



"Ywain and Gawain" and Chrétien de Troyes' "Yvain: The Knight of the Lion" in contrast: Differences between the Middle English poem and its French source

By Thomas Schachtebeck

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Seminar paper from the year 2006 in the subject English - History of Literature, Eras, grade: 1,7, Free University of Berlin (Fachbereich Englisch), course: Medieval English Literatures II : English Arthurian Romances , language: English, abstract: There is no doubt that Chrétien de Troyes was one of the most influential writers in the Middle Ages, and his poem Yvain: The Knight of the Lion (Yvain: Le Chevalier au Lion) is probably one of the greatest masterpieces of medieval writing. Since there are many different redactions of Chrétien's Yvain: The Knight of the Lion (hereafter Yvain) today – such as Hartmann von Aue's Iwein, the Welsh Owain, and the Middle English Ywain and Gawain (hereafter YG) – it can be rightfully claimed that Yvain had a huge impact on the literary world of the Middle Ages. Referring to the English world of literature, YG is – of course - the most popular redaction of Chrétien's Yvain. However, there are a lot of critics who argue whether this Middle English redaction of Chrétien's Yvain should be regarded “as a work of art in its own right or as merely a translation” [Finlayson 1969: 312] of its French source. In order to give proof that YG is a work of its own rather than a pure literal translation of Chrétien's Yvain, this paper aims to highlight and analyse some striking differences between these two poems. Therefore, this paper will first focus on some differences in terms of form and style, and then, it will concentrate on some matters which are related to different meanings and different focal points of YG and Yvain.

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- Rank: #4161870 in eBooks
- Published on: 2011-01-19
- Released on: 2011-01-19
- Format: Kindle eBook

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