Cahiers Africains de Rhétorique

ISSN 2790-6108 | E-ISSN 2790-6116

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Cahiers Africains de Rhétorique(fr), **Vol. 2, N°01, pp.106-122, juillet 2023**
African Rhetoric Notebooks(An)
ISSN : 2790 -6108, EISSN : 2790-6116

Pragmatics of Symbolism in Chrétien De Troyes's Tristan and Iseult[1]

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Date de réception : 22/03/2023 **Date d'acceptation :** 25/05/2023 **Date de publication :** 30/07/2023

Abstracts: This study proposes to find out the practical meaning of symbols in Tristan and Iseult, written by Chrétien de Troyes. It starts from the observation that the author codifies his work by the means of symbolism and that each symbol does not only summarize or hide a vast reality that sometimes escapes the reader; but also takes on a situational meaning which matches the context in which it appears; hence the hypothesis: the reading of a symbol is done in accordance with the environment to which it belongs. Thus, this study, which requires a rapprochement with biblical stories, revolves around the human body, nature and colors as specific elements of analysis.
Key Words: practical signification, symbols, Tristan and Iseult, codify, environment, biblical stories.

Pragmatique du symbolisme dans Tristan et Iseult de Chrétien de Troyes

Résumé : Cet article se propose de trouver la signification pratique des symboles dans *Tristan et Iseult*, écrit par Chrétien de Troyes. Cette étude part de la constatation selon laquelle l'auteur, codifie son ouvrage par le moyen du symbolisme et que chaque symbole, non seulement résume ou cache une vaste réalité qui échappe parfois au lecteur mais aussi revêt une signification situationnelle, c'est-à-dire, qui épouse le contexte dans lequel il apparait ; d'où l'hypothèse : la lecture d'un symbole se fait en conformité avec l'environnement auquel il appartient. Ainsi, la présente étude qui exige un rapprochement avec la Bible, s'articule autour de la nature, du corps humain, et des couleurs comme éléments spécifiques d'étude.
Mots clés : signification pratique, symboles, *Tristan et Iseult*, codifient, environnement, récits bibliques.

[1] Comment citer cet article : MOUTATI-KABOU S.N., « Pragmatics of Symbolism in Chrétien De Troyes's Tristan and Iseult », *Revue Cahiers Africains de Rhétorique*, 2 (3), pp-pp.106-122.

Introduction

Chrétien de Troyes (1130 - 1180/90?) is a French writer of the Norman Conquest time, mostly known for his rewriting of the Arthurian Legends. His works are outstanding and fascinating. He wrote *Tristan and Iseult* which embody a very wide range of symbols which interpretation does not scope with the universal meaning.

Etymologically, the term symbol comes from the Greek verb *symballein*, which means "throw together", and its noun *symbolon*, "emblem", "mark", "sign" or "token". In a broad sense, a symbol is a character or glyph representing an idea, concept or object. While symbolism is the representation of a concept through symbols or underlying meaning of objects or qualities. Steve Desrosiers (2005:9) asserts:

> *L'expression symbolique se retrouve partout, sous toutes ses formes. L'une des raisons d'être du symbole c'est qu'il permet d'aider l'homme à saisir certaine réalité de l'univers qu'autrement il n'arrivait possiblement jamais à comprendre. Le symbole est pour ainsi dire la partie visible de l'iceberg, le signe ou (forme) matériel exprimant une réalité immatérielle. Il a ce pouvoir de nous relier directement à la réalité cachée et à ce titre il agit comme facteur de lien.*

Desrosiers acknowledges that symbol comprises a hidden message. This being, the symbol requires a code to understand it. This paper reads: ¨ *Pragmatics of Symbols*¨. By pragmatics of Symbols, we mean the contextual study of symbols, regardless their primary and commonly known signification, rather the milieu in which they appear, regarding the one who uses them too. Some interesting works have been done successfully . We refer to Jean Daniélou (1958), Franson, J. Karl (1996), Lewes, Ülle Erika (1978). Ziemann, Gwendolyn Timmons (1971). Heikel, Julie Anne. (2010), and Saunders Corinne J. (1993).

With this in mind, the central question is formulated as follows: what is the contextual meaning of symbolic elements in the aforementioned works? This problematic question arose from the subsidiary questions below:

1. If symbol's interpretation is not always universal, Should we consider a situational interpretation?
2. In this case, do similar situations read symbols in the same way?

This study is conducted on the basis of the biblical approach. It consists in departing from events depicted in the Bible related to the focus points of the present analysis. After exploring the different theories of symbols, this paper classifies the study of symbols in three groups: Human body parts, Elements of Nature, and Colors. About the first group, we will demonstrate how body parts unveil message that have nothing to do with their primary sense or role. In the second group, it comes to prove that Nature's message through symbols should be read in accordance with the situational

context. And, in the third and last group, it will be given to see how colors may embody contradictory meaning despite the

1. Applied Theory of Symbols

Many different authors tackled the notion of symbol in one way or another. Among them, Amadou Hampâté Bâ (2000) in *Conte Initiatique Peuls*, Clémentine Madiya Faïk-Nzuji (1992) in *Symboles Graphiques en Afrique Noire ;* Ernest Jones (1918) in ¨The Theory of Symbol ¨, and Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrat (2008) in *Dictionnaire des Symboles*. The different theories about the term symbol given in these works are of very great importance in the elaboration of my analysis in accordance with the symbols submitted to this study.

In his *Theory of symbols*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ reveals that symbols are significative messages but not clearly conveyed. Thus, the message is a secret hidden in a given symbol. Amadou (2000: 246) pinpoints: *¨ […] le monde des significations cache derrière l'apparence des choses, le monde des symboles où tout est signifiant, où tout parle pour qui sait entendre.¨*

Amadou Hampâté Bâ fesses up that the world of symbols keeps the message in secrecy. Also, he lets know that it is not given to anybody to decode that message. What renders a symbol complex to interpret is that, it is not seen identically in any community. In this respect, symbols are metaphorically compared to polysemy of a word depending on the context in which it is used, however the orthography being the same. This assertion is reinforced by Clémentine (1992: 18) who reminds the interpreting of a symbol differing from a community to another in these coming terms:

> *Chaque communauté humaine a sa propre conception du "symbole" et en fait usage en fonction de son expérience existentielle particulière. L'attitude qu'elle prend à son égard ne peut, du moins dans ce qu'elle prend à son égard ne peut, du moins dans ce qu'elle a d'essentiel, être réduite à des schémas globaux.*

In ¨The Theory of Symbol ¨, Ernest Jones (1918: 182) lists the different elements that he considers as symbols bearers, on which a symbolic study may be done. He writes:

> The word 'symbolism' is currently used both in a wide sense, roughly equivalent to 'sign,' and in a strict sense, as in psycho-analysis, which will be defined later. The following examples illustrate the variety of phenomena included in the former category. It is applied in the first place to objects, such as emblems, amulets, devices, tokens, marks, badges, talismans, trophies, charms, phylacteries.

In connection to the present paper, the analysis focuses on natural elements, human body parts and colors. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrat's theory of symbol is not opposed to the two mentioned above, but brings a light for it explores another extension of the theory. In fact the particularity of their theory lies on the fact that they mention what may be considered as symbol. Their assertion does not make an exception of an object, for according to them (2008: XII-XIV.):

> *L'histoire des symboles atteste que tout objet peut revêtir une valeur symbolique, qu'il soit naturel (pierre, métaux, arbres, fruits, animaux, sources, fleuves et océans, monts vallées, planètes feu, foudre, etc.,) ou qu'il soit abstrait (forme géométrique, nombre, rythme, idée, etc.)*

These four (4) theories of symbol above mentioned are not the only existing ones. It has been tackled by critics as well as scholars namely Alfred North Whitehead (1927) in *Symbolism; Its Meaning and Effects*; Lucien Levy Bruhl (1938) in *l'Experience Mystique* et *Les Symboles chez les Primitives*, and J.E. Cirlot (1971) in *A Dictionary of Symbols*

These theories are fruitful guidance in the study of symbols, for they paved the way and bring the necessary light to tackle the present study. Combining Clémentine theory which reveals that a symbol is interpreted differently depending on community with Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrat's one which considers any natural object as symbolically representing something, I fall upon the two biblical illustrations in which the snake (an animal) is portrayed in the book of Genesis differently from the snake displayed on the book of Exodus. It plays two distinctly opposite roles. In one hand it leads to death whereas in the second hand leads to life.

2. Human body parts

2.1.Hair

Hair is a symbol of strength in reference to Samson, a biblical character whose hair was the source of his strength and power. No one could deny his abilities and capacities to do anything requiring force. Considering the story of *Tristan and Iseult*, the latter's name is followed by the indicator: with *blond hair*, throughout the story. Following the plot of the story, she was a source of strength for Tristan who did all his best to always be not far from the lady. When it comes to be distant, his heart and thoughts were directed to his Isolde. When Tristan was about to die for grievously injured after defeating and killing the Morholt, he became completely weak and not able even to face an animal. He, therefore, did need vitality and strength to stand up. As a matter of fact, Isolde with *blond hair* helped him to stay alive, providing him with the necessary cure.

Coming back to the story of Samson told in the Bible, it highlights the connectedness between hair and love. Samson's hair was source of his strength, but he came to be weak after having them cut, unwillingly. Scrutinizing deeply the story, it was due to a lovely matter that the strongest man reveals his power hidden in his hair. The book of Judges 13: 2-5, it is written:

> 2 Now there was a certain man of Saraa, and of the race of Dan, whose name was Manue, and his wife was barren. 3 And an angel of the Lord appeared to her, and said: Thou art barren and without children: but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. 4 Now therefore beware, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. 5 Because thou shalt conceive, and bear a son, and no razor shall touch his head: for he shall be a Nazarite of God, from his infancy, and from his mother's womb, and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

In the scope of the story of Tristan, power and hair are connected. However, love must be added to that, in accordance with the story of Samson, in which betrayal,

strength (hair) and force are mixed. The main character in reference is Iseult with *blond hair*. As a reminder, the indication blond hair is to differentiate her from the second character bearing the same name: Iseult with *white hands*.

However, this differentiation done at the level of a part of human body, that is hair, provokes the curiosity of the reader, whose whole attention is deeply vested in the story. Iseult with blond hair is not doomed to death, as Samson's fate, but kills unwillingly. In both circumstances, death is invited in love affairs, what seems not fair. Both, Iseult and Samson are betrayed, Samson by Delidah and Iseult with *blond hair* by Iseult with *white hands*. This betrayal led to human life destruction.

The case with Samson, he first lost his hair, a loss caused by the one towards who he reveals the secrecy of his force, because in love with her: Delilah; as illustrated in the book of Judges 16: 18-19:

> 18 Then seeing that he had discovered to
> her all his mind, she sent to the princes of the
> Philistines, saying: Come up this once more, for
> now he hath opened his heart to me. And they
> went up, taking with them the money which they
> had promised.
> 19 But she made him sleep upon her knees,
> and lay his head in her bosom. And she called
> a barber and shaved his seven locks, and began
> to drive him away, and thrust him from her: for
> immediately his strength departed from him.

This extract does correspond with the final part of the story of Tristan and Iseult, even though both stories compared do not proceed seemingly in the same way. However, it can be underlined that Tristan, compared to Samson, lost the necessary energy that keeps him alive, when Iseult with white hands to lied him. Yet, betrayal and lie belong from the same semantic context. In this way, the connection between the two stories compared can be resumed to one word: Missing. Samson lost his hair, automatically lost his strength and the final consequence is death. In the same optic of reasoning, considering Iseult white hands words, the first Iseult is not present on the ship that should take her to Tristan. As a matter of fact, Iseult missing in the ship, symbolically her hair¸ source of hope for Tristan, is missing. The consequence of that schema is the death of Tristan, as it can be noticed in the coming extract:

> *And Tristan trembled and said:*
> *"Beautiful friend, you are sure that the ship is his indeed? Then tell*
> *me what is the manner of the sail?"*
> *"I saw it plain and well. They have shaken it out and hoisted it very*
> *high, for they have little wind. For its colour, why, it is black."*
> *And Tristan turned him to the wall, and said:*
> *"I cannot keep this life of mine any longer." He said three times:*
> *"Iseult, my friend." And in saying it the fourth time, he died.*
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 48-49)*

Up in the story, it can be proved that Iseult with *white hands*, lied in hope to have a chance in her lovely relationship with Tristan. She was listening when:

He [Tristan] called Kaherdin secretly to tell him his pain, for they loved each other with a loyal love; and as he would have no one in the room save Kaherdin, nor even in the neighbouring rooms, Iseult of the White Hands began to wonder. She was afraid and wished to hear, and she came back and listened at the wall by Tristan's bed; and as she listened one of her maids kept watch for her.
(Chrétien de Troyes, 46)

Even if it is in a complex context the comparison is made, this has helped to clearly deal with the symbolic meaning of hair in *Tristan and Iseult.*

2.2.Hand

The hand helps the body to touch, seize and hold any element in, on or outside of the body. It is a magnificent machine in the human body. In *Tristan and Iseult*, the word hand is associated with the name of Iseult, whose *white hand* appears late in the story. Her role is decisive for she does influence and radically changes the course of the story. Unfortunately, she does not make mention for help to Tristan when he was suffering. She lets her jealousy takes upon her love and stays without helping. Here, her hands, always underlined, seem inactive at the very right moment they should serve. Her regret is expressed in the passage below:

Near Tristan, Iseult of the White Hands crouched, maddened at the evil she had done, and calling and lamenting over the dead man. The other Iseult came in and said to her:
"Lady, rise and let me come by him; I have more right to mourn him than have you--believe me. I loved him more."
(Chrétien de Troyes, 49)

The above extract reveals also the passiveness of Iseult with *white hands* in front of Iseult the Fair, who ordered her to leave the corpse of the dead man.

3. Elements of nature

By elements of nature we refer to all creations which are not human inventions. Chambers concise 20th Century Dictionary (1983) defines ¨element¨ respectively: one of the essential parts of anything. It goes beyond and proposes four (4) substances namely: fire, air, earth and water; which it names as being the four (4) powers of nature. The same dictionary also defines nature as the power that creates and regulates the world and brings the precision which is untouched by man. Therefore, it comes to demonstrate the part of role of some selected elements of nature in connection with the anti-values of love. It must be specified that those elements do not cause or harm love, but they do not play their true role in helping nature in a good way but strengthen negatively the anti-values of love.

In every part of the world, we find symbols. Also, there is an obvious connection between symbols and literature which uses them to convey messages of any genre, depending on culture. Nature is considered as involving secret symbols. This idea of secretiveness is tackled by Baudelaire who uses metaphor of the nature

to express an idea. This situation is observable in the literatures that make the object of our study. It is then interesting to decode the message conveyed by the symbols which are, I can say a silence message but highly communicative. Charles Baudelaire (1857) writes:

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
L'homme y passe à travers des ***forets de symboles****.*

It comes now to study some natural powers involving symbolic messages in the works under scrutiny.

3.1. Earth

Earth is simply synonymous with ground. It is defined as the planet on which we live, according to Harrap's Easy English Dictionary (1994, 136). The Holy Bible gives another connotation to the concept. In fact, earth is source of human's creature. In the book of genesis 2: 7, we can read:

> And the Lord God formed man of the slime
> of the earth: and breathed into his face the
> breath of life, and man became a living soul.

This extract clearly states that the Almighty God used earth to create the last earthy creature. In the same scope, the same God warns that (Genesis 3: 19):

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread
> till thou return to the earth out of which thou
> wast taken: for dust thou
> art, and into dust thou shalt return.

It is impossible to see dust without having earth at the basis. His words, uttered to punish the very first inhabitant down earth, are clear. God simply reminds that Adam was made of earth. The interesting side of both extracts above lies on the double face of earth: First Source of life, and then end of life. It begins and ends life. Consequently, the link with the present research work focuses on the fact that earth is principally placed in the second position. That is to say, earth abundantly signifies the stop of life, so it is closely linked to death.

> But in one night there sprang from the tomb
> of Tristan a green and leafy briar, strong in its branches and in the
> scent of its flowers. It climbed the chantry and fell to root again by
> Iseult's tomb. Thrice did the peasants cut it down, but thrice it grew
> again as flowered and as strong. They told the marvel to King Mark,
> and he forbade them to cut the briar any more.
> (*Tristan and Iseult, 49*).

Otherwise, in a context of love, as the writings selected are said to be love stories, earth being present in those, does not play a role that fits the spirit of love. As a matter of fact, Chrétien de Troy's *Tristan and Isolde* is very illustrious. Tristan and Isolde are buried after facing several torments due to their unwelcomed love:

> But in one night there sprang from the tomb

> of Tristan a green and leafy briar, strong in its branches and in the scent of its flowers. It climbed the chantry and fell to root again by Iseult's tomb. Thrice did the peasants cut it down, but thrice it grew again as flowered and as strong. They told the marvel to King Mark, and he forbade them to cut the briar any more.
> (*Chrétien de Troyes, 49*).

By definition, a tomb is a large grave (usu. With an underground vault in which to put a dead person), as proposed by Harrap's Dictionary (1994). One cannot talk about a tomb without referring to ground; similarly ground is connected to earth. Thus, the continuation of both young lovers' love has to be found in the depths of earth; death being the main burial place. Coming from earth is synonymous to live whereas going back to earth means to die.

3.2.Fire

According to the Christian faith; hell is predominantly represented by a big and unfinishable fire. The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ deals with hell, in the book of Saint Luke 16: 20-24, mentioning the flame as hell:

> 20 And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, 21 Desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him; moreover the dogs came, and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died: and he was buried in hell. 23 And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: 24 And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.

Obviously, fire does not come repeatedly throughout the three works under consideration. At least, whenever it appears, it symbolizes the end of life of one, two or more characters. As a case in point, in Chrétien de Troy's *Tristan and Isolde,* fire appears to put an end to Isolde's life, in "The chantry Leap" the last chapter of part 1:

> His guards still waited for him at the chantry door, but vainly, for God was now his guard. And he ran, and the fine sand crunched under his feet, and far off he saw the faggot burning, and the smoke and the crackling flames; and fled.
> (*Chrétien de Troyes, 22*)

The words underlined in the extract above are strongly linked to fire. The English proverb "there is no smoke without fire" does scope with this reasoning. However, Queeen Iseult would escape from that punishment which is not feasible without being confession and pardon at first.

3.3. Water

Water is defined as a ¨ colorless, transparent, odorless liquid that forms the seas, lakes, rivers and rain and is the basis of the fluid of living organisms¨, according to Chambers concise 20th Century Dictionary (1985) proposes the following denotative definition: ¨ a state of purity, at ordinary temperatures, a clear transparent

colorless liquid, perfectly neutral in its reaction, and devoid of taste and smell ¨. Before all, it is worth considering the symbolism of water.

Universally speaking, water symbolizes purity and fertility. It alludes to purity whens it serves to wash and clean, in the meantime it is alluded to fertility when it comes to make grow. Avia Benefica is the owner of the website www.whats-your-sign.com ; in which she deals with the symbolism of water in the Taoist tradition, the ancient Greeks, the people of North America and in the ancient Egyptians. Benefica explains that according to the Taoist tradition, water refers to wisdom, as she underlines:

> In Taoist tradition, water is considered an aspect of wisdom. The concept here is that water takes on the form in which it is held and moves in the path of least resistance. Here the symbolic meaning of water speaks of a higher wisdom we may all aspire mimic.

Benefica carries on with the symbolism of water in the ancient Greeks and relates:

> The ever-observant ancient Greeks understood the power of transition water holds. From liquid, to solid, to vapor-water is the epitomic symbol for metamorphosis and philosophical recycling.

Benefica takes us to the northern part of America where she deals with the same need to search for the symbol of water among the Americans. Benefica writes:

> Among the first peoples of North America, water was considered a valuable commodity (particularly in the more arid plains and western regions) and the Native Americans considered water to be the symbol of life […]

In the same optic, Benefica leads her interest to the same matter in the Egyptian milieu and notes:

> So it is also with the ancient Egyptians as we learn their beloved (and heavily relied upon) Nile river is akin to the birth canal of their existence.

In the works under consideration, water is represented by the oceans, seas and rivers. Despite the names those streams may bear, fundamentally we see water. What's more, it is commonly known that where water is, life also is, to say life is possible. It is in this strict respect that Albert Szent-Gyorgyi (2012) recalls that there is no life without water. In short and simple terms, water symbolizes life.

In connection with this research paper, water, in any form, is present and plays a very great contradictory role. It is source of peace and source of danger. Yet, with peace, one enjoys life whereas with danger death is close. According to Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (1983), the sea is the great mass of the salt water covering the greater part of the earth's surface. Truly, the sea conveys huge messages most of the times expressing sorrow and smelling sadness. In *Tristan and Isolde*, the sea is abundantly mentioned. It is better to say it begins the story and appears at the end without forgetting that it is present all along it. The question that comes is the following: what is the story like whenever the sea is mentioned? Or what does any liquid represent in the story? As a reminder, talking about water, this includes any liquid.

Chrétien de Troyes' first lines tell about a war between King Rivalen and King Mark respectively Monarchs of Lyonesse and of Cornwall. King Rivalen had to cross the sea to go on help to his fellow Mark:

> Long ago, when Mark was King over Cornwall, Rivalen, King of Lyonesse, heard that Mark's enemies waged war on him; so he crossed the sea to bring him aid; and so faithfully did he serve him with counsel and sword that Mark gave him his sister Blanchefleur, whom King Rivalen loved most marvellously (*Chrétien de Troyes*, *2*)

The sea appears because of war. This bears the reader with a contradictory mind because the story is about love but begins with war. Indeed, what is unavoidable about war, in its pure meaning, results to a blood bath. In this reasoning, the sea, as mentioned in the afore-written extract, symbolizes blood and tears in accordance with the fact that it is the way which leads to war. Rivalen, King of Tintagel and Blanchefleur's husband, crossed the sea to feud against the enemies who, after landing on Lyonesse, destroy and ravage all on his way. Chrétien de Troyes (2012: 2) writes:

> He wedded her in Tintagel Minster, but hardly was she wed when the news came to him that his old enemy Duke Morgan had fallen on Lyonesse and was wasting town and field. Then Rivalen manned his ships in haste, and took Blanchefleur with him to his far land; but she was with child. He landed below his castle of Kanoel and gave the Queen in ward to his Marshal Rohalt, and after that set off to wage his war.

This extract is the evidence of Rivalen on the verge of crossing the sea. What comes next is that the King of Tintagel lost his life on the battlefield, henceforth the piece of news immediately leads Blanchefleur to death as soon as she gave birth. Here, water does not signify life but conducts to death. Critics such as Lavielle (2000: 74) interprets the sea as a symbol of distance in love, in these words:

> *La mer est un pont. Elle sépare et joint les amants. Tristan la traverse sans cesse pour venir à Tintagel. Elle est le lieu de tous les dangers. De l'amour- les amants y boivent le philtre-, de la mort- la tempête retarde Iseut venue guérir Tristan. Les auteurs jouent sur les mots : la mer, l'amer, l'a(i)mer. C'est le leitmotiv du retour éternel.*

It is no longer seen as source of live but that of danger. Lavielle makes a long analysis of the whole story before analyzing the great role of water in any form that may be. Generally, he argues that water is dangerous all along the story as it is the case with the philter containing a "lovendrinc". As soon as both, Tristan and Iseult, drank it, love emerged in both hearts what determines the starting point of a troublesome life for both young lovers. Lavielle (2000 : 80-81) pinpoints : ¨ *Le philtre représente non pas la faute morale, mais le "péché", l'erreur par excellence, la fatalité. L'amour est le danger suprême. […] L'amour est un processus fatal et clos. On ne peut y intervenir. Il est impossible de le guérir ou de le discipliner*.¨

As a comment, love, according to Lavielle, is dangerous in this context; and here it is caused by the philter also the philter contains the lovendrinc, the latter being basically liquid; however, water, the basis of any liquid, no longer provides life but conducts to death. It plays a contradictory role. In another context, the lovendrink, being basically a liquid, is source of life. Thanks to that, love is born between Tristan and Iseult, what was not the case before.

If it comes to lead a study on the times the words sea, blood and tears appear in the story, the result would be: "sea" appears sixty-seven (67) times, blood is mentioned twenty-one (21) times and eight (8) times for tears. As an analysis, it is not expected to meet those concepts several times as statistics show that above. Talking

about love, it is seen one hundred and nineteen (119) times. In the final chapter of *Tristan and Isolde* the sea does not help save the life of Tristan. The worst is that even Isolde lost her love after crossing to rescue Tristan, who she finds dead. Chrétien de Troyes (2012: 48-49) writes:

> And Tristan turned him to the wall, and said: "I cannot keep this life of mine any longer." He said three times: "Iseult, my friend." And in saying it the fourth time, he died. Then throughout the house, the knights and the comrades of Tristan wept out loud, and they took him from his bed and laid him on a rich cloth, and they covered his body with a shroud. But at sea the wind had risen; it struck the sail fair and full and drove the ship to shore, and Iseult the Fair set foot upon the land. She heard loud mourning in the streets, and the tolling of bells in the minsters and the chapel towers; she asked the people the meaning of the knell and of their tears. An old man said to her: And when she had turned to the east and prayed God, she moved the body a little and lay down by the dead man, beside her friend. She kissed his mouth and his face, and clasped him closely; and so gave up her soul, and died beside him of grief for her lover.

Between the two cases of decease, the sea is at the middle. This action covers the sea with a cloth of responsibility of the death of both young lovers.

3.4. Forest

Forest is ¨a large uncultivated tract of land covered with trees and underwood ¨, according to Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (1983). Considering forest as a generic term, its specific one is a tree, for it is the best sample to represent a forest, in other term one can never think about a forest without seeing basically trees, which is ¨a large plant with a single branched woody trunk ¨, Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (1983).

In the domain of ecology, the tree plays a great role in the ecological balance. It is synonymous with oxygen which is a necessary gas for human breath. In Africa, a tree is seen differently depending on contexts. Most of African traditions consider tree as a place of meeting (the case of the traditional parliament called the "Mbongui") or place of learning (as it is the case of Coranic school in the Western part of Africa). In connection with this paper, the tree, in other part the forest, is going to be analyzed in two constituents. In the first constituent, it is to examine the impact of the presence of the tree whenever it appears in the different works. However, the second constituent consists in studying the impact of the absence of tree or forest.

The forest is present in *Tristan and Isolde* at a specific moment of the plot of the story. It appears when Tristan, on the way to Cornwall, gets off his horse to rest on the edge of a forest on the land of King Mark. Chrétien de Troyes writes:

> Painfully he climbed the cliff and saw, beyond, a lonely rolling heath and a forest stretching out and endless. And he wept, remembering Gorvenal, his father, and the land of Lyonesse. Then the distant cry of a hunt, with horse and hound, came suddenly and lifted his heart, and a tall stag broke cover at the forest edge. The pack and the hunt streamed after it with a tumult of cries and winding horns, but just as the hounds were racing clustered at the haunch, the quarry turned to bay at a stones throw from Tristan; a huntsman gave him the thrust, while all around the hunt had gathered and

> was winding the kill. But Tristan, seeing by the gesture of the huntsman that he made to cut the neck of the stag, cried out:
> "My lord, what would you do? Is it fitting to cut up so noble a beast like any farm-yard hog? Is that the custom of this country?"

And the huntsman answered:

> "Fair friend, what startles you? Why yes, first I take off the head of a stag, and then I cut it into four quarters and we carry it on our saddle bows to King Mark, our lord: So do we, and so since the days of the first huntsmen have done the Cornish men. If, however, you know of some nobler custom, teach it us: take this knife and we will learn it willingly."
> (*Chrétien de Toyes, 2012)*

The forest was supposed to be a place of rest for Tristan, it suddenly turned into a place of party of hunt. This quick change seems to explain that the protagonist will not have time to rest for long in Cornwall where his beloved uncle is king. Here, the forest is a source of oxygen, symbolically life, becomes is source of death. And, the death of the animal is the first event Tristan sees on the land of Cornwall, and perhaps a sign telling him that the fact of landing on Cornwall he meets his death there. He will never ever forget this first event whenever he had to count his story when arrived on that land. The forest is the door allowing him to enter Cornwall. What happened there is a sign full of huge message for Tristan. It is then very necessary to go deeper in the story to consider the role of the forest any time it is mentioned.

For this time, let us talk about "The Tall Pine-Tree". as is entitled the fifth (5th) chapter of the book. This part of story is determining by the fact it involves a tree called the tall Pine-Tree, where the story reaches a high turning point. Under that tree, the two lovers have to meet and their meeting is preceded by King Mark hung on the same tree waiting for them. What I consider here, is the presence of the tree and the story around it. We dare not forget that being under a tree is basically meaning to have a rest. This is not the case under the tall Pine-tree where fear, tears and disappointment gained respectively Tristan, Isolde and Mark; each aware of the presence of each other. This was unexpected. Once more, the tree is Tristan's source of trouble as it may be seen from the below extract:

> "Fair King, climb into these branches and take with you your arrows and your bow, for you may need them; and bide you still."[…] She came, and Tristan watched her motionless. Above him in the tree he heard the click of the arrow when it fits the string […] suddenly, by the clear moonshine, she also saw the King's shadow in the fount. She showed the wit of women well, she did not lift her eyes.
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 17-18)*

What happens around the tree was decisive for their future. The mere inattention from Tristan and Isolde, by not noticing the presence of King Mark on the tree would change completely the story. However, the interesting element is the tree which appears once more seemingly like a pitfall. Even if by noticing the presence of Mark, the young lovers changed good words to use innocent ones, they were finally caught and condemned to death. Tristan managed to escape away and helped also Isolde soon after. This part of story leads to the Wood of Morois, a forest where they

found refuge. My curiosity gives birth to the question: would the Wood of Morois be a peaceful place for the refugees? Governal, known as Tristan faithful master, killer a baron who was hunting on the forest edge and brings the dead to Tristan:

> There came Gorvenal, noiseless, the dead man's head in his hands that he might lift his master's heart at his awakening. He hung it by its hair outside the hut, and the leaves garlanded it about. Tristan woke and saw it, half hidden in the leaves, and staring at him as he gazed, and he became afraid. But Gorvenal said: "Fear not, he is dead. I killed him with this sword." Then Tristan was glad.
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 25)*

As at the very beginning, the forest is bloodthirsty. Shifting to the last chapter about the death of Tristan, Isolde also came to die soon after. Both were buried each other aside. Curiously in one night, a green briar emerged from Tristan's tomb which branches went deeper in Isold tomb.

> When King Mark heard of the death of these lovers, he crossed the sea and came into Brittany; and he had two coffins hewn, for Tristan and Iseult, one of chalcedony for Iseult, and one of beryl for Tristan. And he took their beloved bodies away with him upon his ship to Tintagel, and by a chantry to the left and right of the apse he had their tombs built round. But in one night there sprang from the tomb of Tristan a green and leafy briar, strong in its branches and in the scent of its flowers. It climbed the chantry and fell to root again by Iseult's tomb. Thrice did the peasants cut it down, but thrice it grew again as flowered and as strong. They told the marvel to King Mark, and he forbade them to cut the briar any more.
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 49)*

This green and leafy briar connecting the two tombs witnesses finally the role that plays the tree of forest, that of symbol of death as when Tristan landed on Cornwall and rested on the forest edge where an animal was killed by hunter men. Always in the forest, where they can never feel at ease, Isolde came to dream about trouble to happen, but curiously they were under a tree:

> Then in her sleep a vision came to Iseult. She seemed to be in a great wood and two lions near her fought for her, and she gave a cry and woke, and the gloves fell upon her breast; and at the cry Tristan woke, and made to seize his sword, and saw by the golden hilt that it was the King's. And the Queen saw on her finger the King's ring, and she cried […].
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 27),*

This passage is faithful to the description of tree, or forest, representing danger or trouble. Though this interpretation of the forest is totally different from Gottfried's view. For Gottfried, the forest is depicted as a place of desire. Emile Lavielle is firmly of that opinion when he (2000: 75) comments: ¨La forêt est le lieu du désir, explore à ses limites. Les amants y vont jusqu'au bout d'eux-mêmes, Marc y découvre le pardon en même temps que se réveille son désir pour Iseut.¨ As for Gottfried (1720-1723): ¨La beauté d'Isolde le fit bruler du désir de posséder son corps et son amour. […] Il voyait – tremblant

de désir – comment ses vêtements laissaient resplendir sa gorge et la naissance de ses seins, ses bras et ses mains.¨

The tree, in Tristan and Iseult, is more the symbol of withdrawal of life than the symbol of life producer. At least it timidly represents life through the growing of a briar, connecting the two grave yards in each of which lies the dead bodies of both lovers. Chrétien de Troyes (2012: 49) writes:

> But in one night there sprang from the tomb
> of Tristan a green and leafy briar, strong in its branches and in the scent of its flowers. It climbed the chantry and fell to root again by Iseult's tomb. Thrice did the peasants cut it down, but thrice it grew again as flowered and as strong. They told the marvel to King Mark, and he forbade them to cut the briar any more.

Depicted as such, forest symbolizes: bloodshed and death. The briar symbolizes, not the physical life of Tristan and Iseult, but the rebirth in one hand and the eternal existence, in the other hand, for the love that they had in common when alive.

4. Colors contradictory meaning:

"Colors impact our daily life in business, art, work and love" said Herman Cerrato on the covering page of his entitled The Meaning of Colors. If so, literature being the mirror of society, the study of color is not lesser. By colors contradictory meaning, we mean to deal with the signification of them (colors) in opposition to the standard meaning. For instance, it is commonly admitted that white color means clearness, innocence, light and property. The French expression Blanc comme de la neige is a good witness. In this simile, the element of comparison "comme" in English "like", brings the two other elements at the same level. Meghamala S. Tavaragi and Sushma (2016: 115) highlight the great importance of colors when they term:

> Color is a meaningful constant for sighted people and it's a powerful psychological tool. Attention is captured subconsciously for color before people can consciously attend to something. Color psychology is the study of hues as a determinant of human behavior. By using color psychology, you can send a positive or negative message, encourage sales, calm a crowd, or make an athlete pump iron harder. Color therapy is also known as chromotherapy, color therapy, colorology or cromatherapy. In this chapter it gives meanings of various colors, what colors means, how do they affect mood and personality of person. It gives an account of what color psychology is, and uses of color psychology in treating illness as well its use in marketing business.

Referring to the theory of antithesis, as discussed in the preceding lines, white color, as a case in point, is not seen in its global sense, but meets a totally opposed meaning; focusing of the plot of the story. Colors are predominantly used throughout the works under study. They either paint something or used to describe characters' complexion. The present study of colors does not stand to study whenever it appears in the selected literatures, but it focuses on the special moment when they impact much and give another direction to the written story.

4.1. Black and White

Black and white are strongly opposed colors in meaning and role. However, where black is white is not far. The very simple example is this dissertation which letters are black on a white sheet of paper. Their contradictory sense does not at all distant them, on the contrary brings them closely together. The two colors appear repeatedly in Christian of Troy's Tristan and Iseult. Black is synonymous to night whereas white is synonymous to light. Yet, night and light are contrary in meaning. It is necessary to underline that here it comes not to oppose them, but to study each separately; this is then the main reason of the title "black and white" instead of "black versus white". Black" refers to night. Also, at nightfall, it is commonly admitted that the vision starts getting diminish until perceiving nothing at a very close distant. At this level, what was visible during the day becomes invisible at night. Focusing on the word "invisible", it is hard, let us say almost impossible to move freely and fast.

4.2. Black versus White:

Here, the two colors are opposed, especially in Tristan and Iseult, talking about their common agreement about the color of the sail, black or white. Before detailing the situation, it must be fessed up that it is hard to believe that a human life may somehow depend on colors, which determine if he/she may live or die. Obviously, this is what happen to Tristan. Kaherdin, under Tristan's initiative, finally went to Cornwall to take back Iseult with blond hair, for she is his only cure. Iseult with white hands, having discovered that Tristan love to the Iseult of Cornwall is irrevocable, decided to put an end to Tristan life playing a not pleasant trick by changing the color of the sail, source of hope for Tristan if white. In other terms, the white sail means that Iseult is in the boat: She came to where Tristan lay, and she said:

> "Friend, Kaherdin is here. I have seen his ship upon the sea. She comes up hardly--yet I know her; may he bring that which shall heal thee, friend."
> And Tristan trembled and said:
> "Beautiful friend, you are sure that the ship is his indeed? Then tell me what is the manner of the sail?"
> "I saw it plain and well. They have shaken it out and hoisted it very high, for they have little wind. For its colour, why, it is black."
> And Tristan turned him to the wall, and said:
> "I cannot keep this life of mine any longer." He said three times: "Iseult, my friend." And in saying it the fourth time, he died.
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 48-49),*

It is now clear that due to color, Tristan died. Here, the black color symbolizes hopeless. In front of such a picture, hope is a key argument to keep his life. Here we can see how black reflects death or obscurity. Obscurity because death requires the closing of eyes, which allows no other color than black. Added to that, the white color is then the color of life, as both, Tristan and Kaherdin agreed about the color of the sail when Tristan said:

> Hasten, my friend, and come back quickly, or you will not see me

> again. Take forty days for your term, but come back with Iseult the Fair. And tell your sister nothing, or tell her that you seek some doctor. Take my fine ship, and two sails with you, one white, one black. And as you return, if you bring Iseult, hoist the white sail; but if you bring her not, the black. Now I have nothing more to say, but God guide you and bring you back safe.
> *(Chrétien de Troyes, 46-47)*

This extract shows the symbolism of colors. The white color symbolizing cure due to Iseult attendance on the ship, the black one expressing her non-attendance, so no medicine for him. Comparing both figures, Tristan life depends on a simple color. Again, the two colors here have played and respected their traditional opposing role.

4.3.Red

Red color is abundantly present in work under consideration in this article. Only, its orthography is scarcely mentioned. This is to declare that it is almost invisible throughout the stories but painted symbolically in events or facts. The opinion of the graphic designer Herman Cerrato (2012) concerning the red color is:

> *• Red is the color of fire and blood, so it is associated with energy, war, danger, strength, power, deter-mination as well as passion, desire, and love.*
> *• Red is a very emotionally intense color. It enhances human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure.*
> *• It has very high visibility that's why stop signs, stoplights, and fire equipment are usually painted red.*
> *• In heraldry, red is used to indicate courage. It is the color found in many national flags.*
> *• Red brings text and images to the foreground.*
> *• Use it as an accent color to stimulate people to make quick decisions; it is a perfect color for 'Buy Now' or 'Click Here' buttons on Internet banners and websites.*
> *• Red is widely used to indicate danger (high voltage signs, traffic lights).*
> *• This color is also commonly associated with energy, so you can use it when promoting energy drinks, games, cars, and items related to sports and high physical activity.*

The words stressed are the different meanings that the red color is assimilated to. Considering them all, those terms are good for some and bad for the others. This polysemy deserves a precious study for it (red) may differ in one context or another.

Conclusion

This study devoted to symbols, especially the changing meaning comes to an end. It sheds a light on hidden but interesting aspects which explain better the story told or performed categorized through different natures. The gist of this analysis was to scrutinize deeply until to find out necessary information from symbols, with a focus on the context in which they appear. I have come to the agreement that a symbol does not obey faithfully to a same and universal interpreting, but differs, taking into consideration some parameters (sociological, religious, civilizational, educational and so on). Metaphorically, a symbol may be compared to water, it takes the shape of the recipient in which it is poured.

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