



The Romance of Tristan and Iseult

Joseph Bédier , Hilaire Belloc (Translator)

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A tale of chivalry and doomed, transcendent love, *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* is one of the most resonant works of Western literature, as well as the basis for our enduring idea of romance. The story of the Cornish knight and the Irish princess who meet by deception, fall in love by magic, and pursue that love in defiance of heavenly and earthly law has inspired artists from Matthew Arnold to Richard Wagner. But nowhere has it been retold with greater eloquence and dignity than in Joseph Bédier's edition, which weaves several medieval sources into a seamless whole, elegantly translated by Hilaire Belloc and Paul Rosenfeld.

The Romance of Tristan and Iseult Details

Date : Published May 31st 1994 by Vintage (first published 1170)

ISBN : 9780679750161

Author : Joseph Bédier , Hilaire Belloc (Translator)

Format : Paperback 205 pages

Genre : Classics, Romance, Fiction, Historical, Medieval, Mythology, Arthurian

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Molly says

Há muito que procurava ler esta obra. Vi o filme e conhecia o romance de ambos, mas queria muito ler a história, uma vez que faz parte das lendas arturianas e tem aquela magia que tanto me agrada. Foi agora que apareceu a oportunidade e só posso dizer que estou muito feliz.

Este livro conta a história de amor de Tristão e Isolda, amor esse predestinado a consumir os seus amantes de modo a que a sua história fosse bela e trágica. Perseguidos pelos seus, Tristão e Isolda lutam contra tudo e contra todos pelo seu amor. Uma bonita história de cavalaria, relacionada com a lenda arturiana, que para sempre trouxe ao mundo uma magia que invoca um tempo pleno de magia e maravilha.

A narrativa é bastante simples, é uma história pequenina, mas encerra em si uma beleza enorme, mostrando como a perseverança e a luta pelos nossos ideias, sonhos e objectivos é aquilo que nos move. Todas as batalhas, todas as tristezas, todos os desgostos podem ser vencidos pela coragem e pelo amor, e mesmo se não o forem, há sempre algo para além deste tempo e espaço, onde aguarda o prémio para aqueles que amam e mostram a sua coragem. É essa a grande mensagem da história, a meu ver e é isso que o amor entre estas duas personagens me transmitiu.

Esta é uma história de amor em si bastante desoladora, mas é impossível não encontrar a beleza que nela reside. É um hino ao amor e aos amantes impossíveis. Tristão está excelente. Juntamente com Lancelote e Artur, ele é uma daquelas personagens lendárias que mais me fascina, precisamente devido à sua história de amor com Isolda e à sua batalha por ela. Também Isolda é uma personagem bastante interessante. Filha dos

reis da Irlanda, Isolda é uma bela mulher, nobre e ativa, que parte em rumo ao desconhecido para se casar com o Rei Marcos da Cornualha, mas acaba por se apaixonar por Tristão a meio da viagem. É, como quase todas as mulheres das lendas arturianas, uma mulher de força e carácter, que não desiste nem mostra fraqueza.

Uma história medieval, com tudo o que a Idade Média nos deixou. Com romances proibidos, batalhas, amizades, intrigas, traições, magia, mistério e muita coragem. Um hino ao amor e à cavalaria.

Existem várias versões desta história e eu li aquela que foi recontada por Joseph Bédier e só posso dizer que correspondeu às minhas expectativas. Recomendo a todos a sua leitura, sem reservas. É um livro pequeno, mas com uma história do tamanho do mundo. Existe o livro traduzido para português.

Karlyflower *The Vampire Ninja, Luminescent Monster & Wendigo Nerd Goddess of Canada (according to The Hulk)* says

Okay, so I did NOT **love** it... but it was good :)

I **LOVE** the 2006 film *Tristan & Isolda* for reasons.... mostly this:

and this:

but also because it has one of the most poignantly beautiful forgiveness scenes I have ever seen. Rufus Sewell (as King Mark) delivers an unforgettable performance. Which is saying something because I am a HUGE James Franco fan (he is the reason I watched the movie) and Rufus Sewell stole that movie from him, hands *snicker* down!!

However, this translation/compilation of *Tristan & Iseult* didn't ravish me the way the movie did. It was good, cute and tragic in turns but I found the fantastical elements made it a lot harder to relate to.

There are big variances between the movie and book, a key one being the love potion (aka spiced wine)'s presence. I didn't like that part as it removed the humanity of the affair and, in a way, made the lovers actions more forgivable.

All and all it was quite good but I wish I'd read the book first and seen the movie second. I never thought I would say this... the movie was better.... *facepalm* I have to go hide now.

Ana Rînceanu says

I would have liked more romance and less chivalry, but I enjoyed the ride.

Gabrielle Dubois says

The legend of Tristan and Iseut ... in these old times, one knew what the drama was!

His lord and husband dead, the queen Blanchefleur (Whiteflower), pregnant, wants to let herself die. Her faithful Rohalt tries to console her:

"My queen, your mourn will only add to your husband's mourn, there's nothing to win there. Should not all those who are born die? ... May God receive the dead persons and preserve the living ones!..."

But Blanchefleur didn't want to listen to him. For three days she waited to join her dear lord. On the fourth day she gave birth to a son and, taking him in her arms, she said:

"Son, I have desired to see you for so long, and I see the most beautiful creature that a woman has ever worn. Sad I gave birth, sad is the first welcome I give you, because of you I have sadness to die. And as thus you came to this earth by sorrow (tristess), your name will be Tristan. "

When she had said those words, she kissed him and died. "

I had for a long time this book on my shelves. It belonged to my grandmother, it's a beautiful illustrated edition from early 19th, not the one on the picture from goodreads.

First, I found the writing simple. But, once you're in the book, which is easy... well, in fact the book takes you, then you can feel the depth and the poetry of this text, and then, you find it hard to come back to the 21st century.

Usual French version:

La légende de Tristan et Iseut... voilà un temps où l'on savait ce qu'était le drame !

Son seigneur et époux mort, la reine Blanchefleur, enceinte, veut à son tour se laisser mourir. Son fidèle Rohalt s'efforçait de la consoler :

" Reine, on ne peut rien gagner à se mettre deuil sur deuil ; tous ceux qui naissent ne doivent-ils pas mourir ? Que Dieu reçoive les morts et préserve les vivants !..."

Mais elle ne voulut pas l'écouter. Trois jours elle attendit de rejoindre son cher seigneur. Au quatrième jour, elle mit au monde un fils, et, l'ayant pris entre ses bras :

"Fils, j'ai longtemps désiré de te voir ; et je vois la plus belle créature que femme ait jamais portée. Triste j'accouche, triste est la première fête que je te fais, à cause de toi j'ai tristesse à mourir. Et comme ainsi tu es venu sur cette terre par tristesse, tu auras nom Tristan."

Quand elle eut dit ces mots, elle le baisa et mourut."

J'avais ce livre depuis longtemps sur mes étagères. Il appartenait à ma grand-mère, c'est une magnifique édition illustrée du début 19ème siècle, pas celle proposée par goodreads.

D'abord, j'ai trouvé l'écriture simple. Puis, le livre m'a emportée, et j'ai pu sentir la profondeur et la poésie de ce texte, alors, je l'ai lu d'un jet et j'ai eu du mal à revenir au 21ème siècle.

Anna says

Δεν ήταν προσεγμένη η συγκεκριμένη έκδοση. Αρκετά ορθογραφικά λάθη σε σημείο εκνευρισμού!! Εντοπίσι, γλυκί η ιπποτική αφήγηση, μια ιστορία αγάπης σε παραμυθιακή μορφή, με όλα τα κλασικά μοτίβα. Για τους αγαπήνε τα παραμύθια (πώς εγ?) η Ιστορία του Τριστανου και της Ιζολδης, έχει όλα τα χαρακτηριστικά του κλασικού παραμυθιού, που σαγηνεύουν!

Janez says

Une passion folle ou une folie passionnee, ce roman, bien qu'idealise par le medieviste Joseph Bedier, nous donne une histoire d'amour, qui ne peut pas etre vecue. S'y melent les divers elements des romans chevaleresques, comme fin amor, le feodalisme et tout ce qui le represente....Ce qui m'a plu le mieux, c'etait la force de la passion, le renoncement a cette meme passion qui ne peut finir que par la mort des deux amants. Point de happy end!!

FP says

Vale la pena mencionar que éste no es uno de los poemas medievales sobre la historia de Tristán e Isolda, sino más bien un intento del autor Joseph Bédier de unificar diversos poemas en una sola historia internamente consistente, en formato narrativo.

La vieja historia es sobre Tristán, un caballero fiel y leal, que va a buscar a la prometida de su rey, sobrina de un guerrero a quien Tristán mató en combate singular. Esta reina, Isolda, detesta a Tristán, pero cuando los dos beben una pócima mágica (que se suponía era para ella y su futuro esposo), se enamoran perdidamente. Muchos ecos del romance de Lancelot y Guinevere prosiguen. La historia es famosa por su elemento romántico, pero en verdad suele olvidarse que dicho romance fue por una poción, no nació de la interacción mutua de los dos individuos. Ellos mismos parecieron olvidarlo en poco tiempo, eso sí, ya que no hacían más que desearse mutuamente.

Bédier logró crear una trama coherente con todo el material que tenía. Por supuesto, dada la naturaleza del material con el que trabajaba, la trama aún es bastante episódica. Hay que tomarla por como viene y verla como un refuerzo narrativo de una historia antiquísima.

Mohammad Ali says

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Megan Anderson says

A classic myth, but maybe not the best version.

Tristan and Iseult is a big deal: it's said to be a major influence for the romance between Lancelot and Guinevere, Romeo and Juliet, and pretty much the majority romantic love stories after the 12th century. This myth was passed down verbally and has been committed to text by several different authors. Bédier argues

that his version is adapted from the original poem, which may or may not be historically accurate. The style is conversational as if a bard is telling it aloud, which is probably an attempt to retell the story as closely as possible to the Cornish poem Bédier argued was the original. No matter the accuracy, the story as he writes it is interesting and tragic. It would have been more interesting and tragic if it didn't start by telling you what is going to happen, but for some reason classics don't believe in the importance of the element of surprise.

One thing that this book got me thinking about was persuasion of the reader through perspective. As long as a book clearly "sides" with a character as a good guy, the reader generally accepts that the character is someone they should root for. But these people were awful. If we set aside the "forbidden love" /affair moral conundrum, there's still the fact that Tristan and Iseult go around killing or almost killing several people just to keep their boot knocking secret. Nobel and fair hearted? Not so much. But I bet most people don't even notice T&I are a-holes, because the narrator keeps talking about how awesome and doomed they are.

Jason says

To be honest, I didn't read this as closely or attentively as I should have, so my impressions are unfairly formed. I liked it: a love potion (meh), romance, deception, humour, a really heart-warming dog scene. Episodic. Inconsistent at times, but not so much that it's bothersome; some characters somehow are no longer dead, for example. The story goes on. I didn't hate it! I like the Wagner treatment. (I know, y'all, problematic.)

Agir(????) says

Book of Books, the very oddest
Here - the Book of Love.
Alertly have I read it:
Of joy a few brief pages,
Volumes filled with sorrow;
And then a part that deals with parting.
Rendezvous - a little chapter,
Fragmentary. - Tomes on worry
Lengthened by the clarifers,

Measureless, no end.
O Nizami! - in the long run,
Though, you found the right direction.
Unresolvable - who solves it?
Lovers being reunited.

Yes, it was the glancing eye
And the mouth, the kissing lips,
Rounded body, slender hips,
As on green of Eden lie.
Was she there? Where did she go?
There! she gave - as off she sped -
Gave her self - surrendered, fled! -
Fettering my life in woe.
Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Nikki says

If you've read any other Tristan text, like that of Gottfried von Strassberg, this is nothing new. The introduction suggests that this is the oldest surviving Tristan text: perhaps so, I think it may well be right.

The translation is clear and easy to read, and you get the whole gist of the story. The surviving manuscripts of Beroul's poem and The Tale of Tristan's Madness are full of gaps, so the gaps are filled in by what is known from other Tristan stories. Reasonably well done, I think.

When reading it, you do have to recall that Beroul wasn't setting out to write something that was like a modern novel. One of the reviews suggests someone should have told Beroul about "show, don't tell" -- how ridiculous: that's a rule for a modern novel, and fiction had entirely different conventions then.

The story of Tristan and Isolde is a difficult one, for readers -- certainly modern readers. All our sympathies are meant to lie with the lovers, and yet they are consistently lying and cheating. The love potion seems like nothing but an excuse, to us, to avoid their moral culpability. Still, if you can set aside your moral sensibilities for the space of the story, whichever version you read, it's a beautiful tale.

Erika B. (SOS BOOKS) says

"King Mark made peace with Tristan. Tristan returned to the castle as of old. Tristan slept in the King's chamber with his peers. He could come or go, the King thought no more of it. But who can long keep his love a secret? Love alas cannot be hid."

Ah love. It has a mind of its own. This was so tragic and bittersweet. I saw the movie with James Franco back in the day, and now I feel cheated because this story is so much more. The story of two lovers at the mercy of fate and the gods that control them. Loved it!

"The Queen understood the signal of her friend. On the ground she perceived the branch of hazelwood about which the woodbine tightly clung, and thought in her heart; "So is it with us, friend: neither you without me nor I without you."

Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly says

His parents were wed in a castle standing above the sea called Tintagel "well fenced against all assault or engines of war, (with) its keep, which the giants had built long ago, (a) compact of great stones, like a chess board of vert and azure." He was lost for a long time, his royal origin hidden and unknown, but fate was kind and he was brought back to King Mark, ruler of Cornwall, brother of his deceased mother Blanche fleur (the husband of his late father, Rivalen King of Lyonesse). He served King Mark loyally, loving him as his lord and like a father. But there were battles fought, a dragon slain, a bird which came to King Mark with a girl's fine strand of hair and a love potion drank by the wrong couple until it all came to this: he, Tristan and Iseult the Fair love each other but Iseult the Fair is to marry King Mark. A touching scene between the two before the wedding:

"Two days she (Iseult's lady-in-waiting) watched them, seeing them refuse all food or comfort and seeking each other as blind men seek, wretched apart and together more wretched still, for then they trembled each for the first avowal.

"On the third day, as Tristan neared the tent on deck where Iseult sat, she saw him coming and she said to him, very humbly, 'Come in, my lord.'

"'Queen,' said Tristan, 'why do you call me lord? Am I not your liege and vassal, to revere and serve and cherish you as my lady and Queen?'

"But Iseult answered, 'No, you know that you are my lord and my master, and I your slave. Ah, why did I not sharpen those wounds of the wounded singer, or let die that dragon-slayer in the grasses of the marsh? Why did I not, while he lay helpless in the bath, plant on him the blow of the sword I brandished? But then I did not know what now I know!'

"'And what is it that you know, Iseult? What is it that torments you?'

"'Ah, all that I know torments me, and all that I see. This sky and this sea torment me, and my body and my life.'

"She laid her arm upon Tristan's shoulder, the light of her eyes was drowned and her lips trembled.

"He repeated: 'Friend, what is it that torments you?'

"'THE LOVE OF YOU,' she said. Whereat he put his lips to hers."

Aaaaaw, the collective sigh of teenage girls in an imaginary moviehouse as Tristan and Iseult exchange bodily fluids for the first time. On the other hand I, jaded by love I no longer need to suffer vicariously, just continue munching my popcorn (barbecue flavor keeps me awake) and just wait for this scene where chess is used as a signal for Iseult to cheat on her husband-king:

"Dinas accordingly returned to Tintagel, climbed the stair and entered the hall. Under the canopy King Mark and Iseult the Fair sat over a game of chess. Dinas seated himself on a stool beside the Queen, as though to observe her play, and twice, pretending to point out moves to her, he posed his hand on the chess board: the second time, Iseult perceived on one of his fingers the jasper ring. Great joy immediately overwhelmed her. Lightly she jarred Dinas' arm, so that several pawns fell in a heap.

"'Look, seneschal,' said she, 'you have disturbed my game, and in a way that prevents my resuming it.'

"Mark left the hall, Iseult repaired to her chamber and had the seneschal called to her:

"'Friend, you bear a message from Tristan?'"

Wonderful, very old(circa 1300's) love story. And who was the author? There were several:

"The good singers of old time, Beroul and Thomas of Built, Gilbert and Gottfried told this tale for lovers and none other, and, by my pen, they beg you for your prayers. They greet those who are cast down, and those in heart, those troubled and those filled with desire, those who are overjoyed and those disconsolate, all lovers. May all herein find strength against inconstancy, against unfairness and despite and loss and pain and all the bitterness of loving."

Amen.

Vaishali says

Five stars if not for abrupt character reactions. Still, one of the best legends ever. Historically, the romance predates Arthur/Guenevere/Lancelot, but its enduring popularity morphed Tristan into a Round Table Knight.

We have it all here : fresh verdant woodlands ... mighty castles with tall steeples ... dainty maids courted by the finest men... plus dragons, pirates, and lepers. In short, a world as innocent as it was brutal, now lost to us forever. A dreamland worthy of revisiting for centuries to come.

Quotes :

"I would like to try the sea that brings all chances."

"They alone shall taste this brew. For this is its power: they who drink of it together love each other with their every single sense and with their every thought, forever, in life and in death."

"Seeing them refuse all food or comfort and seeking each other as blind men seek, wretched apart and together more wretched still."

"Hearts so stricken will lose their vigilance."

"She showed the wit of women well as she did not lift her eyes."

"God has compassion, and will not hurt the innocent at heart."

"A man who lives in sin without repenting is a man quite dead."

"And hence forward from that day, no one dare entered the wild wood, for terror guarded it, and the lovers were lords of it all."

"Tristan fashioned his bow 'Fail-Not', which struck home always, man or beast, whatever it aimed at."

"A little bell... that tinkled so gaily, and so clear, and so soft, that as Tristan heard it he was soothed, and his anguish melted away. For such was the virtue of the bell... that whosoever heard it, he lost all pain."

“Sire, keep you Tristan. There is no better knight, and your land has need for such courage.”

“Far from her, death came surely, and he had rather die at once than day by day.”

“Tell her that my heart salutes her.”

Helena says

La historia puede llegar a ser bella, si bien la narración se me ha hecho extremadamente espesa.

Yani says

Relectura septiembre 2016

Es otra versión de la historia de amor prohibida (suena bien...) entre el sobrino de un rey y la esposa de este. Llegado a un punto Marc, el rey, me dio un poco de pena porque vive envuelto en los chismes y las mentiras de toda la gente que lo rodea y se deja influir. Por alguna extraña razón, me gustó más que la versión de Gottfried. Tal vez haya sido porque el verso es más amable que la prosa cuando una no está muy en sintonía con la historia (a pesar de que a mí me gustó) por sus digresiones o, tal vez, porque los diálogos de los personajes hacen que una forme una opinión propia sobre ellos. Además, está contada de una forma menos empalagosa. Si bien Béroul es tendencioso (él afirma que está contando la historia tal como fue), Gottfried se ponía pesado con sus teorías en medio de la narración. Coinciden en muchas cosas (como que están inconclusos, por ejemplo) pero también difieren en detalles que cambian la interpretación. Eso lo hace entretenido.

Malanie says

“And what is it that you know, Iseult?”

She laid her arm upon Tristan’s shoulder, the light of her eyes was drowned and her lips trembled.

“The love of you,” she said. Whereat he put his lips to hers.

The lovers held each other; life and desire trembled through their youth, and Tristan said, “Well then, come Death.”

Before Romeo and Juliet, there was Tristan and Iseult.

This was such a beautiful story. Everyone calls their lover "friend" and there is *so much deceit*

And when people kissed each other on the lips to show good faith/friendship??!!!!!! I wish everyone still did this tbh c:

Tristan and Iseult fall in love not because they want to, but because they drink a philter which forces their affair. Without it, Tristan would have just remained loyal to King Mark. Philters always take away from the romance, for me, because it feels like the feelings lack substance

But still a nice classic. c:

David Wright says

I absolutely love this story. As usual, I won't mention any plot specifics as such. I meant to read this a long time ago after reading Beowulf but got sidetracked. This is such a tragic tale that you will either love completely or take issue with, depending on your interpretation of what is just and right within the storyline. There are battles of mythical beasts as in Beowulf but also intrigues, jealousy, spite and heartbreak. In my opinion, the events surrounding vanquishing of certain characters are totally deserved, they were cowardly and two faced backstabbers who had no loyalty whatsoever. I also felt total empathy for Tristan and Iseult, being thrown together by external events. The fact that this book has reviewers disputing viewpoints just proves the impact that this story makes, everyone will react to it in a certain way. For me, this was a work of art.
