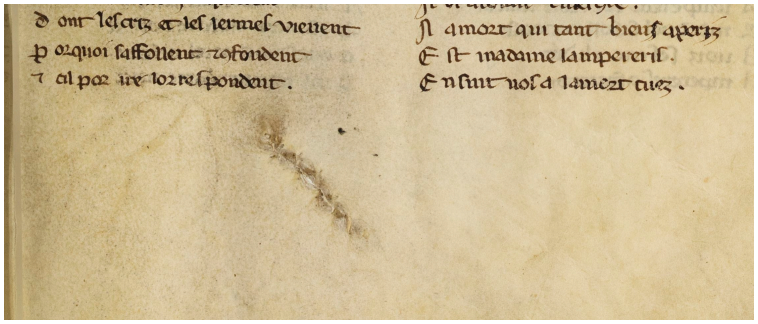

Figure 3. MS. BnF, fr. 1374, fol. 59r.

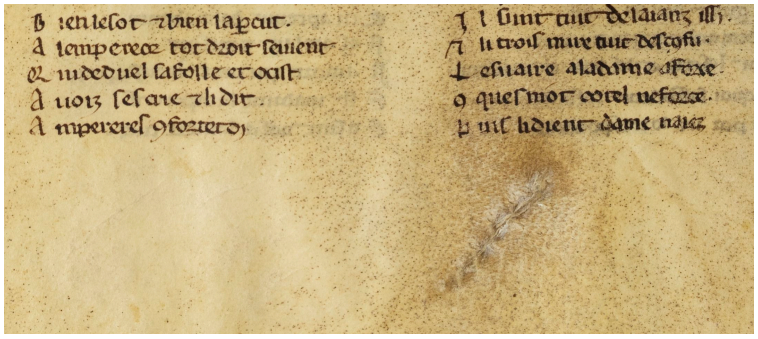

Figure 4. MS. BnF, fr. 1374, fol. 59v.

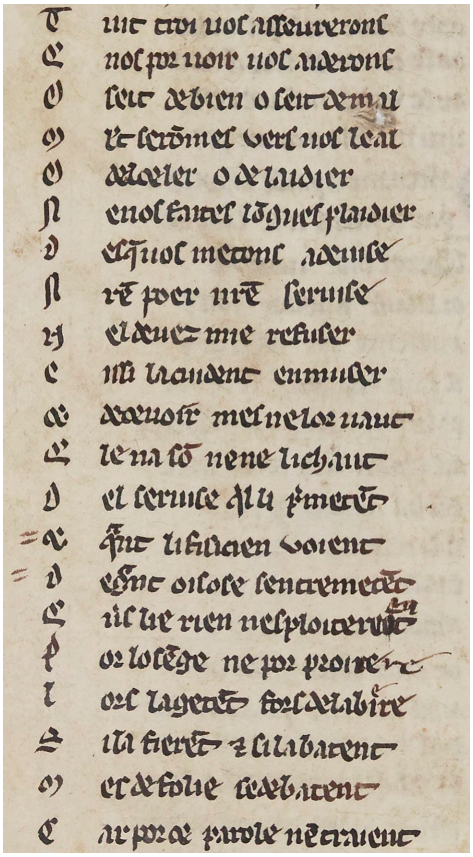

Fig. 5. MS. BnF, fr. 12560, fol. 117va.

Wear and tear in two books from the end of the century attest to the same culture of damage. BnF, fr. 375 (c.1289), a well-known and varied compilation of texts in Latin and French, including a number of verse romances (*Le Roman de Thèbes*, *Le Roman de Troie*, *Le Roman d'Alexandre*, *Le Roman de Rou*, *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, *Floire et Blancheflor*, *Le Roman de Blancandin*, *Cligès*, *Erec et Enide*, *Ille et Galeron*, *Amadas et Ydoine*), exhibits a small tear in the lower lefthand corner of fol. 279v and, more notably, a hole of some sort in the upper margin of the same folio (Fig. 6). In this case, the hole lines up with the beginning of the scene and remains in view throughout the passage detailing the torture, a considerable amount of text that the scribe was able to fit onto the verso of a single folio thanks to the large, four-column format of the codex. Given the mirroring of form and content, it is once again distinctly possible that the scribe responsible for this section of the manuscript, or the planner if there was one, sought to transform the damaged parchment into an interpretative cue. The case of MS. BnF, fr. 1420, another romance compilation which comes down to us from the close of the thirteenth century and transmits Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* alongside Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* and *Cligès*, is quite similar to that of BnF, fr. 1374 (Fig. 5). There, a cut in the skin has likewise been sewn together in the lower margin of the leaf, but the thread remains (Fig. 7). The proximity of the gash in the parchment and the violence to Fenice's flesh in the text is even more striking than the *mise en page* of BnF, fr. 1374. The seam in the page is separated by only a couple of centimeters from the bottom two verses of the second column of text, which read, "Si la fierent et si la batent / Mais de folie se debatent" (corresponding to lines 5883-84 in Méla and Collet)—and it is in reading distance from the very moment where the physicians create a gash

in the skin of their patient-victim (see “desrompue” at the rhyme fifteen lines from the bottom of the third column).

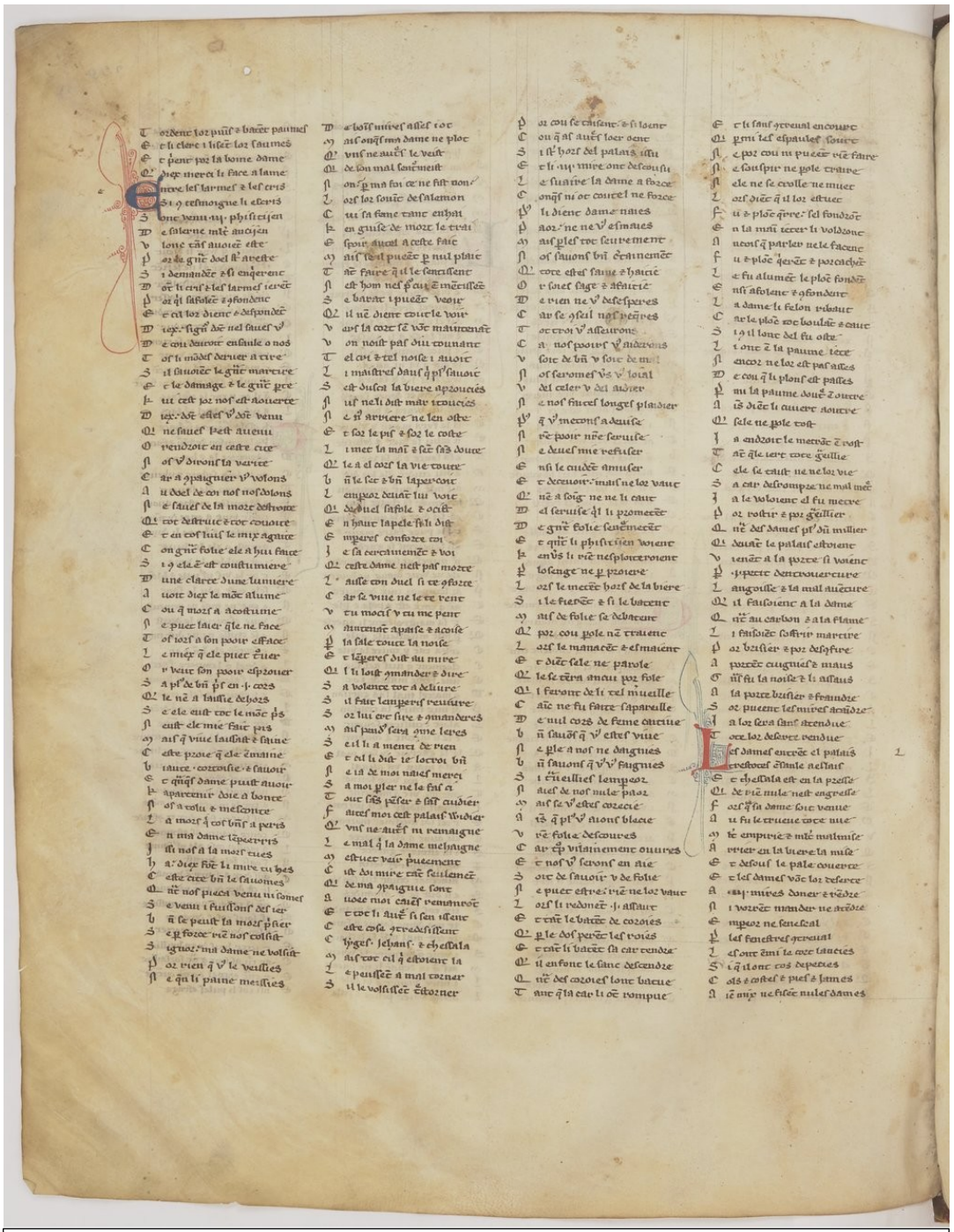

Figure 6. MS. BnF, fr. 375, fol. 279v.

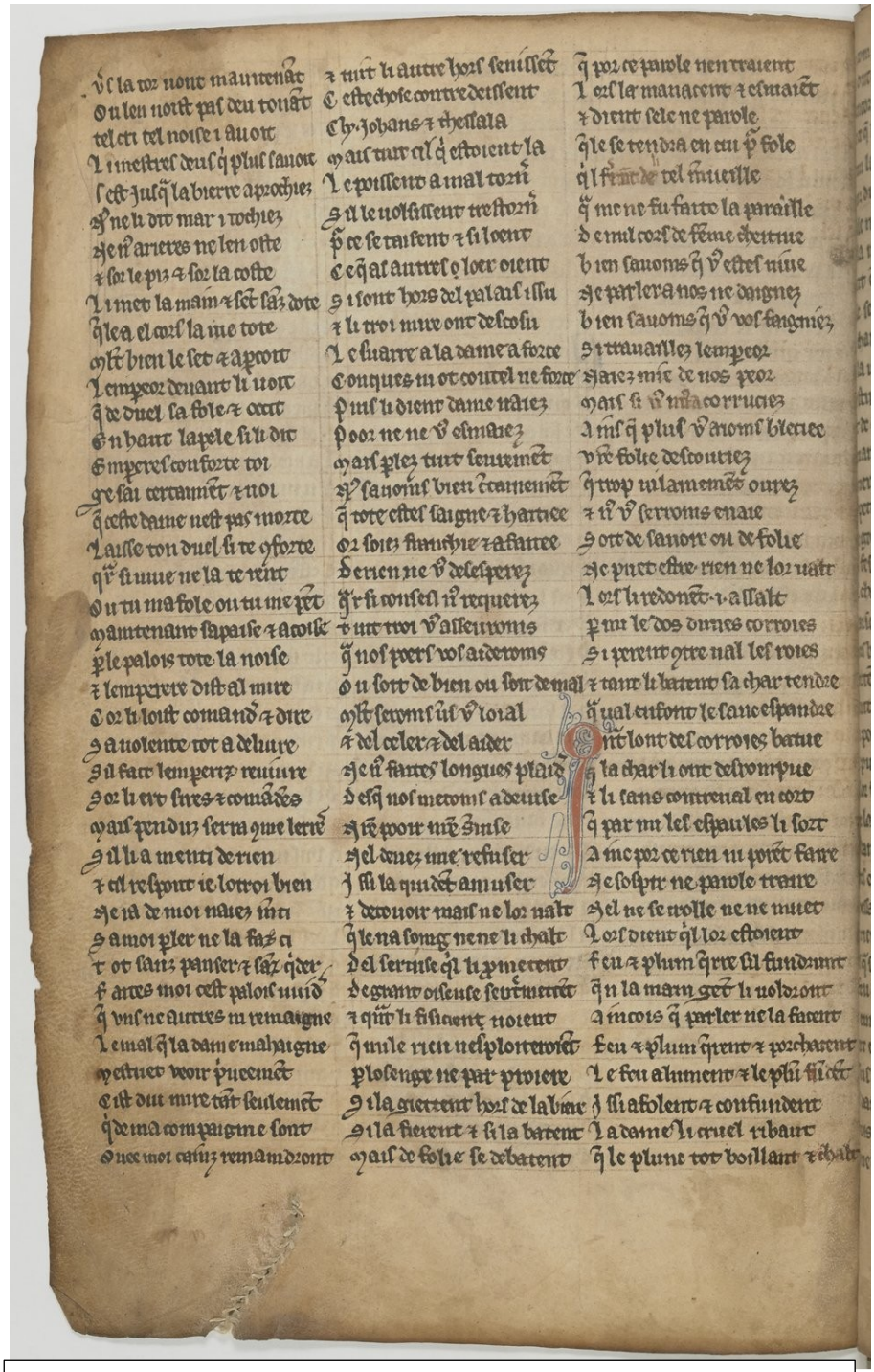

Figure. 7. MS. BnF, fr. 1420, fol. 54v. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In addition to the five French manuscripts already examined here, MS. Michael 569(*) of the Oriental section of Oxford's Bodleian Library is relevant to the present discussion of the material context of the text of *Cligès* and the coextensive nature of narrative and inter-narrative unity and disunity therein. While I have not been able to consult the manuscript itself, Naomi

Howell's detailed recent analysis of Michael 569(*) allows for an elaboration on my reading of the textual and the material in the manuscript tradition of Fenice's torture.[319] Howell uses this peculiar shelf mark to refer to the combined texts of MSS Michael 569 and 569*:

> MS Michael 569 is a late thirteenth-century Hebrew miscellany, located in the Oriental section of the Bodleian library along with other manuscripts collected by the bibliophile Heimann Joseph Michael (d. 1846). Shelved alongside it—the two manuscripts touching, but for their protective boxes—is MS Michael 569*, containing fragments of Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century romance, *Cligès*. For nearly half a millennium these two texts comprised a single manuscript, one which I will call MS Michael 569(*).[320]

The original text of Michael 569(*) dates from 1289, whereas the eleven scraps from Chrétien's *Cligès* were used to patch the Hebrew miscellany at some point early in the fourteenth century.[321] Per Howell, however, only half of the fragments of the Old French romance would have been legible before the nineteenth century, at which point the patches were removed from the manuscript and stored separately.[322] The identity of the text preserved on these fragments is important for my purposes here, as it comes primarily from the central section of the poem, "including significant sections of Fenice's wedding night with the emperor Alis," and the later sequence in the narrative comprising the doctors' violence and the description of Fenice's mutilated skin.[323] The recycling of fragments of *Cligès* in Michael 569(*) visualizes the material poetics that so interested Chrétien as he composed the text of the romance: the vulnerability of the manuscript page, the mutability of literary artefacts, and the complex formal relationship between coherence and fragmentation. Howell comments on this last aspect of the manuscript in a way that is consonant with my reading of the dialectic in *Cligès*: "Yet Michael 569 exists on a spectrum of fragmentation with Michael 569* rather than in dichotomous opposition to it. . . . These two damaged and partial texts speak to and complete one another in profound and paradoxical ways."[324] Further, the resurfacing of the text recounting Fenice's torture in the midst of a book so powerfully shaped by the types of codicological violence and repair that are dealt with in Howell's article justifies a comparison between the resulting traits of Michael 569(*) and the holes and gashes which we have seen above, highlighting the hermeneutic value of such clearly devalued strips of parchment for audiences attentive to the meditation on writing and book culture lurking beneath the depiction of the heroine's skin in *Cligès*. As Howell writes,

> The very passage in which Fenice laments that her body has been broken and fragmented has been torn and fragmented in the same way. We are reminded of how the malevolent doctors approached Fenice's body as a supine text to be glossed and bent to their will. . . . Fenice's words thus seem to give the mute fragment of parchment its voice. The line describing her broken and fragmented flesh ("Ma char ronpue *et despecee*") is itself broken (author's emphasis).[325]

[319] Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other."
[320] Ibid., 374.
[321] Ibid., 383.
[322] Ibid., 385.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid., 419.
[325] Ibid., 418.

However, Howell makes no attempt to situate her object of study in relation to the rest of the manuscript tradition of *Cligès*, nor does she comment on the significance of the poetics of fragmentation in Michael 569(*) with respect to Chrétien's broader interest in the materiality of poetry or the relationship between *depecier*, *corrompre*, and *conjointure*.

Finally, while MS. BnF, fr. 2186 (s. XIII$^{3/4}$, *Le Roman de la Poire*) does not contain a copy of *Cligès*, the opening of the manuscript proffers the earliest known illustration of the scene of Fenice's torture (Fig. 8).[326] In fact, none of the manuscripts of *Cligès* itself are illustrated, making the third folio of BnF, fr. 2186 all the more precious as the sole surviving visual gloss on the fragmentation of Fenice's flesh. In the upper image of the miniature, Fenice speaks in private with Thessala, sharing her plan to escape the entangled Tristanian configuration of lover and husband; below this, the lead doctor holds up Fenice's hand for a second doctor, who pours the melted lead into her palm. This relatively conservative depiction of the heroine's body, entirely clothed despite what the text says, may reflect the shock value of the scene for courtly medieval readers. What the artwork partially "covers up," however, becomes again apparent in the outskirts of the page. Like Fenice's burnt and torn skin, the parchment on which it has been illustrated exhibits a significant scraped part in the bottom lefthand corner, as well as two small holes, one beside and one below the miniature. Aside from the resonance between what is painted and the surface on which it is painted, the images themselves call attention to a specific portion of the skin, the hands of Fenice and Thessala in the first scene, those of Fenice and the doctors in the second. The hand is a key figure in the depiction of writing and torture in *Cligès* and one which underlines the status of the page as skin and that of the book as "manuscript." The juxtaposition of the two scenes also emphasizes the contrast between them and in so doing translates the masculine brutality present in Chrétien's text. Fenice makes eye contact with Thessala in the top half of the miniature, her hand on the servant's lap, whereas her closed eyes point away from both men in the second image, her seemingly lifeless hand held up to the instrument of torture, as the second doctor stares rather deviously, and expectantly, at her body—waiting for a reaction. That the second image should feature two of the doctors rather than all three represents a potentially meaningful choice insofar as the position of Fenice's body between two men is paradigmatic of the text's larger concern with corporeal unity and division in the wake of the *Tristan* legends and the triangular formation of love, marriage, and sex therein.

The connection between this passage from *Cligès* and the *Tristan*, made explicitly by Fenice in Chrétien's text as we have seen, is evoked by the proximity of the above illumination to an additional, similar pair of illustrations appearing on fol. 5v of the same manuscript (Fig. 9). The first image there depicts Tristan seated beside Yseut, placing his arm on her shoulder just as Thessala does with Fenice in the earlier scene. In the second illustration, the famous episode of the Forest of Morois transmitted by Béroul's romance, King Marc discovers the lovers asleep or pretending to be, a sword between them.

[326] On this manuscript (dating and illustrations), see Alison Stones, *Gothic Manuscripts: 1260-1320*, 2 vols. (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2013-14), I: 53; *Le Roman de la Poire par Tibaut*, ed. Christiane Marchello-Nizia (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1984), XXXIX-LV; Howell, "Reflecting (on) the Other," 404.

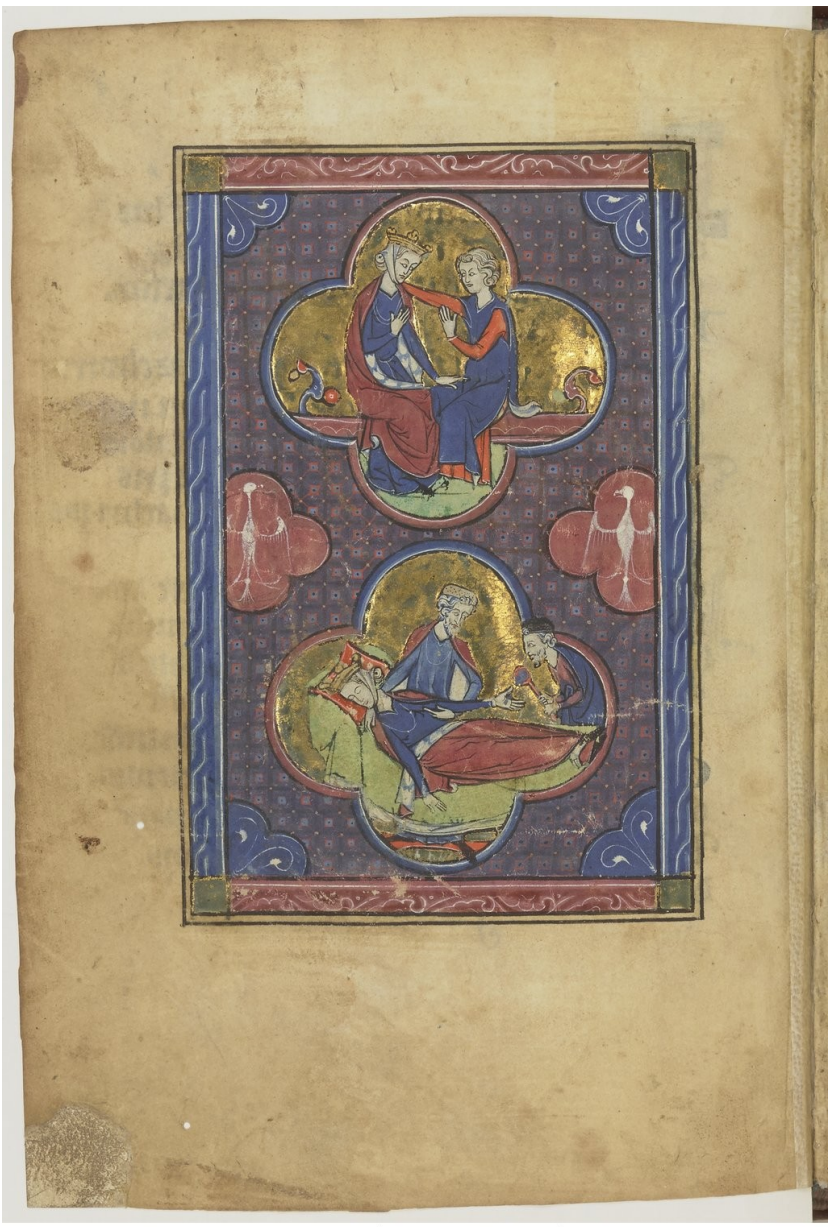

Figure 8. MS. BnF, fr. 2186, fol. 3v. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

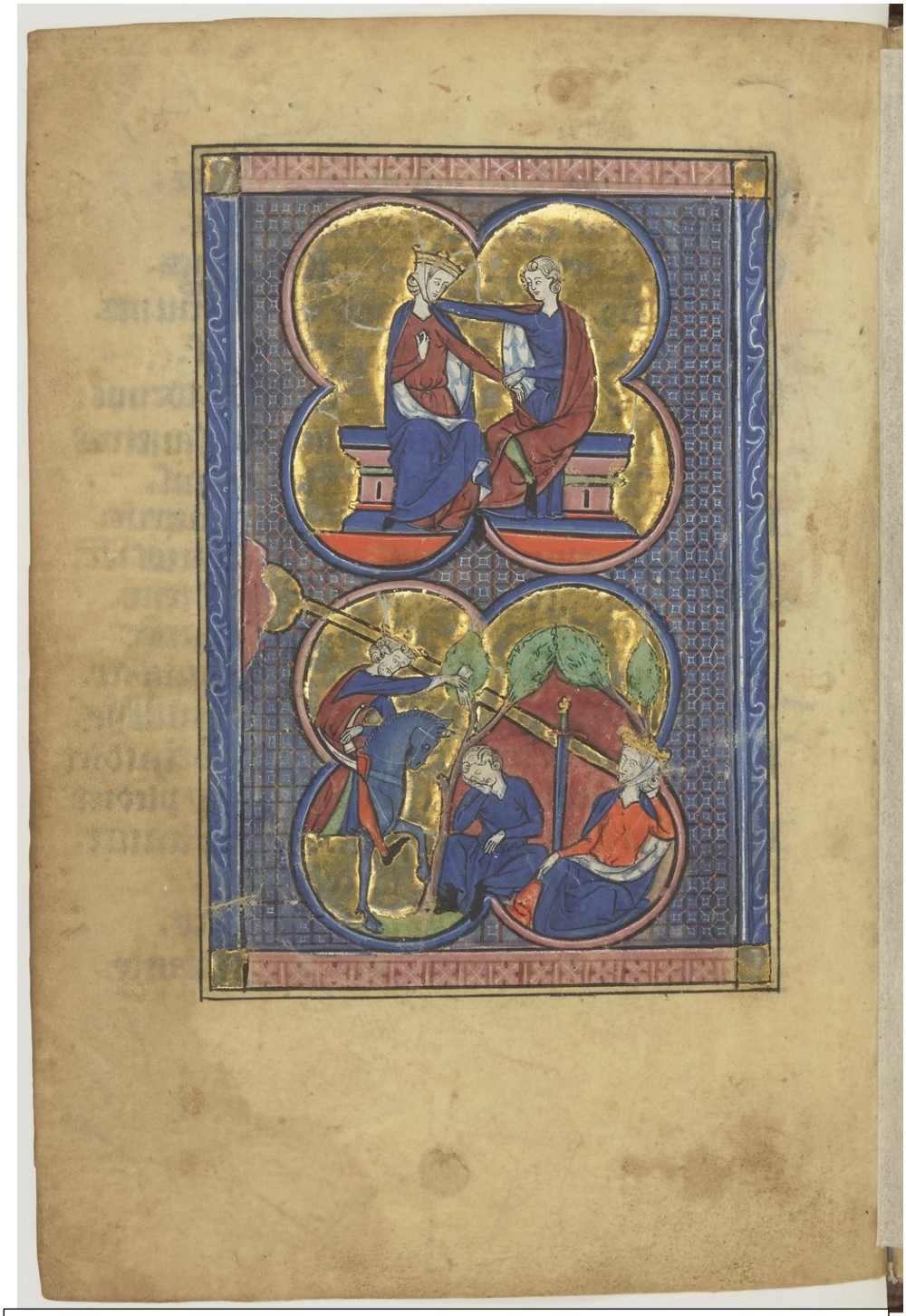

Figure 9. MS. BnF, fr. 2186, fol. 5v. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Conclusion

BnF, fr. 2186 is different in many respects from the other manuscripts examined in the last section of this chapter. It is the only one to contain veritable illustrations of Fenice's false death, and it is the only one *not* to provide the text of *Cligès* in part or in whole. Yet it is a fitting place to end this portion of the reflection in that it ties together the principal issues of textual and material representation that are raised by the manuscript tradition of Chrétien's second Arthurian poem, while reminding the audience of the direct relevance of these seemingly insignificant or peculiar literary and codicological details to the dialogue between *Cligès* and the *Tristan* that is staged at length in *Cligès*. Throughout my readings of the manuscripts of *Cligès*, I have attempted to show how the poet's use of Fenice's body to figure his engagement with Thomas's *Tristan* in particular, a "minus function" *avant la lettre*, also manifests in the material conditions of the texts as they migrated from author to reader. A selective study of the manuscripts therefore offers a means of situating my interpretation of the romance in the context of a set of possible *medieval* readings of the text. Moreover, such an analysis demonstrates that Iser's blank need not be always be taken in a strict, which is to say figurative, sense. Material blanks, be they holes in the page or other types of damage, missing text or illuminations, etc., are an essential characteristic of medieval manuscript culture, related in nature and importance to Bernard Cerquiglini's *variance*. As such, they stand to enhance the interpretation of the blanks within the text.[327] In the light of the manuscript evidence, it is not only possible but likely in my view that early audiences of Chrétien's romance would have been sensitive to the porous or dialectical nature of the distinction between *conjointure*, *depecier* and *corrompre* in *Cligès* as it is woven into the poem's intertextual "plot" and its dissection of the concepts of error and intention—or motivation—as they relate to the overarching themes of love, chivalry, and poetry. This line of thinking is evident in *Erec et Enide,* it clearly also runs through *Cligès*, and it shall again figure prominently in *Yvain*, where the precise details of Thomas's romance undergo further mutations—and mutilations.

[327] Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989). Howell for one cites numerous examples of such "blanks" in the context of MS. Michael 569(*), stating with regard to the censored passages in this manuscript, "Gaps of another kind occur in other places where unfinished, blank spaces await future completion; on the arched gateway on fol. 27b (Fig. 6), the planned decorative program remains incomplete, forever awaiting the scribe's attentions" ("Reflecting [on] the Other," 381).

Chapter 3

Lion-Keu-Coupé: A Missing Link in *Yvain* or *Le Chevalier au Lion*

At the heart of *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion* (c.1177–81), Chrétien de Troyes's 'best constructed romance' according to the great medievalist Jean Frappier, there is a missing link: the lion's tail, the tip of the tail to be precise.[328] It goes missing at the midpoint of the romance, as Yvain ushers in his new identity as the heroic *chevalier au lion*, the knight of the lion or lion-knight. Having had his madness cured by the lady of Noroison and rescued her from her aggressor (lines 2888–3340; 291–96),[329] Yvain hears a loud cry, traces the noise to its origin and encounters a lion with its tail caught between the jaws of a serpent:

> Mesire Yvains pensis chemine
> Tant qu'il vint en une gaudine;
> Et lors oÿ en mi le gaut
> Un cri mout dolereus et haut,
> Si s'adrecha leus vers le cri
> Chele part ou il l'ot oÿ.
> Et quant il parvint chele part,
> Vit .i. lion en .i. essart
> Et .i. serpent qui le tenoit
> Par le keue, si li ardoit
> Toutes les rains de flambe ardant. (lines 3341–51)

> (Absorbed in his thoughts, Sir Yvain rode until he entered a forest, and then he heard a loud cry of pain from the trees. He turned in the direction of the cry. When he reached a clearing, he saw a lion and a serpent, which was holding the lion by the tail and scorching his haunches with burning fire. [296–97])

He decides to save the lion (lines 3356–75; 297), but in order to do so he must cut off a small part

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[328] Jean Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris, 1969), 23. The above and all further translations from modern French are my own.

[329] For the sake of consistency, and because of their abundance, all references to primary sources and their translations will appear in parentheses above, with a full citation given here in the first instance. Unless otherwise indicated, references to *Yvain* are to David F. Hult's edition of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1433, fols. 61r–118r: Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion ou Le Roman d'Yvain*, ed. and trans. Hult, Lettres gothiques 4539 (Paris, 1994). References to the editor's introduction, apparatus and index (hereafter 'ed. Hult') are provided separately, with page numbers indicated. I will explain the use of any textual variants, that is, with regard to BnF, fr. 1433 in subsequent notes. English translations of passages from *Yvain* (*The Knight with the Lion*), *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*The Knight of the Cart*) and *Erec et Enide* (*Erec and Enide*) are cited from Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. David Staines (Bloomington, 1990). Except in instances where the analysis only applies to the text in Old French, references to line numbers in Hult's edition will be followed by the corresponding page numbers of Staines's prose translation. Since the translation is based on Guiot's copy of *Yvain* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 794 (fols. 79v–105r), I have modified it on occasion to better reflect the language of the text that I am using, generally following Hult's modern French translation. I have also emended Staines's translation at several points where it seemed to me unfaithful or erroneous. Finally, translations of individual lines or words are subject to slight changes based on the context of citation.

of its tail even after he has killed the serpent:

> A l'espee fourbie et blanche
> Va le felon serpent requerre,
> Si le trenche jusques en terre
> Et les .ii. moitiez retronchonne;
> Fiert et refiert et tant l'en donne
> Que tout l'amenuse et depieche.
> Mais de le keuë une pieche
> Li couvint trenchier du leon,
> Pour la teste au serpent felon
> Qui engoulee li avoit.
> Tant com trenchier en covenoit
> L'en trencha, c'onques mains n'en pot. (lines 3376–87)

> (With his polished and gleaming sword he goes to attack the evil serpent, and slices it all the way to the ground, and he in turn slices through the two halves. He strikes again and again until he has chopped and hacked the serpent to pieces. But he had to sever a piece of the lion's tail because the head of the serpent had swallowed it. He cut off as little as necessary; in fact, he could not have removed less. [297])

With the serpent dead and the lion's tail freed from its mouth, Yvain cleans his sword of the snake's venom and sets off again with the lion in tow (lines 3408–13; 297).

Scholars so far have proposed two principal theories as to the meaning of the lion's tail in *Yvain*. The first, Peter Haidu's, comes as the litotic conclusion to the author's *Lion-queue-coupée: l'écart symbolique chez Chrétien de Troyes* and locates the meaning of the tail in its very lack (tail and meaning taken together).[330] 'Surprise!', Haidu exclaims at one point.[331] This and other examples would be proof of the 'symbolic gap' or 'antisymbolic' symbolism characteristic of Chrétien's formation of a new and playful literary symbolism through the subversion of traditional (e.g., religious) symbols and the all-out negation of their meaning for the sake of the 'gratuity of the literary game'.[332] Along similar lines, Tony Hunt views the tail as being 'counterindicative of any transcendental significance'.[333] Yet, as others have readily pointed out, the lion's tail is a part of the 'signature image'[334] of the romance and possibly Chrétien's greatest

[330] Peter Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée: l'écart symbolique chez Chrétien de Troyes*, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire 123 (Geneva, 1972), 70–71. The first part of my title, '*Lion-Keu-Coupé*', is a pun in French calqued on Haidu's titular expression *Lion-queue-coupée*, used to refer to the lion with a part of its tail cut off (*queue coupée*) – a pun that, I suggest below, is already present in Chrétien's text.
[331] Ibid., 30.
[332] Ibid., 80–82. It should be noted that while *Lion-queue-coupée* suggests the centrality of the severed tail, the book devotes only one sentence to this image (specifically, on 70–71). To be sure, the title points to the missing part of the tail as a figure for the 'symbolic gap' that is at the centre of Haidu's argument, but only obliquely.
[333] Tony Hunt, 'The Lion and Yvain', in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to A. H. Diverres*, ed. P. B. Grout et al., Arthurian Studies 7 (Cambridge, 1983), 86–98 (87).
[334] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, 'The Lady and the Dragon in Chrétien's *Chevalier au lion*', in *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, ed. E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame, 2013), 65–86 (65). By contrast with my argument, Bruckner's article argues for a link between the 'lady', i.e., the lady of Landuc, and the

innovation in *Yvain*. Indeed, it is placed at the precise midpoint so as to draw our attention to it. Moreover, critics have not been able to trace the lion's tail to any of Chrétien's potential source texts, and not for lack of trying.[335] Perhaps, then, according to the second theory, the mutilated tail should be interpreted with a view to Yvain's reconciliation with the lady of Landuc – that is, as a figure of castration and therefore a potentially important symbol of Yvain's renewed commitment to his wife, whom he betrays by failing to respect the one-year term of his leave.[336] But this interpretation does not seem to hold up to closer scrutiny, as demonstrated, for instance, in Jean Dufournet's reading of the later episode of Pesme Aventure, according to which the lion's tail appears under the sign of ferocity and virility.[337] Haidu's virtual interpretation of the lion's tail as an example of the symbolic gap prevails in this regard, and yet it generates an all-or-nothing hermeneutic that risks dissimulating the possibilities Chrétien opens up for a literary symbolism beyond the simple negation of existing symbols. Could the seeming gratuity of the lion's tail serve a larger purpose within the broader narrative context of the romance?

In this chapter, I argue that the events of the first half of *Yvain* and the literary-historical context of the romance together provide a necessary frame for the interpretation of the action at the midpoint, and in particular the cutting off of the lion's tail. My analysis arises from the following simple observation. In Old French, the word for 'tail' is *keue* (var. *coue*, *cöe*, *cüe*). In *Yvain*, there is a perfidious seneschal named Keu whose biting insults haunt the hero's conduct throughout the first half of the romance and whose name presents a homophonic and visual echo with the form of the word 'tail' attested in manuscript BnF, fr. 1433. Somehow, Yvain's transformation into the ideal knight, from *vilain* to *courtois* ('churl' to 'courtly man'), thus seems to be related to the removal of the tip of the tail at the midpoint as well as the concomitant elimination of Keu's character from the fictional world of *Yvain*. The manner in which these various elements relate to one another and to the whole remains to be seen. I shall thus be concerned in what follows not only with the symbolic interpretation of the lion's tail, but also with its status as a link in the romance architecture of *Yvain* as a unified whole.

In the first place, I focus on the link between Keu, Yvain and the *keue* through a reading of the opening scene, the midpoint passage, and intervening episodes against the background of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, another of Chrétien's romances which was undoubtedly composed at the same time as *Yvain*, as well as Thomas d'Angleterre's *Tristan* (c.1173). In a second development, I proceed to a discussion of the rupture of this link – of the *lion-Keu-coupé* – through the removal of the tip of the lion's tail and its implications for the way we think about Chrétien's mode of signification in *Yvain* relative to his tradition and the global structure of the poem.[338] I maintain that they are considerable indeed. Chrétien's investment in irony and dialectic as tools of the art of romance, while well established at this stage in the criticism,[339] has never, to

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dragon (I call it a serpent or a snake [see note 353]). This potential connection is less relevant to my reading than that between the serpent and Keu, which shall be my focus below.

[335] Michel Stanesco, 'Le Lion du chevalier: de la stratégie romanesque à l'emblème poétique', *Littératures* 19, 20 (1988–89), 13–35, 7–13 (27); Jean Dufournet, 'Le Lion d'Yvain', in *Le Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes: approches d'un chef- d'œuvre*, ed. id., Collection Unichamp 20 (Paris, 1988), 77–104 (81–85).

[336] E.g., Francis Dubost, '*Le Chevalier au Lion*. Une "Conjointure" signifiante', *Le Moyen Âge* 90.2 (1984), 195–222 (221).

[337] Dufournet, 'Le Lion', 81–82.

[338] In what follows, my emphasis shall thus be on the tip of the tail, and it is primarily in this sense that we should understand my references to 'the lion's tail'. I shall specify any exceptions.

[339] Hunt, 'The Dialectic of *Yvain*', *The Modern Language Review* 72.2 (1977), 285–99; Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in* Cligès *and* Perceval, Histoire des idées et critique littéraire (Geneva,

my knowledge, been brought to bear on the composition of the midpoint scene. A close reading of the lion's tail in this connection will reveal that it cannot be viewed as a symbol. I will suggest, rather, that it constitutes an antisymbol in a much more precise, much more *significant* sense than has previously been thought: not only a link, but also a missing link, in other words. As such, the lion's tail is the essential signifier of Yvain's evolution as a knight. I further contend that it is crucial to understand the union of rupture and integrity, cutting and piecing in Chrétien's poem in order to grasp both the meaning for Yvain's transformation of the lion's tail as an antisymbol and its overarching narrative function as the piece that holds together the two halves of the romance. While many readers since Frappier have agreed upon *Yvain* as the Champenois poet's most accomplished work with regard to poetic structure, others have understandably objected on the basis that Chrétien appears to have written two romances in one, with apparently no link between them. At any rate, the importance of the *queue coupée* for our understanding of the author's compositional strategy in *Yvain* has yet to be fully recognized. Through my reading of the lion's tail as an antisymbol, I offer a new perspective on the unity of *Yvain*, or what the author would refer to as its underlying *conjointure* ('conjuncture'). Indeed, Chrétien has written two apparently disjunctive stories, those of Yvain and the lion-knight, but not without supplying a piece to connect them. It is the lion's tail as a missing link, I shall ultimately argue, that ensures the coherence of the parts and the whole thematically, structurally and *ironically* through discontinuity.

The Queen and Keu: Patronizing Yvain

The opening scene of *Yvain* is striking for several reasons, including the unexpected placement of Calogrenant's *principium*, or 'direct introduction' (lines 149–74; 259), after the narrator's *insinuatio*, or 'indirect introduction' (lines 1–41; 257), as well as the equally improbable speaking subject of the direct address, a knight turned clerkly narrator. Importantly, these narrative choices blur the line between the front matter and body of the text – that is, between the formal prologue, which conventionally provides the reader with certain keys to the interpretation of the poem, and the poem itself.[340] As they negotiate this lengthy preface – including everything from the beginning to Yvain's solo departure from court (lines 1–720; 257–65) – readers may wonder whether they are already reading a romance or whether they are reading *about* the romance.

This goes especially, I would argue, for the exchanges between the seneschal Keu and Guenièvre that surround Calogrenant's prologue on either side.[341] That their dialogue is as much

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1968); Charlie Samuelson, 'The Beast That Therefore Chrétien Is: The Poetics, Logic, and Ethics of Beastliness in *Yvain*', *Exemplaria* 27.4 (2015), 329–51 (338–40).

[340] Hunt, 'Tradition and Originality in the Prologues of Chrestien de Troyes', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 8.4 (1972), 320–44 (328–29 on *principium* and *insinuatio* in particular); Hult, 'Calogrenant's Prologue', in *'Si sai encor moult bon estoire, chançon moult bone et anciene': Studies in the Text and Context of Old French Narrative in Honour of Joseph J. Duggan*, ed. Sophie Marnette, John E. Levy and Leslie Zarker Morgan, Medium Ævum Monographs (Oxford, 2015), 179–97 (179–83). On the rhetorical background of *Yvain*, see also Hunt's earlier article, 'The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue: Tradition and the Old French Vernacular Prologues', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 6.1 (1970), 1–23 (15), where the critic proposes that the 'conversations' involving Keu also be viewed as part of the 'exordial pattern' of *Yvain*. Unlike Joan Tasker Grimbert, however, Hunt does not view these as prologue materials *per se* (see following note).

[341] What follows is an expansion upon Grimbert's *'Yvain' dans le miroir: une poétique de la réflexion dans le 'Chevalier au lion' de Chrétien de Troyes*, Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages 25 (Amsterdam,

about the romance as it is a part of the romance is signalled by the author, who evokes in both characters the role of his patroness Marie de Champagne in the *Charrette* and her implication in the generation of the text's *san*, or 'meaning'. In fact, critics have already noted the manner in which the two romances are delicately interwoven through multiple (precisely three) direct allusions to the action of the *Charrette* in *Yvain* (lines 3702–11, 3914–35, 4734–39; 301, 303, 313),[342] but a part of my aim here will be to argue for the relatively greater importance of other, less overt connections and parallels, such as the following verbal echo. Here is an excerpt of the opening of the *Charrette*:

> Puis que ma dame de Chanpaigne
> Vialt que romans a feire anpraigne,
> Je l'anprendrai molt volentiers
> …
> Mes tant dirai ge que mialz oevre
> Ses comandemanz an ceste oevre
> Que sans ne painne que g'i mete.
> Del *Chevalier de la charrete*
> Comance Crestïens son livre,
> Matiere et san li done et livre
> La contesse …. (lines 1–3, 21–27; editor's italics)[343]

> (Since my lady of Champagne wills me to undertake the making of a romance, I shall undertake it with great goodwill. … I shall say only that her commandment is more important in this undertaking than any thought or effort I may expend.
>
> Christian is beginning his book of the Knight of the Cart. The Countess presents him with the matter and the meaning. [170])

Without getting involved in the decades-long debate over the difference in meaning between *sans* and *san*, I will call attention to the interpretative weight carried by another word: *comandemanz* ('commandment'). From the verb *comander* (var. *quemander*, 'to command or commission'), the word *comandemanz* both designates the commandment of the countess concerning the romance and furnishes a clue to its interpretation, insofar as the conduct of the courtly lover and hero (Lancelot) will be dictated by his lady's (Guenièvre's) commandments (e.g., lines 5852–57; 241). Significantly, a bit of close reading reveals that the same lexical paradigm is used to characterize the roles of Guenièvre and Keu in *Yvain*.[344] After mocking Calogrenant's courteous reception of

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1988), 13–14, 26–31, in which the author suggests that the entire opening of the romance (lines 1–720; 257–65), and in particular the quarrel between Keu and the queen (infra), be interpreted as general prologue material potentially applicable to Calogrenant's story and Yvain's adventures.

[342] See especially David J. Shirt, 'How Much of the Lion Can We Put Before the Cart? Further light on the chronological relationship of Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot* and *Yvain*', *French Studies* 31.1 (1977), 1–17 (1).

[343] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette ou Le Roman de Lancelot*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla, Lettres gothiques 4527 (Paris, 1992).

[344] Patron and *comandemanz* also figure prominently in the prologue to Chrétien's last romance, *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal* (c.1180–90), but the connection between it and *Yvain* is far less direct, historically and thematically, than the link between *Yvain* and the *Charette*. For more on the parallel between Guenièvre and Marie de Champagne, see Emmanuèle Baumgartner's concise analysis, 'Figures du destinateur: Salomon, Arthur, le roi Henri d'Angleterre',

the queen (lines 71–85; 258), Keu enjoins the queen, for the sake of the inscribed audience (lines 124–27; 258), to command that the knight continue his story: 'Quemandés li, si ferés bien' (Command him to continue, and you will act well, line 130 [258]). The text draws the reader's attention to the act of patronage by making it a 'meta-command' – a command to command. The queen's witty response is to comply with the seneschal's commandment, but not without modifying it so as to establish her own authority as patroness at the expense of Keu, henceforth the antipatron of Calogrenant's *conte* ('tale'):

> 'Cologregnant,' fait le roÿne,
> 'Ne vous chaille de la haïne
> Monseigneur Keu, le seneschal;
> Coustumiers est de dire mal,
> Si qu'on ne l'en puet chastïer.
> Quemander vous veul et proier
> Que ja n'en aiés au cuer ire,
> Ne pour lui ne laissiés a dire
> Chose qui faichë a oïr.' (lines 131–39)

> ('Calogrenant, pay no attention to the hostility of Sir Kay, the seneschal,' the queen replied. 'He has always had a vicious tongue no one can correct. I would command and beseech you not to harbor anger in your heart and not to refrain from telling because of him a tale that is worth hearing.' [258–59])

With these and other forms of *quemander* (e.g., line 143; 259), Chrétien establishes an ironic parallel between Marie's patronage of the *Charrette* and that of the queen and Keu in *Yvain*. The difference, a crucial one, and the source of the irony is that the latters' voices, while complicit in the production of the narrative, are inscribed in the fiction as direct discourse, that, as patrons of the embedded narrative, Keu and the queen are simultaneously characters in the romance in which it is contained. Chrétien is thereby able to use not only the fact of their fictional patronage but also the dialogue between them to frame the *san* of the remainder of the action, adding a metapoetic dimension to both characters' speech, especially the queen's. A closer examination of their dialogue will show how it emplots a key to the interpretation of the larger romance, and in particular the lion's tail.

Keu and the Keue*: Patronizing* Yvain

By far the most striking feature of the exchange between Keu and Guenièvre is the emphasis placed on the seneschal's 'venom' and 'tongue'. When Keu first mocks Calogrenant's pseudo-courtly behaviour (lines 67–85; 258), Guenièvre retorts,

> Chertes, Kés, ja fussiés crevés,
> … au mien quidier,

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in ead., *De l'histoire de Troie au livre du Graal: le temps, le récit (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)*, Varia 18 (Orléans, 1994; first publ. 1993; *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. Ian Short, Anglo-Norman Text Society Occasional Publications Series 2 [London], 1–10), 159–68 (163–64).

Se ne vous peüssiés widier
Du venin dont vous estes plains. (lines 86–89)

(Certainly, Kay, … I think you would have burst had you not been able to pour out the venom that fills you. [258])

The queen elaborates on this image later in reaction to Keu's second raillery, directed this time at Yvain (lines 610–27; 264). Determined to avenge his cousin's shameful defeat against the defender of the fountain under the pine tree, Yvain announces his plan (lines 579–87; 264). Keu's sarcastic approval (lines 588–609; 264) insinuates that Yvain's plot to avenge Calogrenant is nothing more than a postprandial boast, easier said than done. It is the queen who responds once again for the insulted knight, allowing her to complete the description of the seneschal's 'venomous' logorrhea: 'La vostre langue soit honnie, / Que tant i a d'esquemenie' (lines 613–14; 'Your tongue should be [a]shamed, for it is so full of bitterness').[345]

In the first passage, the output of Keu's foul mouth is likened to venom, which he 'pour[s] out' onto his interlocutors; in the second, the ceaseless outrage produced by his bilious tongue is metaphorized as diarrhea.[346] It will also be worth recalling the striking manner in which the queen characterizes Keu's tongue as a being figuratively apart from the seneschal.[347] Note, finally, how these invectives resonate with the narrator's earlier characterization of Keu as *venimeus* (line 70; 'venomous' [258]), an exceedingly rare epithet in Chrétien's œuvre, as Gérard Chandès has pointed out.[348] Could this highly distinctive metalanguage, shared by narrator and character, flag a further complicity between author and character, suggesting that Chrétien might be giving us here something more than a cheeky taste of the queen's own venom?

It is in the middle of the romance that we find out what that 'something' is. There one finds the only other incidence of the words *venimeus* and *venin* in *Yvain*, notably in the context of the lion–serpent combat. In this scene, *venimeus* is used twice to describe the serpent and justify Yvain's decision to assist the lion:

Lors dist c'au lyon secorra,
Qu'a venimeus et a felon
Ne doit on faire se mal non.
Et li serpens est venimeus. (lines 3356–59)

[345] In this instance I have replaced Staines's translation, which is too liberal, with my own. In translating *honnie* as '(a)shamed', I have attempted to preserve not only the literal sense of term, 'covered with shame' (Takeshi Matsumura, under the direction of Michel Zink, *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* [Paris, 2015], 1862), but also the personification of Keu's tongue.

[346] *Esquemenie* ('scammony') is a purgative resin extracted from the root of a variety of bindweed and used to treat constipation (ed. Hult, 87 n. 3). The queen's use of the term recalls the traditional association of bile with bitterness and venom (Jacques E. Merceron, 'De la "mauvaise humeur" du sénéchal Keu: Chrétien de Troyes, littérature et physiologie', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 41 [1998], 17–34 [22]).

[347] Hult, 'Prologue', 190.

[348] Gérard Chandès, *Le serpent, la femme et l'épée. Recherches sur l'imagination symbolique d'un romancier médiéval: Chrétien de Troyes*, Faux Titre 27 (Amsterdam, 1986), 44. In line 70 I cite the *lectio difficilior* of the Guiot manuscript (BnF, fr. 794), rather than Hult's base manuscript. These two manuscripts have widely been considered the 'best' for the text of *Yvain*; see the discussion in ed. Hult, 27–33.

> (He said [to himself] then that he will go to aid the lion, because a venomous and treacherous creature deserves nothing but harm. And the serpent is venomous. [297])[349]

That Yvain's thought process is not limited to venomous serpents, but rather extended to any 'venimeus' and 'felon' creature is, I think, a deliberate choice of words on the part of the author, whose general statement invites us to consider what other snaky personage he might be referring to in this instance. If Keu does not come to mind immediately, the text gradually overdetermines the similarities between him and the serpent: like the venomous and *felon* serpent (lines 3377, –84; 297), full of *felonnie* ('Tant est de felonnie plains' [line 3361]; 'so full of evil is the creature' [297]), Keu is *fel* (line 70; 'mean' [258]) and full of venom ('Du venin dont vous estes plains' [line 89]; '[of] the venom that fills you' [258]); the serpent's mouth spits flames ('Que la flambe mal ne li faiche / Quë il getoit par mi la gole' [lines 3366–67]; 'as a protection against the flames that the serpent was flinging from its throat' [297]), Keu's spits insults and mockeries ('Et gas et ranpornes gitant' [line 1356]; 'flinging insults and abuse' [273]).

The connection between the queen's remarks in the beginning of the romance and the rescue of the lion – namely, so far, between Keu and the serpent – is further strengthened by another example of the type of intertextual play that Chrétien practises in *Yvain*. Karl Uitti reads the midpoint scene as a 'response to the Forest of Morois episode' in Béroul's *Tristan* (c.1150).[350] While this is undoubtedly the case on some level, the author seems to be combining in his usual way references to more than one text, and a more convincing reading, following one recent paper, might identify not Béroul's, but Thomas's *Tristan* as the essential reference here.[351] In the Old Norse adaptation of Thomas's Tristan legend (1226), Tristan confronts and kills a dragon that has been terrorizing the inhabitants of Ireland (36: 543–44).[352] A cursory comparison reveals elements common to *Yvain* and *Tristan*, beginning with the chopping in half of the serpent in the former and the slaying of the dragon in the latter: 'Tristan bondit alors à terre agilement, tira son épée, attaqua le dragon et *le coupa en deux par le milieu*' (Tristan leapt to the ground with agility, drew his sword, attacked the dragon, and *cut it in two through the middle*, 36: 544 [my emphasis]).[353] Approaching the dead dragon, Tristan cuts out its tongue and stows it in his sack before riding off. When the king of Ireland's perfidious seneschal arrives on the scene, he

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[349] Likewise, I replace the adjective *enuious* in BnF, fr. 1433 (lines 3357, 3359) with *venimeus*, the word given in the Guiot manuscript, which seems a more appropriate descriptor for the serpent and creates a subtle link between the midpoint and the initial description of Keu that goes beyond the scope of scribal innovation. While acceptable, the variant in BnF, fr. 1433 would appear to be a unicum in the manuscript tradition as represented in the editor's critical apparatus (ed. Hult, 258), as well as that of Wendelin Foerster's first, critical edition: *Der Löwenritter (Yvain) von Christian von Troyes* (Halle, 1887), 139. In the translation, I preserve the sequence of tenses used by Chrétien to signal a sort of free indirect discourse.

[350] Karl D. Uitti, 'Intertextuality in *Le Chevalier au Lion*', *Dalhousie French Studies* 2 (1980), 3–13 (9).

[351] See Hult, 'Prologue', 191–92 on the relevance of Thomas's text to the prologue of *Yvain*. To my knowledge, the link between Thomas's *Tristan* and *Yvain* at the midpoint has not previously been noticed.

[352] References are to section and page numbers in Daniel Lacroix's modern French prose translation of Brother Robert's saga: Brother Robert (Frère Robert), *La Saga de Tristan et Yseut*, in *Tristan et Iseut: les poèmes français et la saga norroise*, ed./trans. Daniel Lacroix and Philippe Walter, Lettres gothiques 4521 (Paris, 1989), 484–626. The episodes cited have not survived in the Old French versions of the legend, only in the translations and adaptations in Old Norse (Brother Robert) and Middle High German (Gottfried von Strassburg).

[353] In Old French, *serpent* could mean *dragon* and vice versa (Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 1069, 3111). The important thing to note is that the serpent in *Yvain* and the dragon in *Tristan* are described in nearly identical terms (poisonous, spitting flames, etc.), and that both texts are thus in all likelihood referring to the same zoological genus (Dufournet, *Cours sur la Chanson de Roland*, Cours de Sorbonne [Paris, 1972], 99–109).

assumes that Tristan is dead and conspires to take credit for the slaying of the dragon (37: 544). The stakes are high, as whoever kills the dragon will be rewarded with Yseut's hand in marriage. The seneschal proceeds to chop off the dragon's tongueless head and present it to the king as proof of his victory (37: 544–45). However, the ruse is exposed as such when Tristan arrives with the tongue, which the king then realizes is missing from the dragon's head (45: 556–57). As in *Yvain*, *Tristan*'s seneschal is ultimately compared to the dragon, a double of the enemy beast: just as Tristan cuts off the dragon's tongue, so too is he able to silence the seneschal – with the former's organ. Operating across the exordium and the midpoint of *Yvain*, the Tristanian intertext shores up the link between Guenièvre's bitter characterization of the seneschal's tongue and the initial encounter with the lion and the serpent.

What proves most important about the *Tristan* reference in spite of these parallels is a fundamental reworking of Thomas's text by Chrétien, which situates both Keu and the *queue coupée* at the heart of *Yvain*'s intrigue. In Thomas's *Tristan*, the dragon is sliced in two, then its tongue is cut out, and finally the tongueless head is removed by the seneschal. It is in this case the tongue as a physical token, excised from the dragon's head, that carries a truth the seneschal's lying tongue tries to pass over in silence.[354] Moreover, it is the same tongue that poisons Tristan and launches the love story by bringing Tristan and Yseut together for the first time (38: 546–47).[355] In *Yvain*, the hero slices the dragon in two (lines 3378–79; 297), removing the serpent-dragon's head and, with it, that part of the lion's tail which the fire-breathing snake has swallowed (lines 3382–85; 297). As what seems to me to be the most direct avatar of the lion's tail in *Yvain*, the tongue of the dragon in Thomas positions the tail as the crux of the hero's intervention. This is not to say, however, that Chrétien has done away entirely with the motif of the serpent's tongue. To the contrary, the lexical web linking together Keu's 'venomous' tongue in the opening of *Yvain* and the serpent's venomous mouth at the midpoint, compounded with the Tristanian intertext underlying both scenes, suggests instead that the lion's tail has become irrevocably intertwined with the serpent's tongue; in other words, that the part of the lion's *keue* Yvain must cut off is at some profound level coterminous with Keu's vile language: that, figuratively speaking, the *keue* is, in fact, Keu(s), especially his villainous tongue. Wordplay involving Keu's name has a precedent in *Yvain*, where it is deployed as the radical of Calogrenant's name, making it all the more tempting to identify in the *keue* a lexical expression of the various associations between the serpent and Keu.[356]

These connections raise further questions. What would it mean for Yvain to cut off Keu's tongue along with the lion's tail? What, for that matter, does it mean for them to be connected in

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[354] Ed. Hult, 16; Hult, 'Prologue', 191–92.

[355] This is, in fact, the first meeting of Tristan-qua-Tristan and Yseut, although the two have already encountered each other in an earlier episode while Tristan was still going by the metathetical code name Tantris (30: 532–36).

[356] *Keus* (often abbreviated *Kex*) is the most common spelling of Keu's name in BnF, fr. 794 and 1433 (ed. Hult, 474; Chrétien de Troyes, *La Copie de Guiot, fol. 79v-l05r du manuscrit f. fr. 794 de la Bibliothèque nationale: "li chevaliers au lyeon" de Crestien de Troyes*, ed. Kajsa Meyer, Faux Titre 104 [Amsterdam, 1995], 219). G. D. West, *An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances, 1150–1300*, University of Toronto Romance Series 15 (Toronto, 1969), 96–97, provides a full list of variants. To interpret the lion's *keue* as a reference to *Keus* is irresistible in Hult's base text, where the first four occurrences of the word 'tail' read *keue* (lines 3350, -82, 4098; the form found in Guiot is *coe* [lines 3344, -81, 4096]). On Keu in Calogrenant's name, see Roger S. Loomis, 'Calogrenanz and Crestien's Originality', *Modern Language Notes* 43.4 (1928), 215-22. I would hazard to argue that there may be an additional pun on Keu's name in *Yvain*, based on homophony with the Old French word for 'cook' (*keu*, var. *queu*, *cous*). See lines 588-95 (264) and John Grigsby's remarks, 'Kay (Cei, Keu, Kei, Cayous)', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 931 (New York, 1996; first publ. 1991), 259-60 (260).

the first place? In the following pages, I will show that the parallel construction of Keu's opening *rampornes* ('mockeries') and the serpent's tongue/lion's tail at the midpoint reflects a much larger development in the narrative of *Yvain*. More specifically, I will argue that the entanglement of the serpent's mouth and the lion's tail is established figuratively by the corruption of Yvain's courtly-chivalric ethics, broadly understood as his motivations as a knight and a lover, throughout the entire first half of the romance. Indeed, I shall suggest through an analysis of four key and interrelated concepts developed by Chrétien that the metaphorical 'poisoning' of Yvain lasts until the midpoint scene, at which point a rupture occurs.

Keu and Yvain: Vantance-Rampornes-Enseignes Vraies-Conte

Nowhere in the early episodes of the romance is Keu's influence on the hero's conduct more apparent than in Yvain's duel with Esclados. There, as others have observed, it is Keu's mocking *rampornes* above all else that drive Yvain to chase gratuitously after his defeated opponent in order to prove his valour in a very real sense by producing a token of his victory, or an *enseigne vraie* (lines 883–97; 267–68),[357] extracted from the knight's body, dead or alive. David Hult and Joan Tasker Grimbert have concentrated attention on this and following passages.[358] The former, for instance, argues that 'Yvain needs to find a token … to authenticate his story as an antidote to Keu's vicious words, his charge of Yvain's empty *vantance* [boasting]'.[359]

At this point the text sets in place a striking connection between Yvain's quest for a trophy and the lion–serpent combat at the midpoint in the image of the portcullis arming the entryway to Esclados's palace. What stands out most from the perspective of this analysis is the imagery of cutting: the door 'slices' Yvain's horse 'all the way through the middle' ('trenche tout par mi' [line 945; 268]), cutting off at the same time Yvain's two spurs ('Si c'ambedeuz les esperons / Li trencha au rez des talons' [lines 949–50]; 'so closely that it clipped off the two spurs flush with his heels' [268]). We meet here with a familiar morphology of mutilation preparing the ground for the interpretation of later actions.[360] Yet the text also points backwards to the narrator's exordial remarks and the tale of Calogrenant's shame, an echo of more immediate importance as far as the contamination and partial symbolic stripping of Yvain's status as a knight are concerned. Rather than proof of his victory, the horse and spurs seem to constitute the obverse face of the *enseignes vraies*: they are signs of the degradation in Yvain's moral standing from *onnor* to *honte* (honour to shame), *courtoisie* to *vilenie* (courtliness to its essential opposite), as he pursues the token, harking back to the narrator's earlier sentence, 'Qu'encor vaut mix, che m'est a vis, / Un courtois mors c'uns vilains vis' (lines 31–32; 'For a courtly man, though dead, is worth

[357] This expression seems to have held particular importance for Chrétien, who uses it again to describe the blood found on the queen's sheets in the *Charrette* (lines 4774; Hult, 'Prologue', 191). Interestingly, the *ansaignes bien veraies* spoken of in the *Charrette* also have to do with Keu, who is (wrongly) accused by Meleagant of sleeping with Guenièvre (lines 4763–888; 228–29).

[358] Hult, 'Prologue', 191; Grimbert, *'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 27–28.

[359] The word *vantance* in Old French can refer to self-praise or glory (Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 3401). While it does not occur in *Yvain*, forms of the related verb *vanter* ('to boast') abound (e.g., lines 28, 716, 1854, 2183, 2188; 257, 265, 279, 283). With others (Roger Dragonetti, 'Le Vent de l'aventure dans *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion* de Chrétien de Troyes', *Le Moyen Âge* 96.3–4 [1990], 435–62 [438]; Hult, 'Prologue', 191), I invoke *vantance* to designate Yvain's boasting. Similarly, in the light of the verb *conter* (esp. line 2299; 284), I shall use the word *conte*, the same one that Chrétien uses in reference to Calogrenant's narration (lines 59, 61; 258), to describe Yvain's story below.

[360] Hult has compared the horse and the lion's tail as figures of 'incomplétude' in *Yvain* (ed. Hult, 19).

more, in my opinion, than a living churl' [257]). At the same time, the spurs and horse are a throwback to Calogrenant's humiliating decision to take off his armour in order to travel more lightly on his way back to court after Esclados takes his horse away from him (lines 542–57; 263–64). The analogy is made irresistible by the accelerant function of the spurs and their figurative significance in the twelfth-century ideology of chivalry,[361] and compounded by a disparaging comparison of the door's mechanism to a rat trap (lines 911–13; 268), making Yvain out to be the mischievous rat. However, he has all but forgotten about his cousin's misadventures, and even though Esclados escapes through another door and Yvain is the one who is trapped (lines 952–59; 268), the hero remains determined to present an item belonging to the defeated knight (his spurs, for instance) before the members of Arthur's court as a countermeasure to Keu's insulting tongue.

Of course, the problem arises that Yvain is never able to procure the corpse of Esclados le Roux, whose burial he observes from a tower in the palace (lines 1345–48; 272–73). How, then, will he prove his victory? In fact, a solution is found close at hand: the defeated's wife and property replace the husband's corpse as *enseignes vraies*.[362] Significant, in this regard, is the direct *enchaînement* of Yvain's disappointment at the burial of Esclados and the advent of New Love allegorizing Yvain's new love for the deceased's wife.[363] Joseph Duggan summarizes the whole development: 'Yvain, then, can be said to enter into marriage as the result of a series of incidents in which his conduct is impetuous and, at times, morally unjustified.'[364] It should be emphasized, however, that the seneschal's influence does not end with his defeat at the fountain or with the marriage, but rather lasts until the midpoint of the romance. To illustrate this, I would like to examine now the manner in which Yvain, like Calogrenant, transgresses the line between knight and narrator when he finally performs his *conte*.

We recall that Keu, as Yvain predicts, is granted the opportunity by the king to confront the defender of the fountain (lines 2236–40; 284). Having secured a victory, Yvain reveals himself to the king (line 2281; 284), who asks for a narrative of all that has happened to him since leaving the court:

> Et il lor a trestout conté
> Et le serviche et le bonté
> Que le damoisele li fist:
> Onques de riens n'i entreprist,
> Ne riens nule n'i oublia.
> Et aprés che le roy proia
> Quë il et tuit si chevalier

[361] The affixing of spurs was a key step in the process of becoming a knight in the Middle Ages, also known nowadays as 'winning or earning one's spurs': see, for example, Craig Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War* (Cambridge, 2013), 96, 152. By analogy, the removal of the spurs is emblematic of a loss of knightly status (Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks [Cambridge, 2016], 114), like Calogrenant's self-humiliation. In the specific context of the twelfth-century, Étienne de Fougères suggests the creation of what Jean Flori calls a 'ceremony of degradation', serving to undo the dubbing and in which the offending knight would be stripped of his spurs. See Flori, *L'Essor de la chevalerie: XIe–XIIe siècles*, Travaux d'histoire éthico-politique 46 (Geneva, 1986), 317, who cites Fougères.

[362] Ed. Hult, 15.

[363] Ibid.

[364] Joseph J. Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name: The Unity of Chrétien de Troyes' "Chevalier au Lion"', *Orbis litterarum* 24.2 (1969), 112–29 (114).

Venissent o lui herbegier,
C'onnor et joie li feront
Quant o lui herbegié seront. (lines 2299–308)[365]

(Yvain recounted everything to them, including the young lady's service and the good deed she did for him, detailing all without omission, and forgetting nothing. Then he invited the king and all his knights to come and stay with him, adding that they would give him joy and honor by taking lodging with him. [284])

Note the seamless transition from the story of Yvain's victory to the invitation he extends to the king and his men. Only by seeing with their own eyes, Yvain seems to believe, the *enseignes vraies* of his victory over Esclados will they accept the *conte* as truth.[366] From this standpoint, Yvain's *onnor* (a term which, for a twelfth-century audience, could evoke both Yvain's 'virtue in the eyes of others' and his 'noble property and rights')[367] is indeed at stake when he insists that Arthur be his guest, and when the king does eventually arrive with his men (lines 2331–87; 285), Yvain would appear to have procured, at last, as Hunt and Francis Dubost have argued, the antidote to Keu's *rampornes*.[368]

And yet: a closer examination of the text supports the opposite interpretation, that the enunciation of Yvain's *conte* does not mark the end of Keu's style of chivalry, but rather signifies the continuation of Keu's influence. Fittingly, it is none other than Keu himself who glosses the problem(s) inherent in the story of Yvain's honour during an unexpected excursus on the ignobility of self-narration directed at an absent Yvain prior to their duel at the fountain:

Aÿ, qu'est ore devenuz
Yvains, quant il n'est sa venuz,
Qui se vanta aprez mengier
Qu'il yroit son cousin vengier?
…
Molt ce vanta de grant orgueil.
Molt est hardiz qui louer s'oze
De ce dont autre ne l'alose;
Ne n'a temoig de sa losenge,
Ce n'est par force de loenge.
Molt a entre mauvez et preu,
Que li mauvayz delez le feu
Dist de lui unes grans paroles,
Si tient toutes les genz a foles

[365] I have adjusted line 2300, 'Le grant serviche et le bonté' in BnF 1433, a reading that is unique to this manuscript according to Foerster's critical edition (ed. Foerster, 93). More specifically, I have replaced 'Le grant' with Guiot's 'Et', for reasons of prosody which I describe in detail in a later portion of my analysis of Yvain's story.
[366] Reference is made further along to the vast property Yvain has conquered (lines 2468–75; 286). Yvain's function as defender of the fountain also lends credence to his account, but this office is the product of his marriage with the lady of Landuc and new status as lord of her castle, which he preserves as *enseignes vraies*.
[367] See Frederic L. Cheyette and Howell Chickering, 'Love, Anger, and Peace: Social Practice and Poetic Play in the Ending of *Yvain*', *Speculum* 80.1 (2005), 75–117, 100.
[368] Hunt, 'Dialectic', 294; Dubost, 'Une "Conjointure" signifiante', 208.

Et cuide q'en ne le congnoisse;
Et li preuz avroit grant angoisse
Së il ooit dire a autrui
Les proesses qui sont en luy. (lines 2181–84, -188–200)

(Well then, what now has become of Sir Yvain, since he has not come here – he who boasted after dinner that he would go and avenge his cousin? … He made a great boast out of excessive pride. Very brazen is the man who dares to praise himself for a merit no one else acknowledges in him, and who has no witness to his fraud, unless by virtue of praise itself. There is a great difference between a coward and a man of valor, for the coward, around the fire, brags about himself, he regards all men as fools and believes that no one knows his true character, whereas the brave man would be distressed to hear someone else describe the virtues that are in *him*. [283; my emphasis])

In what I believe to be a second instance of partial complicity between poet and character (following on the implication of both Keu and the queen in the inscribed act of patronage [§*The Queen and Keu*]), the seneschal's lengthy last *rampornes* both maintain the focus on Keu's own verbal excess and describe and predict Yvain's behaviour, obliquely summarizing the triptych of *vantance*, mockery and *enseignes vraies* at stake here, as well as its implications for the action – and *conte* – to come. Note in this regard the adverb 'ore' in the first line above; what does it recall but the narrator's distinction between then and now, 'or' and 'lors', as adumbrated, in a deliberately half-baked manner, one supposes, throughout the liminary sequence of the romance (esp. lines 12–24, 57–60; 257–58), where Calogrenant's shame is rendered present through the act of narration, *conte* ('tale') rhyming with *honte* ('shame')? The ambiguous temporality of Calogrenant's shame is evoked once more by the systematic shift in lines 2188–89 from the past tense to a sentential present potentially applicable to Yvain's current predicament ('Molt ce vanta' / 'Molt est hardiz' ['He made a great boast' / 'He is very brazen']). In the second half of the passage, the reader is presented with an additional opposition between *mauvez* and *preuz* that echoes with the narrator's collocation of *courtois* and *vilains* in line 32 (257), a related and equally tenuous dichotomy. One might reasonably object, for that matter, that Keu is an unlikely authority when it comes to distinguishing the good knights from the bad. Indeed, I think this is a part of the point, for if Yvain's *conte* and the manner in which he comports himself as a narrator, producing tokens of his glory to support his story, tell us anything, it is that he now shares with Keu an incomplete model of *proesse* ('virtue' above) based on the act of *prover* ('to prove'), one that fails to account for the more subtle, ethical requirements of chivalric honour bound up, among other things, with the ability to keep one's word.[369] Thus, Keu recapitulates the initial motive behind Yvain's adventure in lines 2183–84 without grasping its incompatibility with the quest for proof (*temoig*) that has by now superseded it, concentrating instead on the fact that Yvain's apparent boast so far lacks the necessary evidence. Meanwhile Chrétien repeats in reverse in the seneschal's mouth a rhyme that Keu and Yvain share in their first exchange: 'vengier' (Yvain) / 'mengier' (Keu); 'mengier / vengier' (Keu; lines 587–88; 2183–84; 'avenge / eat'; 'eat / avenge' [264; 283]). Here is a compact figure for the reversal of Yvain's ethics that resembles the conjunction of head and tail at

[369] The verbal echo between *proesse* and *prover* may be coincidental, although it is worth pointing out that various forms of the latter appear throughout the poem (e.g., line 1657; 276). At any rate, the connection between proof and prowess as conceived by Yvain and Keu around the figure of *enseignes vraies* (otherwise *temoig*) is clear, as central here as it is to Thomas's *Tristan* (supra).

the midpoint and so realizes verbally the connection established between Yvain and Keu as the latter swallows up one motive and spits out another in the opening of *Yvain*. Now – 'or(e)' – the entire sequence of events from the pursuit of Esclados to the showdown with Keu appears as 'pretext', a circular movement in the narrative that begins and ends at the fountain and whereby *Yvain's* self-narrative becomes the ironic confirmation not of his valour but rather of his *vantance* as such, an unhonoured vow to avenge his cousin.[370] Whereas Calogrenant's narrative is about the knight-narrator's shame, we may conclude, therefore, that the story of Yvain's honour is by its very paradoxical nature shameful.[371] In *Yvain*, as opposed to the situation in *Tristan*, for a knight to be his own narrator is never a good sign, let alone a true sign of heroism. The parallel between the two cousins and their respective stories is further marked by the royal audience in each case: first the queen, then the king.

For readers of Chrétien's romance, however, the trouble with Yvain's *conte* proper is that, strictly speaking, it hardly 'tells us anything'. In effect, the author all but excludes his own audience from the moment of narration, limiting the account of Yvain's exploits to five short lines of verse narrated not by the knight himself but rather by the narrator. Why would he so reduce a form of narration that we have come to associate with self-indulgence and great length, following Keu's description of the bad knight's 'grans paroles' (line 2195; 'praise', where 'grans' could also denote length [283]), aside from the obvious – that it could take too long, be too repetitious?[372] In anticipation of the figure of *conjointure*, I would like to suggest that the subtlety of the link between Keu's tongue and Yvain's behaviour at this juncture (following the seneschal's defeat) be taken as a significant feature of the representation of their relationship, as it unfolds in both narrative and metanarrative terms, rather than a barrier to interpretation. For now that Keu's *langue* no longer represents an immediate verbal presence in the text, it becomes a question of the continuing *effects* of his venom on Yvain rather than the poison itself, a dynamic that Chrétien will both mimic and communicate in this case through the contamination of the knight's voice by that of the narrator in the former's *conte*.[373] In other words, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the author focuses our attention on Yvain's narrative precisely by marginalizing it, and he spares nothing of his own verbal subtlety in the process.[374] Indeed, Chrétien would seem to seize upon the boundary between direct and indirect speech as an important site of interpretation in its own right, instead of a neutral passage from one speaker to another, *je* ('I') to

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[370] Here I part ways temporarily with Grimbert, who suggests, following Marie-Louise Ollier ('Proverbe et sentence: le discours d'autorité chez Chrétien de Troyes', in ead., *La Forme du sens. Textes narratifs des XIIe et XIIIe siècles. Études littéraires et linguistiques*, Medievalia 33 [Orléans, 2000; first publ. 1976 (*Revue des sciences humaines* 41, 329–57)], 125–55 [145]) that, 'It seems (*il semble bien*) that by proving that his valour matches his pretentions, Yvain succeeds in refuting the portrait that the seneschal has outlined in the opening scene' (*'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 116). I am arguing, by contrast, that the very drive to contradict Keu means (somewhat paradoxically) that Yvain's *conte* can only substantiate the seneschal's original charge of boasting.

[371] I disagree here with Ollier, 'Le Discours en abyme ou la narration équivoque', in ead., *La Forme du sens* (first publ. 1974 [*Medioevo Romanzo* 1.3, 351–64]), 87–98 (90), who states that, in contrast with Calogrenant, Yvain never tells his own story.

[372] One might compare *Yvain*'s narrator in this connection to that of *Erec et Enide* (c.1170; ed. and trans. Jean-Marie Fritz, Lettres gothiques 4526 [Paris, 1992]), who at one point states explicitly that he has no intention of reproducing in full the *conte* that Erec addresses to the court, for he (the narrator) has already related all of the knight's adventures, to repeat them would take too long and it would bore him (lines 6467–87; 80).

[373] Here I contrast Yvain's inscribed narrative with earlier scenes, such as the pursuit of Esclados (lines 883–97; 267–68), in which the seneschal's language is explicitly recalled in connection with the knight's behaviour.

[374] The account of Yvain's *conte* could be compared in this regard to the passage relating his adventures with Gauvain (infra).

il ('he'). More specifically, the form of the reported discourse that we find here gives it the distinctive quality of functioning as a critique of the subject of the direct discourse. What results, as we shall see, is an instance of irony that is not simply but doubly dramatic, suggesting the possibility of two widely divergent receptions of the account of Yvain's honour depending on one's point of view – within or without the narrative, so to speak. At first, we appear to be deprived of the one thing that we require in order to understand Yvain's *conte*, the story itself, when the opposite may be true: that we are in a better position as interpreters than the type of 'foles', or 'fools', theorized by Keu in his diatribe against Yvain (line 2196; 283), who, provided though they may be with the whole story, do not see the whole, or, as the case may be, partial truth.

In a classic pairing of opposing rhetorical devices, the account begins with a repetition (x3) of the conjunction 'et' (lines 2299–300; 284), a polysyndeton that is amplified by the rhyming words 'cont*é*' and 'bont*é*' yet followed up by a strong, double negation amounting to litotes: 'Onques de riens n'i entreprist, / Ne riens nule n'i oublia' (detailing all without omission, and forgetting nothing, lines 2302–303 [284]). In the last two lines the 'n'-sound of the negation matches the 'et' of the first two, a striking commentary on the asymmetry of narrator and character, brevity versus prolixity, that resonates with the queen's memorable characterization of Keu's uncontrollable tongue, which never stops, 'onques ne fine' (line 612; 264). At the same time, the contrast between the narrator and Yvain points to a lack of understanding on the latter's part of the virtue of economy in language, so well displayed by the former. In short, Yvain has said too much. It is for this reason in particular, I would contend, that the one element of Yvain's story to be specified is also the one notable instance in which Lunete ('le damoisele'), not Yvain, is the principal actor (lines 2300–301; 284). Irony of ironies, it would seem that Yvain, in attempting to tell the 'whole truth' of his adventure, has failed to prove his point. Rather than serving their intended purpose as *enseignes vraies* of Yvain's triumph over Esclados, the wife, castle and new post as defender of the fountain now appear at least in part as the result of Lunete's intervention on his behalf.[375] The narrator's use of terms elsewhere associated with chivalric honour, for instance, 'serviche' and 'bonté' (line 2300; 'service' and 'good deed' [284]), to describe Lunete's services, serves to shore up the distance between the shame of the present and the honour of a more distant past in which Yvain served *her* ('Mais vous, la vostre grant merchi, / M'i honerastes et servistes'; Out of deep compassion you honored and served me, lines 1010–11 [269]), not in hopes of future reward but rather out of 'grant merchi', and a future in which he will inspire others to recount his good deeds rather than narrating them himself.[376] More to the point with regard to subsequent episodes, by singling out Lunete's role in the marriage the narrator evokes the stratagem through which one token is substituted for another following the escape and

[375] Here I follow the version of Yvain's *conte* as cited above, which is to say combining elements of Guiot's copy with that of BnF 1433. For my purposes, however, I am tempted to interpret similarly lines 2299–2303 in the latter manuscript, insofar as 'trestout' could be interpreted separately from the following, as a noun ('the totality' [Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 3353]), then, rather than an adverb modifying Lunete's service. An alternate translation might thus be, 'Yvain told them everything, the great service and the good deed that the damsel did for him: he detailed all without omission, and forgot nothing.' In my rendering the mention of Lunete's intervention would not represent the sole content of Yvain's story, but effective and economical support for the claims to narrative totalization that precede and follow it; what more compelling proof that Yvain has left nothing out of the story of his own accomplishments than the inclusion therein of someone else's?

[376] In fact, the same rhyme 'conté / bonté' that we see in lines 2299–300 will be repeated in lines 4273–74 after the story of Yvain's victory against Harpin de la Montagne. There Yvain requests that his feat be made known to Gauvain, and his beneficiaries readily accept.

death of Esclados. Yvain may be telling the truth, the narrator seems to suggest, but the truth costs him a considerable lie. Trapped within the logic of the *enseignes vraies*, Yvain's story comes at the expense of his marriage with the lady of Landuc, whom the knight, lacking an authentic witness or token, continues to cherish perhaps most of all as the once-removed proof of her former husband's death.

Proof of the last point can be found in the failure of the marriage itself. Once the lady has served her purpose as *enseigne vraie*, Yvain does not lose all interest in her (lines 2579–86; 288), but is nonetheless easily persuaded by Gauvain to take leave of her for a year to participate in a series of tournaments (lines 2484–546; 286–87). Famously, he overstays his leave. Here the form of Yvain's initial request for leave (lines 2549–55; 287), a *don contraignant* or 'rash boon', seems uniquely designed to remind the reader of Keu, who will perform the same type of utterance, and with similarly catastrophic consequences, at a moment in the *Charrette* that follows Yvain's departure more or less directly in the conjoined narrative sequence of the *Yvain–Charrette* 'super romance' (lines 154–59; 172).[377] Resulting from this transgression is a scene of public shaming which takes the reader straight back to the opening quarrel between Guenièvre and Keu and Yvain's impetuous departure for the fountain, the primary difference being that it is now *Yvain's* tongue which is at issue. In this ironic twist, Yvain asks for leave in order to avoid being labelled a *jalous* or a *recreant* ('jealous husband' or 'derelict in duty', lines 2502–61 [287]), while the outcome of his leave is a series of charges that are far more serious and accurate than the ones he feared in the first place would have been: *le desloial*, *le jangleour*, *le menchongnier*, *le guileour*, *lerres*, *larron qui prodome resamblent*, *larron ypocrite* and *traïtour* ('the disloyal', 'the deceiver', 'the liar', 'the trickster', 'thief ', 'thieves who seem worthy men', 'hypocritical thieves', 'traitors', lines 2719–38 [289]).[378] On top of this the poet seems to indict his character of misdoing, suggesting the banality of Yvain's unspecified tour with Gauvain by condensing ironically the overstayed year into a meagre eleven lines of verse (lines 2670–80; 289), while recalling Keu's part in all of this: just as the queen's vituperations point to the separation of the seneschal's tongue from the rest of his body, so the narrator's relatively protracted and deeply regretful announcement of Yvain's departure emphasizes the alienation of the knight's body and heart, *cors* and *cuer* (lines 2639–60; 288–89). The effects of Keu's 'venom' on Yvain have come full circle, one form of *traÿson* ('treason') engendering another.[379]

Yvain-Keu-Coupé*: Pity and the Antisymbol*

We have now witnessed the full extent of Keu's influence on Yvain's actions in the first half of *Yvain* and the existence of a strong link between the literal venom of the serpent at the midpoint and the metaphorical venom Keu's tongue dispenses at the beginning of the text, a link that in turn reveals strong associations between Keu and the lion's tail (*keue*), as well as Keu and Yvain. Focusing much of their attention on Gauvain's role, critics would seem to have lost sight

[377] See Uitti, 'Le Chevalier au Lion', in *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, ed. Douglas Kelly, Edward C. Armstrong Monographs in Medieval Literature 3 (Lexington, 1985), 182–231 (189–90 on the term 'super romance').

[378] The last three terms are in the plural because they are describing an entire class of deceitful lovers, who 'steal' hearts rather than protecting them – and to whom Yvain is quite pointedly being compared.

[379] The words *traïr* (line 622; '[to] betray' [264]) and *traÿson* (line 624; 'treason' [264]) are used by the queen to describe Keu's tongue.

of the link between Keu and the serpent and its implications for our interpretation of the lion's tail and the romance in general. To be sure, Gauvain does perform an important function as ethical foil to Yvain and as an intermediate agent binding together *Yvain* to the *Charrette*.[380] There is no point in arguing against this. Equally or even more important (as far as the internal structure of the poem and its imbrication with the *Charrette* go), however, is Keu's role in a similar vein as Yvain's principal antagonist in the first portion of the story. In fact, Gauvain and Keu are expressly associated from the outset of the romance, where they appear to be sitting next to each other as Calogrenant tells the first iteration of his story, an arrangement suggested by the fact that their names share a line of verse (line 55; 258); then Yvain states his concern that either Keu 'ou mesire Gavains meïsmes' (Or even Sir Gawain, line 685 [265]) will steal his thunder, as it were, at the fountain; like Keu, Gauvain is a hypocrite who preaches what he does not practice (consider his speech to Yvain at lines 2484–538 [286–87]);[381] together, finally, they represent, along with the queen, the (super)glue that holds together the *Yvain–Charrette* super-text (more on this point below). In the briefest possible terms, we may say that Keu is the serpent, whereas Gauvain is the 'butterfly', an 'irreflective meddler' who appears to be present when he is needed the least and absent when he is needed the most.[382] In other words, Keu is the essential cause of Yvain's downfall, whereas Gauvain often appears as a *tertiary* figure whose own flawed notion of chivalry reflects in various ways on the hero's status in *Yvain* and sometimes factors into his conduct secondarily, without, however, deciding the structure and outcome of the romance to the extent that Keu does.[383] Thus, Chrétien uses Gauvain's character to frame the collapse of Yvain's marriage and his reconciliation with the lady of Landuc, with Yvain fighting alongside Gauvain in the tournament circuit (lines 2670–75; 289) and *against* him in the duel at the end of the romance (lines 6104–215; 329–31). In between the two scenes an important change occurs in the *dramatis personae*. Gauvain provides Chrétien with the means to index Yvain's evolution differentially, but the primary reason behind the change in the knight's conduct comes from another source.

In this section, I want to return to my argument that the rupture between Keu and Yvain, on the one hand, and the lion and the serpent, on the other hand, permits and indeed conditions the possibility of Yvain's ethical renewal and of his reconciliation with his wife. The

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[380] Lacy, *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes: An Essay on Narrative Art*, Davis Medieval Texts and Studies 3 (Leiden, 1980), 96–97; Keith Busby, 'The Characters and the Setting', in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Lacy et al., 2 vols, Faux Titre 31,37 (Amsterdam, 1987–88), 1:57–89 (71–73); Uitti, 'Le Chevalier au Lion', esp. 188–89.

[381] Thus, in closing his speech, Gauvain compares himself implicitly – and ludicrously – to a hypocritical preacher: 'Mais tel conseille bien autrui, / Qu'il ne saroit conseillier lui, / Aussi comme li precheour / Qui sont desloial tricheour, / S'ensengnent et dïent le bien / Dont il ne veulent faire rien' (But one easily offers advice to another without knowing how to take his own advice, in the same way that preachers who are deceitful tricksters teach and proclaim what is right with no intention of practising it themselves, lines 2533–38 [287]).

[382] On Gauvain as 'chivalric butterfly' and 'irreflective meddler', see respectively Hunt, 'Dialectic', 298, and Lori Walters, 'The Formation of a Gauvain Cycle in Chantilly Manuscript 472', in *Gawain: A Casebook*, ed. Raymond H. Thompson and Busby, Arthurian Characters and Themes 8 (New York, 2006; first publ. in 1994 [*Neophilologus* 78.1, 29–43]), 157–72 (163). To be clear, I am speaking of Gauvain's character in the specific context of *Yvain*.

[383] One might say that Gauvain is also a cause, albeit a secondary one, given that his speech seems to be the main reason that Yvain agrees to leave with him. As Hunt's close reading of the speech has shown, however, it is completely unpersuasive, despite this critic's misleading use of the term 'persuasive' in reference to lines 2503–506 (does he mean casuistic?); see Hunt, 'Beginnings, Middles, and Ends: Some Interpretative Problems in Chrétien's *Yvain* and Its Medieval Adaptations', in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics*, ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, MI, 1984), 83–117 (92–96; quoted at 94). I would instead recommend that we read this passage as a test of Yvain's commitment to Laudine, a test that he rapidly fails. His seduction by Gauvain's logic may thus be viewed as the effect of a larger problem of love and pride suggested by Keu's insults.

precise symbolic – or, rather, the precise antisymbolic – function of the lion's tail is essentially located in this moment of rupture and illuminates the mechanism of Yvain's transformation.

With the expression 'ethical renewal', I am alluding to a process of evolution that the hero undergoes in the company of the lion, as well as in the episodes that lead up to their initial encounter, including the crucial episode involving a hermit (lines 2827–91; 291). Briefly, through multiple stages of expiation and selfless military championship, the hero fosters a pseudonymous reputation as the *chevalier au lion* that will eventually win him back the lady of Landuc's hand in marriage.[384] Although this process in its entirety includes events both before and after the lion's appearance, Hunt has convincingly identified the rescue of the lion as the crux, a true breaking point in the narrative upon which the remainder of the action hinges.[385] Of course, the hermit begins Yvain on the road to recovery, offering him at the same time a model of charitable action (lines 2838–41; 291), but the crazed knight's relationship to him is primarily exchange-based, we recall, and it is not until the midpoint that Yvain will begin to exhibit something of the good man's *charité*. In exchange for the initial offering of bread and pottage, Yvain 'signifies gratitude for kindness by bringing along what he himself can offer, the animals he has killed'.[386] In this instance, Yvain behaves more like the lion, who will express gratitude in a similar manner (lines 3416–53; 297–98), than the lion-knight he is to become at a later moment. More precisely, it is the pity imputed to Yvain when he saves the lion and kills the serpent that seems to mark most clearly the hero's development:

> Mais quoi qu'i l'en aviengne aprés,
> Aidier li vaurra il adés,
> Que *pités* l'en semont et prie
> Qu'il faiche secours et aÿe
> A la beste gentil et franche. (lines 3371–75)

> (Yet no matter what should happen next, he will come to the aid of the lion now, for *pity* urges him on and pleads that he help and support the noble and honorable beast. [297; my emphasis])

This is a point of no small importance given the ethics espoused by Yvain in his new guise as lion-knight in the second half of the romance. As Hunt notes, 'The exemplary nature of Yvain's first gratuitous exploit – the rescue of the lion – is reaffirmed: it is, indeed, paradigmatic in the ethical context of the second half of the romance.'[387] Yvain's *pitié* is, moreover, just as remarkable in relation to the ethical context of the first half of the romance, where the hero's actions are motivated primarily by Keu's *rampornes* or, in the last instance, by a material debt to the lady of Noroison (lines 3070–73; 293). If it is not until some thousand lines later that Yvain names himself 'li chevaliers au leon' (line 4285; 'the Knight of [or "with"] the Lion' [308]), we

[384] As a narrative trope, the rise, fall, and redemption of the hero in *Yvain* might recall the trajectory of the sinner in religious narratives, as noted by Sarah Kay, 'Who Was Chrétien de Troyes?', *Arthurian Literature* 15 (1997), 1–35 (16) – and suggested in the final scene of the romance (esp. lines 6770–71; 337).

[385] For an opposing viewpoint, see Brian Woledge, *Commentaire sur Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lion) de Chrétien de Troyes*, 2 vols., Publications romanes et françaises 170, 186 (Geneva, 1986–88), 1:192.

[386] Haidu, 'The Hermit's Pottage: Deconstruction and History in *Yvain*', *Romanic Review* 74.1 (1983), 1–15 (5).

[387] Hunt, 'The Lion', 93. I might specify that Yvain's choice to help the lion is only 'gratuitous' in that its motive is not personal profit, but *pitié*. For further remarks on the 'exemplary' nature of this act, see Frappier, *Étude*, 206–207 and Julian Harris, 'The Rôle of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*', *PMLA* 64.5 (1949), 1143–63 (1147–48).

appear nevertheless to have already at the midpoint the staging ground for Yvain's ethical renewal as the lion-knight. To the extent that Yvain's failure is first of all that of a knight, and only then as a lover, the path by which he will be reconciled with his lady is also laid out by Yvain's exemplary justice against the serpent.

There is, however, a substantial problem in taking the narrator at his word when he says that Yvain will help the lion out of pity. As Grimbert has shown, it is exceedingly difficult to pin down the narrator's own voice, as it is frequently (the present case included) porous with the voices of his characters, whom we know at times to be dishonest:

> We have seen that, from the beginning, the narrator shows himself to be untrustworthy, in part because he shares his functions with the participants in the narrative, taking pleasure in blurring the line between his own world and that of the other characters. … As the narrator's speech is an integral part of the adversative structure, it is up to us alone to find, on reflection, our way through this labyrinthine structure; it is up to us alone to do the work of deciphering.[388]

Bearing in mind Grimbert's 'adversative structure', how are we to determine whether it is truly pity or some underlying and more devious motive, for example Keu's tongue, which is to say a desire to prove his honour anew, with a new token, that induces Yvain to rescue the lion? Is Yvain still 'poisoned' at this point? If not, what *proof* does the text offer to the contrary?

Grimbert has furthermore compared the predicament of Chrétien's reader to that of the knight Calogrenant, who seeks what he cannot find (lines 356–57; 261).[389] This is an important insight for our purposes, for I would in fact argue that the solution to Yvain's pity and to the other hermeneutic problems it entails with respect to Yvain's ethical transformation only presents itself provided that we stop seeking, in effect, and take stock of what goes missing in the midpoint scene – that we seek absence rather than presence and find, in a manner of speaking, what we cannot find. A second comparison with Thomas's *Tristan* will help to clarify what I mean by this and reveal in my view the most important work of rewriting on Chrétien's part aside from the wholesale addition of a lion to the story.

As we saw above, the poetics of cutting in *Tristan* and *Yvain* position that part of the lion's tail which Yvain must remove as the counterpart of the excised dragon's tongue which allows Tristan to prove to the king of Ireland that it was he, and not the perfidious seneschal, who slayed the dragon (§*Keu and the* Keue). In that text, the treachery of the seneschal's tongue (understood as his mendacious language) is both divulged and stifled at the moment when the king and Tristan restore the physical and symbolic union of head and tongue, the poisonous tongue representing Tristan's version of the *enseignes vraies*. By locating the truth about the dragon in the reunion of its tongue and head – that is, in the link between them – Thomas seems to be invoking the physical and figurative aspects of the object as a symbol in a strict etymological sense, from the Greek *σύμβολον*, or *symbolon* ('sign of recognition [object cut in two, of which two people would each preserve a half]'), which in turn comes from *συμβάλλω* (*symballein*), 'to throw together, put together, reunite'.[390] Remarkably, Yvain, unlike Tristan, does *not* recuperate the lion's tail as a token of his good deed. The narrator seems to revel in this fact, describing what

[388] Grimbert, *'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 34.
[389] Ibid., 1.
[390] Symbole', in *TLFi: Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, http://www. atilf.fr/tlfi, ATILF – CNRS and Université de Lorraine [accessed 23 June 2017].

Yvain does instead of collecting the tip of the tail using a singularly significant lexicon:

> Pour le venin et pour l'ordure
> Du serpent essue s'espee,
> Si l'a el fuerre reboutee,
> Puis si se remet a la voie. (lines 3408–11)

> (He cleans the serpent's venom and filth from his sword, and then, having placed it back in its scabbard, he resumes his journey. [297])

In leaving behind the tail, in refusing to appropriate it as the 'true sign' of his heroism, Yvain confirms that it is pity, and not what we might call 'prospective shame'[391] or obsessive longing for more truthful storytelling, that motivates the now-hero to save the lion. In the lion's tail, Chrétien has invented a means of dramatizing the end of Keu's influence on Yvain, as well as a brilliant way around the seemingly impassable issues of interpretation stemming, on the one hand, from the all-out failure of language to convey truth and, on the other hand, from the corruptive force of the physical token, which in Yvain's case can only carry 'morally unjustified'[392] truths that should be neither heard by anyone nor true in the first place. More precisely, it is the lion's tail as a veritable *antisymbol*, or a missing link, that speaks the truth about Yvain's evolution.[393] 'Surprise!', as Haidu would say, the proof that Yvain has changed is that there is no proof.[394]

At this point, however, I want to make it clear that my interpretation is intended to deepen and revise Haidu's thesis, though it is nonetheless foundational, regarding what Haidu calls the gratuity of the tail. While we can agree that there is gratuity, I would insist on its being meaningful and even necessary, not simply playful. I would instead define the underlying function of the lion's tail as a precursor to what Wolfgang Iser, in fact a theorist of missing links or 'blanks' in modern literature, would call the 'minus function'. 'The nonfulfillment of traditional narrative functions', Iser writes, 'leads to "minus functions" in that expectations are invoked in the reader as a background against which the *actual* functions of the text become operative.'[395] Now, when taken as a possible token of Yvain's defeat of the serpent, the tip of the lion's tail is, in effect, entirely 'gratuitous',[396] for it is never deployed as such. Further, Yvain

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[391] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, Sather Classical Lectures 57 (Berkeley, 2008; first publ. 1993), 79.
[392] Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name', 114.
[393] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, 30. Perhaps there is a vague echo here with Philippe de Thaon's bestiary lion, who brushes away its tracks with its tail (*Bestiaire*, ed. Luigina Morini, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Âge 183 [Paris, 2018], esp. lines 157–62). We might see Yvain brushing away the traces of his sins by cutting off and leaving behind the tail, the latter signifying his ethical transformation.
[394] Note that the lion itself is never called upon as a token either, because tokens are only valuable inasmuch as they verify spoken narrative or *clergie* (Grimbert, *'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 30–31), whereas Yvain's new ethics will be defined by good deeds, not good stories. Indeed, an essential part of the lion- knight's reputation is that it is built up by those whose causes he champions with the lion, not by the knight himself (e.g., lines 4267–91; 307–308). Appropriately, the rescue of the lion, Yvain's first and arguably most selfless act, is an exception. In fact, no one but the reader will ever hear about the manner in which Yvain saved the lion, as Yvain will say nothing about it in the ensuing encounters; see Kay, 'Commemoration, Memory and the Role of the Past in Chrétien de Troyes: Retrospection and Meaning in "Erec et Enide", "Yvain" and "Perceval"', *Reading Medieval Studies* 17 (1991), 31–50 (38). The lion, being an animal, cannot spread the word either.
[395] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, 1978), 209 (author's emphasis).
[396] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, e.g., 73.

would never cut off any of the tail in the first place, were it not absolutely necessary in order to remove the serpent from the lion: 'Tant com trenchier en *covenoit* / L'en trencha, c'onques mains n'en pot' (He cut off as little as *necessary*; in fact, he could not have removed less, lines 3386–87 [297; my emphasis]). And yet, its very gratuity within the narrative and hermeneutic frameworks in place in the preceding sections of the romance explains its *necessity* as a technology of closure and transition. The tail presents Yvain with a new test, and rather than look for a means of preserving it for his own benefit as Tristan preserves the dragon's tongue, he chooses to wipe the serpent's venom off his blade, set off without the missing piece and pass under silence his great feat. The morphology of the excision is also noteworthy in this regard. Minute in scope and of apparently surgical precision, it will go unnoticed by all but narrator and reader. An important contrast thereby emerges between Yvain's spurs, the *esperons trenchiés*, which are both removed in full and taken, along with the half of the knight's saddle that falls inside the portcullis, as a sign or *enseigne vraie* of his presence in the palace (lines 1120–31; 270), and the tip of the lion's tail, which inverts, and even deconstructs, the typical symbolic order of analysis and synthesis, permanently engulfed in the serpent's mouth and cut off from the rest of the tail, all but unnoticeably so as to signify in its own right as a missing *link*.[397] Yvain's choice to cut off the smallest amount possible further confirms that a decision has already been made to help the lion, out of pity for it. If it was impetuosity of a vicious sort that led Yvain to take off on his own at the beginning of the romance (lines 675–760; 265–66), this quality is here resignified as a virtue, the better to convey the transformation effectuated at the midpoint. Hence our impression of the hero's genuine pity is only deepened by his conviction to help the lion not knowing whether or not it will subsequently attack him (lines 3369–72; 297) and, 'Qu'a venimeus et a felon / Ne doit on faire se mal non' (because a venomous and treacherous creature deserves nothing but harm, lines 3357–58 [297]). A telling equivalency is thus established between the eradication of the serpent's tongue, physically and symbolically, and the hero's newfound pity. The text further determines the connection between Keu and the lion's tail/serpent's tongue by dividing the combat into two parts around the adversative conjunction *mais* (line 3382; 297): Yvain first subdues the serpent by cutting it in half (lines 3378–81; 297), *but* he must then cut off a piece of the tail in order to separate the lion from the serpent's venomous tongue (lines 3382–87; 297).[398] Rather subtly, the alienation of the serpent's mouth from the rest of its body recalls again Guenièvre's allegorization of Keu's tongue as a separate entity with a will of its own.[399] Just as the serpent continues to inject its venom into the lion even after Yvain chops it in half, so too Keu's tongue poisons the hero's conduct even after the seneschal is shamefully defeated at the fountain.

We are now in a position to answer my initial questions. Literally, Yvain kills the serpent and cuts off the lion's tail/serpent's tongue, thereby performing an act of pity and justice against evil that sets the stage for his career as *le chevalier au lion*. In the same stroke, Yvain liberates himself symbolically from Keu's voice as a source of motivation, wiping the seneschal's verbal

[397] The association of spurs with knighthood (see note 361) highlights the contrast between the *esperons trenchiés* and the lion's tail. Whereas the loss of the spurs may be seen to signify a degradation in Yvain's status, the main character will become a knight again precisely by removing the tip of the tail, this last replacing the spurs as a mark of ascension. The reversal of the symbolic paradigm in *Yvain* therefore also operates via the chivalric imaginary, which, along with Thomas's romance, proves more relevant to my reading than the traditional religious and erotic symbolism of cutting that have often been invoked to explain Yvain's transformation at the midpoint; see, for instance, Bruckner, 'The Lady', 72.

[398] On *mais* see Grimbert, *'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 37–68, who has written about the special importance of this conjunction in *Yvain*.

[399] Hult, 'Prologue', 190.

'venom' from his mind as he wipes the serpent's venom off of his sword. Rather than reading the lion's tail as evidence of a psychological romance or an 'interior' moral development *per se*, I propose that it be understood in its antisymbolic function as both a highly complex and subversive example of the type of symbolism Thomas practised and a case in point of the 'adequate' literary symbolism Haidu attributed some time ago to Chrétien's poetics, whereby external signs are called upon to signify the inner states of the soul or moral situations: 'One of the most common functions of literary symbolism is to designate inner turmoil or a moral situation through some external sign.'[400] Driven from this moment forward until the end of the romance by nobler intentions, Yvain becomes in Keu's absence a new knight, the knight of the *lion-queue-coupée*.

Crucially, this moment coincides with the midpoint of the romance. That the hero's definitive transformation should take place exactly in the middle of the conjoined stories of Yvain and the lion-knight, that the symbolic link between Yvain and Keu should be broken there as a different bond forms between the lion and Yvain – this alignment of form and content at the centre of Chrétien's *Yvain* cannot be mere coincidence, but must rather be seen as reflecting a deeply methodical and ironic poetic superstructure coordinated thematically and structurally around the midpoint of the romance and the cutting off of the lion's tail therein.

Depieche, Pieche*: Cutting for* Conjointure *in* Yvain

As noted in previous chapters, Uitti was perhaps the first to observe that the midpoint in medieval verse romance, especially Chrétien's but also, for instance, the conjoined *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun (c.1235– 1275), tends to contain details or actions essential to the furtherance of the entire plot and thus to the interpretation of the text as a whole, a 'strategic *locus*'.[401] As Uitti further warrants, *Yvain* is no exception to the trend, although he and others seem to have misapprehended somewhat the importance of the midpoint in this poem, which remains largely understated from a literary-critical standpoint. In what remains of this study, I want to show how the lion's tail constitutes the operative detail of the middle of *Yvain*, effectively the *sine qua non* of the paradoxical structural unity of Chrétien's apparently disjunctive, two-part poem relating the exploits of Yvain and the lion-knight. In the previous section, I suggested that Chrétien reconfigures Thomas's symbolism so that signification may occur through rupture rather than unity, gaps rather than fullness. To conclude my analysis, I want to argue that the poetics of antisymbolism in *Yvain* is, with certain qualifications, paradigmatic of the global structure of the romance.

On the face of it, the structure of the romance might seem as impassable from an

[400] Haidu, *Lion-queue-coupée*, 19. See also Cheyette and Chickering, 'Love, Anger, and Peace', who have argued that '"Moral education" and "inner maturation" are the wrong terms to use, given the way … twelfth-century emotions were externalized and attached to publicly observable action' (116). Alternatively, see Kay, 'Commemoration', who states that Yvain's adventures are of an 'essentially private nature' (42), and Zrinka Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes*, Gallica 19 (Cambridge, 2011), 75-109 (Ch. 3, 'Adventures in Wonderland: Between Experience and Knowledge'), for whom their 'unintelligibility' would preclude the possibility of 'a progression, evolution, or rehabilitation of the subject [i.e., Yvain]' (108). While the rescue of the lion is not observable by a public within the romance, it is, of course, by Chrétien's external audience. Insofar as I feel strongly that Yvain's adventures *are* intelligible from a narrative standpoint, I also stand by the claim that the hero's behaviour evolves over the course of the narrative.

[401] Uitti, 'Le Chevalier au Lion', 223 (author's emphasis). See also 207–208 on the midpoint.

interpretative point of view as Yvain's pity: the unity of the romance is somehow founded on multiple acts of cutting – indeed on disunity. Yet as previous scholars have so convincingly shown, and as we have witnessed so many times over the course of the present analysis, *Yvain* is governed by a logic of adversative structure and dialectic, the *courtois* blending with the *vilains*, honour with shame, love with hate, man with animal, words with deeds and so forth.[402] An additional and particularly striking example of adversative structure is that of the house in which both Love and Hate together dwell, evoked near the end of the poem (lines 6017–36; 329) in one of the rare instances of personification allegory in Chrétien's romances. Thus, if scholars have not previously commented on the cutting motif as the central figure of the romance, this is undoubtedly due less to its a priori infelicity as a structural metaphor than to the fact that the midpoint passage also seems to be about Yvain's new name and his pseudo-namesake, the lion. Importantly, however, Yvain's 'good name'[403] is not the focus here. Moreover, our attention is not directed towards the lion itself until the last lines of the scene, once it has been freed from the serpent (lines 3388–415; 297). To reduce the contents of the midpoint either to the pseudonym or to the meeting of the knight and the lion is thus to twist the details a good deal. Greatest emphasis, I would argue, is placed on the separation of the lion and the serpent, culminating in Yvain's attack on the latter. Let me rephrase: this is first of all a scene about division and cutting. Indeed, the 'middle of the middle' is dominated by the imagery of the chopping in half of the serpent, the cutting off of the tail and, last but not least, by the vocabulary attending these images: *trenche*, *trencha*, *trenchier* (x2), *.ii. moitiez*, *retronchonne*, *fiert*, *refiert*, *amenuse*, *depieche, pieche* ('slices', 'sliced', 'to slice', 'two halves', 'cuts up again', 'strikes', 'strikes again', 'chops', 'hacks to pieces or dismembers', 'piece', lines 3378–87 [297]). Eleven words in total, all having do to with some form of bifurcation, are impressively concentrated in ten consecutive lines of octosyllabic verse inscribed at the heart of the text as what I believe is a *mise en abyme* or thematization of the literary process: as Yvain chops the serpent in half, Chrétien divides the romance into *.ii. moitiez*. Now, the question remains of how we are to understand the division of the text conceptually. Are we dealing with two distinct 'books', as was suggested by one early critic and again, more recently, by Maurice Accarie?[404]

Rather, I want to argue that the *.ii. moitiez* of the text are drawn together into unity precisely through more division inviting attention to the finer points of verse, theme and diction in the midpoint scene. As telling, in this respect, as the disposition of the cutting paradigm at the heart of the text is the manner in which it, too, is dissected into two sequences (corresponding to lines 3378–81 and 3382–87 respectively [297]), as we have seen, around the adversative *mais* of line 3382: 'Que tout l'amenuse et depieche. / *Mais* de le keuë une pieche' (until he has chopped and hacked it to pieces. / *But* a piece of the lion's tail, lines 3381–82 [297; my emphasis]). Yet in a properly adversative fashion, Chrétien has pitted grammar against prosody and prosody against itself, dividing a series of terms denoting division while simultaneously connecting them by way of an inverted etymological rhyme between *depieche* and *pieche* that itself operates a

[402] See especially Grimbert, *'Yvain' dans le miroir*, 37–68 and Hunt, 'Dialectic'.
[403] See Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name'.
[404] Arthur Witte, 'Hartmann von Aue und Kristian von Troyes', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 53 (1929), 65–192 (89; cited from Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name', 118). In a similar spirit, although dividing the romance around the marriage of Yvain and the lady of Landuc, Maurice Accarie reproaches Chrétien for having written nearly two romances in one: 'It is indeed as if a first romance ends there, and, if one had to opt for a bipartite interpretation, the transition would, rather, be found at this point' ('La Structure du Chevalier au lion', in id., *Théâtre, littérature et société au Moyen Âge* [Nice, 2004; first publ. 1978 (*Le Moyen Âge* 84.1, 13–34)], 267–86 [271–72]).

morphological deconstruction of the first term (*de-pieche*) as well as a reconstruction of the second term. Suddenly, in the middle of the middle of the middle, discontinuity becomes continuity, parts become part – that is, whole – and out of *depieche* we get *une pieche*. Notice, in addition, how this rhyme coincides with and literalizes the transition from the chopping in half of the serpent (*depieche*) to the cutting off of its head, in which a piece of the lion's tail (*pieche*) is lodged: ~~*de*~~*pieche* = *pieche*.

The calculated coincidence of chivalric and poetic performance when the lion's tail is removed at the midpoint of *Yvain* betrays a technique of unification on the poet's part operating at once parallel to and against the actions of the character and ensuring the unity of the narrative even as it is split into two and an antisymbol is created. Yvain chops the serpent in half, *but* he must also cut the serpent off of the lion in order to extricate himself from the influence of Keu's tongue and reinvent himself as the lion-knight, whose story will occupy the second half of the romance. There is something of a dialectical turn here, whereby Keu's tongue, the main source of Yvain's woes, is made to play the counterpoint to Yvain's new identity as *chevalier au lion*, the condition of the narrative's continuation into its second segment. Chrétien has written two apparently disjunctive stories, but not without supplying a *pieche* to hold them together, albeit ironically through discontinuity.

The author elsewhere supplies a very specific term to describe the type of narrative coherence achieved through the lion's tail: *molt bele conjointure* (var. *mout bele conjunture*). Douglas Kelly and Hunt, leading authorities on the topic, provide judicious and economical definitions of a concept that has dominated since the second half of the twentieth century an entire current of scholarship surrounding the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Kelly, in the summa of his work on rhetoric and medieval romance, traces the central lines of the history of the concept of literary 'conjoining' up to Chrétien's time, his use of the term *conjointure* and its influence on later authors.[405] Of these I would like to retain especially the specificity Kelly imputes to the Champenois poet's sense of the word against the background of its broader semantic range in the vernacular. Scholars today have a tendency to invoke the term when referring to any instance of unifying or 'conjoining' in medieval French romance, but, as Kelly rightly reminds us, *conjointure* enjoyed only an extremely limited usage in the French Middle Ages insofar as it is understood in its poetic acceptation:

> The word *conjointure* is as ubiquitous in modern scholarship as it is rare in romance prologues and epilogues. Yet modern fascination with the word masks a startling, even disturbing variety of meanings that are attributed to it. In reference to romance, the noun appears to be a hapax in the Middle Ages, occurring only in verse 14 of Chrétien's *Erec*.[406]

Indeed, outside of its literary sense the word (or a related form) was used in such various fields as carpentry, stonemasonry and pharmaceutical chemistry to designate 'any combination of elements, however unwieldy, untidy, or heterogeneous'.[407] It would thus appear that Chrétien's most innovative move consisted in transforming for his purposes the term into a literary and aesthetic or stylistic designation, adding *bele* to the expression while preserving the root meaning of *jointure* in Old French as a successful and effectively beautiful anatomical unity: 'The beautiful

[405] Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, 1992), 15–31.
[406] Ibid., 15.
[407] Ibid., 15–17.

object of description is *joint*: all parts make a whole.'[408] In keeping with the metaphor, Kelly argues, for Chrétien the subtlety of the 'joints' uniting the parts – what Geoffrey of Vinsauf called *iunctura occulta*, as opposed to *iunctura aperta* (hidden versus unhidden) – is part of that which distinguishes the author's *bele conjointure* from simple *jointure* or *conjointure*.[409] In the twelfth-century corpus, the notion of the subtlety of the joints finds a remarkably clear expression in the narrator's description of the boat in Marie de France's *Guigemar* (c.1170):

> Mult esteit bien apparillee;
> Defors e dedenz fu peiee,
> Nuls hum n'i pout trover jointure. (lines 153–55)
>
> (The ship was fully prepared for departure, caulked inside and out in such a way that it was impossible to detect any joints. [45])[410]

With these examples in mind, it is worth noting that *bel* in Old French had a wider range of meanings than it does today.[411] While 'beautiful' is an apt description for Chrétien's *conjointure* when taken as a metonymy for the romance resulting from the conjoining manoeuvre, it seems less appropriate to describe the latter itself, which is ostensibly invisible. In this light, perhaps 'skilful' (*habile*) or 'suitable' (*convenable*) comes closer to rendering the nature of the *conjointure*. Hunt gives an incisive definition of the concept, clarifying the nature of the skill of conjoining:

> Chrestien's *conjointure*, it seems to me, indicates the coherence of a story which is achieved through the relating of the various parts to each other and to the whole, so that a unified thought-pattern emerges, without internal contradictions.[412]

Now, countless studies – indeed too many to number all of them here – have been devoted to the manner in which parts are made to relate to one another and to the whole in subtle junctures in Chrétien's *Yvain*, most often in terms of a two- or three-part structure, bipartition or tripartition, or a theory of episodic gradation.[413] Regarding these various mobilizations around the question of *conjointure* in *Yvain*, one thing jumps out: in not one of them does the lion's tail assume any sort of significance with respect to the conjoining of the stories of Yvain

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[408] Ibid., 17.
[409] Ibid., 16, 22–23.
[410] Cited from *Lais Bretons (XIIe–XIIIe siècles): Marie de France et ses contemporains*, ed. and trans. Nathalie Koble and Mireille Séguy, Champion Classiques, Série Moyen Âge 32; *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 2nd edn, Penguin Classics (New York, 1999). For a further and equally striking instance of *jointure*, see Chrétien's own *Cligès* (1176), ed. and trans. Méla and Olivier Collet (Paris, 1994), Lettres gothiques 4541, lines 5508–14.
[411] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 380–81.
[412] Hunt, 'Tradition', 321.
[413] See especially Frappier, *Le Roman breton: Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* (Paris, 1952), 8–9; Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name', esp. 118; Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion, Yvain*, ed. Mario Roques, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Âge 89 (Paris, 1960), xi; Reto R. Bezzola, *Le Sens de l'aventure et de l'amour (Chrétien de Troyes)* (Paris, 1947), 81–82; Dubost, 'Une "Conjointure" signifiante'; Z. P. Zaddy, 'The Structure of Chrétien's "Yvain"', *The Modern Language Review* 65.3 (1970), 523–40; Roger Dubuis, 'L'Art de la "conjointure" dans *Yvain*', *Bien dire et bien aprandre* 7 (1989), 91–106.

and the lion-knight. On the contrary, we have seen here how the tail serves thematically and structurally as a link without the symbolic meaning attached to the *symbolon* that nonetheless *signifies* Yvain's transformation into the lion-knight: it is the missing link between these two stories, supplying a piece or *pieche* to connect them in *conjointure*. On the one hand, the elimination of Keu and the *keue* from the narrative conditions Yvain's ethical renewal and the reconciliation of the lovers. The importance of the tail in reconnecting Yvain and his lady is highlighted by the Tristanian intertext, as I have intimated earlier in the analysis. Whereas it was the serpent's tongue that, by poisoning Tristan, joined him together with Yseut, it is the cutting off of the serpent's head and the lion's tail in *Yvain* that results immediately in the transformation of Yvain's ethics and ultimately in his reunion with the lady of Landuc. Now, I would furthermore stress that this aspect of the plot, where the hero's mistake in the first half of the romance is progressively 'undone' through his heroic exploits (if not fully forgotten in the end), points above all to an interest on Chrétien's part in character development through or even *as* a narrative development in *Yvain*.[414] As such, Yvain's evolution revolves around the knight's relationship, in words and in deeds, to others rather than himself in the same way that the various 'pieces' of the text take on their meaning as parts of a larger whole, a dialectical process in *Yvain* whereby integrity, textual and ethical, arises from nothing other than disintegration.[415] Witness a remarkable movement through narrative and social space at the midpoint of *Yvain*. In particular, the conjuncture of the two halves of the romance around the removal of the seneschal's character is also marked by his literal disappearance from the story and his simultaneous entry into another narrative, that of the *Charrette* – along with Gauvain and Guenièvre, the two characters who, with Keu, frame Yvain's downfall.[416] Keu, it should be noted, is initially the motor of both narratives, and it is clear that his character and its symbolic expression in the lion's tail were at the heart of Chrétien's apparently dual project in writing *Yvain* and the *Charrette*. In this connection, I would suggest that we take the entangled configuration of the lion's tail and serpent's head not only as a snapshot of the quasi-ouroboros structure of the opening scene and the midpoint in *Yvain*, but also as a representation in miniature of the forking movement out of which two stories would spring, that of the lion-knight as well as Lancelot's in the *Charrette*. The scene is simply marvellous from a creative point of view.

On the other hand, Chrétien manages to bring together subtly, in the figure of the lion's tail, a series of separate and apparently frivolous, even gratuitous, moments in the action of *Yvain* through artful use of recurrent motifs and image- and sound-patterning connecting these different episodes, namely the queen's squabbling with Keu in the beginning and the rescue of the lion at the midpoint. More than this, he turns them into the focal points of a global signifying framework, from which 'a unified thought-pattern emerges, without internal

[414] On the ending of *Yvain*, see especially Cheyette and Chickering, 'Love, Anger, and Peace'.

[415] One might go as far as to say that the relationship between words and deeds as it concerns time in particular is, in Yvain's case, reversed from one half of the romance to the other, the primacy of language after action, narrative or *conte*, giving way to a dominant form of language, the promise, that precedes – and, unlike *vantance*, is put in – action (e.g., lines 3717–23, 3939–47; 301, 303–304). Likewise, whereas Yvain loses track of time in the first half of the text and thus fails to keep his promise to the lady of Landuc (his 'mistake'), timing is everything in the second half of the romance, a feature of Yvain's new identity that the text throws into relief, for example, by contrasting it with Gauvain's untimely absences (lines 3694–711, 3908–35; 301, 303). Cf. Kay, who argues that, in *Yvain*, 'integrity is a matter of inner consciousness, of which memory is the essential guarantee' ('Commemoration', 41).

[416] Indeed, the midpoint of *Yvain* coincides approximately with the start of Chrétien's *Charrette*, falling between the moment when Yvain leaves Gauvain (line 2796; 290) and Lunete's remark that Gauvain is absent because of Keu's incompetence (lines 3699–711; 301).

contradictions', to quote Hunt again.[417] Thus, while I come closest to siding with Duggan in interpreting the romance according to a two-part division about the midpoint,[418] I am not primarily interested in the numerical structural analysis of Chrétien's poem, but rather in what it demonstrates, the existence of a central juncture in the text and the effect that *it* produces, a paradoxical form of narrative and poetic unity that is at once understated and overarching. The skill and irony with which the 'conjoining' is enacted thematically and structurally are appreciable: it is the lion's tail as a missing link that permits the cohesion of the parts and the whole through discontinuity. So much for gratuity.

As for the irony and paradox of the form of *conjointure* Chrétien offers up in the middle of his *Yvain*, I want to add, finally, that it reflects directly the plot and poetics of the romance and could not be any more suitable in these regards. To see why, it will be useful to revisit in some detail the author's own definition of *conjointure* in the prologue to *Erec et Enide*. As he remarks on the elaboration of this romance, Chrétien's narrator defines the Champenois writer's *mout bele conjunture* (line 14; 1) by contrast with the dismembered and corrupt stories of his less talented counterparts, who tell them solely to turn a profit:

> D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes,
> Que devant rois et devant contes
> *Depecier* et corrompre suelent
> Cil qui de conter vivre vuelent.
> Des or comencerai l'estoire
> Que toz jors mais iert en memoire
> Tant con durra crestïentez.
> De ce s'est Crestïens *ventez*. (lines 19–26)

> (This is the tale of Erec, the son of Lac, which those who wish to make their living by storytelling in the presence of counts and kings usually *hack to pieces* and spoil. Now I am going to begin the story that henceforth will be remembered as long as Christianity endures. This is Christian's *boast*. [1; my emphasis])

It is tempting to think that Chrétien has made in the middle of *Yvain* direct reference to these lines from his first Arthurian romance; in any event, they provide an interesting gloss on the action at the midpoint. In the two terms emphasized above, we encounter the familiar imagery of dismemberment (*depecier*) and boasting (*ventez*). Not only does the translation of disunity into unity, *depieche* into *pieche*, in lines 3381–82 (297) reflect and culminate arguably Chrétien's dialectical poetics in *Yvain*, but it also allows the poet to measure up his own narratorial talents, or *clergie*, against those of his main character and to bring together to the fore the discontinuity of the stories of Yvain and the lion-knight and the shifting dynamics of voice and narrative authority initially problematized in Calogrenant's clerkly address. The second word, *ventez*, is, I think, crucial for understanding the manoeuvre, for so much of Yvain's fault in the first half of the romance was linked to an effort to counter Keu's accusation of boasting, *vantance*, that is, and thus to the priority of narrative over the selfless and more properly chivalric

[417] Hunt, 'Tradition', 321.
[418] Duggan, 'Yvain's Good Name', 118.

prouesse ('valour') he exhibits in the second half.[419] Attributing acts of dismemberment to Yvain when he chops the serpent in half then cuts off the tail of the lion, Chrétien also creates something of a clash between his actions and his character's: *depecier* versus *bele conjointure*, to be precise.[420] From this angle, the placement of the cutting as the metaphorical centrepiece of the romance, the careful preparation and execution of Yvain's transformation from *mauvez* to *preu* ('coward' to 'brave man') following lines 3381–82 (297) and the probable allusion to Chrétien's sloppy peers therein is, again, not mere coincidence, but can and ought to be viewed as a striking superposition of fiction and metafiction, narrative and commentary. Chrétien plays himself against Yvain the reprehensible storyteller, the one who, like a *vilains*, not a *courtois*, has turned Love into fiction (lines 21–32; 257),[421] even while he celebrates the knight's nascent heroism, also his nascent *courtoisie* ('courtliness'), through the action of the cutting off of the lion's tail. In other words, Chrétien cuts for *conjointure* as Yvain cuts to free the lion from the serpent, paradoxically removing a part of himself in order to become whole again.

Apropos, Kelly says of the concept of *conjointure* in the writings of Chrétien and his Latin contemporary Alan of Lille that 'it refers to narrative arrangement and linking'.[422] Perhaps, however, as a final response to Thomas's *Tristan*, where the author had singled out his own ability to unite disparate elements ('Seignurs, cest cunte est mult divers, / e pur ço l'uni par mes vers' [lines 2257–58]; 'My lords, this tale is highly disparate; therefore, I have brought the different parts together through my verse'), but not 'too much' ('Ne vol pas trop en uni dire' [line 2261]; 'I have no desire to combine too much in my narrative'),[423] Chrétien centralizes his romance around the non-opposition of juncture and disjuncture, linking and unlinking. A story, even of the most skilfully conjoined, the author seems to suggest, is an assemblage of parts whose interstices are precisely the locus where the *romancier* must intervene with most artistry. Indeed, in order for parts to make a whole, there must first be parts. As Donald Maddox astutely observes, scholarly efforts to determine the structure of Chrétien's romances are, in fact, premised on the existence of such partitions in the text, and any study of narrative unity is always also, to begin with, a study of narrative *division*.[424] More to my final point, the closeness,

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[419] On *vantance* in *Yvain*, see again Dragonetti's nice reading of Calogrenant's prologue ('Le Vent de l'aventure', 438–39).

[420] *Cf.* Hult's reading of Calogrenant's narrative (ed. Hult, 17). The 'clash', as I call it above, between Chrétien and Yvain can be extended to the act of *vantance*. Whereas Yvain speaks for himself, Chrétien carefully skirts the boast form (strictly speaking) in the prologue to *Erec et Enide* by voicing his *vantance* through the narrator (lines 23–26).

[421] Note that the narrator does not explicitly target Yvain in the lines cited. My point, however, concerns an implicit parallel that would emerge in the light of the midpoint and its preparation between Yvain's character as 'reprehensible storyteller' and those mentioned in the beginning who would turn Love to fable (supra). The notable advantage of such a reading is to acknowledge the potential importance of the narrator's otherwise somewhat opaque remark on the state of love and courtliness, an element of the prologue (specifically the *insinuatio* [§*The Queen and Keu*]) that proves relevant, in my view, to the interpretation of the narrative development, particularly Yvain's evolution.

[422] Kelly, *Art*, 22.

[423] Cited from Félix Lecoy's edition of the Douce manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS d6), containing a fragment of the Old French text (fols. 1r–17r): *Le Roman de Tristan*, in Le Roman de Tristan *par Thomas. Suivi de* La Folie Tristan de Berne *et* La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, ed. and trans. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Ian Short, with the edited texts of Lecoy, Champion Classiques, "Moyen Âge" (Paris, 2003), 9-281; English translation from Kelly, *Art*, 25. On this passage in Thomas, see Kelly, '*En uni dire* (*Tristan* Douce 839) and the Composition of Thomas' *Tristan*', *Modern Philology* 67.1 (1969), 9–17.

[424] Donald Maddox, 'Trois sur deux: théories de bipartition et de tripartition des œuvres de Chrétien', *Œuvres et critiques*, 5.2 (1980–81), 91–102 (91).

conceptual and artistic, of conjuncture and what Kelly calls its converse, disjuncture (*desjointure*), 'a rent, tear, or break',[425] would appear to rank among the central ideas of Chrétien's poem and indeed strikes to the core of both the structure of *Yvain* and the mode of antisymbolic signification examined above. Kelly has furthermore shown how, in medieval letters, *desjointure* is not always a mark of incompetence, but can also be artful – a *bele desjointure*, in his words.[426] For medieval authors, Kelly argues, the binary was not hierarchical but lateral: 'It [*jointure*] may result from synthesis or analysis, from conflation and fusion as *conjointure*, or from accession, annexation, contamination, or augmentation by *desjointure*.'[427] 'Therefore', he concludes, 'both *conjointure* and *desjointure* may refer to the meshing of several *contes* into one, or to expansion by juxtaposing any number of separate tales.'[428] Consistent with the logic and poetics of dialectic in *Yvain*, Chrétien seems to suggest that the two, *conjointure* and *desjointure*, be viewed not as alternate, let alone opposite, approaches to narrative arrangement, but instead as mutually inclusive devices. As the missing link between the two halves of *Yvain*, the lion's tail is both a clear break and a subtle joint, holding the parts together and breaking them apart and thus bringing into greater definition the potential crosscurrent between *conjointure* and *desjointure*, cutting and piecing in medieval romance writing. In the case of *Yvain*, one might finally say that *desjointure* becomes a strategy of *conjointure* in the sense of a dissimulation. If indeed, as Maddox puts it, Chrétien's notion of unity 'presupposes the dissimulation of every juncture in order to enhance the overall integrity of the work',[429] it is hard to imagine a better disguise for *conjointure* than what appears to be its logical opposite.

Conclusion

In so valorizing the cutting off of the lion's tail, Chrétien registers a poetic sensibility attentive to the possibilities of a literary mode of signification beyond symbolism as observed in Thomas's text and embodying *avant la lettre* principles of signification in difference and semiotic play on a par with the work of such linguists and philosophers as Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida.[430] Whereas in *Tristan*, true meaning is located in the reunion of concrete objects and the story of their division, in *Yvain* it is the disintegration and *décentrement* of the symbolic union that signifies Yvain's evolution on the ethical plane and the reestablishment of equilibrium between knight and narrator, and it does so in neither linguistic nor properly material expressions.[431] As a missing link, the lion's tail pries open a space separating signifier and

[425] Kelly, *Art*, 17.
[426] Ibid.
[427] Ibid., 19.
[428] Ibid. A good example of *desjointure* can be found in the late-medieval genre of the *dit*, as Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, in 'Le Dit', *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* 8.1 (1988), 86–94 (87–92), has shown.
[429] Maddox, 'Trois sur deux', 91.
[430] Ferdinand de Saussure, 'Linguistic Value', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, 2nd edn (New York, 2010), 856–63; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), 278–93.
[431] Here I join in one of the standard usages today of the term *conjointure* in French medievalism as a careful redeployment of the author's source (Kelly, *Art*, 25; Richard Trachsler, *Disjointures – conjointures. Étude sur l'interférence des matières narratives dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge*, Romanica Helvetica 120 [Tübingen, 2000], 14). A complex feat of conjoining, Chretien's *Yvain* is as such a rigorous reworking of the Tristanian materials he frequented as he composed his own text, conferring upon them a truly novel structure and sense.

signified, language and materiality in which villains can become knights, parts whole, and readers can confront and transgress the conventional bounds of signification, interpretation and epistemology to grasp at truths in the silent absence of their proof.

Chapter 4

Celui qui l'aunera: Ethics, Identity, and Narrative Structure in the *Charrette*

So far in this analysis, I have taken the midpoint of each of Chrétien's romances as an essential feature of its design and a valuable source of information as to the interpretation of each narrative. There is, first of all, the couple's encounter with count Galoain in *Erec et Enide*; in *Cligès*, the ambiguity of the heroine's body between corporeality and hallucinatory absence; and in *Yvain*, the cutting off of the lion's tail, perfectly combining images of unification and continuity with others of disunification and change. What are we to make of the *Charrette* in this connection? Does the midpoint assume the same significance within the structure of this narrative as in the preceding romances?

The structural complexity of the *Charrette* has led scholars to propose a variety of interpretations with regard to its central division(s), even more so perhaps than was the case with the critical tradition surrounding *Yvain*—a "dilemma" of the sort that Matilda Bruckner has astutely identified in the various conflicting readings that Lancelot's character has inspired over the years.[432] In certain contributions, including one of the earliest analyses belonging to the modern reception of the *Charrette*, the attempt to understand the relationship between different parts of the narrative ends somewhat dramatically in an indictment of the author's style. While admitting that the romance exhibits a "certain unity" of plot, where the action begins with Meleagant's arrival at King Arthur's court and concludes with his death at the hands of Lancelot, a development that is linked to the crucial theme of love through the kidnapping of the queen, Gaston Paris was among the first to call attention to the episodic organization of the *Charrette* and, in his words, "les bizarreries, les lacunes, les incohérences du récit."[433] Mario Roques would echo this sentiment in the introduction to his edition of the text, stating that "Une analyse précise du roman est rendue difficile par la multiplicité des épisodes" and, among other lacks, "leur manque de lien logique."[434]

In a different key, Kelly's detailed monograph on the "sen" and "conjointure" of the *Charrette* emphasizes the coherence of the work, taking the narrator at his word when he claims in the epilogue that Godefroi de Leigni stuck to Chrétien's "plan" (as Kelly puts it) when he composed the last one thousand lines or so of the romance and speculating, as had Paris, that Chrétien had provided for the second author an outline for the omitted portion of the text.[435] For

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[432] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma: Why Are There So Many Interpretations of Chrétien's *Charrette*?," *Romance Philology* 40.2 (1986): 156-80.

[433] Gaston Paris, "Études sur les romans de la Table Ronde. Lancelot du Lac," *Romania* 48 (1883): 459-534, esp. 464. As Donald Maddox rightly notes ("Trois sur deux: Théories de bipartition et de tripartition des œuvres de Chrétien," *Œuvres et critiques* 5.2 [1980-81]: 91-102, 99), Paris also alludes to the bipartition of the romance. However, he does not, as far as I can tell, specify where the division between one part and the other would occur. For a more complete list of the studies on the structure of the *Charrette* than it is necessary to provide here, the reader is referred to Maddox's useful article, which covers in schematic fashion the relevant criticism published prior to 1980.

[434] *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1983), x. On the episodic interpretation of the *Charrette*, see also Z.P. Zaddy, *Chrestien Studies: Problems of Form and Meaning in* Erec, Yvain, Cligès, *and the* Charrette (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973) and Karl Voretzsch, *Introduction to the Study of Old French Literature* (New York: Stechert, 1931).

[435] Kelly, Sens *and* Conjointure *in the* Chevalier de la Charrette (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 95-96; Paris, "Études," 463.

Kelly, the liberation of the prisoners in Gorre constitutes the central theme of the poem; based upon this reading of the plot, he arrives at the following "structural divisions":

> Lancelot's quest constitutes the first one, deriving its unity from Lancelot's determination to free Guenevere and the prisoners. Similarly, Lancelot's imprisonment is another important division, wherein his eagerness to fight with Meleagant at Arthur's court is thwarted by the treachery of Meleagant himself. And bound by these two parts which respectively lead Lancelot away from Logres and back to it again are the events in Bademagu's court at Bath.[436]

Within this scheme, the poem has at its core "the scene in which Lancelot and Guenevere confess and analyze their love"[437] (or approximately lines 4460-736). By contrast, Jean Frappier's bipartite reading of the romance centers around the episode of the Sword Bridge (from about line 3000 to 3135), whereas Reto Bezzola, representing yet another point of view, divides the action around the liberation of the queen (3875-98).[438] Frappier, to whose important analysis I shall return below, concentrates attention on the "graduated" progression of the adventures leading up to the crossing of the Sword Bridge in contrast to the intrigue as it develops thereafter: "le drame amoureux de Lancelot et de Guenièvre au royaume de Gorre, les machinations de Meleagant, son châtiment final . . ."[439]

While none of the foregoing analyses pertains to the midpoint of the romance *per se* (that is, the physical center of the work insofar as it can be approximately calculated based on complete manuscripts and their modern editions), I would like to suggest that they are all noteworthy for precisely the same reason. In the context of *Yvain*, there was significant disagreement among proponents of the tripartite and bipartite interpretations of the romance, for example. At the same time, most every reading of that poem's major "junctures" accorded a great deal of importance to the scene in which the hero encounters the lion, and on which the pseudonym of the "knight of the lion" is based. In my own reading of *Yvain*, I focused on the same scene in order to argue for the importance of the cutting motif therein as a *mise en abyme* of Chrétien's compositional process. Oddly enough, such consensus as to the significance of the midpoint proper, whatever it might be seen to convey about the development of the hero, the narrative, or both, is not a feature of criticism on the *Charrette*.[440] In fact, only two studies that I am aware of grant the midpoint a level of importance with regard to the interpretation of the broader narrative that seems commensurate with its placement in the text.

Both of these appear in the *Symposium* edited by Kelly and are clearly influenced by Karl Uitti's theory of narrative structure in Chrétien's romances vis-à-vis the physical center of each text.[441] The authors, Michelle Freeman and Bruckner, offer logically similar commentary on the

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[436] Kelly, Sens *and* Conjointure, 167-68.
[437] Ibid., 184.
[438] Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1957), 134-36; Reto Bezzola, *Le Sens de l'aventure et de l'amour* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1947), 81.
[439] Frappier, *L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 134.
[440] Of course, this scene, the details of which I shall enter into below, is also mentioned in the work of Kelly (*Sens* and *Conjointure*, 129-30), Frappier (*L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 131), et al., but only obliquely with regard to the structure of the narrative.
[441] Michelle A. Freeman, "*Cligès*," Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette* (*Lancelot*)," and Karl Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*" in Kelly, ed., *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium* (Lexington: French Forum, 1985): 89-131, 132-81, 182-231 (207-208, 223).

midpoint of the *Charrette*, which is taken in each case to be the first combat between Lancelot and Meleagant (starting at line 3514) and, in particular, the scene in which Lancelot's name is finally revealed (lines 3634-61). It is Guenièvre who introduces the hero's name into the text at the point when an anonymous damsel, having surmised that the knight of the cart is not fighting Meleagant for her sake or that of the "gent menue" (line 3639) present, but rather for the queen, inquires about the identity of the unnamed knight under the pretense of coming to his assistance (lines 3634-55). The queen replies with minimal hesitation:

> Tel chose requise m'avez
> Dameisele, fet la reïne,
> Ou ge n'antant nule haïne
> Ne felenie se bien non.
> Lanceloz del Lac a a non
> Li chevaliers, mien esciant. (lines 3656-61)

At this point, the damsel, whose name is ironically concealed throughout the scene, shouts Lancelot's name, which then becomes public knowledge (lines 3664-66). Basing herself on this passage from the *Charrette* as well as the scene from *Yvain* in which the hero meets the lion, Freeman writes,

> In the *Yvain* and the *Lancelot* there lies at the midpoint a scene that reveals the identity of the protagonist. The hero is named in a new and significant fashion which situates him in a relationship of service and rescue with another. In *Yvain* the knight takes on a new identity as Le Chevalier au Lion by saving the lion who becomes henceforth his companion. . . . Conversely, in Chrétien's *Lancelot* an unknown knight assumes early on a mysterious identity as Le Chevalier de la Charrette. At the midpoint the Knight of the Cart is identified by Guenevere herself as Lancelot du Lac, knight of the Round Table, engaged in her rescue as defender of Arthur's kingdom.[442]

Bruckner's reading may be seen to elaborate on Freeman's interpretation of the significance of the midpoint with regard to the revelation of the hero's name and the development of his identity: "When that revelation finally comes, its dramatic potential is fully exploited, both in its placement at the center . . . and in the way we actually learn who he is."[443] In the detailed analysis that ensues, Bruckner traces the construction of Lancelot's identity through the lens of his reputation as it is built up throughout the various "private" and "public" contexts within the romance, a process that would be coordinated around the naming of the hero at the midpoint.[444] Thus, for instance, Bruckner notes, "Lancelot's name plus his actions equal one form of identity: his reputation—that is, identity as evaluated by the other members of Arthurian society."[445]

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[442] Freeman, "*Cligès*," 109. Significantly, Lancelot does not "assume" the identity to which Freeman is referring, which is publicly assigned according to the conventional meaning of the cart (*infra*).
[443] Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," 142.
[444] Ibid., 142-48.
[445] Ibid. 145.

While I have no argument with the centrality of Lancelot's name as a matter of its placement, that is, its inscription at the heart of the romance, it will also be important to consider whether or not the function of his character is in fact related, in some fundamental way, to the question of "who he is"—and indeed how this question might help us to understand the relative marginality of the midpoint in the critical tradition of the *Charrette* as I have sketched it out above. I would begin here by proposing that the comparison and contrast between *Yvain* and the *Charrette* is potentially more significant than passing remarks such as Freeman's would suggest. As I showed in the last chapter, the action of both romances is continuous to the point of having characters move from one fictional world to the other and, in the case of Gauvain, Guenièvre, and Arthur, back again. Moreover, the central example of these movements is represented by the cutting off of the lion's tail, the simultaneous expulsion of Keu's character, and the beginning of the relationship between Yvain and the lion. These developments coincide with the dramatic eschewal of a chivalric ethics corrupted by pride, vanity, and the quest for proof and also having to do with the poetics and politics of the proper name, the adjective "vain" rhyming three times over the course of Chrétien's romance with both "Yvain" (lines 861-62; 1549-50; 4227-28) and "Gauvain" (3911-12; 4761-62; 6243-44), "Keus" rhyming with *keue*.[446] In a relatively straightforward sense, Yvain's triumph over the serpent, Keu, and the old symbolic order that they represent implies a deconstruction of the link between his actions and his name. By contrast, the first thing that he does after defeating Keu at the fountain is to reveal himself to the king (line 2281: "Chë est Yvain que chi veés!"). At precisely the same moment in fictional time that Yvain rescues the lion but in a slightly different place, the action of the *Charrette* begins. Might the continuum logic connecting romance worlds argue for a further continuity between *Yvain* and the *Charrette* on the level of such topics as identity, ethics, and the topos of naming? To argue that the structure and meaning of the *Charrette* somehow turn on the disclosure of Lancelot's name would, in fact, be tantamount to saying that it is the very antithesis of *Yvain*, in which case neither language nor object could be trusted to prove a knight's prowess or otherwise speak truthfully and unproblematically to his identity.[447] On the contrary, a more careful consideration of Lancelot's character in the *Charrette* would tend to support a different reading: that the "how" and "why" of the hero's conduct could be relatively more important than "who he is" and, attendantly, his reputation.

As far as the episodic first part of the romance is concerned, the scene in which the titular cart appears is especially illustrative of the possible gulf between Lancelot's ethics as a knight and a lover and his name. Unlike Yvain or the knight of the lion, whose identity is distributed across two signifiers, a name and a pseudonym, Lancelot's character will pass through at least three onomastic stages, having remained anonymous up until the episode with the cart. All that we know about him before this point is that, like Gauvain, he is in pursuit of the kidnapped queen and that he has lost two horses in the process, one to exhaustion and the second during a skirmish of which we observe only the aftermath (lines 270-87; 304-313). Through the knight's loss of two horses, Chrétien carefully lays the groundwork for the unconventional symbolism of the cart. As for both Calogrenant and Yvain, the horse is essential to their status and honor as knights; correspondingly, the loss thereof is a transparent figure for their shame (Chapter 3). In the parallel universe of the *Charrette*, the knight's relationship to horses, viewed etymologically

[446] Roger Dragonetti, "Le Vent de l'aventure dans *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* de Chrétien de Troyes," *Le Moyen Âge* 96.3-4 (1990): 435-62, 459, has commented on this rhyme in the context of lines 6243-44.

[447] While I resist the interpretation of the *Charrette* as the perfect antithesis of *Yvain*, I would by no means deny the many contrasts between them vis-à-vis, for instance, the nature of love (e.g., *Yvain*, line 24; *Charrette*, 3110-15).

or pragmatically, is gradually emptied of its significance. Here the exhausted and dead horses seem not to signify any sort of shame, but rather the unflagging nature of the unnamed knight's efforts to rescue Guenièvre. The rupture between traditional and actual meaning, another example of Iser's minus function, is equally a characteristic of the *charrete*, as is apparent from the narrator's gloss on the customary significance that was attached to it at the time:

> 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. (Lines 321-38)

In a brilliantly ironic demonstration of what it means to take something out of context, the narrator explains at some length the meaning of the cart, not based on its present function but rather that for which it was habitually used: briefly, to cart prisoners around each town as a form of ignominy. In this regard, the *charrete* is reminiscent of the seemingly irrelevant custom of single combat in *Erec et Enide* (Chapter 1). What readers will discover in the lines directly following the description of the cart is that Lancelot only mounts it in exchange for whatever information its driver, a despicable dwarf, may have to offer about the queen's current situation (lines 351-59). In this moment, cart replaces horse as a means of transportation, and the unknown knight "earns" the oxymoronic pseudonym of the "chevalier de la charrete." Consistent with the clash of traditional and actual functions, Gauvain rather than Lancelot will be ridiculed for his unsuccessful efforts to rescue the queen, even though he remains on his horse at this point in the romance. As Fanni Bogdanow summarizes,

> Although Lancelot is constantly mocked and derided by the other characters for having consented to ride in the cart, yet significantly it is he, not Gauvain, who finally rescues the Queen. Despite the fact that Lancelot chooses the more difficult way of entering Gorre, the sword bridge, and Gauvain the easier path, Gauvain is unable to cross the river, Chrétien delighting in relating his discomfiture and his struggles in the water while he awaits rescue by Lancelot.[448]

[448] "The Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes's 'Chevalier de la Charrette'," *The Modern Language Review* 67.1 (1972): 50-61 (53).

Before getting into the cart, Lancelot hesitates briefly, the space of only two steps, "deus pas," as all but one of the manuscripts would have it.[449] While it will not be necessary for me to enter fully into the matter of Lancelot's two steps, I would like to call attention nonetheless to the narrative importance of this moment from the standpoint of the hero's identity. It is here that the allegories of Love and Reason make their first appearance in the poem. Whereas Reason tells Lancelot not to mount the cart (advising against anything that might bring shame or criticism upon him), Love commands him to do so:

> N'est pas el cuer mes an la boche
> Reisons qui ce dire li ose,
> Mes Amors est el cuer anclose,
> Qui li comande et semont
> Que tost an la charrete mont.
> Amors le vialt et il i saut,
> Que de la honte ne li chaut
> Puis qu'Amors le comande et vialt. (Lines 370-77).

The vocabulary of desire ("vialt") and commandment ("comande") in this passage presents a notable echo with the presentation of Chrétien's relationship to his patroness, Marie de Champagne, in the prologue. The last line above bears a particular resemblance to the first two verses of the romance: "Puis que ma dame de Chanpaigne / Vialt que romans a feire anpraigne" (lines 1-2). We might likewise think back to the implicit distinction between selfless and "vain" action in the middle of *Yvain*, where Yvain decides to assist the lion out of pity, not knowing what will happen to him next:

> Mais quoi qu'i l'en aviengne aprés,
> Aidier li vaurra il adés,
> Que pités l'en *semont* et prie
> Qu'il faiche secours et ayë
> A la beste gentil et franche. (lines 3371-75; my emphasis).

Clearly, it is a question of love rather than pity in the cart scene, but in either case the knight acts without concerning himself for more than a moment's time with the shame or physical injuries in which his actions may result.

Taken together, the prologue, the scene in which Lancelot mounts the cart, and the parallel between Yvain and Lancelot would seem to point to a model of action motivated by service to others (Marie, Guenièvre, the lion) rather than the furtherance or preservation of one's own renown or reputation, here associated with Lancelot's *Reison* and in *Yvain* with, among other things, the quest for proof of Yvain's victory over Esclados and the *conte* that he addresses to King Arthur after having defeated Keu (Chapter 3). In the specific context of the *Charrette*, the cultivation of a chivalric ethics apart from the knight's identity is doubly emphasized by Lancelot's willingness to have his honor mistaken for shame (as indeed it will be, e.g., in lines 575-82) as a result of riding in the cart and the narrator's exclamation, which is subsequently

[449] On the interpretation of Lancelot's two steps from a philological perspective, see especially David F. Hult, "Lancelot's Two Steps: A Problem in Textual Criticism," *Speculum* 61.4 (1986): 836-58.

seconded by the queen, that Lancelot's real mistake was to have hesitated at all before agreeing to the dwarf's terms (360-64).[450] But various other scenes of self-renunciation (voluntary social and physical suffering) come to mind here as well, such as the passage across the Sword Bridge, particularly the hero's "strange" decision to expose his hands and feet to the blade/bridge (lines 3096-97).

While space will not allow me to comment on all the scenes between the cart episode and the midpoint in which Lancelot's behavior is at least partially alienated from his identity, one may also adduce his refusal to give his name to the Immodest Damsel (his second "hostess" [lines 2004-2007]).[451] The only thing that Lancelot is willing to divulge to her is that he comes from the kingdom of King Arthur. For the most salient indication of the relative insignificance of the name "Lancelot" with respect to the construction of his character, however, we must turn to the middle passage itself. To begin with, there is the great nonchalance with which the queen agrees to share the name of the knight who has come to liberate her. If there is any hesitation on her part, it does not exceed the space of four lines, in which she simply states that she can find nothing wrong with the damsel's question, as we have seen above (lines 3656-59). Furthermore, the effect of the name itself is both mitigated somewhat by Guenièvre's admission that she is not entirely sure of the knight's identity (thus: "Lanceloz del Lac a a non / Li chevaliers, *mien esciant*" [lines 3660-61; my emphasis]—this is his name, *as far as she knows*) and figuratively negated by the rhyme of "non" (name) and "non" (no, not) in lines 3659-60.

What follows, I think, is equally important. Without prompting from the queen, the damsel now addresses Lancelot by his proper name:

> Lors saut avant et si l'apele
> Si haut que toz li pueples l'ot
> A molt haute voiz: "Lancelot,
> Trestorne toi et si esgarde
> Qui est qui de toi se prant garde!"
> Qant Lanceloz s'oï nomer,
> Ne mist gaires a lui torner.
> Trestorne soi et voit amont
> La chose de trestot le mont
> Que plus desirroit a veoir
> As loges de la tor seoir,
> Ne puis l'ore qu'il s'aparçut
> Ne se torna ne ne se mut
> Devers li ses ialz ne sa chiere,
> Einz de desfandoit par derriere. (lines 3664-78)

As soon as he hears his name, Lancelot turns around, making himself vulnerable to attack from behind. Taking advantage of his opponent's distraction, Meleagant eagerly continues the battle (lines 3679-82). That Lancelot's performance should take such a drastic turn for the worse at

[450] At a later moment in the narrative, Lancelot's fear of mounting the cart is invoked to explain the queen's resentment toward him (lines 4484-89).

[451] On this episode, see especially Bruckner, "Interpreter's Dilemma," 161-63. In this case, the author does not call attention to the significance of Lancelot's name, but rather suggests the importance for his character of a code of conduct having to with covenants, fidelity, and love.

precisely the moment where he is interpellated *as Lancelot* might be seen as a powerful if oblique demonstration of the deleterious effects that may stem from the damsel's linguistic practice. As Bruckner has noted (and I paraphrase), the naming of the hero allows the rest of the spectators within the romance to situate him within the speech chain known as renown (< OFr. *renomee*, "reputation, rumor, story"[452] < Lat. *nomen*, "name"), relating present action to past "accomplishments" in an analeptic fashion that presupposes upon the circulation of Lancelot's name prior to the beginning of the romance.[453] And yet, the knight's renown is in this case surprisingly self-defeating or negatively performative, creating an immediate disjuncture between Lancelot's actions and the expectations that have accrued to his name, as the same damsel will proceed to observe, without, however, realizing that her anaphoric cries have contributed to the change in his behavior: "Ha! Lancelot! Ce que puet estre / Que si folemant te contiens? / Ja soloit estre toz li biens / Et tote la proesce an toi" (lines 3692-95).

With regard to the ethical model elaborated elsewhere in the text in terms of Lancelot's obedience to the queen, the speaking position of the damsel in this scene is also worth examining. In her analysis of the midpoint, Bruckner writes, "If we look forward to the episode of the tournament at Noauz, the same configuration of events recurs on a larger scale, with Lancelot fighting 'as badly as possible' and 'as well as possible' according to the Queen's instructions."[454] In order to further signal that things are not as they should be, however, the text makes it clear here that Lancelot is responding to the damsel's imperatives ("Trestorne toi et si esgarde"), rather than Guenièvre and her *comandemanz*. Together with the revelation of his name, this displacement of linguistic authority results in an ironic mutation in Lancelot's motivations. At first, the damsel desires to know Lancelot's name so that she may help him by pointing out that the lady he is fighting for is present. But when she subsequently directs Lancelot to adjust his position so that he may continue fighting (lines 3701-703), Love appears to give way temporarily to Reason and hatred, honor to shame, and he seems for the moment to be concerned above all with his own reputation:

> Ce tient a honte et a grant let,
> Lanceloz, tant que il s'an het,
> C'une grant piece a, bien le set,
> Le pis de la bataille eü,
> Se l'ont tuit et totes seü. (lines 3704-708)

To put this another way, the humiliation and disgrace that Lancelot now experiences as a result of the discrepancy between the renown attached to the name "Lancelot" and his current comportment in arms produce a situation in which he must fight to recover the alignment of signifier and signified, language and action, which become misaligned when the damsel first utters his name. In performing at his worst at the tournament, Lancelot will incur shame once again, but its cause and outcome are appreciably different: not only is he acting in that case on the queen's orders, but whatever effects his *pis* (or *noauz*) might have on his renown are

[452] Takeshi Matsumura, *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015), 2908.
[453] Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," 145.
[454] Ibid., 144.

rendered moot by the fact that he is fighting incognito (more on this below).[455] There is also a pointed contrast between the central passage and the cart episode, where it is likewise Love who spurs on an anonymous Lancelot (*supra*).

If, then, there is a "point" to the midpoint, it would not appear to concern the importance of Lancelot's reputation, but rather the way in which the production of identity in and through language runs counter to the model of anonymous (or pseudonymous) action that is developed in *Yvain* and carried over into the *Charrette*, where it is principally Meleagant, Lancelot's enemy and foil, who embodies the vices of pride and vanity, and not Lancelot himself. As in *Yvain*, in other words, a symbolics of identity whereby *proesce* might be straightforwardly translated into language is quickly overwhelmed by a system of courtly-chivalric ethics that is reliant upon the gap between words and deeds. It is in this light that I think we should interpret the significance of Lancelot's pseudonym and its basis in the eponymous *charrete*, whose many misinterpretations (e.g., lines 575-82) within the text sustain a critical distance from our perspective outside of the fiction between what the hero is called and how and why he conducts himself: an "anti-renown," as it were, to match Yvain's anti-symbol. From the standpoint of Iser's theory of aesthetic response, finally, we might say that a part of Chrétien's ingenuity here consists in effectively transforming what is perhaps the most definite form of language, the proper name, into a largely empty signifier—or a blank.

In the *Charrette*, the cleavage between words and deeds at once sheds light on the ironic thematic workings of the scene in which Lancelot is finally named and belies the function of that scene as a structural *center*, as if to communicate an additional gap between what Chrétien is saying and what he is doing. Evidence of this decentering effect, I suggest, can be found not only in critics' tendency to locate a central division elsewhere in the poem (that is, if we think back to Frappier, Bezzola, et al.) but also in the fact that the midpoint, viewed from this angle, is not so much a point of transition as it is an exception that proves the rule vis-à-vis the problematics of identity *qua* naming.[456] It is interesting to note here that Uitti's foundational theory of the midpoint revolves to a great extent around the issue of chivalric identity in *Yvain* and the *Charrette* specifically, whereas in both cases, as we have now seen, that issue seems to be criticized or even disavowed rather than reaffirmed, requiring extensive qualification at any rate.[457] In *Yvain*, the link between identity and ethics is severed at the midpoint and transformed,

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[455] There is an additional difference between the midpoint and the scene of the tournament: whereas Lancelot performs at his worst in accordance with the queen's commandments, he stops fighting altogether between the damsel's first and second interventions at the midpoint (lines 3676-78).

[456] Insofar as Lancelot's name becomes public knowledge in this scene, it will of course be frequently used throughout the second half of the romance, most often in its simplest form (i.e., "Lancelot or Lanceloz," as opposed to "Lanceloz del Lac" [lines 3660, 5144]). Interestingly, however, the vast majority of its occurrences—by my count, 114 out of a total of 139 in Guiot's copy (see Pierre Kuntsmann et al., eds., *Dictionnaire électronique de Chrétien de Troyes* [http://atilf.atilf.fr/gsouvay/dect/download/Lancelot.xml]; accessed 04.16.20)—are concentrated in the narrator's mouth; the way in which the narrator refrains from referring to the main character by name up until its revelation participates of a specific aesthetic strategy in the *Charrette* whereby "the narrator observes the movement of his own plot as though he were an outsider" (Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*," in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens [Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989]: 76-96, 93). More to the point, in merely five cases after the midpoint in which another character speaks this name is it employed to address Lancelot (once by Bademagu [line 3982], once by the dwarf who kidnaps Lancelot [5072], and three times by Meleagant's sister [6537, 6568, 6696]), and the hero himself will never use it. My point here is that Lancelot's relationship to the word "Lancelot," that is, to his own identity, is kept extremely tenuous and marginal throughout the work as a whole. I shall provide a further example of such marginality in the analysis of the tournament below.

[457] Uitti, "*Le Chevalier au Lion*," 207-208, 223.

both mutilated and modified. Simultaneously, in the *Charrette*, the hero starts off anonymous, as if to suggest to readers that the evolution of character that structures *Yvain*, and through which we may eventually take the measure of its hero's prowess, can now be taken in large part as *acquis*. This courtly-chivalric ethics is not confined to the first half of the *Charrette* but will be exemplified once again in the episode of the tournament put on at Noauz, whose analysis has increasingly shaded into that of the midpoint in Bruckner's work on the *Charrette*.[458] There the herald's studiously enigmatic announcement upon the knight's arrival offers a new pseudonym in the place of the knight's name; in this way, it functions to contrast with the damsel's direct address to Lancelot at the midpoint:

> Et li hirauz le voit venir,
> De crier ne se pot tenir:
> "Veez celui qui l'aunera!
> Veez celui qui l'aunera!"
> Et l'an demande qui est il,
> Ne lor an vialt rien dire cil. (Lines 5615-20)

It is tempting to imagine an alternate version of this passage, one that we are in fact invited to envisage based on the tournament goers' question, Who is the one who will take the measure (i.e., the champion *par excellence*)? That is, a version in which some form of the hero's name would be revealed once more. Thus, the other most esteemed participants are introduced by name according to a similar syntax, for example: " . . . Veez vos or / Celui a cele bande d'or / Parmi cel escu de bellic? / C'est Governauz de Roberdic" (lines 5773-76, the beginning of a list that goes through line 5802). To the contrary, the herald's chosen formulation serves to call attention to the action of an indeterminate subject, the verb "aunera," rather than the identity of the actor. Having been recognized by the herald, Lancelot has in fact forbidden him from speaking about him in a way that would reveal who he is (lines 5546-55).

The choice of the verb *auner* is another question. On the one hand, it moves us away from the temporality of renown, upsetting any expectations of the mediation of the present by the past, and toward a future action. Thus, the herald will only use the verb in the future: "aunera" (lines 5563-64, 5571, 5617-18); on two other occasions, he employs different verbs, but still in the same tense: "Cil les vaintra trestoz a tire" (line 5678); "Huimés verroiz que il fera, / Huimés aparra sa proesce" (lines 5964-65). Only those who prematurely mock the herald's language will conjugate *auner* in the past, stating: "Amis! Cist ne l'aunera mes. / Tant a auné c'or est brisiee /

[458] Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," 144-47; ead., *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 60-108. In the first essay, Bruckner ultimately argues for the importance of Lancelot's "public and private conduct" for understanding his identity (147), a distinction that is less relevant to my analysis than the problematization of the concept of identity itself; at any rate, the dramatic irony through which Chrétien frequently cultivates in his readers a better or fuller understanding of a given situation than that of the inscribed audience would argue for the existence of two types of public, or a public and a counter-public, rather than a properly private sphere. In the second essay, Bruckner calls attention to the centrality of the tournament, while noting that it does not occur at the center of the poem: "Through its repetitions and variations, the tournament recapitulates what has already happened and anticipates what is to follow" (61). However, approximately the same significance had previously been attached to the first combat between Lancelot and Meleagant: "We can already appreciate how the middle fuses what lies behind and what lies ahead simply by continuing to chart Lancelot's ups and downs in the combat with Meleagant" ("*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," 144). In some sense, the evolution of Bruckner's scholarship on the middle of the *Charrette* therefore demonstrates the "decentering effect" that I am describing above.

S'aune que tant nos as prisiee" (lines 5682-84). In positing a rupture between past and present using the adverb "or," they fail ironically to realize that they are at the least partly in agreement with the herald.

The same adverb, "or," assumed key status in *Yvain* from its first appearance in line 24: "Or est Amours tournee a fable." In fact, the herald's first line, "Or est venuz qui l'aunera!" (x4 [lines 5563-64, -71, 5963), reads in a sense as a response to the fabulous diminishment of Love in *Yvain*.[459] Here, by contrast, Lancelot's every move in the tournament will be dictated by his lady's commandments in a dazzling demonstration of his devotion to Love (e.g., lines 5850-57). His performance therefore takes us back to the motif of action in the service of some "other," providing Chrétien's audience with a system in which to evaluate his actions that is detached from identity's moorings in reputation, naming, and the past and anchored instead in a series of imperatives through which the knight *will* measure his obedience, his prowess, etc.[460] In this respect, the function of the queen's commandments is not entirely unlike that of the promise in the second half of *Yvain* and *its* orientation in time.

On the other hand, Chrétien registers his own interest in the verb *auner* through the narrator's conspicuous claim that the expression "Or est venuz qui l'aunera" has originated in the fiction itself. According to the text, the herald is the first person to speak these words: "Nostre mestre an fu li hyra / Qui a dire le nos aprist, / Car il premieremant le dist" (lines 5572-74).[461] In this calculated conflation of fictional and "real" language use, the narrator urges us to consider why Chrétien may have chosen to have the herald utter these precise words and not others. An examination of the definition of "auner" in Takeshi Matsumura's excellent *Dictionnaire du français médiéval* is of little help in this regard: it lists, "mesurer à l'aune; battre," and ends with a gloss on the "cri de tournoi" from the *Charrette*.[462] What might strike us as being relatively more illuminating is the entry that directly follows, this one for a second verb that has the interest of differing in origin and pronunciation from *auner* (< Germ. *alino*, "elbow, forearm, cubit"[463]) and yet being visually identical to it, a homograph: *aüner* (from the Latin *aduno*, "to make one, to unite"[464]), a word in Old French for "réunir, rassembler; joindre exactement; mettre le foin en tas; composer."[465] To be sure, medieval audiences who experienced Chrétien's romance in oral form, which is to say by way of a public recitation (without consulting the written text), would never have confused the two terms. In manuscript, however, they would look identical.

Now, it is difficult to conceive of a word that would combine more perfectly than *aüner* the semantic fields of symbolism, structure (or juncture), and narrative composition, or, given both Chrétien's gift for exploiting verbal resemblances (e.g., Keus/*keue*) and his use of the word in *Erec et Enide* (line 2366; "aünée" [reunited]), *Cligès* (2075, 3807; "aünée" [gathered around], "s'aüne" [a reflexive form referring to a 'singular' desire, or *volentez*, on the part of the

[459] This term also figures prominently in the scene of the cart (esp. lines 321-24).
[460] Here I depart once more from Freeman's reading, according to which Lancelot's name is meaningfully related to his "relationship of service and rescue with another" ("*Cligès*," 109).
[461] For a different reading of the herald's cry and its possible origins, see Paule Le Rider, "'Or est venuz qui l'aunera' ou la fortune littéraire d'un dicton," in *Mélanges de littérature du Moyen Âge au XX^e siècle offerts à Mademoiselle Jeanne Lods* (Paris: École normale supérieure de jeunes filles, 1978): 393-409; id., "Le Dépassement de la chevalerie dans *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," *Romania* 112 (1991): 83-99, 85.
[462] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 303.
[463] Guus Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), xx, 22.
[464] Charleton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), available online at http://folio2.furman.edu/lewis-short/ (accessed 03.24.20).
[465] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 303-304 (including further, related senses).

narrator]),[466] and elsewhere in the *Charrette* (3523, 4194; "aüné" [reunited], "aüne" ["adds up," "lists"), to believe that this visual echo is purely coincidental.[467] What we might rather conclude is that the herald's novel manner of speaking, thus interpreted, reveals a connection between Chrétien's activities as a poet and the dialectical nature of Lancelot's actions as a knight. From this perspective, *celui qui l'aunera* would have the ability to make many things one: *celui qui l'aunera* would have mobility across different linguistic and physical guises, such as "le chevalier de la charrette," "Lancelot (du Lac)," and, in this passage, the Red Knight, "le chevalier vermauz" (for instance, in line 5714); *celui qui l'aunera* would therefore be able to straddle different, even apparently diametrically opposed modes of conduct, the "best" and the "worst"—*Proesce* and *Malvestiez* (lines 5747-51); lastly, *celui qui l'aunera* could bring together all the various participants in the tournament under a single system of heroic "measurement" by defeating them all, an idea that appears to be written large in the final moments of this scene, where those who had previously mocked Lancelot now praise him as champion:

> *Certes il valt bien un millier*
> De tex a en cest chanp assez,
> Que il a vaincuz et passez
> Trestoz les chevaliers del monde,
> Qu'il n'i *a un* qu'a lui s'aponde. (Lines 5988-92; my emphasis)

The herald's speech habits likewise illustrate the concept of the verb *aüner*: he cries the same things over and over, a distinctive effect—pure repetition—where *aunera* often rhymes with nothing other than *aunera* (lines 5563-64; 5617-18). Insofar as it is the injunction against using Lancelot's name that inspires the herald to devise this original way of referring to him, the hero's capacity to make the multiple one is, finally, contingent upon his anonymity: it goes hand in hand, not with renown, but with the concealment of heroic identity.[468]

Chrétien de Troyes is of course also *celui qui l'aunera* or, one might now hazard, *celui qui l'aünera*. He has composed the romance such as to allow for the multiplicity of Lancelot's character and, therefore, to "join exactly" a variety of episodes even as they might appear as evidence of an obvious disjuncture, giving new meaning to what Paris had intended as a reproach pertaining to "les bizarreries, les lacunes, les incohérences" of the *Charrette*.[469] (The wordplay itself, an instance of *adnominatio*, might also be understood rhetorically as an example of making two things one.) Sometime in the middle of the thirteenth century, a poet named Douin

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[466] Amidst a playful critique of literary love language from the perspective of verisimilitude in *Cligès*, Chrétien's narrator also muses on the idea of making two hearts one using a similar lexicon: "Ne dirai pas si com cil dient / Qui .II. cuers *a .I.* cors alient, / Qu'il n'est voirs ne estre ne semble / Que .I. cors ait .II. cuers ensemble; / . . . / Mais s'il vos i plest a entendre, / Bien vos savrai le voir aprendre, / Coment dui cuer *a .I.* se tienent / Sanz ce qu'ansemble ne parviennent. / Sol de tant se tienent *a .I.* / Que la volentez de chascun / De l'un a l'autre se trespasse, / Si vuelent une chose a masse, / Et por ce [qu']une chose vuelent / I a de tex qui dire suelent / Que chascuns a les cuers andeus, / Mais uns cuers n'est pas en .II. leus" (lines 2777-80, -783-94); see also Chapter 2, 89-90. In this passage, Chrétien uses the same rhyme with "vuelent" and "suelent" that appears in his critique of the *jongleurs* who are accustomed to mangling Erec's story (*Erec et Enide*, lines 21-22).

[467] To my knowledge, this echo has not previously been observed.

[468] Even the name "Lancelot," containing a form of the verb *celer* ("to hide"), is suggestive of an identity that is always to some degree hidden away, as Hult pointed out in the seminar mentioned in my introduction (1), and Méla notes in his appendix (p. 472) that "Lancelot" rhymes twice with "celot" in the *Charrette* (lines 6381-82, 6831-32; the editor gives the wrong line numbers).

[469] See also Hult, "Voice of Authority," 92.

de Lavesne, the author of the longest surviving fabliau (*Trubert*) about whom we know very little outside of his indebtedness to Chrétien's *Perceval*, would employ *aüner* in this sense in speaking of the moulding of separate *faubles* into a unified *fabliaus*:

> En fabliaus doit fables avoir
> s'i a il, ce sachiez de voir:
> por ce est fabliaus apelez
> que de faubles est aünez. (lines 1-4)[470]

Pierre-Yves Badel refers to Douin's gesture as a "redéfinition du fabliau, où le ressourcement étymologique autorise Douin à s'écarter du récit à anecdote unique pour enchaîner les uns aux autres plusieurs épisodes."[471] While Badel is right to emphasize the unusual rate at which the action multiplies in the *Trubert*, his claim that Trubert's many disguises (the carpenter [lines 431-1059], the doctor [1060-1448], the knight [1449-2226], the young woman [2227-2984]) "ne correpond[ent] ni de près ni de loin à aucun paradigme médiéval connu" is oddly absolute.[472] In both the *Charrette* and *Trubert*, disguise and anonymity are part and parcel of the movement away from the "récit à anecdote unique," a vehicle for the combination of separate *fa(u)bles*, as well as, to some degree, a means of representing the mutability of public/professional personae: "Le sot n'a pas à masquer sa nature, le charpentier prend les outils de l'état auquel il prétend, le médecin teint son visage, le chevalier change de vêtements, la femme travestit en quelque sorte son corps même"; in sum, "Là où passe Trubert . . . les apparences deviennent mensongères, les identités se perdent."[473]

Prior to the composition of the *Charrette*, too, Latin and vernacular authors and theorists had made use of similar verbs in describing the process of selecting a subject matter, or *matiere*, from the diverse corpus of preexisting versions of a given story and arranging it in a novel fashion. The relevant terms in the Douce manuscript of Thomas's *Tristan*, which we have already examined from several angles, are "unir" (to unify) and "en uni dire" (to reunite, lines 836, 839), and Kelly has convincingly traced the latter concept back to the expression *redegere in unum* in the writings of Conrad of Hirsau and others.[474]

In addition to the passages that I have already discussed, various episodes of the *Charrette* may be related to Chrétien's ability to make many things one—and thus to one another. In what follows, I would like to focus on two of them in particular: the crossing of the Sword Bridge and the romance's epilogue, in which, we recall, the narrator reveals that it was Godefroi de Leigni, not Chrétien de Troyes, who penned the ending of the romance—a claim, I

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[470] See *Trubert: fabliau du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Guy Raynaud de Lage, Postface by Isabelle Engammare (Geneva: Droz, 2003), lines 1-4 and Madeleine Jeay, *Le Commerce des mots: l'usage des listes dans la littérature médiévale (XII^e-XV^e siècles)* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 190, who in passing analogizes Douin's composition to Chrétien's concept of *conjointure*.

[471] Pierre-Yves Badel, *Le Sauvage et le sot: le fabliau de Trubert et la tradition orale* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1979), 19.

[472] Ibid.

[473] Ibid., 19, 25. On disguise and multiplicity in *Trubert*, see also Denis Billotte, "L'Unité de *Trubert*: le sens d'une série," *Reinardus* 1 (1988): 22-29 (24-27). Another obvious point of reference for the theme of disguise would have been the Tristan legends: see, for example, Chapter 3, n. 355.

[474] Kelly, "*En uni dire* (*Tristan* Douce 839) and the Composition of Thomas's *Tristan*," *Modern Philology* 67.1 (1969): 9-17.

suggest below, that adds a new layer to the poetics and ethics of identity in the *Charrette* from the standpoint of the text's putatively dual authorship.

In one of the most iconic episodes of the first half of Chrétien's romance, one whose distinctive imagery would inspire numerous illustrations in the manuscript tradition of the prose *Lancelot* or the *Lancelot propre* (comprising a prosification of the *Charrette*), Lancelot must cross the Sword Bridge or the *Pont de l'Espee* in order to reach the land of Gorre. This is one of two perilous passages between Arthur's kingdom of Logres and Gorre, the other, less dangerous of the two being the *Pont desoz l'Eve* (otherwise the *Ponz Evages*) or the Underwater Bridge. These two bridges are mentioned for the first time when Lancelot and Gauvain arrive at a crossroads and encounter an anonymous damsel. She will serve as their informant on a number of relevant matters: the identity of the knight who has kidnapped the queen, the location to which he has taken her, and so on (lines 606-75). Lancelot gives Gauvain the choice between the two bridges, Gauvain opts for the less perilous one, and the two knights parts ways in what could be interpreted as an anticipation of the interlace structure of the second half of the *Conte du Graal* (lines 685-99).[475]

Seconding Frappier's opinion of the episode of the *Pont de l'Espee* as marking a clear division between the two main "parts" of Chrétien's romance, Jean Rychner refers to such bipartition as indisputable fact in the last of a well-known trilogy of articles devoted to the prologue and "meaning" of the *Charrette*:

> Quoi qu'il en soit, le fait est là: le *Lancelot* se compose de deux parties très différentes, non seulement dans leur signification, mais dans leur composition . . . La première, jusqu'au Pont de l'Epée inclusivement, est construite sur le schème d'une quête jalonnée d'aventures que le héros traverse et qui n'ont pas d'autre lien au plan narratif que la quête elle-même . . . La seconde partie obéit en revanche à une construction plus logique, combinant en intrigue des événements qui s'enchaînent . . .[476]

It is certainly an exaggeration to suggest that the adventures that take place over the course of the first part of the romance bear absolutely no direct relation to each other or to Rychner's "seconde partie." Not only do the various episodes falling before this point in the narrative adumbrate the tension between words and deeds that is at the center of my reading of the *Charrette*, but the majority of the disparate adventures referred to by Rychner are also joined, however loosely, as obstacles that Lancelot must surmount in order to traverse the Sword Bridge.

Nevertheless, the readings proposed by Frappier and Rychner draw our attention, importantly, to the paradoxical status of the Sword Bridge as a connection that is also, and quite overtly, a division. Of course, it represents one of only two points of entry into Gorre, but the unnamed architect of this "bridge" has clearly designed it to keep the likes of Lancelot out, not to let him in. As the same damsel who introduces the two bridges elsewhere states, no one has ever succeeded in entering Gorre by way of the impassable passage that is the *Pont de l'Espee* (line 670). This paradox is self-evidently reflected in the construction of the bridge, which, as its name would suggest, has been fashioned in the style of a large sword—"com espee tranchanz" (line 671), the instrument of cutting and division *par excellence* in the world of Chrétien's heroes (e.g., in *Yvain*). Not unlike the cutting off of the lion's tail in *Yvain*, the *Pont de l'Espee* therefore

[475] See, for instance, Frappier, *L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 173.
[476] Jean Rychner, "Le Sujet et la signification du *Chevalier de la charrette*," *Vox Romanica* 27.1 (1968): 50-76, 73.

appears at first to produce an obvious rupture in the narrative: between Logres and Gorre; and between two apparently distinct compositional styles. For Frappier as for Rychner (and others still), the stark contrast that emerges around the *Pont de l'Espee* between two modes of storytelling, of which the second would be more "logical" and thus more nuanced, is attributable to the state of the author's source:

> Le drame amoureux de Lancelot et de Guenièvre au royaume de Gorre, les machinations de Meleagant, son châtiment final, toute cette intrigue aux péripéties multiples rappelle assez *Cligès* et semble bien avoir été construite par Chrétien lui-même, non sans banalités certes, mais sans inconséquences. Au contraire, l'illogisme de la première partie est tel, apparemment, que les reproches d'incohérences et d'absurdité one été formulés par plus d'un critique. On admet aussi, en général, que Chrétien suivait alors un *conte d'aventure* dépourvu d'ordonnance, où les données mythiques du voyage dans l'Autre Monde étaient déjà obscurcies et brouillées. Opinion vraisemblable.[477]

> Cela provient vraisemblablement de ses matériaux: le schème quête et aventures traversées correspondrait à la partie traditionnelle sous-tendue de contes mythiques et perpétuant leur signification; le type intrigue conviendrait à la partie inventée, porteuse d'une psychologie plus proche.[478]

Without gainsaying the importance of whatever *matiere* Chrétien's patroness may have imposed upon him, one might instead attempt to understand the aforementioned contrast within the broader context of the narrative as a deliberate effect and thus a part of Chrétien's designs—his "invention"—in the *Charrette*, a text in which many things can become one. Such a consideration would have to base itself upon the precise language with which the text describes the engineering of the bridge. First, there is the damsel at the crossroads, who, in comparing the *Pont de l'Espee* to the *Pont desoz l'Eve*, states, "Li autres ponz est plus malvéz / Et est plus perilleus assez" (lines 668-69). In the next place, the narrator characterizes the *Pont de l'Espee* in the following superlative terms:

> Einz ne fu, qui voir m'an requiert,
> Si max ponz ne si male planche.
> D'une espee forbie et blanche
> Estoit li ponz sor l'eve froide,
> Mes l'espee estoit forz et roide
> Et avoit .II. lances de lonc.
> De chasque part ot un grant tronc,
> Ou l'espee estoit closfichiee.
> Ja nus ne dot que il i chiee
> Por ce que ele brist ne ploit,
> Que tant i avoit il d'esploit
> Qu'ele pooit grant fes porter. (Lines 3020-31)

[477] *L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 134-35.
[478] Rychner, "Le Sujet et la signification," 73.

In what strikes me as a rather superfluous rejection of the bridge's "realism," Neil Cartridge offers a brief analysis of this passage with regard to the construction of Chrétien's narrative:

> Even when Chrétien draws attention to the solidity of the bridge's engineering, the care ("esploit") implicit in its design and its capacity for heavy loads ("grant fes porter"), the effect is only to emphasize, not the realistic qualities of the bridge, but rather its artificiality. This very artificiality, though, could be read as a pointer to the sheer meaningfulness of the bridge—its very 'constructedness' reflecting the constructedness of the narrative itself, the deliberate way in which Chrétien generates moral and psychological perspectives from the places through which the knight travels.[479]

What these "moral and psychological perspectives" might be is a question that is left tantalizingly undeveloped in Cartridge's work (and, to a great extent, Chrétien's romance). Rather, we might retain the idea of the "meaningfulness" and "constructedness" of the bridge, while exploring how that idea is developed over the remainder of the passage. At this point in the romance, the two knights who are accompanying Lancelot warn him against the dangers of crossing the bridge, including both the sharp blade that he must crawl across and the two lions that appear to await him on the other side of the water:

> Malveisemant est fez et joinz
> Cist ponz, et mal fu charpantez…
> Poez vos savoir et cuidier
> Que cil dui lyon forsené,
> Qui dela sont anchaené,
> Que il ne vos tuent et sucent
> Le sanc des voinnes et manjucent
> La char et puis rungent les os?
> Molt sui hardiz quant je les os
> Veoir et quant je les esgart.
> Se de vos ne prenez regart,
> Il vos ocirront, ce sachiez.
> Molt tost ronpuz et despeciez
> Les manbres del cors vos avront,
> Que merci avoir n'an savront. (Lines 3044-45; 3060-72)[480]

What we discover here is a notably familiar set of terms: "Malveisemant est fez et *joinz* / Cist ponz, et mal fu charpantez"; "Molt tost *ronpuz et despeciez* / Les manbres del cors vos avront." In these four lines in particular, the author draws a connection between the structure and crossing of the bridge and the vocabulary of juncture and fragmentation that is repeatedly associated with the key issues of narrative structure and textual transmission in *Erec et Enide*,

[479] Neil Cartridge, "Introduction," in id., ed., *Boundaries in Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008): 1-12, 3.

[480] In line 3070, I cite the text of MS. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12560, whose use of "despecier" alongside "ronpre" seems to me to be perfectly in line with the way in which Chrétien associates these two verbs in *Cligès*, for instance (Chapter 2).

Cligès, and *Yvain*. As we observed in the context of *Erec et Enide*, for instance, the threat of bodily harm to Erec was linked to the form of the text and the possibility of its being "de(s)peciez," hacked to pieces. That these terms should come back to the fore in the midst of the transition between what Rychner and Frappier understood to be two stylistically very different "parts" of the romance—perhaps even two different narratives—would suggest, in particular, that the episode of the Sword Bridge does not function as an incidental division between them but is, in fact, deeply involved in that transition, that, much like the Sword Bridge itself, this scene has not been constructed haphazardly but carefully, so as to act at once as a breaking point in the narrative and a potential "joint" or connection.

After all, Lancelot will eventually cross the bridge despite his companions' admonishments. Driven by Love (line 3114), he reaches the other side relatively unscathed. As it turns out, the two lions were nothing more than an illusion (3118-23), and any concerns over the dismemberment of his body soon dissipate. Here the magic of the lion's disappearance thematizes the problem of appearances versus reality in Chrétien's romance, perhaps suggesting that the bridge is less impassable than it seems. Moreover, the manner in which Lancelot crosses the bridge resonates directly and indirectly with his conduct as *celui qui l'aunera*. As the first person to successfully traverse *Le Pont de l'Espee*, Lancelot has, in a physical sense, 'united' the lands of Gorre and Logres so as to rescue Guenièvre. Similarly, in the scene of the tournament, Lancelot willingly subjects himself to potentially fatal injuries in order to obey the queen's commandments, disguising his prowess as cowardice and incompetence (*supra*). As if to overdetermine the voluntary nature of his suffering and the alternation between his best and worst behaviors in the name of Love, Lancelot makes the strange decision to uncover his feet and hands as he prepares to cross the bridge:[481]

> "Einz me voel metre en aventure
> De passer outre et atorner,
> *Mialz* voel morir que retorner."
> Cil ne li sevent plus que dire,
> Mes de pitié plore et sopire
> Li uns et li autres molt fort.
> Et cil de trespasser le gort
> *Au mialz* que il set s'aparoille,
> Et fet molt estrange mervoille,
> Que ses piez desarme et ses mains…
> *Mialz* se voloit si mahaignier
> Que cheoir [d]el pont et baignier
> An l'eve don ja mes n'issist. (Lines 3088-97; 3107-109; my emphasis)

In addition to disarming his hands and feet, Lancelot descends from his horse in order to cross over into Gorre (line 3008). In his symbolic interpretation of the *Charrette*, Jacques Ribard takes

[481] Lancelot's injuries and self-sacrifice, as well as other apparently symbolic aspects of the crossing of the Sword Bridge, have led to a number of religious (Christological, Marial) readings of this episode. See, for instance, Jacques Ribard, *Chrétien de Troyes: Le Chevalier de la Charrette. Essai d'interprétation symbolique* (Paris: Nizet, 1972); Laura J. Getty, "Lancelot and the Cathars: Heresy in Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*," *Romance Notes* 42.2 (2002): 139-50, 147; Gérard Gros, "De l'imaginaire du pont à l'imagerie mariale," in Danièle James-Raoul and Claude Thomasset, eds., *Les Ponts au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006): 245-60, 249-54.

Lancelot's decision to dismount as an example of his being denuded of his status as a knight.[482] Yet this conventional symbolism, which was also evoked by the loss of Lancelot's horses at the beginning of the romance and his decision to mount the cart, once again seems to require qualification: this is also Lancelot at his best, "au mialz."[483]

Along the same lines, I would propose that we approach the many paradoxes of the *Pont de l'Espee* from the angle of Chrétien's dialectical poetics and the interplay between juncture and disjuncture as a prime example of his own capacity to perform—or pretend to perform—at his "best" and "worst" as a composer of romance narratives, a comparison that is licensed by yet another curious aspect of the poem's rhetoric. Indeed, the same lexicon of cowardice or *Malvestiez* that the crowd uses to describe Lancelot's "worst" conduct at the tournament first appears, albeit in a somewhat different sense, in connection with the Sword Bridge. This bridge is "more dangerous" (*plus malvés*, line 668) than the Underwater Bridge; the only two adverbs that are called upon to designate the way in which it was made and joined are "malveisemant" (3044) and "mal" (3045); and, according to the narrator, the bridge is "max" (3021), "molt . . . max" (3007), the plank fashioned from the blade "male" (3021). These terms seem determinedly ambiguous. Literally, they refer to the sinister and intentional design of the bridge. But as I have already intimated above, they may also indicate that, from a functional standpoint, it has been poorly ("badly") or improperly designed, both a bridge and a divider, an obstacle that Lancelot must overcome.[484] Likewise, when the crowd refers to Lancelot after having noticed the change in his behavior, they puzzle over his newfound status as a *malvés*:

> Ou est des chevaliers li pire,
> Et li neanz et li despiz?
> Ou est alez? Ou est tapiz?
> Ou ert trovez? Ou le querrons?
> Espoir ja mes ne le verrons,
> Que Malvestiez l'en a chacié,
> Dom il a tel fes anbracié
> Qu'el monde n'a rien si malveise,
> N'il a pas tort, car plus a eise
> Est un malvés .C.M. tanz
> Que n'est uns preuz, uns conbatanz.
> Malvestiez est molt aeisiee,
> Por ce l'a il an pes beisiee,
> S'a pris de li quanque il a. (Lines 5736-49)

Such insults can only recall the figure of Keu from Yvain, specifically his discussion of the *preu* and the *malvés* prior to his confrontation with Yvain, who has assumed his duties as defender of the fountain:

> Et pour ce certez bien m'acort
> Au malvaiz, qu'il n'a mie tort

[482] Cited from Gros, "L'Imaginaire du pont," 252.
[483] As Frappier notes in a similar vein, "Il faut n'avoir pas lu de près le texte pour prétendre qu'au tournoi de Noauz la reine, en commandant 'Au pis,' souhaite avilir la chevalerie" (*L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 142).
[484] On "mal," see Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 2140.

Et c'il se prise et c'il se vante,
Qu'il ne trueve qui pour li mente.
Së il n'en dit, qui l'en dira?
Tuit s'en taissent, nes li hira
Qui des vaillanz crie le ban
Et les mavaiz giete a un van. (Lines 2201-208)

The seneschal's mention of a herald who would trumpet the virtues of the *preu* comes in anticipation of the herald's character in the *Charrette*, while his ironic praise of the *malvaiz* resonates with the crowd's sarcastic defense of the same figure in the *Charrette*. Further, although both passages posit a steady distinction between the two categories, *preu* and *malvaiz*, the context of each set of remarks clearly serves to call that distinction into question by revealing that *Proesce* and *Malvestiez* can co-exist as two facets of a single knight. Particularly in the *Charrette*, this distinction is shown to be highly artificial. The coincidence of opposites in the *Charrette* evokes another moment in *Yvain*, to wit the narrator's discussion of Love and Hate, which mixes the metaphors of the house and the body:

Dex! Meïsmes en un ostel
Comment puet estre li repaires
A choses qui si sont contraires?
En un ostel, si com moi samble,
Ne püent eles estre emsamble . . .
Mais en un cors a plusors menbres,
Quë il i a loges et chambres. (lines 6020-24, -29-30)[485]

But what would it mean, more specifically, for Chrétien to alternate between his best and his worst as a poet, and what could be the reason for doing so? In keeping with the comparison between author and hero, one might wonder if the construction of the *Pont de l'Espee* attests to a specific conception of Chrétien's relationship to his patroness, Marie de Champagne, and *her* commandments. As is well known, the rhetoric of the prologue proposes an analogy between Lancelot's actions as a knight and a lover and the posture of the writer: between his obedience to Marie and that of Lancelot to Guenièvre. As Chrétien puts it in the opening lines of the romance, he will undertake the composition of the *Charrette* as someone who is "entirely hers": "Je l'anprendrai molt volentiers / Come cil qui est suens antiers" (lines 3-4). While the idea of Lancelot's obedience to Guenièvre and its extremity will be conveyed in many passages throughout the romance, in only one of them does the narrator employ the exact same expression to denote the knight's relationship to the queen, namely in the context of the first message that she transmits to Lancelot at the tournament through the intermediary of yet another anonymous damsel:

[485] Love and hate themselves are elsewhere "collocated" in the *Charrette*, particularly in the scene relating the first combat between Lancelot and Meleagant. In describing Lancelot's performance following the revelation of his name, the narrator states, "Amors et haïne mortex, / Si granz qu'ainz ne fu encor tex, / Le font si fier et corageus / Que de neant nel tient a geus / Meliaganz, ainz le crient molt, / C'onques chevalier si estolt / N'acointa mes ne ne conut, / Ne tant ne li greva ne nut / Nus chevaliers mes con cil fet" (lines 3725-33). The contrast between the visibility of Lancelot's hatred and the secret nature of his love for the queen is also consonant with the narrator's description of the house of Love and Hate in *Yvain*: "Espoirs Amors s'estoit enclose / En aucune chambre celee / Et Haïne s'en iert alee / Es loges par devers la voie / Pour che qu'ele veut qu'on la voie" (lines 6032-36).

"Sire, ma dame la reïne
Par moi vos mande, et jel vos di,
Que au noauz." Quant cil l'oï,
Si li dist que *molt volantiers,*
Come cil qui est suens antiers. (lines 5652-56; my emphasis)

The rhyme in these lines on "volantiers" and "antiers" can be seen to gloss the unusual nature of intention, will, or *volentez* in the *Charrette*: Lancelot's desire is precisely to satisfy that of the queen, to whom he belongs entirely; in the same way, Chrétien leads us to believe, his intentions as a writer are contiguous with those of his patroness, who has provided him with everything necessary for the composition of the romance except his own effort and application, "sa painne et s'antancïon" (line 29). One way in which we might thus understand the parallel between Lancelot's worst performance at the tournament and the kind of compositional strategy underlying the episode of the Sword Bridge would be to say that both serve as particularly dramatic demonstrations of fidelity and obedience to some "other" (a lady in both cases) in that both Chrétien and Lancelot show themselves willing to act not only for but *like* somebody they are not, like someone else: *come cil* . . . For Lancelot, this will mean playing the part of a *malvéz*; for Chrétien, one might conclude, writing a romance in which his own voice is always already someone else's, be it that of the *contesse* or of the unspecified author(s) of the source material, or *matiere*, with which she supplied him according to the prologue: "Matiere et san li done et livre / La contesse . . ." (lines 26-27). In fact, this kind of polyphony is precisely what is suggested by the nature of Lancelot's communications with the queen during the tournament at Noauz, where he does not take orders directly from the Guenièvre but rather receives them from a "pucele fine et avertie" (line 5637), the anonymous damsel I mentioned above: a "chain of command" that may also speak to the transmission of narrative material from Marie to Chrétien. Though placing greater emphasis on the gap between her *volenté* and that of her patron, Christine de Pizan would claim in a similar spirit to have written *Le Livre du duc des vrais amants* (c.1405) both for him and "in his person," *en sa personne* (line 39).[486]

Significantly, these various parallels between Lancelot and Chrétien allow us to recast Rychner's concern over the stylistic alterity of the first and second parts of the romance as a potentially incisive commentary on the author's ability to join together heterogenous subject matters and the modes of composition that they imply. Though we will never know exactly what *matiere* Marie gave Chrétien to work with because he does not tell us (not explicitly), the starkness of the contrast between the multiplication of marvelous adventures that culminate in the crossing of the Sword Bridge, or what Frappier has called "l'illogisme de la première partie," and the so-called "logical" structure of the action that ensues, which centers around the interactions between Lancelot, Guenièvre, and Meleagant, may suggest that Chrétien is marking a division either between two elements of the romance's *matiere* or between that *matiere* and what Rychner has referred to as the "partie inventée" (*supra*). In the end, however, we need not insist on such evaluative terms as "best" and "worst" in describing Chrétien's contribution vis-à-vis the part of tradition in the composition of the *Charrette*. For a large part of the author's point in stressing the duality of his compositional strategy, it seems to me, is that what matters most is not the difference between episodism and *enchaînement*, for instance, but rather the poet's ability

[486] *Le Livre du duc des vrais amants*, ed. and trans. Didier Lechat and Dominique Demartini (Paris: Champion, 2013).

to combine them just as Lancelot manages to combine, or make one, such opposing identities and types of conduct as "preuz" and "malvéz." In the same way that Christine would coopt the constraints of her writing as a source of "liberté," as Jacqueline-Cerquiglini Toulet has shown, it is as though Chrétien's relationship to his patroness almost ensures, in the end, a certain aesthetic freedom.[487] In this light, the Sword Bridge appears as a highly appropriate figure for Chrétien's ability to join contrary things and thread his own innovations through received narratives, as it were, his cutting edge.

It is furthermore important to note that the multiplicity inherent in the way that Chrétien has composed the *Charrette* is by no means entirely unique to this romance. To the contrary, I have attempted to show how *Erec et Enide* is structured around the dialogism between Chrétien's version of Enide's character and her portrayal in the *conte* from which he "extracted" the romance. Not unlike the composition of the *Charrette* as I have pieced it together based on the text itself, *Erec et Enide* opens with a *conte d'aventure* that is gradually incorporated into a broader development of the relationship between the text's two main characters, a couple whose adventures can often be seen to reflect on the dynamics of literary tradition and innovation in that text. In *Cligès*, the author's response to the Tristanian legends similarly produces a dialectical structure or a "minus function" whereby one voice or one part of the narrative cannot be fully understood without recourse to other voices and other parts. Finally, in the context of *Yvain*, I have argued that what matters more than the precise number of parts in the romance is the way in which they are made to fit together on various levels of the composition, whether it be through episodic gradation, the overarching unity that is achieved through the figure of the lion's tail at the midpoint, or some other means of juncture, such as the many-faceted relationship between *Yvain* and the *Charrette*. The hacking to pieces of the serpent in the middle of *Yvain* speaks to this multiplicity: at first sliced down the middle, it is then reduced to smaller and smaller pieces, the smallest of which—the tip of the tail—ironically symbolizes the coherence of the text as a whole. Chrétien thereby suggests to readers that no piece of the narrative, however small and disconnected it may be, does not have a part to play in the act of interpretation. All of this helps us to get clearer on the meaningfully insurmountable difficulty of pinning down the structure and style of Chrétien's romances according to a unitary analytical paradigm, for his writing is always, it seems to me, many things at once and many things in one; always both *desjointure* and *conjointure*—and probably still something else. It would perhaps be worthwhile to consider how the genre of romance or *roman* emergent in twelfth-century France, with its relative lack of norms as to form and topic, created the conditions for the topical and structural pliability that Chrétien's poem seems to enjoy.[488]

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[487] Jacqueline Cerquiligni-Toulet, "Écriture de commande et écriture de liberté dans *Le Live du duc des vrais amants* et les *Cent Balades d'amant et de dame* de Christine de Pizan," in Demartini et al., eds., *"A TOUS DITTEURS"*: Le Livre du duc des vrais amants *de Christine de Pizan. Actes de la journée d'étude organisée le 26 novembre 2016 à l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3*: 1-11 (online at https://societechristinedepizan.wordpress.com/2017/02/19/actes-de-la-journee-detudes-sur-le-livre-du-duc-des-vrais-amants/), 11. In a related moment in the *Conte du Graal*, Chrétien uses the verb "se delivrer" in connection with the source: "Ce est li contes do greal / Don li cuens li [= Chrétien] bailla lo livre. / Or oez commant s'an delivre" (lines 64-66).

[488] Topical and formal multiplicity are often also understood as attributes of thirteenth-century romance, as well as the romance-epics of the Italian Renaissance, that go hand in hand with the device of interlace; see, for instance, D.S. Carne-Ross, "The One and the Many: A Reading of Orlando Furioso, Cantos 1 and 8," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 5.2 (1966): 195-234.

For now, I would like to return to the various levels of narrative organization in the *Charrette*, where what appears to be the central division and juncture of the work, the crossing of the Sword Bridge, is not aligned with the physical center of the work as might be expected based on the example of *Yvain*. Of course, the midpoint proper of the *Charrette* is significant in that Lancelot's identity is finally revealed. Insofar as the importance of the name is ironically downplayed, however, the significance of the midpoint, as I have come to understand it in these pages, has to do with the fact that it does *not* function as a hinge in the narrative in the same way as the episode of the *Pont de l'Espee*. In this last passage, Chrétien creates a thematic bridge between the amatory and military intrigues of the *Charrette*. The crossing of the bridge functions as a demonstration of both Lancelot's commitment to Guenièvre and his prowess as a knight, and indeed the rescue of the queen, the liberation of the prisoners, and the various stages of the showdown between Lancelot and Meleagant are all essentially contingent upon the hero's entry into Gorre. Moreover, the passage from one part of the narrative to another around the Sword Bridge projects the thematics of language and action onto the level of poetic identity from the perspective of Chrétien's stated duty as a writer to Marie. Just as Lancelot's mobility across different physical appearances and different types of performance arises from his anonymity, it is worth noting the enigmatically impersonal manner in which the construction of the bridge is described: "Malveisemant est fez et joinz / Cist ponz, et mal fu charpantez" (lines 3044-45). With highly active verbs such as "faire," "joindre," and "charpanter," it is not unusual for a subject of some sort to be specified. Thus, we recall how the first line of *Cligès* had read, "Cil qui *fist* d'Erec et d'Enide" (my emphasis), and how, much later in the text, the artisan Jehan "seals and joins" Fenice's sepulcher: "Bien la seele et joint et clot" (line 6078). As for the last verb, "charpentez," it is derived from the *nom de métier* "charpentier," a word that appears farther along in the romance in reference to the workers "commanded" by Meleagant to construct the tower in which Lancelot is immured: "Si prist maçons et charpantiers / Qui a enviz ou volantiers / Firent ce qu'il lor comanda" (lines 6113-15).[489] Even more fully than the herald's "celui qui l'aunera," however, the syntax of verses 3044-45 in the *Charrette* elides the identity of the subject by way of a decidedly passive construction: ". . . est fez et joinz / . . . et mal fu charpantez." Much like the hero of the romance, the artisan (or artist) behind the bridge seems to have many faces—many different skills—but no name.

A closer examination of the placement of the Sword Bridge episode and the manner in which it is framed by preceding developments in the narrative tends to further argue for its importance with regard to the construction of the romance. Lancelot arrives at the *Pont de l'Espee* around line 3000 in Méla's edition and will have made it across by line 3135. When in the epilogue Godefroi de Leigni claims authorship of the final portion of the romance, he does not specify the point of transition by quoting a precise line in the text, for instance, but nevertheless refers readers to the moment where Lancelot is imprisoned in Meleagant's tower: "Tant en a fet des lors an ça / Ou Lanceloz fu anmurez, / Tant con li contes est durez" (lines 7108-10). The passage from the first author to the second would, then, occur somewhere between lines 6130 and 6146 of the romance:

> Quant ele fu ensi fondee,
> Lancelot amener i fist

[489] Here the suggestion that Meleagant's workers are not all willing to follow his orders implicitly opposes their relationship to Meleagant with the obedience of Lancelot to Guenièvre in the tournament, of Chrétien to Marie in the prologue, and so on and so forth.

Et an la tor ensi le mist,
Puis comanda les huis murer
Et fist toz les maçons jurer
Que ja par aus de cele tor
Ne sera parole a nul jor.
Ensi volt qu'ele fust celee,
Ne n'i remest huis ne antree
Fors c'une petite fenestre.
Leanz covint Lancelot estre,
Si li donoit l'an a mangier
Molt povremant et a dongier
Par cele fenestre petite
A ore devisee et dite,
Si con l'ot dit et comandé
Li fel plains de deslëauté.

The figure of the tower with no entry except for a small window and the reference to Meleagant's "commandments" (*comanda*, *comandé*) hark back to the rhetoric of the prologue to the *Charrette* (Marie's act of patronage), as well as the construction of Jehan's tower in Cligès, which, as a structure with no apparent "jointure" (line 5514), has frequently been understood as a figure for Chrétien's narrative art.[490] In other words, these features of the passage register its metapoetic significance in anticipation of the epilogue. From the perspective of Chrétien's profound interest in the relationship between parts and whole, however, Godefroi's claim to have limited his intervention to the last thousand lines of the romance may strike us as being somewhat ironic (or incomplete), for the manner in which we understand the ending of the poem has undeniable implications for our understanding of other aspects of its narrative structure, for example the location of the midpoint. Are we to interpret the middle of the text from the standpoint of the conjoined narratives of Chrétien and Godefroi, as in the case of Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's *Rose* in the following century? This would amount to the readings put forth by Bruckner and Freeman (neither of whom discusses the problem that I am getting at) as to the centrality of the scene in which Lancelot's name is revealed. However paradoxically, we have seen how that episode reflects on some of the major themes (identity, ethics, and service) dealt with by the *Charrette*. We might at this point add that the substantial delay that occurs before the hero's name is made public also points forward to the delayed revelation of the name "Godefroi de Leigni" in the epilogue, combining commentaries on the development of the

[490] Consistent with Chrétien's manner of combining *conjointure* with *desjointure* in the *Charrette*, however, Meleagant's tower distinguishes itself from Jehan's in that there is an opening in its structure, however small: the window, which will be an important detail when it comes time to liberate Lancelot from this prison. It is by enlarging this hole, or "pertuis" (line 6610), using some sort of pickaxe, or "pic" (6620), that Lancelot is able to escape (about which more below). As we saw in Chapter 3, *jointure* was often associated in the Middle Ages with architecture (as well as carpentry and stonemasonry), which is "particularly interesting," as Kelly puts it, "because of the frequency with which architecture is a model for poetic craft in the Middle Ages" (*The Art of Medieval French Romance* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992], 17); on the stonemason as "internalized storytelling metaphor," see also Hult, "Voice of Authority," 89. As a possible response to existing narrative symbolisms, however, the *Charrette* here effects closure through an opening, replacing the architectural metaphor with an instance of deconstruction and demolition.

hero's character and the "nature of the text," as Uitti might put it (*supra*).[491] But this interpretation need not exclude another reading, one that would take the crossing of the Sword Bridge as an additional midpoint of sorts, falling as it does precisely midway through what we are told is Chrétien's contribution to the romance. Inasmuch as the poem would seem to have two authors and two conclusions, two different endings, as Hult's work on the problem of closure in the *Charrette* has shown,[492] might we venture to say, in other words, that it also has two middles? Does the polyphony of the Sword Bridge episode, or what Rychner understands as the transition from the "partie traditionnelle" to the "partie inventée" in the first half of the romance, set the stage for the replacement of Chrétien by Godefroi?

Interestingly enough, the prose adaptation of Chrétien's romance lodged within the central branch of the Vulgate Arthurian Cycle would in some sense sidestep this question by stitching the two scenes together. In the *Prose Lancelot*, it is not a curious damsel but rather Bademagu who asks the queen for the name of the knight of the cart as soon as he crosses the Sword Bridge (after having noticed, as had Chrétien's *dameisele*, that the knight is acting "for Guenièvre"):

> "Dame, dame, por vostre preu et por tos les servises que je vos ai fes et que je fere vos porroie vos pri je que vos me diois le non a cel chevalier qui le pont a passé, kar je sai bien que por vos a il ce fet." Et ele li dit que chose ou ele eust preu ne li celeroit ele pas; si li dist: "Certes, sire, je ne sai mie a escient, mes je cuit que ce soit Lancelos del Lac" (XXXVIII, 49).[493]

But this act of rewriting might also be taken as an argument for the simultaneous centrality of both passages. In addition to its crucial status as a transition between two parts of the narrative and its figurative importance as a structure suggesting both unity and multiplicity, the broader context of the Sword Bridge lays the groundwork for the conclusion of the romance.

Before he is able to cross the bridge, Lancelot is approached by a prideful knight not in the least unlike Meleagant, the hero's main enemy in the second part of the poem (lines 2579-85). The anonymous newcomer offers to ferry Lancelot across the water, but only if he accepts to reward him with an unspecified prize. His offer is quite similar to the rash boon that Keu ludicrously demands at the very beginning of the romance: if he so desires, he might even take off Lancelot's head as payment (line 2634)—an additional threat to the hero's body that would necessarily bring the narrative to a halt. Naturally, Lancelot refuses and the two knights enter into battle (lines 2646-49). Having defeated his opponent a first time, Lancelot offers to spare his life only if he is willing to mount a *charrete*, a punishment devised on the basis of the knight's earlier criticisms of Lancelot and his association with the cart (lines 2758-64). The knight does not agree to Lancelot's terms, stating that he is willing to do anything but ride in a cart. Meanwhile a young woman riding a wild mule arrives on the scene (lines 2779-88). Rather

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[491] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen compares the "revelation of the second writer's identity" to "Guenevere's bestowal of the knight of the Cart's *nom propre*"; *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 113. Insofar, however, as Guenièvre neither addresses Lancelot directly nor confers this name upon him, "bestowal" is not the correct word choice in this context.

[492] Hult, "Voice of Authority."

[493] *Lancelot. Roman en prose du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Alexandre Micha, vol. 2 (Geneva: Droz, 1978). This version of the passage heightens the effect of the queen's uncertainty about Lancelot's identity by replacing Chrétien's "mien esciant" (line 3661) with the expression "je ne sai mie a escient" and through the use of the subjunctive after "je cuit que."

ironically, she has come to ask Lancelot for a gift, the head of the vainquished knight, in return for her help in the future: "Et tu avras encor afeire / De m'aïde, si con je croi" (lines 2802-803). In brief, Lancelot gives his opponent once last chance to defend himself, defeats him once more, and presents the damsel with the defeated knight's head (lines 2868-927). Prior to departing, the *pucele* reiterates her promise, stressing the importance of future reward: "Uns guerredons de moi t'atant, / Qui molt te vanra an boen leu, / An cest servise avras grant preu / Que tu m'as fet, ce t'acreant" (lines 2934-37).

The nearly prophetic knowledge of the damsel on the mule is suggestive of her narrative function, which will become clearer when her presentiment comes true and she makes good on her promise some four thousand lines later. This is, in effect, none other than Meleagant's sister, who will liberate Lancelot from the tower prison that her brother has had constructed. With a level of explicitness that is unusual in Chrétien's romances, and for that reason perhaps rather telling, the text makes this connection for the reader, evoking, through the damsel's address to an immured Lancelot, the passage leading up to the crossing of the *Pont de l'Espee*:

> Je fui cele qui vos rové
> Quant au Pont de l'Espee alastes
> Un don, et vos le me donastes
> Molt volantiers, quant jel vos quis,
> Ce fu del chevalier conquis
> Le chief, que je vos fis tranchier,
> Que je nes point n'avoie chier.
> Por ce don et por ce servise
> Me sui an ceste poinne mise,
> Por ce vos metrai fors de ci. (Lines 6572-81)

Once liberated, Lancelot returns to Arthur's court to face Meleagant, whom he will behead in the ultimate scene of the romance: "Lanceloz vient, si li deslace / Le hiaume et la teste li tranche" (lines 7086-87). Thus revealed is a connection between the adventure directly preceding the crossing of the bridge into Gorre and the end of the romance that is at once figurative and literal. On the one hand, Meleagant's sister and the guarantee of her assistance condition narrative closure in a very real sense.[494] On the other hand, it is significant that she should first appear in order to ask for the head of the knight who guards the bridge, a figure whose hostility and obstinacy are also those of Meleagant, as her gift to Lancelot will lead directly to her brother's decapitation in the closing lines of the romance.

In this way, the events surrounding the crossing of the *Pont de l'Espee* clearly prefigure the final action of the romance, providing tangible evidence of the continuity between the two parts of the text supposedly composed by two different authors, Chrétien and Godefroi. Immediately following the execution of Meleagant, the narrator's epilogue, and in particular his insistence that Godefroi only completed the work "par le boen gré" of the first author, will stress such continuity, albeit more abstractly:

> Seignor, se j'avant an disoie,
> Ce seroit oltre la matire,

[494] In the context of Godefroi's continuation, Hult has referred to Meleagant's sister as "the key agent of narrative resolution" ("The Voice of Authority," 88).

Por ce au definer m'atire,
Ci faut li romanz an travers.
Godefroiz de Leigni, li clers,
A parfinee la charrete,
Mes nus hom blasme ne l'an mete
Se sor Crestïen a ovré,
Car ç'a il fet par le boen gré
Crestïen qui le comança. (Lines 7098-107)

The narrator's concern over exceeding the bounds of the text's "matire" echoes with one of his earlier interventions towards the beginning of Godefroi's continuation, wherein the text calls attention once more to the narrative function of Meleagant's sister. It is in fact at this moment that her identity is revealed to us:

Toz fu li palés antassez
De chevaliers et de puceles.
Mes une en i ot avoec eles
Cele estoit suer Meleagant,
Don bien vos dirai ça avant
Mon pansser et m'antencion,
Mes n'an vuel feire mancion,
Car n'afiert pas a ma matire
Que ci androit an doie dire,
Ne je ne la vuel depechier
Ne corronpre ne forceier,
Mes mener boen chemin et droit. (Lines 6240-51; my emphasis)[495]

The resurgence in these lines of the vocabulary of textual mutilation, namely the verbs "depechier" and "corronpre," creates a link between this passage and the Sword Bridge as a figure for the "bridge" between the first and second parts of the narrative and the apparent disjointedness of the crossing between them, as well as the author's dialectical definition of *conjointure* from the beginning of *Erec et Enide* to the middle of *Yvain*.[496] Even as he points to the overarching unity of the romance, the narrator is therefore implicitly raising the question of the relation of Godefroi's part to the whole, and I have in mind here especially the *matiere* with which Marie is said to have provided Chrétien in the prologue of the *Charrette*. To return to the language of the epilogue, is Godefroi's contribution not by definition "oltre la matire"? Moreover, if Chrétien intended to analogize his submission to Marie's wishes to Lancelot's devotion to the queen, then why would he pass the torch of authority so willingly to a figure with no apparent connection to the poet's patroness?[497]

[495] In line 6240, I cite the text of MS. Paris, BnF, fr. 1450, which gives "depechier" rather than "boceier" (fol. 222vb); the two verbs have similar meanings in this context, but see note 480.
[496] See also Hult, "Voice of Authority," 89.
[497] In the above passage, the association of the figure of the "charrete" (line 7103) with the "blasme" (7104) that one might be tempted to place on the continuator displaces the comparison between Chrétien and Lancelot so that it is now Godefroi whose situation is likened to that of the hero.

The most compelling answer to these questions may well be "yes" and "he wouldn't." More specifically, Hult has argued for the possibility that Chrétien and Godefroi are not in fact different authors, but "Godefroi is a fiction of Chrétien—a 'clerkly' author-figure allowing our devious first author the luxury of two endings, two voices, and thus a highly nuanced, unlocalizable intentionality"[498]—a possibility that is supported by the way in which Chrétien's treatment of Meleagant's sister seems so perfectly to anticipate Godefroi's conclusion and her role therein. Hult's argument is well known nowadays amongst readers of the *Charrette*. Without having to fully rehearse its many implications, I would like to come back here, in a possible elaboration thereupon, to the status of both Lancelot and Chrétien as *celui qui l'aünera* and their ability to join together different chivalric and poetic entities. As noted above, one of the most extreme implications of Lancelot's devotion to Guenièvre and Chrétien's obedience to his patroness is that they both are capable of producing an overwhelming sense of alterity with regard to what one might consider to be their essential and defining characteristics: Lancelot is the best knight in the world, but he can also perform as the worst, the *plus malvéz*; Chrétien's narrator vaunts the author's signature *conjointure* in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*, yet the type of unity that his romances exhibit often operates precisely through a form of *desjointure* whereby different voices, different *matieres*, and different narrative segments blend together, as exemplified in this case by the figure of the Sword Bridge. To put this another way, it would appear that Chrétien had begun experimenting with the mutability and concealment of his own identity as a storyteller long before the arrival of Godefroi de Leigni in the epilogue of the *Charrette*: that the invention of Godefroi de Leigni as a second "author-figure," however brilliantly misleading and surprising, may be the hypostasis of a preexisting conception of the authorial persona calqued here upon Lancelot's tendency to shed one name or one suit of armor and don another—and taken to a new extreme.[499]

There is an additional precedent, by way of a partial contrast, for Chrétien's venture beyond the limits of "his" *matiere*. In the passage of the *Tristan* pertaining to the selection, omission, and ordering of various parts of the previously circulated versions of the legend, Thomas introduces the notion of a narrative surplus:

> Seignurs, cest cunte est mult divers,
> e pur ço l'uni par mes vers
> e di en tant cum est mester,
> e le surplus voil relesser.
> Ne vol pas trop en uni dire,
> ici diverse la matyre. (lines 2257-62; my emphasis).[500]

At first glance, it seems that Thomas is determined to avoid the inclusion of any and all excess *matiere*. According to Kelly's cogent gloss on this passage, "Thomas intends to bring together in

[498] Hult, "Voice of Authority," 87-88.

[499] In theory, the kind of argument that I am making with regard to Godefroi as his figure relates to Chrétien's ability to act like or through someone else could be applied in a different way, such as, for example, to support Kelly's conviction that a second author was really hired to complete the text according to a carefully laid out plan, but I am relatively more tempted, in the light of Chrétien's duplicity and investment in his own authority, by the possibility of Godefroi's fictionality.

[500] Le Roman de Tristan *par Thomas. Suivi de* La Folie Tristan de Berne *et* La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, ed. and trans. Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Ian Short, with the edited texts of Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion Classiques, 2003).

his poem highly disparate material ('l'uni par mes vers'), although not all of it ('Ne vol pas trop en uni dire'), since he plans to leave some out ('le surplus')."[501]

But these lines come as a follow-up to an earlier metatextual intervention through which Thomas clearly demarcates an addition to his *matiere*. The episode in question relates King Arthur's battle against a giant referred to as L'Orgueilleux. Arthur defeats the giant, cuts off his head, and collects his prize, L'Orgueilleux's coat, which is trimmed with fur and the beards of his previous opponents (lines 872-934). As *vainqueur*, Arthur also gets to keep his beard. Following this scene, Thomas's narrator admits to having digressed:

> A la matire n'afirt mie,
> nequedent boen est quel vos die,
> que niz a cestui cist esteit
> ki la barbe aveir voleit
> del rei e de l'empereür
> cui Tristran servi a icel jor
> quant il esteit en Espaigne,
> ainz qu'il repairast en Bretaigne. (lines 935-42)

Tristan comes to the defense of the emperor (and his beard) and ultimately triumphs over L'Orgueilleux's nephew, receiving a serious wound in the process (lines 943-58).

In a helpful note to their edition of the romance, Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Ian Short explain the meaning of Thomas's digression vis-à-vis a similar episode found in Wace's *Roman de Brut*:

> La relation que donne Thomas du combat d'Arthur contre le géant aux barbes s'inspire, et parfois textuellement, de la relation de ce même combat dans le *Roman de Brut* de Wace . . . En attribuant un exploit semblable à Tristan qui, chez Thomas, vit après le règne d'Arthur, Thomas lègue en quelque sorte le statut de héros civilisateur à son héros, qui a déjà triomphé de ces autres "monstres" que sont le Morhout ou le "serpent." Thomas souligne lui-même que le passage est une digression, qui accentue la dimension guerrière du héros, peu représentée dans les fragments conservés.[502]

Thomas's amplification of Wace's text is digressive, but minimally so. Not only is the inclusion of Tristan's battle with the giant perfectly justifiable in a thematic sense, as Baumgartner and Short have detailed, but it is also quite brief. One gets very much the sense of a connection between Thomas's "en uni dire" and the present passage, abridgment and addition. As for the scene of the battle, it does not exceed seven lines (lines 952-58).

In the *Charrette*, the figure of Godefroi de Leigni may even be parroting Thomas's gesture at the point when he claims to keep the narrative on track rather than going into detail with respect to the role that Meleagant's sister will play in the remaining portion of the romance. In his refusal to digress, the narrator uses the same expression that Thomas had used in discussing the battle between Arthur and L'Orgueilleux: "Car n'afiert pas a ma matire"

[501] For an alternate interpretation of Thomas's "en uni dire," see the introduction to Short and Baumgartner's edition (19).
[502] Ed. Baumgartner and Short, p. 95, n. 2 (to line 869).

(*Charrette*, line 6247); "A la matire n'afirt mie" (*Tristan*, line 935). Both texts also feature the metaphor of the "path." As justification for his decision to put off any further explanation of the narrative significance of Meleagant's sister, the narrator in the *Charrette* states his desire to "mener boen chemin et droit" (line 6251). In his discussion of an implausible episode found in a different version of the *Tristan*, Thomas accuses those responsible for that version of having strayed from the *cunte* and the truth: "Il sunt del cunte *forsveié* / e de la verur esluingné" (lines 2301-102).[503]

The latter passage especially also mirrors certain aspects of Chrétien's inaugural treatment of the issues of corruption and fragmentation in the prologue of *Erec et Enide*, which should serve as a reminder that what I have been calling the "dialogue" between Chrétien and Thomas was not necessarily a one-sided phenomenon. In lines 2263-65, Thomas writes, "Entre ceus qui solent cunter / e del cunte Tristran parler, / il en cuntent diversement," focusing, throughout this critique of his predecessors and contemporaries, on some of the same key terms and concepts developed in Chrétien's opening remarks in *Erec et Enide*: the figure of the professional storytellers (the expression "solent cunter") who do not share the author's concern for verisimilitude and coherence (*cf. Erec et Enide*, lines 13-14, 21-22); the oral versus the written ("Oï en ai de plusur gent, / asez sai que chescun en dit / e ço que il unt mis en escrit," lines 2266-68; *Erec et Enide*, lines 22-23); and the royal/comital subject matter and audience, the rhyme on *cuntes* (stories) and *cuntes* (counts) (". . . Breri, / ky solt les gestes et les cuntes / de tuz les reis, de tuz les cuntes / ki orent esté en Bretaingne," lines 2270-73; *Erec et Enide*, lines 19-20). In sum, Chrétien or, as the case may be, Godefroi could have found Thomas's authorial statements all the more provocative since they would seem to be either based on Chrétien's own reflections on transmission, form, and authority or similar enough to raise the sort of question that I am getting at.

Perhaps even more so than Thomas, however, Chrétien is also open to treading outside of the *chemin*, or going beyond what is strictly "necessary" (*cf. Tristan*, line 2259). The entirety of Godefroi's continuation could, in fact, be interpreted as *surplus*. Not only are the continuator's claim to have added to Chrétien's original (esp. line 7105, "Se *sor* Crestïen a ovré") and his choice of the verb *parfiner* (7103), "to completely finish," consonant with the notion of a surplus (< *sor* + *plus*), but Chrétien has structured the narrative in such a way that it has already reached a conclusion by the time that Godefroi takes the reins. And whereas Thomas delimits, in the passage pertaining to Breri's and other versions of the *Tristan*, a specific episode and chooses to suppress it, "Thomas içe granter ne volt / e si volt par raisun mustrer / que içe ne put pas ester" (2284-86), Chrétien is said to have approved Godefroi's continuation, extending from the hero's immurement to the end of the text (lines 7102-107). To some extent, then, the kind of diversity that Thomas refers to in line 2262, "ici diverse la matyre," is not simply evoked by the passage concerning the *matyre* of the *Charrette*. Such diversity is, rather, cultivated and internalized through the inclusion of two different versions of the poem's ending voiced by two putatively distinct authors, which in turn reveals a more wide-ranging process of "diversification": the elaboration of two *contes* within a single romance.

This is not to say that Chrétien's romance lacks the unity of intention or concern with coherence characteristic of the *Tristan*. Despite the apparent exuberance of the second author, the

[503] In at least two manuscripts of the *Charrette*, verbs deriving from the noun *voie*, *forvoier* (MS. Bnf, fr. 12560, fol. 78ra) and *desvoier* (MS. BnF, fr. 1450, fol. 222vb), are used instead of *forceier* (line 6250) to introduce the idea of there being a correct path for the narrative to take. Méla does not list these or any other variants for line 6250.

ending of the *Charrette* and, in particular, Godefroi's epilogue are suggestive of a rigorously conceptualized narrative structure:

> Tant en a fet des lors an ça
> Ou Lanceloz fu anmurez,
> Tant con li contes est durez.
> Tant en a fet, n'i vialt plus metre
> Ne moins, por le conte malmetre. (lines 7108-12)

By emphasizing the attainment of an exact endpoint, the closing lines of the *Charrette* raise once again the question of how real the difference is between Chrétien and Godefroi. Chrétien himself had ended *Yvain* with a similarly firm statement as to the completion of the narrative (lines 6806-808), but the above passage, particularly the phrasing of line 7110, is also reminiscent of the single boldest gesture of self-authorization found anywhere in Chrétien's extant corpus, the authorial boast in *Erec et Enide*: "Des or comencerai l'estoire / Que toz jors mais iert en memoire / *Tant con durra crestïentez*" (lines 23-25).[504]

Relevant context for the analysis of Chrétien's willfully fragmented authorial voice may likewise be found at various points throughout his other romances. One might think here of the various other instances of Chrétien's talent at imitating and incorporating other voices or having other voices imitate his own, often imperfectly, such as Calogrenant's clerkly prologue and inscribed narrative in *Yvain*; Yvain's attempt to author his own narrative in the same romance; and the recapitulation of the source *conte* in *Erec et Enide*.[505] Within the *Charrette* itself, such double-edged verbal practices are thematized in the scene where a letter is forged using Lancelot's signature (lines 5252-5271). In fact, the contents of this "letres" as they are summarized by the narrator would suggest that its author may be mimicking not only Lancelot but Chrétien himself:

> Cil qui les lut lor sot bien dire
> Ce qu'il vit escrit an l'alue,
> Et dit que Lanceloz salue
> Le roi come son boen seignor,
> Si le mercie de l'enor
> Qu'il li a fet et del servise
> *Come cil qui est a devise*
> *Trestoz an son comandemant,*
> Et sachiez bien certainnemant
> Qu'il est avoec le roi Artu,
> Plains de santé et de vertu,
> Et dit qu'a la reïne mande
> C'or s'an vaigne, *se le comande*,

[504] See also Introduction (31-32).

[505] Dragonetti has compared Calogrenant's verbal performance in *Yvain* to Godefroi's authorship in the *Charrette* (*La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Âge* [Paris: Seuil, 1980], 14-16). See also Hult, "Calogrenant's Prologue," in Sophie Marnette, John F. Levy, and Leslie Zarker Morgan, eds., *'Si sai encor moult bon estoire, chançon mout bone et anciene': Studies in the Text and Context of Old French Narrative in Honour of Joseph J. Duggan* (Oxford: The Society of the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2015): 179-97 (180-83), as well as *id.*, "Voice of Authority," 89-91, on the rhetorical duplicitousness staged by the *Charrette*'s prologue.

Et mes sire Gauvains et Ques,
Et si a entresaignes tes
Qu'il durent croire, et bien le crurent. (Lines 5256-71; my emphasis)

In the above, I have emphasized the elements of the letter that echo with the language Chrétien elsewhere calls into play to designate both his own behavior as "Marie's" (*suens antiers*) and Lancelot's as 'Guenièvre's.' Included in this category is the "Come cil…" of line 5262, and yet in this instance the author is not simply speaking as someone else; it is, as we shall soon find out, quite literally a question of somebody else (lines 5338-41). The choice to have the narrator report the letter's contents rather than citing them directly doubles the effect of the third person, thereby stressing the tertiary quality of the writer's perspective on his own writing, his otherness with respect to a "je" that will tellingly never appear. Though one supposes that Meleagant or one of his men has composed the letter, it should be noted that the text will ultimately pass over in the silence the writer's true identity, a form of referential indeterminacy that seems somehow to be overdetermined.[506] Whoever it is, their confusion over the nature of Lancelot's sense of duty and allegiance, here linked primarily to Arthur rather than Guenièvre, is a further index of the *letres*'s foreignness to the truth. Chrétien's choice of the word "alue" to refer to the writing support, which could mean either "colored animal skin" (from Latin *aluta*) or "illusion" (origin unknown), is also noteworthy in this respect.[507]

Of course, whatever *entresaignes* (line 5270) are included in the letter (a forged signature?) are swiftly misinterpreted as confirmation of the writer's identity, but in this way they participate of the larger tendency on Chrétien's part to inscribe faulty hermeneutic practices within his romances so as to warn the external audience against making such mistakes: the diagnosis of Fenice in *Cligès*; the king's reception of Yvain's *conte*; and in the *Charrette*, Meleagant's mistaken apprehension of the drops of blood on the queen's sheets as proof or "ansaignes bien veraies" (line 4774) that Keu, not Lancelot, has spent the night with her.[508] As for the last example, the wound that is at the origin of these droplets, a cut to Lancelot's hand (his finger), might be taken as a *mise en abyme* of the divorce between person and sign that is at the center of Chrétien's writing and, apparently, Godefroi's continuation. At any rate, it seems to me quite remarkable that the only instance in which an act of writing is explicitly represented within the fiction is also a case of forgery—and of fiction writing itself. Written on parchment and read out loud before a royal audience by an unnamed clerkly type, the letter is all the more interesting as a representation in miniature of very much the sort of courtly literary performance that one (that Chrétien) may have observed in the author's native twelfth century. Set towards the end of the text attributed to Chrétien de Troyes and the advent of Godefroi de Leigni, this metafictional performance seems to prepare another one, this one more covert, and *its* interpretation.

Other readers, most notably Danièle James-Raoul, have instead tried to demonstrate that there is an appreciable stylistic difference between what Chrétien wrote and what is due to Godefroi. In a provocative article, Brian J. Reilly and Moira R. Dillon have recently reviewed

[506] *Cf.* Caroline Pensec, who attributes the letter to Meleagant ("Une Étude structurelle du *Chevalier de la Charrette* ou *Lancelot* par Chrétien de Troyes," *Chimères* 2.2 (1969): 10-14, 13.
[507] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 136.
[508] On the motif of misinterpretation in the *Charrette*, see Bruckner, "Interpreter's Dilemma," esp. 159, where the author suggests that Chrétien's characters "[illustrate] with their own errors and misapprehensions the pitfalls that await would-be interpreters."

the main points of James-Raoul's work through a quantitative lens.[509] Several of their conclusions strike me as being particularly relevant to the context of my discussion here. On the one hand, the findings of their preliminary "stylometric" analysis of the *Charrette* lead them to affirm that there may be a distinction between Chrétien and Godefroi:

> Our analysis of the use of temporal lexemes in the five Arthurian romances usually attributed to Chrétien de Troyes does provide some evidence that a second author composed the end of the *Lancelot*. While that evidence is too exiguous to command assent, it is also sufficiently suggestive to encourage further stylometric analyses.[510]

But the authors are quick to qualify this finding in the following, more qualitative terms:

> What is an author? Stylometry does not force us to abandon the many nuances we can bring to our answers. Medieval authorship is particularly fraught with subtlety, for these reasons among others: medieval *inventio*, while not slavish repetition, created, perhaps, a higher degree of imitation than we come to expect today; medieval textual transmission almost ensures a degree of collaboration.[511]

To say that the *Charrette* exhibits more than one stylistic signature may in other words border on tautology when this statement is viewed from the broader perspective of the medieval culture of transmission and rewriting, or what Reilly and Dillon refer to as *inventio*, taken in the rhetorical sense of discovery and repurposing rather than creation.[512] As in *Erec et Enide* and *Cligès*, Chrétien's voice does not come out of nowhere, *ex nihilo*, or exist in a vacuum but rather emerges (and is discoverable) through particular types of polyphony that may be understood both in terms of the dialectical spirit of his writing and the idea that Chrétien as author is *celui qui l'aünera*: that the one is always imbricated with the many, innovation related to tradition, part to whole, etc. This fundamental facet of medieval style, which did more apparently to allow Chrétien's authority to flourish than can be understood under the constraints of an anachronistic notion of artistic individuality, reveals the troubling circularity of James-Raoul's analysis, thus: "Any valid marker of style for Chrétien's authorial signature supports James-Raoul's overarching thesis that such markers exist and point to an historical author with a recognizable

[509] Brian J. Reilly and Moira R. Dillon, "Virtuous Circles of Authorship Attribution through Quantitative Analysis: Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot*," *Digital Philology* 2.1 (2013): 60-85; James-Raoul, *Chrétien de Troyes, la griffe d'un style* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).
[510] Reilly and Dillon, "Virtuous Circles," 78.
[511] Ibid. See also Frappier, *L'Homme et l'œuvre*, 135, who firmly denies, despite recognizing the part of some source *conte* in the *Charrette*, that Chrétien was patient rather than agent with regard to the transmission of existing narratives ("Mais qui voudrait jurer qu'il [Chrétien] était serf de son modèle…?").
[512] As Cerquiglini-Toulet has shown, the first use of "inventer" in reference to creation would not occur until 1431; "Cadmus ou Carmenta? Réflexion sur le concept d'invention à la fin du Moyen Âge," in François Cornilliat, Ullrich Langer, and Kelly, eds., *What is Literature? France 1100-1600* (Lexington: French Forum, 1988): 211-20, 212. Until the fifteenth century, as Cerquiglini-Toulet has further demonstrated, the verb "trover" was used instead of "inventer" (ibid., 219).

style."[513] To the contrary, Reilly and Dillon build on Hult's work in order to cleverly formulate the possibility that Chrétien invented a set of stylistic characteristics for the invented author:

> While statistically significant differences between texts might suggest different authors, we still have other interpretive escapes. For example, by coming to interpret Chrétien as having performed a successful "obfuscation attack," we might cling to Hult's ingenious suggestion that Chrétien invented Godefroy: Chrétien deviously provided us with a false co-signature for his fictitious co-author![514]

More than this, I would suggest that Chrétien's ability to mix together different styles in his romances need not remain a hypothesis, especially when we think about it on a larger scale. It is in evidence in the interplay of the oral (epic, lyric) and the written (*roman*, *estoire*) in *Erec et Enide*, the dialogue between Chrétien and Thomas in *Cligès*, and, most notably for my purposes here, the noticeable pivot in the *Charrette* from the adventure tale that culminates in the crossing of the Sword Bridge to the interwoven amatory and military intrigues of the second part of the romance. Through what I have come to understand here as its two midpoints, the *Charrette* combines reflections on identity, internalized or appropriative intertextuality, and narrative structure/style in such a way as to prepare the ground for this particular interpretation of Godefroi's "fictitious" authorship and the poem's two endings, wherein we discover that who "Crestïen" is may matter less than what we do not know about him: who he is not.

Apropos, Roger Dragonetti has gone so far as to advance that the name "Crestïens de Troies" may itself be a pseudonym:

> Le fait que les écrivains se soient montrés si experts dans l'art du recouvrement, et par ailleurs si indifférents à la propriété littéraire, devrait nous conduire à une analyse beaucoup plus poussée de la rhétorique concernant les pratiques pseudonymiques médiévales. De là à conjecturer que le nom de *Crestïens de Troies*, sans trace dans les archives, n'était peut-être qu'un pseudonyme, il n'y avait qu'un pas à franchir.[515]

While we will never know whether or not this is true, the very fact that we cannot is eloquent with regard to what Dragonetti calls the art of "recouvrement," Reilly and Dillon the "obfuscation attack." One might finally say, however, that such artful and extreme forms of subtlety and concealment, insofar as they are among the most stable and carefully exploited

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[513] Reilly and Dillon, "Virtuous Circles," 79. See also Zrinka Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 1-2, who take the same observation as justification for interpreting "'Chrétien de Troyes' not as an author identified with a historical figure but as a body of texts attributable to this name" (2).

[514] Reilly and Dillon, "Virtuous Circles," 79.

[515] *La Vie de la lettre*, 20. Dragonetti likens Chrétien de Troyes to Dante's Sinon, a character in the *Commedia* referred to as "il greco da Troia," the Greek from Troy: "Le nom de *Crestïens de Troies* ne sonne-t-il pas de façon étrangement analogique pour qui veut bien l'entendre? L'auteur du *Perceval* serait-il un 'chrétien de Troies'?" (ibid., 22). (As also noted by Dragonetti [20-22], the passage containing the only occurrence of the author's full name [line 9 in *Erec et Enide*] is the same in which the first part of that name is associated at the rhyme with "crestïentez," Christianity [lines 25-26].) Such a comparison cannot very well be substantiated, but it does point to a potential connection between Chrétien's own naming practices, his investment in dialectics, and his ability to collocate heterogeneous cultural and aesthetic paradigms in his writings. The kind of poetic texture and verbal artifice that Dragonetti identifies in the author's signature is, moreover, a quality of various names of characters from *Erec et Enide* to the *Charrette*, count Galoain to Soredamors, Calogrenant, Keu, Yvain, and Lancelot himself.

features of Chrétien's writing, create despite all odds an overwhelming sense of coherence across the five romances attributed to Chrétien de Troyes, indeed a sense of something like a "style," however paradoxical this claim may now seem. It is precisely this impression, I think, that distinguishes my efforts from those of the Chrétien Girls, who submit along similar lines that "Chrétien de Troyes" is little more than a name inscribed on parchment: of course it is, but might that be the author's point, not theirs?[516]

Much like the lion's tail in *Yvain*, the issue of identity in the *Charrette* reveals a set of questions that cannot be answered until the audience becomes willing to loosen its grip on given frames of reference and knowledge (for example, the historical function of the cart, the denotational value of the proper name, or the narrator's first-person pronoun) in order to realize that the author had probably never intended for those questions to be answered—not, at any rate, with a simple "yes" or "no": Is Chrétien's "charrete" actually a cart? Is Lancelot who the queen says he is? Is he a *preuz*? A *malvés*? A hero, a coward, or a traitor?, and so on and so forth. Through the figure of *celui qui l'aunera*, the text would instead appear to address to readers the possibility of its own meaningfully indefinite interpretative futurity. With all of this in mind, I would like to turn now to some of the many questions that are raised and yet never fully resolved by Chrétien's last romance, *Le Roman de Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal*.

[516] Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through*, 2.

Chapter 5

The Holy Blank and the Prison of Time: The Poetics of (In)Completion in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*

Despite being Chrétien's longest romance, *Le Roman de Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal* (*c.*1180-90) exhibits a signal blankness. In his magisterial critical guide entitled *Chrétien de Troyes et le mythe du Graal*, Jean Frappier provides a nearly comprehensive catalogue of the various ambiguities of Chrétien's fifth and final work, thus penetrating indirectly into the analysis of the blank in the *Conte du Graal*. To begin with, Frappier notes the theme of anonymity that blankets the opening scene of the romance:

> . . . l'attaque du récit nous met *in medias res*; nous ne savons pas le nom du père de Perceval, ni de sa mère "la veuve dame"; nous ne connaissons même pas le nom du jeune héros, du jouvenceau qui va nous apparaître dans un cadre de verdure et de poésie sylvestre.[517]

Here the ignorance of the interpreter is made to mirror that of the hero, a *sot* who is also unaware of his own name at this point in the text. In this way, the respective perspectives of character and reader are collapsed and integrated, a narrative technique whose function could be compared to that of free indirect discourse.[518]

A related narrative procedure that had also figured in *Yvain* and the *Charrette*, consisting in the sudden introduction of unfamiliar characters, some of them helpers or supporters (e.g., the laughing damsel, lines 991-1000), others detractors (the hideous damsel, lines 4541-644), many of them likewise anonymous, is taken to a new extreme in the *Conte du Graal*:

> Du même ordre est la brusque entrée en jeu de certains personnages dans la suite de la narration; ce procédé avait des antécédents dans les autres romans de Chrétien; ici nous avons simplement sa systématisation—systématisation somme toute heureuse, qui projette des ombres utiles sur un sujet mystérieux et symbolique, où il convient de ne pas tout expliquer, de laisser quelque incertitude propice aux songeries.[519]

For Frappier, however, Chrétien's deliberately "adumbral" style is exemplified most brilliantly in the scene of the Grail procession, where an ordinary object, a *graal* or serving platter that has an antecedent in the twelfth-century *Roman d'Alexandre* (line 618), is infused with both mythical

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[517] Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes et le mythe du Graal. Étude sur* Perceval *ou le* Conte du Graal (Paris: SEDES, 1972), 64.

[518] Frappier provides further examples (ibid., 67), about which I shall have much more to say below. Anyone needing to be convinced that Chrétien was conversant with free indirect style should consult, in addition to the texts themselves (e.g., *Yvain*, lines 696-722, 3356-61), David F. Hult, *Authorizing Fictions: Stealth Narrative in the Medieval French Tradition* (forthcoming) and Zrinka Stahuljak et al., *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes* (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2011), 123. For a broader discussion of free indirect discourse in medieval literature, see Sophie Marnette, *Speech and Thought Presentation in French: Concepts and Strategies* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), 179-223.

[519] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 64.

and mystical (Eucharistic) imagery, its one true meaning undecidable.[520] With its lack of an "explication totale,"[521] this figure would indeed inspire numerous critical and literary *songeries*, from the verse continuations of the *Conte du Graal* to the many attempts among modern scholars to pin down the precise religious significance of the Grail through the unearthing of one supposed source after another, after another, and so on.

If Frappier's reading of the *Conte du Graal* remains easily one of the most persuasive and authoritative, owing not only to its author's erudition but also—and, I think, especially—his openness to interpreting opacity and polysemy as the outcomes of a specific aesthetic strategy, his insistence on the importance of hermeneutic indeterminacy in this initial version of the Grail legend may seem to be contradicted in part by his interpretation of the ending of the poem, which is traditionally thought to have been left incomplete due to Chrétien's premature death. Gerbert de Montreuil, the author of a *Fourth Continuation* of Chrétien's romance (*c.*1235) that we find interpolated between the *Second Continuation* and the continuation of Manessier in two medieval manuscripts, was the first to make this suggestion, which seems to base itself on no other evidence than the fourth continuator's perception of the unfinished status of the *Conte du Graal*.[522] And while Keith Busby has boldly asserted that "There is no reason not to believe Gerbert,"[523] philologists' latest sleuthing has turned up a probable error in Gerbert's reading of Chrétien's romance, which he would not, in all likelihood, have been able to distinguish from its first two continuations, as such a distinction is "typically not marked in the manuscripts,"[524] but swallowed up by scribal efforts to present Chrétien and his continuators in a continuous "cycle." Frappier nevertheless clings to this explanation throughout his analysis, allowing for surprisingly little mystery when it comes to the reason for which Chrétien apparently abandoned work on the romance after having composed approximately 9000 lines, a fragment whose dimensions exceed by two thousand verses the length of any of Chrétien's complete works: "La mort a arrêté en cet endroit . . . l'œuvre de maître Chrétien de Troyes."[525]

At the same time, Frappier's innovative and highly convincing account of such issues as the narrator's "explications suspendues" and the "structure cachée" of the narrative as *intentional* features of the *Conte du Graal* clears the ground for a somewhat different approach to the

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[520] Ibid., 6, 70-71; *The Medieval French* Roman d'Alexandre. *Volume I: Text of the Arsenal and Venice Versions*, ed. Milan S. La Du (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1937). The above reference is to the Venice version.

[521] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 70.

[522] *La Continuation de Perceval*, ed. Mary Williams (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1922), vol. 1, lines 6984-87. The two manuscripts in question are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12576 and nouv. acq. fr. 6614, to which editors have assigned the sigla *T* and *V*, respectively.

[523] Keith Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes:* Perceval (Le Conte du Graal) (London: Grant and Cutler, 1993), 9 (hereafter "*Perceval* [critical guide]," which is not to be confused with Busby's critical edition of Chrétien's romance [note 525]).

[524] Hult, *Authorizing Fictions*.

[525] *Le Mythe du Graal*, 253. Unless otherwise specified, references to the *Conte du Graal* will be to Charles Méla's edition of manuscript Bern, Burgerbibliotek 354 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990). I have chosen to work with this edition not only because of the quality of its text but also because the Bern manuscript (hereafter "MS. *B*") is among those that transmit Chrétien's romance in the absence of any of its continuations. Medieval readers of MS. *B* may therefore have pondered some of the same questions relative to the integrity of Chrétien's romance that I will be raising here. There are, in total, four surviving manuscripts of the *Conte du Graal* that do not contain any of the continuations: MSS Clermont-Ferrand, Bibliothèque Municipale et Interuniversitaire 248; Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana 2943; London, College of Arms (Herald's College), Arundel XIV; and *B*. For detailed notices on MS. *B* and the other manuscripts of the *Conte du Graal*, see especially the introduction to Busby's critical edition: *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), IX-XXXIX.

suspension of Perceval's adventures, first, then those of Gauvain as additional examples of the blank, which do not preclude the construction of a coherent narrative, lacking nothing that its author did not advisedly withhold. Building on additional work by Frappier and others, such as Roger Dragonetti's provocative but as yet seemingly rather unpopular contention that Chrétien's final romance may, in fact, be perfectly complete ("parfaitement achevé"),[526] as well as my own reading of the dual structure of the *Charrette* in Chapter 4, I would like to take this hypothesis as the starting point for a new reflection, not on the completeness of the *Conte du Graal* or its incompleteness *per se*, but rather its ambiguity between the two.[527] Such flexibility of perspective, which derives its credibility from the methodological apparatus of the preceding discussions, will, I hope, grant insights into structure and reception that would not otherwise be plausible or possible. In certain respects, then, the proposals formulated over the following pages are teleological or, better said, developmental, presuming a career's end and the culminating effect or "bang" that we might therefore expect. In other respects, though, it tracks the structural and semiotic implications of an undeniable shift of *matiere*, allegedly brought about by Chrétien's patron (lines 59-65), that happened to coincide with the poet's last stand: the writing of a romance treating a mystical object, the first but far from the last of its kind, a model and a turning point in the history of romance. As for the analysis, it will divide into two overlapping movements loosely based on the progression in Chrétien's romance from Perceval and his story to Gauvain and *his*, which for clarity's sake alone I number below.

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In addition to positing the author's untimely death, Frappier speculates as to the hypothetical ending of the romance, had the author been able to bring it to, or closer to, completion: "Nous ignorons les proportions que devait avoir le *Conte du Graal* dans la pensée de son auteur, mais il ne semble pas douteux que Perceval devait revenir au premier plan à un moment donné."[528] This view reflects a particular reading of the narrator's intervention between the episode detailing Perceval's penance at his uncle's hermitage and the resumption of Gauvain's worldly adventures, a crux in the interlace structure of the latter part of the romance: "Chrétien annonce alors qu'il va reprendre le récit des aventures de Gauvain et qu'il reviendra plus tard à l'histoire de Perceval . . ."[529] Following are the lines that Frappier is paraphrasing:

> De Perceval plus longuement
> Ne parole li contes ci,
> Ançois avroiz assez oï

[526] Roger Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Âge* (Le Conte du Graal) (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 9.
[527] While Dragonetti makes reference on several occasions to the assimilation of "brisure" and "jointure" in Chrétien's romance (ibid., 9, 148, 198), he appears at times to place a greater emphasis on the latter, such as in his discussion of the alternation of the adventures of Gauvain and Perceval in the second half of the romance: "Nous reviendrons sur cet aspect du récit . . . sur ces brisures où s'abrite une *mout bele conjointure*" (148). It is in part for this reason that I have chosen to start above with an overview of Frappier's guide, which I find to be particularly strong with respect to the issue of structural and symbolic indeterminacy. At any rate, it is not my intention here to overstate my disagreement with either Frappier or Dragonetti. Quite the opposite: a part of my goal will be to explore the possibility of combining elements from both their readings, divergent though they may seem.
[528] *Le Mythe du Graal*, 213.
[529] Ibid., 158.

De mon seignor Gauvain parler
Que riens m'oiez de lui conter. (lines 6434-38)

A comparison of Frappier and Chrétien reveals a notable discrepancy. Strictly speaking, Chrétien does not say that he will come back later to the story of Perceval, as per Frappier, but rather that the putative source *contes* does not say anything more about Perceval in this spot and that we will hear the narrator talk at great length, "assez," about Gauvain before we hear anything (else) recounted about "him." As Dragonetti rightly specifies, the narrator's language is "fortement équivoque": it could be read as a promise to circle back eventually to Perceval's adventures, but it is far too enigmatic to exclude other interpretations, even, I might add, the opposite one.[530] Dragonetti goes as far as to posit that the "lui" of line 6438 is indeterminate, an argument that he bases on the grammar of Old French, according to which such a pronoun would typically designate the antecedent that precedes it most directly, here "Gauvain" and not "Perceval."[531] In paraphrasing the text, Frappier has thus stripped it of precisely the sort of ambiguity that is valorized elsewhere in his analysis. Moreover, the difference between this passage and its disambiguation is potentially crucial, as what is at stake is the possibility that Chrétien never intended to return to Perceval's story following the scene on Good Friday. What remains to be seen from this perspective is whether the final stage in Perceval's education, whereby he repents and confesses his sins to the hermit, may also be read in terms of narrative finality, that is, as a preliminary conclusion designed in roughly the same fashion, from a purely structural standpoint, as Lancelot's immurement in the *Charrette* (see Chapter 4).[532]

The placement of Perceval's encounter with the penitents and subsequent visit to the hermitage seems to me rather telling in this respect. This scene, which spans lines 6143-438, evokes explicitly the passage relating Perceval's silence at the Grail castle. In fact, it is at this point that the hero is finally enlightened by his uncle as to the function of the Grail and the identity of its beneficiary:

Cil cui l'an en sert est mes frere,
Ma suer et soe fu ta mere,
Et del Riche Pescheor croi
Que il est filz a celui roi
Qui del graal servir se fet. (lines 6341-45)

Now, Frappier describes the action at the Grail castle as the "épisode central" of the romance, but what he does not mention—and presumably could not have reconciled with his theory of the death of the author—is its structural centrality as a potential midpoint with regard to the Good Friday episode. Falling between lines 3023-247, its function is not necessarily different in nature from that of the crossing of the Sword Bridge in the *Charrette*, and the links or "joints" established between the beginning of the romance (the death of Perceval's mother and Perceval's

[530] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 155. The two possible interpretations of this "lui" are both interesting and do not, as I shall specify below, exclude each other. *Cf.* Rupert T. Pickens, *The Welsh Knight: Paradoxicality in Chrétien's* Conte del Graal (Lexington: French Forum, 1977), who follows Frappier in stating that "Chrétien explicitly promises to return to Perceval" (56).
[531] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 156.
[532] And see again, on closure in the *Charrette*, Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*," in Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens, eds., *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989): 76-96.

sin [lines 6315-27]), the action at the Grail castle (the consequence of that sin), and the spiritual ascension of the hero some five years later are suggestive of a semi-autonomous narrative embedded in the broader structure of the *Conte du Graal*.[533]

But we must also take stock here of the emphasis that is placed in this central passage on the very figure of the middle. Perceval observes the procession from a bed situated in the middle of the room ("Ami la sale avoit un lit," line 3023). When the Fisher King's niece presents him with the sword that he subsequently gives to Perceval, he draws it only halfway ("Et il l'a bien demie traite," line 3073). As a young man arrives with the bleeding lance, the narrator comments that he is grasping it by the middle ("par lo mileu," line 3131). Finally, when the damsel carrying the Grail enters the room, the reader is informed that she is holding it between her two hands: "Un graal entre ses .II. meins / Une damoisele tenoit" (lines 3158-59). The concatenation of such seemingly unremarkable expressions might be seen to betray their latent symbolic significance with regard to the narrative centrality of the scene in question, an interpretation that would be supported by Frappier's sense of the constant co-presence of literal and figurative meanings in the *Conte du Graal* and Dragonetti's reading of the romance as an allegory of writing.[534] The transitional texture of this scene is further indicated by the manner in which it brings together what were undoubtedly the two basic building blocks of the romance's *matiere*, the stories of Perceval and the Grail, and, correlatively, the function of the procession as a bridge between the world of Arthurian chivalry and the mystical "Autre Monde," or Other World, of the Grail service.[535] In both of these respects and others still, Perceval's silent attendance at the ceremony of the Grail service gestures back towards Lancelot's passage across the Sword Bridge in the *Charrette*.

Regarding the superposition of literal and symbolic significations in the *Conte du Graal*, it may also be worth pointing out that the narrator's reference to the pommel of the sword forged in the Firth of Forth is, both graphically and phonetically, indistinguishable from the *Pont de l'Espee*: "*Li ponz de l'espee* fu d'or / Do meillor d'Arrabe et de Grece, / Li fuerres est d'orfroi de Mece" (lines 3100-102; my emphasis), where *ponz* is a homonym of another form of the word for bridge in Old French, as in *li Ponz Evages* (The Underwater Bridge; *Charrette*, line 656).[536] Like the Sword Bridge (lines 3028-31), Perceval's new sword is nearly unbreakable. But the fact that it has been forged in such a way as to eventually "betray" the knight who wields it, by

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[533] To the point, Pickens views the episodes of the Waste Forest, the Grail castle, and the hermitage as "three points on the same axis"; Pickens refers to this level of the narrative as the "Grail axis," which would be "diametrically opposed" to the "Arthurian axis," though he does not read this progression in terms of a beginning, a middle, and an ending (*The Welsh Knight*, 50-53). He does, however, highlight the metaphorical centrality of this "Grail axis" (ibid., 80).

[534] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*.

[535] See Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 115-16 on the chivalric "décor" of the main room in the Fisher King's castle. Taking things one step further, Fanni Bogdanow contrasts the "Maimed King's hall laden to overflowing with excessively rich food and the table in the invisible chamber where the Maimed King's saintly father will dine . . ." ("The Mystical Theology of Bernard of Clairvaux and the Meaning of Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal*," in Peter S. Noble and Linda M. Paterson, eds., *Chrétien de Troyes and the Troubadours: Essays in Memory of the Late Leslie Topsfield* [Cambridge, U.K.: St. Catherine's College, 1984]: 249-82 [261]).

[536] Note, however, that "ponz" is clearly referring to a pommel rather than a bridge in the above passage; the relationship that I am suggesting between the two terms is prosodic and not semantic. Albeit homonyms, the two terms moreover derive from two distinct Latin words: on the one hand, *pomum*, meaning fruit from a tree, fruit containing seeds or a pit, or, in late Latin, "apple" (Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 2638; https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/pomme [accessed 02.10.21]); on the other hand, *pontem* (accusative of *pons*), "bridge" (https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/Pont).

shattering (lines 3598-601), only seems to accentuate the similarity between it and the *Pont de l'Espee*, whose sinister design is described at length in the *Charrette* (e.g., lines 3020-21, -44-45). Fashioned in the style of a large sword, with a blade that is sharper than a scythe (line 3101), the *Pont de l'Espee* is both a bridge and an obstacle, at once connecting and dividing the kingdoms of Logres and Gorre, protecting Lancelot from the treacherous currents of the "infernal" river that flows beneath it (3009-16) and slicing through the skin on his hands, knees, and feet (3112).[537] In the light of the various parallels between Lancelot's passage across the Sword Bridge and Perceval's encounter with the Grail, and between the hero's sword and the Sword Bridge itself, the above echo might be taken as a subtle paronomastic expression of the structural comparison that I am suggesting between the *Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal*. This would certainly be in line with Chrétien's desire and ability to create moments of intertextual resonance within his own corpus (e.g., in *Yvain*).[538]

The verbal subtleties of the episode at the Grail castle, particularly as it concerns the sword forged in the Firth of Forth, provide an additional support for this reading. The interest of the Fisher King's sword does not escape the attention of Dragonetti, who attaches a great deal of figurative importance to the moment at which it is broken in two. However, he mistakenly attributes this 20-line development, which is clearly an interpolation, to the author.[539] Chrétien's narrator does state that the sword can be broken, "Que ja ne porroit depecier / Fors que par un tot sol peril / Que nus ne savoit fors que [c]il / Qui l'avoit forgiee et tempree" (lines 3078-81), a prophecy that will be reiterated by Perceval's cousin (lines 3598-601), but the moment of its shattering is never incorporated into the *Conte du Graal* as told by the Champenois poet. Rather than taking the unfulfilled prophecy as evidence of the unintentional incompleteness of the romance, I am inclined to read into the verb "depecier" an allusion to the author's practice of willfully corrupting the narrative, which would serve to contrast the sword, which remains intact, with the state of the narrative, which exhibits blanks.[540] Apropos, the playful progression in lines 3079-81 from "*Fors que* par un tot sol peril" to "*fors que* cil" to "*for*giee" invites an ironic syllabic breakdown of the verb referring to the making of the sword, not its breaking, in yet another instance of Chrétien's adeptness at elevating the meaning of ordinary expressions by exploiting homophonies and/or graphic resemblances in Old French: *for-gie(e)*, where *for* is another spelling of *fors* and *gié* is a common form of the first-person singular pronoun in Old French. No one, we might surmise, possesses knowledge of the "sol peril" that would cause the sword to break except "he" (*cil*) who forged it—and the poet himself, whose "I" is here assimilated with the act of creation. In his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*, Jean de Meun, a master at manipulating the meaning of words and their component syllables, would use the same pun, albeit more explicitly:

> Car tant conme Avarice put
> a Dieu, qui de ses biens reput
> le monde quant il l'ot *forgié*

[537] For more on the wounds that Lancelot sustains as he crosses the Sword Bridge, see my analysis of the theme of disarming in the last part of this section.
[538] *Yvain* makes three references to the *Charrette*, which are far more obvious. For a discussion of these and other, less direct references to the *Charrette* in *Yvain*, see Chapter 3.
[539] See Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 149-50, 152-54, 178, 205, 261, 273 and *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, ed. William Roach (Geneva, Droz; Paris, Minard, 1959), lines 3926*a-t* (the interpolation).
[540] It will be remembered that the same verb is used in connection with the Sword Bridge in the *Charrette* and, in particular, the two lions that appear to guard the far side of the bridge (line 3070).

(ce ne t'a nus apris *for gié*),
tant li est Largece plesant,
la courtaise, la bien fesant. (lines 5213-18; my emphasis).[541]

In the *Conte du Graal*, the interpenetration of the images of writing and forging is already present in the figure of the writing on the sword's blade, which specifies where it was made (lines 3074-75, 3611-21).

In addition to the foregoing structural and intertextual arguments for the appropriateness of the Good Friday episode as an implied endpoint for Perceval's story, there are compelling reasons to approach this crux in the narrative as a moment of thematic resolution. I have in mind first of all an important point that has already been made by both Frappier and Jean-Charles Payen in their respective discussions of the motif of repentance in the *Conte du Graal*. According to this interpretation, which I believe would be difficult indeed to destabilize in any decisive way, by confessing to the hermit, showing signs of a sincere "repentir" (the hero's tears [lines 6241-42]), and agreeing to a program of penance (daily religious observances, a pledge to help the weak, etc. [6382-98]) that will ostensibly extend beyond the scene at the hermitage, Perceval exhibits true Christian charity, understood here as the love of God rather than oneself (what Frappier and Payen refer to as "égoïsme"), for the first time in his life and the first time in the romance.[542] As has also been previously pointed out, the virtue of *charité* is established in the prologue of the *Conte du Graal* as a telos of sorts for the evolution of the hero, and Frappier for one has identified a direct connection between the hermit's imperative to believe in, love, and worship God (line 6385) and the poet's discourse on charity in the prologue.[543]

Yet there is at least one further and, I think, particularly striking aspect of this passage that argues for a change in Perceval's character, which is the seemingly trivial detail that he enters the hermit's chapel upon his arrival (lines 6267-68). Of course, both Perceval's mother and his instructor in arms, Gornemant de Goort, had instructed him to go to church (lines 556-58; 1624-28), and critics have readily observed that the hermit, who will repeat their advice, offers nothing new in this connection: "Il n'y a rien de bien nouveau dans ces conseils," Frappier states.[544] But the intended effect of this repetition, I would argue, is to call attention to one of the most significant, if unstated, indications of Perceval's failings as a Christian. Quite simply, there is no evidence in the text that Perceval ever follows the advice of Gornemant or his mother and sets foot in a church or other religious structure prior to his arrival at the hermitage.[545] In the scene concerning the five years that the hero spends searching for the Grail and the bleeding lance, which I will be discussing in greater detail below, Chrétien makes it quite clear that Perceval does not once enter a church: "Ce sunt .V. anz trestuit antier, / Ainz que il entrast en

[541] Ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965-70), vol. 1.
[542] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, e.g., 80; Payen, *Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature médiévale française (des origines à 1230)* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 396-98. Frappier situates the "first sign" of Perceval's charity in his attempt to return to the *gaste fôret* after leaving Gornemant de Goort's castle (*Le Mythe du Graal*, 92; *cf.* Bogdanow, "Mystical Theology," 259-60), but locates the knight's "renoncement total à lui-même" in the Good Friday episode (*Le Mythe du Graal*, 153).
[543] Ibid., 156.
[544] Ibid.
[545] The only exception, which is not really an exception, is the episode at the beginning of the romance in which Perceval mistakes a tent for a church and, remembering his mother's lessons, makes a point of entering it (lines 619-28); Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 130. Pickens too concludes that "Perceval's only communication with the world of religion is marked by statements he makes to the monks and nuns in Belrepaire" but does not discuss the hermit's chapel in this connection.

mostier, / Ne Deu ne sa croiz n'aora" (lines 6147-49). If, then, this portion of the hermit's teachings is gratuitous, it participates of the kind of meaningful and deliberate gratuity that one can expect from Chrétien and that was, for instance, the hallmark of the author's aesthetic innovations in *Yvain*.

The importance of the hermit's character as both a model and a preceptor for Perceval is significantly also evinced by the emphasis placed on the virtue of charity in monastic and eremitic culture in the Middle Ages. While acknowledging that the hermit has a clear role to play in the spiritual evolution of the hero, Frappier would appear to deny flatly the potential relevance of the monastic theology that formed the basis of the eremitic vocation in the medieval period, though he often returns to the Cistercian monk Hélinand de Froidmont's definition of "grail" in Latin from the early thirteenth century: "scutella lata et aliquantulum profunda."[546] In romance, sylvan solitaries such as Perceval's uncle are often represented as "monastic folk," reflecting the proximity, both spiritual and social, of the two classes.[547] Indeed, hermits provided a powerful example for cenobites to follow, as "From the beginnings of Christian asceticism in the fourth century, hermits represented the pinnacle of Christian devotion and self-sacrifice in early medieval religious practice."[548] In the twelfth century, "many hermits and their disciples" also "underwent a process of cenobitization . . . that is, they adopted an authoritative rule and swore obedience to an abbot."[549] Now, such rules, or *regulae*, and the spiritual life that they cultivated were essentially oriented toward the virtue of charity, or what the monastic historian Jean Leclercq variously refers to in his classic introduction to medieval monasticism as the "search" and "desire" for God.[550] As Leclercq puts it in his discussion of monastic readings of Scripture and pagan classics, such as works by Cicero, Seneca, and Plato, "Toute cette culture est au service d'une charité exigeante."[551]

Evidence for Leclercq's claim is unsurprisingly abundant. In his commentary on *The Ascetic Life* by Maximus the Confessor, a seventh-century Christian monk, Polycarp Sherwood notes, "In charity the whole of Christian life is summarized and contained."[552] Anselm of Laon,

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[546] Cited from Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 8. See also ibid., 28-29 for Frappier's review of Henry and Renée Kahan's *The Krater and the Grail: Hermetic Sources of the Parzival* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), in which he remarks, "Si des traces nous paraissent possibles dans le *Parzival*, elles manquent totalement selon nous dans le *Conte du Graal* (28). Though, in this case, the critic is speaking about an unsuccessful attempt to relate ancient eremitic writings to the *Conte du Graal*, he makes no mention (not in *Le Mythe du Graal*, to my knowledge) of the historical existence of hermits in the Middle Ages and the possible resonance or divergence between them and their fictional counterparts in the Grail romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for which analysis we must look to Leclercq (see following note).

[547] Jean Leclercq, "Monks and Hermits in Medieval Love Stories," *Journal of Medieval History* 18.4 (1992): 341-56, esp. 341.

[548] Scott G. Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language in Medieval Monasticism: The Cluniac Tradition c. 900-1200* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46. In early Christianity, as J. William Harmless furthermore reminds us, "the anchoritic, or solitary life of the hermit, and the coenobitic, life within a structured (and often secluded) community" were both "forms of monastic life"; the word "monk" comes from the Greek *monachos*, which "meant, in its origins, 'a solitary'"; see Harmless, "Monasticism," in Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 493-517 (493).

[549] Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 157.

[550] Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957), e.g., 25, 34.

[551] Ibid., 137.

[552] Saint Maximus the Confessor, *The Ascetic Life: The Four Centuries on Charity*, trans. Polycarp Sherwood (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1955), 91. Along the lines of Frappier's and Payen's discussions of "égoïsme," Maximus contrasts charity and "self-love," or ψιλαυτία (ibid., 93; Demetrios Bathrellos, "Passions, Ascesis, and

whose works, alongside those of two other canons regular, Guillaume de Champeaux and Hugh of Saint-Victor, occupied an important place in twelfth-century monastic libraries, states in the *Glossa ordinaria* that, without charity, the other virtues mean nothing: "[P]raeter caritatem cetere uirtutes nichil sunt et omnibus aliis destructis sola caritas non excidet" (III, 86).[553] And Saint Benedict, in the closing paragraph of the prologue to his *Rule*, "the most influential touchstone of monastic legislation in the Middle Ages,"[554] frames his project in terms of the correction of vice and the preservation of charity, "propter emendationem uitiorum uel conseruationem caritatis" (*Incipit prologus*, 47).[555]

That Chrétien was attuned to the centrality of charity in eremitic and monastic spirituality is not only likely but also seems demonstrable in the light of the nearly exclusive association that his romances make between the virtue of charity and the eremitic vocation. Wherever there is charitable action, or talk of it, in Chrétien's first four romances, a hermit is either present or mentioned. In *Yvain*, the hermit leaves bread and water out for a crazed Yvain, "par charité" (line 2839).[556] In Old French, the word "charité" could, in fact, refer specifically, through metonymy, to a meal given to travelers by a monk.[557] In the *Charrette*, Meleagant snarls in response to Bademagu's oath to protect Lancelot from all of his men except his son, "Je ne sui mie si hermites, / Si prodom ne si charitables, / Ne tant ne voel estre enorables / Que la rien que plus aim li doingne" (lines 3276-79).[558] In the *Conte du Graal*, charity is related to the search for God even before Perceval's uncle appears. In the prologue, "charité" is glossed as a name for God, and a person who possesses this virtue is said to live in God and God in them (lines 44-48; more

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the Virtues," in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015]: 287-306, esp. 292). On Maximus's medieval reception, see for example Catherine Kavanagh, "The Impact of Maximus the Confessor on John Scottus Eriugena," in Allen and Neil, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*: 480-99.

[553] Anselm of Laon, *Glossa ordinaria in Cantica canticorum*, ed. Mary Dove (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). With regard to the overlap between canonical and monastic beliefs, Leclercq, in *L'Amour des lettres*, 177, also observes that the cloistered lifestyle of such canons as Hugh, Anselm, and Guillaume "est semblable à celle des moines."

[554] Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 29.

[555] Cited from *The Rule of St. Benedict: The Abingdon Copy*, ed. John Chamberlin (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982). For further evidence of the importance of charity to monastic "legislation" in the Middle Ages, particularly the Cistercian twelfth century, see the *Carta Caritatis* (attrib. Stephen Harding, *c.*1119), in Thomas Merton et al., *Charter, Customs, and Constitutions of the Cistercians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015): 1-14.

[556] Charity could, of course, refer to the love of God or a secondary, fraternal or neighborly love. These two valences are closely related and rarely treated in an entirely separate fashion in the medieval context. For the first sense of the word in Old French, Takeshi Matsumura puts, "Amour de Dieu et du prochain" (*Dictionnaire du français médiéval* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2015], 558), and as R. Freyhan writes, "Both elements together constitute Caritas. Yet the New Testament states clearly that the primary object of Caritas is God, that the works of mercy alone are of no value. And the great theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are explicit on this point: *amor proximi* is valuable only for God's sake, 'propter Deum'" ("The Evolution of the Caritas Figure in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 [1948]: 68-86 [68-69]); see also note 710 below. On this association, we might also think of the prologue of the *Conte du Graal* (in which the topic of generosity is treated in parallel with charity); Anselm of Laon's *Glossa ordinaria* (IV, 94); Augustine, "On Charity," in *Sermons on Various Subjects*, 107-109 (Sermon 350), esp. 108, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1995); and the *Del Confortement de Philosofie* (*c.*1240, ". . . l'amor de Deu e d'ome crestien, que nos apeloms Charité" [IV, i, p. 123], ed. Margaret Bolton-Hall [*Carmina Philosophiae* 5-6 (1996-97): i-227]). In their role as both spiritual models and almsgivers, Chrétien's hermits also exemplify this association.

[557] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 558.

[558] Explicit depictions of charity and charitable action are, however, rare before the *Conte du Graal*. Above are the only two references to *charité* that I have been able to locate outside of Chrétien's last romance.

on this point below).[559] Farther along in the text, "charité" rhymes with "Sainte Trinité" (lines 6555-56). And the definition of charity as a form of secrecy—"Charité, qui de sa boene oevre / Pas ne se vante, ançois se coevre" (lines 41-42)—anticipates the ascetic ideals of isolation and self-renunciation embodied by the Fisher King's father, both silent and invisible throughout the romance, and his brother the hermit.[560]

The context of the concept of charity in the *Conte du Graal* raises an interesting question as to the possibility of a broader engagement on Chrétien's part with monastic thought concerning the quest for God and related activities, such as the coenobitic culture of silence. As Scott G. Bruce has shown, the culture of silence was central to medieval monastic life as a way of regulating speech and avoiding sins of the "tongue."[561] Saint Benedict is clear on this point: "Faciamus quod ait Propheta, 'Dixi, "custodiam uias meas ut non delinquam in lingua mea; posui ori meo custodiam, obmutui, et humiliatus sum, et silui a bonis"'" (6.1). Notably, the monastic conception of silence also had implications for the representational dynamics of mystical writing, particularly with regard to the search for God and the verbal expression of that experience. For mystical authors, according to Leclercq, the use of writing to depict a spiritual experience "devait aboutir au silence: car l'expérience est une forme d'amour intime qui s'échange entre Dieu et l'âme; en ce qu'elle a de personnel et d'incommunicable, elle tend au silence."[562] Silence is, for that matter, a form of "charité" in that it inscribes an admission of the imperfect quality of any such writings:

> Cette imperfection radicale de tout ce que le mystique exprime achève de le détacher de sa littérature, de lui enlever toute complaisance dans ce qu'il écrit. La littérature, il le sait, avec tout ce qu'elle a de formel, et ses lois nécessaires, est un signe de l'impuissance de notre condition, de ses limites, et de l'inadéquation de ce que nous disons à ce dont nous vivons. Prendre conscience de ce manque et de cet échec, c'est aviver en soi le désir de posséder Dieu pleinement dans l'éternité. Aux extrêmes frontières de la littérature s'ouvre donc tout le domaine de l'ineffable.[563]

In his penultimate sermon on the Song of Songs, for example, Saint Bernard writes about his acceptance of the incommensurability of experience and language:

> Pergat quis forsitan quaerere a me etiam, Verbo frui quid sit? Respondeo: Quaerat potius expertum a quo id quaerat. Aut si et mihi expertri daretur, putas me posse eloqui quod ineffabile est? . . . Illud licuit experiri, sed minime loqui . . . Magna, fratres, magna et sublimis virtus humilitas, quae promeretur quod non docetur, digna adipisci quod non valet addisci (85, 14 [Col. 1194C-D]).[564]

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[559] The text cites Saint John, but attributes the quotation to Saint Paul, an error that Dragonetti has interpreted as part of the poetic strategy underlying Chrétien's prologue; see *La Vie de la lettre*, 124-32 and my discussion below.
[560] The text specifies that the Fisher King's father, who survives off of the miraculous food presented to him in the Grail, has not left his room for twelve years (lines 6355-56); in certain manuscripts, this number is fifteen or twenty (see Méla's critical apparatus, p. 450).
[561] Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, e.g., 1-13.
[562] Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres*, 249.
[563] Ibid.
[564] Sancti Bernardi, *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, in *Patrologia Latina Database* (Ann Arbor: Proquest), http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk (accessed 01.03.21), hereafter *PL*. The omitted portions of the passage deal respectively

For monastic thinkers such as Bernard, the virtue of humility, here expressed through silence, was closely related to that of charity, the possession of a spiritual reality unmediated by language.[565] In this particular quotation, the futility of the search for a language capable of capturing what transpires between God and the saint is conveyed through the circular structure of the sentence beginning and ending in "quaerat," seeking leading to more seeking, without there being discovery or possession. One quest begets another. (I note that the mystical conception of silence persists today. In episode 7 of the first season of Nic Pizzolatto's *True Detective*, the disillusioned former minister Joel Theriot tells the story of how he once knocked over by accident a collection of letters composed by the twelfth-century Franciscan mystic Telios de Lorca, a figure apparently invented by the show's creator, as the anachronistic detail of a twelfth-century Franciscan would suggest.[566] While appearing at first incidental, this detail serves to introduce Theriot's evolution from Christian revivalist to anchoritic contemplative: "All my life," he murmurs, "I wanted to be nearer to God. But the only nearness . . . silence."[567] And so ends his role in the series. The intimacy between silence and divinity is also attested in Max Picard's phenomenology of silence, published in 1952: "The mark of the Divine in things is preserved by their connection with the world of silence."[568])

Leclercq cites in full this passage from Bernard's eighty-fifth sermon on the Song of Songs. But thought connecting silence and charity in mystical writing was perhaps more widespread than the monastic historian allows. By design, Leclercq has saved his discussion of the limits of literary representation, those "extrêmes frontières" spoken of above, for the very last paragraph of his own study. A Benedictine monk himself, Leclercq is both theorizing and practicing silence as he writes. In this, he mimics the peripheral placement of Bernard's rumination on the ineffable, which, Leclercq is careful to point out, appears in the last of the saint's completed sermons on the Song of Songs.[569] Insofar as Bernard's sermons were left incomplete due to the author's death on August 20th, 1153, the performative aspect of Leclercq's citation of Bernard is, however, potentially misleading.[570] At all events, the topic on which Leclercq ends his analysis could, it seems, have furnished enough material for an entire second study. In what follows, I will limit myself to a handful of illustrative examples.

Like Bernard, Saint Basil distinguishes between feeling and expression in relation to God's love: "Ineffabilem prorsus ego sentio amorem dei et qui sentiri magis quam dici possit,

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with 1.) Paul's distinction in II Corinthians 5:13 between silence when he is alone with God and the necessity of trying to speak in a way that is understandable to his audience and 2.) the imperative to listen with the spirit rather than the ears, as it is grace and not language that teaches.

[565] See also Leclercq's analysis of Gregory the Great and the virtue of humility in *L'Amour des lettres*, 34. Payen has related a passage from Saint Bernard to Chrétien's understanding of sin in the *Conte du Graal* (*Le Motif du repentir*, 397). Along similar lines, Bogdanow argues for the relevance of Bernard's doctrine of self-knowledge, self-ignorance, pride, and sin to the *Conte du Graal*, but she does not mention Bernard's views on silence or their implications for Chrétien's poem.

[566] The Franciscan orders were not founded until the first decade of the thirteenth century.

[567] "After You've Gone," *True Detective*, performance by Shea Wigham, Season 1, Episode 7 (HBO, 2014).

[568] Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), 20.

[569] Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres*, 249.

[570] Thanks to medieval hagiographers, including Bernard's secretary Geoffroy d'Auxerre, we possess a fair amount of information on the life—and death—of this twelfth-century saint; see especially the *Vita Prima* of Geoffroy et al., trans. Hilary Costello, OCSO (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015). Evidence of the sermons' having been left unfinished comes in the form of a partial eighty-sixth sermon.

inenerrabilis quaedam lux est" (2.18).[571] For his part, Hugh of Saint-Victor speaks in his *De beatae Mariae virginitate* (after 1120) of "eternal charity and ineffable love": "Propter hoc in cantico amoris cum illa aeterna charitas et amor ineffabilis sive Dei ad animam, sive Christi ad Ecclesiam" (Col.0876A).[572] Augustine, whose writings greatly influenced those of Hugh, and who would "[enter] into a form of monastic life with his companions at Thagaste" and author his own *Rule*, discusses "ineffabili dignatione et charitate" in the second paragraph of his sermon on penance.[573] And in another source closer in date and in "spirit" to our author, the *Commentaria in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (*c.*1131), Peter Abelard, Chrétien's dialectical confrere, glosses as "ineffable" the divine *caritas* that Paul mentions in his letter, an unusual renunciation of language for the "semi-monastic" philosopher, who throughout his career emphasized understanding through reason (*ratio*): "De cuius quidem circa nos ineffabili caritate alibi dicit: *Commendat autem suam caritatem Deus in nobis quoniam si cum adhuc peccatores essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est*" (III: VII, 6).[574] Just after his statement on vice and charity in the prologue to his *Rule*, Benedict likewise refers to the "unspeakable sweetness of love" in connection with faith and desire: "Processu uero conuersationis et fidei, dilatato corde *inenarrabili dilectionis dulcedine*, curritur uia mandatorum Dei" (*Incipit*, 49; my emphasis). In the commentary on his edition and translation of Benedict's *Rule*, Terrance G. Kardong submits that "The reference to the ineffability of this love alludes to I Corinthians 2:9," which Benedict will cite in the fourth chapter: "Quod oculus non uidit, nec auris audiuit, nec in cor hominis ascendit quae praeparauit Deus his qui diligunt eum" (4.77).[575] However, Benedict's choice of the adjective "inenarrabili" sparks an additional association between his *Rule* and Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, whose ninth and last verse ends with the following words about God's gift: "Gratias Deo super inenarrabili dono eius" (9:15).[576]

The text and context of this last passage also present a striking echo with the *Conte du Graal*. II Corinthians 9:6, dealing with generosity and abundance, reads, "Hoc autem dico: Qui parce seminat, parce et metet: et qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet." The first part of this verse receives a word-for-word translation in the opening line of Chrétien's prologue, which revolves in large part around the topic of giving as well: "Qui petit seime petit

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[571] *The Rule of Saint Basil in Latin and English: A Revised Critical Edition*, edited by Klaus Zelzer and translated by Anna M. Silvas (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

[572] Hugo de S. Victore, *De beatae Mariae virginitate libellus epistolaris*, in *PL* (accessed 01.05.20). The "cantico" mentioned here is the Song of Songs.

[573] George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 44; Augustini Hipponensis, *De Poenitentia*, in *PL* (accessed 01.09.21).

[574] Ed. M. Buytaert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969); Romans 5:8. It is not the least bit unusual for Abelard to take up questions relative to charity, however. As Tony Hunt has noted with respect to *Sic et Non*, "The work consists of a prologue and 158 groups of texts involving theological problems, which fall effectively into three sections, *fides*, *sacramentum*, *caritas*" ("Aristotle, Dialectic, and Courtly Literature," *Viator* 10 [1971]: 95-130 [103]). "Semi-monastic" is the term that Catherine Brown uses to describe Abelard in *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectics, and the Poetics of Didacticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 65.

[575] Terrence G. Kardong, *Benedict's Rule: A Translation and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981), p. 24. All references to this volume are to Kardong's commentary.

[576] *Biblia Sacra: iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado (Madrid: Editorial Catolica, 1965). In addition to the examples cited above, see Philip L. Reynolds, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments: The Sacramental Theology of Marriage from its Medieval Origins to the Council of Trent* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), in part. 734, his discussion of Erasmus, who, in characterizing the hypostatic union as the result of "ineffable charity," provides evidence of the continuing belief in the inexpressibility of charity in the Renaissance.

quiaut" (line 1).[577] Though this line is not explicitly linked to the Bible, Chrétien will mention "Sainz Polz" in a different line that strikes me as being equally pertinent to the problem of expressing charity:

> Dex est charitez, et qui vit
> En charité, selonc l'escrit
> Sainz Polz ou je lo vi et lui,
> Il meint an Deu et Dex en lui. (lines 45-48)

Dragonetti has demonstrated that Chrétien's citation of Saint Paul in the prologue is actually an act of misattribution: the passage in question comes from John's first letter (4:16).[578] In addition to destabilizing and displacing the voice of authority, as Dragonetti details, these lines have been carefully composed in such a way, by my reckoning, as to contrast two senses of *charité*, one interrupting the other: charity as lived experience ("qui vit . . .") and as written expression ("selonc l'escrit"), seen on parchment ("je lo vi") but not lived. Here Chrétien's viewpoint is positioned at a double or perhaps even a triple remove from the "vit": *his* "escrit" is distanced from the referent by two degrees of citation (Chrétien > Paul > John), but the "charité" mouthed by John is itself already a verbal signifier divorced from reality. Through this rhetorical performance, the poet seems to nod towards the referential impasse that Leclercq discusses above in terms of the "inadéquation de ce que nous disons à ce dont nous vivons," while simultaneously intimating that even as authoritative a discourse as John's is liable to be erroneous. In a related gesture, Abelard's commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans, cited a moment ago, juxtaposes what he calls "ineffabili caritate" with the verb of speaking, "dicit," and thus with Paul's discourse on charity ("caritatem"), revealing the part of irony in Abelard's deferral to the apostle's authority.

To be sure, however, Chrétien was not a mystical author, but a romancer whose works are inscribed in a generic tradition, the *roman courtois* or *roman de chevalerie*, which would not become Christianized until the turn of the thirteenth century, and even then not fully or permanently by any means.[579] Moreover, silence is not represented in the first half of the *Conte du Graal* as a virtuous practice, but rather as the result of Perceval's sin against his mother. Nevertheless, the mystical use of silence as a narrative technology and, more broadly, its conceptualization among cenobites as an activity in its own right rather than a passive withdrawal from language constitute notable points of commonality with Chrétien's own secular aesthetics of corruption and fragmentation, from *Erec et Enide* to the *Charrette*. The notion of possessing something fully ("posséder . . . pleinement") not despite but *through* a failure, an error, or a gap in understanding of which the writer is radically aware ("ce manque ou cet échec"), as described by Leclercq, is, I find, particularly consonant with Chrétien's dialectical poetics. Further, the theorization of silence as a precondition of Christian charity would have presented an obvious interest with regard to the spiritual evolution of Perceval's character, and the odds that Chrétien did not encounter at some point in his readings the interrelationship of

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[577] See Baptiste Franceschini, "'*Qui sème peu récolte peu*': Chrétien de Troyes au champ romanesque," *Études littéraires* 40.2 (2009): 69-77 (70).

[578] *La Vie de la lettre*, 124. Dragonetti instead interprets line 47 (in particular, "je lo . . . lui") in terms of Chrétien's apparent "conviction" in the authenticity of his reading of Paul/Jean. But see also Dragonetti's provocative comparison of the prologue of the *Conte du Graal* to Fenice's reference to Saint Paul in *Cligès*, which would tend to strengthen his theory of the intentionality of the author's error (ibid., 124-32).

[579] On this Christianization, see, for instance, Frappier, "Le Graal et la Chevalerie," *Romania* 75 (1954): 165-210.

silence and charity, which figures as divergent as Abelard and Bernard could agree upon, are undeniably slim. On top of all this, the idea of an unsayable thought, experience, or sight, or one that would be difficult or impossible to describe in a complete way, is a well-known trope in medieval Arthurian romance probably inherited from antique literature and amply attested as early as 1155 in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (eight occurrences).[580] According to Danièle James-Raoul, such "formulae" appear regularly throughout Chrétien's corpus.[581] With respect to a possible shift in the meaning of silence in the *Conte du Graal*, one might also consider here the contextual contingencies of virtuous comportment in Chrétien's romances, wherein "right" and "wrong" often trade places through dialectical turns, rather than obeying an absolute distinction.[582]

Within this multifaceted analytical framework, I would like to revisit my opening claim that the silence to which Perceval's story is reduced following the Good Friday episode need not be taken as proof of the author's death, let alone some great deficiency in the design of the romance. Given the traces of monastic culture in Chrétien's romance and the amount of ink spilt by various saints and other religious writers on the challenge of representing one's most intimate relationship with God, both in Christian antiquity and in the twelfth century, such silence could, rather, be interpreted as an adaptation of the monastic theory of charity's ultimate ineffability, which is to say as a form of the blank that would have been particularly well-suited to the religious *matiere* of the *Conte du Graal*—as a blank that is sacred or "holy" in its inspiration. Note, in this regard, how the hero's rediscovery of God aligns perfectly with the splintering of his narrative. Moreover, the hermit's last words to Perceval concern nothing other than silence with respect to God:

> Et li hermites li consoille
> Une oreison dedanz l'oreille,
> Si li ferma tant qu'il la sot.
> [Et] en cele oreison si ot
> Assez des nons notre Seignor,
> Car il i furent li greignor
> Que nomer ne doit boiche d'ome,
> Se por peor de mort nes nome.
> Quant l'oreison li ot aprise,
> Desfandi li por nule guise
> Ne les deïst san grant peril.
> "No ferai je, sire," fait il. (lines 6405-16).

[580] See on this point Danièle James-Raoul, *La Parole empêchée dans la littérature arthurienne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 281. James-Raoul cites lines 422, 1758, 1938, 1945-46, 4399, 4400, 4512, 4689 of *La Partie arthurienne du* Roman de Brut, ed. D.O. Arnold and M.M. Pelan (Paris: Klincksieck 1962).

[581] James-Raoul, *La Parole empêchée*, 282. The figures she gives are six in *Erec et Enide*, seven in *Cligès*, eight in the *Charrette*, six in *Yvain*, and three in the *Conte du Graal*. James-Raoul does not provide references, but she may be thinking of, among other passages, lines 7645-49 of the *Conte du Graal*, in which the narrator says about the windows of the palace at the Roche de Champguin, "Li vaurres fu pains a colors / Des plus riches et des meillors / Q'an saiche deviser ne faire, / Mais n'en voil ore point retraire / Ne devisser totes les choses."

[582] Proper and improper acts of storytelling in *Yvain* are a key example of this dynamic, as is the poet's foundational appropriation of the *jongleurs*' errors of transmission in *Erec et Enide*. Pickens examines antithetical behavioral codes in the *Conte du Graal* in the same light: "In fact, in each antithetical concept, the *gallois* and the courtly, there are both positive and negative elements" (*The Welsh Knight*, 122).

In their commentaries on the hermit's prayer, Paule Le Rider and Frappier both insist on its magical, rather than "authentically Christian," character.[583] In their view, it is a vestige of the ancient idea that "le *nomen* est *numen*." Yet one of the greatest strengths of Frappier's reading of the *Conte du Graal* is to show that Chrétien takes pleasure in combining different semiotic, intertextual, and cultural registers.[584] In the same spirit, the hermit's injunction to silence might be read, both in its immediate narrative context and in the monastic context that I have reconstructed above, as an allusion to the monastic custom of silence and thus as a preparation of the charitable silence that is to come with the exclusion of Perceval's character from the remainder of the narrative. Indeed, the text's reference to a proscription concerning the utterances of a "boiche d'ome" (line 6411) recalls the monastic ideal of modeling one's behavior on earth after that of the angels in heaven, or what Bruce calls "angelic mimesis."[585] According to Odo of Cluny, this practice was exemplified by Count Gerald of Aurillac, whom the Cluniac abbot characterized as "uttering no human sound": "nil mortale sonans."[586] For other thinkers, such as John Cassian the Roman, brevity and silence in prayer were signs of spiritual maturity:

> . . . Cassian, *conf.* 9.15, teaches that prayer itself tends toward wordlessness. Since God is basically ineffable, true experience of God transcends words and even frustrates them. Hence as prayer deepens, words will tend to become more and more superfluous. Perhaps this is implied in Benedict's remark that "prayer should be short and pure" (20.4).[587]

That Perceval's prayer should center on the figure of the divine *nomen* is also striking with respect to the prologue of Chrétien's romance and, in particular, the notion that "charité" is among the many names of the *numen* (" . . . cil . . . / Qui Dex et charitez a non," lines 43-44), as I have already mentioned. On the topic of charity's basis in silence and the ineffability of this divine "name," we would be remiss if we did not in turn take note of the glaring absence of the very term "charité" from the scene at the hermitage, despite its (implicit) thematic prominence therein.[588] Abelard, as we saw, had picked up on the problem with Paul's use of language to designate the ineffable (*supra*), and it is interesting to consider whether Chrétien has taken a

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[583] Paule Le Rider, *Le Chevalier dans le* Conte du Graal (Paris: SEDES, 1978), 104-108; Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 157.

[584] See, for example, Frappier's interpretation of the bleeding lance in *Le Mythe du Graal*, 71. On the echo between Chrétien's lance and the lance of Longinus, see also Erich Köhler, *L'Aventure chevaleresque: idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois*, trans. Eliane Kaufholz (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), esp. 238-41.

[585] Bruce, *Silence and Sign Language*, 23.

[586] Ibid. Odo borrows this expression from Virgil's *Aeneid*; *Aeneidos*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, in P. Vergili Maronis, *Opera*, ed. id. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), VI: 50.

[587] Kardong, *Benedict's Rule*, p. 127. See also Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 139, who takes the hermit's prayer as an example of the "inexpressibility topic": "We have the *somme* of the *matiere* when something is so well known as to require no elaboration, or the matter is so 'high' as to be ineffable"; and Andrea M.L. Williams, "Perspectives on the Grail: Subjectivity in *La Queste del Saint Graal*," *Reading Medieval Studies* 26 (2000): 141-53 (153), who compares the prayer to other "mystical teachings," e.g., *La Quête du Saint Graal*, ed. Fanni Bogdanow and trans. Annie Berrie (Paris: Libraire Générale Française, 2006), XV: 331 and 2 Corinthians 12:4.

[588] By contrast, the virtue of "umilité" is mentioned in line 6390. On "the theme of charity," as well as "direct references to Christian dogma, the inner spiritual life, the workings of organized religion, the administration of sacraments with emphasis on the meaning of the visible signs" in the Good Friday episode, see also Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 48.

further step in this direction, finding an exit from this logical circle in the act of omission and circumlocution. Yet Chrétien's prologue is not the only earlier passage that comes to mind here. Ultimately, as a lesson in silence, the hermit's prayer can be seen to evoke, intensify, and replace Gornemant's precept from line 1612: "Qui trop parole pechié fait," a proverb whose religious significance, suggested by the word "pechié," would remain rather opaque without this moment of re-signification at the hermitage.

Of course, when a writer such as Bernard refers to the inexpressibility of charity, he is talking specifically about his own, solitary spiritual experience and not someone else's (e.g., *Sermones* 85, 14 [Col. 1194C-D]; II Corinthians 5:13),[589] whereas in the *Conte du Graal* it is a question of Perceval's charity and not Chrétien's or his narrator's. But a rigorous distinction between self-narration and third-person narrative, the voice of Perceval versus that of the author or the narrator, is not necessarily operative vis-à-vis the poetics of silence in Chrétien's romance. The erroneous citation of Saint Paul in the prologue appears to problematize in more general terms the relationship between charity in life and charity on parchment, that is, as an object of human discourse, or "mortal sounds" (to use Odo's expression, cited above). More importantly, as noted at the outset of this chapter, Chrétien frequently blurs the line between the perspectives of Perceval, the narrator, and the reader in the *Conte du Graal*, such as in the scene of the hero's naming, about which Frappier writes the following:

> C'est donc au vers 3575 seulement qu'avec un synchronisme parfait les auditeurs de Chrétien et le héros lui-même apprenaient le nom de Perceval. De même, dans la *Charrette*, le nom de Lancelot n'est révélé qu'au vers 3676, un peu après le milieu du roman, alors qu'il est prononcé pour la première fois par la bouche divine de la dame; mais Lancelot, lui, n'ignorait pas son nom. On dirait que Chrétien a voulu cette fois porter au comble l'étonnement de ses auditeurs.[590]

Our initial amazement at the belated revelation of the name "Perceval" might, however, temper our surprise at the silence that reigns over the representation of Perceval's charity, which could henceforth be understood as an even more dramatic example of the projection of his character's point of view onto the narrative. Furthermore, the silence of the text with respect to the hero's spiritual transformation follows not only on the onomastic plot of the early part of the romance, but also on the silence of character and narrator alike at the Grail castle. Just as Perceval fails to ask about the meaning of the Grail and is therefore deprived of its secrets, the narrator will say nothing to readers about its function, and his silence in this instance seems all the more remarkable given the tendency of Chrétien's narrators to intervene periodically with glosses on relevant customs, such as with the cart in the *Charrette* (Chapter 4) and the rules of combat in *Erec et Enide* (Chapter 1). In another important passage that will be worth citing in full, Frappier elaborates on what he astutely describes as Chrétien's "progressive" conception of the romance:

> A vrai dire, les énigmes, les ombres, les lacunes concertées du récit sont dans le *Conte du Graal* plus qu'un simple moyen de piquer la curiosité; il y a là quelque chose qui se trouve en accord avec le caractère du héros allant de surprise en surprise à la découverte du monde et de lui-même. Aussi ne nous empressons pas

[589] See also note 564 above.
[590] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 66. Frappier's "vers 3575" corresponds to line 3513 in Méla's edition.

> d'affirmer que Chrétien n'a pas compris son sujet: le manque de clarté provient pour une bonne part de sa conception progressive du récit. Ce point est fondamental: Chrétien a poussé jusqu'à ses conséquences logiques le système qui consiste à ne pas intervenir et à ne présenter les faits qu'au fur et à mesure qu'ils se produisent et s'expliquent peu à peu pour le héros. La scène du Graal, si mystérieuse, est décrite telle qu'elle devait apparaître à Perceval, c'est-à-dire à un être encore inculte et naïf, dont le cerveau reflétait une réalité fragmentaire ou disloquée.[591]

This fragmentary reality, as Frappier will clarify in his explication of the episode in which the Grail passes in front of Perceval, and as I have already begun to suggest, is transposed into the narrative: "Chrétien a décrit la scène en se plaçant au niveau de son personnage,"[592] an argument that finds confirmation in the narrator's use of a sort of free indirect style in lines 3190-91, concerning the hero's unasked questions: "O bien li praigne o mal li siee, / Ne lor anquiert ne ne demande."

As fundamental as this point is to Frappier's understanding of the romance, his qualification "pour une bonne part" announces the limits of his argument with regard to the lacunae in Perceval's story: he never considers its silent ending in precisely these terms. But to what more logical an extreme can such a system be taken than a situation in which the "faits" to which Frappier refers would never be fully explained—that is, in which the narrator would not intervene at all? If the experience of charity is ineffable for Perceval, as it was for mystical writers, then it seems to me that, within the aesthetic framework that is constructed around Perceval's character in the *Conte du Graal*, that experience could not be more effectively conveyed through language than through silence. This silence would present another echo with the prologue's gloss on charity, whose covert nature is contrasted with language through the figure of *vantance* (lines 41-42), a definition that is itself likely based on the portrait of love in 1 Corinthians 13:

> Charitas patiens est, benigna est. *Charitas non aemulatur, non agit perperam, non inflatur, non est ambitiosa* . . . Charitas nunquam excidit: sive prophetiae evacuabuntur, sive linguae cessabunt, sive scientia destruetur. Ex parte enim cognoscimus, et ex parte prophetamus. Cum autem venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est (4-5, 8-10; my emphasis).[593]

"Love never ends . . . As for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end."[594] I would be willing to bet that there is scarcely another passage in the Bible that ties together so well Chrétien's long-standing interest in the interrelationship of language, knowledge, and form (part vs. whole), while collocating the two essential qualities that he attaches to the virtue of charity in the prologue to his last romance: it

[591] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 67.
[592] Ibid., 115.
[593] Abelard had also featured parts of this passage in *quaestiones* 137-138 ("Quod sola caritas virtus dicenda sit et non"; "Quod caritas semel habita nunquam amittatur et contra") of *Sic et Non* (ed. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976-77], 464-84; all references will be to this edition).
[594] Translation cited from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

(she) does not boast, and it will always remain at least partly hidden under a mantle of silence.[595] But these words could have a special significance as well for the theme of prophecy in the *Conte du Graal*, whose first half in particular contains an entire series of prophecies (those of the fool [lines 1015-18], the laughing damsel [995-1000], Perceval's cousin [3529-33], and the hideous damsel [4605-13]), none of which mentions the hero's future reunion with God and all of which therefore amount to partial rather than complete forms of language and knowledge.

The various associations between the story of Perceval and 1 Corinthians 13 are bolstered by the metaphor of childhood that Paul uses to explain the difference between the imperfect and the perfect, part and whole: "Cum essem parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus, cogitabam ut parvulus. Quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli" (1 Corinthians 13:11). In the beginning of the *Conte du Graal*, a similarly negative view of childhood obtains, and like Paul, Chrétien not only portrays the child as astonishingly foolish, but he also links youth to a state of spiritual immaturity, as evidenced by Perceval's ludicrous first question to the knight in the Waste Forest: "Estes vos Dex? . . ." (line 168).[596] In Paul's metaphor, spiritual adulthood is reached as the "partial" (i.e., language, knowledge) draws to a close ("evacuabitur," "evacuavi").[597]

As a practice coterminous with the virtue of charity, silence emerges in the *Conte du Graal* as an absence of language but not meaning. It is also a sign system in its own right, imbued in this case with a specifically Christian meaning, but at work in many other places in Chrétien's corpus. In *Yvain*, for example, the hero's greatest feat, the rescue of the lion, is passed over in silence (that is, within the fictional world), which was a key part of the author's strategy for representing both the end of Keu's influence and Yvain's newfound pity. Likewise, in *Erec et Enide*, the author's omission of Erec's motivation, a paradoxically intentional error (i.e., a lie), is a means of signifying Chrétien's originality, as well as his resistance to the misogyny of the oral tradition against which his first romance positions itself.

In the *Conte du Graal*, silence can also be approached as an escape from a particular type of narrative discourse. To explicitly depict the hero's newfound spiritual devotion, a secret and therefore interior state of being, Chrétien would, one supposes, have had to elaborate a significant psychological apparatus for the romance. In general, however, the Champenois poet appears uninterested in providing detailed psychological portraits for his characters.[598] While emphasizing the kind of interiority implied by the concept of charity, Frappier bemoans the absence of a more detailed account of Perceval's "exile" from God at the beginning of the Good Friday episode, one example among others of such an absence according to Frappier's reading:

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[595] See also Pickens, *Perceval and Gawain in Dark Mirrors: Reflection and Reflexivity in Chrétien de Troyes's* Conte del Graal (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014), 13-14 (and *passim*), who interprets lines 41-42 of the *Conte du Graal* as a "quotation" of 1 Corinthians 13:4 and recognizes the appropriateness of Paul's initial metaphor to Chrétien's romance but ultimately privileges the second figure that Paul invokes as a gloss on charity, that of the mirror or *speculum*.

[596] Paul introduces this comparison in chapter 3, where he refers to the Corinthians as "infants in Christ" ("parvulis in Christo").

[597] Abelard too cites 1 Corinthians 13 in the prologue of *Sic et Non*, establishing in the acceptance of that which cannot be understood a principle of charitable interpretation (92; see Chapter 1, 67).

[598] Notable exceptions include the interior monologues in *Cligès*; see Jody Enders, "Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien's *Cligès*," *Rhetorica* 10.1 (1992): 5-23. Scholars have often also approached the so-called Blood Drops scene in the *Conte du Graal* as an instance of psychological representation (e.g., Michelle A. Freeman, *The Poetics of* Translatio Studii *and* Conjointure *in Chrétien de Troyes's* Cligès [Lexington: French Forum, 1976], 82; Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 130-41).

> Encore une fois regrettons que Chrétien se soit abstenu de peindre et d'expliquer, en contraste avec les exploits les plus brillants du héros, son désarroi intérieur, sa déchéance religieuse, cet exil total de son âme.[599]

Yet the reason for distinguishing between these lacunae and the "lacunes concertées du récit" (*supra*) is never made clear, which leads me to believe that it may have more to do with Frappier's taste for psychological representation than with Chrétien's failings as a poet. At any rate, I am not convinced that our understanding of the text would stand to benefit from a distinction of this sort. Rather, my reading of Chrétien's silence would suggest that it (silence) is more of a solution than a problem in this regard, permitting the author to represent the hero's internal spiritual evolution in a radically implicit and uniquely efficient fashion, that is, by saying almost nothing about it at all. Through an analysis of the narrator's courtly posture, Pickens has arrived at a similar conclusion:

> Silent as an evaluator, he reports, but refuses to analyze directly Perceval's mental and spiritual state. He shuts out, thereby, the light of psychological realism and avoids confrontation with the Hermit's judgments based in charity and knowledge of the Grail kingdom.[600]

If we were to object more substantively to Chrétien's use of silence, we might instead ask whether or not the culture of Arthurian chivalry as documented in the *Conte du Graal* is even remotely compatible with the concept of Christian charity adumbrated in the romance's prologue and developed in the Good Friday episode. To clarify: If Perceval were to remain a knight after leaving his uncle's hermitage, as scholars have repeatedly speculated, would it be possible for him to embody the virtue of charity—"la gloire dou ciel" (line 6232), rather than the worldly chivalric glory attained through *prouesse*? Payen has argued that Perceval's departure for King Arthur's court signifies an "absence totale de charité": "Perceval, abandonnant sa mère, abandonne Dieu, et Dieu l'abandonne."[601] Moreover, Perceval's relationship with the Arthurian court is essentially maintained through the translation of action into language, as opposed to silence. Following each of his victories in battle, Perceval sends his prisoner to Arthur's court with a message serving to relate (implicitly) his heroism and reaffirm (directly) his oath to avenge the laughing damsel who is slapped by Keu at the beginning of the romance (e.g., lines 2255-63). The narrator also chronicles Perceval's feats as a knight, while registering their mundane or generic character through a strategy of abridgment that is applied to scenes of battle in particular (lines 2618-21; 2170-73; 3861-63). In this part, Perceval's primary allegiances are to Arthur and to the profane chivalric vocation, and his experiences, which can all, with the exception of the Grail procession, be readily put into words, appear to adhere to a conventional standard of courtly service to *pucelles* in need of a protector or an avenger. Such behavior resembles more closely the secular valor of Alexandre (lines 14-15) than the charity of Chrétien's patron, Philippe de Flandres. Viewed from this angle, Perceval's chivalric ethics in the first part of the text may provide evidence of what Jean Flori understands as a movement away from the original, ecclesiastically inspired deontology of the order of *chevalerie* in twelfth-century France:

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[599] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 149.
[600] Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 98.
[601] Payen, *Le Motif du repentir*, 398-99.

> Dans tous ces cas, la protection des faibles tend donc à se muer en service courtois, moyen honorable d'acquérir aux yeux de tous *los* et *pris*, d'exhiber sa valeur guerrière, sa prouesse, dans des affrontements qui se rapprochent des tournois ou des combats singuliers, ancêtres des duels. Plutôt qu'à l'idéal ecclésiastique de protection des églises et des faibles, ce type de comportement chevaleresque rejoint, par bien des traits, celui que l'Église condamnait comme entaché de "vaine gloire."[602]

Though there is scarcely a suggestion in the text that Perceval is culpable of the sort of "fause ypocresie" that is related to "vaine gloire" in the prologue (lines 38-39), the earthly tenor of his actions as a knight is made clear in the aforementioned passages, as well as the prophecy of the laughing damsel.[603] She predicts that there will be no better knight than Perceval "an trestot lo monde" (line 997), but fails to mention anything about the hero's spiritual renewal. For Payen, then, as for many other critics, the chivalry of the *Conte du Graal*, as embodied by Perceval, is not yet the Christianized or "celestial" chivalry of the canonical thirteenth-century adaptation of Chrétien's romance, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, gesture though the author may in this direction: "Perceval vivra dans le monde, et l'on a tort à son propos de parler de chevalerie célestielle, opposée à la chevalerie mondaine de Gauvain."[604] By comparing Perceval to Erec, Cligès, and Yvain, Payen arrives at the theory that the missing ending of the *Conte du Graal* would have comprised a return to Bel Repaire and ended on the marriage of Perceval and Blanchefleur.[605] Thus, Payen also argues that "La perfection que propose le saint homme [the hermit] à son neveu est une perfection laïque, je dirai presque: mondaine" and that Perceval "fait son salut au milieu de la société humaine, tout en restant soumis à l'Église et en se gardant du péché."[606]

Given at once the tension between chivalry and charity in the *Conte du Graal* and the explicitly Christian—and indeed ascetic—setting of his "salut" (the Good Friday episode at the hermitage), however, it may be high time that we rethought the long-held assumption that Perceval was slated to resume his career as a knight after having taken stock of his sin and repented. Approaching the silent ending of Perceval's story as a blank opens up a different perspective and an alternate interpretive escape. If the hero's spiritual adviser is a hermit, and his experience of charity is akin to the mystical conception of the inexpressibility of God's love and the love of God, is it instead possible that Chrétien is pioneering a theme that would be dear to later authors of romance, the topos of chivalric "moniage," rather than marriage, or the knight's

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[602] Jean Flori, "La Notion de chevalerie dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes," *Romania* 114 (1996): 289-315, esp. 309-310.

[603] *Cf.* Bogdanow, "Mystical Theology," who argues, "But when Aguigeron tells him [Perceval] that 'his honour and renown would be increased' if his vanquished opponent were allowed to live and so could testify to his valour Perceval agrees with alacrity to spare both him and subsequently Clamadeu, pretending to himself that he is doing so out of goodness" (259). Aguingueron's words provide evidence for what I presented above as the dual function of Perceval's messengers, but Bogdanow's reading strips the passage of some of its complexity vis-à-vis Perceval's motivation in sparing the seneschal's life. Even before the defeated knight presents his proposal to Perceval, the latter, remembering Gornemant's instructions, decides that it is right to grant him "merci" (lines 2180-84).

[604] Payen, *Le Motif du repentir*, 400.

[605] Ibid.

[606] Ibid., 400-401.

adoption of the eremitic vocation—that, having discovered the secrets of the Grail, Perceval will now enter the religious life?[607]

In his classic work on ideal and reality in courtly romance, Erich Köhler takes a small but important step in the direction of this interpretation: "Dans le *Perceval*, c'est Dieu qui prend la place de l'amour."[608] Such a reading would, notably, go some way towards elucidating the actual thematic overlap of Chrétien's two most enigmatic romances, the *Charrette* and the *Conte du Graal*, despite the apparently divergent, Christian trappings of the latter. Are we not, Köhler leads us to wonder, dealing with two stories of devout love, advancing from one extreme to the other of a single amorous spectrum, the courtly and the Christian, *cupiditas* and *caritas*—that is, from the love and adoration of the lady (Guenièvre) to the love and worship of God? This hypothesis is made all the more seductive by the (heretofore unacknowledged) "rhyming" plots of the two romances: on the one hand, the tale of Lancelot, who is entirely Guenièvre's, "suens antiers" (line 4)—willing to suffer shame and disrepute by riding in the titular *charrette* in order to rescue the queen, and who will be designated in the aftermath of this episode variously as "charretiers" (line 684) and as he who was "charretez" (2612); and, on the other hand, the story of a young knight who, following a meteoric rise to chivalric stardom, is willing to lay down his arms for the sake of *charité*—a lady in her own right?[609]

In later medieval allegorical depictions of this virtue, *charité* would become, by virtue of its grammatical gender, both "fille" and "dame Charité," but its representation as a lady is already attested in the writings of saints Ambrose and Jerome, who call it the mother of all virtues: "[C]unctarum uirtutum mater est caritas" (118), Jerome asserts in direct connection with the portrait of charity in 1 Corinthians 13 ("Charitas patiens est" etc.).[610] In the twelfth century, this sentence, including variants ("Mater est omnium virtutum" [Jerome]; "Caritas est forma et mater virtutum" [Ambrose]), would be a veritable "hit" in the theological community, cited, glossed, and debated.[611] As R. Freyhan lucidly synthesizes,

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[607] Instances of this theme may be found in *La Mort le roi Artu* (ed. and trans. Hult [Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2009]), XXIII: 1-2 and *Mélusine*, on which example see Leclercq, "Monks and Hermits," 347.

[608] Köhler, *L'Aventure chevaleresque*, 220.

[609] Notably, perhaps, mention is made of carts at two points in the *Conte du Graal*: "Et chargier charetes et charz" (line 4081); "Tant com une charrete porte" (4835). On other, more pronounced similarities between the plots of the two romances, such as the topos of delayed naming, see Frappier, e.g., 66.

[610] Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistulae 71-120*, ed. Isidor Hilberg (Wien: Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 1996). On charity as lady, daughter, and mother in later medieval literature, see for instance Jehan Henri, *Jardin de contemplation*, ed. Gabriela Badea, in ead., *Allegories of Selfhood in Late Medieval Devotional Literature* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2018): 264-357, esp. 289, 314; Jean Gerson, *Sermon pour la conception de la vierge*, in *Six sermons français inédits de Jean Gerson. Étude doctrinale et littéraire suivie de l'édition critique et de remarques linguistiques*, ed. Louis Mourin, pref. André Combes (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946), e.g., 393. The view of charity as the mother virtue is of course consonant with what Anselm says about the indispensable nature of charity. Similarly, Gilbert of Hoyland, abbot of Swineshead Abbey in Lincolnshire between *c.*1147 and 1172, calls charity the "root" (*radix*) in his *Sermones in Canticum Salomonis* (Col. 0170A, in *PL* [accessed 02.23.21]), and Saint Bernard instead uses the expression "virtutum magistra" in reference to charity (*Parabolae* 1 bis, ed. Dom H.-M. Rochais: "Enquête sur les sermons divers et les sentences de saint Benard," *Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis* 18.3-4 [1962]: 1-183 [55]). The primacy of charity is a notion that is also present in the Bible: "Nunc autem manent, fides, spes, charitas: tria haec; maior autem horum est charitas" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

[611] Cited from *PL* via Freyhan, "Evolution," 68. On the circulation of this idea in the Middle Ages, see particularly Magdalena Bieniak's succinct and informative article "Faith and the Interconnection of the Virtues in William of Auxerre and Stephen Langton," *Archa Verbi: Yearbook for the Study of Medieval Theology* 12 (2014): 209-220. As for the debate element, Abelard for example is known to have put faith before charity in the hierarchy of virtues: Petrus Abaelardus, *Theologia Scholarium* (Col. 0984B-C), in *PL*; for further examples, see Bieniak, "Faith and Interconnection," 212-17.

> In Patristic literature, an expression first used by Cicero to designate the rank of Justitia among what later became known as the four cardinal virtues is applied to Caritas, who becomes the "mother of all the virtues."[612]

In the third book of his *sententiae* (1152), Peter Lombard writes: "Fides autem qua creditur, si cum caritate sit, virtus est, quia 'caritas, ut ait Ambrosius, mater est omnium virtutum,' quae omnes informat, sine qua nulla vera virtus est" (Lib. III, Dist. XXIII, Cap. IV).[613] One by one, other major twelfth-century theologians and monastic voices such as Simon de Tournai, Guillaume d'Auxerre, Stephen Langton, Peter Cantor, and Alain de Lille—all Chrétien's contemporaries—would trot out more or less the same "maternal" image of charity, albeit to varying effects.[614]

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[612] Freyhan, "Evolution," 68. Freyhan's observation with regard to the pictorial history of the "mother" virtue may also be of interest with regard to the discourse of ineffability examined above: "Such all-embracing functions seem to defy representation, and up to the end of the twelfth century Caritas was characterized only by an inscription. The more limited cardinal virtues had long since been provided with pictorial symbols, in part taken over from their classical predecessors, in part newly created, and of the theological virtues, Faith, at least, had found her symbol" (ibid.). Freyhan does not say what symbol Faith had found, but he is presumably referring to the dog; Judith W. Mann, "Federico Barocci's Faithful Fidos: A Study in the Efficacy of Counter-Reformation Imagery," in Laura D. Gelfand, ed., *Our Dogs, Our Selves: Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature, and Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 127-62; James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Routledge, 2018[2]), 108.

[613] Peter Lombard, *Libri IV Sententiarum*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 2 vols. (Florence: C. Aquas, 1916), II: 656.

[614] Simon Tornacensis, *Disputationes*, ed. Joseph Warichez (Louvain: "Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense," bureaux, 1932), Disp. XXXII, p. 95; Guillelmi Altissiodorensis, *Summa aurea. Liber tercius,* ed. Jean Ribaillier, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1986), I: 264, 266 (Tractatus XIV, Cap. VI, "Utrum caritas informet omnes virtutes": "Auctoritas dicit quod 'caritas est mater omnium virtutum.' Ergo caritas dat omnibus suam perfectionem; ergo omnes informat"; "Ad primum dicimus: quod caritas dicitur mater esse omnium virtutum, non est auctoritas sancti, sed Magistri in *Sententiis*, qui dicebat quod caritas nichil aliud est quam Spiritus Sanctus; et ideo non cogimur consentire tali auctoritati. Tamen caritas potest dici mater omnium virtutum propter motus. Non enim est aliqua virtus quam caritas non moveat ad suum actum, etiam fidem quandoque movet. Unde Apostolus: *Caritas omnia credit*"); Petrus Cantor, *Verbum abbreviatum*, Col.0266D, in *PL* (accessed 02.23.21; "Prima igitur mater earum et origo est fides; secunda mater et velut nutrix est charitas"); Alani de Insulis, *Theologicae Regulae,* Col.0669C, in *PL* ("[T]amen charitas prior dicitur causa, quia ipsa specialiter causa est, quare aliquod opus dicatur bonum . . . Et omne opus ideo dicitur bonum, quia finaliter fit pro Dei amore. Unde et ipsa dicitur Mater omnium virtutum, quia omnes virtutes informat; sine qua caeterae non habentur . . . Diuturnitate etiam major est, quia caeterae evacuabuntur, ut spes, et fides; charitas autem non excidet . . ."). For a transcription of the relevant text of Langton, see Bieniak, "Faith," 214. To be clear, Simon de Tournai cites Augustine ("Qui ergo habet unam virtutem, habet omnes. Unde Augustinus: *Ubi*, inquit, *caritas est, quid est quod possit deesse? Ubi autem non est, quid est quod possit prodesse?*"), rather than Jerome or Ambrose (on the "mater"). However, Augustine's question was closely associated with the maternal idea of charity. Alain, for example, compares the two points explicitly: "Rationibus sic. Caritas mater est omnium uirtutum. In quocumque mater est, scilicet caritas, et cuncte filie eius, id est uirtutes, recte fore creduntur. Unde Augustinus: *ubi est caritas, quid est quod possit deesse? Ubi autem non est, quid est quod possit prodesse?* Cur ergo non dicimus: qui habet hanc uirtutem habet omnes, cum plenitudo legis sit caritas?" (*Traité d'Alain de Lille sur les vertus*, ed. Odon Lottin, in *id.*, *Pscyhologie et morale aux XII[e] et XIII[e] siècles*, vol. 6, art. 6, p. 66 [Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1960]). Of course, the notion of charity as the mother of all virtues is not exclusive to major authors. More minor figures, such as the German Cistercian monk Gunther of Pairis, reproduce it as well: "Illud autem ignorari non debet, nullam animi qualitatem vere ac proprie virtutem nominari, nisi quam bonorum omnium mater charitas procreat et informat" (*De oratione, jejunio et eleemosyna. Libri tredecim* [Col. 0133C], in *PL*). On the other hand, the Italian abbot Ogerius of Locedio (*c.*1140/50-1214) refers to charity rather as the queen of the virtues: "[C]haritas est contemptus mundi et amor Dei: charitas, regina virtutum, ad nullius vitii pavet occursum, dotata sanguinis Christi sensu, in fronte vexillum bajulans crucis, cunctos adversarios in fugam

Chrétien, in a way, stands apart: he does not quote or translate the line in question, and one imagines that he could have done so in his prologue, an appropriate venue for this sort of maxim. He does, however, personify the virtue to some extent in lines 41-42, a passage that alludes to 1 Corinthians 13, which also asserts the primacy of the virtue of charity: Jerome, Guillaume d'Auxerre, and Alain de Lille all make the connection between the *mater* and the New Testament's description of *caritas*.[615] More importantly, as far as the trope of the *mater* is concerned, one cannot help but notice the crucial narrative role that has been accorded to Perceval's mother in the *Conte du Graal*. It is precisely on his sin against her that the narrative opens, and it is for that very same sin that Perceval will later make amends, or begin to repent, at the hermitage. To sum up, Perceval shows a lack of charity in abandoning his mother at the beginning, and it is in that error, according to the hermit, that all the "mal" (misfortunes) that subsequently befall him originate (line 6328). On the other end of his story, Perceval recognizes the error, returns to God and His love, and so exhibits *charité*. The sole reason for which Perceval has not been imprisoned or killed along the way, as the hermit explains, is that his mother had prayed for God to look after him: "Mas sa parole ot tel vertu / Que Dex por li t'a regardé, / De mort et de prison gardé" (lines 6332-34). Even as Perceval forgets God entirely, in other words, his mother maintains their connection. For Augustine, charity's status as the *sine qua non* of virtuous spiritual conduct meant that "she is the bond which connects man with God": "Caritas est nexus quo homines invicem sibi et Deo connectuntur."[616] Add to all of this the fact that Perceval's mother's two brothers represent the pinnacle of the charitable life, both of them subsisting largely off the spiritual "food" of the love of God, and we are led to ask: Could this be an allusion by Chrétien to what had evidently become a key reference point and an eminently quotable idea over the course of the twelfth century, a cultural logic of sorts cutting across so many different texts? Is this, in other words, one of the seeds that the poet alludes to sowing in the prologue (line 1), both *mater* and *materia*?[617] We will never know for sure, but the

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convertit . . ." (*Sermones XV. De sermone Domini in ultima coena ad discipulos habito*, Col. 0901C, in *PL*). Hilduin, chancellor of the University of Paris from 1178-90, uses the figure of the mother, but in reference to temperance instead of charity: "Ceterarum vero virtutum quasi mater in forma, videtur esse temperantia" (Jean Longère, *Œuvres oratoires de maîtres parisiens au XII^e siècle. Étude historique et doctrinale*, 2 vols. [Paris: Institut d'études avancées, 1975], 2: 238, n. 10). And Wolbero of Cologne, abbot of Sankt Pantaleon in Cologne before his death in 1165, "set up his commentary on the Canticle as a *quadratura charitatis* by dividing it into four books corresponding to the four cardinal virtues which flow from charity" (István Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: A Study in Moral Thought from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* [Leiden: Brill, 2011], 101), but the sentence he quotes substitutes "discretio" (discretion) for charity: "Et quia ipsa discretio mater virtutum esse dicitur, recte turri Libani qui *candidationem* sonat comparatur, quatenus per eam omnium virtutum pulchritudo custodiri intelligatur" (*Commentaria vetustissima et profundissima super Canticum Canticorum Salomonis*, Col. 1233B, in *PL*; emphasis in original); long before Wolbero, Bede had also described *discretio* in this way (*Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: An Introduction and Selection*, intr. Rowan Williams and trans. Benedicta Ward [London: Bloomsbury, 2012], III: 5, p. 91). On the meanings of *discretio*, see John Wortley, "Discretion: Greater than All the Virtues," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 51 (2011): 634-52.

[615] Cited in note 610. When Guillaume d'Auxerre cites the "Apostolus," he means Paul, and the quoted line comes from 1 Corinthians 13:7 (see note 614). Alain de Lille also marshals 1 Cor. 13, particularly verse 8, as evidence of the indispensable nature of charity; see the first passage attributed to Alain in the preceding note ("[C]haritas autem non excidet . . .").

[616] *Annotationum in Job. Liber unus*; text and translation cited from Freyhan, "Evolution," 68. For reasons that are unclear to me, the text of the *Patrologia Latina* differs slightly from Freyhan's transcription: "Nexus eorum intelliguntur, quibus et invicem sibi et Deo connectuntur ne cadant" (Col. 0878; accessed 04.09.21). The following sentence in this version, "Charitas autem nunquam cadit," is a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:8; see p. 201 above.

[617] In medieval Latin discourses on literature and related fields (e.g., ships, building, and clothes), *materia*, in the sense of either "material" or "subject matter/source" is sometimes associated with the word *mater*, e.g., by Isidore:

medieval tradition of charity *qua* mother may well offer a partial answer, at least, to the question of why it should be Perceval's mother who drives the story of his rise, fall, and repentance, while suggesting another way in which Chrétien has managed to portray charity implicitly—that is, without having much recourse to the term itself, using figure in order to respect the defining silence of the divine.[618]

Also of some importance in this connection is the author's selection of the verb "se covrir" to refer to the secrecy of charity in the prologue, which is a lexical innovation with respect to 1 Corinthians 13. Indeed, the use in medieval literature of lexemes like "covert" and "covertement" in reference to figural discourses such as allegory is well known, the most "visible" examples of this usage being found in the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*. In the *Rose*, a truth that is "coverte" is contrasted with one that is "overte" (otherwise "aperte").[619] In fact, Chrétien not only anticipates this soon-to-be classic rhyme, which was already a staple in his verse, but arguably effects a version of it through his own juxtaposition, at the rhyme, of "oevre" and "coevre" in lines 41-42.[620] Taken out of context, "oevre" is ambiguous: it could be a noun ("work") or a conjugation of the verb "ovrir," whence "overt(e)."[621] In the context of line 41, it is clearly a question of the former, but an attentive medieval reader would surely have been alive to the pun produced by the juxtaposition of *oevre* and *coevre*, a case of *adnominatio*. What is more, the term "oevre" is already laden, by dint of its use in the midst of the prologue to Chrétien's poem, with an implicit literary sense: the *oevre* as artistic production. The semantic and poetic density of these words lends credence to the sort of figurative reading of charity that I have laid out in the preceding, but it also bespeaks the multivalent structure of Chrétien's prologues, wherein the covert and the overt are often if not always already in contact with each other.

This detour through the forest of meanings in the prologue of the *Conte du Graal*—and, in particular, the notion of a family that is at once biological and religious—offers us a way back

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"For material is always necessary for the production of an object . . . It is called material (*materia*) as if the word were 'mother' (*mater*)" (*The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney et al. [Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006], XIX.xix.4, p. 382. For other examples, see Kelly, *Art*, 36.

[618] On the role of Perceval's mother in structuring her son's narrative, see also Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 51, who argues that "Family ties are an important literal link among the episodes [of the Waste Forest, the Grail Castle, and the Hermitage], but Perceval's mother is foremost." In his second monograph on the *Conte du Graal*, Pickens identifies a link between Perceval's mother and the biblical "themes" of filial piety and *peccatum matris* (e.g., *Perceval and Gawain in Dark Mirrors*, 67-68). While this reading is somewhat less relevant to my interests here than the material presented above, Pickens's general statement that "One of the extraordinary features of the *Conte del Graal*, by contrast with Chrétien's other romances, is the ways in which an abundance of biblical and liturgical references are woven into its narrative fabric" (ibid., 67) is perfectly in accordance with my sense of the narrativization, rather than simple citation, of various such references.

[619] For a discussion of this opposition, see Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "*Overt* and *Covert*: Amorous and Interpretive Strategies in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Romania* 111 (1990): 432-53. The author observes Chrétien's use of the verb "coevre" in a note (432).

[620] In *Cligès*, Soredamors makes use of the term "coverz" to refer to a discourse with a masked amatory meaning: "Si n'i a plus que de l'atendre / Et del sofrir, tant que je voie / Se jel porré mestre a la voie / Par semblanz et par moz coverz" (1034-37). See, on these lines, Hunt, "Aristotle," 113. For other examples of the rhyme, see *Cligès*, e.g., lines 2083-84 ("apert / covert"), 4271-72 ("coverz / overz"), 6309-10 ("overz / coverz," referring to the secret door to Jean's orchard), *Charrette*, e.g., 981-84 ("overte / coverte / overt / covert"), 3539-40 ("coverz / aperz"). In the *Conte du Graal*, the rhyme occurs again in lines 7157-58, the description of the Roche de Champguin, whose importance as a hub of figurative meaning I examine below.

[621] E.g., in *Le Moniage Guillaume. Chanson de geste du XII^e siècle*, ed. Nelly Andrieux-Reix (Paris: Champion, 2003), line 5846.

into my initial question concerning Perceval's potential *moniage*. One important consideration, which I have tried to hint at above, is that, by casting Perceval's primary spiritual models, the hermit and the Fisher King's father, as brothers, Chrétien is asking his readers to appreciate fraternity in the communal sense that it had in the Middle Ages and still has now: "membre d'une communauté religieuse."[622] He may be alluding to this meaning in the following two lines, where the hermit is explaining his relationship to the Fisher King's father and Perceval's mother: "Cil cui l'an en sert est mes frere, / Ma suer et soe fu ta mere" (lines 6341-42). From a purely familial or biological standpoint, "Ma suer *et soe*" could appear somewhat redundant. However obliquely, the distinction between biology and community is invoked once more when, after being interpellated by the hermit first as "biax amis" (lines 6294, 6313) and then, after Perceval reveals his identity (6315), as "frere" (6318), Perceval invites his uncle to refer to him as his "nevou" (6363). "To the Fisher King," as Pickens observes, "he is *frere*" as well (line 2955).[623] To reformulate the query, then, is it possible that Perceval will join the ranks of his two uncles and end up a new *frater*? Is his family now being reconstituted in some sense, the two uncles replacing Perceval's dead brothers (lines 435-49), the absence of the biological father ultimately calling our attention to the presence of "Dé lo soverain pere" (e.g., line 6714), and *caritas* performing the office of Perceval's deceased mother?[624]

On the contrary, Frappier, Le Rider, and Angus Kennedy, all of them echoing Payen, reject the possibility of Perceval's *moniage* out of hand.[625] As Kennedy asserts,

> . . . no suggestion is ever put forward that the hero himself should permanently take up the eremitical life. The hermit-uncle, in other words, is content to improve Perceval as a member of the world and society; he shows no desire whatsoever to make of his nephew a candidate for the austere sainthood represented by his own way of life.

Similarly, Frappier contends that "La règle morale et religieuse qui est recommandée à Perceval est simplement celle d'une chevalerie très pieuse vivant dans le siècle."

Once again, however, a work of critical embellishment of no slight significance has occurred. True, the hermit never directs Perceval explicitly to take up the eremitic life. But note that he does not make any mention of chivalry either. Surely the uncle's exhortation to come to the aid of the weak ("Se pucele aïde te quiert, / Aïde li, que mielz t'en iert, / A veve fame o orfenine," lines 6391-93) resonates to some degree with the chivalric ideology of the protection of the weak, which subsists in the modern French expression "défendre/protéger la veuve et

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[622] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 1625.
[623] Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 109.
[624] Throughout the romance, various other characters, such as the unnamed knight with whom Perceval speaks at the beginning of the narrative, Gornemant de Goort, Arthur, and Keu (as quoted by Arthur), also call Perceval "frere" or "bia(u)x frere" (e.g., lines 293, 1315, 1355, 4037, 4051). These other uses, which fill out the semantic field covered by "frere" in Old French ("compagnon d'armes," "nom qu'on donne à une personne pour laquelle on a de la tendresse" [Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 1625]), underscore Chrétien's exploration of the term's polysemy, while framing its potential importance with respect to the relationship between Perceval and his uncles. Note the contrast with Gauvain, who is only twice addressed as "frere" / "biaus doulz frere" in an extra-familial sense (lines 6713, 8533).
[625] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 156; Le Rider, *Le Chevalier dans le* Conte du Graal, 202-205; Angus Kennedy, "The Hermit's Role in French Arthurian Romance (c. 1170-1530)," *Romania* 95 (1974): 54-83, esp. 60.

l'orphelin" (to serve the less fortunate and the oppressed).[626] However, the hermit's reference to widows is also a throwback to his sister's and Perceval's mother's status as a *veve fame* and her death as a result of Perceval's original sin—the youthful impetuosity or "égoïsme" that had led him to leave his life with her in order to become a knight. Chivalry, we will furthermore recall, was at the origin of her widowhood (lines 379-459), and it is interesting to observe that Perceval's departure for the Arthurian court not only causes his mother's death but also aggravates his own state of orphanhood; "aggravates" because, in the Middle Ages, an *orfe* could be an orphan in the modern sense of the term, a child with no living parents, or someone (a child or a wife) having lost their protector, in this instance Perceval's father.[627] In the *Conte du Graal*, chivalry would therefore appear to produce more widows and orphans than it serves.[628] In addition to this, the hermit does not specify the nature of the "aïde" that Perceval is to provide to such classes, leaving eminently open the possibility of spiritual assistance or fraternal charity (decency towards one's neighbor) of the sort that *Yvain*'s hermit exhibits, rather than military protection. The term that the hermit uses to designate this form of service, "aumosne" (line 6394), could mean "charité," "bonne œuvre," or "don charitable," all rather similar.[629] It can hardly be said to betoken a specifically chivalric act or duty.

Furthermore, whether or not the hermit tells Perceval to do one thing or another may not be the most interesting question in the context of this scene, which engages once more the crucial themes of subjectivity, freedom, and choice in Chrétien's romances. Frappier examines this thematic nexus in relation to the episode of the hideous damsel, concluding that its importance, which is "sublime," lies in its demonstration of Perceval's freedom to choose: "Perceval choisit l'aventure impossible: il entreprend la quête du Graal. C'est l'instant sublime du roman, celui qui prouve la liberté du héros."[630] Likewise, Perceval *chooses* to go and see the hermit after having been brought to tears by the words of the penitents: "Ce que Percevaus oï ot / Lo fait plorer, et si li plot / Que au saint home alast parler" (lines 6241-43). When the hermit lays out his expectations for Perceval's penance, he presents this course of action as a choice: "Or me di se faire le viels" (line 6398), to which Perceval responds, "Oïl . . . molt volantiers" (6399).[631]

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[626] E.g., Flori, *L'Essor de la chevalerie: XI^e^-XII^e^ siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 1986), 2; *TLFi*, "orphelin," https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/orphelin (accessed 01.10.21).

[627] E.g., A.J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français* (Paris: Larousse, 1994[2]), 428: "État de celui ou celle qui a perdu la protection du père de famille (d'orphelin, de veuve, etc.)." The adjective "orfenin" could be used in the same the way. In the *Conte du Graal*, Gauvain's sister, who is among the "damoiseles orphenines" living with the two queens at the Roche de Champguin, offers another example, both a single-parent orphan and a *pucelle* lacking a protector (lines 7495-97, 8667-73). See also line 4611, where the hideous damsel uses this adjective. And in the fourth branch of Alexandre de Paris's *Roman d'Alexandre*, the narrative relates how Alexandre's land became "orphaned": "Du bon roi Alixandre, dont terre est orfenine" (*The Medieval French* Roman d'Alexandre. *Volume II: Version of Alexandre de Paris. Text*, ed. Edward C. Armstrong et al. [Princeton: Princeton University Press; Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1937], IV: 621).

[628] The mother's story of the death of Perceval's father and his two brothers sets the stage for the appearance of numerous other widows in the marvelous palace at the Roche de Champguin. She relates that many noble families became impoverished and were chased out of their homes following the death of Arthur's father, Uter Pandragon (Uther Pendragon). The words she uses to describe them are "Apovri et desserité / Et essillié . . . a tort" (lines 414-15). The widows at Champguin are also described as having been "deseritees a grant tort" (line 7493) since the death of their husbands, and one of their two queens is none other than Yguerne, Uther Pendragon's wife and Arthur's mother, who had the castle built after her husband was buried (lines 8642-57).

[629] Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 302.

[630] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 145.

[631] This episode could be compared to the scene in the *Queste* in which Gauvain confesses to a hermit who then presents him with the opportunity to repent: "Gauvain [Gauvain], se tu voloies lessier ta male vie [que tu as si

The depiction of repentance and charity as a choice in this episode links up with the notion of an active search and desire for God in the monastery, as per Leclercq, and in patristic literature, such as Augustine's sermon "On Love of God and Love of the World": "It isn't, you see, on wings or on foot that we come to God, but on the power of our desires" (49).[632] In the same vein, monastic writings about the process of repenting, such as the treatises of St. Mark the Monk, hold that ". . . God can never force repentance. . . . for the gift of grace to be truly received, voluntary repentance must be present."[633] But the presentation of Perceval's repentance as a voluntary course of action also works to distinguish it, in the epistemological and volitional field of Chrétien's romance, from the hero's sin, which he commits unknowingly: " . . . Frere, molt t'a neü / Uns pechiez don tu ne sez mot" (lines 6318-19), the hermit tells his nephew. If sin can transpire without knowledge or desire on the part of the sinner, repentance requires some degree of both, a notion that was already in circulation by the time of the composition of the *Conte du Graal* and that Chrétien may have experienced through Saint Bernard, as Fanni Bogdanow has suggested.[634] But he certainly would not have had to go through Bernard: Abelard's *quaestio* 145, "Quod aliquando peccamus nolentes et contra" (499-502), supplies various authoritative arguments for and against the existence of a necessary link between sin and volition.

At this point in Chrétien's romance, the hermit requests that his nephew stay with him at the hermitage for two days and share his meals, a modest regimen consisting of herbs, bread made from barley and oats, and spring water (lines 6400-403, -421-26).[635] But what, we are obliged to ask, is to stop Perceval from *choosing*, at the term of these two days, to "permanently take up the eremitical life," to quote Kennedy again? In certain other instances, knights are actively encouraged to assume the ascetic life, as with Lancelot's character in *La Mort Artu* (XXIII: 1).[636] But this is certainly not always the case. Hector enters the same hermitage as his half brother without any prompting (XXIII: 2). Shortly thereafter, Bohort, upon hearing the news of Lancelot's death, volunteers to take his place at the hermitage, and it is on this note that the romance ends (XXIII: 4-5). Importantly, such *moniage* is also set up as one possible ending for

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longuement maintenue], encor te porroies tu acorder a Deu . . . Por ce te loeroie je [en droit conseil] a fere penitance [de ce que tu as fet]" (IV: 65). As Katarzyna Dybeł remarks about this hermit, "De nouveau, il conseille, il encourage, sans imposer de conduite, mais aussi sans cacher la gravité de l'état de l'âme de Gauvain" ("Les Ermites et les reclus[es]: à propos de la figure du maître dans la *Queste del Saint Graal*, roman arthurien du XIII^{e} siècle," *Quêtes littéraires* 9 [2019]: 21-31 [23]).

[632] Saint Augustine, *Sermons*, trans. Hill (Sermon 344, 49-57).

[633] Alexis C. Torrance, *Repentance in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life c. 400-650 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97.

[634] Bogdanow, "Mystical Theology," 251-52.

[635] Here, as Bogdanow, "Mystical Theology," 268 has noticed, the text further suggests a change in Perceval's character by implicitly contrasting his willingness to remain with the hermit for two days and his earlier pledge to not spend more than one night at any location before he is able to rediscover the Grail and the bleeding lance (lines 4657-70). Along the same lines, Pickens observes that "there is something static about the ending of the Hermitage episode" (*The Welsh Knight*, 56). He also mentions a "sense of finality" in this scene, but not closure: " . . . But the nagging questions remain. What next? What about Belrepaire? What now about the Grail Castle?" (ibid.); "This could be the end of a narrative action—indeed, it is the end of Perceval in our fragment; but, potentially, there is also more . . ." (ibid., 132).

[636] To my knowledge, however, entry into the religious life is never depicted as an obligation or an imposition. Thus, in *La Mort Artu,* the archbishop does not order but "exhorts" (Hult's translation) Lancelot to become a priest: "Et li arcevesques l'avoit ja tant mené que Lanceloz avoit ordre de prouvoire . . ." (XXIII: 1).

Perceval's story through the precedents of his two uncles, the hermit and the Fisher King's father, both of whom had presumably pursued careers as knights before becoming ascetics.[637]

Given Chrétien's penchant for symbolic ornamentation in the *Conte du Graal*, the setting of Perceval's repentance on the anniversary of the Crucifixion may be all the more telling. As the penitents remind Perceval, it is forbidden to bear arms on Good Friday (lines 6184-86). Like the sacred blank, a novel use of a preexisting (secular) trope, this is, I think, a Christianization of one of the central themes of *Yvain* and the *Charrette*, in particular the act of disarming. For knights in Chrétien's romances, the process of removing one's arms often signifies in a way that is inversely commensurate with the figurative significance of armor in the ritual of knighting. In *Yvain*, Calogrenant's shame takes on a ceremonial dimension at the point when, after having been defeated by the defender of the fountain under the pine tree and had his horse confiscated, he takes off his armor (line 556). In this dramatically ironic turn, Calogrenant remains unaware of the figurative implications of his actions. His explanation is, rather, that he wishes to travel more lightly (line 557). To different effect, in the *Charrette*, Lancelot decides to disarm before crossing the Sword Bridge, a choice that the text describes as being "very strange" ("Et fet molt estrange mervoille, / Que ses piez desarme et ses mains" [lines 3096-97]), but which could be taken as a demonstration of the extent to which the hero is willing to suffer and mute his chivalric identity for the sake of the queen (see Chapter 4).[638] As for Perceval's act of 'un-knighting,' it obliquely registers the tension between chivalry and Christianity in the *Conte du Graal*, which is borne out by the five-year period directly preceding this episode in which the hero continues his exploits as a knight but completely "forgets" God (lines 6143-65), but it also adds a certain symbolic weight to the possibility that Perceval will renounce his identity as a knight after his two days at the hermitage.[639] Significant in this respect is the necessary concomitance of Perceval's disarming and his repentance, a process that also implies, in a basic sense, a change in lifestyle. In a poetically inflected moment of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*, for example, repentance is defined in terms of the death ("mors") of the soul, by which we are to understand the abandonment of one's former "mores" (habits, ways, customs): "Iam vero sicut animi quaedam mors est vitae prioris morumque relictio, quae fit paenitendo, sic etiam corporis mors est animationis pristinae resolutio" (I: 36).[640] In the *Conte du Graal*, the new "mores" are specified in terms of daily worship and service to the weak, but who is to say that

[637] Earlier in the text, and perhaps relatedly, Perceval had proposed to have his mother take the veil and spend the end of her life as a nun (lines 2900-909) in one of the religious houses, including monasteries/convents (*mostiers*, line 2680), at Beaurepaire. Interestingly, this is one of only two references to monasteries in Chrétien's corpus, the first being found towards the end of *Erec et Enide* (line 6893). As for the former status of Perceval's uncles, his mother states in her story that she descends from an illustrious line of knights, which would seem to imply that her brothers and their fathers were also knights (lines 392-96); see on this detail Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 220.

[638] As with Calogrenant's self-humiliation in *Yvain*, Lancelot's decision to disarm before crossing the Sword Bridge in the *Charrette* receives a pragmatic explanation in addition to its apparent symbolic significance: "Mialz se voloit si mahaignier / Que cheoir [d]el pont et baignier / An l'eve don ja mes n'issist" (lines 3107-109). As a result of uncovering his hands, Lancelot is also able to see the anti-magical ring on his finger, which causes the lions apparently guarding the entrance into Gorre to disappear (lines 3118-29).

[639] As noted by Pickens, "Instead of the materiality of Arthurian knighthood, the Hermitage emphasizes Christian spirituality. Perceval is urged to eschew the former and embrace the latter; implicit in this fact is the suggestion that, at least towards the end of the Holy Week, the two are incompatible" (*The Welsh Knight*, 48). Pickens goes on to point out that "Perceval . . . is made to realize a reconciliation with the world of spiritual value," which "involves rejection of his Arthurian identity (signified, in part, by the removal of his armor)" (ibid., 141), but he does not comment on whether the hero's disarming is to be understood as temporary or permanent.

[640] *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 28.

they do not admit of a broader sense in this context, where the profession of chivalry appears somehow to be bound up with the very sin for which Perceval now repents? As Pickens rightly warrants, "Perceval's 'rebirth' and regeneration at Easter communion suggest that the Hermitage may function as a pivotal episode serving to orient the hero and define his heroism."[641]

In this symbolic connection, Frappier's sense of "durée subjective" also deserves a mention.[642] With regard to the accelerated rhythm of the adventures in the first half of the surviving text, in which Perceval's prowess and courtliness come to equal those of Gauvain in a matter of approximately two weeks, Frappier has argued, "L'explication de cette apparente anomalie est à chercher dans la composition symbolique de l'œuvre: chaque épisode est une image synthétique d'une étape de l'existence humaine."[643] Consistent with this argument, though Frappier does not develop it in the context of the Good Friday episode, I would be inclined to conclude from a "synthetic" reading of Perceval's experience at the hermitage that this brief passage, in which the hero is still relatively young, was nevertheless devised in such a way as to represent the final stage in his existence: his retirement and withdrawal from the wordly affairs of Arthurian chivalry. In the end, Chrétien's silence prevents us from asserting with any kind of certainty where the hero will go and what he will do after the Good Friday episode, but the same silence, with all of its potential mystical connotations, seems to argue in favor of the poetic strategy that I have hypothesized here, which would have provided Chrétien with a means of synthesizing the seemingly antithetical issues of chivalry and charity and achieving an extremely subtle form of closure. While I have already observed the unusual length of the *Conte du Graal*, one must also acknowledge, on a final structural note, that the section that appears to end here, with its 6,438 lines, comes quite close to the "normal" length of a romance by Chrétien de Troyes (between six and seven thousand lines).[644]

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Now, in arguing that the silence of the author surrounding the end of Perceval's story may be read as a blank, yet another example of the kind of coherent meaning that can emerge in Chrétien's romances through the seams and tears in the fabric of the text, I am, it may seem, simply seconding Dragonetti's claim that it is possible to interpret the *Conte du Graal* as a complete and structurally sound work. Certainly Dragonetti's reading remains a vital foundation for thinking through the form and language of Chrétien's last romance, and I agree with him that the intervention of the hideous damsel is interpretable as a second and overarching midpoint analogous to the naming of the hero in the *Charrette*. This interpretation is supported by the

[641] Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 48.
[642] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 133.
[643] Ibid.
[644] *Cligès* counts between 6,600-6,700 verses; *Yvain* about 6,800; *Erec et Enide* approximately 6,900 lines; the *Charrette* 7,000. The corresponding endpoints in MSS BnF, fr. 12576 (*T*) and BnF, fr. 794 (*A*) are 6493 (fol. 26r) and 6292 (ed. Lecoy, 2 vols. [Paris: Honoré Champion, 1973-74], vol. 2), respectively. For MS. *T*, I cite the manuscript instead of Roach's edition of it (Geneva, Droz; Paris, Minard, 1959), simply because the latter uses the line numbers from Alfons Hilka's edition. In Busby's critical edition, which is also based primarily on MS. *T*, Perceval's section ends in line 6518. While contending that "Because the poem is incomplete . . . most of what may be said about the structural arrangement borders on the conjectural" (*The Welsh Knight*, 34), Pickens nevertheless compares the length and organization of Perceval's story in the *Conte du Graal* to those of *Yvain*: "More to the point, the Perceval section alone resembles a romance and has an episodic structure strikingly similar to *Yvain*" (ibid., 18).

situation of this passage at the heart of the surviving "fragment" ("au milieu de l'œuvre inachevée"), its role in generating the interlace structure of the second half of the romance, and, as Pickens points out, its status as a conduit between the Arthurian court and the Grail "axis" of the romance.[645] Along the same lines, Frappier has discussed the "pivotal" function of this episode:

> Cet épisode est court (144 octosyllabes), mais son importance nous paraît décisive, si l'on essaie d'entrevoir la structure générale du *Conte du Graal*. Le roman pivote à cet endroit et prend une envergure inattendue. . . . Il est très frappant que l'épisode de la Demoiselle Hideuse présente le caractère d'une crise à la suite de laquelle le rôle de Perceval s'enrichit d'un sens nouveau et s'oriente dans une direction opposée à celle où s'engagent les autres chevaliers de la Table Ronde.[646]

In reality, however, my reaction to Dragonetti's reading is somewhat mixed. Dragonetti does not apply his theory of the *Conte du Graal*'s completeness to the story of Perceval as such, which is to say as a carefully woven narrative in its own right, or what I have previously called a "semi-autonomous" narrative. Nor does he comment on the duality of the narrative arrangement in terms of the possible structural centrality of the Grail procession with respect to the hero's evolution and the tropes of silence and charity, their medieval (monastic) contexts, etc. In turn, our respective approaches to the structure of the romance produce different views of the relationship between Perceval and Gauvain. For Dragonetti, the prologue's opposition of Alexandre and Philippe, which prefigures the distinction between Christian and pagan virtue that might seem to be embodied in the narrative proper by Perceval and Gauvain, thinly veils a poetics of "ressemblance occulte" or latent parity that is ultimately evinced by the substitution of Gauvain for Perceval as the "true 'figure d'élection', the author-to-be," whose adventures can no longer be reduced to an ancillary status.[647] By contrast, my own reading of Perceval as the only Christian hero of the *Conte du Graal* ("hero" and not "knight," as we are not dealing with a precocious depiction of celestial chivalry in the manner of the *Queste*) would not tend to suggest parity, but rather a dialectical relationship between the two characters through which the core values from the prologue, the Alexandrine and the Christian, define each other mutually through juxtaposition and contrast.[648] As in *Yvain* and the *Charrette*, in other words, Gauvain serves as a

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[645] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 154-55; Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 77 (". . . It is the only occasion when the existence of the Grail Castle and kingdom is made known to the Arthurian court"). However, Dragonetti's identification of an "exact" middle is erroneous; see Hult's review of Dragonetti's book in *MLN* 96.4 (1981): 951-57 (955). An examination of all three of the "best" manuscripts that have been individually edited reveals nevertheless that the scene in which Perceval is reproached by the hideous damsel falls consistently at the approximate center of Chrétien's romance: in Méla's edition of *B*, it begins at line 4535 of 9066 (fol. 246ra in the editor's base manuscript, where the romance occupies fols. 208-83v); the corresponding line numbers in *A* and *T* are 4579 of 8960 (fol. 378rc / fols. 361-94v) and 4589 of 9207 (fol. 19ra / fols. 1-37r). For a fuller review of Dragonetti's work, see Hult.

[646] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 142. The author is referring to lines 4603-746 in Roach's edition, which correspond to lines 4535-676 in Méla.

[647] Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, 133-58 (136); Hult, Review, 954. It would seem that various other readers have taken the Gauvain of the *Conte du Graal* as a primary rather than a secondary character in the light of the treatment of his adventures in the second half of the romance (e.g., Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 34; Kelly, "Narrative Poetics: Rhetoric, Orality, and Performance," in Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, eds., *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* [Cambridge, U.K.: D. S. Brewer, 2005]: 52-63 [63]).

[648] On Gauvain's character as a "counterpoint" to Perceval, see also Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 215-16.

counterpoint, here to Perceval. Only this time, Chrétien has shaken things up with a new paradox: a secondary character becomes the primary focus throughout much of the romance's latter half, ultimately providing the poet with the means to achieve a second form of closure, without, however, fully escaping the static nature that defines Gauvain's character from beginning to end in Chrétien's *œuvre*.

From Dragonetti's "milieu" (my "second midpoint"), the actions of Gauvain attest to a specifically chivalric ethos of worldly glory that would be difficult to equate with the Christian ideals put forth in the prologue and the episode that takes place on Good Friday, or to interpret as being fully endorsed by the poet. As in *Yvain* (lines 6243-44), a certain tendency toward vanity is inscribed within Gauvain's name, which is made to rhyme with "vai[n/m]" on two occasions in the *Conte du Graal* (lines 6065-66, 6957-58).[649] In addition, Gauvain jumps quite literally at the opportunity to win " . . . lo pris . . . / De tot lo mont" and "totes les loanges" (lines 4631-32, 4641) by coming to the rescue of the damsel who is under attack on a *piece de terre* located at the foot of Mont Esclaire.[650] Since there will be no further mention of Mont Esclaire or of the similarly framed contest at the Château Orgueilleux (lines 4618-30), Frappier wonders if the hideous damsel is not, in fact, attempting to dupe Gauvain and the other knights of the Round Table into vying for accolades that do not exist.[651] Indeed, it would not be out of line with Gauvain's *modus operandi* in the *Conte du Graal* to undertake adventures without carefully considering whether or not they are worth pursuing or will redound to his credit in the end. He appears to be seduced by the potential for glory and renown in any situation. Whereas Perceval comes to be defined by his choices, Gauvain therefore is indiscriminate: he remains the butterfly that we know from *Yvain*, multiplying his commitments at every opportunity.

The sequence of adventures involving Gauvain and the *male pucele* is an illustrative example. At the head of this sequence, Gauvain encounters a seriously wounded knight and his lady (lines 6460-69). When the knight wakes up, he warns Gauvain not to venture beyond the *bone de Galvoie*, for no knight has ever done so and come back alive (lines 6523-24). Gauvain does so anyway, which prompts the knight to comment on the ferocity of Gauvain's desire for "pris": "Vos i iroiz, que molt volez / Vostre pris croistre et eslever" (lines 6542-43). On the other side of the *bone*, Gauvain encounters the *male pucele*, as well as a crowd of people cursing her in unison: ". . . Deable t'ardent, / Pucele, qui tant mal as fait! / . . . / Tant chevaliers as fait tranchier / La teste, dom il est granz dials" (6662-63, -66-67). She makes no attempt to conceal her cruelty from Gauvain, heartily agreeing with the crowd's accusations and assuring the newcomer that her company will result in his "dials," "honte," and "mescheance" (line 6628), but Gauvain still offers her his services.

It does not take Gauvain long to succumb to shame and misfortune. Having returned to the wounded knight and his lady, accompanied by the *male pucele*, Gauvain treats the knight's wounds with a plant found nearby (lines 6824-89). The knight regains his strength, at which point he recognizes Gauvain: the same Gauvain who, in an earlier encounter that is not included in this romance, had forced him to eat with the dogs for an entire month as punishment for

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[649] The same rhyme also appears in the *Charrette*: lines 5199-200.

[650] The verbal profile of Mont Esclaire at once invites and resists a "heavenly" interpretation. In Old French, *esclaire* can refer to brightness, lighting, or celandine, a plant producing yellow flowers (Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 1314), but the word *mont* ("mountain") finds a nearby homophone in the "mont" of line 4632, meaning "world." Moreover, the battle will not take place on the mountain itself, but rather on a hill that lies beneath it (line 4636). The earthly atmosphere of the battle is further suggested by the hideous damsel's reference to this location as a "piece de terre" (line 4633).

[651] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 146.

kidnapping and assaulting a damsel in Arthur's kingdom (lines 6977-7031). Only now does Gauvain recognize the knight as the rapist Greorras (line 7032), a somewhat theatrical moment of anagnorisis that injects the text with a heavy dose of retrospective irony concerning the extreme courtliness that Gauvain has extended to a traitor whom he had previously treated like a dog.[652] While Gauvain is off dealing with an insolent and hideous squire who has suddenly arrived on the scene, Greorras takes possession of Gauvain's charger, Guingalet, and mockingly invites Gauvain to mount in its stead the squire's particularly miserable-looking packhorse (lines 6898-7003).

The trappings of the topsy-turvy scene on which this episode ends are decidedly comic, even burlesque. The emaciated packhorse is a distant relative of Don Quixote's old and bony steed Rocinante, whose name derives from the Spanish *rocín* (rouncey) and *–ante* (before), as Cervantes's erudite hero explains at the beginning of the novel (3).[653] Before realizing what has transpired, Gauvain himself laughs at the sight of Greorras riding Guingalet (line 6991). Shortly thereafter, the *male pucele* also laughs, this time at Gauvain, while remarking with no small amount of delight that she only wishes he had been left with a mare, "Por ce que plus avreez honte" (line 7071). The evil damsel's seemingly prophetic knowledge of Gauvain's imminent *honte* invites a comparison between her laughter and that of the damsel who had laughed out of apparent joy at the arrival of Perceval and predicted his excellence as a knight (*supra*). Gauvain is inferior to Perceval in the spiritual order, but he is also, Chrétien seems to be suggesting, not the knight that Perceval is, or was. This difference between the two characters plays out in a figurative register as well. Whereas Perceval's act of disarming was justified by a spiritual proscription, Gauvain undergoes an involuntary form of un-knighting when he is stripped of his horse and forced to ride the squire's *roncin*, the two developments being more or less juxtaposed in the narrative.[654]

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[652] In a cute first encounter with Greorras, Gauvain wakes him up by touching his spur with the bottom of his lance, so gently that Greorras thanks him for it (lines 6502-12).

[653] *The Life and Exploits of the Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Charles Jarvis (London: Sands and Company, 1902). Pickens (*The Welsh Knight*, 40) has noted that there is a "Quixotic" element in Gauvain's character in the *Conte du Graal*.

[654] On Gauvain's appetite for "gloire mondaine," his "côté galant," and his "relatif échec" as a hero, see also Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 213-54 (quoted at 216-217). On his "deheroicization" and the way in which he gradually "divests himself of the signs of Arthurian knighthood," see especially Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 35-40; Pickens does not compare the theft of Guingalet to the disarming of Perceval on Good Friday, but rather to the latter's loss of his Welsh identity. At any rate, Gauvain's trouble with horses does not begin in the above episode. Following the tournament at Tintagel, Gauvain spends the night in a priory (line 5584-85). When he leaves, he notices a group of hinds at the edge of a forest (lines 5587-91). Gauvain begins to hunt them, ultimately taking one of them by surprise (lines 5602-605). However, his horse (Guingalet) is unshoed just as Gauvain is about to capture the hind (5608-11). This scene seems to evoke the figure of the antelope (*apt[h]alos*) in the *Physiologus* and vernacular bestiaries. In Guillaume le Clerc's *Bestiaire divin* (*c.*1210), for instance, the antelope gets caught and killed by a hunter after entangling itself in a thorny bush, or a *roncerei* (ed. Célestin Hippeau [Caen: A. Hardel, 1852], lines 243-63). The same sort of thicket appears in the *Conte du Graal*, where the deer is found in a *roncenoi* (line 5604); Méla translates as "près d'un buisson de ronces" (ed. Méla, p. 401), but Chrétien's expression is "an un roncenoi." If, however, Chrétien had the bestiary antelope in mind, he has, I think, reframed the figurative significance of the *biche* in terms of a secular-chivalric symbolism distinct from the biblical analogy that one finds in the bestiaries (e.g., *Bestiaire divin*, lines 267-32). For further intertextual echoes in this passage, see Joël Grisward, "La Mythologie du Cerf," *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Touraine* 29 (2016): 143-64, esp. 144-45, on the uncapturable *cerf* and its longevity. In brief, Chrétien's *biche* is compared to a stag (line 5606), and the anatomy of its wound (". . . li mist / Sor lo col sa lance en travers," lines 5604-605) resonates with the legend according to which Alexander the Great, to whom Gauvain is implicitly likened in the

In addition to these broad thematic divergences, the story of Gauvain is narrated at a noticeably, and notably, different pace in the latter half of the *Conte du Graal* than that of Perceval. From line 4677 to line 6142 and again from line 6439 to the ending of the text, Gauvain becomes the sole focus of the romance. Over a combined 4094 octosyllabic verses in Méla's base manuscript, MS. *B*, the narrator covers seven days in the life of Gauvain, the last of which has just begun when the text reaches its ending.[655] Inserted between these passages is the brief episode pertaining to the five-year period during which Perceval forgets God and his subsequent penance. The temporal disjuncture that is thereby introduced into the narrative, which in my experience is highly unusual for a romance that uses the interlace technique, if not a *unicum*, has two important effects.

On the one hand, it results in the compression of fully five years' worth of adventures into a mere twenty-one lines of verse (lines 6143-63), in which the narrator rapidly summarizes Perceval's many exploits as a knight-errant and his alienation from God. While abstaining from a full-fledged critique of Chrétien's style, Frappier nevertheless remarks on an apparent lack of craft in this passage: it is too short, "d'une excessive brièveté."[656] However, such acceleration is not unheard of in Chrétien's romances. In the *Charrette*, the first 5000 lines or so of the romance correspond to about ten days, whereas the construction of Lancelot's tower prison, which takes fifty-seven days, is squeezed into just over twenty verses (lines 6113-36).[657] Between the latter passage and the epilogue of the *Charrette* (lines 7098-112), an entire year passes.[658] The year of tourneying in *Yvain*, which Chrétien passes over without providing any of the details (lines 2670-80), quite obviously serves as an additional narrative model for Perceval's five years of chivalric activity. In the more immediate context of the *Conte du Graal*, Chrétien prepares the ground for his extreme (but not excessive) brevity with regard to these many *estranges aventures* (line 6153) through the narrator's strategy of consistently abridging scenes of battle involving Perceval (*supra*). This form of partial silence might be viewed in the case of the Good Friday episode as a means of disarming the narrative, as it were, in a thematic sense, or of announcing the turn in Perceval's story from a chivalric to a Christian *matiere.* At any rate, it goes to show that silence does not emerge *ex nihilo* in the *Conte du Graal*, as Frappier's thesis as to the death of the author would suggest.[659] To the contrary, it is cultivated from the beginning of Perceval's story, where his mother lives according to her own sort of rule of silence with regard to the profession of chivalry, keeping her son in the dark as to its very existence (lines 380-83), through to its ending at the hermitage, a circularity that seems to constitute an additional token of closure.

Conte du Graal, placed gold and silver collars on a number of stags which were found to be still alive more than a hundred years later.

[655] For the purposes of this calculation, I consider the messenger's trip to Orcanie, on which the text ends, as part of Gauvain's narrative. But see below for a more detailed look at the narratological dynamics of that episode.

[656] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 149.

[657] Méla provides a breakdown of the first ten days in the *Charrette* (ed. Méla, pp. 27-28).

[658] In another instance of this time squeeze, the text of the *Charrette* states that the tournament at Noauz will take place at some distant date in the future (lines 5377-79), the idea being to attract as large a crowd as possible, but it is only a short while later in the text that Lancelot arrives in Noauz on the day of the tournament (5505). On the representation of time in the *Charrette*, see also Ernst Soudek, "Structure and Time in the *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*: An Aspect of Artistic Purpose," *Romania* 93 (1972): 96-108, esp. 104-108; and Jacques-Cornélis Kooijman, "Temps réel et temps romanesque. Le Problème de la chronologie relative d'*Yvain* et de *Lancelot* de Chrétien de Troyes," *Le Moyen Âge* 83.2 (1977): 225-37.

[659] See once more Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 253. While Frappier refers here to the "brusque interruption" of the romance, he also speculates elsewhere that Chrétien was dying, and aware of it (!), as he composed the episode of the Roche de Champguin (ibid., 231).

On the other hand, the five years that now separate the stories of Gauvain and Perceval have created an apparently insurmountable asymmetry in the narrative. Yet there is nothing about this gesture that would indicate an error in the design of the romance. The narrator's overwhelmingly redundant reminders of the number of years that have passed since Perceval's last appearance in the romance is, rather, a means of signaling rhetorically the importance of this detail, as with the repeated imperatives to go to church: ".V. foiz passa avris et mais" (line 6146); "Ce sunt .V. anz *trestuit antier*" (6147; my emphasis); "Tot ensin .V. anz demora" (6150); ".V. anz" (x4 [6161-62, -64, 6290]). Planted at the seam between the "partie Gauvain" and the "partie Perceval" of the *Conte du Graal*, the passage in which these various expressions appear calls the reader's attention to a meaningful problem in the interlace structure of the romance.[660] Namely, were Gauvain's adventures to catch up with those of Perceval after line 6438, the narrator would have to devise a way of reestablishing their simultaneity by filling in the five-year gap.[661]

Granted, one could speculate that Chrétien had intended to speed up the narration at some point after the ending of the romance as it has come down to us today. However, the details of the text would tend to point in a different direction. Whereas Perceval's thread of the narrative accelerates in its final segment, Gauvain's seems to decelerate and stagnate; the two characters bear markedly different relationships to time. In the case of Perceval, five years elapse over some twenty lines of verse. To the contrary, a passage of the same length would correspond to a small fraction of a day in the world of Gauvain. Following is a breakdown, by verse numbers, of the six full days that are covered in the part of the extant romance that is devoted exclusively to Gauvain's character: 1. lines 4677-5401 (725 lines); 2. 5402-586 (185 lines); 3. 5587-6142 (556 lines);[662] 4. 6439-7407 (969 lines); 5. 7408-8179 (772 lines); 6. 8180-9015 (836 lines).

For readers of an analytical persuasion, such precise figures allow for an interesting set of operations with regard to the hypothetical scope of a *Conte du Graal* in which the realignment of the two interlaced threads would be achieved. Let us assume (conservatively) one leap year in the five-year period that we are dealing with here. If the romance ends on the seventh day of Gauvain's adventures, and if we include in this calculation the day on which Perceval meets the penitents and the hermit, which occurs after the five years in question ("Au chief de ces .V. anz…," line 6164), then there are 1,820 days (4 x 365 + 366 + 1 – 7) that remain unaccounted for in Gauvain's part. If we were now to attempt to determine the sheer amount of poetry that would be required in order for the missing days to be represented, we might use the average ratio of narrative to time in Gauvain's story based on the six data points identified above, though it behooves us to note that, if anything, the days are getting "longer," not shorter, as we approach the final scene of the romance. In any event, this average would come out to approximately 674

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[660] *Cf.* Pickens, who cites this "temporal disjointment" as evidence of "the Hermitage episode's lack of relationship with the [Gauvain] section's structural organization," specifically its "sequential arrangement" (*The Welsh Knight*, 45-46).

[661] On this aspect of interlace, see Frank Brandsma, *The Interlace Structure of the Third Part of the* Prose Lancelot (Cambridge, U.K.: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 1. For overviews of Chrétien's use of this technique, which are generally good on *Yvain* and the *Charrette* but do not stress the oddity of the *Conte du Graal* within the interlace tradition, see Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: SEDES, 1969), 63-65; Carol Chase, "Sur la théorie de l'entrelacement: ordre et désordre dans le *Lancelot en prose*," *Modern Philology* 80.3 (1983): 227-41 (229); and Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "Intertextuality," in Lacy et al., *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 2 vols., I: 224-67, esp. 250.

[662] A new day is not explicitly marked with the return to Gauvain's adventures at line 6439, but the narrator's specification that he arrives between 9 am and noon at the oak tree where he finds a wounded Greorras (line 6442) makes it quite clear that Gauvain has either spent the night somewhere since we last saw him or traveled through to the next morning.

lines per day, meaning that the section of the *conte* that comes to a halt at line 9066 would have to be stretched out by about 1,226,680 octosyllabic verses—a staggering and wildly implausible figure indeed, one that dwarfs the length of the longest verse narratives ever written in any language.[663]

If these operations, whose results must of course be taken with a grain of salt, argue in favor of the hypothesis that Chrétien never intended to maintain a chronological equilibrium between the adventures of Perceval and Gauvain, that he never intended to return to Perceval after the Good Friday episode, as I have previously suggested, they are not strictly necessary in order to grasp the gradual corrosion of the technique of interlace in the second half of the *Conte du Graal*. At several points and through various means, Chrétien underscores the length of the narrative as it pertains to Gauvain and the unusually slow rate at which it unfolds. As the king's nephew departs from court after having been sidetracked by Guinganbrésil (lines 4677-742), the narrator states, "Des aventures qu'il trova / M'orroiz conter *molt longuemant*" (lines 4744-45; my emphasis).[664] Similarly, the narrator implicitly contrasts brevity and length at the juncture between Perceval's penance and Gauvain's initial encounter with Greorras and his lady (lines 6434-38). Guinganbrésil and Greorras are among several characters who come crawling out of the romance's woodwork to accuse Gauvain of some form of treachery, or *traïson* (see also lines 7023-31, 8687-22), each of them adding heft and complexity to an already dilated and multidirectional narrative. So many different characters, episodes, and changes of setting are packed into the fourth day of Gauvain's adventures, whose 969 lines represent more than a tenth of the total volume of Chrétien's romance, that time seems to cease to pass altogether and stand still. Only once in the entire development does the narrator mention a specific hour, and even then it is somewhat vague: "entre tierce et mï[e]di (line 6442), between 9 am and noon. On the fifth day, the narrator states that Gauvain's inaugural feast at the Roche de Champguin "ne fu pas corz" (line 8163) and that the castle's inhabitants stayed up late into the night for "dances et caroles" (8170), stretching time by foregoing sleep.[665]

Also on the fourth day, the figure of the *roncin* that Gauvain is forced to ride following the theft of Guingalet becomes a sort of metalepsis with regard to the stagnation of the narrative. Because the packhorse is incapable of trotting, much less galloping, Gauvain can only advance at a walking pace, "dou pas" (line 7135). In the first half of a lengthy portrait of this "laide beste" (line 7075), Chrétien's narrator gives, among other details, the reason for its lack of mobility:

> Graisle ot le col, grosse la teste,
> Longues oreilles et pendanz,
> De viellece ot perduz les denz
> Et l'une levre de la boiche
> De .II. doiz a l'autre ne toiche.
> Les iauz ot trobles et oscurs,
> Les piez grapeus, les costez durs,

[663] Excluding Twitter's automatically generated *Longest Poem in the World* (http://www.longestpoemintheworld.com; accessed 08.10.21), these are the *Mahābhārata*, a Sanskrit epic composed of 200,000 twenty-syllable verses and the *Epic of Manus*, a Kyrgyz epic whose longest version comprises 500,000 7- to 8-syllable lines.

[664] Here the emphatic expression "molt longuemant" might be taken as a provocation to the sort of numerical analyses that I have pursued above. Also of potential relevance in this regard is the dual sense of the verb *conter*, which can mean "to recount" or "to count" in Old French.

[665] See also lines 9012-14 (on the end of the sixth day).

Toz depeciez a esperons. (lines 7076-83)

This fascinating description relates the horse's "long" features to its old age, obliquely reiterating the problematics of time and length in Gauvain's story. Its pendulous ears and gaping mouth are perhaps particularly notable in this respect. As for its two lips, which are separated by an irreducible distance of ".II. doiz," they might be read as a figure for the fragmentation of the romance into two divergent threads that are parallel in a strict sense, in that they will never meet, or "touch" each other, again—a variation on the antisymbolic logic of *Yvain*, whereby rupture occurs in the place of reunion. Along the same lines, the verb *depecier*, a recurrent image of fragmentation, both corporeal and narrative, in Chrétien's romances, reappears in line 7083, nudging readers toward a supra-literal interpretation of the *roncin*'s inertia.[666] Mutilated by the spurs of past riders, it cannot proceed any more quickly than the narration of Gauvain's strange adventures.[667] Here the inefficacy of Gauvain's spurs (lines 7133-34), which symbolize his membership in the order of *chevalerie*, creates a link between his inability to move forward in space and time and the degradation in his comportment from chivalric distinction to squirely comedy.

For Gauvain, the future is endlessly elusive. This elusiveness is furthermore displayed through the topos of postponement. On three separate occasions, a combat involving Gauvain is delayed until a point in the future—forty days after Guinganbrésil accuses Gauvain of killing his lord (lines 4717-21), a year after an unplanned second confrontation with Guinganbrésil (6076-127), and seven days after a new charge of *traïson* is brought against Gauvain, this time by Guiromelant (lines 8731-53)—that the narrator will never get around to recounting.[668] A striking pattern of repetition and incompletion thereby emerges that would support Frappier's contention that Gauvain's character in the *Conte du Graal*, his prominence in the narrative notwithstanding, remains secondary and static:

> Gauvain est un personnage statique. D'un épisode à l'autre, il ne cherche pas à se dépasser lui-même. Il tourne en rond dans un cycle d'événements dont le *sen* ne change pas. Aussi ne retrouve-t-on plus dans cette partie du roman la composition progressive et symbolique du récit consacré aux apprentissages de Perceval.[669]

Despite the circularity of his movements, Gauvain is not a round but a flat character, and his flatness is reflected in the flattening of time.[670] If he can be considered a protagonist or hero

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[666] For specific instances of corporeal/narrative rupture, see *Erec et Enide*, lines 20-22, 3411-23 and *Cligès*, lines 5907-11, 6194-96.

[667] Chrétien will also use the related verb *rompre* in association with the *roncin* in line 7251, where Gauvain's left stirrup snaps.

[668] The distinction that Dragonetti proposes between the verbs "parler" and "conter," based on the narrator's intervention in lines 6434-38, bears mentioning in this context: ". . . *parler* indiquerait une manière plus sobre de traiter une matière, là où le verbe *conter* emporte évidemment tout le poids de l'acte narratif" (*La Vie de la lettre*, 156). If we were to take Gauvain as the object of both verbs, "parler" and conter," as Dragonetti's interpretation of the pronoun "lui" would furthermore allow (ibid.), then it would not be difficult to read into these lines an announcement of the many things that the narrator will not recount *(conter*), even though he will speak (*parler*) at great length about Gauvain's character.

[669] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 216.

[670] Time might therefore be viewed as "subjective" in Gauvain's story as well; see again Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 133. In other words, Gauvain's part of the romance is probably not bereft of symbolic meaning, but rather that meaning is different from the "synthetic" representation of life in Perceval's section of the *conte*. As for "flat"

of the *Conte du Graal*, then perhaps he is a medieval precursor to the "flat protagonists" that Marta Figlerowicz catalogues in her work on the modern novel: figures defined by "personal finitude," "asymptotic" progressions, or, to quote Edward Morgan Forster's foundational study, construction "around a single idea or quality," as opposed to what Alex Woloch characterizes as Dostoevsky's vision of an "'infinitely' complex" character.[671] *Pace* Forster, however, Gauvain is "capable of surprising in a convincing way" precisely because of the apparently endless or "infinite" extent of his flatness and its implications for the structure of the narrative.

To put this yet another way, the continuing subordination or "secondariness" of Gauvain's character is articulated through the paradoxical precedence of Perceval's story, which possesses the distinctive quality of ending both before (according to the order of events as they are narrated) and after (according to the fictional chronology) that of Gauvain. The grammar of line 6436, a future construction used to designate what will come first or "before" ("Ançois avroiz assez oï"), embodies something of the attendant ambiguity of Gauvain's story between anteriority and futurity.[672] Gauvain plays the counterpoint to Perceval, but he is also much more than that: an occasion for Chrétien to experiment with notions of time, verisimilitude, and narrative form.

So incredible is Gauvain's journey through time that, by the end of the text, his character would no longer appear to exist in the fictional present. Rather, he seems to have traveled to a far-distant past. After having had his horse stolen by Greorras, Gauvain makes his way through a landscape of deserted forests before arriving at a deep river (lines 7138-45). On the other side of the river, he spots a magnificent castle that has been built onto a cliff. This is the famous Roche de Champguin (lines 7146-54).[673] The five hundred windows of the gray marble palace are filled with the faces of ladies and damsels looking out over the surrounding property (lines 7155-61). Inside the palace, Gauvain meets two queens (lines 8011-31). As he will later learn from Guiromelant, the first is Yguerne, Uther Pendragon's wife and Arthur's mother (line 8643). As far as Gauvain knows, however, the king's mother has been dead for over sixty years:

> Foi que doi Dé et sa vertu,
> Li rois Artus, si com je panz,
> N'ot mere passé a lonc tanz,
> Qu'il a bien .LX. anz passez,
> Mien escïent, [et] plus assez. (lines 8644-48)

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versus "round" characters, see Edward Morgan Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1927). For an important deepening of Forster's inquiry, see Marta Figlerowicz, *Flat Protagonists: A Theory of Novel Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[671] Figlerowicz, *Flat Protagonists*, 2; Foster, *Aspects*, 67; Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13.

[672] On this aspect of the temporality of Gauvain's adventures, see also Dragonetti, who states that "Tout le récit qui suit l'intermezzo ne serait que l'amplification d'une aventure antérieure" (*La Vie de la lettre*, 148). On Perceval as "primary," see Matilda Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the* Conte du Graal *and Its Verse Continuations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), who comments on scribes' use of the name Perceval as a "synecdoche" for the romance (10).

[673] The passage in which the castle is named is omitted from MS. *B*; the missing text, consisting of forty-eight separately numbered verses inserted between lines 8686-87 of Méla's edition, is supplied by Lecoy's edition of MS. *A*.

Guiromelant now identities the second queen as Gauvain's mother, to which Gauvain reacts with no small amount of astonishment, though he continues to conceal his identity from the other knight:

> Et si veïstes, bien lo sai,
> L'autre raïne, l'autre dame,
> La grant, la bele qui fu fame
> Lo roi Lot et mere celui
> Qui males voies taigne ancui,
> Mere Gauvain. – Gauvain, voir, sire,
> Conois je bien et bien os dire
> Qu'il n'ot mere, icil Gauvains,
> Bien a .XX. anz a tot lo mains. (lines 8658-66)

Still, Guiromelant insists on the truth of his claims: "Si est voir, sire, ele est sa mere" (line 8649, in reference to Yguerne); "Si a, sire, n'en dotez ja" (8667; yes, Gauvain does still have a mother).

As Frappier puts it with regard to this "extraordinary" adventure, "Les règles du temps sont brouillées; les vivants rencontrent des disparus qui ne sont pas tout à fait vivants."[674] I would like to stress, however, that the peculiarity of the scene should not be taken out of the broader context of the narrative. It both culminates Chrétien's temporal play in the *Conte du Graal* and serves as an ironic rejoinder to an otherwise rather cryptic sententia that Perceval had voiced during a conversation concerning the death of *his* mother and his cousin's lover: "Les morz as morz, les vis as vis!" (line 3568). The distinctive texture of this line, composed of four one-syllable words all of which are repeated, is such that it could be rearranged as a chiasmus to suit the present situation, with no syntactical changes and without even breaking with the original rhyme scheme: "Les vis as morz, les morz as vis!," a phantom text seems to whisper. Insofar as "morz" and "vis" are metrically interchangeable in Perceval's exclamation, this meaning is already implicit in Chrétien's romance. But this interpretation is further licensed by a passage intervening between the two scenes in question, in which the penitents explain the salutary effects of the death of Christ and in so doing refute on theological grounds Perceval's insistence on the separation of the living and the dead: "Molt par fu sainte icele morz / Qui sauva les vis, et les morz / Resuscita de mort a vie" (6215-17).[675] The importance of the episode at the Roche de Champguin as a moment of rupture in the space-time continuum of the fictional universe of the *Conte du Graal* and of narrative synthesis is also suggested by the various echoes between it and the discourse of the hideous damsel at the midpoint, as documented by Frappier, though, interestingly, he relegates this point to a note.[676]

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[674] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 231.

[675] In an additional instance of the interplay of life and death in the *Conte du Graal*, the narrator states that Gauvain is unsure, upon approaching a wounded Greorras (as yet unnamed), whether the knight is alive or dead: "Quant mes sire Gauvains vint la, / Si ne sot s'il fu morz ou vis" (lines 6480-81). For Hunt ("Aristotle," 108), *Yvain* is also "constructed according to a set of paradoxes incorporating such oppositions as . . . *morir-vivre*."

[676] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 243. See also, on "narrative synthesis," note 628 above (on the Roche de Champguin and Perceval's mother's inscribed narrative). Frappier's point, more specifically, concerns lines 4608-12 ("Dames en perdront lor mariz, / Terres en seront essilliees / Et puceles desconseilliees, / Qui orferines remanront, / Et maint chevalier en morront") and the passage comprising lines 7490-97 ("Et si a dames ancïenes / Qui n'ont ne mariz ne seignors, / Ainz sunt de terres et d'enors / Deseritees a grant tort / Puis que lor mari furent mort, / Et

More to my point, the enchanted palace seems to offer Chrétien the means of effectuating an additional form of narrative closure, this time with respect to Gauvain's story, that is coordinated around that second midpoint. From a structural standpoint, this scene is comparable to the second ending of the *Charrette*, the ultimate combat between Lancelot and Meleagant and the beheading of the latter. Thematically, it is not entirely dissimilar from the preliminary conclusion that Chrétien *qua* Chrétien had devised for the *Charrette*, the imprisonment of Lancelot, prior to the advent (or invention) of Godefroi de Leigni. In any event, what is at stake in this final comparison is the paradoxically determinate, or overdetermined, indeterminacy of the *Conte du Graal*, wherein ending shades into endlessness and incompleteness would not seem to preclude the variety of surplus completion designated in the epilogue of the *Charrette* in terms of the verb "parfinee" (line 7103). Jacques Derrida, one imagines, would have had a field day with Chrétien and his play with center and absence, had he taken the *Conte du Graal* as an example of the "supplementarity" characteristic of discursive structures, which is to say language writ large, as theorized in *Writing and Difference*: ". . . instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it."[677]

As the pilot of the boat that ferries Gauvain across the river to Champguin explains, the palace has long been under a spell cast by a *clerc* well versed in astronomy (lines 7462-65). As a result, any knight whose character is polluted by sins of covetousness, greed, or mendacity would die promptly upon entering the palace (lines 7469-78). The various inhabitants of the Roche de Champguin, including orphans, damsels, and widows, all await the arrival of a knight who is able to set foot in the palace and survive the trials of the perilous Liz de la Merveille (lines 7664-729). The foundational proscriptions of the Roche de Champguin loosely anticipate the closing chapters of François Rabelais's *Gargantua* (LII-LVII), in which the utopian Abbaye de Thélème is constructed, with numerous specifications inscribed on its door as to who may enter and who may not, the latter list beginning with hypocrites and bigots before becoming an exercise in rhetorical *copia*.[678] As we shall see, there is, however, a significant difference between Thélème and Champguin, which concerns the respective privileges and constraints of life inside of each structure.

As soon as Gauvain sits down on the bed, a magical system of defenses is activated: more than five hundred bolts and arrows shot by invisible archers land in Gauvain's shield and wound him in more than one place (lines 7746-66). In the next instance, a famished lion, released through a door in the palace, digs its claws into the shield as if it were made of wax (Chrétien's comparison), forcing Gauvain to his knees (lines 7767-79). Gauvain leaps up, draws his sword, and slices off the lion's head and its two front paws (lines 7782-83). Here the dialectic of linking and unlinking that we observed in the context of the lion, the serpent, and the horse in *Yvain*

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damoiseles orphenines / Et avec les does reïnes, / Qui molt a grant henor les tienent"). The connection between the two passages is oblique, at once a "joint" and a blank, as the hideous damsel predicts such a state of affairs (women forced to abandon their homes, without protectors) as the result of Perceval's silence, where the construction of the Roche de Champguin would appear to predate significantly the beginning of the action in the *Conte du Graal*. Yet the striking parallels between the two passages could be said to contribute to our sense of an overarching romance architecture, which would not necessarily be in line with Frappier's argument vis-à-vis Chrétien's death and the incompleteness of the *Conte du Graal*. At the very least, as Frappier freely concedes, such echoes should not be written off as coincidence.

[677] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 289.

[678] François Rabelais, *Gargantua*, ed. and trans. Guy Demerson (Paris: Seuil, 1996[3]). One might also think here of the various vices depicted on Déduit's wall in Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Lecoy, I: lines 129-460.

comes back to the fore.[679] The lion's paws have been removed from the rest of its body, but they remain suspended from the shield:

> Et li pié remestrent pandu
> Par les ongles a son escu
> Si que li uns parut dedanz
> Et li autres defors pandanz. (lines 7785-88)

Should other aspects of the scene strike readers as familiar, it is because we have also encountered them already. Thus, the anger and ferocity, "grant fierté" and "grant ire" (line 7775), of the lion in the *Conte du Graal* recall Yvain's lion, whose behavior in battle is described using a nearly identical lexicon, consisting of such terms as "ire" (lines 4215, 5528) "grant forche" (4215), "fierement" (4540) and "hardement" (5528). When Yvain's lion unexpectedly escapes from the chamber where it has been locked up at Pesme Aventure, a precursor to the door through which the lion is released in the *Conte du Graal*, it drags one of the demon brothers to the ground as if he were a log (lines 5630-31).[680] The marvelous bed is likewise a calque on the action of the *Charrette*, an authorial rewriting of the luxurious but perilous bed that one of Gauvain's and Lancelot's unnamed hostesses forbids them from sleeping on (lines 473-75). Lancelot decides to sleep on it anyway, and when the clock strikes midnight, a lance with a flaming pennon attached to it comes hurtling down from the ceiling above the bed, the exact point of origin left unspecified, and sets the sheets on fire (lines 503-27). Echoes like these point to the status of the *Conte du Graal* as a poetic *summa* of sorts, as well as underlining the unity of Chrétien's authorial corpus,[681] but the concentration and combination of different recycled episodes in this scene could also suggest its derivative nature and therefore contribute to the audience's impression of Gauvain's "secondariness" with regard to Chrétien's other heroes.[682] All the while, and in a characteristically provocative manner, Chrétien's narrator assures readers that we have never seen and will never see such a sight: "Tex fu li liz, qui voir en conte, / Qu'onques ne por roi ne por conte / Ne fu telx faiz ne n'iert jamais" (lines 7633-35), a follow-up to the claim in line 7617 that "Del lit nule fable ne faz."

If, however, Chrétien is replaying some of the classic scenes from his other romances in this land where the living and the dead come face to face, his sources were probably not limited to *Yvain* and the *Charrette*. In effect, I would wager that he is also making reference to a more distant literary and heroic past, that of Virgil's Aeneas by way of his Old French avatar, the hero Eneas of the *Roman d'Eneas* (*c.*1160).[683] Joseph Duggan, Busby, and Pickens have analyzed the resemblance between the doors to the palace at Champguin (lines 7602-607) and the gates of ivory and horn in the *Eneas*, all rather tentatively, and understandably so, as the second door in

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[679] See my analysis in Chapter 3 of the bifurcated horse, the severed lion's tail, and the decapitated serpent.
[680] Possibly as a means of encoding the *Yvain* intertext, Chrétien has Gauvain mention Yvain as he is conversing with Yguerne after having killed the lion (lines 8069-74).
[681] On the various ways in which Chrétien constructs his authorial corpus, see Hult, *Authorizing Fictions*.
[682] In addition to the parallels between the *Conte du Graal* and Chrétien's other romances which I identify above, Jean-Marie Fritz has detected an interesting similarity between the depiction of Perceval's silence and that of Enide in *Erec et Enide*: "*Erec*, à première vue, est une sorte d'anti-*Perceval*, puisque l'épreuve d'Enide consiste à ne pas parler et celle de Perceval à ne pas se taire. . . . Mais en fait, c'est en enfreignant l'interdit de parole qu'Enide prouve son amour à Erec, comme Perceval aurait accompli l'aventure du *graal* en brisant le silence lors du défilé merveilleux au château du Roi Pêcheur" (ed. Fritz, pp. 12-13).
[683] *Eneas*, ed. Jacques Salverda de Grave, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925-29).

Chrétien's text is made of ebony, not horn, and the symbolics of true and false dreams, *songe* and *mençonge* as per the *Eneas* (lines 3001-3002), are not evoked directly.[684] Upon closer inspection, though, Chrétien's romance is clearly giving new life to many other details from the *Eneas*, layering one over the other in a way that requires attention to both Eneas's visit to the underworld and the larger "arc" of the narrative treating the fall of Troy and the eventual founding of Rome, the new Troy—no doubt the most storied instance of destruction and rebuilding in the Western literary canon.[685]

Like the Trojans, the founders of Champguin were forced off their native lands following the death of their king (Priam/Uther Pendragon), and Perceval's mother uses the same adjective to describe the devastation of the Utherian kingdom, "Les terres furent *essilliees*" (line 419; my emphasis), that appears throughout the *Eneas* in reference to Troy (lines 571, 2278, 4675). If Champguin is yet another Troy, or a *nova Roma*, it is also distinctly Carthaginian, a parallel, we recall, that was already present in the *Aeneid*.[686] Not only is Champguin currently ruled over by two queens in search of a lord, but the elder of the two, Yguerne, shares a backstory with the Dido of the *Eneas*: after losing Sycheus, who was killed by one of her brothers, Dido fled and took with her a great treasure, "molt grant tresor" (line 389); "orphaned," that is without a husband, Yguerne repairs to Champguin with "tot son tressor" (8654). Moreover, the topography and outer architecture of Champguin are practically identical to those of Dido's Carthage. The walls of Carthage have been built into a large rock that lies beyond a river: "El coig amont devers la rive / ot une grant roche naïve; / iluec sont li mural assis" (lines 419-21). Likewise, Champguin is situated next to a deep and wide river (lines 7141-45), and the palace has been erected on a cliff: "Car sor une roiche naïve / Ot un palais si riche assis / Que toz estoit de marbre bis" (7154-56). For that matter, the stones in Carthage are also made out of marble of various colors, including gray: "Li carrel sont de marbre bis, / de blanc et d'inde et de vermoil" (*Eneas*, lines 422-23).

Probably owing to our author's agile zig-zagging between different moments in the *Eneas*, rendering more concrete Virgil's implicit comparisons of the various locales through which Aeneas passes in the *Aeneid*, scholars appear to have overlooked this and further examples of Chrétien's intertextual play, whereby he inserts the narrative of the *Conte du Graal* into a longer legendary *durée* in a way that might recall, for those familiar with Chrétien's manuscript

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[684] Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 268; Busby, *Perceval* (critical guide), 77; Pickens, *Perceval and Gawain in Dark Mirrors*, 168. Pickens's hypothesis is that Chrétien may have "misread" the *Eneas* poet's term *eborine*, "of ivory," as "of ebony." But I do not follow the logic. If this were so, would the result not have been one door made of ebony and another made of horn, not ivory? If the author had misunderstood this term, we might also expect the ebony door to be mentioned first, not second, as in Chrétien's text. I am equally unconvinced that Chrétien, a master of Old French, would have made such a basic linguistic error. Consider what Pickens says regarding the erroneous citation of Saint Paul in the prologue: "Unlike some scholars, I believe that Chrétien is too smart and too learned to misconstrue I John as a Pauline epistle" (ibid., 13); see also note 559 above. I am therefore relatively more attracted to a reading of this supposed "error" as an act of re-telling, a *clin d'œil* to indicate that while certain details have been borrowed from the *Eneas* and left intact, others have been actively distorted or simply dropped.

[685] The "influence" of the *Roman d'Eneas* has been studied extensively in the context of *Erec et Enide* and *Cligès* by the likes of Alexandre Micha, "Enéas et Cligès," in *Mélanges Ernest Hoepffner* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949): 237-43, Joseph S. Wittig, "The Aeneas-Dido Allusion in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*," *Comparative Literature* 22.3 (1970): 237-53, and Raymond Cormier, "Remarques sur le *Roman d'Eneas* et l'*Erec et Enide* de Chrétien de Troyes," *Revue des langues romanes* 82 (1976): 85-97.

[686] See for instance Elena Giusti, *Carthage in Virgil's* Aeneid*: Staging the Enemy under Augustus* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 88-147 (Ch. 2).

tradition, the scribe of manuscript BnF, fr. 1450, who would thrust the Champenois poet's entire corpus, as well as two of the continuations of the *Conte du Graal*, into the embrace of the *romans antiques* to create a book of universal history.[687] Indeed, the parallels between the *Eneas* and the *Conte du Graal* do not stop with Dido and Yguerne. In the following, I will constrain myself to a brief consideration of several other instances of textual crossover that strike me as being particularly illuminating with regard to the second ending of Chrétien's romance.

As with the Sibyl in the *Eneas*, who appears to have come from hell, "de male part" (line 2272), Gauvain's guide of a sort on the journey from Galvoie to Champguin, the *male pucele*, is characterized as being worse than Satan (line 7370).[688] Not unlike the Sibyl, whom Eneas finds in the port city of Cumae (line 2260), the *male pucele* lives on the outskirts of society, in the relatively inaccessible port of Galvoie to be precise (6571-73). Both figures are gifted with prophetic abilities. In one of the first and most remarkable lines spoken by Chrétien's *male pucele*, she claims to have read Gauvain's thoughts (line 6607), and Gauvain confirms the accuracy of her reading: "Voir vos avez dit, damoisele!" (6611). As Gabrièle Giannini has shown, the medieval tradition of the Sibyl frequently grants her character immortality, by analogy with the figure of the *fée*, and the *male pucele* will later state that she has wished to die for quite some time (line 8799 and *infra*).[689]

In the *Eneas*, the "nautoniers" Caro ferries the dead across the infernal river (lines 2505-34), and in the *Conte du Graal*, Chrétien's *notoniers* takes Greorras's dying nephew (li Orgoilleus de la Roche a l'Estroite Voie, 8558-59) into his custody both as a prisoner and as payment for Gauvain's passage across the river at Champguin (7290-357). As for Greorras himself, who is found at the entrance to Galvoie and strongly urges Gauvain not to cross the border into this other "Autre Monde," he harkens back—why not?—to the canine guard of the underworld in the *Eneas*, the chimerical three-headed dog Cerberus (lines 2561-78). Greorras, we remember, once spent a full month eating with the dogs, but there is another echo between the two "dogs" that is a little too perfect to ignore. In the *Eneas*, the narrator devotes several lines to the description of Cerberus's saliva, which causes a lethal herb, "aconita" (aconitum, line 2584), to grow: "n'an boit nus hom a mort nel traie, / senz mort n'an puet nus hom goster," the narrator specifies (2582-83). In the *Conte du Graal*, by contrast, Greorras is dying when Gauvain comes upon him and Gauvain, as we have seen, supplies him with an herb whose properties are

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[687] Natalie Vrticka's suggestively entitled article "Mort, mensonge et malentendu. Silence et parole après la mort dans le *Roman d'Énéas*, chez Chrétien de Troyes et Marie de France," in Jean-François Kosta-Théfaine, ed., *La Mort dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Villers-Cotterêts: Ressouvenances, 2013): 257-67 briefly examines silence and posthumous language use in the *Eneas, Philomena*, and *Cligès*, as well as certain texts by Marie de France, but she makes no mention of the *Conte du Graal*. On the process of insertion in BnF, fr. 1450, see Lori Walters's "Le Rôle du scribe dans l'organisation des manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes," *Romania* 106 (1985): 303-25. On some of the other sources that may have been pressed into service in the final stretch of the *Conte du Graal*, see Busby, *Perceval* (critical guide), 77. On the "eschacier" (lines 7564-95), see Frappier, *Mythe du Graal*, 241, who cites, among others, Sheila M. Flynn and her interpretation of the one-legged doorman as a figure for the devil or for Pluto, the mythological king of the underworld; Flynn, "The *Eschacier* in Chrétien's *Perceval* in the light of Medieval Art," *The Modern Language Review* 47 (1952): 52-55.

[688] The *male pucele*'s role as a guide from one world to the other is also intimated by the text's specification that she has accompanied many men from Galvoie to Champguin in the past. In lines 6732-37, relating Gauvain's recovery of the *male pucele*'s palfrey, the narrator states that the palfrey requires no assistance in crossing the bridge because it has done so many times before (lines 6730-37). On the banks of the river at Champguin, the *notoniers* tells Gauvain not to concern himself with the whereabouts of the *male pucele*, who has had many knights decapitated in this very spot (lines 7371-72).

[689] Gabrièle Giannini, "Interprétation, restitution et réécriture du texte médiéval," *Fabula* 5 (2008), digital publication, https://www.fabula.org/lht/5/giannini.html (accessed 02.22.21), §2.3, ¶32.

such that it can heal any (non-mortal) wound: its effect is not death but new life (lines 6851-69). When Eneas initially approaches Cerberus, the three-headed dog begins to bark, at which point the Sibyl utters an enchantment that puts him to sleep (lines 2587-604). On the contrary, Greorras "dort et repose" (line 6497) when Gauvain encounters him, and Gauvain insists on waking him up.

Most uncanny, perhaps, is the *clerc* who has cast a spell over the palace at Champguin, whose function closely resembles that of Minos, the judge of souls, in the underworld of the *Eneas*:

> Minos gitot anprés ses sorz
> et anqueroit la vie as morz;
> a chascune ame sortissoit
> sonc ce que deservi avoit:
> les buens anvoie es soés chans,
> les mals tramet sofrir ahans. (lines 2615-20)

But whereas Eneas's safe passage out of the world beneath is ensured by culling a golden branch on the instructions of the Sibyl (lines 2309-15), a gift to be presented to the queen of hell, and whereas Eneas observes the proceedings of Minos's "court" as an outsider, Chrétien's Gauvain is less of a tourist in the land of the dead. Conspicuously absent from this version of the story is any ticket out of Champguin: Gauvain himself is, rather, subjected to the process of judgment. This new instantiation of Iser's "minus function" would suggest that, despite Chrétien's borrowings from the legend of Eneas, he may be putting the secular Virgilian underworld to a much different use than the *Eneas* poet: no longer a stop on the way to Rome, it has become a final destination.[690] And although Gauvain will be sent to Chrétien's re-imagining of the "chans" mentioned in the *Eneas*, which are none other than the "Elisïens chans" (lines 2900-10), *Champ*guin will prove to be a place of both sweetness and suffering.

Indeed, Gauvain is delighted with his victory over the archers and the lion, but his reward is also a punishment. By overcoming the astronomer's enchantments, he has put an end to them and won the title of prince and lord of the castle (line 7865). As he looks out over the surrounding property, including game-filled forests, he looks forward to future hunting trips (lines 7927-29). But the *notoniers*, who is standing beside Gauvain, informs him that he will likely never be able to leave, a rumor that is promptly confirmed by Yguerne (lines 8248-49):

> Sire, de ce vos poez vos,
> . . . molt bien taire,
> Que j'ai oï assez retraire
> Que cil cui Dex tant ameroit
> Que l'an seignor lo clameroit
> De ceianz et droit avoé,
> Qu'il est establi et voé
> Que il jamais de ces maisons
> N'istroit, fust o torz o raisons.

[690] It will be recalled, however, that the time that Eneas spends in the underworld likewise sets the stage for narrative closure through Anchises's prophecy, which is explicitly referenced in the final lines of the romance (lines 10143-46).

Por ce ne vos covient beer
Ne a chacier ne a berser,
Que ceienz avez lo sejor,
Jamais n'en istroiz a nul jor. (lines 7930-42)[691]

As for the Thélémites, they are only limited in their actions by the bounds of their desires: "FAIS CE QUE VOUDRAS," reads the paradoxical "rule" of Thélème (275), which its residents may or may not wish to follow. In stark contrast, Gauvain has become quite literally a prisoner to his own excessive prowess. As Frappier amusingly summarizes, "Il est condamné à demeurer pour toujours le prince d'une sorte de gynécée: royauté charmante et dérisoire! Telle est l'ironie de son aventure."[692]

While scholars have been reluctant to view the prison of the Roche de Champguin in terms of a conclusion, it would be difficult to imagine a more perfectly ironic end for Gauvain than this: a forced *recreänce* or *recreantise* (a diminution in honor brought about by inactivity, and another possible form of "un-knighting"), the fate that Gauvain has feared the most all along, and often quite irrationally, in what amounts to a sort of courtly cloisters, or a more durable, Arthurian Carthage.[693] Earlier in the second half of the *Conte du Graal*, when Gauvain refuses to turn back after reaching the *bone de Galvoie*, he provides as justification his fear of being accused of "recreandise" (line 6535). Shortly thereafter, Gauvain comes across a large knight who urges him not to attempt to retrieve the *male pucele*'s palfrey, which, the knight adds, would be a sign of great pride, "grant orguol" (lines 6694-97). Gauvain refuses to back down, citing once more the prospect of being called a *recreant*: "Je seroie honiz en terre / Comme recreanz et failliz" (lines 6710-11). Likewise, in *Yvain*, Gauvain warns his friend of the dangers of idleness and dereliction (lines 2484-538), which Yvain takes to mean the state of being a "recreant" (2561), immediately after Yvain marries the lady of Landuc and acquires her former husband's landholdings. But it will also be remembered that, in that case, Gauvain had explicitly admitted his inability to follow his own advice, a bizarre hypocrisy that Chrétien was evidently not prepared to let him live down: "Mais tel conseille bien autrui, / Qu'il ne saroit conseillier lui" (lines 2533-34).

Perhaps there is some significance after all to Chrétien's decision to retain the Virgilian "gate" of ivory but not that of horn: has Gauvain not, in some sense, succumbed to a false dream, where honor turns to shame? Better yet, we note that the material used for the second door in the *Conte du Graal*, ebony, a dark wood, is lacking in the translucency that gives the gate of horn its association with the truth according to Macrobius in his fifth-century *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* (*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*), a text with which we know Chrétien was familiar as he references it in *Erec et Enide* (lines 6730-35). In glossing the meaning of the two gates of dreams in the *Aeneid*, Macrobius introduces the figure of the "veil" that obstructs the truth in the night, citing a commentator named Porphyry, Homer (*Odyssey*, XIX: 562-67), and a different passage from the *Aeneid* (II.604-606) before writing:

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[691] Perhaps the *notoniers*'s use of the verb *retraire* (line 7933), "to recount," points to the origin of this episode in a source legend of some sort. Citing Arthur Brown and Roger Sherman Loomis, Frappier has speculated with respect to the final portion of Gauvain's adventures (from the arrival of the *male pucele* onwards) that "Il est probable que Chrétien a trouvé dans sa source cette juxtaposition presque incohérente et cet emboîtement de contes divers qui ont cependant pour caractère commun de dériver de légendes de la mythologie celtique sur les fées, les héros et les séjours merveilleux de l'Autre Monde . . ." (*Le Mythe du Graal*, 232).

[692] Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 243-44. See also Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*, 135-36.

[693] On the related terms *recreänce* and *recreantise*, see Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 2839.

> [H]oc velamen cum in quiete ad verum usque aciem animae introspicientis admittit, de cornu creditur, cuius ista natura est ut tenuatum visui pervium sit; cum autem a vero hebetat ac repellit optutum, ebur putatur, cuius corpus ita natura densetum est ut ad quamvis extremitatem tenuitatis erasum nullo visu ad ulteriora tendente penetretur (1.3, 20).[694]

The distinction between the two portals therefore weakens in the *Conte du Graal*, and it is interesting to observe that the narrator does not specify which door Gauvain passes through, quite possibly because it will make no difference or, as hinted at by Méla's translation of this passage, quite simply because we no longer seem to be dealing with two separate entrances, but rather the two leaves of one and the same, opaque door.[695]

At all events, the parallels and contrasts between the respective withdrawals of Perceval and Gauvain from Arthurian society are brought into greater focus through the recurrent topoi of disarming, family reunion, and choice. As soon as Gauvain defeats the lion and sits back down on the marvelous bed, the pilot approaches him and instructs him to take off his armor: "Ostez vostre armeüre tote, / Que les merveilles do palais / Sont remeses a toz jorz mais" (lines 7796-98). Like Perceval, who comes across his uncle at the hermitage, Gauvain is reunited in the end with his mother and his grandmother and introduced to his sister (e.g., lines 8845-82); if my reading of Perceval as a religious brother is correct, then it is all the more interesting that Gauvain should "become" a brother in this passage, albeit in a purely familial sense.[696] Unlike Gauvain, Perceval is not obligated to stay with his uncle at the hermitage: it is his choice.[697] This is not to say that Gauvain has *no* choice in the matter, but rather that the decision he makes—to enter the castle and confront the marvels of the Liz de la Merveille—attests to a type of agency that is counterintuitive in that it backfires, ultimately undermining instead of ensuring his freedom. Chrétien seems to anticipate Gauvain's semi-voluntary imprisonment in the passage where the king of Escavalon offers to free Gauvain from his custody if he is willing to undertake

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[694] Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Opera*, vol. 2: *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, ed. James Willis (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994). See also William Harris Stahl's English translation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 92, n. 19-20 (on Homer and Virgil).

[695] "L'un des vantaux était d'ivoire . . . et l'autre, d'ébène" (p. 535). Taking into account Chrétien's evident interest in the story of Dido and the palimpsestic layering of different episodes of the *Eneas* in the *Conte du Graal*, one might cautiously speculate that Chrétien's "ebenus" comes from the following description of the dining table in Dido's palace, an ivory surface supported by pillars of gold and ebony: "El gauble sist le maistre dais, / tel n'ot ne amiraus ne roys, / et li piler sont d'ebenus / qui soustienent le dois dessus, / a or taillié d'ivuire blanc, / et de meïsmes sont li banc" (ed. Aimé Petit [Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1997], lines 440-45). In the *Conte du Graal*, a similarly fashioned table appears in the Grail castle: see lines 3199-212 and Pickens, *Perceval and Gawain in Dark Mirrors*, 49. According to Salverda de Grave in his first, critical edition (Halle: Niemeyer, 1891, p. 389), the description of Dido's table is preserved in three out of nine manuscripts: MSS BnF, fr. 1416 (thirteenth century), 1450 (thirteenth century), and 60 (late fourteenth century), the base manuscript for Petit's edition of the *Eneas*.

[696] In addition, Guiromelant's account of the family tragedies that led to the construction of the Roche de Champguin has much in common with the story that Perceval's mother tells him as he is preparing to depart for the Arthurian court at the beginning of the romance. On the echoing discourses of Perceval's mother and Guiromelant, see also Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Chrétien de Troyes.* Le Conte du Graal (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 74 and note 628 above.

[697] In a similar vein, Frappier notes that the predicament whereby Gauvain pledges to seek the bleeding lance for the king of Escavalon makes him a "quêteur malgré lui" (*Le Mythe du Graal*, 230), whereas Perceval chooses to pursue the Grail and the bleeding lance after the hideous damsel reproaches him for his silence.

the quest for the bleeding lance and bring it back within a year, to which Gauvain responds that he would rather die or spend seven years in prison than commit to such a strict deadline:

> Certes, je me lairoie ançois,
> Fait mes sire Gauvains, ceanz
> Morir ou languir bien set anz
> Que je ce sairement feïsse
> Ne que ma foi vos en plevisse. (lines 6100-104)

Only when the king's spokesperson revises the terms of the oath does Gauvain swear it. According to these new terms, Gauvain will do everything in his power to procure the bleeding lance within the allotted year (lines 6113-14). Should he fail to complete the mission, he will return to the king's tower prison, having fulfilled his oath (lines 6115-16).

As a further indication of the dubious nature of Gauvain's choice, Chrétien brings back one of the key motifs of *Yvain* and the *Charrette*, that of the rash boon or *don contraignant*. After explaining the many perils that lurk behind the castle's exquisite façade, the *notoniers* invites Gauvain to remain with him for another day or perhaps even longer (lines 7528-29). Ironically, Gauvain takes offense, thinking that his host must take him for a coward and a *recreant* (lines 7538-39). The pilot eventually agrees to take him to the castle on the condition that Gauvain grant him an unspecified gift (lines 7549-51). Cleverly, when he is ready to collect his gift, the *notoniers* asks Gauvain to return to where he came from instead of going into the palace. Presumably so as to assuage what is perceived by Gauvain as a threat of dishonor, the *notoniers* even provides him with a flattering story that he can tell to the court, one that has the added benefit of being true: "Q'un tel palais avez trovez / Qu'ainz si bes ne fu esgardez, / Ne vos ne autres ne savez" (lines 7681-83). For the first time in any of Chrétien's romances (as far as I am aware), however, a *don contraignant* is not granted, though the agreement has been honored nonetheless, as Gauvain has taken the unusual measure of attaching a "shame clause": "Biax ostes, vostre volanté / Ferai, *mas que onte n'i aie*" (lines 7552-53; my emphasis). The pilot repeatedly offers Gauvain a way out—and, in fact, he appears to be every bit as concerned as Gauvain with preserving the knight's honor—but Gauvain chooses not to heed his advice or take his help, reaffirming and, in the same stroke, undercutting his own "volanté."

Gauvain had received—and ignored—similar advice from the anonymous knight on the far side of the *bone de Galvoie*:

> Et neporquant dire te voil
> Que ja ne lo t'irai desfandre,
> Se tu as grant talant dou prandre.
> Mas je te lo que tu t'en ailles,
> Qu'aillors de ci se tu lo bailles,
> Trop grant desfanse i troveras. (lines 6698-703)

The knight thereby emphasizes Gauvain's freedom to choose, specifically stating that he will not prohibit Gauvain from seeking the palfrey. But he warns of the misadventures to come, should Gauvain be unwilling to leave without the horse. The term that the knight uses to describe what is in store for Gauvain, "desfanse," is, I believe, important. The translation that Méla proposes, "obstacles," is perfectly acceptable; one could, for example, think here of the magical defenses at

the Roche de Champguin. However, in Old French, the word "desfanse" may also refer to an interdiction (*cf.* mod. Fr. "défense"), which would amount to a negation of choice, and this sense is clearly called into play through the juxtaposition of "desfandre" ("to prohibit") and "desfanse" in the knight's warning. Taken together, Gauvain's verbal interactions with various "monitors" throughout the second half of the *Conte du Graal*, including Greorras, the unnamed knight who voices the above lines, the *male pucele*, and the *notoniers*, constitute an alternate version of the educational plot of the first part of the romance. Whereas Perceval is ultimately able to take stock of his sin and learn from his mistakes, Gauvain seems incapable of change.

Viewed from this angle, the prison in which Gauvain now finds himself only cements the static nature of his character.[698] Stuck in time and place as a result of his inability to distinguish reliably between *mesure* and excess, honor and shame, the *preu* and the *recreant*, good and bad counsel, Gauvain has become the unwitting architect of something along the lines of his own worst nightmare.[699] In this, Chrétien may be in dialogue with another branch of spiritual thought concerning vanity rather than charity, and in particular the notion of the perpetual blindness of the vain to the consequences of their actions, as opposed to the apparent clairvoyance of certain of the monitor characters just mentioned. In *De Vanitate mundi*, a dialogue composed by Hugh of Saint-Victor towards the end of the 1120s, the figure of the Soul remarks, "Vere fateor quod omnino ineptum est illum sapientem dicere, qui quamlibet ab alia oculum habeat apertum, suum tamen interitum aut praevidere nequeat, aut cavere detrectet" (I, Col.0710D-0711A).[700] In

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[698] Here the heroic stasis that Pickens associates with romance closure is achieved on multiple levels at once: ". . . heroes must complete the kind of structured route that Perceval has projected for his own future before proving themselves worthy of static existence, at the end of their histories, in places where they belong" (*The Welsh Knight*, 30). In the event, Gauvain appears to belong not only in but *to* Champguin.

[699] On "mesure," see the *male pucele*'s interpellation of Gauvain: "Et ele li crie: 'Mesure, / Mesure, sire! Or belement, / Que vos venez molt folement! / Ne vos covient pas si haster / Por vostre embleüre gaster. / Fox est qui por neent esploite" (lines 6594-99).

[700] Hugonis de S. Victore, *De Vanitate mundi et rerum transeuntium usu. Libri quatuor*, in *PL* (accessed 01.04.20). The theme of vanity or *vaine gloire* as it represented elsewhere in Chrétien's romances would also appear to make a comeback in this part of the narrative. Gauvain will keep the severed lion's paws and later present them as proof of his victory in the marvelous palace, which he recounts to Guiromelant (lines 8600-22). Gauvain refers to the paws as "ansaignes" (line 8622), which echoes with the expression "enseignes vraies" in *Yvain* (line 897, Ch. 3). In the passage from Matthew cited in the prologue of the *Conte du Graal*, *vaine gloire* is also related to "ypocresie," which retains some of its original meaning in Greek: "*Hypocrites* originally signified 'actors'" (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, p. 1755 [commentary on Matthew 6:5]). Likewise, Gauvain may come off as an actor in his exchange with Guiromelant in that he "acts out" his triumph; tellingly, perhaps, Guiromelant accuses Gauvain of being a "fableior" and a "juglerres" (lines 8591-92). While Gauvain is telling the truth, these various elements seem to point to the fact that there is more to his actions at Champguin than a simple desire to lift the astronomer's spell, even if his actions ostensibly never rise to the level of the sins proscribed by that *clerc*. One might go as far as to interpret the lion's two front paws as a figurative refraction of the two hands in Matthew 6:4, representing *vaine gloire* and *charité* (lines 31-44). As Bruckner, "The Poetics of Continuation in Medieval French Romance: From Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* to the *Perceval* Continuations," *French Forum* 18.2 (1993): 133-49, puts it, "The vain glory decried in the Prologue, for example, seems to creep into Gauvain's sense of satisfaction, when he is treated as the lord of the marvelous castle liberated from enchantment by his accomplishments" (143). Moreover, veracity on one level contrasts with dissimulation on another: Gauvain is an actor in the additional sense that he conceals his identity from Guiromelant until line 8695, referring to himself twice in the third person (lines 8663, -65). Also related to the figure of the actors and their hypocrisy in Matthew 6:5 is the importance of being seen in action: ". . . hypocritae, qui amant in synagogis et in angulis platearum stantes orare, ut videantur ab hominibus . . ." Since Guiromelant does not have his helmet or his shield, he proposes a delay, of a few hours or, preferably, seven days, during which time he and Gauvain would have time to assemble an audience for their combat (lines 8707-22). By Guiromelant's logic, having an audience is every bit as necessary as his missing armor; a victory over Gauvain would be meaningless without its being made known to as wide and illustrious a public as possible. A passage found in MSS *A* and *T*

response to the *notonier*'s revelation, Gauvain deplores and denies his unanticipated loss of his freedom:

> Ce saichiez bien, je ne porroie
> Jusqu'a .VII. jorz vivre ceianz
> Ne plus que jusqu'a .VII^{XX}. anz
> Por ce que je ne m'en issise
> Totes les foiz que je vosisse. (lines 7946-50)

But Gauvain also gestures in these lines toward the distinct possibility that he is there to stay for much longer than seven days, perhaps even for one hundred and forty years,[701] and the marvelous temporality of the Roche de Champguin, where time appears to be ambiguous between the eternal paradise towards which Perceval's character will progress if he is willing to repent fully—"Se ce te vient a volanté, / Ancor porras monter en pris, / S'avras henor et paradis" (lines 6382-84), as the hermit assures him—and the never-ending enlargement of a single moment in the *saeculum*.[702] In a still darker vein, one could—I think plausibly—read into Champguin a somewhat more pernicious iteration of the capital city of hell in the *Eneas*, where torments are described as "perdurable", "la sont les poines permananz, / et li travail, les peors granz; / icil torment sont pardurable" (lines 2755-57), possibly mixed in with elements of the eternal reign of Eneas and his line in Rome, prophesied by Anchises in the underworld of the *Eneas* in another example of time without end: "toz tens senz fin" (2990). Both imprisonment and accession/coronation (of Erec and Enide, Cligès and Fenice) had been explored as closing themes in Chrétien's previous romances, and we would do well to remember that the *Conte du Graal* is not, strictly speaking, the first to combine the two. In the surprise finale to *Cligès*, it is revealed that, following the reign of Cligès and Fenice, all the empresses of Constantinople are imprisoned by their paranoid and misogynistic male counterparts (lines 6683-701).

The mention of seven days in the above passage of the *Conte du Graal* and the subsequent scene where Gauvain's duel with Guiromelant is postponed (".VII. jorz," "au septoisme jor," "set jors," lines 8713-14, 8739) may be one way for Chrétien to signal to readers the care and precision with which Gauvain's adventures have been structured, while alluding to the impracticability of representing seven additional days, much less one hundred and forty years, in the life of Gauvain's character. Readers of MS. *B*, in which the *Conte du Graal* is directly preceded by the *Roman des Sept Sages de Rome* (fols. 184-205r), would have been

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would only seem to overdetermine what is implicit in *B*: ".M. tanz plus d'enor i avra / Li vainquerre que il n'avroit / Quant nus fors lui ne le savroit" (ed. Méla, p. 612; Guiromelant speaking). Ultimately, in choosing the seven-day delay and agreeing to send a message to Arthur (lines 8748-53), Gauvain appears to signify his approval of Guiromelant's argument on the epistemology of honor. Pickens has commented in more general terms on Gauvain's "public persona" in *The Welsh Knight*, 42.

[701] There is a small error in Méla's translation, which interprets the number in line 7948 as one hundred and seven years. In a later portion of this episode, Gauvain alludes once more, in a somewhat litotic fashion, to the eventuality of a lengthy "incarceration," while acknowledging that he is a prisoner: "Et sachiez bien, je ne porroie / Vivre *si grant tans* prisoniers" (lines 8254-55; my emphasis), to which the *notoniers*, addressing one of the queens, adds: "Ja no retenez malgré soen, / Qu'il en porroit de doel morir" (8258-59). There is undoubtedly a part of irony in these statements on life and death, made in a place where the distinction is hard to keep track of.

[702] In his commentary on Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, composed prior to the *Conte du Graal*, Bernard Silvester similarly interprets the "night" (*nocte*) of the underworld as "temporali vita," as opposed to "day" (*dies*), which represents "eterna vita"; *Commentum quod dicitur Bernardi Silvestris super sex libros Eneidos Virgilii*, ed. Julianus Jones and Elizabetha Jones (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 68.

sensitive to the potential structural significance of the number seven, given that the *Sept sages* is, as its title suggests, a "heptapartite" narrative, centering around a seven-day period of silence (for the emperor's son) and storytelling (by the wise men and the empress).[703] Even in the absence of this framework, however, the emphasis that Gauvain and Guiromelant place on the figure of a seven-day delay is hard to miss. In unknowing anticipation of his conversation with Guiromelant (in which, as I have said, he reveals that Gauvain's sister and mother are present at Champguin), Gauvain tells one of the queens of the castle that he would prefer to conceal his name for the time being and in so doing repeats the number seven:

> Mais un doin vos demant et ruis,
> Se vos plaist et vos commandez,
> Que vos mon non ne demandez
> Devant .VII. jorz, si ne vos griet. (lines 8266-69)

Following this exchange, Gauvain is allowed to exit the palace for a day in order to speak with the *male pucele*, whom he sees through a window at Champguin, but only if he agrees to come back on the same day (lines 8260-65). When he stops to talk to the *male pucele*, whose only slightly less abstract proper name, L'Orgueilleuse de Logres (*Orgoillouse de Norgres*, lines 8550-51), is now revealed, she tells the story of how she came to be so cruel and arrogant, which happens to involve Gauvain's new adversary, Guiromelant. As the story goes, Guiromelant was at one time in love with the *male pucele*, but she loved another knight and also "hated" Guiromelant (lines 8784-87). Guiromelant would then kill her lover (lines 8788-90), at which point she would begin to treat all men with the same amount of contempt in hopes, she specifies, of inciting anger and violence:

> Despuis ai esté si musarde
> C'onques ne me prenoie garde
> Cui j'alasse contralïant,
> Ainz lo faisoie a escïant,
> Por ce que trover en volsisse
> Un si ireus que jou feïsse
> A moi irier et corrocier
> Por moi trestote *depecier*,
> Que pieç'a volsisse estre ocise." (lines 8791-99; my emphasis)

[703] Given the apparently crucial importance of the numbers five and seven for the structure of Chrétien's romance (the five years of errantry preceding Perceval's spiritual renewal and the seven days of Gauvain's adventures, both discussed at length above) and the hideous damsel's prophecy concerning the ghastly effects of Perceval's silence (lines 4608-12), it would be interesting to further reflect on a possible engagement on Chrétien's part with the highly influential apocalyptic thought of the twelfth century, such as that of the monastic prophet Joachim de Fiore. While the relative imprecision with which Joachim's works have been dated makes it difficult to say whether Chrétien was aware of Joachimism (Köhler, *L'Idéal chevaleresque*, 261-62), it is worth observing that Joachim's model of the three states of history, the second associated with the number five and the third with seven, overlaps with the numerology of Chrétien's romance; see, for instance, Bernard McGuinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 128. There may be another loose parallel between Chrétien's romance and Joachim's vision of the world's end insofar as the latter also prophesied the advent of an order of hermits during the third *status* (ibid., 136-27).

On the face of it, the story that L'Orgueilleuse recounts is meant to elicit Gauvain's understanding and forgiveness—his "merci" (line 8777). As such, it is the mirror image of the misogynistic inscribed narrative told by a similarly named figure from the first half of the romance, L'Orgueilleux de la Lande, as he prepares to battle Perceval (lines 3775-832).[704] At the same time, these verses, among the last penned by Chrétien, offer a subtle apology of the romancer's narrative art as I have theorized it. Clueing us in on this overlay of poetic and metapoetic meanings is the literary and philosophical flair of L'Orgueilleuse's rhetoric, such as the interlocking images of totality and fragmentation in the expression "trestote depecier"; the pun connecting "depecier" (to hack to pieces) to "pieç'a" (for a long time) and thus refocusing our attention on the relationship between time and form in the *Conte du Graal*; and the counterintuitive, even dialectical, strategy whereby she counters one man's violence by attempting to bring out the most violent tendencies in all the knights whom she subsequently meets. Most importantly, perhaps, the fiercely intentional character of her behavior, communicated through the repeated verb "volsisse" and the "a escïant" of line 8794, powerfully reproduces the central notion in Chrétien's literary imagination of a form of damage, most often associated with the terms "depecier" and "(cor)rompre," that is not erroneous (unintended) but desired, and desirable—a nuance introduced in *Erec et Enide*, as we have seen.[705]

Gauvain's temporary liberation from Champguin also finds a parallel in Chrétien's prior literary activity. Specifically, this development is clearly modeled on the similar scene in the *Charrette* in which Lancelot asks the seneschal's wife for permission to leave his prison to participate in the tournament at Noauz (lines 5446-58).[706] It is upon Lancelot's return that Meleagant has the tower built in which the hero is immured (lines 6108-19). In the lines leading up to Lancelot's request for a temporary release, the seneschal's wife notices his sadness and inappetence:

> Sire, por Deu et por vostre ame,
> Voir me dites, fet li la dame,
> Por coi vos estes si changiez.
> Vos ne bevez ne ne mangiez
> Ne ne vos voi joer ne rire. (lines 5439-43)

In the *Conte du Graal*, just after the *notoniers* tells Gauvain that he has been effectively imprisoned, Gauvain's sister Clariant notices a change in his tone and attitude, "Et cele vit qu'il a muee / La parole et la contenance" (lines 7962-63), and Gauvain refuses to eat:

> Bele, je n'ai de mangier cure,

[704] In his running titles, Méla refers to this scene as "le repentir de l'Orgueilleuse de Logres," which is potentially significant because of the apparent parallel between her (secular/courtly) repentance and Perceval's penance, both scenes beginning with variations on the same expression, "merci crier" (lines 6310-12; 8778).

[705] The imagery of willful fragmentation also figures in Gauvain's initial encounter with the *male pucele*, during which she affirms that she would rather have her skin and flesh butchered all the way down to the bone than have it be discovered that Gauvain had touched her: "Il me seroit trop mescheü / S'il estoit conté ne seü / C'a ma char eüsses toichié, / Que j'en voldroie avoir tranchié / D'iluec endroit, bien dire l'os, / Lo cuir et la char jusqu'as os" (lines 6757-62).

[706] Perhaps there is a pun in these passages on the legal sense of *recreänce*, which could refer to a "mise en liberté sous caution" (Matsumura, *Dictionnaire*, 2839; Philippe de Beaumanoir, *The* Coutumes de Beauvaisis, trans. F.R.P. Akehurst [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015], 668 [p. 242]).

Li miens cuers ait male aventure
Qant mangerai ne n'avrai joie
Tant que je tes noveles oie
Don je me puisse resjoïr,
Que grant mestier ai de l'oïr. (lines 7973-78)[707]

The difference between the two characters, or a part of it, is that Lancelot will put on a brilliant performance, even when he is performing at his worst, whereas Gauvain's confrontation with Guiromelant will be delayed, and it is unclear whether he will ever be able to set foot outside the palace again.[708]

Indeed, the closing lines of the romance do not bode particularly well for Gauvain or his eventual deliverance. Having returned to the palace after his day out, he handpicks a messenger to broadcast the news of his upcoming duel with Guiromelant at the court of King Arthur (lines 8918-21).[709] Gauvain swears the *vaslez* to secrecy so as, it would seem, to keep his new subjects uninformed (lines 8925-31), and the messenger replies that he would rather have his tongue ripped out of his mouth than let slip his lord's secret (8932-36). Such secrecy vaguely recalls Perceval's sin, whereby *his* tongue was cut out, "Pechiez la laingue te traincha" (line 6335), as well as the poetics of *charité* in the prologue (line 34),[710] but it also anticipates the silence to

[707] The "tornele" (line 8203) from which Gauvain looks out over the surrounding lands and sees L'Orgueilleuse de Logres and Guiromelant, which is also where Gauvain is told that he will never be allowed to leave "his" palace ("vostre palais," line 8247), harks back to the tower in which Lancelot is imprisoned in the *Charrette*.

[708] Their difference is also brought out through two different variations on the theme of anonymity. As I argued in the previous chapter, Lancelot's highly deliberate anonymity at the tournament at Noauz betokens a certain renunciation of chivalric reputation. In the case of Gauvain, the knight's anonymity initially seems to stem from a failure of recognition of the sort that we observed in the context of Greorras, yet it does not prevent his reputation for treacherous action from catching up with him (lines 8661-62, -73-81, etc.). Even then, Gauvain does not reveal his identity, waiting for Guiromelant to ask for his namely directly, while somewhat comically making a case for why his interlocutor should consider not hating but serving the Gauvain of whom he speaks (lines 8682-86). This is consistent with Gauvain's statement in lines 5549-53, that he will not disclose his identity until asked, but in this part of the text he appears particularly reluctant to give his name, specifically requesting that Yguerne not ask for it (lines 8266-69). With regard to naming, there may therefore be an additional contrast between Perceval, who is at first anonymous, and Gauvain, who goes from being named to a state of partial anonymity. See also note 700 above on Gauvain's anonymity.

[709] As Arthur's court will be reunited on the occasion of Pentecost, which falls fifty days after Easter, inclusive of Easter, and thus on a Sunday, it is distinctly possible that Chrétien is indicating, when Guiromelant says that Orcanie is less than a two-day ride from Champguin (line 8743), that Gauvain's story, like that of Perceval, ends on a Friday. Depending on our interpretation of the messenger's "ETA," "N'il n'i a mas que .II. jornees" (Guiromelant's precise words in line 8743), and the exact hour at which the messenger departs, which is a detail that is not provided, this could mean either that Gauvain arrives in Champguin on a Friday or that the second day he spends there (the last full day of his adventures to be related) is a Friday. Given the parallel with Perceval's story and the fact that the morning after Gauvain's conversation with Guiromelant (lines 9015-20) is juxtaposed with the messenger's arrival in Orcanie (9021-24), the first hypothesis may appear slightly more compelling.

[710] The word "charité" also resurfaces in line 9043, where the crowd in Orcanie praises Gauvain's generosity, referring to him as ". . . celui . . . / Qui por Dé toz nos revestoit / Et dun toz li biens nos venoit / Par aumone et par charité" (lines 9040-43); as Busby points out in the critical apparatus of his edition, four manuscripts have "amor" in the place of "aumone" (ed. Busby, p. 393). While I will admit to having been somewhat puzzled by the use of "charité" in this context, where it seems to refer to Gauvain, I also believe that such might be the desired effect of the author. Inasmuch as the reader can only base their judgment of Gauvain's character on the details of what is recounted, we are in a sense invited to carefully vet the crowd's words against the depiction of Gauvain in preceding passages, which do relatively more to evince an obsessive and ultimately self-defeating quest for glory, motivated perhaps, on some level, by a sincere desire to be of courtly-chivalric service, but difficult to read in terms of a

come. As is well known, the messenger will not have time to deliver his message before Chrétien stops writing.[711] He does, however, make it to Arthur's court, where his presence is immediately linked to Gauvain's absence by those who have gathered around the king.[712] Has he brought news of the king's nephew's death?, they wonder out loud. Assuming that this is the case, the city begins to mourn Gauvain's loss: "Ensin par tote la cité / Mon seignor Gauvain regretoient / Les povres genz qui molt l'amoient" (lines 9044-46). As the messenger approaches the king, Arthur in turn becomes somber and pensive, "Qant il vit sa grant baronie / Et de son nevo n'i vit mie" (lines 9053-54), subsequently fainting from distress (9055). Strictly speaking, Arthur and his *baronie* have misinterpreted the significance of the *vaslez*'s arrival. Nevertheless, their misinterpretation brushes up against the truth, thus inscribing the possibility that Gauvain, who is currently stuck living among the dead at Champguin, has taken leave of the court never to return again: that he has perished in both a figurative (professional) sense and a quasi-literal one.

We find at least one other potential sign of closure in this final stretch of the action, which is the unmarked introduction of a new interlace thread within an already multiple narrative in lines 9021-24, pertaining to Gauvain's messenger:

> Et li vaslez a tant herré
> Qu'il est venuz a la cité
> D'Orcanie ou li rois tenoit
> Cort tel cum au jor avenoit.

When I say "unmarked," I am referring more precisely to the absence of the sort of formulaic transition that Chrétien had previously used to signal a change in perspective and narrative geography: the separation of characters in space and, to a certain extent, time that produces any

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wholehearted devotion to God. Praise in Chrétien's romances typically raises questions about truth and authenticity in language (e.g., in the prologue to the *Charrette* and in *Yvain*), and the present passage may be no exception, in other words. As Dragonetti furthermore observes, the text is ultimately designating an absence rather than a presence of "charité," attendant on the loss of the one (*celui*) who had previously provided clothes etc. for the mourners (*La Vie de la lettre*, 249). Building on his argument about the indeterminacy of the "lui" of line 6438, Dragonetti goes as far as to suggest that the "celui" of line 9040 may not be a reference to Gauvain: "Car, il faut le souligner encore, la foule ne précise pas le nom de celui qui devrait la soutenir 'par amour et par charité'" (ibid., 248). In the light of the importance of 1 Corinthians 13 for the *Conte du Graal*, a simpler explanation is also possible, one that would complement my sense of the reader's potential skepticism. In the third verse of this chapter, a clear hierarchy is established between monetary/fraternal charity and the love of God: "Et si distribuero in cibos pauperum omnes facultates meas, et si tradidero corpus meum ita ut ardeam, charitatem autem non habuero, nihil mihi prodest." At all events—and this is a point that I have already hinted at above—the reappearance of the vocabulary of charity here, at the very end of the surviving text, is suggestive of this scene's incorporation into the larger narrative sweep of the *Conte du Graal*.

[711] For an alternate reading of the messenger and his message, see Dragonetti (*La Vie de la lettre*, 247-62), who compares Chrétien to Gauvain and L'Orgueilleux. However, he has apparently misread certain important details of the final scene of the work, claiming that the message will be "présentée de telle manière que personne n'entende la nouvelle" (ibid., 247). In fact, the message will not be presented at all. Dragonetti also compares Gauvain's act of sending a message to Arthur, here understood in parallel with Philippe d'Alsace as "donateur de fictions," to Chrétien's emancipation from the count's commission (ibid.), where I find it difficult to read the ending of the text in terms of any sort of freedom for Gauvain.

[712] The Arthurian court is not an unusual concluding venue in Chrétien's romances. In *Erec et Enide*, Erec is crowned by Arthur in Nantes; in the *Chevalier de la Charrette*, Lancelot's duel with Meleagant takes place at Arthur's court. Here Arthur's court is held in Orcanie, a city whose name is rather similar to that of the city that Guiromelant claims is "his," Orcaneles (lines 8533-38). In the "hellish" context of the end of the poem, such place names may evoke a third term for readers of Latin: "Orcus," a name for the underworld, death, and Pluto.

structure of *entrelacement*. Yet it remains the case that we have left Gauvain's character to follow the movements of the *vaslez* entrusted with his message. And the way in which the narrator recounts the messenger's journey from Champguin to Orcanie is redolent of the peri-interlace rhetoric employed earlier in the romance, such as with the resumption of Gauvain's adventures in line 6439: "Mes sire Gauvains *tant erra* . . ." (my emphasis). What I find so remarkable about this development, within the broader framework of the latter half of the *Conte du Graal*, is that it is an instance of interlace that proves wholly lacking in any kind of assurance from the narrator that he will at some point or another come back to the interrupted story of Gauvain. Readers are provided with nothing of the sort, and this is, I think, a crucial point with regard to what I have previously designated as a "corrosion" in the device of interlace. From the highly ambiguous suggestion, in lines 6434-38, that the *contes* will speak at length about Gauvain before we hear anything else told about Perceval (about "him," to be precise), we arrive at a more paratactic juncture/disjuncture, where the only punctuation is silence. Perhaps this time, the text murmurs through its muteness, we will have much longer still to wait.

In his final breath as a romancer, Chrétien has grounded the reader's frame of interpretation in the realm of absence and silence: that of the messenger, of dame Lore, whose precise answer to Guenièvre's question (line 9066) will forever remain a mystery (a perfect inversion of the hero's sin), and—inevitably—his narrator's and his own.[713] Such *taciturnitas* may frustrate and perplex, but it also emerges here as the emblem of the hermeneutic freedoms that are implied by a specific type of indeterminacy. The *Conte du Graal* is perhaps Chrétien's most profoundly dialectical work. Its deep ambiguities make meaning a moving target, the function of possibility and probability (improbability?) rather than finitude.[714] Some moments appear dogmatically Christian, others decidedly secular or somewhere in between.[715] At certain points, time flies by, elsewhere it reverses course. The text is long and full of gaps. By my reckoning, the romance may be read as a fully executed work, but only once one is willing to admit that it is held together almost entirely by blanks. Cling too tightly to the ideal of a single message, and we risk ending up in an enclosure of our own design.

[713] The interpretation of silence is furthermore staged within the text at the point when Yguerne sees Gauvain conversing with Clariant and remarks to their mother: "Conseillié a a li grant piece, / Ne sai de quoi, mas molt me siet" (lines 8890-91).

[714] On this point, the reader is also referred to Frappier, *Le Mythe du Graal*, 70 and Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre*, e.g., 10 (on the "indéchiffrable").

[715] For further examples of Christian-secular "crossover," see Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular against the Sacred* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013). While Newman's first and second chapters treat the "[fusion] of Christian and secular elements" (x) in such Arthurian romances as *Yvain* and the *Charrette*, the author does not discuss the *Conte du Graal* in detail or explain why it has been excluded from the analysis.

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