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## Direct Discourse and Female Archetypes in Chrétien de Troyes's Romances

Raquelle A. Crotty  
*University of Central Florida*



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DIRECT DISCOURSE AND FEMALE ARCHETYPES IN CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES'S  
ROMANCES

by  
RAQUELLE ARACELI CROTTY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in French  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of the female messenger archetype in Chrétien de Troyes's romances within the context of the rising courtly literature written in France throughout the early twelfth century. The romances by Chrétien that will serve as cases in point for this thesis are *Érec et Énide*, *Lancelot*, and *Yvain*. I analyze the various courtly ladies of the lower nobility to whom Chrétien attributes direct discourse and study how their verbal influence over the plot and the extent to which they are directly involved in the action of that plot correlate to one another. This, as a counterpoint to the queen's traditional role as seemingly powerful, but ultimately passive object in the chivalric paradigm, demonstrates how Chrétien uses the female messenger archetype within his romances. While this study focuses on examining the existence of the female messenger archetype, it also acknowledges the variation amongst the different female characters, even as they fit into the role of the female messenger archetype within Chrétien's individual works. Lastly, the ambiguity of Énide's character, as the oldest example of the female messenger archetype, in comparison with the examples from Chrétien's later works, suggests a possible development in Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetypes, specifically a crystallization of the literary function of both the queen and the female messenger figures in his corpus.

## DEDICATIONS

To my mother, without whom I would not have fostered my love for the French language.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to medieval literary tradition, a knight is beholden to a certain code of conduct that focuses on serving a lady and bringing honor to himself, as well as to the court, through chivalrous and courageous acts. If the knight fails to continuously bring greater honor to himself or his court, he is considered a “chaitif maleureux” [wretch] who “ne se vault armer” [is unwilling to bear arms] (Charny 120, 121). Being defined as a man who was “unwilling to bear arms” would be shameful to the point that a lady who is seen to be spending time with him would be considered shameful as well (Charny 121). The role of the courtly lady in literature, therefore, is generally to create a situation or situations in which the knight is driven, through serving her, towards greater honor and glory.<sup>1</sup> Acquiring, enhancing, and demonstrating his honor, according to the code of chivalry, is a primary goal of the ideal knight within medieval French literature, especially in the action found within the rising *histoire d’aventure* of the twelfth century. The courtly lady as a narrative device reflects courtly values and catalyzes the knight’s journey throughout his quest. The knight’s obligation to chivalric honor, which often results in direct action in battle, and the courtly lady’s obligation to the chivalric ideal of honoring her knight combine to create formulaic models of courtly masculinity and courtly femininity that interact with each other to create certain character types within twelfth-century medieval literature. Within the paradigm of the masculine and knightly Self and the feminine and

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of courtly to which I refer belongs most closely to that stated by Alexander J. Denomy in his article titled, “Courtly Love and Courtliness.” Denomy states that “courtly has the essential meaning of belonging to, emanating from, for and in a court. It is a literature of courts, a court literature dealing with courtliness and embodying its ethical and social ideals” (46). In other words, by courtly lady, I refer both to the ladies who dwelt in the court of the king and queen, as well as to the system of social obligations and etiquette that was becoming popular within the structure of romance narratives which dictated what a lady of the court should and should not do or say.

courtly Self, the roles of the female characters become prominent and relevant within the realm of medieval courtly literary tradition. Within literature, the courtly lady generally functions as the object on whom the knight projects his desired self-image, just as the knight's accomplishments reflect in his lady's worth according to the society of the medieval period.

In the twelfth century, the *histoires d'aventure* were transitioning from the spoken verse of the troubadours and the trouvères to written verse and becoming the *roman*. Chivalry as a cultural phenomenon was also becoming prominent within the French courts. As a result, chivalry was being recorded in literary and didactic texts as it became an ingrained social obligation. Courtly chivalry often emphasized the importance the courtly lady plays in aggrandizing the knight's honor. Thus, by the fourteenth century, Geoffroi de Charny wrote, in his *Livre de chevalerie*, that "thus your ladies will and should be more greatly honored when they have made a good knight or man-at-arms of you" (121).<sup>2</sup> This statement by Geoffroi illustrates how the courtly lady, especially in literature, functions as the object through whom the knight acquires greater glory. Besides being written in various didactic texts, the increasingly crystallizing yet still forming concept of chivalry was also used by various trouvères in the north of France. Chrétien de Troyes, one such trouvère who wrote during the period in which chivalry was becoming a popular literary theme, wrote five romances composed of the *histoire d'aventure* and quest narrative. In his romances, each character type and archetype work together to create the plot structure of the quest narrative. Chrétien, however, utilizes different types of female characters to evoke the traditional functions of the literary courtly lady within his romances.

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<sup>2</sup> Even though Geoffroi de Charny wrote his *Livre de chevalerie* in the fourteenth century and Chrétien de Troyes wrote in the twelfth century, his guidelines provide primary evidence for the solidification of the code of chivalry. His book also provides the definition of the courtly lady and the reciprocal obligation the knight and the lady had to each other to uphold the courtly tradition that will be used throughout this thesis.

Specifically, female characters' voices add plot action and narrative direction to his romances. For example, in Chrétien's romances, Geoffroi's belief that "et ainsi seront vos dames et devront ester plus honorees" [ladies will and should be more greatly honored] by their knight's accomplishments and that, to a certain extent, they are responsible for their knight's glory, is embodied both by the queen figure characters and female messenger characters (Charny 118, 121).

Much scholarship has been devoted to the chivalric and courtly relationship between the knight and his lady. In David Fekete's article "Ritual and the Ambiguous Power of Women in Chrétien de Troyes's 'Yvain Roman,'" Fekete focuses on twelfth-century relationship ritual dynamics, pointing out that *Yvain's* plot structure is dependent upon "ritualized action" completed by each character as figures of courtly literature, specifically as these characters relate to one another through the plot (1). Fekete explains that knights are seen as "symbols for power and danger" and that ladies exist as "objects of devotion with little explicit authority" (1). This was a rising trend in literature as chivalric social norms became instilled as practice within the French medieval court and became rooted in the cultural and collective unconscious. For this reason, by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Geoffroi defines a woman's worth by the honor bestowed upon her knight by others. Geoffroi emphasizes this point to such an extent that an entire section of his book on chivalry is dedicated to the role ladies play within a knight's chivalric obligation. According to Geoffroi, if a lady loves a man who refuses to bear arms, she must feel "le cuer à malaise" [very uneasy and disconsolate] (Charny 120, 121). This literary tradition resulted in the development of the role of the medieval courtly lady as an impetus for whom the knight augments his status as a chivalric figure throughout the course of a literary piece.

Much scholarly focus has been placed on the role the courtly lady plays in Chrétien's work, especially as a traditional projection of courtly values. According to courtly literary tradition, the queen figure has the power to command a knight. The ideal knight must therefore adhere to her spoken and implied wishes. This common principle of chivalry often drives the plot so that the knight, to aggrandize his own glory, must serve and obey the queen. The queen embodies the courtly values that enable conquest. Her commands often send the knight on a journey to fulfill her desires or her needs. The voice of the queen is therefore central and has garnered the majority of scholarly attention concerning the knight's role as savior and servant to her.

Focusing instead on the female characters who do not come from the highest tier of nobility expands the argument regarding the role the queen plays in Chrétien's romances. These other female characters include the various ladies-in-waiting, the queen's entourage, and the demoiselles who appear at various literal and metaphorical crossroads. These ladies either facilitate actions or guide the knight's quest. The queen's role contrasts to the female messenger characters' roles and distinguishes the two, emphasizing the existence of the female messenger archetype. Through the female characters of the lower nobility and by analyzing the ways in which Chrétien de Troyes employs direct discourse in three of his five major romances, Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype can be observed in the ways in which they affect the plot by creating tension and aggrandize the knight's chivalric honor.

The queen figure and the ladies of the lower nobility exist within three romances of Chrétien de Troyes to reveal manifestations of feminine agency, as it relates to the women's role in the courtly chivalric literary structure. In contrast to the queen, whose generally formulaic

discourse and tendency to remain silent at pivotal moments in the plot serve primarily to uphold courtly literary convention, the influence that the ladies of the lower nobility have over the concrete action of the plot establishes their primary role throughout Chrétien's romances as messengers and guides. What is more, Chrétien often presents the speech of these women in the form of direct discourse, as they guide or redirect the knight on his quest, prescribing to these characters a certain level of power and personal agency within the narrative. The female messenger affects the knight or the plot while he is on his quest. Using her voice, this female messenger archetype sometimes calls upon the chivalric values of honor in battle and loyalty to lady to redirect him or the queen figure. In this way, she intervenes for herself or for someone on whose behalf she was sent. The concrete action that is provoked by the messenger's voice, in turn, enhances the knight's ability to realize his quest for honor and glory. This thus leads back to the realm of courtly tradition in which, ultimately, masculine concerns, agency, and action prevail.

From this complex chivalric narrative, two primary contrasting, yet typically complementary, female archetypes are utilized within Chrétien's romances: the queen figure archetype and the messenger archetype, whose use of direct discourse attributed by Chrétien helps to establish them in their prescribed roles. Carl Jung posited that the archetype is an image that is derived from "the collective unconscious" and are products of instinct that "pursue their inherent goals" (43). By applying Jung's theory into medieval literature, the historical and traditional values of a society resulted in certain character types that are tied to certain patterns of behavior and speech. The queen figure archetype, for example, functions overall as an empty vessel for courtly values. This is to say that the queen's role is so aristocratic and courtly that she

is limited in what she can actively do outside of inspiring a quest or accepting people into court. What makes the queen aristocratic and courtly is that she tends to delegate throughout the course of the narrative. She commands both knights and other female characters, using her social and political power that is rooted in her status as a royal lady of the highest noble status within the narrative. This seems an obvious statement; however, the literary implications are vast. The queen's limited capacity for direct action within the plot means that the other female characters are left with the more active roles, even when they are sent directly by the queen as a messenger or guide. Due to the courtly limitations set forth by the quest narrative of the *histoire d'aventure*, the queen generally speaks and acts in a passive manner, even when she is the one to convince the king to allow a knight to begin a quest. She is static within the walls of the court, while the knight, inspired by her, goes off on adventure.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the second type of archetype, the female messenger, is often played by a lady of the lower nobility. As the messenger archetype, she works directly with the knight and actively affects his quest by guiding him, assisting him with a problem, or redirecting him on his path.

As previously posited, the voice of the female messenger archetype, therefore, more often than not, directly influences the action of the plot. For example, in all but one of Chrétien's romances examined within this thesis, Guinevere is the recurring queen figure; she plays the same role of the static female character who embodies the literary courtly tradition of delegating and sparking the initial quest of the narrative within her domestic domain. The queen acts as a sort of background principle and so when her direct discourse is attributed to her, it functions

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to specify that this does not undermine her role as a political figure within the sociohistorical context in which the narrative takes place. She does indeed wield immense, individual power as the royal woman who sparks the quest that frames the rest of the narrative. Rather, the goal of this thesis is to analyze the queen as a narrative device as she compares to the female messenger archetype.

mostly to serve courtly convention. When the queen speaks, she tends to order the knight on a quest or give him a command within an official and noble capacity, or she welcomes the knight or courtly lady into the court and welcomes them into the narrative; and with her silence throughout the rest of the narrative, she solidifies that courtly role. In each of the romances, however, one female character functions particularly strongly as a contrast to the queen figure. These characters, who often function as female messenger archetypes, are different from the queen because they move; they foray away from the castle and from the court, and, in so doing, actively contribute to the plot through their voices and engagement in the action. Many of these ladies, whom Chrétien establishes as the female messenger archetype, use the conventions of courtly tradition to redirect the knight on his path, utilizing their voice to manipulate the situation and the knight.<sup>4</sup> This compares to the queen figure archetype because she tends to be used, by Chrétien as well as by some of the characters who represent the female messenger archetype, as the purest form of courtly convention and retains her role as an “object of exchange” for whom the knight must sacrifice everything (Kreuger 304). Ultimately, the women of the lower nobility, similar to the queen figure archetype, expand the knight’s potential for honor and virtue, while exercising active voices that directly affect the knight while on his quest.

When Chrétien attributes direct discourse to the female figures in his romances, that direct discourse, in turn, often translates into action by the knight or the female character herself. Within this narrative context, speech serves to keep the queen figure within the archetype of courtly conventions. As the courtly delegator, the queen does not physically take action during

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<sup>4</sup> While the messenger archetype indeed seems to embody certain attributes belonging to the trickster archetype, Jung posited that a key attribute belonging to the trickster archetype is their “malicious” nature, which excludes the majority of my examples in this thesis (*Four Archetypes* 160). For this reason, I propose that the messenger archetype is as much of an archaic phenomenon as the trickster archetype in terms of the literary psyche.

the quest or the narrative tension of the plot; she creates the quest narrative's initial purpose. On the other hand, through their speech, the ladies of the lower nobility tend to function as catalysts for concrete action that directly affects the knight's quest. Michel Foucault's compiled theory of discourse posits that "the principle of hierarchy remains at work" within a verbal discourse (Foucault 221). He discusses that it is impossible to deny that power dynamics and relationships continue to affect the discourse of any given situation. The system of discourse works to maintain these power dynamics and the system of hierarchy of any given culture. The courtly ladies' voices, therefore, reveal and perpetuate the role the courtly ladies of the lower nobility play as active messenger archetypes, especially as they correlate to their role in augmenting the glory of a knight. In Chrétien's romances, direct discourse reveals the power dynamics that exist within a literary piece. This is especially prominent concerning the voice of the female characters as narrative devices and their relationship to the action of the plot. One can thus trace the development of the female characters' voices and demonstrate how the courtly ladies of the lower nobility in Chrétien's romances are utilized by Chrétien as messenger archetypes, specifically through the active use of their voices.

What emerges within Chrétien's romances is that discourse is a way through which "power and desire" are socially yielded and defined (Foucault 221). In other words, the ladies of the lower nobility use their voices to spark action within the main quest itself and often join the action or use their voices to influence the action while it is occurring, giving them a degree of social power. Indeed, in the medieval French court, according to Albrecht Classen, "male courtly poets also recognized the profound relevance of gender discourse and more often than not gave credit to their female protagonists" (31). In their compositions, as in Chrétien's Arthurian

romances, direct discourse and gender combine to define Chrétien's use of different archetypal figures. The Foucauldian concept of power through discourse reveals how Chrétien uses the device of the female messenger archetype to amplify the knight's power within a piece as the central figure of chivalric honor. This means, for instance, that the men-at-arms who partake in the pastimes of "jousting, conversation, dancing, and singing in the company of ladies and damsels as honorably as is possible and fitting" can "make a good start, for glances and desire, love, reflection and memory...set [knights and men-at-arms] off on the right road and provide a beginning" in their search for honor and glory (Charny 113, 115). The company and voice of the lady are thus provided a certain amount of influence and power over the knight in question as she is the way through which he accomplishes his chivalric goals. Furthermore, traditional archetypes and literary role expectations amplify the power of the messenger archetype's voice.

In *Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory*, Chris Weedon explains that Foucault further defines discourse as the "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them" (108). In Chrétien's romances, the courtly ladies and their voices play a specific role as dictated by their status and gender that, as a result, prescribes them a certain level of power and agency, even as they are bound to the chivalric narrative, which remains an inherently masculine genre. By a masculine genre, I refer to the tendency of the knight figure's chivalric glory to be the focal point of the narrative. This means that the courtly ladies' voices and subsequent actions ultimately retain their value as reflections of the knight's own potential for more honor and glory. Furthermore, in her article "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics," Judith Butler states that "the performativity of gender is thus bound up with the

differential ways in which subjects become eligible for recognition” (4). Within a literary context, Chrétien’s use of the archetypal figure and gender power relations demonstrates the socio-historical reality that simultaneously, where discourse attributed to certain female characters aids in creating patterns of behavior within their characters. By utilizing twelfth century gender power relations as pertains to the literary role the ladies of the lower nobility play, Chrétien attributes direct discourse to the courtly ladies and transforms them into manifestations of the female messenger archetype. E. Jane Burns, in *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature*, discusses the idea of a “doubled discourse” where “exploring how the female body often functions in a range of Old French literary texts both as a site for the construction of femininity according to a logic that bolsters male subjectivity and as a locus for developing an alternative reading of female subjectivity” (17). Chrétien attributes direct discourse to certain ladies of the lower nobility to provide the narrative with a duality of gender relations, power dynamics, and performed courtly femininity that work to drive the plot forward within the Arthurian *histoire d’aventure*. Chrétien uses the female characters of the lower nobility to establish the phenomenon of courtly gender performativity and power dynamics. He creates the tension between gender performativity and power dynamics by having the female characters use their knowledge of the literary courtly expectations. Chrétien specifically focuses on a knight’s obligatory service to a lady and the knight’s obligation to aggrandize his own chivalric glory in battle. Ultimately, Chrétien uses the female characters of the lower nobility to manipulate the knight’s obligations to the knight’s or the female characters’ own benefit.

The three romances at the center of this study are *Érec et Énide*, *Lancelot ou Le chevalier de la charrette*, and *Yvain ou Le chevalier au lion*. *Érec et Énide* is believed to be Chrétien’s

earliest romance. The character of Énide, the daughter of a poor vavasor, and the development of her active voice throughout the romance demonstrates her archetypal duality. *Lancelot ou Le chevalier de la charrette* and *Yvain ou Le chevalier au lion*, on the other hand, stand as cases in point for Chrétien's more crystallized use of the female messenger archetype. Together, these two romances reflect the development of the archetypal role the ladies of the lower nobility play in Chrétien's romances, while demonstrating the complexity behind the dichotomous view that archetypes remain exclusively separate from each other as the plot interacts with the archetypal roles prescribed to certain character types.

## CHAPTER 1: ARCHETYPAL DUALITY IN *ÉREC ET ÉNIDE*

The plot of *Érec et Énide* focuses on the knight Érec, and Énide, the daughter of a poor vavasor who marries Érec and transitions from lower nobility to a courtly princess. After being married and living for a time in marital bliss, Érec overhears Énide lamenting the fact that Érec has not ventured out on quests to gain more honor and glory for himself or his court because he has been too distracted by his love for her. In response, he takes her on a quest, giving her one order: she must not speak unless he allows her to speak. Disobeying his orders, she warns him of oncoming danger. He forgives her the first time. After it happens another time, however, he tells her he will never forgive her. He subsequently ignores her throughout the rest of the romance. During a battle with a count, Érec is grievously wounded, and another count tries to kidnap and forcefully marry Énide. Her shouting and protests wake Érec up from his comatose state and he fights the count. The count is defeated, and Érec and Énide return to the court of Nantes, where they are eventually crowned king and queen.

As is typical of most analyses, there are exceptions and complexities behind any theoretical basis or defined character type within a narrative. Literary archetypes, as a reflection of the human social psyche, reflect this ambiguous reality. With that in mind, we can consider *Érec et Énide* as an example of Chrétien's earliest and most complex use of the queen figure and female messenger archetypes. In *Érec et Énide*, the female protagonist, Énide, undergoes a social transformation wherein she rises from daughter of an impoverished vavasor to princess when she marries Érec. Énide might, at first, seem to play the role of "object of exchange" through her silence and passivity at the beginning of the narrative, which aligns her more closely with the queen archetype in Chrétien's pieces than with the messenger archetype (Kreuger 304).

However, the conflict she plays out later on between silence and speech demonstrates her ambiguous place as an archetypal figure within Chrétien's works. Indeed, one can say that she simultaneously represents both archetypes. What determines both this conflict and, ultimately, her role as a messenger archetype, is her speech. Grace Armstrong states that "Chrétien de Troyes's heroines, in contrast to their male counterparts who generally prefer militaristic activity to the word, acquire and exert the only power of which they are capable by raising their voice, by mastering speech" (1). Indeed, Énide utilizes her power as a lady who can speak to protect Érec and to manipulate the situations in which she and Érec find themselves.

The voice of Énide plays a large role in the plot of the romance, especially because her voice directly correlates to the passages of the romance that contain the most significant action. She speaks against Érec's orders each time he is in danger. Énide redirects Érec's quest for glory, while simultaneously creating tension between Érec's abilities as a knight able to defend himself without the aid of his wife and her desire to save him. Énide also shows the tension between her desire to guide Érec and aid him in attaining his honor and her duty to obey and honor her lord's and husband's command. Énide's inability to remain verbally passive, which, more often than not, is a characteristic of the queen figure, demonstrates her original role as lady of the lower nobility, rather than the queen archetype she should now fall into as the wife of a soon-to-be king. Énide thus incarnates the diversity behind the messenger archetype as presented within Chrétien's earliest romance.

In contrast, the queen figure of this piece, Guinevere, remains "the same" throughout the course of the romance, as noted by Joan Tasker Grimbert in her analysis (Grimbert 50). Grimbert refers to the nonverbal and verbal signs in the romances and demonstrates how "those who

evolve in the course of the romance usually grow in their ability to interpret their experiences” (50). This concept of the characteristically static queen figure can be observed at the beginning of the romance, when Guinevere talks directly to Érec after a dwarf repeatedly strikes a demoiselle whom the queen had sent to talk to the knight the dwarf was guarding. When the queen says to Érec, “bel ami, allez lui parler et dites-lui de venir sans faute: je veux faire sa connaissance et celle de son amie” [good friend Érec, go over to the knight and tell him to come to me without fail: I want to meet both him and his lady] (Troyes 7; Kibler 39), she sparks the second part of the quest.<sup>5</sup> With just her voice, the queen sends the knight, Érec, on his quest, which leads him to Énide. The queen’s voice in this passage thus serves a dual purpose. Firstly, she amplifies his chivalric glory by providing him with a quest. Secondly, she provides him an opportunity to grow in his duty to a lady, both to his queen and, eventually, to his wife. The queen’s importance thus lies in her role as the character who begins the quest and sets up the first narrative tension of the romance. The whole romance depends on her verbally demanding Érec to chase Yder, the knight. Ultimately, however, the queen does not physically immerse herself in the actual quest. The queen does, however, ask “Dites-moi, sire, savez-vous quand reviendra Érec?” [Tell me, sir, do you know when Erec will return?] (Troyes 31). From her place in court, she asks about the quest, keeping her distance from the action, while maintaining the authority over the narrative tension, using her voice. This voice, however, is not accompanied by action pertaining to the quest itself; that role is taken up by Énide.

Énide emphasizes Guinevere’s static nature as a queen who plays a consistent narrative role because she embodies the tension between the queen figure and the messenger figure.

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<sup>5</sup> Most of the quotes by Chrétien are supported by William W. Kibler

Furthermore, Énide's voice commences and further realizes her internal tension between her role as it pertains to the two different character types within the narrative, the queen figure archetype and the female messenger archetype. She embodies the conflict of the "doubled discourse," which demonstrates the "fundamental paradox of speaking from the female body" (Burns, *Bodytalk* 18). She must embody both the courtly lady of the highest tier of nobility and the courtly lady of the lower nobility from which she originally came. This duality of archetypal character, in turn, interacts with her external literary reality imbued with the chivalric narrative, where she must adhere to her character type as the wife of the knight who is on the quest. In this way, she must honor her knight, Érec, and, in the end, aid in increasing his chivalric glory, even if this only results as a consequence of her spoken internal conflict, manifested through her monologues. One particular passage that embodies this tension within *Érec et Énide* is the moment in which the queen invites Énide into court. By this point, Énide still has not spoken. The queen, however, uses her own voice to welcome Énide into court, while simultaneously signifying her welcome speech through the symbol of a new dress with which Guinevere provides Énide. Érec insists that Énide, who by this point in the romance has not yet spoken, should wear her tunic that as a poor woman, she has worn "si longtemps... que les deux manches en sont trouées au coude" [poverty has made her wear this white dress so often that both sleeves are worn through at the elbows] (Troyes 39; Kibler 57). Énide's silence in this passage emphasizes the tension between Énide's current impoverished state and low social status and her transition to higher social status. Érec goes asks the queen: "Ne pensez-vous, ma douce dame, qu'elle a besoin d'une belle et élégante robe?" [My sweet lady, now consider this; for, as you can see, she has need of a fine and fitting dress] (Troyes 40; Kibler 57). The queen responds with

“Vous avez très bien fait. Il est juste qu’elle reçoive une de mes robes et je vais immédiatement lui en offrir une” [You have acted very properly; it is right that she should have one of mine, and I shall immediately give her an elegant and beautiful, brand-new one] (Troyes 40, Kibler 57). This reply underscores Énide’s silence, and the queen’s direct discourse marks Énide’s transition from humble daughter of a vavasor to princess. Her social transition occurs because the queen’s speech welcomes Énide into her higher status as Érec’s wife and a part of the court, much in the same way that the queen figure typically sparks the quest narrative. The episode welcoming Énide into Arthur’s court is significant because it leads to Énide’s internal conflict, which then leads to her saving Érec. By the end of the narrative, the chain of events sparked by Énide’s and Guinevere’s initial interaction provides the Érec with greater honor in battle when he completes the quest, while simultaneously allowing him to serve and honor his wife and lady, Énide.

Furthermore, this passage allows the queen to retain her political power through her voice, while setting up Énide’s transition to her place in court. The queen solidifies the transition when she orders Énide, “Ma demoiselle, ce biau, qui vaut plus de cent marcs d’argent, je vous ordonne de l’échanger contre votre tunique, car je veux maintenant vous honorer” [My damsel, I order you to replace this meagre dress with this tunic, which is worth more than a hundred marks of silver. I wish to honour you in this manner] (Troyes 41; Kibler 57). E. Jane Burns states that “clothing constructs a range of gender and social identities for the courtly couple, not in terms of immutable sex differences, but as spacings on a continuum,” (“Refashioning Courtly Love” 115). Here, Énide’s clothing, along with her silence and Guinevere’s speech, mix to create a sense of transitory social status. It is a slight shift in perspective but remains an important note to make towards the case study of Énide as both a messenger archetype and queen figure as the

narrative continues. This social transition, enabled by the queen's voice and Énide's silence, sets up the quest where Énide will be forced to reckon with her archetypal duality. Énide's character displays an ambiguous example of both the queen and the messenger archetypes, but nevertheless, Énide retains her role as both plot-pusher and passive object subject to the domain of the court, as we shall soon see.

Interestingly enough, Énide soon assumes the role of the queen figure archetype in her first tormented monologue. This occurs when she laments her husband's social downfall because he is so obsessed with her that he will not enter into tournaments if it requires being separated from her. Indeed, the first words attributed to Énide by Chrétien are a lament expressing the courtly expectations of the French medieval period. Érec breaks the social rule that he is obligated to partake in honorable pastimes such as "jousting, conversation, dancing, and singing in the company of ladies" (Charny 113). Énide, in response to this breach in courtly tradition, exclaims "que malheureuse fut ma destinée! Qu'est-ce que je suis venue chercher ici en partant de mon pays?" [Unhappy me! Why did I come here from my land?] (Troyes 63; Kibler 68). In doing this, she fulfills two roles: she follows the courtly view that to be a lady means partially to be filled with a "le cuer à malaise" should her knight refuse to take up arms and bring honor to himself and her, while also establishing herself as the courtly lady who inspires Érec's quest (Charny 120). What initially appears to be "the first in a series of curt, but disruptively uncourtly, statements" takes on an essential narrative function (Burns, *Bodytalk* 159). Érec hears her and decides to go on a quest, taking Énide along with him. This moment is so significant and singular because it demonstrates a decisive moment in Énide's journey as an archetype. Chrétien's use of

Énide as the queen figure archetype in this romance, however, is later obscured by her role throughout the rest of the romance as intervener, guide, and, essentially, messenger.

According to E. Jane Burns, Énide's "constructed voice cannot be as fetishized as her fictive flesh" (*Bodytalk* 158). She refers to this as "gender trouble" in that Énide calls into question the "very *conte d'aventure* that creates her as a silent object of the heroic knight's desire" (Burns, *Bodytalk* 159). However, it can also be argued that this, consequentially, redirects the focus of the female voices in the narrative. This also demonstrates the tension between Énide's importance as the queen figure archetype whose value rests in her fleshly appearance, as well as her role as the female messenger archetype who, through her voice, has the power to influence the action of the plot. As the narrative progresses, she becomes a greater testament to Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype because of the direct discourse attributed to her by Chrétien, which affects the direction of the plot.

Érec orders Énide not to speak "un seul mot de sa bouche sans qu'il ne lui en donne la permission" [mind you do not speak to me unless I speak to you first] (Troyes 73; Kibler 71), which enables Énide's transition from queen figure to female messenger. This transition is made possible because the interdiction gives way to Énide's later disobedience of her lord and husband's wishes, when Énide demonstrates that she feels obligated to protect Érec, even if it is against his will. Her monologues prior to her dialogue with Érec and the count who kidnaps her show the conflict between her role as lady of the court and her role as queen-to-be, while her dialogue evokes a sense of diplomatic urgency, wherein she takes up the role of messenger. This can be seen before her first instance of disobedience, when she says "Je ne sais que dire ou que faire, car mon seigneur m'a fort menacée de me punir si je lui parlais de quoi que ce soit" [what

can I say? My lord will be killed or taken prisoner, for they are three and he is alone] (Troyes 74; Kibler 72). This monologue that precedes her disobedience exemplifies her role as the queen figure archetype because she is still distant from the action of the plot and tied by the conventions behind the shame of having a knight who refuses to bear arms for honor. She faces the tension that the narrative conflict renders necessary on her part: she simply must speak up, for his sake. The monologue becomes an outburst of warning, where Énide exclaims, “Sire!- Quoi, que voulez-vous me dire?-Sire, de grace! Je veux vous dire que cinq chevaliers sont sortis de ce bois, ce qui me fait grandement peur” [Fair lord, what are you thinking of? Here come three knights spurring after you in hot pursuit; I am afraid you will be harmed] (Troyes 74; Kibler 72). With her voice, Énide “sets the central episodes of the text in motion” (Ramey 3). Unlike Lunete in *Yvain*, who will willingly and, indeed, quite forcefully, push herself into the position of female messenger, Énide is pressed into the archetype of the female messenger by narrative necessity. The plot would not work without this moment, in which Énide actively influences the outcome of Érec’s potential defeat, speaking out against his orders and against her courtly role as a princess, even though he says to her after that he hates that she speaks to him: “je déteste que vous me parliez” [I hate that you spoke to me] (Troyes 75). The reality of her position as princess conflicts in this moment with the narrative need for her to step beyond that role and play the role of the female messenger.

While the role of the female messenger archetype tends to be played by a lady of the lower nobility who is often a secondary character in the overall narrative, Chrétien attributes that position in this particular *roman* to Énide, who is a princess and the only courtly lady close enough to Érec capable of influencing the action of the plot in this manner. Énide’s use of

monologue returns after the second incident, when Érec is asleep. Énide's internalization of Érec's shaming her for having spoken before is projected outward. This queen figure, the epitome of the courtly princess, says, "Malheureuse que je suis, en quelle triste destinée je me vois par mon orgueil et mon outrecuidance!" [How unhappy I am, in such a sad destiny I see myself as a result of my pride and my impudence] (Troyes 76; Kibler 75). In this instance, through her speech, she verbalizes the courtly values which acknowledge her worth as a silent object, whose role as a courtly lady who should remain silent, unless functioning directly as an amplification of the knight's own glory, casts her as more the queen figure archetype than the messenger archetype. Again, while the messenger archetype serves the same purpose of aggrandizing the knight's chivalric honor, the lady characters who fulfill this role tend to actively speak to influence the knight while he is on his quest. This speech is often associated with direct action, while the queen figure is defined either by her narrative silence or her formulaic speeches.

Énide's struggle between silence and speech while outside of the princess's courtly domain defines her as a dual archetype, wherein the seemingly contradictory roles of queen archetype and female messenger archetype exist simultaneously, suggesting that neither figure is an exclusive concept.<sup>6</sup> The monologues delivered by Énide embody this struggle. Peter Dembowski states that Chrétien's use of monologue is dependent on an "interior debate" (106). Dembowski discusses that monologues in Chrétien's romances often portray a split in the personality of the protagonist (106). In the case of Énide, that interior debate further becomes an external manifestation of her internal confusion at her social reality. When Chrétien "obliterates

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<sup>6</sup> By princess, I refer in this instance to the courtly lady who is directly next in line to be queen.

the formal distinction between the monologue and the dialogue,” he plays with the concept of the female messenger archetype and the queen figure archetype (Dembowski 107).

Interestingly, there is one other instance of Chrétien’s use of the female messenger archetype in *Érec et Énide*. In one episode, a maiden who tells Érec that, “deux géants, ennemis mortels de mon ami, sont en train de l’emmener prisonnier” [my beloved has been taken prisoner by two evil and cruel giants] (Troyes 106; Kibler 90). She has a short passage in which she converses with Érec and asks of him: “secourez mon ami si vous le pouvez” [assist [my]beloved] (Troyes 107; Kibler 90). The young woman interrupts Érec’s quest and redirects it for the purpose of Érec’s greater glory so that the young woman becomes his “servant,” indebted to Érec, while simultaneously using her words to directly affect the plot when Érec is in the midst of his quest with Énide (Troyes 107). The young woman’s voice leads Érec to become grievously wounded, which, in turn, leads to the development of Énide’s own narrative voice as the female messenger archetype because Énide must, once again, assume a more active role in the narrative.

In Énide’s lamentation after realizing that Érec had been fatally wounded, she exclaims, “Un silence judicieux n’a jamais fait de tort à personne” [A good silence never harms anyone but speaking often causes harm!] (Troyes 113; Kibler 94). In other words, Énide shows that she blames Érec’s death on her speech. By chiding herself for being outspoken, Énide reasserts her own sense of courtly values that are forming within her newly transitioning personality as a princess who is in line to be queen. Through her monologues that act as “*extended* direct discourse,” Énide thus embodies the conflict between the two archetypes as pertaining to the theme of social status and social status shifts within Chrétien’s romances (Dembowski 107).

Furthermore, while silence was not demanded of a queen, obedience to the lord—hers to Érec—was among “the messages” on the role of women, that, at the time, “would have been clear and unmistakable” (Ramey 10). The Jungian concept of archetype, wherein the archetype is an image that is derived from “the collective unconscious” is, in the case of Énide, expanded to demonstrate the complexity behind the social dichotomy between the queen archetype and the female messenger archetype and its original ambiguity existing within Chrétien’s works (Davis 28). The repeated interdiction resulting from Érec’s order for silence, combined with the fact that Énide transitioned from lower nobility to queen-to-be status, creates tension, which results in Énide as the unwitting embodiment of an archetypal duality, in which she demonstrates two archetypal patterns that switch back and forth between queen and female messenger as the narrative progresses.

As the narrative develops, and Érec is thought to be dead from his wounds from saving the demoiselle’s beloved from the giants, Énide becomes the primary voice in the narrative, especially when she interacts with the other male characters who wish to have Énide as their wife. The primary example of this would be the count who hears her laments and wishes to marry her. Énide refuses to submit to the count, telling him, “Jamais je ne vous trouverai assez méchant pour me faire faire votre volonté même si vous m’arrachiez les yeux de vos propres mains ou me dépeciez toute vivante!” [I’ll never find you so fearsome that I’ll do any more or less for you, even if right now with your own hands you were to tear out my eyes or skin me alive!] (Troyes 119; Kibler 96). The important line, however, is delivered by the narrator, who points out that Énide’s voice alerts Érec to the trouble ahead, where he “entend la voix de sa femme” [hears his lady’s voice] (Troyes 119; Kibler 96). Érec then jumps up and fights the

count, after feeling the anguish of hearing her loud voice; this acknowledgment of the power behind Énide's voice in affecting the narrative by alarming and directing Érec's quest, as well as his personal strength, shows the phenomenon of Énide's duality as an archetypal figure. In this instance, Énide sets up the next action sequences that result in Érec's greater chivalric victory.

Énide's archetypal duality is further seen in the passage in which she bargains with a rival knight, Guivret, for Érec's life. Stepping into the fight, Énide says to the knight Guivret, "sois noble et courtois et renonce par générosité à ce combat que tu as entrepris" [Now be generous and noble, and in generosity abandon this combat that you have begun] (Troyes 123; Kibler 98-9). In this instance, Énide takes on an almost diplomatic role. Énide successfully convinces Guivret to let Érec go without further harm. This moment leads Guivret to reveal his own quest, which is fascinating because, in this passage, Énide assists both Érec in his survival and Guivret in his quest to rescue the supposed damsel from the count through the power of Énide's own speech.

That is the last passage in which Énide speaks with the voice of the female messenger. In the following section, Énide is described only by the narrator as "pensive" [thoughtful] and as a "dame courtoise" [courtly or courteous lady] (Troyes 151). Although she speaks directly to her cousin, she speaks not as a diplomat, but as a courtly princess who is, once again, transitioning into a status of higher nobility and higher honor when she rejoins her family in court, who are discovered to be high-born and noble. The narrator's voice replaces her own, and her defining feature sinks back into the realm of queenly values dictated by those around her who admire her. Her voice disappears, and she, once again, assumes the role of "object" that was defined by her initial silence at the beginning of the narrative, before her marriage to Érec (Kreuger 304). The

quest ends, and her disobedience, which enabled Érec to survive and thrive within his chivalric duty, remains unmentioned and forgotten. The traces of her disobedience reside in his amplified glory as a knight who went forth into the world and saved others, including Énide and himself.

*Érec et Énide* demonstrates the stirrings of the female messenger figure in Chrétien de Troyes's romances, illustrating the conflict between queen and messenger as embodied through one character. Énide's tormented monologues reveal this conflict, while her dialogue works to resolve the external conflict of the plot. Through Énide's conflict as a dual archetype, she creates the action of the plot and resolves much of the plot tension, even as she reckons with her own internal tension. As we will see, compared to the other two romances discussed, Énide intriguingly demonstrates the exception to, as well as the complexity behind, the one-dimensional messenger archetype the ladies of the lower nobility play in Chrétien's later romances.

## CHAPTER 2: A PLOT TRACED BY THE MESSENGER FIGURE IN

### *LANCELOT OU LE CHEVALIER DE LA CHARRETTE*

In this romance, Queen Guinevere is kidnapped by the bad knight and prince, Méléagant, and taken prisoner in his land of Gorre. Lancelot, sworn to protect and serve his lady, Guinevere, embarks on a quest to save her. However, at the beginning of this quest, he encounters a dwarf who offers him transportation in a prison cart, which would publicly mark him with shame. Lancelot, aware of the shame in which getting into the cart would result, hesitates for two steps. This hesitation haunts him throughout the quest and angers Guinevere so that, besides his original quest to save her from Méléagant, he must also earn back her trust through tournaments and various battles against Méléagant. Along the way, he also saves Arthur's people who had been kidnapped by Méléagant's father, King Bademagu. In looking for Guinevere and saving Arthur's people, Lancelot interacts with various courtly ladies whom he aids and who, in turn, aid him. One of the maidens is Méléagant's sister, who saves him from a tower in which he is imprisoned by Méléagant. He defeats Méléagant, beheading him, and brings Guinevere back to Arthur's court, restoring his honor in the eyes of the court after entering the cart and proving his love for Guinevere after hesitating for two steps.

The romance *Lancelot*, compared to *Érec et Énide*, contains clearer manifestations of the female messenger archetype. In *Lancelot*, there are multiple courtly ladies whose presence and voice correlate to the action of the plot. Indeed, one can trace Lancelot's journey by the maidens and ladies of the court with whom he interacts. Throughout the narrative, these ladies use their voices to guide, redirect and intervene on his behalf. The ladies' voices work as narrative tools

through which they enable the knight's greater glory, while simultaneously maintaining courtly values, so that "discourses have an impact on individuals as they are discursively constructed and constituted" (Diaz-Bone 10). In *Lancelot*, various women who are of the court interact with it. The queen is forced out of her castle when she is kidnapped. This creates a queen who is absent from the action of the plot but one who still sparks the initial quest, as she must be rescued because so much of the queen's importance lies in her knowledge of Lancelot's hesitation to enter the cart, which would take away his honor in the eyes of the public. In other words, she represents an instance in which the queen herself may be forced away from her domestic domain, but she still remains a delegator who controls the knight, Lancelot. Jane Burns writes that "Guenevere, as a temporary prisoner of King Bademagu in Gorre, is defined in the *Charrette*, in terms of flesh alone when Bademagu assures Lancelot of her safekeeping by stating that no one has touched her *char*" ("Refashioning Courtly Love" 120). This emphasis on her flesh, her body as an object of courtly femininity, highlights her role as a vessel for courtly values and for knight's chivalric glorification in regard to her place as center point for the initial chivalric action as the object of that action. That is to say that she is the reason for the overall quest and the narrative as a whole, whether she is physically present within the passages or not, whether she is silent or not. This differs from the other courtly ladies within this romance upon whom Lancelot stumbles and for whom he fulfills various requests. The ladies themselves seem to take their words and directly transform that into action that brings Lancelot closer to accomplishing his overall goal, which is to obey and serve Guenevere and earn her forgiveness, while saving her.

The queen is, from the beginning, more an "object of exchange" than a character with agency or a narrative device that has power over the actual action of the plot (Kreuger 304). This

is seen at the beginning of the narrative when Keu, King Arthur and Guinevere are discussing how to convince Keu to stay in the kingdom because he wishes to leave as he feels he is not trusted. Keu tells Arthur, “Allons, confiez-la-moi” [Now trust her to me] (Troyes 511; Kibler 209), asking for an actual exchange in which Keu remains a part of Arthur’s court if Keu is permitted to travel with Guinevere alone. Arthur agrees to let Guinevere go with Keu as though she were just an object to be handed over without negotiation. Significantly, both Guinevere and Arthur agree, Guinevere with her silence and Arthur, when he says, “Dame, sans conteste, il faut vous en aller avec Keu” [My lady, there is no way to prevent your going with Kay] (Troyes 511-12; Kibler 209). In this dialogue, Guinevere is the one who suggests that the king must do as Keu “dira” [says] and grant Keu what he wants and thus is responsible for the quest that would send Lancelot to rescue her from Méléagant (Troyes 511; Kibler 209). In this way, she fulfills the queen figure archetype.

In this romance, the messenger archetype and the queen figure archetype at times, work together to further the chivalric values imbued within the narrative. Interestingly, in an episode toward the end of the romance, the queen speaks through the voice of one particular “jeune fille habile et intelligente” [clever, pretty girl] (Troyes 646; Kibler 276), whom Chrétien uses as a female messenger archetype in this romance. As Lancelot, disguised as a red knight, participates in the tournaments, the queen suspects it is he, so she tests him to make sure. To do this, the queen sends a young woman, telling her to tell Lancelot, “Au pire” [Do your worst] (Troyes 646; Kibler 277). That Lancelot obeys the queen whose orders were delivered by the messenger thus maintains the queen’s power over Lancelot as his lady, while providing a platform through which the young maiden has the opportunity to move the quest forward and affect the knight’s

quest directly using her voice. The female messenger again influences the knight on his quest when the queen sends the messenger again, and she says that, “Maintenant, ma dame vous demande, seigneur, de faire au mieux que vous pourrez” [Sir, now my lady orders you to ‘do the best you can’] (Troyes 652; Kibler 279). In this case, the female messenger archetype serves the queen and thus directly serves the code of chivalry. While her words emphasize her role as the female messenger archetype because they cause a ripple effect of action that affects the plot, she nonetheless enables greater honor and glory for Lancelot when he regains the trust of the queen and the glory of the tournament.

In a later scene, the voice of the messenger in the episode above further enables the queen to forgive Lancelot for hesitating two steps to enter the cart. The stirrings of this forgiveness can already be observed and is perhaps even prompted by the messenger girl, who informs the queen, “Madame, je n’ai jamais vu un chevalier d’aussi bonne disposition, car il veut sans réserve obéir à tous vos ordres” [my lady, I have never seen a more agreeable knight, for he is perfectly willing to do whatever you command of him] (Troyes 653; Kibler 280). By verbalizing Lancelot’s loyalty to the queen, the messenger emphasizes his chivalric honor and affirms his loyalty to his lady. This line, spoken by the messenger girl, forces the queen to reckon with the fact that Lancelot is striving to prove himself to her, to the point of risking his personal honor at court. This exchange of words also enables the queen to remain within her role as delegator. The tournament passage illustrates the intricacy behind Chrétien’s use of the female messenger archetype and the queen figure archetype as they interact with each other within the narrative. As Lancelot faces increasingly complex situations, the different courtly ladies play their prescribed roles to move the plot towards Lancelot’s ultimate chivalric triumph.

From the beginning of Lancelot's quest to save Guinevere, Lancelot and Gawain encounter maidens who actively affect their quest. For example, when they sleep in a castle on the first night of their quest, after Lancelot hesitates to get into the cart, a "demoiselle élégamment habillée" [attractively attired girl] (Troyes 528; Kibler 212) tells them that a certain bed within the castle "n'a pas été fait pour vous" [was not prepared for you] (Troyes 528; Kibler 213). By prohibiting and warning Lancelot against using the bed, her discourse seems to provoke a challenge from Lancelot, who replies, "je veux me coucher et reposer tout à loisir" [I want to lie down in this bed and rest as long as I like] (Troyes 519; Kibler 213). In this example, the female messenger archetype provides the opportunity for Lancelot to challenge their conception of his shame concerning his hesitation to ride in the cart at the beginning of his quest. However, her relevance as a messenger archetype is once again coupled by, in this particular case, a direct action that arms Lancelot for the future because she wishes to show him "courtoisie" (Troyes 521). The woman gives him a lance and a horse after she mocks him for getting into the cart earlier on in the narrative (Troyes 521; Kibler 214). Her contradictory messages in this passage emphasize Lancelot's need to gain back his chivalric honor through various courageous acts. The woman's words, coupled with the action of giving him a horse and lance, not only illustrate his need to gain back his honor but also foretell the future of the quest, as is typical of many of the interventions by female messenger characters. The woman prepares him for battle, while mocking his lack of honor. Indeed, many courtly ladies seem to influence the plot while foreshadowing the future of that plot with their words.

One such female character whose voice actively directs both Gawain and Lancelot at the beginning of their quest is a "demoiselle" upon whom they stumbled at a crossroads, where they

must choose between two different paths that would dictate which knight would cross the Sword Bridge and which knight would cross the Underwater Bridge later on in the quest (Troyes 522; Kibler 215). The maiden tells them that “je pourrais bien moyennant certaines assurances de votre part, vous mettre dans le droit chemin et sur la bonne voie” [If you promise me enough, I can show you the right road] (Troyes 522; Kibler 215). In this passage, the female messenger archetype, in a very literal sense, directs them on their path, using her voice to deliver the message. By warning them of where the two different paths lead, and as the possibility for chivalric glory becomes a spoken option from which to choose, the maiden sets up the tension that occurs later, delivered to the knights through a demoiselle at a crossroads. She shows them the two options, becoming, herself, a metaphorical crossroads through which she becomes the source of tension created by the weight of their options and subsequent choices. In this way, the maiden’s presence and speech lead to the next step in the knights’ quests. She also sets up a later conflict, as they are both beholden to her by a spoken promise, agreed upon during their first meeting: “Chacun de vous doit me donner en échange une recompense à mon gré” [Each of you must grant me a favour of my choosing] (Troyes 524; Kibler 216). She is an interesting example of the female messenger archetype as Chrétien uses her to advance the action of that specific passage, while simultaneously setting up the tension for the challenges of the quest pertaining to the Sword Bridge, where Lancelot, upon finding the Sword Bridge to pass into Bademagu’s land, must cross the bridge and cut himself on its sharp edges. In the passage in which the maiden at the crossroads informs Lancelot of his options, she provides Lancelot with the opportunity to be chivalric. It is, however, also important to note that he remains humble in letting Gawain choose which path he would like to take. These attributes are all revealed by the decisions the

demoiselle's speech in this passage provokes from the two knights, especially the protagonist, Lancelot. This particular embodiment of the female messenger archetype thus shows the multi-faceted purpose this archetype plays. She foreshadows and creates the later plot tension of the Sword Bridge enabling Lancelot's greater chivalric glory later on in the narrative, while revealing Lancelot's courtly nature when Lancelot allows Gawain to choose which path he would prefer to take.

Many of these female messenger archetypes validate Lancelot's worth as a chivalric knight who is good and honorable. Their speech, in the form of requests, therefore, offers the opportunity to demonstrate the inherent chivalric goodness within Lancelot. They, however, differ from the queen because of their close physical proximity to the action of the quest itself. Another young woman who provides Lancelot the opportunity to grow in his personal glory through the situation she creates with her speech and subsequent actions appears while Lancelot is in the forest. She appears "tard dans la soirée" [near nightfall] (Troyes 530; Kibler 219) and tells him that "ma maison est à votre disposition" [my lodging nearby is set to welcome you] (Troyes 530; Kibler 219). Once Lancelot accepts the invitation to stay the night, and she guides him to her castle, a scene in which she stages a rape with her guards occurs.<sup>7</sup> The fake rape scene that follows, where she yells to Lancelot "À l'aide!" [Help!] (Troyes 533; Kibler 221) emphasizes Lancelot's chivalric obligation to save her as a "noble chevalier" [Gentle knight]

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<sup>7</sup> This example of the messenger archetype does show more characteristics of the trickster archetype in terms of having a "malicious" nature towards the beginning of her appearance in this *roman* (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 160). This maiden in the woods also demonstrates the "trickster cycle" in which she develops and matures into a more civilized being throughout her presence in the *roman*, as is further explained later on in this chapter (Jung, *Four Archetypes* 172). This means that she begins as manipulative and then changes into a more gentile, courtly woman who does not manipulate Lancelot. However, unlike with Jung's trickster archetype, the maiden does not seem to simply remain civilized until "the conscious should find itself in a critical or doubtful situation" (*Four Archetypes* 173). Rather, even in those moments where the conscious meets conflict later on, she turns to the knight and calls upon the civilized rule of chivalry so that he will protect her. It is not malicious in nature but adaptive adherence to the established chivalric paradigm.

(Troyes 533; Kibler 221). Her action of faking a rape scene and her words demanding Lancelot's help call him to rise to the occasion, which proves Lancelot's chivalric nature and leads to the next part of the action, where he must, once again, act chivalrously and escort her. In the scene as in the one discussed above, Lancelot thus encounters another messenger archetype whose presence and intervention creates and results in shaping the path of his quest.

In the other romances such as *Yvain*, the messenger archetype plays a role in maintaining the higher nobility's chivalric or courtly place, similar to the lady who calls for help during her fake rape scene, fully understanding that Lancelot would have no choice but to oblige her. This demoiselle continues to challenge and manipulate Lancelot. She uses his obligation to take care of her later on the next day, when he is preparing to leave her castle. The woman states, "Seigneur, je vous accompagnerais longtemps en ce voyage, si vous osiez m'emmener et m'escorter selon les us et coutumes institués bien avant nous au royaume de Logres" [Sir, if you dare to escort me according to the customs and usages that have been observed in the Kingdom of Logres since long before our days, I will accompany you some distance along this way] (Troyes 539; Kibler 223). The woman inserts herself in his quest and accompanies Lancelot, voicing his courtly duty towards her in order to persuade him to escort her. She even chooses the path she believes is best, stating that "Seigneur, nous marcherons mieux pour ici" [I'm certain we'll do better to go this way] (Troyes 540; Kibler 224). Her choice leads to the prophesy tomb stones that foretell Lancelot's future place of burial. It also leads to the man who wishes to kidnap the demoiselle, for which Lancelot must argue for her freedom. This woman becomes the

facilitator of his reconciliation arc in these passages.<sup>8</sup> Her words provoke the next conflict of the narrative, in which a man chases her, and she informs Lancelot that this man “pense à coup sûr m’emmener avec lui sans rencontrer de résistance” [believes without a doubt that he can carry me off with him without meeting any resistance] (Troyes 544; Kibler 226).

This woman’s archetypal role as an active agent within her own plot, as well as a lady responsible for aggrandizing Lancelot’s chivalric glory, continues when she commands Lancelot, “Si vous pouvez me protéger, alors, je *dirai* sans mentir que vous êtes un preux, d’une très grande valeur” [If you can protect me, then I shall be able to say without lying that you are a bold and worthy knight] (Troyes 544; Kibler 226). By helping her, Lancelot affects the direction of his own quest, defending a lady and preparing for his reconciliation arc as a once-disgraced knight in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of his queen, Guinevere. This woman shapes him further into a chivalric figure using her words, which then lead to the action of the plot when he decides to follow her, according to Lancelot’s courtly obligation. The most significant moment of her presence occurs when she chooses to join Lancelot’s quest because it leads him on a different set of adventures that might not have otherwise occurred. In that instance, we can observe once again that Chrétien tends to couple the voice of the female messenger archetype with her own action that leads to the knight’s chivalric action later on.

Another example of the female messenger archetype who acts as a guide and intervenes on Lancelot’s quest appears during the first fight between Méléagant and Lancelot. In that episode, Guinevere is present in the tower in which she is being held prisoner. The young lady is

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<sup>8</sup> By reconciliation arc, I refer to the character development of this protagonist, Lancelot. He must win the trust of his lady back after having hesitated two steps to enter the cart, while simultaneously winning his chivalric honor back from the public, which he lost as a result of stepping into the cart at the beginning of the narrative.

described by the narrator as “une jeune fille très sensée” [a clever maiden] (Troyes 596; Kibler 252). She notices Guinevere and then calls out to Lancelot to encourage him, “Lancelot! Retourne-toi et regarde qui est là, les yeux fixés sur toi!” [Lancelot, turn around to see who’s watching you!] (Troyes 597; Kibler 252). The young lady interrupts the fight to insert her voice and provoke a response from Lancelot so that he would see Guinevere. In so doing, the messenger archetype inspires him and affects the plot by, for a while, giving him the upper hand. The young lady redirects his fighting to the point that she suggests that he, “retourne-toi et passe de l’autre côté de manière à avoir toujours cette tour sous les yeux, car il fait bon la regarder” [Turn around and come over here where you can keep the tower in sight, for seeing it will bring you strength and help] (Troyes 598; Kibler 253). Lancelot listens to her and is inspired, albeit a little distracted by Guinevere as well. While this particular fight did not end the conflict and complete Lancelot’s quest, the female messenger archetype still served her purpose: she intervened and redirected him.

One of the more prominent examples, however, of the messenger archetype within the romance *Lancelot*, is Méléagant’s sister. She first appears as a nameless girl who commands Lancelot, “Chevalier, je suis venue de loin te trouver pour une affaire pressante, je veux te demander un don, et je ferais tout ce qui est en mon pouvoir pour t’en récompenser et t’en dédommager, car tu auras un jour besoin de mon aide” [Sir knight, I have come from far off in great distress to ask a favour of you, for which you will earn the greatest reward I can offer. And I believe that a time will come when you will need my assistance] (Troyes 575-6; Kibler 242). In this discourse, Méléagant’s sister displays the messenger tendency to foreshadow the future, while creating the plot composed of her own personal needs. This still provides the knight with

the opportunity to augment his chivalric honor and glory as she presents a conflict through her spoken need for help. This later ensures Lancelot's success, as he unknowingly aids Méléagant's sister, although she knowingly aids him, understanding he will later need her help to defeat her brother. Lancelot does not know whom he aids when he helps her during their first encounter; she is simply a lady asking for his help. However, Méléagant's sister makes it clear that Lancelot will need her help later on when she promises to return the favor.

As the messenger archetype, Méléagant's sister couples her words with her actions to affect the outcome of the plot, when she journeys to a tower where Lancelot is held captive by Méléagant. She had searched specifically for him and endured hardships to find and rescue him. She calls out to Lancelot, saying, "C'est pour ce don, pour ce service rendu que je me suis donné tout ce mal. C'est pour cela que je vous sortirai d'ici" [For that boon and that service, I have exposed myself to these hardships; because of them I'll release you from here!], directly intervening in the conflict between Méléagant and Lancelot in Lancelot's favor (Troyes 669; Kibler 288). With her words, she alerts him to her presence and then couples her announcement of Lancelot's salvation at her hand with direct action. She searches for a way to free him, inserting herself into the plot, as she did before when she sought Lancelot out the first time. Méléagant's sister plays a very active role in the plot, using her power of knowledge as Méléagant's sister, as well as through her power of rhetoric as a woman who understands that she ranks among the breed of courtly lady to whom every ideal knight is beholden.

The courtly ladies of the lower nobility play pivotal roles as messengers and guides throughout *Lancelot*. Without them, Lancelot would be unable to regain the queen's trust and his lost honor. Since hesitating to enter the cart, he was someone who had to prove to the people that

he did not belong in the cart. Lancelot was also someone who had to prove to his lady that he was willing to sacrifice everything for her. Although it may seem obvious to state that these women play important and individual roles as messengers and interveners in Lancelot's quest, it is interesting to observe the pattern that demonstrates, as quoted earlier on, that "discourses have an impact on individuals as they are discursively constructed and constituted" (Diaz-Bone 10)

This pattern further shows Chrétien's construction of the ladies of the lower nobility in their role as archetypal figures who fit into the basic narrative of his romances. This becomes especially intriguing as Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype solidifies as his works develop, as we shall see in *Yvain*.

## CHAPTER 3: THE MESSENGER AS MANIPULATOR OF COURTLY

### VALUES IN *YVAIN OU LE CHEVALIER AU LION*

In this tale, the knight Yvain embarks on a quest to avenge his brother who was killed by Esclados, the guardian of a magical stone. Yvain kills Esclados and falls in love with Esclados' widow, the queen Laudine. With the help of one of Laudine's ladies, Lunete, Yvain marries Laudine. After the wedding, he embarks on another quest to gather more glory through acts of bravery but forgets to return after a year away from Laudine, which was the time limit she set for him. She shuns him, and he slowly goes crazy. He is cured by another noble lady. He then seeks honorable ways to win back Laudine. He defeats giants and undergoes several other conflicts that help redeem himself. Yvain meets a lion who accompanies him on his several quests. After saving Lunete from the stake, he regains her trust, and she aids him in winning back the queen. The romance ends when Laudine allows Yvain to return to her court.

*Yvain*, like *Lancelot*, compared to his earlier romance, *Érec et Énide*, demonstrates the further crystallization of Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype. According to Corinne Denoyelle, in her *Poétique du Dialogue Médiéval*, writers "inventent des situations originales pour intégrer les interactions à la trame narrative et à une écriture fortement régie par la tradition" [invent original situations to integrate interactions to the narrative thread and to writing strongly ruled by tradition] (19).<sup>9</sup> Denoyelle is speaking both about the grammatical structure of verse as it transitioned from oral to written in the courts as well as about "des moments de la journée pendant lesquels ils se parlent" [moments of the day during which they

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<sup>9</sup> The translations of Denoyelle are my own.

[the characters] speak to each other] (19). This is to say that dialogue and discourse during the French Middle Ages were structured according to courtly and literary tradition, which dictated what could and could not be said. The tradition of rules that decide when, where, and in what situations one can speak can be expanded and applied to the courtly literature of the time where chivalric obligation and courtly etiquette were becoming priorities. This tradition of dialogue creates the next step in the female messenger archetype that develops in Chrétien's later romances: that of the diplomat. In *Yvain*, many ladies of the lower nobility fulfill this role, especially those who are intimately connected to the court, and specifically those who are intimately connected to the queen, such as the character of Lunete.

Before discussing of Lunete's diplomatic agency and the other courtly ladies' roles characterized by the agency attributed to the female messenger archetype, it is important to first discuss the courtly and domestic role of the queen, Laudine. While *Lancelot* features various women who interact with the court, *Yvain's* queen is completely set apart from the action of the plot. From the beginning of the narrative, Laudine exists as a testament to the importance of courtly values. This is to say, she seeks greater honor and rank for her kingdom, specifically as it concerns her marriage after the death of her first husband by Yvain's hand. The reason that she is permitted by the council to marry so soon after the death of her husband is due to her claim that "le jour de mon mariage, j'aurai un époux d'un rang plus élevé que le mien" [I will be wed to a nobler knight than I deserve] (Troyes 391; Kibler 322). Her personality is rooted in the idea that the honor and glory of the main knight to whom she is espoused is reflected in her. Therefore, the basis of her marriage to Yvain is focused on bringing greater honor to and protection to the court. In that sense, Laudine as the queen figure fulfills her role in respect to upholding courtly

ideals. Laudine exists as an instrument for these courtly goals. Yvain's role as protector is emphasized when one of the arguments that Yvain uses to convince the court to allow them to marry is that "la guerre nous menace" [war is upon us] (Troyes 390; Kibler 321). Besides the arguments used to convince the court, Lunete uses similar arguments when convincing Laudine to marry Yvain. Lunete states that, "vous aurez l'époux le plus noble, le plus aimable et le plus beau jamais sorti du lignage d'Abel'" [You will have the noblest and the finest and the fairest lord who ever came from Abel's line] (Troyes 383; Kibler 317). Rather than cling to her old husband who lost the battle with Yvain, Laudine is convinced to accept the lord who is, as Charny would have put it, "loved, esteemed and honored by all" (Charny 120, 121). This courtly value would then reflect her own nobility. Lunete and, indeed, everyone else involved in this particular marriage process, seeks both the aggrandization of the court and of the knight, Yvain, himself.

Furthermore, as the queen figure and as the lady to whom the knight is beholden, Laudine acts as delegator of courtly values and yet remains a courtly lady who must remain within the castle limits, a paradoxical characteristic that, according to Margaret M. Hostetler, "relegate[s] Laudine to invisibility" as a prize for Yvain's conquest (122). Laudine does, however, show a degree of power when she sets the interdiction from which the main narrative quest can spark when she says, "Que mon amour vous rende hâve et abattu si vous n'êtes pas de retour à la date fixée" [You will be banished from my love if you are not back here with me on that day] (Troyes 402; Kibler 327). This provides the narrative with an opportunity for Yvain's failure later on when he forgets to return, which then sets up his reconciliation arc that is focused on various quests to win Laudine back. In this way, Laudine is similar in function to the version of

Guinevere portrayed in *Lancelot*, in that both queens provide the main knight with a reason to regain their lost chivalric honor. Laudine's importance as the queen figure archetype is set up, however, both by her determination to remain a proper lady of honor at court, as well as by the traditional bonds between a lord and his lady demanded by courtly tradition.

The characteristic of the queen figure that pertains to the queen's obligation to provide protection for the court largely depends on Laudine's intimate confidante, Lunete. Lunete's role as master manipulator through her speech to protect and preserve her court demonstrates well Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype. This damsel hides and protects Yvain at the beginning of the narrative conflict after he had killed Laudine's husband so that, with her voice, she foreshadows and affects the action of the plot. This point is demonstrated when she orders Yvain, "ne bougez pas d'ici, car personne ne vous trouvera si vous ne quittez pas ce lit" [don't move on account of their noise, for you'll never be found if you don't stir from this bed] (Troyes 365; Kibler 308). Lunete's vocal power is repeatedly demonstrated in the passages in which she switches between talking to Yvain to comfort and reassure him and convincing Laudine to set him free and marry him. Lunete works with her voice to free Yvain from prison, assuring him when he is imprisoned but already in love with Laudine that, "je vais vous délivrer de cette prison" [I'll soon make arrangements to get you out of prison] (Troyes 377; Kibler 314). According to Denoyelle, in this genre of medieval literature, one can observe "les relations d'amitié ou de pouvoir" [relationships of friendship or of power] that unite the narrative, as well as the characters, and thus create their respective relational dynamics (19).

From the outset of this romance, Lunete plays the part of manipulator as Laudine's "confidante" (Troyes 378). In fact, Chrétien uses her to play with the courtly expectations of

Laudine's role as the vessel for courtly values to advance the action of the plot. This becomes evident when she informs Laudine that it is not proper for a lady of her rank to remain grieving for so long: "un si long deuil ne convient pas à une dame de votre rang. Souvenez-vous de votre rang et de votre grande noblesse?" [it's not proper that such a high-born lady should persist in her mourning for so long. Remember your station and your great gentility] (Troyes 380). The series of arguments Lunete presents to Laudine as to why Laudine should marry Yvain leads to Yvain's proclamation to the council that would approve Laudine's and Yvain's marriage, when he states, "la guerre nous menace," [war threatens us] (Troyes 390) that, in turn, leads to Laudine's and Yvain's marriage. The foundation of the rest of the narrative depends on the passage in which Lunete convinces the queen to marry Yvain. This demonstrates how Lunete's diplomatic involvement in Yvain's and Laudine's relationship establishes Chrétien's use of the female messenger archetype.

As Roberta Kreuger points out in her article in which she discusses how courtly ladies in *Yvain* were merely objects of exchange as symbols of masculine honor, Chrétien "explores the process by which the tensions between men and women become masked by an ideology of love and honor" ("Love, Honor and the Exchange of Women" 304). Lunete catalyzes the courtly tension discussed by Kreuger when Lunete promotes Laudine's marriage to Yvain. Lunete works to maintain and reassert the courtly tension "of love and honor" (Kreuger, "Love, Honor and the Exchange of Women in 'Yvain'" 304). This also occurs when Lunete is about to be burned at the stake for having recommended Yvain's marriage to Laudine, after Yvain betrayed Laudine by not returning to her in time. Lunete is considered a traitor to the court and to the queen. The female messenger archetype also sparks the tensions between the different roles of courtly ladies.

Rather than simply being “an object of exchange” as Kreuger argues, several courtly ladies in *Yvain* function as active agents of diplomacy and plot-movers through speech (304). Lunete is the primary example of this literary phenomenon in *Yvain*, in which “women’s voices neither fully underwrite the specular basis of male subjectivity nor thoroughly repudiate the culturally constructed female,” but, rather, use the constructed female’s voice and the courtly tradition of masculinity—that is glory and honor in battle and loyalty to lady and court—to manipulate Yvain and the queen figure (Burns *Bodytalk* 17-8).

While Laudine demonstrates and perpetuates the qualities of the traditional courtly lady, Lunete cultivates and maintains the queen’s image and the order of courtly values. Judith Rice Rothchild argues that “secondary female personages empower themselves to direct and control other characters” (172). Lunete’s status as a diplomat places her as a primary example of the female messenger archetype in Chretien’s works through the concept of her “doubled discourse” and her power over the plot’s action (Burns *Bodytalk* 18). According to Penny Schine Gold, Lunete acts as “an intermediary between the knight and his lady” (quoted in Rothchild 172). Through her voice, not only does Lunete act as an intermediary and diplomat, her actions also match the importance of her speech. Lunete pursues a diplomatic position in the court concerning Yvain’s and Laudine’s relationship from the onset of the romance by approaching Yvain in his prison and inserting herself into the action of the plot.

Later, Lunete’s words once again both determine and foretell the plot. This occurs after Yvain begins his quest for reconciliation, and he encounters Lunete, who was imprisoned as a

result of betraying the queen.<sup>10</sup> This characteristic duality of the female messenger archetype is exhibited when she says that she was imprisoned for convincing her lady, Laudine, to marry Yvain. She tells Yvain that she will be saved, “mais je ne sais pas encore par qui” [but I don't know yet by whom] (Troyes 426; Kibler 340). In these words, while Lunete does not act as diplomat, she foretells that she will be saved, and, indeed, she is saved by Yvain himself. If Yvain had not saved Lunete, she would not have been able to convince Laudine to accept him back into her court as her husband towards the end of the romance. When he rescues Lunete, Lunete exclaims that, “vous êtes venu pour me défendre” [You have come to defend me] (Troyes. 445; Kibler 350), emphasizing the power of her words over the plot and over Yvain. She had mentioned earlier that she did not know who is going to rescue her, while understanding that it would be Yvain who would because his mere awareness of her predicament, ensured by the passage in which Lunete explained her imprisonment to him, establishes his chivalric obligation to save her. It also demonstrates the power of Lunete's voice in establishing Yvain's trust in her. This is exemplified when Yvain states to the villainous seneschal and his brothers to release Lunete because she told Yvain that “Elle n'a jamais accompli, proféré ni prémédité la moindre trahison envers sa dame” [she never committed or spoke or conceived treason against her lady] (Troyes 446; Kibler 350). This reflects what she said to Yvain when she was imprisoned in a cell: “je cherchais à satisfaire son honneur et votre désir” [I sought to serve her honor and your desire] (Troyes 427; Kibler 340). The fact that Yvain echoed and trusted in Lunete's speech shows the power of her role as messenger, diplomat and guide. Lunete's direct

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<sup>10</sup> Like Lancelot, Yvain's character and the plot of this romance after his failure to return to Laudine within the allotted time depends on a reconciliation arc.

speech then leads back to the paradigm of providing greater chivalric honor and glory for the knight because she provides the opportunity for Yvain to save her for a righteous cause, while simultaneously enabling the reconciliation arc that later permits Lunete to negotiate Yvain's way back into Laudine's court. Lunete's position as the primary female messenger archetype is manifested by the way Lunete moves the plot with her voice and her understanding of the social mores that dictate chivalric society. Indeed, Lunete seems to be very consciously aware of her power as intermediary and lady of the court.

Towards the end of the romance, Lunete negotiates Yvain's acceptance back into court, saying, "Ma dame, oubliez votre colère envers lui car il n'a pas d'autre femme que vous" [my lady, do not be angry with him further, for he has no other lady but you] (Troyes 501; Kibler 379). Intriguingly, the narrative ends with a passage in which Laudine forgives Yvain due to Lunete's voice. Laudine responds that "je dois me réconcilier avec lui" [I must be reconciled to him] (Troyes 502; Kibler 379) because Lunete insisted that Laudine ought to forgive Yvain and that he had done many heroic deeds to reconcile himself with Laudine. Contrasted to Laudine's expressive yet immediate forgiveness of Yvain, Lunete's direct speech in this passage demonstrates, yet again, her power as messenger and guide over the overall plot, even, and especially, over the ending. It becomes evident that the queen figure remains a vessel for courtly values, while Lunete's active influence over the plot throughout the entirety of the story demonstrates that she sculpts the plot itself, as an active participant with agency of her own. Once again, Lunete uses her speech to play with the courtly values expected of the queen when she says that "Ma dame, dites-lui de se relever, et déployer vos pardons, car vous êtes la seule de par le monde à pouvoir les lui offrir" [My lady, bid him rise and use your power, efforts, and

wisdom to procure that reconciliation and pardon that no one this whole world over can procure that reconciliation and pardon that no one this whole world over can procure except you] (Troyes 501; Kibler 379). Chrétien molds Lunete into this female messenger archetype to frame the story under the traditional structure of the rising courtly literature of the time, while realizing the need for the queen figure's royal and political power as the female character with the power over the amount of influence Lunete's discourse ultimately has over the plot.

Lunete is not, however, the only courtly lady whom Chrétien utilizes as a female messenger archetype within this piece. After Yvain fails to respect Laudine's time limit, instead of going to find him, take back her ring, and banish him from her court herself, Laudine sends a young woman who acts as the female messenger. This young woman declares to Yvain that, "par ma voix," [by me, whom you see before you], literally translated by 'by my voice,' the queen "te demande de le lui restituer. Rends-le-lui donc car il le faut!" [orders you to send it back to her; return it, for return it you must] (Troyes 406; Kibler 330). He must return his marriage ring to the messenger, which the messenger insists through her own voice. Her sense of purpose as well as her authoritative manner of speaking establishes her in an active role of influence on the plot so that she vocally declares that "ma dame ne se soucie plus de toi, Yvain" [my lady no longer cares for you] (Troyes 406; Kibler 330). She delivers a speech about how Yvain betrayed her lady and mentions how he not only betrayed the queen herself, but also Lunete, and that Lunete, "celle qui t'a fait épouser ma dame" [the one who married you to my lady] (Troyes 406, Kibler 330), as a result, was also a traitor to the court. As a result of his banishment that is reinforced by this female messenger, Yvain goes mad, and must be healed by yet another female messenger character in the narrative. This demonstrates the importance of the character who fulfills the role

of a female messenger archetype as influencing the plot of Chrétien's romances. This type of phenomenon is similar to that which occurs in *Lancelot*, when Guinevere sends the female messenger to tell Lancelot to play his worst at the tournament. In light of the chain reaction which ensues from the initial messenger archetype—that is, Lunete—the plot can be traced through Yvain's interactions with the various ladies of the lower nobility who act as messengers, interveners, and guides throughout the romance, as in *Lancelot*.

After Yvain goes insane because the female messenger delivered news of his banishment to him, “deux demoiselles accompagnées par leur maîtresse” [a lady and two damsels from her household] (Troyes 409; Kibler 331) discover him in the forest. One of the damsels declares to the others, “Ah, si seulement en acceptant ensuite de rester à votre service!” [may it please him to remain in your service] (Troyes 410; Kibler 332). In this instance, she announces the next section of the plot in which her lady provides Morgan's healing potion. This declaration of aid by the demoiselle leads to the lady's helping Yvain, although indirectly, as the lady who physically administers the healing potion to Yvain is the demoiselle who spoke. This demoiselle also acts as an intermediary, suggesting that they should take care of him and that maybe, in return, he would assist them with their problem with Count Alier, a man who is attacking the noble lady's lands.

The demoiselle who foretells Yvain's help in the noble lady's struggle against Count Alier demonstrates her importance as vocal agent who directly redirects and guides Yvain on his quest. Her role as the female messenger continues when Yvain wakes up. She intervenes in the plot when she convinces him to stay with her mistress until he recovers, saying, “Accompagnez-moi là où je me rends” [Come along with me to where I am going] (Troyes 413; Kibler 334).

After he heals completely, Yvain is able to leave and pursue chivalric glory by winning tournaments and finding and befriending the lion he saves in the forest, a symbol of his chivalric reconciliation arc. The female messengers in this series of passages act as diplomats, guides and saviors, actively affecting the narrative and the main quest of the romance with their words, which, in the case of administering Morgan's potion, was coupled with direct action on the female messenger's part.

While there are several examples in *Yvain* that illustrate the female messenger archetype as she actively affects Yvain while on his quest, Lunete remains the primary and most prominent example. Chrétien uses various different courtly ladies and maidens to fulfill the role of the messenger archetype. This particular romance seems to be rooted in word play and dialogue that amount to the outright manipulation of the queen and knight figures. This is especially true concerning the ways in which Lunete uses the values of a courtly lady to maintain her power over the direct discourse pertaining to the queen, Laudine, and to keep the queen within her role as the instrument for courtly tradition.

## CONCLUSION

*Lancelot, Yvain* and *Érec et Énide* all demonstrate—to different extents—the existence of, and perhaps even an evolution in, Chrétien’s use of the female messenger archetype within his romances. *Yvain* is an especially potent case in point for the importance of the female messenger archetype as Chrétien utilizes the growing courtly genre of the chivalric romance. *Yvain* also suggests the crystallization of the different political and social traditions that were becoming popular in courtly literature during the transition from oral poetry to written verse in twelfth-century France. This, in turn, resulted in a more crystallized manifestation of Chrétien’s use of the female messenger archetype as exemplified in both *Yvain* and *Lancelot*. As in *Lancelot*, the voice of the female messengers in *Yvain* often function to maintain courtly tradition, which is often embodied through the queen figure character. Although, that female messenger figures function to maintain courtly tradition is all the more prominent in *Yvain* through Lunete’s and Laudine’s relationship, than in *Lancelot*. In both *Lancelot* and *Yvain*, the importance of the female messenger archetype is manifested through the way in which the plot can be traced by the knight’s interactions with the various ladies of the lower nobility. The speech belonging to the female messenger archetype is often associated with direct action, such as in the case of Méléagant’s sister in *Lancelot* and Lunete in *Yvain*, while the queen figure is defined either by her narrative silence or her formulaic courtly speeches. *Érec et Énide*, through the character of Énide, presents a more ambiguous manifestation of the female messenger figure. Énide’s archetypal duality sets the stage for a sense of development within Chrétien’s use of the various types of courtly ladies over the course of the three romances examined in this study. When compared to the more defined roles the other courtly ladies of the lower nobility play as

messenger figures in the other two romances, Énide embodies a more dynamic manifestation of both the female messenger and queen figure archetype.

Simon Gaunt, in *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, discusses the paradox of the rising medieval Self. Gaunt's focus is on the "competing views of masculinity," in which he uses Lancelot as his case in point (Brown-Grant 528). Gaunt suggests that the complex concept of chivalry was rising and was, as a result, also simultaneously solidifying the roles the various characters types within Chrétien's romances. It can thus be inferred that the role that the various types of courtly ladies play within these romances were also being developed simultaneously with the courtly concept of femininity. The "tropes of love" and the "courtly accounts that reinforce rigidly gendered stereotypes" provide the reader with variation within the different narratives through the different female characters, as argued by Burns ("Courtly Love: Who Needs It" 25). This is to say that even though obligation to the court and to the rules that dictate being female within this court are reflected in these romances, more often than not, each individual female character retains a sense of self that is rooted in her personal plans that incidentally, when vocalized by the female messenger archetype, affect the knight on his quest.

Thus, while my analysis provides a greater understanding of the two general types of courtly lady figures, composed of the queen figure archetype and the female messenger archetype, what provides the female messenger archetype with power and agency is the fact that she retains an identity composed of individual, rather than simply courtly, desires and needs. Seumus Miller qualifies Foucault's concept of discourse and speech as a strictly institutional construct. Miller states that discourse also relies on "the participation in mutually beneficial social arrangements" (122). In this same way the variation in the female messenger archetype

and the direct discourse attributed to her character can be credited to the natural variation that occurs when individual characters maintain their own needs and desires, even as they follow an established literary pattern that is a part of a larger literary and social tradition.

In short, the female messenger archetype follows a certain pattern: through direct discourse, she often foretells and creates the next section of the plot, often foreshadowing the knight's needs. She redirects him on his quest and aids him in his search for greater glory. However, the characters to whom Chrétien attributes these female messenger characteristics also hold an individual form of agency composed of their voice and their manner of approaching the knight, whether it leads to their active intervention or the knight's direct action. In the case of the female messengers' direct and active intervention beyond words, she often plays the role of savior. When the knight takes up the mantle of direct action as a result of the messenger archetype's discourse, this action usually takes the form of a reactive duel, tournament or battle.

Even when considering the various courtly ladies' personal individuality and variation, the archetypal pattern persists, and, in so doing, maintains and even develops the idea of chivalry throughout Chrétien's romances. It is believed and generally accepted that *Érec et Énide* was Chrétien's oldest romance, and *Lancelot* and *Yvain* were written more or less simultaneously. *Lancelot* and *Yvain* demonstrate that the female messenger archetype interacts with and compares and contrasts to the queen. It is through the use of the archetype on a more "conscious level" that Chrétien demonstrates and utilizes the messenger archetype in his works (Coward 481). This, in turn, illustrates his own personal "évolution philosophique à coup sûr très remarquable" [surely very remarkable philosophical evolution] (Borodine 379).<sup>11</sup> It may be

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<sup>11</sup> Translation mine.

precarious to conclude too narrowly that the analysis of this development regarding his use of the different courtly archetypes demonstrates a personal philosophical evolution that was reflected in Chrétien's work. However, his usage of the female characters' manipulation of courtly expectation and obligation demonstrates a strong understanding of the courtly culture taking shape at the time.

Interestingly, as Chretien's oldest romance, *Érec et Énide* presents a more ambiguous expression of the female messenger archetype. This may indicate a development, and perhaps even an evolution, towards the more definitive split in archetype-figures between two different tiers of courtly ladies in Chrétien's romances: the queen figure and the messenger lady, who generally comes from the lower nobility. Roberta Kreuger explains that, in Old French literature, "female characters are read as metaphoric functions of the 'feminine,' the source of poetic activity" (Kreuger 12). This indicates that the concept of femininity and courtliness regarding the courtly lady as a narrative device and as an "object of exchange" was further being formed in northern French literature during the period in which Chrétien wrote (Kreuger, "Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance" 304). The roles that female characters play within Chrétien's romances seem to crystallize over the course of his works, especially as prominent courtly traditions became ingrained within the written culture of Chrétien's public. Chrétien's use of the messenger archetype is a manifestation of the "collective unconscious" of a rising society as courtly culture became a written phenomenon (Jung 43).

Jung explains that "the archetype is an 'arranger' of psychic forms inside and outside the psyche into meaningful patterns" (Coward 481). The archetypes used by Chrétien within a literary context indicate a character's internal interaction with the external universe or society in

which the figure exists. This means that the different archetypal figures do not exist in isolation and are thus affected by one another's existence and role within the narrative. The queen figure archetype and the messenger archetype within Chrétien's romances work. The narrative and the characters' actions are further composed of courtly tradition and gender and social status power dynamics. Furthermore, the external culture in which Chrétien wrote affects his works as well. The universal role of delegator as prescribed to the queen figure thus mixes with the universal role of messenger and guide as prescribed to the various ladies of the lower nobility featured within Chrétien's works. Even taking into consideration the variation existing among the different courtly ladies, including both the queen and the female messenger archetype, it can be understood that, "raised high atop the metaphorical pedestal of courtliness, the lady reputed to have ultimate control over her suitor's well-being, his life, and even his death actually derives little power, authority, or material gain" aside from their position as a narrative device beyond the bounds of courtly tradition (Burns, "Courtly Love: Who Need It" 24). They are characters who remain a part of the chivalric narrative, wherein the lady's actions and words eventually yield to the greater glory of the knight. Therefore, although their individuality and their use of the chivalric code and courtly obligations demonstrate a cultural consciousness that seems close to the narrator's own level of awareness that sets them apart from the queen figure archetype, the female messenger archetype retains the same end function as the queen figure archetype. Understanding that there remains room to examine the broader literary implications, this analysis demonstrates how Chrétien's use of direct discourse, the female voice and the theme of social status consistently function to represent and perpetuate courtly tradition in Chrétien's chivalric romances.

This study evokes further questions concerning the power of the courtly lady's voice as it compares and contrasts to the narrator's voice and his overall interference in the dialogue of the plot throughout the romances through the use of indirect discourse. This can be observed through the role the female messenger archetype holds as a secondary narrator, who often foretells the plot's direction with her speech, as well as the queen archetype, whose power as a political figure creates the basic narrative structure of the plot. This examination of the female character of the lower nobility also provokes questions regarding the role these female messenger archetypes play as liminal spaces within the narrative, through which the knight can be transformed, allowing him the opportunity to grow in his chivalric glory.

The paradigm of the courtly lady, as well as the role of chivalric and courtly culture as observed in Chrétien's romances, particularly the patterns behind the different female characters of the lower nobility and the queen, leave much still to be analyzed. The extent to which the female messenger figure is or is not an embodiment of Jung's trickster archetype also needs to be further examined. Future studies may reveal how these archetypes exist as base character types whose complexity is embodied in the individualized but formulaic Arthurian characters, specifically the ladies of the lower nobility, even as they remain embedded within their rigid narrative structures and must therefore maintain certain patterns of behavior and speech. Ultimately, although these romances each contain different strong female characters, they are still subject to the traditional framework of the chivalric romance, which is, ultimately, a genre centered on the courtly tradition of the twelfth-century French aristocracy, where courtly ladies played a set role in the courtly social and literary structure.

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