



Gendered Emotives in Medieval Literature: Marie de France's Grasp of the Tristan Corpus

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Abstract:

Writing one's name on a hazel branch in a manner that would be readable to the happy few – namely the beloved and her accomplices – while remaining invisible to all of the entourage of a medieval king – is a complex gesture, implying the alphabet of signs and the language of emotions.

Tristan l'Amerus (Tristan the lover), the hero of Marie de France's *Lai du Chèvrefeuille*, seems to master both arts. The "poetics of memory" (Whalen 2008) and the "voice of pleasure" (Callahan 2001) point to what William M. Reddy would call an "emotive" (2001: 105-7): in declining his identity, the knight seeks to move the queen deeply enough to make her invest the inscribed object with an interpersonal, unique significance leading to a passionate tryst in the woods, meant to write a page of unparalleled romantic history.

It is the masculine inscription of "Tristesse" (sadness) through wood carving with a dagger, but also the suggestion of a symbiosis with the feminine, as embodied by the honeysuckle vine, that create two kinds of sap (the signifier & the signified) running through the vegetal bodies drawn away from the biosphere of love, only to materialize and transcend the imminence of an intimately desirable death.

Tristan's identity is hence "rooted" in his first name, but also in its violent, unnatural encoding in the syntax of wood fibers. The emotive agency of the lover's calligraphy invites Marie's readers to a medieval "navigation of feeling", sensitive to the conjugated pragmatics of passing and immortalization: a personalized version of the ancient "carpe diem" and "memento mori" is thus simultaneously provided.

Keywords: Tristan, gendered identity, medieval narrative, emotive semiology.

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A constant presence in courtly culture and civilization, *Tristan l'Amerus* is a sex symbol whose emblematic figure as a martyr of love has dominated the beginnings of French romance, inspiring profuse adaptations and incisive replicas in most European languages¹. Adjusted to the horizon of expectations of the Breton matter² via the introduction of King Arthur's court as a legitimating order, the mythical hero of Cornwall spends more than four centuries vying with Lancelot and Galaad for the title of the world's best knight.

However, in the earliest romances of the Tristanian matter, the Philter enraptures the hero to the fullest: facing the danger of losing his life and reputation in the challenging experience of irresistible love, he leads a savage's life in the Morois forest. Known as a hunter, as a "trickster"³ and as an escaped convict, the exile embodies the power of "fol' amor" in the eyes of his (fictional) contemporaries⁴; thus, a passionate form of admiration is the immediate emotion he inspires to the ordinary people who happen to cross his path in Béroul's and Thomas of Britain's romances, while envy is gradually replaced by vengeance and greed in the hearts of his rivals to the throne. As for literary audiences, they are invited to identify themselves with the unfailing, fallen champion, and to achieve a paradoxical kind of "confort" by contemplating the final curtain of such a plot: a romantic deathbed.

Tristan's puzzling way of being-in-the-world, both as a leper of love and as a dragon-killing knight – a condition that could be designated as "the Tristan complex", in which the sense of visible excellence fuses with an occult strain of culpability – has inspired many medieval authors to take a stance on his *art de vivre*, either in a polemic or in an emulatory way. Along the ages and languages of European literature, the victor of Cornwall has been perceived as a strong, enduring "emotor"⁵, together with Arthur and Gauvain, to the point of overshadowing Christ's own persona, as Peter of Blois remarks most poignantly, by reproving his contemporaries' sentimental horizon of expectations:

There is no merit in a pious feeling if it does not spring from love for Christ. In tragedies, poems and songs, many characters are wise and glorious, lovable and admirable in every way. Jongleurs show us the tribulations these characters have been through, the cruel wrongs they

¹ This wide diffusion was mainly achieved via the German and Norse translations and adaptations of the "courtly version" of Thomas, in which the hero's own reputation is built on the steadiness and reliability of his love for Ysolt (see Thomas, *Tristan et Yseut*, ed. Christiane Marchello-Nizia, in *Tristan et Yseut. Les Premières versions européennes*, dir. Christiane Marchello-Nizia 1995: v. 2353).

² The twelfth-century literature witnesses the influent fusion of the Tristanian and Arthurian matters, in accord with the holistic paradigm of the emergent genre of romance. Thomas's allusion to Tristan's victory over the beard-collecting giant – who happens to be the nephew of Arthur's arch-enemy – and Béroul's narrative staging of Ysolt's judgment, where Arthur becomes her defender against King Mark's baronage, are particularly relevant in this respect. See Thomas, *Tristan et Yseut*, ed. cit. : vv. 867-982, pp. 148-150 and Béroul, *Tristan et Yseut*, ed. Daniel Poirion, in *Tristan et Yseut. Les Premières versions européennes, op. cit.* : vv. 3283-4265, pp. 90-116.

³ See Blakeslee 1989: chap. « Tristan's Social Identities », « Tristan's Disguises » and « Tristan the Trickster », pp. 13-127.

⁴ It is in Béroul's romance that the omnipresent vision of "fol' amor" (crazy love, folly) is voiced by challenging characters such as King Mark, the dwarf and the barons (v. 3042), who typically attribute it to either lover (vv. 20, 177, 301, 362, 2007, 2013; 661), but also by Ysolt (vv. 496, 2323, 2718) and Tristan (vv. 801-802, 1655) themselves, who generally refute it quite skillfully, and by Ogrin, who adopts a severe, yet pragmatic, religious stance (vv. 2297, 2344). In his turn, King Arthur uses explicit phrases concerning the offence perpetrated on his Irish protégée (vv. 4155, 4163-4166, 4193-4194). Occasionally, the narrator himself embraces a depreciative vision of Tristan's unrestrained, amorous desire (v. 696). In Thomas's version, this innuendo galvanizes Brangien's speech (vv. 1458, 1693, 1789, 1800-1802, 1864, 2103) and Ysolt's vigorous defense (v. 1639, 1736, 1748).

⁵ "Emotors induce emotions without going through the appraisal stage. They plug straight into the emotion brain. They acquire their emotive capacity by associative learning [...], but we experience them as having this capacity inherent in them." (Tantam 2002: 55).

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have undergone, as in the fables about Arthur, Gauvain and Tristan, which, when they are listened to, move the audience to the point of provoking compassion and even tears. You who are moved to compassion by a fable's recitation, if you hear something about God's love and if this moves you to tears as well, how can you say that this comes from your love for God? You feel for God; but you also feel for Arthur. (Peter of Blois, éd. 1904, 1088 C-1089 A).

In terms of emotional response mediated by oral diffusion, Tristan enjoys the charisma of an antagonistic kind of *auctoritas* – that of an imaginary hero capable of breeding a passionate sense of compassion. He reaches the public's emotional brain with a sense of immediacy that eludes any ethical appraisal; thus, no particular “merit” nurtures this outpouring of empathy – just sheer, unrestrained emotion.

Marie in *Tristania*: in Search for an Emotionology of Love

Among the first European texts belonging to this (in)famous corpus, it is only the episodic *Lai du Chevrefoil* (*Lay of the Honeysuckle*) by Marie de France that presents the legend's storyline and the couple's stylized ensample as the fruit of Tristan's own creativity.

Indeed, the narratrix attributes to her fictional character both the conception of the lyrics and the composition of the music of the *Lay*, while providing an explicitly mnemonic motivation for this act of communication: “Si cum la reïne l'ot dit, / Tristram, ki bien saveit harper, / En aveit fet un nuvel lai.” (Demaules 1995: vv. 110-113, 215-216)⁶ [As the queen had told him, Tristram, who knew well how to harp, made of this a new lay.⁷]. The poem's paternity is a matter of maternal conception: if Marie refers to Tristan, it is Ysolt that Tristan ultimately refers to, in forwarding their singable sign.

It is this allegedly autobiographical, synergic narrative that the French poetess chooses to endorse, under the bilingual title indicated as her own contribution (vv. 114-115, 216). In the chain of transmission from the legendary masculine voice to her own textual montage, Marie also invokes the mediation of a large number of open sources – “Plusurs le m'unt cunté e dit / E jeo l'ai trové en escrit” (vv. 5-6, 213) [Many have told and retold me this story, / And I've found it written as well] – that she prefers to leave anonymous. Thus, the matter of the lay is conveyed as a meta-gendered stratification of facts and emotions, where the “troveir” is a mnemonic filter of rumors.

Emotionally speaking, the key of this polyphonic ensemble is the happy expectation of what may befall somebody who follows his / her heart: the blessing of a real, heart-felt, face-to-face encounter, as unforgettable as it is ephemeral. It is for the sake of such a rewarding feeling – “Pur la joie qu'il ot eüe, / De s'amie qu'il ot veüe” (vv. 107-108, 215) [Because of the joy he had felt / On seeing his beloved] – that Marie espouses the exploit of the illicit tryst in the woods and heralds the eternalization of its reverberations on the lovers' lives and afterlives.

Where Bérout saw samples of fabliau-like derision (in the defiant cavalcade of the royal ordeal) and Thomas instances of tragic miscommunication (in the mythical blackening of Ysolt's white sails), Marie sees the enchanting truth of “lur amur ki tant fu fine / Dunt il eurent meinte dolur, / Puis en mururent en un jur” (vv. 8-10, 213) [their love which was so loyal, and which brought about

⁶ Our reference edition for the *Lay of the Chevrefoil* is Mireille Demaules' in *Tristan et Yseut. Les Premières versions européennes*, dir. Christiane Marchello-Nizia (1995: 213-216), with its rich, informative notes and variants (1287-1309). For the other *Lays*, we refer to the online edition Warnke 1900, unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ The English translations of the corpus are our own, and they tend to favor a raw sense of fidelity to the medieval source. For comparison, we have consulted Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby's prose translation of the *Chevrefoil* (2003 [1986]: 109-110), Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante's white verse translation of the *Prologue* (1982 [1978]), and Judith Shoaf's verse adaptation of the *Lays* (https://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/marie_lais); we have also referred to Eugene Mason's venerable prose version (1966 [1911]), which offers accurate solutions for some key passages of the *Chevrefoil*.

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many tribulations and then death, on the very same day for both of them⁸]. While relativizing the usage of the adjective “fine” by dismantling the phrase “fine amour”, she defends the dignity of a sentiment and the memorability of a story – in the name of the evergreen truth of two harmonized hearts.

Tristan and Ysolt’s successful performance as love communicators provides the recipe of what could be seen as a literary “emotionology”, consisting of a set of “collective emotional standards” (Stearns & Stearns 1985: 813) pertaining to an exclusivist, elitist society of “fine” lovers who excel in devising opportunities to come together and revel in the protection of their accomplices and supporters. These standards address the management of “basic emotions” – in essence “amour”, “volentez”, “pensiv[eté]”, “ire”, “dolor”, “abandon / De mort et de destruction”, “joie”, “deduit”, “pleisir” (pp. 213-215) – and of their most adequate expressions. From desire to apathy, through the reduction of wonder to knowledge (vv. 21-24, 213), these emotions are managed in accord with certain “professed values” which tend to regulate (Stearns & Stearns 1985: 824) the societal framing of consensual marriage, as well as its extraconjugal reframing in aristocratic circles.

Backed up by those “norms for men and women and for age groups” (827) poetically suggested by Marie, Ysolt’s and Tristan’s guiding principles include, and are not confined to, notions of peaceful government and friendly international policy; supportive conjugality and respectful cooperation with one’s vassals; the prioritizing of love by younger agents, the woman being expected to show more mastery of the situation than the man, the queen than the knight, the beloved than the lover; the scrupulous secrecy of trysts¹⁰, observed by both partners and accomplices of a noble couple; the voicing of a lyrical version of an iconic love story; the art of (warm) persuasion, used as a diplomatic instrument at the summit of aristocratic society, even when male rivals are concerned; the abstinence from any form of rebellion against the political system in place, and the support of courtly etiquette.

To the advocates of this model of emotional mastery, the God-like demiurge of Tristania offers an enjoyable reward: the backstage jubilation of a dyadic, congenial, team-like complicity – for a day (and a song) that could last forever.

Marie in Britannia: the Unforgettable

Via the utopia of a jocund Tristania (!), Marie furthers the marvels of Britannia and defends their relevance to the emotional horizon of expectations of the Plantagenet court. In order to succeed

⁸ In Burgess-Busby, “lur amour ki tant fu fine / Dunt il eurent meinte dolor, / Puis en mururent en un jur” becomes “their love was so pure that it caused them to suffer great distress and later brought about their death on the same day” (2003 [1986]: 109). At the other end of the traductological spectrum, Shoaf loosens the causality link and tries to render more explicitly the “finess” of “amour”: “Their love so true, so pure, from / Which their sorrows multiplied – / Then, in a single day, both died.” (1991-1996: <https://people.clas.ufl.edu/jshoaf/files/chevrefoil.pdf>). Mason’s prose translation creates a lyric ambiance by favoring structural repetition and extensive use of archaisms: “It is of a love which passed all other love, of love from whence came wondrous sorrow, and whereof they died together in the self-same day” (1966 [1911]: 102). In spite of its transgressions from the literal dimension of the source, Mason’s version reaches one of the highest forms of emotional fidelity by boosting the empathetic quality of Marie’s *expositio*.

⁹ Translated as “courtly love” (*amour courtois*) thanks to Gaston Paris’s conceptualization of the phrase (1881). For a nuanced, carefully contextualized account of the notion’s use in medievalist exegesis, see Bryson and Movsesian (2017: 121-122, n. 2- 3).

¹⁰ Without referring specifically to *Chevrefoil*, William M. Reddy perceives this secretive ethos as a typical ideological trait of Marie’s *Lays* and emphasizes it as a social class marker for illegitimate couples cultivating an amorous ethos apt to provide a cocoon of honorific security: “Love, when it occurs, Marie counsels, must be covered over and protected by the silence of aristocratic speech.” (2012: 204).

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as an “influencer” of this milieu, the writer fulfils the requirements of any ritual communication between the storyteller of an emerging matter and the potent Maecenas of the land.

Marie de France dedicates her writings to the king of her country of adoption – most probably Henry II of England (Rothschild 2011: 89) – trying to reinforce the paradigm of elated selfhood against which both merits and deviations are to be measured and sanctioned. This anonymous figure of sovereignty “a qui tute joie s’encline” [before whom all joy bows¹¹] is expected and even encouraged to proffer “mult [...] grant joie” by accepting the literary gift of a scholar of “grant pris” who has spent many a night engaging in creative labor (Warnke 1900: 2) – not unlike Ysolt herself bestowing her graces on her poet and praiser, Tristan.

In Marie’s world, royal displays of generosity must be devoted to a higher cause: the recognition of art’s power to provide a spiritual form of “joie” by overcoming “grant dolor” and “vice”, oblivion and death (3). Furthermore, she pursues the king’s approval of her formula for optimism and self-accomplishment on behalf of the instance of creation she re-presents before the glamorous English court, in the context of the growing success of the Arthurian matter. Hoping not to be considered “surquidiee” [conceited¹²] for her audacity (and narcissism?), she inscribes her emerging corpus of folkloric, Breton extraction into the dominant emotionology of multicultural tolerance, well aware of the blossoming media of lyric poetry in langue d’oc and Antiquity romances in langue d’oïl¹³.

As a spokeswoman of “that group within the Anglo-Norman elite famed for its *militēs literatī*”, probably living “close to the Celtic and Latin epicenters of the Arthurian legend” (Aurell 2007: 376), Marie is a “cultural hybrid”, like Henry II himself (Le Saux 2006: 205). Tactfully, she avoids anything that might compromise her intellectual ambitions, including the hint to Eleanor of Aquitaine¹⁴ or to the embodiment of a French (sub?)cultural authority that might support her own. Marie does not want to be appreciated as a mere poetess buttressed by a queen – even by one who is famous for her literary patronage in the two flourishing countries on which she exerts her dominion – on account of a noble, gendered kind of Frenchness. She sees herself as a remarkable writer of the twelfth century, regardless of birth or sex – “Marie, / ki en sun tens pas ne s’oblie” (*Guigemar*, Warnke 1900: 5) [Marie, who is not forgotten in her time] – and claims to be acknowledged at the heart of the most brilliant entourage a writer could dream of, in “an empire that rivaled that of the Holy Roman Emperor Barbarossa” (Baker 1993: 21-22). Her voice must be heard in order that the ephemeral folkloric repertoire of her epoch integrate the Angevin-Norman domain and become a folio of History – and it is by proclaiming herself unforgettable that she is to be remembered, along with this heritage-to-be. Marie’s speech act achieves its perlocutionary effect (Searle 1969: 19 *sq.*) in an undisguised, conventionalized, way. Her pleading *pro domo* is all the more effective as it is accompanied by a fresh wave of altruistic feelings toward the anonymous collectivity of Breton storytellers, and of eulogistic investment of their treasure of “aventures” (*Prologue*, Warnke 1900: 2).

Conversely, the poetess vigorously orients her discourse against the community of her equally anonymous, purportedly bestial *haters*, who happen to tell influent stories themselves, most of which contribute to discredit “sun bien” (*Guigemar*, Warnke 1900: 5). This dual emotional targeting of

¹¹ “Repository of all joys” in Hanning-Ferrante (1982 [1978]: 29), the unnamed king is the one “to whom all joy pays homage” in Burgess-Busby 2003 [1986]: 107.

¹² “Presumptuous” in Hanning-Ferrante (1982 [1978]: 29).

¹³ At Henry II’s court, « on entendait parler non seulement le français mais aussi l’anglais, le celte et l’occitan » et « on rencontrait Wace, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Bernard de Ventadour, Marie de France parmi tant d’autres. [...] Ce n’est pas par hasard qu’on y composa les romans de Thèbes, d’Enéas et de Troie. » (Nezirović 1980: 1).

¹⁴ William M. Reddy alludes to her as Marie’s plausible protector, without providing any textual evidence (2012: 199).

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narrators – as architects of narrative matters – ultimately supports an urbane, mediated linguistic interactivity corresponding to a *lifelong learning programme* of the Central Middle Ages.

Obscurity: Marie's Emotional Refuge

In her *General Prologue*, Marie bids her readers to a form of cognitive participation in the act of poetic creation which consists in the project of “gloser la letre / et de lur sen le surplus metre” [glossing the letter¹⁵ and endowing it with the surplus of their sense] (Warnke 1900: 3). Such an immersion in collective subjectivity tends to incorporate every “granz biens” [good story] (3) of the immaterial patrimony at hand, provided that it deserves narrative attention, but also to go one step farther, deeper or beyond, and achieve exegetic appropriation. Indeed, Marie's famous couplet presents the “hermeneutic impenetrability” of the past as a “promise of meaning and ethical utility”, possibly under the influence of Augustine's conception of the *integumentum* and Bernardus Silvestris's theory of the *involucrum*¹⁶. With a little help from the diligent reader, each letter could be a life-saving tactic: writing appears as a form of penitence meant to enhance one's interpretive fecundity, moral fervor and sense of personal salvation¹⁷.

In spite of this standpoint widely endorsed by theologians, “the earliest known French woman poet” (having flourished c. 1150 - c. 1200)¹⁸ is well aware of the vulnerability of feminine authorship in the *Mâle Moyen Âge*¹⁹ and decides to support her creative use of obscurity by invoking one of her intellectual ancestors, the (male!) grammarian Priscian, as a testimony to this praxis. In her readiness to acquire (virile) credibility and to further the reception of her tales, Marie seeks to “align herself with his venerable reputation”²⁰ without feeling compelled to adopt his Stoic paradigm of elucidation. What is at stake for her is to make her words flourish “in full bloom” (Burgess Busby 1999: 107), so that their memory can last forever. In other words, the “felicity” of literary speech acts (Austin 1962: 14-15) is apprehended as a matter of immortalization, both in the field of written reception and in that of oral recitation, reception and emulation.

In her attempt to secure the felicity of her corpus, the French poetess resorts to the policy of code switching between the French and English dialects of her milieu (*Chevrefoil / Gotelef*), and experiments with the universal appeal of the marvelous to be found everywhere in Britain – “Meinte merveille avum veü / Ki en Bretagne est avenue” (*Bisclavret*, Warnke 1900: 83) [“Many wonders have we seen arriving in Brittany.”] – while depicting the chiaroscuro of human truth, its potential for wondering and transmuting.

Along with the other eleven lays, *Le Chevrefoil* embarks on a quest for the enigmatic “verité” (truth) of lyric creation (Demaules 1995: 3, 213), which corroborates the image of an enviable, self-

¹⁵ Burgess and Busby (2003 [1986]: 107) avoid using the ambiguous nouns “the letter”, “the surplus”, “the sense” and propose a version that tends to dispel the obscurity Marie defended by choosing to “provide a gloss for the text and put the finishing touches to their meaning” (precisely!). In Hanning-Ferrante (1982 [1978]: 28), the noun “surplus” is also avoided, and supplanted by a close, verbal, more explicit solution: “supply its significance from their own wisdom”. Waters 2018 proposes a close solution: “supply the rest through their understanding” (49). In Shoaf 1992, future readers “would gloss the letter, / Add their own meaning to make the book better”, the idea of an amelioration going beyond Marie's suggestion. Mason's version points to an autodidactic stream of glossing, alluding to the spirit rather than the letter of the ancient artifacts: “study with greater diligence to find the thought within their words” (1).

¹⁶ On the intertextual dimension of Marie's *ars poetica*, see Rector 2018: 130, n. 44.

¹⁷ See Drogin 1998 [1982]: 20-23 on this graphologic vision on redemption.

¹⁸ According to the official doxa rendered by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marie-de-France>.

¹⁹ On the prevalence of masculine authorship and authority in French medieval culture, see Duby 2010 [1988].

²⁰ Marie's motivations to “single [...] out one of her mentors in literary training” are judiciously delineated in Whalen 2008: 50.

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assured medieval woman of letters ready to surmount the emotional rejection of her fellow writers, rather than become a *foolish virgin* and let her *lamp* go out (Matthew 25). Whether the ideal reader is God or just a spiritual sort of *bridegroom* granting her access to the eschatological feast before the door is shut, Marie would still take pains to invest her “science” and “eloquence” in the making of a “grevose oevre” [arduous work] to “mustrer” [display] (*Prologue*, Warnke 1900: 3) in a subdued light.

Throughout Marie’s corpus, eroticism is approached in a particularly ambiguous way. Statistically, this interactional pattern – always heterosexually depicted – is more often presented as a matter of individual resourcefulness and dyadic motivation than as a virtuous / vicious form of emotional conduct. Feelings *per se* are prioritized over ethics, in such lays as *Guigemar*, *Milun* and *Yonec*, where adulterous attachment is depicted and reverberated in a more empathetic key than the desolate conformism associated with a noble marriage.

When feudal ties are focused on, however, they seem to imply a series of norms which are deemed more defensible than those of a romantic liaison; thus, in *The Lay of Equitan*, it is the clandestine couple formed by a king and his seneschal’s wife that must be sacrificed to the emotionology of loyal vassalage, whereas in *Eliduc*, all dyadic norms for the experience and expression of human intimacy are overshadowed by the imperatives of disincarnated asceticism and saintly brotherhood.

Beyond the manifest discrepancies in the appreciation of societal versus sexual ties, each “adventure” in Marie’s grasp, once it has been rhymed and confronted to (rather than molded in!) the affective standards of the Plantagenet reign, demands to be treated with the same faith, devotion and sense of dignity as “alkune bone estoire” [any good tale] (3) from the mainstream Latin corpora. The poetess sees herself as a champion of intercultural edification, fighting against unjust oblivion in the name of an inter-subjective, original, folkloric form of truth – “Les contes que jo sai verais, / dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais” [the tales I know to be true, on which the Bretons drew the matter of their lays] (*Guigemar*, Warnke 1900: 6) – that would reveal itself to generations to come as a mental universe “sutil de sens [subtle in its sense] and worthy of “remembrance”” (*Prologue*, 4).

In search for the best compromise between individual, dyadic and collective musts, all the lays attributed to Marie de France are concerned, at their deepest level, with **narrative transportation** (Gerrig 1993: 66-67). Whether she chooses the setting of an enclosed garden (as in *Milun*), of an alcove (*Yonec*), of a remote island (*Lanval*), of a forest (*Chievrefoil*) or of the very space between two windows (*Laiüstic*), Marie typically constructs an otherworld where the rules of royal diplomacy and international policy are temporarily suspended, allowing for a blithe, surreal sense of freedom. Away from the dominant system of conjugal confinement, this amorous haven – elsewhere acknowledged by Georges Duby as an instance of “jeu courtois” (2010 [1988]: 76-80) – could be apprehended in modern exegesis as an “emotional refuge” tolerated by the official policy, following William M. Reddy’s model. The return to the reference world typified by the society of Marie’s lays – the law-abiding, feudal, heterocentric, homosocial, conjugalist nobility of Britain – represents the homeward journey meant to complete every “trip” into the metamorphic possibilities afforded by the text.

As an “emotional régime” is characteristically supported by political leaders (Reddy 2001: 121) who are supposed to boost its “style of emotional management” via the expression of “normative emotions” through “official rituals” (129), it is only natural for Marie to try and attain the most accessible (to a poetess!) form of centrality at the Plantagenet court by pinching the chords of the trendsetters in her milieu. She artfully solicits “the most fundamental qualities of medieval literary

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invention [...]: the acquisition of material from acquired knowledge [...], and the capacity to organize it and communicate it to an audience” (Whalen 2008: 18).

In the *Chevrefoil*, poetry enkindles the “joie” of cultural transmission and courtly dialogue. Should the Lay’s dedicatee be Henry II Plantagenet, as most scholars tend to consider²¹, his “love of hunting” and his escapades with Rosamund in a bucolic world for two (Aurell 2007: 374), as well as his promotion of “foreigners”, of “new men” and “lesser folk” (Aurell 2007 [2002]: 61 *sq.*) would prove highly compatible with Tristan’s voluptuous dominion over the woods and envied popularity at court, but also with the queen’s role as an “alienator” (41). Henry’s acceptance of the narrative trophy offered by the French poet would thus embrace a wide range of emotional motivations – including lenience toward incestuous bonds and intergenerational rivalry – belonging with the aural prestige of the ineffable.

However, “we do not know [...] whether Marie’s Henry was, as her earliest critics thought, Henry III (Mall, La Rue); Henry II, who reigned from 1154 to 1189 (more later); his son, Henry the Young King, who was crowned in 1173 but died in 1183 (Levi); or, as Roger Dragonetti maintains, no king at all.” (Bloch 2003: 5). To honor all the candidates to the title of Maecenas, one could add Richard I, “the Lion-Hearted” (1189-1199) to the pedestal (Krueger 2008:26): her appreciation of a “*pruz*” [valiant] (*Prologue*, 4) champion of Christianity would thus shed a brighter light on a knight’s merits and legendary potential.

Happily – for the historiography of the untold – “*vus, nobles reis*” [you, noble king] (4) resounds, over the ages, as the rhetoric mold fit for any deictic entity deserving such a title and disposing of a “*quer*” [heart] where good actions can be said to take root. As for this (relativistic!) understanding of goodness, it includes delight in listening to a woman – herself endowed with a vivid heart – and in bestowing some bliss on the sacrifice of her whitest nights (*Prologue*, Warnke 1900: 4).

Against this puzzling, interpersonal kind of purposiveness, it would be irrelevant to draw any “plain lessons” from Marie’s art of making (royal!) sense of her Breton patrimony (as suggested in Reddy 2012: 203); her “*captatio benevolentiae*” playing with “*quer*”, “*biens*”, “*joie*”, and Breton “*aventures*” remains distinct from the possible “mission” of such contemporaries as Béroul or Chrétien de Troyes (themselves hard to treat jointly in such a univocal, ideological key). Something even more “*sutil*” [subtle] than “a shadow religion of love” (200) is prepared for “*cels [...] a venir*” [those to come], in accord with the artist’s pursuit of truthfulness and timeless “*espannement*” [blossoming] (*Prologue*, Warnke 1900: 3) – something more smiling, tricky and haunting.

Tristan and Ysolt in the Woods: Emotion Work(s)

In order to contemplate what Marie veils and what she unveils in the *Chevrefoil*, one must access the “emotional refuge” offered by the Virgilian, lenient utopia of *Omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori*, and follow its textual meanders.

The tale offers bilingual hints to the resourcefulness of passion, launched by two mythical heroes who adopt an affective agency powered by the morality of the lesser evil. This relativistic conformism supports innovation: while returning to their social matrix without the slightest sign of anger, frustration or revolt, the Cornwall lovers enrich the collective memory of humanity with an unforgettable chapter of romance.

Conceived at the image and resemblance of Marie de France, Tristan displays a leadership style founded on “science” and “eloquence” – in the field of linguistic expressibility and emotional perlocution (Searle 1969: 19 *sq.*) – that he exploits in the rehabilitation of his own reputation as a

²¹ In the prestigious Pléiade collection which hosts our reference edition of the *Chevrefoil*, Henry II is considered “*sans doute*” the king beyond the Prologue’s dedication (Demaules 1995: 1287).

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chivalric icon and in the resumption of the ties with his own, royal family. Deeply affected by the consequences of his clandestine condition, the exile manages to join the public sphere while preserving the highest amount of privacy and “emotional liberty” permitted by the “normative order for emotions” (Reddy 2001: 124) he has to observe as a sylvan lover.

In the *Chevrefoil*, love is neither blind nor deaf. However sad (as Tristan and Ysolt in vv. 103-104) or even suicidal (as Tristan in vv. 19-26) they may feel at times, Marie’s protagonists never resort to the extreme gesture of pursuing their happiness in a far-away setting where they would start a new mode of being in the world. And yet, the phantasmal reality of the couple’s escape is well illustrated and nonchalantly treated in the common version of the Tristanian legend: Béroul’s love hermitage and Eilhart’s public elopement provide two contemporary solutions to the disparaging stressor of social culpability; even in Thomas’s “courtly” version, Ysolt leaves her king, throne and kingdom, only to win the honor of dying next to Tristan. By contrast, in the tentative, compensatory universe of the *Lay*, the Cornwall lovers do their utmost to avoid upsetting the balance of worlds and values and to preserve their sense of dignity by investing their personas of love-storytellers. The “*granz biens*” (Prologue, Warnke 1900: 3) of Tristan’s act of lyric response to Ysolt’s narrative demand is thus included in the repertoire of Breton folklore, along with the other refrains disseminating the matter exploited by Marie.

Happy to share their heartfelt closeness whenever they can, Tristan and Ysolt master the art of transcending their desire in accordance with the aesthetic and cognitive requirements of “*lur amur ki tant fu fine*” (vv. 8-10, 213), without abandoning themselves to the temptation of reaching the ultimate refuge of death. Such a patiently hedonistic illustration of “*amur*” is not attained in a magically determined manner; it undergoes what modern psychology would term “emotion work” (Hochschild 1979: 551). Indeed, the clandestine couple manage their affects – with a tendency to downplay the negative ones, such as fear, despair, bitterness, anger, revolt, shame, hatred – by adopting a series of “feeling rules” fit for the demanding setting of Cornwall’s court, where they are faced with the objective impossibility of *living* happily ever after.

While Tristan strives to create opportunities to see Queen Ysolt in the utmost intimacy without compromising her, and to sing away his blues when he is far from her, she displays a more pragmatic agency, focusing on diplomatic solutions of long-term reconciliation between her paramour and her husband. However, the lovers espouse a common habitus favoring social responsibility and the compromise of love from afar (*amor de lonh*²²): they both accept that there is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing (Ecclesiastes 3:5).

Moreover, they found their daily abstinence on esthetic “deep acting”: carving, composing lyrics and melodies, then singing them accompanied on a Breton harp, represent a successful duo’s performance at the height of a moment of inner truth and transfiguration. A spoken, unspeakable experience is equally enjoyed by the lovers in the deep woods where they depart from their chosen paths in the name of a greater, broader emotional liberty.

The *Bastun* and the *Chevrefoil*: Breeding Emotional Literacy

In spite of the saddening potential of Tristan’s name and of the narrative tradition associated to the possible worlds of Tristania, Marie’s hero is depicted as a happy survivor, both as a lover and as a writer. He must have the last word and will have it, just like the French poetess herself. For Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “the underlying optimism of Marie’s *Chevrefoil* can include the lovers’ death by stressing their final, inseparable union [...] and by focusing our attention on what remains after death, the *lai* composed by Tristan and recorded in writing by Marie.” (1993: n. 46, p. 233). Hopeful, upbeat

²² On the free exploitation of this topos by Marie, see Kinoshita & McCracken 2012: 55-56.

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emotions are, however, poorly or rather “enigmatically” rendered in this lay, requiring a cooperative effort on the part of the reader, who must make good use of the fuzzy, supposedly known context of the characters’ literary lives (Rider, 2016: 58-68, esp. 65).

In the *Lay of the Honeysuckle*, the clandestine lover resorts to the disguise of a bifacial image: the symbiotic nexus formed by a hazel tree and a honeysuckle vine. Thus, the way he declines his gender identity, in this complementary dyad, is literally abstruse – to anyone but his beloved. In order to explore the possibilities implied by the mental and affective experience of identifying with Ysolt – via Tristan – with the help of Marie – readers have a few textual clues, but no unique, exclusive trajectory of signification: their faculty to prefer a viewpoint and to achieve mediated partiality is necessarily activated.

If a “*lector in fabula*” should prefer to take a religious path to Tristania, the paradigm of creation, as projected by the mythical drama of Adam and Eve / Lilith²³, would corroborate the idea of man’s (in)completion, and of the necessary quest for the Feminine Other. Tristan’s phantasmatic activity around the ever-absent Ysolt, who revolves in the *Paradise Lost* of Tintagel, would then illustrate the « [Western topos which] marks Woman as the representation of [the] search of a non-existent original wholeness » (Callahan 2001:10). Seen from this angle, Eden must crucially and permanently include the father figure of the King, in the light of a redeeming pardon springing from the lovers’ oneiric eschatology.

To the reader wishing to take the mythic path to Tristania, the traditional pattern of the Poet and the Muse would offer four antique models supporting Ysolt’s identification to the honeysuckle vine: Clio, muse of history; Erato, muse of love poetry; Euterpe, muse of music and lyric poetry; and Melpomene, muse of tragedy. In spite of Boethius’s influence in driving muses away from the instance of consoling femininity²⁴, a sense of the sacred persists in “courtly tradition, [where] the divine and erotic aspects of the female muse are collapsed together; the muse becomes an unattainable mistress whom the poet worships.” (Parker 2015: 91). In Tristan’s case, however, Ysolt does assume an embodied, attainable human presence, for the few hours spent in naked conversation with her worshipper, only to consolidate her status of an inspiring, perfumed flower of his – and our – imagination.

The literal path is even more interesting to follow: whether a simple *T*, an appellative such as *Tristran l’Amerus*, or a whole narrative program written in a secret alphabet (possibly the Celtic *ogam*) of his time²⁵, Tristan’s signature, as evoked in the poem – « *De sun cutel escrit sun nun* » [He engraved his name with his dagger.] (Demaules 1995: v. 54, 214) – plays the role of “an emotional expression such as *I love you* [, which] does not merely describe an emotion; it usually activates and enhances the background activation level of that range of thought material that is the emotion.” (Reddy 2012: 8). In this performative light, Tristan’s engraving represents a speech act intelligible to a single person, like a modern password – the required competencies in Marie’s world being the knowledge of the alphabet of signs and the mastery of the language of emotions. Thus, the message communicated to Ysolt and its mysterious implications would correspond to what William M. Reddy

²³ Folk narratives and formulaic charms throughout Europe popularize the scenario of the divine misconception of the first woman – who would be Lilith rather than Eve, a runaway rather than an exile, a whole rather than a half. Depicted as a free, first-hand, Godlike creature, she is said to reject phallocracy and initiate diabolic intercourse. This insolent first lady is known as early as 2000 BCE, thanks to the Sumerian epic Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree; she is frequently mentioned in Talmudic passages, and reputed to have developed a series of fecund relationships with serpentine companions at the seaside, after having deserted her human match, as well as Eden (according to the Zohar – see Biggs 2010: 188 sq).

²⁴ On Boethius’s influence on French and Anglo-Norman literature, see Cropp 2012, 320 sq.

²⁵ Ogam was a common means of encrypting Celtic content, especially on hazel tree wood, which was reputed to play a (magic!) part in poetic inspiration. See Demaules 1995 : 1291 sq.

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called an “emotive”: an “emotion statement [...] in which the [...] referent changes by virtue of the statement [...], building, hiding, intensifying emotions.” (1997: 331).

To imagine how the act of engraving might have been conceived in the twelfth century, the modern reader must consider the very stick which serves as a parchment to the cryptic inscription. Tristan’s gendered identifier circumscribes two phallic signifiers: a dagger and a hazel branch. It is the masculine inscription of “*Tristur*” [sadness] by wood carving with a blade, but also the suggestion of a symbiosis with the feminine, as alluded to by the honeysuckle vine, that create two kinds of sap (the signifier & the signified) running through the vegetal bodies drawn away from their biosphere, as if to materialize and surpass the imminence of an intimately desirable death. The knight must slay a vegetal body and split it in two²⁶ in order to materialize his loving self – as a graphic prelude to the excruciating scriptorium of the tomb.

On the queen’s side, the reception of Tristan’s arboreal scepter is a matter of deduction, amplification and emotional contagion, whose meaning comes fully to light when she has identified the support of the mysterious message: “*De sun ami bien conustra / Le bastun quant el le verra.*” [She will recognize Tristan’s stick as soon as she has seen it.] (vv. 59-60, 214.), the translation of “amistié” into the language of *natura naturata* being the key to the reappraisal of their past, and to its displacement from general history. “*L’escrit*” [the engraved message] can be considered as a speech act configuring the “sume” [the assessment] of a whole era of lovelorn wandering: “*Ceo fu la sume de l’escrit / Qui fu el baston que j’é dit : / Que lunges ot ilec esté / E atendu e surjurné, / Pur espïer e pur saver / Coment il la peüst veer, / Ke ne pot nient vivre sanz li.*” [This was the sum of the engraved message / Which was on the stick I told you about: / That he had lingered long / And waited and lurked there / To spy and find out / How he might see her, / For he could not live without her at all] (vv. 61-67, 214). The prerogative of claiming an exclusive relevance to the other empowers the exiled lover, in spite of the declaration of disempowerment conveyed by the global image of his misery. With Marie, a man is a man if he asserts his manliness as an unbearable, womanless condition – and a woman is a woman if she can read between the lines, and see the branch in spite of the forest, the evergreen love beyond the injured tree.

Traditionally, wooden gender markers are omnipresent in *Tristania*, especially in the romance of Marie’s French confrère, Bérουλ. Along with “baston²⁷ / bastun” (v. 1160), tags for this phallic device include « puiot » (stick, staff: vv. 1232, 1251 vv. 3303, 3607, 3650, 3792, 3928, 3935), « potence » (crutch: v. 1255 vs. v. 1368) and « vert jarri » (rod: v. 1260). They are illustrative of the violence of male desire, being used as weapons by the lepers, in their attempt to defend the (universal!) right to punitive, collective, vehement sex.

In Marie’s *Chevrefoil* and in the *Folie Tristan de Berne* (vv. 188-9), it is this moral stigma that is reinvested by Tristan with positive, verdant emotivity. Indeed, fresh wood conveys an erotic signal reactivating the semiotic potentialities of hollow stem in contemporary romance, especially in its “senefianche” of social ascension to the lady’s tower. Thus, the feminine character of the story attributed to *Berox* in *Le Roman des sept sages de Rome* finds a univocal, unlettered means of suggesting a line of athletic action to her wooing knight by launching a carved stalk out of her chamber’s window (Foehr-Janssens (ed.) 2017: vv. 4321-4330, 350).

Beyond the déjà-vu imagery of arboreal sentimentality, Marie’s Tristan builds on the singular suggestiveness of the honeysuckle, which is quite a hapax in contemporary literature. In his poetic temerity, the lover formulates a botany of passion of his own, and lays the foundations of a new

²⁶ “*Une codre trencha par mi, / Tute quarreie la fendi*” [He cut in two a branch from a hazel-tree, and carved it in a perfectly square shape] (Demaules 1995: vv. 51-52, 214).

²⁷ Cf. *Folie Tristan de Berne*, v. 470.

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folkloric episteme: “*D’euls deus fu il tut autresi / Cume del chevrefoil esteit / Ki a la codre se perneit: / Quant il s’i est lacies e pris / E tut entur le fust s’est mis, / Ensemble poënt bien durer; / Mes ki puis les voelt desevrer, / Li codres muert hastivement / E li chevrefoilz ensement.*” [It was with them just like it was with the honeysuckle and the hazel tree to which it clang: / Once it has embraced it, clung to it, / And set itself all around the trunk, / They could well last together; / But should one try to split them apart, / The hazel would die hastily, / And the honeysuckle likewise.] (vv. 68-76, 214-215). In this dyadic logic projected by Marie, being the one implies moving the other, for the sake of a love life in which reciprocity is the key to “*durer*” [lasting]. The intuitive connectedness of a (transfigured!) natural setting can translate into human affinity and mutual choice. To count on the other is the only way to become durably oneself – as seem to suggest the two vegetal bodies bathing in their coalescing halo. By declining his identity in this symbiotic form, Tristan initiates a perlocutionary act (Austin 1962: 101) with a deep emotional charge: he hopes to “move” the queen to the point of determining her to leave her retinue, grasp the carved meaning, leave the written twig, hide the pleasant surprise and follow her heart to the encrypted destination.

As she accepts the sentimental profile ascribed by her lover – that of a believer in the vivifying power of togetherness – the queen performs her part in the perlocution script. In keeping with her social solidness and political durability, she becomes the verdant trunk of this relationship, and achieves the predicted verticality that suits her life-boosting predilection.

The modern reader would invoke light as the indispensable ingredient to make this greening association work, in line with the universal, trans-historic phenomenon of photosynthesis. Twelfth-century thinkers of mystical orientation, such as Hildegard of Bingen, visualize this form of causality in the shape of divine “*viriditas*”, attributing the principle of yearly resurgence to the Living Light (King-Lenzmeier 2001: 71). Marie’s “photosynthetic” representation centers on the imagery of Pentecost, seen as the feast of fiery revelation and the ritual celebration of the power of language to change the world. In accord with this background of spiritual illumination, the “felicity” of Tristan’s emotive act leads to an enlightening sense of mutual comprehension and synergetic burgeoning.

Tears of “Joie”: Depressive Realism and Happy Resilience

From *dolor* to *joie* via *l’escrit*, there is a change in the reference of Tristan’s name and in the valence of its impact as an emoter. At the beginning of the narrative, “*Tristram est dolent e pensis / Pur ceo s’esmut de sun país.* [Tristan was sad and thoughtful, therefore he left his country] (Demaules 1995: vv. 25-6, 213.). At the end of the story, “*la joie*” turns Tristan into a carver of medieval resilience. In his navigation between his home and the Queen’s life space, he has secured a harbor where cultural memory and individual rejuvenation can thrive, via self-control and creative performance.

To overcome a predestined form of sadness is a matter of deep emotional healing, mediated by one’s true love. If Tristan’s happiness rests on the accomplishment of self-surpassing acts, Ysolt’s relative contentment – with herself, with her paramour and with their common *art de vivre* – depends on Mark’s acceptance to tolerate a rival’s presence, and thus reintegrate an incestuous, gloomy outcast into the royal family. The refugee must become a central figure of the emotional régime of Tintagel, a vassal in his own right, a noble nephew to be crowned one day. This way of adjusting the amplitude of a clandestine “*amur*” to the official model of courtly bonding is presented as an “*acordement*” most beneficial to both parties; in spite of the “*deduit*” Mark is said to cultivate at court with his entourage, he is expected to feel freer and gladder to express his affection for Tristan, as the “*ire*” he had shown him was merely a consequence of his barons’ legitimate and inescapable authority over him (Demaules 98-101: 215). The feudal constraint is thus presented as the nexus of a moral and political

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weight on a king's heart, an emotional blockage of opaque semblance, and Tristan has no choice but to trust he is not forgotten, unloved or hated by his uncle. Ysolt's performativity as a peace-maker owes its felicity to her genuine feelings for the men in her life and to her ability to find excuses for the one in front of the other, in order to facilitate their empathetic understanding: in her evergreen biosphere, a tie cannot be broken by a liaison – the sap must keep flowing.

As reminded at the beginning of the lay and suggested by the central icon of the lay, the trio's lifestyle deploys its domestic, intercultural stratagems in the wider context of a "fine" tragedy yet to come. Before their legendary death day, the two lovers can spend their time exploring the best means to steer a path between a private emotionology and its public anti-emotionology, between the *finest love* in their reach and the best foreign policy in their power, between their dyadic scriptosphere and Mark's private audiosphere. In the end, "*les lettres*" [the message] confirm their proficiency in terms of amorous literacy, but also of factitive sway: "*sis uncles le manda*" [his uncle summoned him back]. The engraved "*baston*" is the interface between worlds, the open sesame permitting the circulation of emotional agents and affective currents.

It is impossible to tell, however, what did happen in the obscure scene of the woods. The ambiguous experience of Ysolt's "*trespasser*" [passing-by] is simply described as a hope coming true, in the triple light of pleasure, bliss, and cheerful intimacy: "*Entrè eus meinent joie mut grant. / A li parlat tut a leisir, / E ele li dit sun pleisir*" [Together they share great joy. He spoke to her at leisure, and she told him whatever pleased her] (vv. 44-46 and 94-96, 215). As this "joie" (v. 107, 215) becomes a lay, it awakens what Anne Callahan has called "the voice of pleasure": "Through the composition of songs of love, the troubadours achieve that state of ecstasy called *joi*, or as Guillaume IX has it, the « moving out of oneself ». For the male artist, the voice's pleasure is derived from the search itself, from composing." (Callahan 2001:10). Following this verbal, codified ethos, "*joi*" could be attributed to Tristan as a singer of "*amor de lonh*", although he does not adopt the "troubadours's erotics" (Nelly 1963: 134, 242) *per se*, with its abstinent imperatives and its linguistic displacement of desire.

Emerging from a woodsman's semiology, the Tristanian formula of emotive expressibility through art reads as a meta-emotional, solitary frame of experience, rather than an inter-emotional process. Thus, if it is legitimate to say that Tristan can project a literary avatar of Ysolt meant to replenish the void of absence²⁸, his constant seclusion would suggest that, in a sense, "there is no couple. There is only the feminized male and his idealization of an imaginary Other." (Callahan 2001: 3-4). In a (transcendent) way, the *Chevrefoil* is about a lover's progress from a self-limited form of solitude to a gratifying one that is blessed, ratified and enlarged by the other.

And yet, despite the narrative boundaries of the Tristanian matter – projecting the pair's synchronous death – the enactment of identification and idealization does not lead to artistic (and autistic) self-referentiality. Essentially, the legendary lovers of Cornwall manage to act like a synchronic, tightly connected tandem: "*Bele amie, si est de nus: / Ni vuz sanz mei, ni jeo sanz vus*" [My fair friend, this is how it goes between us: neither you without me, nor I without you.] (vv. 77-78, 215). This interdependence is even accepted as a kind of "natural" fatality, but also as a human sentence to love. Psychologists of our day would call this attitude "depressive realism" (Alloy-Abramson 1979: 441-485), as neither of the protagonists believes in his / her chance to escape what

²⁸ "The man in love, and who speaks or writes it, is not homosexual, nor is he in the masculine position; one writes desire from the position of the feminized male. In spite of the male writer's feminization, the absent Other in narratives of desire is represented as a woman. This representation – structurally a double femininity – creates the illusion of a heterosexual couple." (Callahan 2001: 4). The author quotes Barthes's contention that "*un homme n'est pas féminisé parce qu'il est inversé, mais parce qu'il est amoureux*".

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appears as a toxic relationship: each of them is sure to be trapped for ever, and ready to experience “*meinte dolor*” at every separation, while walking unabatedly towards untimely death. As the actual parasitism behind the symbiotic imagery suggests, there is a pathological background underneath the literary concatenation of the Lay.

When it comes to Tristan’s likelihood to achieve lasting autonomy, twelfth-century versions of the legend diverge. Thomas of Britain’s character does hope and grope for a way out, by marrying an attainable, attractive Ysolt and by struggling to complete a healthy, moral consummation. Béroul’s hero abducts his *Dame* instead of leaving her to the lepers’ lust, as the official emotional régime would have it. In Marie’s world, however, no such “emotional hijacking” (Goleman 1996 [1995]: 13-14) is attempted: as Tristan knows the queen must stand by her king, he never tries to cast a shade on her commitment to Mark or to commit himself elsewhere; incapable of jealousy, he accepts to be the one who leaves, is left, or both. And yet the exiled lover trusts that his beloved would be looking forward to seeing him, and would be reading every sign of his presence to the world. It is this semiological open-mindedness that stands at the core of Marie’s reenactment of the Tristan complex.

Hereafter, in spite of the monadic, oneiric appearance of Tristan’s creation, **there is** a couple Tristan-Ysolt in the *Lay of the Honeysuckle*, and even a family, a “*mesnie*”, a court to keep together under the sign of Pentecost, by weaving a supple language with anyone and everyone. Above all, Tristan’s identity as an *emotion worker* and Ysolt’s as a team-mate are communitarian in nature: the two lovers choose to behave like responsible social agents, who never give up their social duties and their sense of belonging. They simply accept to enjoy to the fullest the sole tropisms they can afford in a life of steadiness and stability²⁹.

In the face of eternity, the lover’s calligraphy bids Marie’s readers to a medieval “navigation of feeling” (Reddy 2001) sensitive to the conjugated pragmatics of passing and immortalization, as a personalized version of the ancient “*carpe diem*” and “*memento mori*” is simultaneously provided. Tristan wants to be remembered as a man who knows the (fictive) antidote of *Tristur*: whatever Nature or Culture may teach, the honeysuckle alone can keep the hazel tree alive, erect and deep-rooted. And the other way round.

After all, being the best version of oneself in a “fine” medieval couple implies being able to fecundate the other in the only socially tolerated way: a harper’s / a queen’s. By *translating* the happiness of a single legendary couple into a collectively readable, singable *lay*, a transition from the unique to the eternally iterative is achieved. As the branch is not the tree, the vine budding around it is only a figment of imagination. What is perpetuated is a compensatory kind of chaste, godlike « *viriditas* »³⁰, and the most felicitous emotive two lovers can share with the word: an invitation to undying loyalty and leafy relativism.

Thus, Marie’s understanding of the mythical love icon turns the Tristan emoter into a trigger of creativity, ambiguity and happy nostalgia. In the context of the mainstream *translatio studii* conceiving Northern counterparts for the lyrical forms of Provençal poetry, the French poetess living

²⁹ Which is not exactly “a shadow religion of love”, as William M. Reddy argued for Marie’s Lays. If the two protagonists of the *Chevrefoil* are on their way to become martyrs of love, as everywhere in *Tristania*, they are presented as saints without a God, without a sense of religious transcendence, without the shade of a guardian angel. Apart from Brangien’s protection, they never surpass their condition as unguarded, unblest, unredeemed creatures who can only manage to project a possible audience for their love story – fostered by Marie herself in an ambiguous defense of the lesser evil working for good.

³⁰ At the same epoch where Ysolt discovered, thanks to Tristan, the language of green saps, “Hildegard believed that the earth’s canopy of green grass was proof of God’s creative energy, or *viriditas*, at work in the material world of creation. In the same way, she taught, within the world of the cloister, the virgins’ long flowing hair was the external manifestation of their virtues, their work through *viriditas* to render God present to the material world.”, Ritchey 2014: 56.

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at the English court³¹ furthers a multicultural model of affective literacy. The lovers' ability to create a common affective alphabet playing on gendered identity tokens is reminiscent of the praxis of the *senhal*, the proper way to conclude a *tornada* and seal it with a mystery. The troubadour-knight and his Dompna form an overlapping dyad where the masculine name could look, if properly figured, as a surname for the feminine agent. *Tristur*, *Tristan* or *Tantris*, abbreviated in an ingenious manner, would minimally require a circle and an initial resembling a cross, alluding to a queen's crown, to a knight's rising sword, but also to a higher kind of coronation.

Whether the lasting union between two living (loving) beings is syntactically rendered by the superposition, concatenation or juxtaposition of signs, whether they belong to Latin, French, Saxon or ogamic grammar, one thing is unquestionable: both speak the selfsame idiom and invest the selfsame view on how the basic emotion of "*amur*" should be refined in order to suit their *status quo* and remain "*tant fine*".

Unlike the stylized, conventional relational paradigm projected by the Provençal *canço*, in which there is enough room for deictic shifters³², Tristan and Ysolt's formula is an invariable one, mutually binding and (inter-)personalized. The vegetal knot crystallizes the reciprocally desired radicalization of this particular instance of affective dependency which integrates and transcends those of Adam and Lilith / Eve, of the Muses and the poet, of the Dompna and the troubadour.

In Marie's *Chevrefoil*, inseparability is seen as the most picturesque way to achieve oneness, although it is, mathematically speaking, a matter of double halfness rather than the state of two entities coming together. Untempted by the concurrent ethos of the *Dame sans merci* expanding in the Midi, Tristan's Lady endorses the metaphor of the incomplete self exhaling the perfume of necessity.

In its metadiegetic play on light and sight, the honeysuckle remains an invisible ink ready to reveal itself to the ardor of the emotionally literate. This unique act of emotion exhales, open-endedly, a couple's desire to embrace love and mortality, to further social survival, to soothe the unhappy rival, and to enjoy "joie" while it lasts.

Tristan and Ysolt's Spherosphere

- **Emotives :**
 - **Reference Acts – A "Natural" Symbiosis of Heterosexual Relevance**
 - **(In)voluntary Action: Blurring Gender Identity Semiotics; Suggesting a Toxic Bond**
 - **Self-Assertion as Other-Orientation: Tristan's Name as Love Message to Ysolt**
 - **Focus : Relational Intent as well as Content Relevance**

The Emotionology of Mutual Addiction and Fatal Reliability

- **Basic Emotions: Desire, Longing, Joy, Oneness, Reciprocity, Radical Sense of Loyalty, Depressive Realism,**
- **Feeling and Expression Rules: Sublimation and Indirectness, the Systematic Preference of the Lesser Evil**
- **Emotional Refuge: A Counterfactual World**

³¹ On Marie's broader conception of "*translatio studii*", see Waters 2018: 12.

³² « *La dame n'est pas davantage l'objet du discours que le je n'en est le sujet; ni plus ni moins que sur le plan syntaxique. La chanson intègre la dame, celle-ci en est une composante formelle et sémantique à un niveau élémentaire [...], non vraiment thématique.* », Zumthor 1972: 218.

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- **Clandestine Relationship Acknowledged as an “Amur Tant Fine”**
- **Folklore of Noble Authorship: the I Becoming a Lay, the Sin Becoming a Poetic Topos**
- **Emotion Work: Transfiguring a Royal “Trespasser”; Relativizing Official Ethics**

Mark’s Audiosphere

Anti-Emotionology

- **Basic Emotions: Fear of Treason, Passive Passion, Frustration with Political Conformism**
- **Feeling and Expression Rules: Meeting the Crown’s Interests – Autosuggestion and Display of Righteousness, Hiding One’s Distress**
- **Emotives:**
 - **Involuntary Action : Exiling Tristan**
 - **Undergoing the *Aural* Manipulation by the Barons and by the Queen**
- **Emotional Régime**
 - **Joy and Courtliness for All**
 - **Apparent Conformism for the King**
 - **Relative Freedom for the Queen**
 - **Simulation of Impartiality ; Punishment Inflicted to the Dishonored Vassal**
 - **Emotion Work: Postponing the Desired, Undeserved Conciliation; Subliminal Encouragement of Individual Stances, Acceptance of Incestuous Sharing.**

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