JACQUES LE GOFF

THE MEDIEVAL IMAGINATION

TRANSLATED BY

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LÉVI-STRAUSS IN BROCELIANDE
A BRIEF ANALYSIS
OF A COURTLY ROMANCE

The episode that we have chosen for comment[1] is taken from Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion,* written some time around 1180.[2] Yvain, a knight in King Arthur's court, following a series of adventures about which we shall have more to say in a moment, obtains the permission of his wife Laudine to leave her for a year "in order to accompany the king and go to tournaments" (lines 2561–2562). Should he remain away for more than the allotted time by so much as a single day he will forfeit his wife's love. Inevitably—for this is a fantastic tale, in which conditions are set only to be transgressed[3]—Yvain allows the deadline to pass. A damsel from his wife's household (*mesnie*), riding a symbolic black palfrey, comes to tell him that all is lost and that he must never attempt to see his wife again. Yvain, losing his wits at this news, flees the court and heads for the forest.

A word needs to be said about the setting of the action. Like other of Chrétien's works (most notably *Perceval* and *Erec et Enide*) and many other courtly romances, the story unfolds in two series of episodes of radically different, even opposite, meaning (or *sen,* as one would have said in twelfth-century French).[4] The narrative opens with the story of a failure, a bungled "adventure." Calogrenant, another knight in Arthur's court and a cousin of Yvain, is unable to defeat Esclados le Roux, the guardian of a magic fountain in the heart of Broceliande. Yvain follows the same route and succeeds everywhere where Calogrenant has failed. Not only does he defeat and slay the lord of the fountain, but he also marries the man's widow and, like the king of Nemi studied by Frazer, replaces him on the throne. Yvain's feats are what might be called gratuitous adventures, exploits for exploits' sake, in which the magical interventions of Lunette, maid to the lady of the fountain, were of crucial assistance.

Mes or est mes sire Yvain sire, 2166
Et li morz est toz obliez

This essay was written in collaboration with Pierre Vidal-Naquet and first published in abbreviated form in *Critique* 325 (1974): 543–571. The more complete version reprinted here first appeared in *Claude Lévi-Strauss* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 265–319.

Cil qui l'ocist est mariez;
Sa fame a, et ensanble gisent. . . .

[Now Sir Yvain is lord and the dead man is completely forgotten. His murderer has married and taken his wife, and now they sleep together.]

The poet, who is not an adventurous knight but most probably a clergyman, does not disguise his feelings about the matter. Indeed, subsequent to Yvain's madness, the episode that chiefly interests us here, the knight ceases to make conquests for himself and works only on behalf of others, as a defender of widows and orphans. Having legitimated his lordship, he regains his wife's love.

The episode that is most important for our purposes occupies lines 2783–2883:

> Yvain was beside himself. Everything he heard upset him, and everything he saw tormented him. He wished he were far away in a land so wild that no one would know where to look for him, and that neither man nor woman would know more of him than if he were at the bottom of an abyss. His trouble mounted. He hated nothing so much as himself, and he knew not where to seek consolation. He saw that he was responsible for his own disgrace, that he had ruined himself. Rather than fail to take vengeance against himself for the theft of his happiness, he preferred to lose his mind. He parted without a word, so afraid was he of raving in the presence of the barons. The latter paid no heed. They allowed him to wander off on his own. Their words and their concerns, they believed, would be of little interest to him.
>
> Soon he was far from their tents. Madness took hold of his mind. He flayed himself and shredded his garments and fled across fields and furrows. His worried companions looked for him everywhere, among the tents, in the hedges, and through the orchards, but they did not find him.
>
> Yvain ran like a madman until near a park he encountered a boy with a bow and very broad and sharp barbed arrows. He had just enough sense to take them away from the youth. He lost all memory of what he had done until then. He lay in wait in the woods, slew whatever animals happened by, and ate their meat raw.
>
> He wandered among the hedgerows like a frenzied man of the wild until he came to a small, low house. There lived a hermit who was out grubbing for roots. When the hermit saw the naked figure of a man, he realized that the fellow had lost his wits and ran into his house to hide. But out of charity the good man placed some bread and water out through the window.
>
> The madman drew near and, his appetite whetted, took the bread and ate. Never had he tasted such bad-tasting stale bread. The flour from which it was made had cost no more than five sous per measure, for it contained barley with the straw mixed in and was more bitter than yeast and mildewed and dry as bark. But hunger tormented him, and the bread seemed good, for hunger is sauce for any dish well prepared and well preserved. He ate all the bread and drank the cold water from the pot.
>
> When he was finished he fled into the woods in search of stags and does. And the good man under his roof when he saw him run away prayed to God to protect him but never to allow him to stray again into that part of the woods. But nothing could prevent the lunatic, witless though he was, from returning to a place where someone had done him a good turn.
>
> Thereafter, as long as his madness lasted, not a day went by when he did not bring some wild beast back to the hermit's hut. He spent his time hunting, and the good man spent his skinning and cooking the game, and every day there was bread and water in the window for the wild man. He had to eat venison without salt or pepper and drink cold water from the fountain. And the good man took it upon himself to sell the skins and buy oat or barley bread of which the other man ate his fill. This continued until one day when a lady and two damsels from her household found the madman sleeping in the forest.

The lady and one of the damsels then healed Yvain's madness with a magic ointment that the lady had previously obtained from the fairy Morgue (Morgan).

We shall have much more to say about Yvain's reintegration into the human world, for a lot more was involved than the damsel with the magic ointment. The "wild man theme" was a common topos of medieval Latin literature. The prototype can be found in a well-known episode of the *Vita Merlini* (1148–1149) by Geoffroy of Monmouth, a text that draws heavily upon ancient Celtic tradition.[5] Responsible for a battle in which two of his brothers die, Merlin takes to the woods (*fit silvester homo,* line 80), where he leads a miserable life but acquires prophetic powers. The theme occurs frequently in courtly romance,[6] and brilliant use was made of it by Ariosto in *Orlando furioso* (which is why Frappier would call the episode in question "Yvain furioso").[7] Our goal, however, is to comment on the text in detail, avoiding facile "psychological" explanations in which Chrétien appears to have been almost a psychiatrist: "All the details, all the precise little indications, suggest that in describing his character's madness Chrétien did not allow himself to diverge very far from certain observed facts."[8] That Chrétien transformed courtly romance into a kind of psychologization

of mythology is not without importance, to be sure, but the significance of this particular episode lies elsewhere, and no matter how fine an observer he was, Chrétien undoubtedly met very few madmen in the forest of Broceliande. Yvain was not just any madman, moreover: he was neither the mad Heracles of Euripides nor the mad Orestes of Racine; nor was he a client of Charcot's.[9]

It is useful to reread this episode with an eye to what structural analysis can reveal.[10] Yvain first abandons his companions, the "barons," who stand for all society and mankind. He crosses cultivated fields and is soon beyond the limits of the region in which the knights of King Arthur's court search for him (among tents, orchards, and hedgerows). His madness is situated in the forest,[11] a more complex place than it first appears. In the medieval West the forest was the equivalent of what the desert was in the East: a refuge, a hunting ground, a place of adventure, impenetrable to those who lived in cities and villages or worked in fields.[12] In England or at any rate in "Britain" it was even more: a place where in a sense the hierarchy of feudal society broke down. Offenses committed in the forest did not fall under the jurisdiction of the regular courts. The laws of the forest issued "not from the common law of the kingdom but from the will of the prince, so that it was said that what was done according to those laws was just not in an absolute sense but according to the law of the forest."[13] Henry II, king of England and Anjou, in 1184 prohibited "bows, arrows, or dogs in his Forests to anyone without surety."[14] The forest was royal property not only because of the resources it supplied but perhaps even more because it was a "desert." Here Yvain ceases to be a knight and becomes a hunter-predator:

Les bestes par le bois agueite 2826
Si les ocit; et se manjue
La venison trestote crue.

[In the woods he lay in wait for beasts and killed them, and he ate the venison raw.]

He strips his body of its clothing and his mind of its memory. He is naked and without memory. Yet between the world of men and that of wild beasts Chrétien has provided a rather curious mediation: a "park," that is, an enclosed area for grazing,[15] a place for raising livestock (and thus different from both the world of agriculture and that of gathering). There he finds a "boy," that is, a servant, a person who stands at

the bottom of the social scale.[16] No sooner does the lad appear than he is robbed of his bow and arrows:

Un arc 2818
Et cinq saietes barbelées
Qui molt erent tranchanz et lées.

[A bow and five barbed arrows, broad and sharp.]

Now, bow and arrow are the weapons of a hunter, not of a knight in battle or tournament. To digress for a moment, there was a time long before the twelfth century when a contrast was drawn between the fully-equipped warrior and the isolated and even savage archer, namely, in archaic and classical Greece. In Euripides' *Heracles* the king of Argos contrasts the archer of the title to a valiant hoplite and finds him wanting: "a nullity of a man who fought with apparent bravery in his contests with animals but was incapable of any other prowess. He never held a shield on his left arm or confronted a lance. Carrying a bow, the most cowardly of weapons, he was always ready to flee. For a warrior the test of courage is not firing arrows but standing at his post and watching, without averting his eyes, as a whole field of raised lances runs toward him, always steadfast in his rank."[17] From the time of Homer until the end of the fifth century the bow was the weapon of bastards, traitors (such as Teucros and Pandaros in the *Iliad*), and foreigners (such as the Scythians in Athens)—in a word, of subwarriors (in the sense in which one speaks of "subproletarians"). Yet it was also the weapon of the superwarriors, in particular of Heracles, whom only a tragedian influenced by the sophists could have portrayed as a second-class fighter. For it was Heracles who passed on to Philoctetes, the lonely hero, the weapon that would decide the fate of Troy, and it was Ulysses who, wielding his bow at Ithaca, affirmed his sovereignty.

The distinction between the "heavy" and the "light" warrior, between the solitary, wily hunter and the soldier who fights as part of a unit, predates archaic Greece. To confine our attention to Indoeuropean sources, Georges Dumézil has found it in an Indian epic, the *Mahabharata,* certain elements of which date from Vedic times. Here, however, the bow is the sign not of the isolated hunter but of the armed combatant: "As a warrior, Arjuna was different from Bhima [two of the five brothers who are heroes of the Indian epic]. He fights not naked but clad in breastplate and mail and armed, indeed 'superarmed': he wields a huge bow. . . . He is not like Bhima a solitary

warrior, an advance guard."[18] In other words, the bow is a sign whose value is determined solely by its *position* in a system, obviously a fact that calls for comment in any Lévi-Straussian analysis of the work.

Let us return, however, to the twelfth-century works with which we are primarily concerned. In Béroul's *Roman de Tristan,*[19] roughly contemporary with Chrétien's *Yvain,* the hero, about to plunge into the forest with Isolde, obtains a bow from a forest warden along with "two feathered, barbed arrows" (lines 1283–1284), which he uses to hunt game to keep himself and his companion alive. Later in the Morois forest episode, he fabricates a new "bow" (or, more precisely, an infallible trap for wild animals):

Trova Tristan l'arc Qui ne faut
En tel manière el bois le fist
Riens ne trove qu'il n'oceïst. 1752

[Tristan made the Unerring Bow of wood in such a way that there was nothing that it failed to kill.]

In line 1338 of Béroul's poem the "laburnum" bow is also the emblematic arm of Tristan's prince and Isolde's husband, King Mark—emblematic because, unlike Tristan, Mark does not make use of his bow,[20] any more than Charlemagne does of the emblematic bow that he gives to Roland as a sign of his mission in the *Chanson de Roland* (lines 767ff.). Thus the bow can be a royal symbol (as for Ulysses), or it can be the emblem of a solitary hunter. In the Middle Ages it was predominantly the latter. If further proof is needed, it can be found in the late thirteenth-century anthology of *Merlin's Prophecies,*[21] in which two knights, Galeholt the Brown and Hector the Brown[22] land on a desert island teeming with wild animals and in a sense reinvent civilization at its most primitive level. Their first act is to make a bow.[23] Thus the bow is an ambiguous symbol, capable of signifying either a lapse from civilization or a revival of civilization. What is more, the "unerring bow" made famous by Béroul's poem[24] was also the name applied to the weapon used by the traitor Eadric to assassinate Edmund II (The Ironside), king of Wessex, according to the Anglo-Norman historian Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis.*[25] A weapon like Tristan's, though a legitimate arm when used against wild animals in the Morois forest or against the criminal lords at King Mark's court who drove the hero into exile, became illegitimate in knightly combat.

The text cited above is not isolated. It is easy to cite similar examples in chronicles, chansons de geste, and church documents. For

example, the Latin chronicle of the murder (on 2 March 1127) of Charles the Good, count of Flanders, written by the notary Galbert of Bruges tells us about the knife-wielding Benkin *in sagittando sagax et velox.*[26] Many other documents portray archers among brigands and other "wild men" living on the fringes of society and engaged in inferior forms of military activity.[27] As for chansons de geste, consider Bertrand of Bar's *Girard de Vienne,* whose hero shouts: "A hundred curses among which archers are first. They are cowards, they dare not draw near." For the knight, to be an archer is to become a "shepherd boy."[28] In 1139 the Second Lateran Council anathematized in its twenty-ninth canon "the murderous art, hated by God, of crossbowmen and archers. We forbid the use of this art against Christians and Catholics."[29] This text is particularly interesting in that it was not the product of knights and their entourage: the ninth canon of the same council prohibited tournaments, but in a rather different tone. Courtly romance encoded this prohibition by likening the archer to a wild animal or even a centaur, the sign of Sagittarius. In the *Roman de Troie,* for example, Benedict of Sainte-Maure describes one of Priam's allies as an infamous criminal yet an infallible archer: "Whatever he aims at he strikes at once. His body, his arms, his head were like ours, but he was not at all handsome. He never wore cloth for he was as hairy as a beast. . . . He carried a bow that was made not of laburnum but of boiled leather joined together by a strange technique."[30]

Thus far we have concentrated primarily on French and Anglo-Norman sources. In other words, we have been looking at a sector in which chivalric norms and values, ways of life and forms of thought predominated. But just as what was true of Greece was not true of India, what was true of France and England was not true of Wales, where the bow was a noble weapon. Now, it so happens that we possess a Welsh version of Yvain's adventures, similar in some ways to Chrétien's version but different in others. It is highly unlikely that the two versions are directly related.[31] Yet the Welsh version is far from being utterly alien to the civilization of French chivalry. A book has even been written on the influence of chivalric culture on Welsh tales.[32] Nevertheless, the Welsh resisted the French denigration of the bow as a weapon of war. The episode that corresponds to Yvain's madness does not involve the theft of a bow and its use against wild animals. In the fortress where in the French version first Calogrenant and later Yvain encounter a vavasor and a girl familiar with the weapons used by knights, the Welsh storyteller has his heroes meet two youths practicing archery with ivory bows.[33] Similarly, in the *Gest of Asdiwal* the

concrete details of the myth change in a manner reflecting the local ecology and customs but without altering the myth's structure.[34]

But let us get back to our archer, a naked savage and eater of raw meat.[35] No sooner is his metamorphosis complete than his reintegration into society begins. Yvain "finds" a man who is living at a primitive level of civilized technology: he has a "house" and engages in a rudimentary form of agriculture. A conquest of the wild by civilization is clearly implied. The man "grubs for roots," in other words, he gathers food from land that had been cleared by burning. He also purchases bread. The hermit thus belongs to an intermediate status between the constituted orders of society and the chaos of barbarism. He recoils and hides from Yvain, whose naked body marks him as a savage.[36] He barricades himself inside his hut. At this point the hermit and the knight-made-savage enter into a form of commerce motivated, according to the Christian interpretation, by the hermit's charity. The hermit offers the madman bread and cooked venison, at the bottom of the scale in terms of food preparation. Yvain has never tasted bread so bad or stale, eating it dry rather than in a kind of porridge, the basic dietary staple of the Middle Ages. Water is served in a pitcher, but it is very cold spring water, that is, "natural" water. The venison is cooked but served without salt or pepper. Thus the poet implicitly or explicitly points out a series of absences: of porridge, wine, salt and spices, and table manners. Yvain eats alone, in a sense clandestinely. In exchange the savage brings the hermit stags, does, and other wild beasts. This commerce even gives rise to a surplus, which allows this de facto society to enter into trade with others. The hermit skins the animals, sells their hides, and with the profits buys unleavened barley and rye bread to satisfy Yvain's needs. The arrangement between the two men is one of silent barter, with contact between them reduced to a bare minimum: the mad knight hurls his prey in front of the hermit's door, and the hermit sets bread, water, and cooked meat in the hut's narrow window. Communication between the world of the hunt and the world of agriculture, the raw and the cooked, thus takes place at the lowest possible level.

The opposition is apparent at two levels: between Yvain and the hermit, who represents an enclave of "culture" in the midst of "nature," and between Yvain and the environment in which he moved prior to entering the forest. Yvain has chosen nature in the wild, that is, the forest and what it has to offer. Nudity replaces clothing. Raw foods replace prepared and especially cooked foods. Impulsive behavior and repetitive actions supplant memory. Yvain has abandoned

culture. He has fled organized society with its economic system encompassing plowed fields and orchards surrounded by hedgerows. He has abandoned tents, houses, and military camps for open-air campsites. And he has given up agriculture in favor of hunting with bow and arrow.

Yvain and the hermit are guests of the forest. Both lead solitary and frugal lives. But the hermit leaves the forest occasionally to sell hides and buy bread in transactions with "civilized" men. Although the hut in which he lives is rudimentary, it is nevertheless a product of human construction. He wears clothing and is shocked by Yvain's nakedness. And he barters hides for bread. He lives by basic dietary rules. Although we are not told how he cooks the venison that Yvain supplies, there is little doubt that the meat is roasted. In Béroul's *Tristan* the lovers, with help from Gouvernal the squire, live on venison roasted directly over the fire without milk or salt.[37] Thus we see here what Lévi-Strauss has called the "culinary triangle," with roast meat in the mediating role, though boiled meat is present only metaphorically.[38] In other words, the meeting between Yvain and the hermit is possible because the former stands at the upper limit of "nature" (whose lower levels comprise the forest flora and fauna) while the latter stands at the lower limit of "culture" (the upper levels of which are represented by the court and its knights, whose superiority is called into question, as we shall see).

In making provisional use of the concepts of "nature" and "culture" here, we do not mean to suggest that they were clearly and consciously distinguished in Chrétien's mind.[39] The oppositions we have identified are all based on a further opposition, between the dominant world of humans and the dominated world of animals (dominated by hunting as well as domestication). The "wild" is not what is beyond the reach of man but what is on the fringes of human activity. The forest (*silva*) is wild (*silvatica*) not only because it is the place where one hunts for animals but also because it is the haunt of charcoal burners and swineherds.[40] Between the asymmetric extremes of savagery and culture the mad and savage hunter is an ambiguous mediator, as is the hermit, but in a different way.

Twelfth-century thinkers reflected a good deal on the concept of nature, largely stripping it of its sacred qualities. Figurative art accomplished much the same thing, as with the sculpture of Eve in the flesh at Autun.[41] The concepts wildness, matter, and nature, though they had many points in common, were not identical.[42] When Chrétien played on the opposition between *Nature* and *Norreture* (which Greek

called *paideia)* he did not mean to oppose culture to wildness, for there were good "natures" (like Yvain's) as well as bad.[43] Nature is not the same as animality. In courtly literature, moreover, the juxtaposition of madman or savage (they were not always the same) with hermit was commonplace, one couple among others deserving systematic study: the knight and the shepherdess, the knight and the female savage,[44] the lady and the leper (an instance of which can be found in Béroul). The list could be extended. Courtly romance contains numerous examples. In Béroul, for instance, the lovers' sojourn in the forest of Morois (after they have been driven mad by a potion) is framed by two dialogues with the hermit Ogrin, the very person who facilitates Isolde's return to the court of King Mark. In Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal* Perceval "has lost his memory so completely that it no longer reminds him of God."[45] Not until he meets in the forest a hermit who turns out to be his uncle does his adventure begin to take on a meaning.[46]

A romance written after Chrétien's time, *Li Estoire del Chevalier au Cisne (The Story of the Knight with the Swan),*[47] describes a man who is much more fully a savage than Yvain, for he exhibits all the traits of the savage of folklore: he is as hairy as an animal, he meets a hermit with certain Christian characteristics, and he attains the summit of knightly glory. In *Valentine and Orson,* a romance that enjoyed immense popularity in the late Middle Ages and beyond,[48] we find a variant of the theme in which Orson, the reeducated savage, himself becomes a hermit.[49] Again it would be worthwhile to study systematically the savage-civilizer couple (in which the civilizer himself lives a half-savage life), in this case a noteworthy variation on the theme of Yvain and the hermit.[50]

In the thirteenth-century allegorical romance *Quête du Graal,*[51] certain of the characters are in essence enlightened interpreters of God. As Tzvetan Todorov has observed, the "possessors of meaning are a distinct group among the characters. They are "wise men," hermits, abbots, and recluses. Just as the knights could not know, these men could not act. None of them takes part in any episode except those involving interpretation. The two functions (action and interpretation) are strictly divided between the two classes of characters."[52] Twelfth-century romances were "symbolic" in the sense that their authors discussed the hidden significance (*sen*) of their poems. By symbol we mean here simply "the attribution by any literary means of an intellectual value to a physical reality (object, place, gesture, etc.)

that does not attach to that reality in normal language and usage."[53] In this sense the encounter between the savage and the hermit is indeed "symbolic," but it does not exhaust the *sen* of the romance or even of an episode whose significance extends far beyond. The admirable ambiguity of the text is perhaps that this encounter is pure action, that the exchange is at no time cast in dialogue form.

It is not easy to define precisely what the notion of "wild man" involves and how the mad knight relates to that notion. Societies in fact define their relations to alien beings by way of their representations of wild men. Indeed, historical societies were not interested in the wild man as such. In both written documents and images and even with respect to institutions the whole interest is in the relations between the wild man and his "cultivated" brother. Every culture has its own way or ways of classifying aliens, whether by viewing them as radically different, interchangeable, or in terms of a series of intermediaries. From Enkidu, the wild brother of Gilgamesh, the Mesopotamian king of Uruk, to Tarzan and the Yeti, to say nothing of Polyphemus the Cyclops and Caliban, literature has defined man in relation to the gods, the animals, and other men. Depending on the period and person, this definition has been either exclusive or inclusive.[54] Societies also define their relation to the proximate and remote environment and explicate the concept of seasonal time through the wild man theme.[55]

The same theme might also be worth studying in folklore. Its significance is ambiguous, for the wild man is classified in thematic indices both as a "supernatural helper" (in which case he is generally destined to rejoin society) and as a dangerous adversary, perhaps an ogre, of which Homer's Polyphemus is one example among others.[56]

There were moments in western history when things were relatively simple. The men who interpreted the age of discovery classified the "new men" in one of two fundamental ways, either as domesticable animals or as wild animals.[57] The former were to be converted to Christianity and put to work, the latter to be exterminated. Such is the conclusion that emerges from a reading of travel literature, although it should be noted that Montaigne in the *Essays* and Shakespeare in *The Tempest* gave a critical reading whose ambiguity must be respected—and saluted: Caliban is neither a mere animal nor a simple colonial rebel.[58]

The Middle Ages in their way are far more complex. Medieval classifications were more commonly series than discrete entities. (The

tympanums of Vézelay and Autun, for example, portray monsters as capable of understanding the divine word.) Yet even near neighbors could be cast as devils: women, shepherds, Jews, foreigners.[59] Medieval forests were populated not only by hermits but also by demons. Wild men in the forests could therefore appear as innocents of the golden age, as in the *Estoire del Chevalier au Cisne,* which portrays men who

Rachinetes manjuent et feuilles de pumier 329
Ne savent que vins est ne nus autres daintiés.

[eat tiny roots and leaves of apple trees; they know nothing of wine or any other sophisticated refreshment.]

But they could also appear as minions of Satan.

We do not intend to explore systematically this vast domain but are simply making a modest attempt to understand, with the aid of structural analysis, the text with which we began by restoring the context from which we extracted it,[60] and, further, to show how this kind of analysis, which originated in the study of so-called cold societies, can be incorporated into historical research as such.[61]

The story of Calogrenant at the beginning of Chrétien's romance is something like a dress rehearsal (albeit ending in failure) for the first part of Yvain's adventures, which culminates in his marriage to Laudine. Wherever his predecessor went Yvain too will go, but he will succeed where Calogrenant failed. The world into which Calogrenant ventures "alone like a peasant, seeking adventure . . . armed with all armors as every knight should be" (lines 174–177) is, in a spatial sense, oddly laid out and curiously populated. As in any chivalric romance the setting is the forest, Broceliande, portrayed as the wilderness par excellence.[62] It is an abstract forest, not a tree of which is described.

Et tornai mon chemin à destre 177
Parmi une forest espesse
Molt i ot voie felenesse
De ronces et d'espinnes plainne.

[Mounted on my charger I followed my path through a thick forest, along trails thick with thorns and brambles.]

The knight takes his bearings and chooses the right-hand path, the "good" direction.[63] Yvain's adventure would take him down the same path but with a redundancy heavily stressed by the poet:

Erra, chascun jor, tant 762
Par montaignes et par valées,
Et par forez longues et lées

Par leus estranges et salvages
Et passa mainz félons passages
Et maint péril et maint destroit
Tant qu'il vint au santier estroit
Plain de ronces et d'oscurtez

[He wandered every day through mountains and valleys and through forests long and broad, through strange and wild places and through many a difficult passage, and braved many perils and straits, until he came to a narrow path, dark and full of brambles.]

The *félons passages,* the characteristic treachery of the forest, thus give way to an incipient order symbolized by the path. By way of the forest the knight gains access to another very different kind of place, having nothing to do with either the culture symbolized by court and fields or savage nature. It is a kind of moor (line 188), an "other world" of sorts, in which the hero encounters at a castle gate a vavasor (minor noble) who holds a goshawk in his hand, indicating the he is a hunter, but a cultivated one.

In courtly romance the vavasor is the traditional host, and it is in the role of hosts that he and his daughter, "a beautiful and gentle virgin" (line 225) greet the knights-errant whom they welcome into their fortress. Hosts and not guides: the vavasor confirms that the route taken was the right one (lines 204–205) but gives no indication as to how to proceed. Here the thread of the plot is interrupted. The signs of otherworldliness are discreet but incontrovertible. Although this is a warrior's castle, no object is made of iron. Everything is copper, a metal of superior value:

Il n'i avoit ne fer ne fust 213
Ne rien qui de cuivre ne fust.

[There was nothing of iron, Nothing that was not made of copper.][64]

And there is also an orchard (or, more precisely, a walled garden or meadow), an unambiguous sign for anyone familiar with the symbolism of "Breton" romance:

El plus bel praelet del monde. 237
Clos de bas mur à la reonde.

[The most beautiful meadow in the world, Enclosed by a low wall.]

An "enclosed place, separate from the rest of the world, in which all connections with normal social life and its concomitant responsibilities are broken,"[65] the otherworldly quality of the place is also sig-

nified by sexual temptation: the hero is attracted by the presence of the young maiden and does not wish to leave (lines 241–243).

The return to the forest leads the knight[66] to a place that is the antithesis of the one he has just left. In the midst of the forest, "in a clearing," he comes upon "terrifying wild bulls" that "were fighting among themselves and making so much noise, with such pride and ferocity," (lines 277–281) that the narrator backs off.[67] These bulls have a master, a "peasant who looks like a Moor,"[68] a giant and an authentic wild man in the sense that he is not just a man who has returned to the wild but one whose features and body and clothing are all borrowed from the animal world: "His head was larger than that of a horse or any other animal, and he had bushy hair, a broad, hairless forehead more than two hands wide, large, soft ears like those of an elephant, enormous brows, a flat face, owlish eyes, a cat's nose, a cleft mouth like a wolf's, sharp, reddish teeth like a boar's, a black beard, a curly moustache; his chin touched his chest, and his backbone was long, humpbacked, and twisted. He leaned on a club and was clad in a strange outfit that was made not of linen or wool but of two pieces of cowhide attached to his neck" (lines 293–311).[69] Unlike the vavasor, who is only a host, this savage "peasant," this "anti-knight," is a guide,[70] of the sort known to specialists in medieval folktales as a "helper," in this case a human (as opposed to a supernatural) helper. He is called upon to identify himself and explain how he is able to control beasts that *appear* to be totally wild: "By Saint Peter of Rome, they know nothing of man. I do not believe that it is possible in plain or hedgerow to keep a wild animal unless it is tied up or penned in" (lines 333–338). Whereupon he demonstrates his mastery and explains himself in such a way that his humanity is evident: "And he told me that he was a man" (line 328). "I am the sire of my beasts" (line 334). Indeed, he is a lord who can not only question the knight as an equal but also guide him on the road to discovery, showing him the way to the magic fountain that guards the castle whose lady is Laudine. He gives a meaning to the forest:

Ci près troveras or en droit
Un santier qui là te manra
Tote la droite voie va,
Se bien viax tex pas anploier
Que tost porroies desvoier:
Il i a d'autres voies mout.

[Nearby you will find on the right a path that will take you there. Follow the right hand if you wish to avoid going astray. There are many other ways.]

This guardian is therefore an ambiguous figure. He possesses most of the features typical of the medieval wild man as we know him from art and literature,[71] but certain details seem out of place: his technical (rather than magical) mastery over the wild animals and the fact that his animals, while ferocious, belong to a species domesticated by man,[72] The wild man is not merely a guest of the forest but its master. The knight is searching for an "adventure or marvel" (line 366), but the peasant "knows nothing about adventure" (line 368). He does know something about a marvel, however, namely, a magical country, which brings us to a new theme in *Yvain*.

This new thematic space encompasses all three spaces already traversed—culture, nature, and the other world of hospitality and femininity—but at a higher level, thanks to magic. At its center is a fortress adjacent to a town and surrounded by cultivated fields whose defense in case of enemy attack poses a number of problems.[73] The food eaten here is of course cooked, and Yvain can eat roast capon and good wine served on a white tablecloth. This feudal domain, graced by the same institutions as King Arthur's court (a seneschal, numerous knights, and so on), is guarded by a magic fountain adjacent to a chapel. The fountain is a most artful work, described by the savage as made of iron but actually of gold (lines 386 and 420) with stairs of emeralds and rubies. The water in it is cold yet boiling, and when poured it creates a terrifying tempest.

But access to this courtly society is via a supernatural wilderness. The peasant tells Calogrenant: "You will see this fountain, which is boiling yet colder than marble. The most beautiful tree ever shaped by Nature covers it with its shadow" (lines 380–383).[74] When combat begins between Esclados la Roux, the defender of the fountain, and Yvain, Chrétien resorts to animal imagery that he never uses in clashes between two knights of equal rank. Esclados attacks Yvain "as if he were hunting a rutting stag" (line 814), and Yvain is compared to a gyrfalcon stalking cranes (line 882).

Finally, once Yvain has killed the knight this world is predominantly female, and Laudine's beauty, like that of the tree beside the fountain, is supernatural: "Yes, I swear that Nature could not dispense such beauty, it was beyond all measure. Perhaps Nature had nothing to do with it! How could that be? Where did such great beauty come from? God created it with his own hands for Nature to ponder. No matter how much time it took to counterfeit such a work, it would never succeed. Even God, were he to apply himself to the task, could never with all his efforts produce its like" (lines 1494–1510). Here, sexual temptation, previously encountered at the vavasor's, is so pres-

ent that Yvain, after being threatened with death and saved by the ring given him by Lunette, marries Esclados's widow and becomes master of the castle.

Thus this is a world with three aspects: savagery, culture, and courtliness. But from another point of view it is also a divided world, as Chrétien continually emphasizes. The approaches to the fountain are, successively and alternatively, paradisal and infernal. The marvelous singing of the birds gives way to the terrifying tempest. Yvain himself describes the ambiguity of the situation:

Ce qu'Amors vialt doi je amer
Et doit me elle ami clamer? 1457
Oïl, voir, par ce que je l'aim
Et je m'anemie la claim
Qu'ele me het, si n'a pas tort
Que ce qu'ele amoit li ai mort
Donques sui ge ses anemis?
Nel sui, certes, mes ses amis.[75]

[She, whom Cupid wants me to love, must she call me friend? Yes, surely, because I love her. And I call her my enemy, because she hates me, and with good reason, because I killed the man she loved. Am I therefore her enemy? Surely not, because I love her.]

What takes place inside the fortress can be classed under the head of courtly spirit, refined love, and culpable ruse. Lunette brings Yvain and Laudine together through a series of lies. The feminine world is itself divided, for servant and mistress in a sense share roles.

Yvain's madness marks the severance of the hero's ties with both Arthur's court and the world just described. The bulk of the text (from line 2884 to the end, line 6808) is taken up with describing the stages of Yvain's return: cured of his madness, he regains the love of his wife and legitimate possession of his estate. To make sense of the previous interpretation we must examine the stages of this return. The madness episode is indeed of crucial importance. Previously the savage world is represented by the forest, the scene of adventure and initiatory exploits. But madness turns Yvain himself into a savage and simultaneously makes the status of the forest seem more complex. In terms of structural analysis, there is no forest as such. Even within the context of a single work the forest exists only in relation to that which is not forest. Oppositions come into play even within what appeared to be simple.[76]

When Yvain, healed by the magic ointment given him by the Lady of Noroison, reawakens,

Si se vest 3029
Et regarde par la forest
S'il verroit nul home venir.

[He dressed and looked into the forest to see if anyone was coming.]

the forest effectively becomes populated. The very presence of the lady is a sign that a castle is nearby, "so near that it was no more than a half league away, just a short walk, according to the measurement of leagues in that country, two of whose leagues equal one of ours, and four, two" (lines 2953–2957). It is as though the spaces that are so carefully distinguished in the first part of the text have ceased to be separate. The forest, the moor with its orchard, the court, and the magic fountain are no longer isolated from one another. Laudine's estate has been integrated into Arthur's court,[77] and the characters go from one space to the other without the aid of mysterious guides and without submitting to rites of passage. To be sure, the forest still exists, and a maiden comes close to losing herself in it:

Si pooit estre an grant esmai 4842
Pucele au bois, et sanz conduit
Pas mal tans, et par noire nuit,
Si noire qu'ele ne veoit
Le cheval sor qu'ele seoit.

[With great emotion the damsel took to the woods without a guide, in bad weather and in the dark of night, so dark that she could not see the horse on which she was sitting.]

But the maiden, who calls upon God and her friends "to rescue her from this bad pass and guide her toward some inhabited place" (lines 4851–4852) is in fact guided by Yvain, who uses exclusively human means (one of his helpers is Lunette, who makes no use of magic), and it is on "flat and level terrain" (line 5031) that she ultimately encounters the knight who will rescue her.

The forest is no more than an element—a humanized element[78]—of the landscape, but the savage wilderness still exists, and Yvain's sojourn in it is not without consequences. After his recovery, he enters the service of the lady of Noroison and does battle against the knights who have pillaged Count Allier. Chrétien compares him to a falcon hunting ducks and to a "lion tormented and pursued by hunger loosed among the deer" (lines 3191 and 3199–3200). This is the last animal

metaphor used in connection with Yvain.[79] The metaphorical lion is made flesh. Yvain, again traveling through the forest, sees locked in struggle two creatures of the wild, a lion and a serpent, the latter in fact almost a dragon, for it breathes fire (line 3347).[80] The lion is about to succumb. If Yvain saves it, he risks death himself. But Yvain does not hesitate for a moment between the "venomous and criminal" animal (line 3351) whose vices are well known to readers of Genesis[81] and the noble beast depicted in the *Roman de Renart* as the king of the wild, "the frank and gentle beast" (line 3371). As it happens, however, the lion loses the tip of his tail—a rather obvious symbol of castration or at least domestication—to the knight's sword. The grateful lion renders a vassal's homage to Yvain and subsequently becomes his companion and even his pet (line 3435). Yvain is henceforth the "knight with lion."[82] The lion took part in his battles, at least in those in which the rules of chivalry, which prescribe combat between equals, are not respected.[83] The striking fact, not yet taken seriously by any commentator, is that the relations that are established between Yvain and the lion from the outset reproduced the relations established between the hermit and Yvain during his madness. But in this case it is obviously Yvain who plays the human role.[84] The lion *hunts* on behalf of Yvain. He detects the scent of a kid within a *bowshot* (line 3439), a word that calls to mind the bow of Yvain the hunter. But now it is Yvain who slits the animal's hide, roasts it on a spit (roasting is explicitly mentioned in lines 3457–3460), and shares the meat with the animal (who receives the surplus). The absence of "table manners" and in this case of bread (there being no commerce involved, in contrast to the situation with the hermit) is emphasized, but it is of course Yvain and not the lion who complains about the savage nature of the repast: "This meal gave him little pleasure, for he had no bread or wine or salt or tablecloth or knife or other utensil" (lines 3462–3464).

In fact Yvain's encounter with the lion and the elimination of the serpent remove the ambiguities associated with the savage world in the first part of the romance. From this point on Yvain will confront only wild creatures about which there is no ambivalence.[85]

He first saves a damsel threatened with being delivered into prostitution by a "giant criminal" (line 3850) named Harpin of the Mountain, who possesses certain characteristic traits of the savage.[86] He is armed not with a sword but with a pike (lines 4086–4098), he has a hairy chest (line 4217), and he is covered with a bearskin (line 4191). He is compared to a bull (line 4222) and goes down "like a felled oak" (line 4238), but this time the connotation is entirely diabolical. The

battle with the Maufé [the Evil One] takes place not in the forest but in the plain under the sign of God, Christ, the Virgin, and the angels (line 4106).[87] Yvain has heard mass (line 4025), which is mentioned for the first time.

In the château de Pême-Aventure (the Worst Adventure), which in some respects resembles the residence of the hospitable vavasor,[88] Yvain comes upon a group of captive girls forced to work with silk. Here Yvain, accompanied by his lion, does battle not with a metaphorical devil but "with two sons of the devil, and this is no fable, for they were born of a woman and of one Netun" (lines 5265–5267).[89] The fight with these "hideous and black" creatures (line 5506) is a struggle against diabolical savagery.[90] Yvain the victor will finally be able to return to the castle by the fountain. His fight with his peer Gawain so that he may return home is strictly a knightly combat in which there is neither victor nor vanquished. Nor is any low trick used in securing his return to the good graces of Laudine, which is negotiated, without the aid of magic, by Lunette. Laudine agrees to help the knight with the lion to return to his lady, unaware that he and Yvain are one and the same. There is no deception involved, only a play on the hero's two identities.

The lion, which is inseparable from Yvain as he makes his return to humanity and which is gladly welcomed by Laudine, is simply merged with Yvain when his itinerary is complete and disappears from the story.

Let us therefore review the characters that populate the wild in Chrétien's tale.[91] At the two extremes are the lion and the serpent, and in between is a whole range of other figures. The helpful hermit may be paired with the giant ogre Harpin of the Mountain and the two sons of diabolical Netun.[92] A central figure, monstrous but human, is the "peasant who looks like a Moor," about whom Yvain asks "how nature could have done such foolish work, so ugly and common" (line 798); this is the savage in the strict sense. Yvain himself traverses all the degrees of the scale, confronting his enemies and helped by his helpers. At a critical moment in his adventure he himself becomes a savage, thus assimilating that aspect of the wild needed by the perfect knight.

Certain of the codes that underlie Chrétien's tale have emerged in the course of the analysis. But we owe it to readers of *Yvain* to sketch out more fully than we have done thus far the relations between the tale and the society from which it issued and to which it returned. To

be sure, we have already had occasion to make extensive reference to twelfth-century society. Such references were an expository convenience, permitting us to shorten the argument and to verify certain points. But narrative elements such as the bow, the hermit, the savage, the lion, the serpent, God, and the Devil could have been decoded without reference to the outside world. Yet that world did exist, and in the final analysis it is what interests historians.[93]

The question is made more complex by the fact that an image of the world of chivalry is available in two very different sorts of twelfth-century literary works—different in terms of both the audience addressed and the underlying ideology. The chanson de geste appeared somewhat earlier than the courtly romance,[94] but in the twelfth century the two genres were mutual influences and rivals.[95] For the positivist historians of the last century (who have more than one imitator today) it was essential to choose between the two. Thus Léon Gautier, in his celebrated work on chivalry, stated authoritatively that "the romances of the Round Table, which to biased or hasty judges seem so profoundly chivalric, actually number among the works that hastened the end of chivalry."[96] Having made this judgment, he can then tranquilly and with admirable knowledge of the texts trace the life of the knight from birth to death using evidence drawn almost exclusively from chansons de geste without once asking himself whether those sources were indeed written for the purpose of providing positivist historians with data and footnotes. Historians nowadays are less confident; we know that we are mortal, and that our errors will be as transparent to our successors as those of our predecessors are to us. But at least we have learned that fiction, like myth, and indeed like society, cannot be treated as though it were a thing.

"The relation of the myth to the idea is definite, but it is not one of *re-presentation*. It is dialectical in nature, and the institutions described in myths may be the inverse of the real institutions. Indeed that may always be the case when the myth seeks to express a negative truth. . . . Mythological speculations seek in the final analysis not to portray reality but to justify its rather rough construction, since extreme positions are *imagined* only in order to show that they are *untenable*."[97] What is true of myth is even more true of the literary work, whose complex texture must be respected. We must not seek to decompose literature into primary components to which the narrator adds an ideological dimension and a set of personal choices.[98] There is admittedly a kind of literature that is nothing but a degraded form of myth, as Lévi-Strauss has said of the serialized novel.[99] To be sure,

some courtly romance resembles the serialized novel, but taking a broader view the whole genre attests to a comprehensive ideological project. That project, which has been described in great detail by Erich Köhler,[100] concerned what Marc Bloch has called the "second age of feudalism," in which the nobility transformed itself from a de facto into a de jure class. Threatened by the rise of royal authority and by urban development, the new class aimed to restore an order that was subject to continual challenge. Romances were written as works intended to be read; as such, they deliberately excluded the mixed public that listened to the chansons de geste. Only the two major orders, knights and clergy, were consumers of courtly romance,[101] as was stated in these well-known verses by the author of the *Roman de Thèbes:*[102]

Or s'en tesent de cest mestier, 13
Se ne sont clerc ou chevalier
Car aussi pueent escouter
Comme li asnes al harper
Ne parlerai de peletiers
Ne de vilains, ne de berchiers.

[Nothing will be said here about those whose trade is not that of cleric or knight, for if asses can listen to the harp, so can they. I shall not speak of furriers or peasants or shepherds.]

Clergy and knights were not on the same plane, however. The ideal of adventure was held out to the knight, not to the cleric. This was to be sure a complex ideal, ambiguous by nature and subject to a variety of internal tensions: think of Chrétien's critique of *Tristan* in *Cligès*.[103] Köhler, however, has summed up its intentions quite well: "Adventure was a way of overcoming the contradiction that had come to exist between the ideal life and the real life. Romance idealized adventure and thus conferred upon it a moral value. Adventure was dissociated from its concrete origins and situated in the center of an imaginary feudal world in which a community of interests among the various strata of the nobility, already a thing of the past, still seemed possible to achieve."[104] Courtly love, a "precious and holy thing" (*Yvain,* line 6044), was at once the point of departure and the point of return for an adventure that left the feudal court for the wild only to prepare the way for a triumphant return. In the meantime, the hero secured his salvation in accordance with the wishes of the clergy, saving himself by saving others. At the center of Chrétien's romance the hermit preserves Yvain's humanity and the lady of Noroison begins

his return to chivalry. But medieval ideology reduced all the diversity of society to just three functions (enumerated most recently by Georges Dumézil, after so many others). Besides the clergy, who prayed, and the knights, who fought, there were those who worked. This third function is represented in the romance by the peasant: his humanity is acknowledged, but his hideous appearance marks him as a member of his class.

To further our knowledge of an imaginary world, recognized as imaginary by courtly writers themselves,[105] we must proceed by investigating what Freud called displacements and condensations, as well as by examining the extensions and inversions introduced by the poets. Consider, for example, the problem of initiation. As has been known for some time, dubbing, the ceremony by which young men were inducted into knighthood, was an initiatory rite comparable to similar rituals found in many societies.[106] It is clear, moreover, that courtly romances can readily be interpreted as revealing an initiatory pattern, with a departure followed by a return.[107] Yet it is striking that the dubbing rite experienced by so many aspiring knights on the battlefield or on the night of Pentecost plays but a limited role in Chrétien's romances, among others.[108] It is not mentioned in *Yvain,* and although it is present in *Perceval* and *Cligès* it is in no sense a turning point of the story. The knights who head into the "forest of adventure" are already dubbed. The theme of childhood, so important in the chansons de geste, is of relatively minor interest in courtly romance. Compared with "real" initiation, therefore, the initiation described in the romances is disproportionately extended in time and space.

In an important article Georges Duby has suggested another comparison.[109] Duby calls attention to the existence of a special class in twelfth-century aristocratic society: the youths (*juvenes*). Duby writes: "A 'youth' was in fact a grown man, an adult. He was admitted to a group of warriors, given arms, and dubbed; in other words, he became a knight. . . . Youth can therefore be defined as that part of life comprised between dubbing and fatherhood,"[110] which could be a very long time indeed. Youths were footloose, vagabond, and violent. They were the "leading element in feudal aggressiveness."[111] And their long, adventurous quest—"a long sojourn shames a young man"—had a purpose: to find a rich mate. "The intention of marrying seems to have governed all of a young man's actions, impelling him to cut a brilliant figure in combat and to show his prowess in athletic matches."[112] Marriage was made more difficult by the proscriptions of the Church, which often made it impossible to find a bride close to home. Duby

himself has noted the inescapable parallel between this situation and that described in courtly literature: "The presence of such a group at the heart of aristocratic society fostered certain attitudes, certain collective images, certain myths, of which one finds both reflections and models in literary works written in the twelfth century for the aristocracy and in the exemplary figures that those works proposed, which encouraged, perpetuated, and stylized spontaneous emotional and intellectual reactions."[113] Indeed, Yvain, husband of the wealthy widow Laudine of Landuc, accords rather well with the model proposed by Duby.

Let us take a closer look, however. Note first that in *Yvain* as well as *Erec et Enide* marriage takes place not *after* but *before* the great adventure that demonstrates the hero's mettle. Among the reasons for youthful restlessness suggested by Duby are certain inevitable conflicts: between father and son and especially between younger brother and older brother (and heir). Many "youths" were younger sons who became knights-errant because of their position in the family. Yet such conflicts are apparently absent in Chrétien's romances.[114] What is more, it is as if *all the poet's heroes* were only sons: this is true of Yvain, Cligès, Lancelot, Perceval, and Erec.[115] Brothers and sisters belong to the *previous generation.* Yvain and Calogrenant are first cousins. Erec, Enide, and Perceval discover uncles and aunts in the course of their adventures. Cligès becomes the rival of his paternal uncle for possession of Fenice, daughter of the emperor of Germany.[116] The adventures of the youths are collective, moreover. The chroniclers portray bands of *juvenes* furnishing the "best contingents for all remote expeditions."[117] Yet adventure in courtly as opposed to epic literature is always individual.[118] Thus it would appear that the courtly writers refracted the social facts in such a way that their interpretation often amounts to an inversion of reality. The mechanisms employed to accomplish this deserve further study: shift from the present to the past, from the plural to the singular, from the masculine to the feminine.

Yet much of the real economic and social evolution of the twelfth century is present in *Yvain,* but at an unconscious level: the transformation of the rural landscape and of seigneurial and clerical revenues, and the changes in peasant life that resulted from vast efforts to clear the land begun in the tenth century and apparently culminating in the twelfth.[119]

Shortly before *Yvain* was written the Norman poet Wace in the *Roman de Rou* described the magic fountain of Broceliande, which plays so central a part in Chrétien's story, as a thing of the distant past:[120]

Mais jo ne sai par quel raison 6386
Là sueut l'en les fées véeir
Se li Breton nos dïent veir
E altres merveilles plusors
Aires i selt aveir d'ostors
E de grans cers mult grant plenté
Mais vilain ont tot désesrté
Là alai jo merveilles querre
Vi la forest e vi la terre
Merveilles quis, mais nes trovai
Fol m'en revinc, fol i alai,
Fol i alai, fol m'en revinc
Folie quis, pour fol me tinc.

[I do not know, however, why people were in the habit of seeing fairies there. If the Bretons tell of these and other marvels, there were buzzards and lots of huge stags, but the peasants soon left. I went in search of marvels and saw forest and earth but of marvels found none. Mad I came back and mad I went, mad I went and mad I came back. What I was asking was mad, and I consider myself mad.]

Obviously we cannot prove that Chrétien read this text, which so eloquently bears witness to the disenchantment of the forest as it was cut down to make way for new fields. Instead we shall turn to *Yvain* itself, for the text of the romance provides us with our best argument.

In interpreting *Yvain* we have stressed the importance of the hero's three encounters in the forest:[121] with the savage who gives him directions, with the hermit who saves him and restores his humanity, and with the lion that he tames. Now, the meeting with the peasant takes place on cleared land (Lines 277, 708, 793) as does the meeting with the lion (line 3344); the hermit is grubbing for roots on cleared land (line 2833).[122] Finally, the encounter with Harpin of the Mountain takes place after the poet has described him "galloping through the woods" (line 4096), "before the gate," to be sure," but "in the middle of a *plain*" (line 4106), where the word *plain* was commonly used at the time to refer to recently cleared land. The only encounter that does not take place on cleared land is that with the sons of diabolical Netun, but this is not situated in any concrete location.[123] Turning now from the savage world to the magical world, we find, as J. Györy has observed, that one consequence of the use of the fountain is the destruction of the estate's trees despite their admirable, almost paradisal qualities: "But if I could, sir vassal, I would shift to you the suffering

caused me by the obvious injury of which proof surrounds me, in my wood that has been cut down" (lines 497–501). The theme disappears, however, after the Calogrenant story. The magical world—and perhaps the interests of the lords, not all of whom benefited from the clearing of land—is here in contradiction with the savage world.

The peasant and the lion were both encountered in clearings, then, but only the hermit is actively clearing land and modifying space. The three characters are therefore both similar and different.[124] The active role ascribed to the hermit is not particularly surprising since it corresponded to reality: hermits played a far greater role than the monks of the great abbeys in the major episodes of land-clearing.[125] Admittedly peasants played no less important a role, but the ideology of the clergy was opposed to acknowledging this fact, deplored by Wace, in the marvelous world into which Chrétien introduces us.[126]

Yvain's itinerary, as we have reconstructed it with the aid of structural analysis, intersects with and sheds light on several historical schemata. The key space, the clearing, corresponds to a very important economic phenomenon of the twelfth century, the clearing of land. Yvain's adventure follows in the footsteps of the groups of "youths" identified by Georges Duby, whose contradictory relations with the rest of society have been analyzed by Erich Köhler. Finally, the Christian atmosphere of the time is present in the very texture of the analysis, in the implicit judgment on chivalric behavior, and, more specifically, at critical transitional stages in Yvain's trajectory: a chapel watches over the stairs, the pine, and the magic fountain where everything begins; a hermit preserves Yvain's humanity; and Yvain's rehabilitation is accomplished through a confrontation with the world of the devil. In order to return to the world of culture Yvain himself must first be Christianized, and even the forest is marked by Christian signs.

We hope that the reader will forgive us for ending our analysis here. In order to carry it further we would have to move to another plane, one explored by Chrétien himself in *Perceval*.[127]