
From *Genesis* to Gottfried's *Tristan*: Peace Trees in Medieval German Texts and their Latin and French Sources

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From *Genesis* to Gottfried's *Tristan*: Peace Trees in Medieval German Texts and their Latin and French Sources

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This contribution focuses on symbols, first of all the olive tree, but also the palm tree, both trees symbolizing peace in medieval German literature. Aiming at an exhaustive list in the German area, it quotes more than 30 texts. It also discusses the German names Siegfried and Gottfried expressing peace through their last syllable.

Today, we have two main peace symbols. They both date back to after World War II: the dove drawn in 1949 by Pablo Picasso for the Paris Peace Congress (Fig. 1) and the circle designed in 1958 by Gerald Herbert Holtom for an anti-nuclear campaign. The central motif of the circle represents the letters N and D for 'Nuclear Disarmament' and is not related to any tree unlike Picasso's dove. In front of the bird, Picasso drew olive branches, a traditional Christian peace symbol. Today, the peace dove often carries an olive branch in its beak.



Fig. 1: Pablo Picasso, *La Colombe*, 1949, lithograph, 56.7 cm × 76 cm, Tate Britain, London.

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In medieval German literature, the dove never symbolizes peace except indirectly the Genesis dove, which brings an olive branch back to Noah's ark. Before Picasso, the dove first of all symbolized the Holy Spirit. According to the New Testament¹, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove:

Mt 3, 16: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. [*Baptizatus autem confestim ascendit de aqua et ecce aperti sunt ei caeli et vidit Spiritum Dei descendentem sicut columbam venientem super se.*]

When represented in medieval iconography, this dove does not hold any branch in its beak. The dove is interpreted by some medieval German authors as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, for example by Lamprecht of Regensburg in *Tochter Syon* (1247/1252), an allegorical treatise. The daughter of Zion mentioned in the title is an allegory of the soul that loves God. She opposes the daughter of Babylon who loves

¹ The Bible is quoted from the 5th edition of *Biblia Sacra* by Robert Gryson (2007). Ps 121, 7 is also quoted from the 'Hebrew Psalter'.

the world. The treatise interprets the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and distinguishes this symbolism from that of the olive branch. According to Lambrecht, this branch means the peace that the spirit acquires when it rests, in other words a spiritual peace, not a military truce. By extension, Lambrecht interprets the oil from the branch as divine mercy that soothes the pains of the heart. This treatise shows how close symbols may be:

Tochter Syon 2433, 2446-2448, 2563-2569²: The oil [from the olive branch] means mercy. (...) The dove above all means the Holy Ghost in the scripture. (...) When the dove was sent out for the second time, it brought back in its beak an olive branch. This means the peace which the spirit acquires when it has previously realized that it must soon rest. [*Daz öl bediut barmherzikeit. (...) Mit der tûben allermeist / ist der heilige geist / in der schrift gemeinet. (...) Dô man die tûben anderstunde / sande ûz, dô brâhtes indem munde / eines ölboumes zwî. / dâ ist gemeint der fride bî / den der geist danne gewinnet, / swenne er sich vor versinnet, / daz er schiere ruowen sol.*]

The later dove is the one described in *Genesis* (8th/7th century BC). In late Antiquity, it became a peace symbol because of the olive leaf it brought back to the ark:

Gn 8, 11: When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. [*At illa venit ad eum ad vesperam portans ramum olivae virentibus foliis in ore suo intellexit ergo Noe quod cessassent aquae super terram.*]

In fact, the olive tree was a peace symbol long before Christianity. Virgil uses it once in the *Georgics* (37/30 BC) and four times in the *Aeneid* (30/19 BC), for example when Aeneas visits King Evander. When Evander's son Pallas asks the Trojans if they seek peace or war, Aeneas offers him an olive branch. Pallas spontaneously understands the message. Aeneas does not need to utter the word 'peace':

Georgics II, 425: After this mode nurture the plump olive, favoured of Peace. [*Hoc pinguem et placitam Paci nutritor olivam.*]

Aeneid VIII, 115-116³: Then father Aeneas speaks thus from the high stern, outstretching in his hand a branch of peaceful olive. [*Tum pater Aeneas puppi sic fatur ab alta / paciferaeque manu ramum praetendit olivae.*]

This initially pagan symbol was taken over by the Christians. The first testimony of this recovery is Tertullian's treatise on baptism (200/206 AD). He interprets the Flood as a baptism of the world and recalls that pagans consider the olive tree as a sign of peace. This remark may have been a hint to Virgil:

² In quotations, the Arabic numbers refer to lines, chapters, pages or columns, the Roman numbers to books. The bibliography lists editions and translations under the original author's name, anonymous texts under their title. When no translation is listed, I have translated the text myself.

³ Cf. also *Aeneid* VI, 808; VII, 153-155; XI, 101.

On Baptism 8: After the baptism (so to express it) of the world, a dove as herald announced to the earth peace from the wrath of heaven, having been sent forth of the ark and having returned with an olive-leaf – and towards the heathen too this is held out as a sign of peace. [*Post baptismum ut ita dixerim mundi, pacem caelestis irae praeco columba terris adnuntiavit dimissa ex arca et cum olea reversa – quod signum etiam ad nationes pacis praetenditur.*]

Some centuries later, Augustine already considered the olive branch a Christian symbol in his treatise on Christian doctrine (397/426 AD):

On Christian Doctrine II, 16: The only reason why we find it easy to understand that perpetual peace is indicated by the olive branch which the dove brought with it when it returned to the ark, is that we know both that the smooth touch of olive oil is not easily spoiled by a fluid of another kind, and that the tree itself is an evergreen. [*Nec aliam ob causam facile est intellegere pacem perpetuam significari oleæ ramusculo, quem rediens ad arcam columba pertulit (...), nisi quia novimus et olei lenem contactum non facile alieno humore corrumpi, et arborem ipsam frondere perenniter.*]

In medieval German literature, peace will sometimes be associated with another Mediterranean tree: the palm. In Ancient Greece, this tree species was used by artists as a victory symbol. Pliny the Elder (77 AD) mentions this painting from the 4th century BC:

Natural History xxxv, 36: A work of Eupompus is a Winner in a Gymnastic Contest holding a Palm branch. [*Est Eupompi victor certamine gymnico palmam tenens.*]

According to Livy (27/9 BC), this symbol was imported to Rome in 293 BC:

Founding of the City x, 47: Palms were then for the first time conferred upon the victors, in accordance with a custom borrowed from the Greeks. [*Palmaeque tum primum translato e Graeco more victoribus datae.*]

The Bible frequently mentions the palm tree. According to the *Gospel of John* (80/110 AD), the crowd waved palm branches to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem, but John does not comment on this gesture:

Jn 12, 13: They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting: Hosanna! [*Acceperunt ramos palmarum et processerunt obviam ei et clamabant osanna.*]

Only John explains from which tree the branches are taken:

Mt 21, 8: branches from the trees [*ramos de arboribus*].

Mk 11, 8: branches they had cut in the fields [*frondes caedebant de arboribus*].

Lk 19, 36: spread their cloaks on the road [and took no branches] [*substernebant vestimenta sua in via*].

In his comment on this entry (400/430 AD), Augustine reinterpreted the pagan symbol, explaining the palm branches as heralding Resurrection and Jesus's victory over death.

Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John 51, 2: The branches of palm trees are laudatory emblems, significant of victory, because the Lord was about to overcome death by dying, and by the trophy of His cross to triumph over the devil, the prince of death. [*Rami palmarum laudes sunt, significantes victoriam; quia erat Dominus mortem moriendo superaturus, et tropæo crucis de diabolo mortis principe triumphaturus.*]

In Christian iconography, the palm tree became the emblem of martyrs. However, it was still used as a victory symbol in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (600/800 AD). It describes Jesus's childhood and his escape to Egypt. In the desert, young Jesus orders a palm tree to bend so that Mary can take the fruit. The tree obeys and a source of water springs from the roots. The child then declares the palm a victory tree and orders the transfer of a branch to paradise:

Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 21: This privilege I give thee, O palm tree, that one of thy branches be carried away by my angels, and planted in the paradise of my Father. And this blessing I will confer upon thee, that it shall be said of all who conquer in any contest, You have attained the palm of victory. And while He was thus speaking, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and stood upon the palm tree; and taking off one of its branches, flew to heaven with the branch in his hand. [*Hoc privilegium do tibi palma, ut unus ex ramis tuis transferatur ab angelis meis et plantetur in paradiso patris mei. Hanc autem benedictionem in te conferam, ut omnes qui in aliquo certamine vicerint, dictatur eis: Pervenistis ad palmam victoriae. Haec eo loquente, ecce angelus domini apparuit stans super arborem palmae, et auferans unum ex ramis eius volavit ad caelum, habens ramum in manu sua.*]

None of these ancient texts associates this palm tree with peace, but as war mostly ends with victory, medieval authors tended to bring both symbols together, at least in Germany.

The Olive Tree in Medieval German Literature

The olive tree is attested in medieval German literature in four compounds: *ölberc* ('Mount of Olives'), *ölboum* ('olive tree'), *ölloup* ('olive leaf') and *ölzwî* ('olive branch'). The *Mittelhochdeutsche Begriffsdatenbank* records 51 examples in 24 different texts: *ölberc* (2 texts with 2 examples), *ölboum* (22 texts with 41 examples), *ölloup* (1 text with 2 examples), *ölzwî* (5 texts with 6 examples). In most cases, the olive tree is just

part of nature without any particular meaning. Sometimes, it evokes mercy, for instance in an anonymous sermon from the 13th century which summons Zion's daughters to spread flowers, grass and olive branches at the heavenly king's arrival:

Sermon on Is 62, 11: The branch of the olive tree means that you shall show mercy and clemency to all your sisters. [Des olebomiz zwi, daz ist, daz du dinen swesteron allezan miltkait und senftekait solt øgin.]

This particular interpretation of the olive tree derives from the oil with which wounds are soothed. It is also found in the first quote above from Lambrecht of Regensburg and in Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Divinity* (1250/1280):

Flowing Light of the Divinity IV, 27: Their [= the Dominicans'] belt is made from the fiber of an olive tree, signifying the holy compassion. [Ir gürtel ist gemachet von baste eins oleibomes nach der heligen barmherzekeit.]

The *Mittelhochdeutsche Begriffsdatenbank* records three examples with the traditional interpretation of the olive tree as a peace symbol, but this database does not include the first German testimony because it only covers Middle High German texts. In his 9th century life of Jesus, Otfrid of Weißenburg (French Wissembourg) uses the *Gospel of John* for his description of the entry into Jerusalem since he mentions palm trees. He interprets these branches as a symbol of victory over death and thus takes up Augustine's exegesis. However, he adds olive branches. This addition betrays an influence of the treatise in which Augustine interpreted the Genesis branch as a sign of perpetual peace. The four evangelists agree that olive trees grow in Jerusalem because they all tell us that Jesus was betrayed on the Mount of Olives. It is therefore a logical guess that some of the branches waved on Jesus's arrival were taken from this species. Otfrid was the first German author who added the olive tree in this episode:

Evangelienbuch IV, 3, 21-24: From far away, they waved palm whips and olive branches in their hands to him. In this way, these people showed that he would be victorious in death and then give mankind the delight of peace forever. [Sie drúagun in then hánton / pálmono gértun // ingégin imo rúmo, / zuig ouh óliboumo; // Mit thiú méintun thie mán, / thaz ér in tode sígu nam, // joh er frídes wunnon / síd gab iamer mánnon.]

The olive tree also entered medieval German literature as a peace symbol through a secular channel. As mentioned above, Virgil uses this symbol four times in the *Aeneid*. Around 1160, this Latin epic was turned into a French love story by an Anglo-Norman poet. His *Roman d'Énéas* only contains two explicit references to the olive tree as a peace symbol. The first time, Aeneas and his knights carry an olive branch when coming to King Evander's castle (l. 4592). Later, Italian ambassadors use the

same symbol when entering Aeneas's camp where they ask for a truce in order to bury the dead:

Roman d'Énéas 5918-5920: Everybody held an olive branch. It was at that time a sign of peace, harmony and friendship. [*Chascuns tint un rain d'olivier: / Ce estoit signe a icel jor / De pais, d'acorde et d'amor.*]

Heinrich von Veldeke soon retold the new French story in the Holy Empire. In his Middle High German *Eneas* (1187/1190⁴), he faithfully copied the first reference from his French model and deleted the second. Thus, only one of the four *Aeneid* occurrences survived in the German version. Veldeke strived to glorify the Trojans and reduced the Italians' peaceful embassy to a short mention without description (l. 7942-7959). This is how he describes the Trojans' arrival in Pallanteum according to the *Roman d'Énéas*:

Eneas 6090-6092: All of the knights had taken an olive branch. It means peace. [*Die heten alle genomen / aller ritter gelîch / einen olêes zwîch. / daz bezeichent den frîde.*]

This symbol also occurs in the *Lanzelet* (c. 1220), an Arthurian novel translated from a French book according to its Swiss author, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven. He claims that an English hostage provided him with a manuscript when Richard Coeur-de-Lion was released from Germany (in 1194), but since this alleged French source is not preserved, the German novel is likely to be an original work⁵. The hero's name echoes Lancelot, the main character in Chrétien's *Knight of the Cart* and the Prose Cycle, but the German story is totally different. At the beginning, Lanzelet arrives in a castle called Limors, literally 'Death', but is unaware of the local custom: any visitor must carry an olive branch. Otherwise, he risks his life:

Lanzelet 1378-1382: No guest whatever, whether foolish or wise, arrived here without carrying an olive branch as a sign that he sought peace. [*Dar enkom nie kein gast, / weder tump noch wîs, / er fuort ein ölboumes rîs. / daz was ein wortzeichen, / daz er vride wolte reichen.*]

This peace motif may originate from Virgil's *Aeneid*, the *Roman d'Énéas* or Veldeke's *Eneas*, but certainly not from a religious text. The fourth and last example for the olive tree as a peace symbol is the one already quoted above from the *Tochter Syon*. Lambrecht of Regensburg is part of the Augustinian tradition.

⁴ For its achievement after 1187 cf. Andersen, 2021.

⁵ For its achievement around 1220 and its dependence on the Prose Cycle cf. Andersen, 2011.

The Palm Tree in Medieval German Literature

The palm tree is much more frequent in medieval German literature than the olive tree. For the simple form *palm* and the compound *palmboom*, the *Mittelhochdeutsche Begriffsdatenbank* lists 75 occurrences in 32 different texts. Including Otfrid, the palm tree is described six times as a victory symbol, but also three times as a peace symbol, assuming the traditional symbolism of the olive tree. Otfrid is the only author who brings the two trees and the two interpretations together. In the lines from the *Evangelienbuch* already quoted, a specific meaning cannot easily be associated to a specific tree.

The second example is found in Konrad's *Rolandslied* (c. 1170), a quite free adaptation of the *Chanson de Roland* (c. 1125/1150). Unlike Charles in the French epic, Karl mentions Jesus's entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the German version and refers to the traditional Augustinian interpretation of the palm tree:

Rolandslied 824-825, 829: When he suffered the martyrdom for our sake, he held a palm branch in his hand (...) the palm means victory. [*Dâ er die martir durch uns leit. / einen palm vuorte er in der hant (...) diu palme bezeichnenôt den sigenunpht.*]

The third example is recorded in Konrad von Fußesbrunnen's poem about Jesus's childhood (1195/1210), a fairly faithful adaptation of the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. It takes up the symbol from its Latin model and quotes the new name of the palm tree in Latin before translating it. Young Jesus speaks thus to the tree in the desert:

Kindheit Jesu 1495-1497: And may your name forever be 'palma victoriae', the sign of victory! [*Unt sî dîn name immer mê / palmâ victoriê, / des siges wortzeichen!*]

The other three examples are similar. Mechthild of Magdeburg uses the same symbol when she describes the mystical union between the soul and Christ:

Flowing Light of Divinity I, 46: The bride [= the soul] has a crimson silk cloth, which is hope. It [better: she, the bride] is clothed with truth and crowned with song. She has a palm in her hand, which is victory over sin. [*Die brut hat einen pallebovir, das ist die hoffen, die ist gekleidet mit der warheit und gekrønet mit dem sange. Si hat einen palmen in der hant, das ist die sege über die sünde.*]

In his life of Saint Pantaleon (c. 1270), Konrad of Würzburg, using the traditional emblem for martyrs, also mentions the victory palm:

Pantaleon 944-947: God's pure fighter wanted to suffer martyrdom thanks to which he would carry the victory palm. [*Der gottes kemphe reine / Die marter liden wolte, / Durch daz er tragen folte / Der figenvfte palmen.*]

The last of the six examples comes from an almost literal translation of the so-called 'German' variant of the *Stabat mater* (13th century). This translation was composed by the Monk of Salzburg (1350/1400). The expression *die palme der signunft* is very close to the previous quote and gradually tends to be lexicalized:

Stabat mater 10: Christ, when these my days are done, / Let thy Mother lead me on / To the palm of victory. [*Christe, cum sit hinc exire, / da per matrem me venire / ad palmam victoriae.*]

Maria stuend in swindem smerzen 11: Powerful God, when I die, give me your victory palm, because of the noble Virgin. [*Starkcher got, als ich verschaide, / tail mit mir durch die werden maide / die palme der signunft dein.*]

In these six examples, the palm tree is explicitly presented as a symbol of victory. In their description of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, some other German texts quote the palm tree without giving it any particular meaning. This is the case with the *Heliand* (c. 830) and the *Old High German Tatian* (c. 830), two anonymous stories about Jesus that predate Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch* by three or four decades:

Heliand 3674-3677: Before Him they strewed // The way with their garments, their weeds; / and with herb-roots, // With bright colored blossoms / and the branches of trees they did strew it, // The field, with fair palms. [*Imu biforen streidun // thene uuieg mid iro giuuâdiun / endi mid uuurtiun sô same, // mid berhtun blômun / endi mid bômo tôgun, // that feld mid fagaron palmun.*]

Tatian 116, 5: They took palm branches and went towards him and cried: Hail! [*Intfiengun zuuîg pálmboomô inti giengun ingegin imo inti reofun: heil.*]

About 1300, the Austrian poet Gundacker of Judenburg provided an example comparable to that of Otfrid. In the *Christi Hort* ('Christ's Treasure'), he combined several sources and recounted Jesus's entry into Jerusalem twice. In the first account, he addresses Jesus directly and here follows the *Gospel of John*. Therefore, he mentions palm trees:

Christi Hort 1028-1031: Some spread soon their cloths towards you on the road. The others carried palm branches in their hands und spread them there. [*Sûmlich streuten ir wat / gegen dir ouf den weck zehant; / die ander trugen in der hant / von palmen este unt streutens dar.*]

Later, an eyewitness recounts the same scene to Pontius Pilate during the trial. Now, Gundacker follows the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (310/320 AD) which does not mention any specific tree. Like Otfrid, the Austrian poet imagines that the branches are taken from olive trees. However, neither passage gives any symbolic interpretation. They just confirm the tendency to bring the palm and the olive tree together:

Gospel of Nicodemus 1, 3: The children of the Hebrews cried out, Hosannah, holding boughs of trees in their hands. Others spread their garments on the way. [*Infantes Hebraeorum frangentes ramos de arboribus sternentes in via; et alii ramos tenebant in manibus suas; alii autem vestimenta sua sternebant in via.*]

Christi Hort 1461-1464: They carried flowers and the best olive branches and spread them soon before him as well as their garments. [*Si trugen phlumen unte este / von olpauum aller peste / unt streutens under in zehant / unt dar zu ir gewant.*]

Two other texts confirm this tendency first recorded in the 9th century in the *Evangelienbuch*. Half a century after Konrad, an Alemannic poet 'updated' the *Rolandslied*. He called himself 'Stricker', which normally means 'ropemaker'. His new German version is known as the *Karl* (c. 1220). This poem is partly a literal repetition of Konrad's free retelling of the *Chanson de Roland*, but with some significant alterations. One of them was to associate the palm tree to peace for the first time in German literature. In these lines, Stricker just replaced victory with peace:

Karl 1414-1415, 1420: When he suffered the martyrdom for our sake, he held a palm branch in his hand (...) the palm means peace. [*Do er di marter durch uns leit. / er furte einen palmen an der hant. (...) der palm bezeichent den fride.*]

The Bavarian poet Konrad von Heimesfurt gave the palm tree almost the same meaning some years later. His poem *Unser vrouwen hinvar* (1225/1230) describes Mary's assumption according to the *Transitus Mariae B* (5th century). In this apocryphal text, Mary settles on the Mount of Olives after the crucifixion. There, an angel descends and brings her a palm branch from her son in paradise. This branch is mentioned 12 times in the Bavarian poem. After Mary's death, the apostle John carries the branch in front of her coffin. It is also used to heal the blind in Jerusalem. After Mary's burial, Jesus descends from heaven with a multitude of angels and greets the apostles with a message of peace and Konrad von Heimesfurt relates this message to the palm tree. The Bavarian poet's combination of symbols is partly due to his Latin source:

Transitus Mariae B 2, 15, 17: [the angle to Mary:] Behold, said He, a palm branch – I have brought it to thee from the paradise of the Lord. (...) [Jesus to the apostles:] Peace be with you! (...) [Jesus:] Peace be to you! [*Ecce, inquit, ramum palmarum; de paradiso domini tibi attuli. (...) Pax vobiscum. (...) Pax vobis.*]

Unser vrouwen hinvar 283-287, 470: [Gabriel:] He sent you, Lady, this cloth and this palm. It grew in Paradise. With this very branch, he announces you true peace. (...) [Jesus:] May peace be with you! [*Er hat dir, vrouwe, diz gewant / und disen palmen gesant, / der wuohs in dem paradÿse. / mit dem selben rise / chündet er dir den wâren vride. (...) pax vobis, mit iu sÿ vride!*]

A similar combination is found in Stricker's *Karl*. The anonymous poet of the *Chanson de Roland* may have had Virgil in mind when he let Marsile say these words to his messengers before their embassy to Charlemagne:

Chanson de Roland 72-73: You shall carry olive-branches in your hands as a symbol of peace and of humility. [*Branches d'olive en voz mains porterez: / ço senefiet pais e humilitét.*]

The Saxon "priest Konrad [*phaffe Chunrat*]" (*Rolandslied* 9079) rewrote the courteous French poem in a clerical perspective. He replaced the Pagan olive tree with the palm tree which he probably considered a more appropriate Christian symbol, but he did not provide any explicit interpretation in his passage. Marsile just orders his messengers to ask for peace and to signify their submission by throwing themselves at Karl's feet:

Rolandslied 595, 607-608: Take palms in your hands (...) Throw yourselves at his feet so that we can obtain peace. [*Nemet palmen in die hant (...) suochet sîne vüeze, / das wir vride haben müeze.*]

On their arrival, Charlemagne grants them peace in all versions while recalling that Marsile previously had shown cruelty by decapitating two of his messengers. In the French poem, it is Roland who makes this reminder pointing out that the Christian messengers had carried olive branches (l. 202-209). In the German addition to this episode quoted above (l. 824-829), Karl draws a comparison between the two assassinated messengers and Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and recalls that the palm tree is a sign of victory. The replacement of the olive tree by the palm tree underscores the felony of the Saracens and transforms the messengers into martyrs. In the *Karl*, Stricker mentions the palm tree twice (l. 1183, 1415) like Konrad, but changes the victory symbol into a peace symbol in the second passage as mentioned above.

The Greeting Kiss

In addition to the olive and the palm tree, medieval German literature records a third peace symbol: the greeting kiss. It is mentioned in at least three texts: the anonymous love novel without any known source *Mai und Beafloer* (1250/1300), Heinrich von Neustadt's religious poem *Von Gottes Zukunft* inspired by Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* (1182/1183) and Heinrich Steinhöwels prose novel *Apollonius von Tyrus* (1460/1468) inspired by a Latin version inserted into the *Gesta Romanorum* (1350/1400):

Mai und Beafloer 6848-6851: Your greeting is the greeting of Judas who caused war quarrel and bitterness when he welcomed Christ with a kiss. [*Din gruz ist ludas gruz, / als er mit frides gruz / braht vrluoge vnd vnsuzze, / do er Christ mit chuss enphie.*]

Von Gottes Zukunft 2471-2473: O Judas, did you take the human child's life with the kiss which is a sign of total peace? [*O Juda, hast du gegeben / Dez menschen Kindes leben / Mit dem kusse, der ane list / Dez gantzen frides zeichen ist?*]

Apollonius von Tyrus 598-599: The King's daughter Cleopatra (...) greeted her father and gave him the kiss of peace. [*Des küniges tochter Cleopatra (...) grisset iren uatter vnd gab im den kuß des frides.*]

If the present inventory is complete, medieval German literature only records nine occurrences in which a common noun is clearly interpreted as a peace symbol. The olive is used in four texts (*Evangelienbuch*, *Eneas*, *Lanzelet*, *Tochter Syon*), the palm in three texts (*Evangelienbuch*, *Karl*, *Unser vrouwen hinvart*), the greeting kiss also in three texts (*Mai und Beafloer*, *Von Gottes Zukunft*, *Apollonius von Tyrus*). The palm is used in six texts as a victory symbol, often close to a peace symbol (*Evangelienbuch*, *Rolandslied*, *Kindheit Jesu*, *Flowing Light of Divinity*, *Pantaleon*, *Maria stuend in swindem smerzen*). In Otfrid's book, both trees are directly connected to each other.

The Proper Nouns Siegfried and Gottfried

Through their etymology, two proper nouns are closely linked to peace: 'Siegfried' and 'Gottfried'. The Old High German root *fridu* ('peace') has often been used for Germanic names. Ernst Förstemann has identified 357 different names and even more variants: 68 male names beginning with this root (*Frithuger*, *Fridamund*, *Frithuric*, etc.), 23 female names beginning with this root (*Frithuburg*, *Fridegundis*, *Fridulind*, etc.), 220 male compounds ending with this root (*Autfrid*, *Godafrid*, *Sigifrid*, etc.) and 46 female compounds ending on this root (*Ermfreda*, *Gotfrida*, *Winefreda*, etc.)⁶. Three German emperors and nine Danish kings called themselves 'Frederick', a name meaning 'powerful through peace'. The first known German author is also part of this list. The beginning of the name 'Otfrid' means 'wealth' or 'property'. This element is not recorded as a common noun in Old High German, but survives in Icelandic *auður* ('riches'). In the *Evangelienbuch*, Otfrid mentions his own name in three of his dedications, twice also in acrostics, but without alluding to its etymology.

⁶ Förstemann, 1900, col. 526-539.

Another Alsatian poet probably did it metaphorically, but before approaching him, the choice of the Latin title *Fiat Pax* need to be explained. It is due to Siegfried, undoubtedly the most famous Germanic hero of all times.

The name 'Siegfried' is recorded in numerous Medieval Latin documents, nearly always with the letter <g>⁷. The usual spelling reflects the original etymology since Old High German *sigu* means 'victory'. The first text using this name in German is probably the *Nibelungenlied* (1200/1205), the epic about the dragon-slayer known today as Siegfried. The modern spelling is probably first recorded in 1595 in Georg Rollenhagen's *Froschmevseler* ('Battle of the Frogs and Mice') in which mice are attacked by crabs looking like "the horn-skinned Siegfried [*den hørnin Siegfried*]⁸".

No Middle High German manuscript uses any <g> and usually spells the name *Sivrit*. This spelling must have been pronounced [si:frit], exactly like the wish 'May Peace be!' (Middle High German *sî vrit*). This wish is recorded once in the Bible, in a prayer that David addresses Jerusalem (Ps 121, 7). The Vulgate (*Vetus Latina*) has *Fiat pax*, and the Hebrew Psalter (*Versio iuxta Hebraicum*) made by Jerome about 392 from Hebrew manuscripts uses the verb *Sit* even closer to the German hero:

Vetus Latina: Peace be made in thy strength: and abundance in thy towers. [*Fiat pax in virtute tua et abundantia in turribus tuis.*]

Versio iuxta Hebraicum: May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. [*Sit pax in muris tuis: abundantia in domibus tuis.*]

The first German translation of this psalm was made by Notker (1001/1022). He quotes the *Vetus Latina* and uses the German verb *geschehen* ('happen'):

Psalter 121, 7: May peace come to you, Jerusalem, in your virtue which you reveal, that is love and mercy. [*Fiat pax in uirtute tua. Frido keskêhe dir ierusalem in dinero tuge. die du skeîndost. daz ist minne unde milti*⁹.]

When Martin Luther translated the 'Hebrew Psalter' (1524), he used the verb *sein* ('be'):

Das Allte testament deutzsch Ps 121, 7: Peace must be within your walls. [*Es musse fride seyn ynnwendig deynen mauren.*]

Although the Middle High German subjunctive *sî* never seems to have been used in a translation of this psalm, it is associated with peace in Konrad von Heimesfurt's poem about Mary's assumption. In the quote above from *Unser vrouwen hinvar* (l.

⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 1324.

⁸ Rollenhagen, 1595, fol. Bbb 3r (III, 10).

⁹ See the reproduction of these lines from the Saint Gall manuscript on the cover of this volume, with the spelling *geskehe*.

470), Jesus actually pronounces Siegfried's medieval name when he greets the apostles (Jn 20, 19): "*mit iu sî vride*" [= *Sivrit*].

Even without <g>, the spelling <Sivrit> evokes both victory and peace, two relatively close ideas. This may explain the name of the hero's sword, mostly spelled <Palmunc> in the manuscripts. It could hint to the palm, the emblem of the martyrs. Siegfried dies indeed as a martyr. Moreover, the *Nibelungenlied* was composed during a long civil war. In the Holy Empire, Wolfger von Erla, the probable patron of the epic, was used by Rome as a diplomat between the enemies and was praised about 1206 by Pope Innocent III as a "messenger of words of peace and concord [*verborum pacis et concordiae portitorem*]¹⁰". Therefore, the sword 'Palmunc' may be meant as a peace symbol, as does its bearer. This is not the case for Siegfried's Icelandic counterpart Sigurd whose sword 'Gram' (from Norse *gramr*, 'angry') on the contrary evokes wrath. It is first mentioned by Snorri Sturluson in the *Edda* (1220/1230).

Approximately at the same time, Gottfried of Strasburg draw inspiration from Thomas's Anglo-Norman *Tristan* to compose an incomplete love story ending after 19548 lines (1200/1220). At the point de interruption, Tristan wonders whether he should marry Isolde-of-the-White-Hands¹¹ or not and thus betray the woman he loves. Her subjects have given her a French surname: "Isolde, Isolde the blonde, marvel of the entire world [*Îsôt, Îsôt la blunde / marveil de tû le munde*]" (l. 12559-12560). Ten of the eleven existent manuscripts relate the death of the two lovers, seven the continuation of Ulrich von Tûrheim, three that of Heinrich von Freiberg. Both continuators claim that Gottfried died too early to complete his work. There are in fact good reasons to doubt this explanation of the incompleteness of the story, in particular the acrostics with which the text is sprinkled. Three of them are incomplete.

Only the name of the likely patron, an unknown 'Dietrich', is easily visible when you open the book (Fig. 2). On the first page of the Heidelberg manuscript (Cpg 360), nine small red initials follow each other at regular intervals, all opens a monorhyme quatrain and form the acrostic DIEDERIKH (l. 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29, 33, 37). It was rediscovered already in 1809. On the same page, the text begins with a huge blue and red <G> (l. 1). The top of the second column has a big blue <T> (l. 41) above a little red, hardly noticeable <I> (l. 45). The <G> and the <T> also open monorhyme quatrains, while the red <I> marks the transition to an ordinary passage in simple rhymes. In 1925, two incomplete four-letter acrostics, TRIS and ISOL, beginning on

¹⁰ Andersen, 2017, p. 121 (with further arguments in favor of the spelling 'Palmunc', rejected by all modern editors who prefer 'Balmunc').

¹¹ Gottfried calls her *Isot* or *Isolt* according to French *Yseut* and *Yseult*. The modern spelling 'Isolde' is mostly due to Richard Wagner.

the first page and referring to the two protagonists, were rediscovered. At exactly eight places, a big and a small colored initial surround a monorhyme quatrain. Four times, the stanza begins with an initial from the hero's name and ends with an initial from the heroine's name (TRIS/ISOL: l. 41/45, 1791/1795, 5099/5103, 12431/12435), four times, it is the reverse (ISOL/TRIS: l. 131/135, 1865/1869, 5177/5181, 12503/12507). In other words, the two lovers embrace each other eight times by means of initials.

In 1963, a fourth acrostic was rediscovered. Just as TRIS and ISOL, it begins on the first page, has four letters and is incomplete. The four big colored initials GOTE (l. 1, 1751, 5069, 12183) are located precisely at the beginning of each of the four parts of the poem, open monorhyme quatrains and precede the lovers' initials with 40 to 248 lines. The four parts can be given the following subtitles: 'Conception and Birth' (l. 1-1750, including the prologue l. 1-244), 'Childhood and Youth' (l. 1751-5068), 'Bridal Quest' (l. 5069-12182), 'Endless Love' (l. 12183-19548). In other words, each of the four parts begins with three relatively close initials and these initials refer to three names, those of the poet and his two main characters.

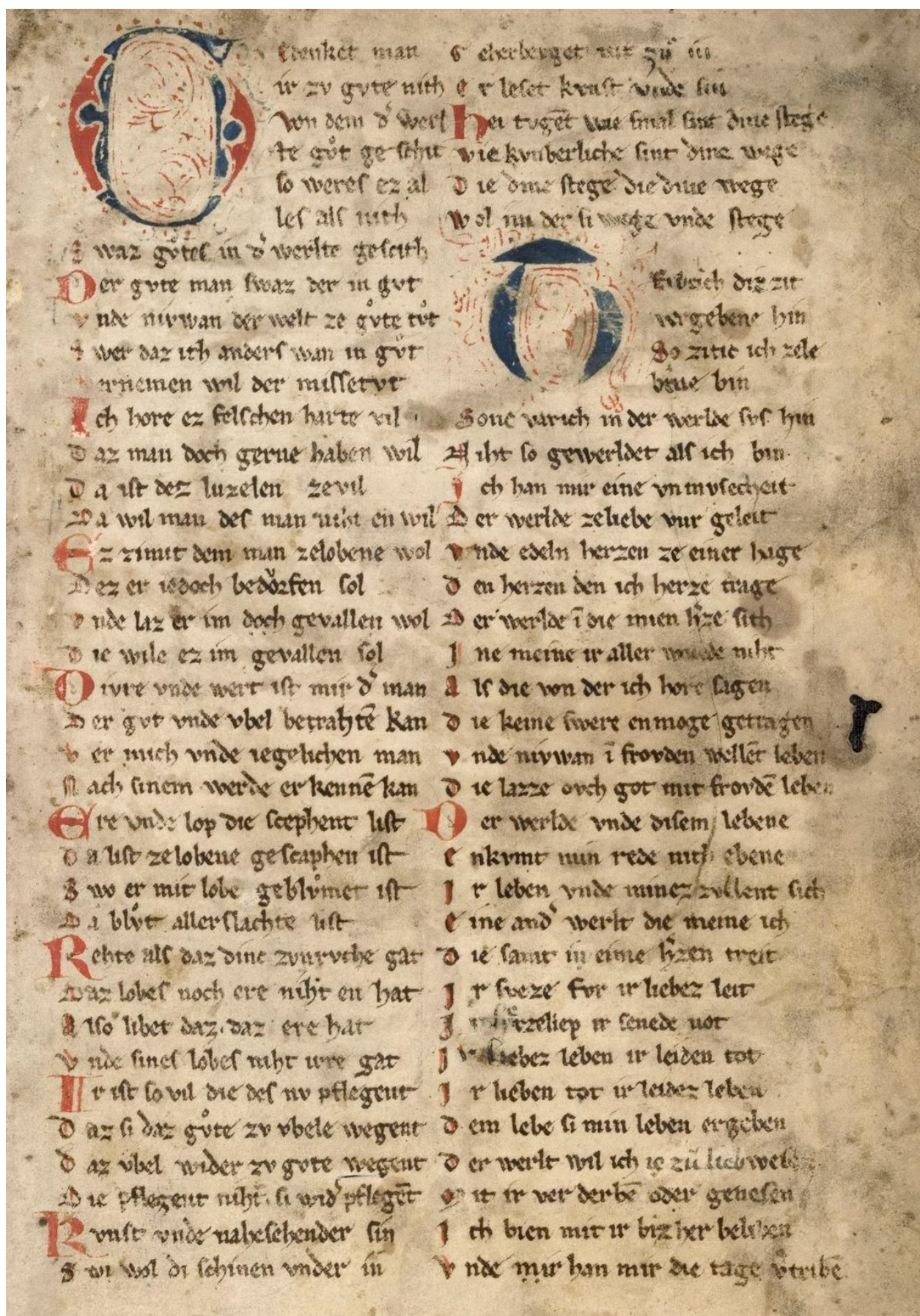


Fig. 2: Gottfried's red acrostic DIEDERIKH and the blue initials G and T in GOT and TRIS.

In 2013, a fifth complete acrostic was rediscovered: DIUE (l. 233, 237, 241, 245)¹³. These four letters surround three monorhyme quatrains, but only the letter E is a big colored initial. This acrostic represents a definite article and a polysemic female noun, Middle High German *diu ê* ('marriage', modern German *die Ehe*; 'eternity', modern German *die Ewigkeit*; or 'law', no modern equivalent). This one-letter noun is perhaps repeated as a single initial at the beginning of the fourth part (E: l. 12183). Indeed, this part describes an endless union since Gottfried did not finish his poem, as some scholars think deliberately. If he had continued until the two lovers' tragic death, he would not have finished the three now incomplete acrostics at the same time. In GOTFRIT, four letters are missing, in TRISTAN three, in ISOLT only one.

The last third of the poem (l. 12508-19548) is totally devoid of initials and monorhyme stanzas. It features the well-known scene in which Tristan sends wooden chips to Isolde who is being watched by her husband Mark hidden in a tree (Fig 3). In this episode, Bérout (l. 404, 415, 472, 475: *pin*) and *La Folie Tristan* (l. 783, 798, 802: *pin*) mention a pine tree, Eilhart von Oberg (l. 3352, 3463: *linde*) and *Sir Tristrem* (l. 2039: *linden spon*) a linden tree, the Icelandic monk Robert an apple orchard (ch. 55: *eplagarðinum*), only Gottfried mentions an olive tree (l. 14423, 14444, 14608, 14624: *öleboum*). This part of Thomas's novel is lost and does not give any evidence, but it is very likely that Gottfried's olive tree is an innovation. According to *Sir Tristrem*, Tristan writes runes on the chips, according to Eilhart crosses, only according to Gottfried initials, namely <T> and <I> on either side of each chip. In fact, each chip mirrors the first leaf of an ordinary *Tristan* manuscript. It normally contains a <T> for TRISTAN on the front page and an <I> for ISOLT on the reverse side. In fact, Gottfried continues his subtle initial game in the last part of his poem. The orchard episode cleverly alludes to the eight previous initial encounters in these lines which have never been discussed by scholarship:

Tristan 14502-14507: So it was that he [= Tristan] and his lady Isolde found their way to the spring in the shade of the tree eight times in as many days, in secret and at opportune moments. No one was aware or saw anything. [*Sus kam er und sîn vrouwe Îsôt / zem brunnen an des boumes schate / vil heinlîch und ze guoter state / in ahte tagen wol ahte stunt, / daz ez nie nieman wart kunt, / noch ez kein ouge nie gesach.*]

The number eight which is repeated twice in the same line must refer to the general initial game. By interrupting the acrostic with his own name after three letters,

¹² Online, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg360/0009/image> (Creative Commons).

¹³ Andersen, 2013, p. 141-142.

Gottfried highlights its divine etymology and may play with the idea that a poet is a creator in the same way as God. Anyway, the olive tree seems to refer to the end of Gottfried's name. The poet sends initials, but only attentive readers notice them. The discrete hint in these lines has perhaps never been remarked since the Middle Ages.



Fig. 3: Tristan und Isolde next to Gottfried's olive tree falsely drawn as a linden tree.

Munich, Bavarian State Library, Cgm 51, 1225/1250, fol. 76^r¹⁴.

A contemporaneous name-sake explained the etymology of the name 'Gottfried', the historian Gottfried of Viterbo († after 1202). He is supposed to have instructed the future emperor-poet Henry VI between 1180 and 1190 in the imperial castle in Hagenau in Northern Alsatia (French Haguenau). In the Latin chronicle he proudly called *Pantheon* (1187/1191) in reference to his own name, he explains that 'Gottfried' means 'God's peace'. The Latin title in fact derives from Greek *πάνθεον*, literally '(a temple) of all gods', but this historian apparently thought that *pan* meant 'peace' in Greek:

Pantheon 133, preface: The title of this book is the *Pantheon* from Gottfried, like the *Lucan* from Lucan and the *Horace* from Horace. This title means 'God's peace' because in the German tongue *got* means 'god' and *fride* means 'peace'. Thus, *Gottfried* means 'God's peace'. [*Nomen autem libri est panteon Gotifredi, sicut a Lucano Lucanus et ab Oratio Oratius. Hoc autem nomen interpretatur pax Dei. In lingua nanque Teutonica got dicitur Deus et pax dicitur fride. Inde Gotifredus pax Dei interpretatur.*]

¹⁴ Online, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00088332?page=154,155> (Creative Commons).

Gottfried of Viterbo and Gottfried of Strasburg both frequented the imperial court in Hagenau, the only city of the Holy Empire to be mentioned in the *Tristan* (l. 4779). If they were not simply one and the same person, the *Tristan* poet must at least have known the historian and may have drawn inspiration from his name-sake for a two-part signature based on an acrostic meaning 'god' and an olive tree meaning 'peace'.

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