Juslittera
Miscellanea Juslittera
Revue numérique *Droit & Littérature (XIe–XVIIIe siècle)*

Le Roman d'Yder l'étude d'un récit de la *Matière de Bretagne* au prisme de la juslittérature

PROPOS INTRODUCTIFS

Le *Roman d'Yder ou (du roi Yder)* occupe une place originale parmi les récits de la *Matière de Bretagne*. Le héros est une figure littéraire connue dès la première moitié du XIIe siècle : on le retrouve sous la plume de William de Malmesbury dans son *Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, dans le *Roman de Brut* de Wace, dans *Erec et Enide* mais aussi dans *Les Merveilles de Rigomer*, *L'Âtre périlleux*, *Hunbaut*, *La Vengeance Raguidel* et même dans le *Lancelot en Prose*. Dès lors, il était assez logique qu'il devienne lui-même le personnage central d'un récit.

Le Roman d'Yder est un roman en vers anonyme, écrit en ancien français et datant du premier quart du XIIIe siècle. Ce texte nous est parvenu dans un seul manuscrit acéphale conservé à l'université de Cambridge : le début de l'histoire est manquant (environ 1000 vers). Le reste du récit compte 6796 vers en octosyllabes. Suivant les règles de la Courtoisie, le jeune aristocrate, qui ignore l'identité de son père, se rend à la cour du roi Arthur afin d'être fait chevalier. La reine Guenièvre n'étant pas insensible à son charme, Yder provoque la jalousie d'Arthur qui refuse de le faire chevalier avant qu'il ait prouvé sa valeur. Ce n'est que le début d'une série d'aventures initiatiques qui aboutit à l'adoubement d'Yder et à son mariage avec la reine Guenloïe, la femme dont il voulait conquérir la main.

L'originalité du *Roman d'Yder* tient en la figure du roi Arthur, celle d'un roi victime d'une jalousie mortifère à l'égard du jeune héros qui le conduit jusqu'à porter atteinte à son intégrité physique à l'aide de moyens guère loyaux (comme le poison). Dans ce roman, le roi Arthur n'est plus le roi-modèle garant d'équité entre les chevaliers de la Table Ronde et de justice pour son royaume. De nombreux arguments ont été avancés pour expliquer les raisons de ce portrait qui dénote avec la majorité des textes de la *Matière de Bretagne*. Certains y voient la résurgence d'un modèle mythique indo-européen (J. Grisward) ; d'autres, comme Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann (article reproduit dans ce numéro), analysent la figure d'Arthur comme un *exemplum malum* traduisant la réaction d'hostilité de l'Église et de la haute-aristocratie contre la conduite peu exemplaire du roi d'Angleterre Jean sans Terre ; d'autres encore, comme Dietmar Rieger (article également réédité dans ce volume), pour lequels ce roman est destiné à l'édification de la classe aristocratique en mettant en garde contre la faillite de la vision intellectuelle et morale inhérente à la société courtoise.

Quelques puissent être les raisons avancées pour expliquer ce portrait au vitriol, il est le fondement même de la célébrité de ce texte et la raison principale pour laquelle l'équipe de Juslittera a décidé de proposer un numéro thématique autour de ce récit. En effet, la déviance même d'Arthur, qui l'éloigne des règles de la courtoisie, est propice à l'étude de la norme. En effet, la fiction nous permet de nous interroger sur la construction et la cohérence du système normatif proposé en tant que représentation du système juridico-juridique contemporain auquel il renvoie nécessairement. Mais le système normatif fictionnel est également un objet d'études à part entière puisqu'il obéit lui-même à ses règles, ses valeurs et ses syllogismes propres, en somme ses rouages spécifiques. Toutes ces règles fictionnelles normatives spécifiques animent et structurent un système cohérent et logique à l'image de la société courtoise comme le rappelle très justement Lise Morin dans son article : « Le motif du *Convenant* dans le roman d'Yder ».

Nous espérons que cette nouvelle livraison des *Miscellanea Juslittera* encourage de nouvelles vocations et contribue à mieux faire connaître ce roman dont l'originalité mériterait qu'on lui octroyasse un plus grand intérêt.

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Miscellanea Juslittera

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LE MOTIF DE LA JALOUSIE DANS LE ROMAN ARTHURIEN. L'EXEMPLE DU *ROMAN D'YDER*

Dietmar RIEGER

Le Roman d'Yder fitude d'un récit de la légende du Graal au prisme de la juslittérature

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Je ne sais si le roi Arthur
Se cherche consolation
Ou bien pour se divertir
Ainsi qu'il le fait souvent
Il a institué un jeu
Qui dure depuis longtemps
Il a institué un jeu
Qui dure depuis longtemps
Il a institué un jeu
Qui dure depuis longtemps

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NOTES

LE MOTIF DE LA JALOUSIE DANS LE ROMAN ARTHURIEN. L'EXEMPLE DU *ROMAN D'YDER*

* Cet article a été initialement publié dans la revue *Romania* t. 110, n° 439-440 (1989) p. 364-382.

(1) Il faut citer surtout A. Micha, "Le mari jaloux dans la littérature romanesque des XIIe et XIIIe siècles, *Studi Medievali*, n. s. 17 (1951), p. 303-320, et E. Köhler, "Les troubadours et la jalousie", *Mélanges offerts à Jean Frappier*, Genève, 1970, t. I, p. 543-559.

(2) A. Micha, "Le mari jaloux," art. cit., p. 303 : "La littérature du Moyen Âge qui s'est attachée si souvent à la peinture de l'amour, et du premier émoi amoureux surtout, n'a pas fait une large place à la jalousie, qui devait tenter plus tard tant d'écrivains curieux du cœur humain, de Racine à Stendhal et à Proust".

(3) La jalousie d'Archambaut est analysée par L. Nolting-Hauff, *Die Stellung der Liebeskasuistik im höfischen Roman*, Heidelberg, 1959, p. 104 et suiv. (*Heidelberger Forschungen*, 6).

(4) *Cf.* le fameux jugement de la comtesse Marie de Champagne (*Andreae Capellani regii Francorum de Amore libri tres*, (éd.) E. Trojel, München, 1964, p. 153 et suiv.). Pour la distinction que fait André le Chapelain entre la "vraie" et la "fausse" jalousie, *cf.* F. Schlösser, A*ndreas Capellanus, seine Minnelehre und das christliche Welthild des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn, 19622, p. 128. Pour Thomas d'Aquin, *cf. Summa theologiae*, la IIae q. 28 a.4.

(5) *De Amore libri tres*, éd.cit., p. 147 : *Multi tamen in hoc reperiuntur esse decepti, qui turpem suscipionem zelotypiam esse, asserentes falluntur [...] Unde non pauci zelotypiae originis et descriptionis ignari decipiuntur saepissime et in durissimum trahuntur errorem. Nam et inter non coniugatos falsa sibi potest zelotypia locum vindicare, qui postea non dicuntur amantes [...]*

(6) Dont parle C. Camproux dans *Le Joy d'Amor des troubadours*, Montpellier, 1965, p. 85.

(7) E. Köhler, "Les troubadours et la jalousie", art. cit., p. 549.

(8) *Cf.* R. Morris, *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature*, Cambridge, 1985, mais aussi E. Köhler, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik. Studien zur Form derfrühen Artus - und Graldichtung*, Tübingen, 1956, p. 5 et suiv. (trad. fr. *L'aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois*, Paris, 1974, p. 7 et suiv.), et K. R. Gürttier, « Künec Artus der guote », *Das Artusbild der höfischen Epik des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn, 1976 ; plus récemment R. Barber, *King Arthur. Hero and Legend*, Woodbridge, 1986.

(9) Nous citons d'après l'édition d'*Érec et Énide* publiée par M. Roques, Paris, 1955, p. 54 (CFMA).

(10) Kristian von Troyes, *Cligès*, (éd.) W. Foerster-Alfons Hilka, Halle, 1921, p. 180, 183-184.

(11) *La Mort le Roi Artu*, (éd.) J. Frappier, Genève-Paris, 1964, p. 65.

(12) *Ibidem*, p. 120.

(13) *Cf.* toujours l'édition procurée par H. Geizer : *Der altfranzösische Yderroman*, Dresden, 1913 d'après laquelle nous citons le texte de ce roman dont le caractère relativement atypique a dû être responsable du peu de soin qu'en a pris la critique. De la communication de O. Kratins, faite pour le 9e Congrès de la Société Int. Arthurienne (Cardiff, 1969), seul le résumé a paru (Bulletin, 1969, p. 153 et suiv.).

(14) *Cf.* le chapitre que B. Schmolke-Hasselmann consacre au roman d'*Yder* dans *Der arthurische Versroman von Chrestien bis Froissart. Zur Geschichte einer Gattung*, Tübingen, 1980, p. 76 et suiv. partiellement repris dans son article "King Arthur as Villain in the Thirteenth-century Romance *Yder*", *Reading Medieval Studies*, t. 6 (1980), p. 31-43.

(15) B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, *Der arthurische Versroman von Chrestien bis Froissart. Zur Geschichte einer Gattung, op. cit.* p. 204 : John I "weist Züge auf, die wir in der negativ stilisierten Artusgestalt des Yder und des Vallet wiederfinden. Ist es ein Zufall, daß Yder, während seiner Regierungszeit entstanden, eine derart verzerrte Herrscherfigur zeichnet, die mit dem Artusbild der Romane vor 1 190 und nach 1220 nicht viel gemeinsam hat ?"

(16) *Ibidem* : "Je feindseliger die Hocharistokratie ihrem König John gegenüberstand, um so mehr mußte sich ihr die Vorstellung von einem König aufdrängen, der die Züge des Königs Artus trägt : edel, gerecht, höfisch, ritterlich und auf die Beratung seiner Barone angewiesen".

(17) E. Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

(18) *Ibidem*, p. 42.

(19) *Cf.* J. Markale, *Le Roi Arthur et la société celtique*, Paris, 1976, p. 257 et suiv. ("Le thème de la reine infidèle") ; "il semble que la tradition poétique du Moyen Age, aussi bien en France que dans les pays celtiques, ait considéré comme un fait certain les rapports amoureux de Guenievre et d'Yder... » (p. 257).

(20) J. Markale, *Le Roi Arthur et la société celtique*, *op. cit.*, p. 259 : "Guenloie n'est pas autre chose qu'un doublet de Guenievre, et il est certain que dans la version primitive, il n'y avait qu'un seul personnage féminin, Guenievre elle-même. C'est la seule explication qui puisse justifier la jalousie d'Arthur et la haine de Kaï [...]. J. Markale n'est pas le premier à avancer cette hypothèse ; *cf.* G. Hutchings, "Isdernus of the Modena Archivolt", *Medium Aevum*, t. 1 (1932), p. 204-205 ("From a close study of the poem it is obvious that Guenloie and Guinevere were originally one and the same person") et, déjà avant elle, l'éditeur du roman d'Yder lui-même (*cf.* Roger Sherman Loomis, *Isdernus again*, in *Medium Aevum*, t. 2 [1933], p. 160).

(21) R. Morris, *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

(22) *Cf.* les v. 5178 et suiv.

(23) R. Morris, *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature, op. cit*, p.98.

(24) « Yder war der Liebhaber der Königin Genièvre, nahm also die Stellung ein, die später Lanzelot innehat [...] In der Vorlage war die Eifersucht des Königs auf Yder begründet wie bei Lancelot, dann ist der tödliche Haß motiviert » (éd. cit., p. LV-LVI, LXII).

(25) *Cf.* le texte établi par Ernest Hoepffner, *La Folie Tristan de Berne*, Paris, 1949.

(26) *Cf.* entre autres *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, (dir.) R. S. Loomis, 1959, p. 375-376.

(27) "Et ço fist Quois qui-l conseilla, / Qui onques bien n'aparailla ; /Maudit seit il de Chesu Crist, / Ke onques bien pur bien ne fist, / E Deu maudie il suen sen" (v. 2460 et suiv.).

(28) "De cel don baise al rei le pié" ; *cf.* la longue note que l'éditeur consacre à ces vers (éd. cit., p. 230-232).

(29) "Tallac ot feit ligance al roi / E de li out son chastel pris" (v. 3404 et suiv.).

(30) *Cf.* les derniers vers du roman : "Cest livre [...] / Por rei fu fait e por reine / E por clers e por chevaliers / Qui biais diz óent volentiers, / Por dames e por damaiseles / Qui mult sunt cortaises e beles / E nient pas por altre gent / Ne fut fait le livre naient » (v. 6762 et suiv.).

(31) Telle est la thèse de B. Schmolke-Hasselmann ; *cf. Der arthurische Versroman, op. cit.*, p. 204, et l'article cité plus haut.

(32) Pour le lai de *Lanval* nous renvoyons à notre article "Évasion et conscience des problèmes dans les 'Lais' de Marie de France," dans *Spicilegio Moderno. Saggi e ricerche di lett. e lingue straniere*, t. 12 (1979), p. 49-69, paru, en allemand, comme préface à notre édition bilingue des Lais (Marie de France, *Die Lais*, München, 1980, p. 7 et suiv).

(33) *Cf.* l'édition des *Lais* établie par J. Rychner, Paris, 1966 (CFMA, 93).

(34) *Cf.* L. Spitzer, Marie de France, *Dichterin von Problem-Märchen*, dans *ZRP*, 50 (1930), p. 29-67.

(35) C'est ainsi que A. Micha classe le roman d'*Yder* dans le vol. IV/I (*Le roman jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle*) du *Grundriß der Rom. Lit. des Mittelalters*, Heidelberg, 1978.

(36) E. Köhler, *L'aventure chevaleresque*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

(37) A. Micha, *Grundriß*, vol. IV/I, *op. cit*,. 391 : "À deux péripéties près (combats contre l'ours, contre les géants), le roman exclut le merveilleux et témoigne de la même tendance au naturalisme que Durmart".

(38) Pour ce motif, *cf.* notre article : "*Chetis recreanz, couars euers failli.* Zum Motiv der verschmähten Frau in der mittelalterlichen Dichtung Frankreichs", *ZRP*, n° 103 (1987), p. 238-256.

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Propos introductifs

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KING ARTHUR AS VILLAIN IN THE THIRTEEN-CENTURY ROMANCE "YDER"

Beate SCHMOLKE-HASSESLMANN

King Arthur is generally regarded as representing the epitome of courtly virtues : the noble king, lord of the Round Table, a paragon of *prouesce*, *largesce*, and *chevalerie*. The poet Wace says in his *Brut* (v. 9029 et suiv.)[1]:

Tant com li vesqui e regna
Iuc oltres prices surmenta
de curtesie e de noblesce
e de vertu e de largesce.

He loves his knights and is venerated in return by them. Only the requirements of costume, the lore of the King's forefathers, can (as happens in the opening scenes of *Erec et Enide*) trouble the harmony that reigns between monarch and barony. Paradoxically this harmony seems to be largely dependent on the King's passivity : in Chretien's romances he no longer appears as he had in Wace's *Brut*, in the guise of a warrior ; on the contrary his function in the Arthurian feudal system is to send out his knights to redress misdeeds and to restore order, not to seek adventures himself.

The Arthurian lays and the French Arthurian verse romances of the thirteenth century not infrequently present a different picture of the King. Chretien (who probably wrote his first Arthurian poem *Erec* for King Henry II and his entourage and whose reading public certainly consisted of those high aristocrats belonging to the maisne of Henry and Eleanor on the Continent and in England) could not very well present King Arthur in a doubtful light, since he knew that the Anglo-Angevin monarch and his supporters promoted the idea of a symbolic identification of King Arthur with the kings of the new dynasty in Britain as an ideological means of establishing and consolidating their power on the island. Writers of Arthurian literature after Chretien often had no such scruples , for after the literary and political equation of King Arthur with a reigning English monarch had been accepted by authors, royal household and a vast public, some poets sow an opportunity of criticizing their actual monarch by means of an unfavourable literary depiction of King Arthur.

During his short reign, King Richard I (the "Irobador") did his best to perpetuate the chivalrous ideals his barons cherished, and identified himself with what had by now become the "Arthurian tradition" of his family. We know that he was present at the exhumation and translation of Arthur and Guenevere at Glastonbury, and that he gave a sword named Excalibur to the King of Sicily in 1191[2]. The poets' need to criticize arose during the reign of King John his brother, for John was not a man who could fulfil or wished to fulfil baronial expectations of this kind[3]. He refused to restore the old customs, forfeited the fiefs and heritage of his barons' elder sons on the Continent, and murdered young prince Arthur of Brittany whom Richard had designated as his heir instead of John, and who was regarded by his party (which included the King of Scotland) as a kind of Arthurian messiah, the future Arthur II. The more the barons interpreted the monarch as their enemy, the more they realized what a King of England should be : noble, just, courtly and chivalrous. They also wished him to consult them and to ask for their counsel whenever a problem arose, just as King Arthur had done.

Nor were clerical circles content with King John. Until 1214, the reign suffered under the Pope's interdict a consequence of John's misconduct. Glastonbury Abbey, the traditional centre of royal Arthurian propaganda, suffered particularly under John. During the first years of the century, the King sided with Bishop Savary who wanted to gain power over Glastonbury contrary to the monk's wishes. The Abbey was besieged by royal and episcopal troops, and in order to defend themselves, I.he monks addressed a successful petition to the Pope[4].

Under Henry II and later under the Edwards I who patronized everything Arthurian (from Round Table tournaments to French and English romances[5]) the supporters of Arthurian literature and ideology were mainly to be found in the royal household. But at the beginning of the thirteenth century it comes as no surprise that the patronage of Arthurian literature shifts to the barons (who oppose monarchy in the guise of their best King John) and to the clerics, especially of Glastonbury Abbey. These two parties tried to uphold Arthurian ideals and Arthurian tradition in the difficult years before 1215. They felt responsible for the welfare of the state : in their opinion, baronial *power* and influence formed the basis of a commonwealth, as had been the case under King Arthur and his knights.

The romance of *Yder* probably was written shortly after 1200[6]. It presents a picture of a king who is greedy for power, cruel, unjust and villainous : an anarchist malum. The language of the only extant manuscript is Anglo-Norman, and it seems to have left England[7]. Various arguments support the hypothesis that *Yder* was written under the influence of Glastonbury Abbey : the personage of Yder is already mentioned in the context of the Abbey's history by William of Malmesbury and an ancient tradition says that the hero is buried there[8].

A short summary of the narrative stressing the conflicts between Yder and the King helps to show the unusual aspects of this poem which, with its strong polarization, stands out among all other Arthurian verse romances. Without recognizing him to be King Arthur, Yder meets a knight in the wood who has lost his company and who is attacked by two other knights. Yder kills them and so saves the King's life. But back at court, Yder has to realize that the King has completely forgotten him. During the meal
a damsel comes to ask for help against an invader of her lady's lands, but Arthur refuses because he is engaged in a war with a knight, Talac, who does not wish to become his liege man. Yder, who had expected the famous monarch to conform to his widespread renown as a just and generous king, leaves court deeply disappointed. The quest he now engages in has two aims : being an illegitimate child, he wants to find his father whom he has never seen, and he also wants to prove worthy of a beloved demoiselle, Quenn Guenloie, who refuses to marry him because his lineage is unknown. Yder helps Talac against Arthur's unjustified siege and, during the battle, he repeatedly throws Keu from his horse. This arouses the seneschal's bitter envy. He proposes to waylay Yder with the other knights and to slit him in an ambush. But Yder defends himself vallantly. Next, Keu tries to murder Yder by thrusting a lance through his back and turning it round several times. Yder falls from his horse and appears to be dead. The knights had at first seemed to be glad about what had happened, suddenly repents of his evil thoughts and begins to accuse Keu of every villanous deed he has committed lately at the instigation of the seneschal. But Yder's wounds are healed by his amie Guenloie who secretly follows him everywhere. Now, Quenn Guenevere asks Arthur to receive Yder into the Round Table community ; the King, however, begins to feel jealous of the friendship and admiration Guenevere shows for the young knight. Reluctantly, he sends Gauvain to Yder as a messenger. Yder, after his bad experience with the King and his seneschal, refuses to accept the invitation. But Gauvain insists, so Yder gives in for friendship's sake. A little later, the hero rescues the Queen from a bear that had penetrated into the ladies' chambers.

Talac by now has become Arthur's man, and when he himself is besieged by another enemy, he asks the King for help. But his request is not granted, as Arthur prefers to engage his army in an unjust war with the Black Knight. Again, it is the King's greed for land and for power which prevents him from fulfilling his duties as a feudal overlord. Yder, as Talac's friend, is appalled ; so are Gauvain and Yvain. They leave court secretly in order to help Talac, without even telling Yder, because they fear his wounds may break open. Yder was not prepared for this new disappointment. He believes his friends to have forsaken him and loses the last bit of faith in the courtly values of the Round Table community. He goes away alone, finally finds his father (a German Duke) and, after a year, returns to court. All the knights rejoice except Arthur and Keu. The seneschal is envious of Yder's prowess, and Arthur is angry because now the young hero is worthy more than ever of Guenevere's esteem. One day, he insists upon asking her whom she would marry if he were dead. After trying in vain to evade the question, the Queen replies that her choice would fall upon Yder.

Now Arthur's most violent feelings of jealousy break out. When Yder's amie announces that she will take the one for husband who can kill two dangerous giants (hoping Yder to be the victor), the King sees his chance to send the young knight out on an adventure from which he hopes he will not return. During the fight, Gauvain and Yvain want to help their friend Yder when they hear him lamenting, but Arthur forbids it. Then Keu emerges before the assembled knights pretending that Yder was slain by the giants and that he himself has killed them. When Yder, however, to everybody's surprise, comes forth alive, he is very thirsty. Keu hurnes to a distant well which he knows to contain poisonous water and brings him a drink. Yder swallows it and instantly shrinks into something resembling a piece of dry wood. Keu explains this as a consequence of the giants' fiery and poisonous breath. Full of fear, the company leaves the infested place and the remains of Yder are left in the wood. Two passing knights who recognize his unnatural state restore him to health and accompany him to Arthur's court. Meanwhile, Yder's friends mourn him ; only Arthur and Keu are happy that their adversary is eliminated. When Yder suddenly appears in good health, everybody rejoices at last what has happened and realizes that it is Gauvain blames Arthur for his love of Keu and openly challenges the seneschal to fight with him should he deny his crime. Keu, whose cowardice is well-known, tries to escape, but is locked into a room of the tower. At last, Guenloie recognizes Yder as her promised husband. Now Arthur is glad because a married Yder will leave court and do his own wife Guenevere no harm.

He even promises him a fief to make him an equal partner for Queen Guenloie. The marriage and coronation take place, and although Keu is so much afraid of Yder's thirst for vengeance that he asks some friends to escort him at the ceremony, the hero, in a final apotheosis of courtoisie and *largesce* embraces, kisses, and forgives him.

The young knight Yder in the thirteenth-century poem is a paragon of courtly and baronial virtue. When he realizes that Arthur neglects him and shows him no gratitude for his services, although Yder has saved his life, the hero is bitterly disappointed. After he has witnessed several other instances of the King's injustice and lack of loyalty, he does not wish to have anything further to do with such an uncourtly lord[9].

How is the extraordinary behaviour of the King narrated in the text ? Arthur offends Yder several times. Each time he repents of his unjust and uncourtly conduct but only after Gauvain, the leader of the baronial party, has upbraided his uncle with his villanous deeds. Gauvain is on Yder's side, and he can neither understand nor approve of the King's hatred for the hero and his love for his treacherous counsellor Keu. This attitude is sharply articulated in lines 6635 ff. :

"Boens reis" dist li, "gentil e franc,
Muit devroiz Keis tenir vil,
Car fels et traitres est il.
Vos l'amez, si l'iens en damage.
De vas prover l'en vos tent mon gage,
Quïe[l] il est traitres mortels,
Se il le nie, e il est tels
Li fel traitres rampaonos,
Qu'il ne deit conversier od nos (..)

Arthur recognizes that he has committed vilanie and so betrayed his own personal ideals and those of the community (v. 2447 ff.) :

"Alias", dist li, "mal[e] soit l'ure
Ke jo le Rogermont assis.
La vilonie que fi fiiz
Quant ja fell ; a la pucele
Qui m'enveia so demoiselle,
M'a changié grieve penitance.
Ki pas vilanie s'avance
De suen bien at [de] son prou faire,
Al chief del ter a ensuivre.
Ele s'ert mise en ma gorante ;
Je nuis ne fero vilanie
Qu'il me. I compert ou iceis ou prez.
Cest siege pris trop a engrés ;
Et ja fist Quais qui l. conseilla,
Qui onques bien n'aparaitra ;
Maudit seit il de Chieou Crist,
Ke onques bien pur bien ne fist,
E Deu maudie il suan sen."
Assez i ot qui dist amen.[10]

But although Arthur repents, his contrition is only momentary. There is no indication whatsoever in the text about any sort of permanent reform. Keu, after several attempts to murder the hero, feels humiliated because he has been found out ; his hatred for Yder, however, is by no means changed into love. The problem of the King's jealousy (a topos of many Arthurian texts, although nowhere so strongly developed as here) is solved, so it seems, by Yder's marriage. The hero leaves court as a consequence, but if he had stayed, the King (the reader feels) would again have tried to eliminate him. The text, at any rate, makes it perfectly clear that the King is not villanous by his own initiative: it is Keu's negative influence which brings ruin upon the kingdom. This is how Arthur himself explains his conduct and this is how the barons see the situation (v. 6628 ff.) :

Muit tenoient Keis por metable
Ciarmes, s'i fust de bones mors,
Mes onques hoen ne a ot paors.

A great number of telling epithets inserted into the text whenever Keu is mentioned show that the author or narrator himself is no neutral towards Keu :

A poi de mas vos ai conté
Quanqu'il out [en] lu bonté,
Tot tenir a cest la bone somme :
Il n'iaut onques amor vers home,
Tot dis fu felz e enuios,
Il ert cu ivert et rampaonous,
De femmes d[e]voiderers honte,
Vos n'orrez ja son los en conte,
Se ji n'est de chevalerie.
Cel perdi il par felonie,
Molt en fu fame atatue.
Chevalerie est metz perdue,
Quant ele en est home s'atoe
Ke ambiture en malveise oe. (v. 1145 ff.)

Or s'en fut Quais, qui Deus doint mal.
"Deus", dist Gauguïns, "q'or n'ai cheval,
Tort siwiese le trahitor,
Qui nos ad fet la deshonor
E. le damage et la pesance ;
Com jo preisse grant vengance" (v. 2344 ff.)

Quois fu de felonie salve (..) (v. 2327)

La felonie a parceüe
A la plaie qu'ell a veüe.
Que li traistres purpensa (..) (v. 2746 ff.)

The reader, on the other hand, realizes that only a very weak character with additional flaws such as jealousy and greed, injustice and ingratitude, can eventually lead Pharaoh to such an extent as does Arthur. And the reader who has a knowledge of other Arthurian texts of the period recognizes that these character traits form part of a general trend towards an unfavourable representation of King Arthur in these years, not only in romances like the *Perlesvaus* or the *Lancelot en prose* but particularly in some other instances of Arthurian poetry. The authors of the burlesque-satirical lays *Cort Mantel* and *Cor*, which according to the latest dating one probably contemporaneous with *Yder*[11], and also *contes arthuriens* like *La Mule sans Frein* and *Le Chevalier à l'Epée* similarly stress the negative aspects of the presumed ideal of the Round Table community[12]. Apart from the tremendous shame brought upon the assembly by the horn test, in the *Lai du Cor*, Arthur even seizes a knife to stab his queen when he is revealed as a cuckold in public, and his barons blame him :

"Sire, ceo dist Juwains,
Ne soiez si vilains (..) (Cor, v. 307 f.)

And in a short fragment of another early thirteenth-century romance, the so-called *Vallet a la Cote Mautaille*[13], the King's vilanie plays as prominent a role as in *Yder*. Here the King ridicules a young knight, the hero, who offers him his services, and sends him away because he is poorly dressed :

"Por chevalier de ma maisnie,
Amis, ne vos reterne mie."
Li valéts l'ot, molt fu dolens,
El de responde ne fu lens.
En haut li dist par grant franchise :
"Rois, ki n'ies soing de mon service,
Ne te dirai honte grignour,
Mais [ma] quere autre signour."(Vallet, v. 17ff.)

Again it is Gauvain in his well-known function as the wise counsellor and spokesman of the barons who blames and criticizes his uncle for his uncourtly behaviour which he interprets as a sign of decadence :

O le ro est est tournés Gauvains
Qui a pié n'a cheval n'est vains ;
Molt bel le prist a chastoier :
"Rois, vi or ne vi affaitier
Et la grant court et la poissance.
Encor avras la presence
Quant le vallet n'as retanu
Qui devant nous s'est contenu
Molt belement dadans la court.
Ja soit ce qu'il ne s'atourt
A noiste us, mes par aventure,
Teix est sas us et sa coustume.
Es drois ne gait pas le prouece.
Rois, sei retien par to largece,
Car trop avez mal espoïté
Quant vous l'aves si eslongié."(Vallet, v. 47ff.)

This is no longer the same atmosphere as that in the first scene of *Erec et Enide* where Gauvain's tone was one of gentle warning.

It seems that in a particular stage in the evolution of the genre (and under specific historical circumstances) texts such as these can serve to hold up a mirror to the monarchy and to articulate the needs and wishes of the barony more openly and in a less general way than they normally do. Expressing and solving problems between king and knights is probably the most important constituent of the genre. In the earlier French Arthurian verse romances conflicts of this kind were symbolically solved by victories over enemies and villains belonging to the outer world[14]. But in the texts mentioned above, grave conflicts arise between divergent forces of the Arthurian community itself. It is King Arthur himself who acts as enemy and villain. In *Yder* and the *Lai de Cote Mautaille* we recognize two representative heroes who cannot identify themselves with the moral corruption and the false ideals of a degenerate monarchy. As exponents of the barony, they long for a restitution of the old order .Their disappointment and aggression are temporarily directed against one particular king who has destroyed this order, a King Arthur who is temporarily influenced by evil forces. But this does not undermine the fundamental loyalty of these barons towards monarchy, and especially towards a monarchy which fulfils the Arthurian ideals of justise, cortoisie and chevalerie. On the contrary, in hard times the barons do their best to prove that they and always will be the pillars of the kingdom.

After King John's death, the Kings of England together with their loyal barons and the Church once again became the patrons of Arthurian literature. They continued to ask poets from the Continent like Guillaume le Clerc (the author of *Fergus*), or Girart d'Amiens (the author of *Escanor*), or Jean Froissart (the author of *Meliador*) to write Arthurian romances for them poems which all reflect British territorial, political and social problems[15].

It is only during the first years of the thirteenth century that Arthurian literature is directed against its natural and traditional patrons, in the form of a symbolic literary representation of King Arthur as a villain, which is meant to encourage the King to repent and reform and at the same time glorifies the unswerving loyalty and the outstanding qualities of the English barony. Never again in later French or Middle English Arthurian verse romances is King Arthur represented as a villain, but Middle Scots texts like *Sir Gawayne and Grene Knyght*, *Lancelot of the ak*, or the *Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*, and most Scottish Chronicles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries revert to much the same technique as the texts which were written in King John's time. They emphasize King Arthur's bad character, show how unjust, greedy and uncourtly he is, how he has no right to reign over Scotland because he is an illegitimate son, how he usurps land from Scottish barons and gives it to English barons (to Gauvain, for example), only to show in the end that he repents, gives in, learns to be generous, and restores the Scottish fiefs to their rightful owners ... All these are narrative motifs which are already to be discerned in what could be called the "English Arthurian verse romances in French". The Scots use the same literary device as the malcontent barons under King John, because (due to the unending border conflicts and the problems of vassalage between the Scottish and the English King) their situation is in some ways analogous. This ideological warfare which employs the literary character of King Arthur - either a villain or an ideal and noble king! this depends entirely on the perspective - as a means of political controversy, seems to be typically British. Although it is and has always been possible to read these fictional texts merely for their aesthetic and poetic value, Arthurian verse romance (other than the prose) has often been a means of driving home a claim for the supremacy of the English throne over the French, the Welsh, the Scots or the Bretons. Those who suffered from it apparently hit back with the same weapon. This strong political function may explain why in Great Britain Arthurian literature continued to live longer than anywhere else in Europe, although it is certainly not the villanous Arthur who still survives, but the "Once and Future King" as an *exemplum bonum* for future generations.

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KING ARTHUR AS VILLAIN IN THE THIRTEEN-CENTURY ROMANCE 'YDER"

* Cet article a été initialement publié dans *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France*, t. 15, 1e Partie, 1842, p. 336-368.

(1) *La partie arthurienne du Roman de Brut par Wace*, (éd.) I. Arnold and M. M. Pelan, Bibl. Française et Romane B-1, Frankfurt/Main, Paris 1962. Arthur's attitude towards his knights is very well expressed in *Durmart le Galois*, (éd.) J. Gildea, Villanova, 1965-1966, v. 8153 ff. : "Li rois sa prent a esjoir ; / Ne sa puet de parler tenir / Cant il veit so chevoierie / Par cui il maintient saignorie. / "Dex' dist li rois a Saigremor, / Com est riches de bioi fresor / Qui bons chevaliers a o lui'. / Mout riches at mout manans sui, / Quar j'ai les millors chevaliers / Que puist avoir rois ne princiers. / Jo vers eaz ne tenrai avoir / Car rois ne puet onor avoir / Se de chevaliers ne li vient. / Quant del roi Daire rne sovient / Qui las chevaliers avilla/ Et les vilains tos ensaucha, / Mout sui joians quant on me conte / Qu'il en fu mars viement a honte. / Il ensoucha sers et vilains, / Et cil l'ocisent de lor mains. / Mar avilla les chevaliers ; / Rendus l'en fu ses drois loiers. / Mout doit on riche home blamer / Qui chevaliers ne vuet amer."

(2) *Cf.* G. Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain*, London, 1971, p. 7.

(3) For the much discussed character of King John, *cf.* C. Brooke, "From Alfred 10 Henry III 871-1272", *A History of England*, t. 2, London, 1967, p. 216 ; D.M. Stenton, "English Society in Ihe Middle Ages", T*he Pelican Hislory of England*, t. 1, London, 1965, p. 46ff. The wickedness of King John is treated in such pseudo-historical literary texts as Wistasse le Moine and Fouke Fitz Waryn. In Wistasse which seems to be written from a French point of view, John gives Wistasse, the Count of Boulogne's outlaw vassal and enemy, a house in London and rich presents, whereas Fouke has aroused the King's hatred when they were both children in the royal John deprives him of his heritage after he has become King of England and Fouke, as an outlaw, has many of the barons on his side.

(4) *Cf.* G. Ashe, *King Arthur's Avalon*, London, 1957, p. 283 et suiv.

(5) *Cf.* R.S. Loomis, "Edward II Arthurian Enthousiast", *Speculum*, 28 (1953), p. 114-127 ; *Id.,* "Arthurian Influence on Sport and Spectacle", *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, (éd.) R. S. Loomis, Oxford 1969, p.553-559 ; M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century 1216-1307*, *Oxford History of England*, Oxford 1953, p. 516; (on Edward Ier) "He doubtless believed in the slory of Arthur and hod opened the tomb at Glastonbury in all good faith. He saw more than a symbol in his Welsh trophy, the crown of Arthur, just as he did in the cross of Neath or later in the stone of Scone (...) Yet Edward was a political realist. He lived in an age of political propaganda and he knew the value of it". See also p. 429.

(6) *Der altfranzösische Yderroman*, nach der einzigen bekannten Handschrift mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und Glossar zum ersten Male herousgegeben von Heinrich Gelzer (Geselfschaft für Romanische Literatur, Band 31), Dresden 1913 ; all italics in the quotations are mine.

(7) It is now in Cambridge University library, Ms. Ee. 4. 26.

(8) The part concerning Yder in William of Malmesbury's work may be an interpolation in the interest of Glastonbury, *cf.* R.M. Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, New York 1973, App. 326 ; see also Migne, *P.L.* 179, S.1701: *De illustri Arturo*. Yder is mentioned on the Modena archivolt (Ysdernus) together with Winlogee who is probably not Guenevere but Guenloie, his *amie* in the romance.

(9) It can rightly be argued that the author of *Yder* only developed a possibility of criticism which had been inherent in the genre from its very beginnings. Chrétien himself sometimes views the Arthurian world and the conduct of king and knights with irony and humour. This applies particularly to *Yvain* as has recently been shown by P. Noble, "Irony in 'ce Chevalier au lion", *BBSIA* XXX (1978), p. 196-208 ; in *Yvain*, the poet is contrasting the idealized reputation of Arthur's court with his own portrayal of it : "In a very discreet way Chrétien seems to be suggesting that perhaps the heroes and heroines of Arthur's court were not such courtly paragons after all *(op.cit.*, p. 207). But in Yder there is no ironic or comic distance ot all ; the criticism is seriou,! not benevolent. A comparison of Keu's character, reputation and conduct in the two texts, for example, reveals the fundamental difference of attitude.

(10) A. Adams and A.J. Kennedy, "Corrections to the Text of Yder", *Beiträge zum Romanischen Mlttelaiterr,* (dir.). K. Baldinger,Tübingen 1977, p.230-236 ; the authors propose for this quotation the reading *euea* for *envea*, *preu* for *prou*, *loinz* for *loins,* le *suen sen* for *li suen sen*.

(11) *Mantel et Cor. Deux Lais du XIIe siècle*, p.p. P. Bennelt, 1975, Introduction.

(12) *Two Old French Gauvain Romances : Le Chevalier à l'Epée and La Mule sans Frein*, (éd.) R.C. Johnston and D.D.R. Owen, Edinburgh / London 1972 ; in *Espee* it is the easily enamoured and as easiiy disappointed Gauvain who is ridiculed, whereas in *Mule* the whole Arthurlan court is mocked for its vital need of adventures by a damsel who incites Keu and Gauvain to look for her Frein which she herself has hidden.

(13) "Fragment du Vallet a la Cote Mautaillie", (éd.) P. Meyer and G. Paris, *Romania*, n° 26 (1897), p. 76-280. "Cil a la cote maltailliee" is mentioned in the prologue to *Le Bel Inconnu*, v. 49 and in *Les Merveilles de Rigomer*, v.7075, 10391 and 13596 which apparently was not known to Meyer and Paris. The hero's story is incorporated in the *Tristan en Prose* where his name is Brunor. These various reminiscences can only mean that our fragmentary verse romance was rather well known in its time.

(14) *Cf.* E. Köhler, *"Ideal und Wicklichkeil in der höfischen Epik"*, *Beiheft zur ZrPh* 97, Tüibngen, 1970, 18 ff., 89 ff.

(15) The first version of *Meliador* was probably written when Froissart lived with Queen Philippa of Hainault at the English court, *cf.* A. Diverres, "The Geography of Britain in Froissart's Meliador", *Mélanges. R. Lejeune*, t. 2, Gembloux 1969, p. 1399-1409 ; "The Irish Adventures in Froissart's Meliador", *Mélanges J. Frappier*, t. 1, Geneva, 1970, p. 235-251. *Escanor* was composed for or commissioned by Eleanor of Castile, Queen of Edward I. She probably met Girart d'Amiens in his home town in 1279, when she came to do homage to the King of France for the county of Ponthieu, which is mentioned in v.18882 "Pontiu"). Fergus was probably commissioned by Dervorguilla and John de Balliol about 1240, *cf.* B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, "*Le Roman de Fergus* : technique littéraire at intention polltique", paper presented at the XIIth Congress of the !International Arthurian Society in Regensburg, August 1979.

(16) For details *cf.* K.H. Göller, "Konig Arthur in den schottischen Chroniken", *Anglia* n°80, (1962), p. 390-404 ; *König Arthur in der englischen Literatur des spälten Mittelalters*, Göttingen, 1963.

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LE MOTIF DU CUVEAUMAT DANS LE ROMAN D'YDIER

Lise MOSION

Le texte, qui dit ou tent (ainsi toute chose) à se nuire, a enquête dans sa source inaphasique le séjourne d'ouverture du roman d'Ydier: le cuveaumat. Ce motif, qui se présente sous plusieurs formes proches mais différentes dans le roman (toujours hybrides) traduit de son protagonisme (mais aussi du destin qui, en retrait, fouille le texte, dit de l'extérieur l'intérieur du diégèse, le fait que traite ou sort l'intérieur du diégèse, le fait que traite ou sort l'intérieur du diégèse, le fait que traite ou sort

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LE MOTIF DU COVENANT DANS LE *ROMAN D'YDER*

* Cet article a été initialement publié dans la revue *Littératures* n°3 (1995) p. 55-87.

(1) *The Romance of Yder*, (éd. et trad.) A. Adams, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 1983.

(2) Nous relevons dans le texte vingt-cinq occurrences du substantif "covenant" (v. 100, 102, 136, 198, 332, 422, 428, 432, 435, 456, 461, 2137, 3941, 3946, 3961, 4565, 4711, 4863, 4880, 5012, 5032, 6235, 6514, 6530, 6545), une du terme "covenance" (v. 128), et trois du verbe "encovenancer" (v. 211, 3489, 6329). A cela, il faut ajouter la présence de nombreux mots relatifs a l'entente verbale et qui comportent une valeur juridique ou performative : les verbes "pramettre" (v.181, 210, 421, 1918, 4623, 4889, 5351), "graanter" (v. 197, 225, 877, 3176, 4490, 6299), "otroier"(v. 400, 3992, 4022, 4613, 4781, 6549, 6621), "mesdire" (v. 3865, 3868, 5041), "jurer" (v. 6691), "mentir" (v. 370, 5626), "tricher" (v. 618), "mander" (v.83, 577, 3315, 4210), "somer" (v. 1096, 5210, 6576), de même que l'adjectif "plevie" (v. 5640) et l'expression "foi plevie" (v. 3539), le verbe "desdire" (v. 109, 113, 2573) et ses dérivés, "desdiz" (v. 112 et 4866) et "desdisanz" (v. 111), "defendre" (v. 2800, 3624), "defenze" (v. 2825), "comander" (v. 2484, 2840, 2901, 3306), "comandement" (v.3082), "comant»"(v. 2545), "demander" (v. 5267, 6209), "demande" (v. 5262), "proiere" (v. 3728, 4629), "prier" (v. 4413, 4498, 4637), et les substantifs "vo" (v.1163 et 4844), "aliance" (v. 182), "fiance" (v. 1822 et 5124), "homage" (v. 2508), "blasme" (v. 3867), "marchie" (v. 225), "requeste" (v. 2213, 3954, 4613, 4675), "arramie" (v .5318), etc.

(3) B. Schmolke-Hasselmann,"King Arthur as Villain in the Thirteenth-Century Romance *Yder*", *Reading Medieval Studies*, 6 (1980), p.31.

(4) M. Stanesco et M. Zink, *Histoire européenne du roman médieval (esquisse et perspectives)*, Paris, PUF, 1992, p. 34.

(5) M.-L. Chênerie, *Le Chevalier errant dans les romans arthuriens en vers des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Genève, Droz, 1986, p.105.

(6) E. Kohler, *L'Aventure chevaleresque*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 26-27.

(7) A. Gerhards, *La Société médiévale*, Paris, MA, 1986, p. 258.

(8) G. Sheridan Burgess, *Contribution à l'étude du vocabulaire pré-courtois*, Genève, Droz, 1970, p.160. "Car le lien entre seigneur et feudataire est un lien sacré, fondé sur la foi".

(9) E. Baumgartner, *Moyen Âge (1050-1486)*, Paris, Bordas, 1988, p.18.

(10) A. Gerhards, *La Société médiévale*, *op. cit.,* p.135.

(11) E. Baumgartner, *Moyen Âge (1050-1486)*, *op. cit.,* p. 18.

(12) P.-Y. Badel, *Introduction à la vie littéraire du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Bordas, 1969, p. 28.

(13) Vers 3129-3135 et 6339-6343.

(14) M. Rossi, "La chanson de geste et le mythe carolingien", *Mélanges René Louis*, t. 2, Saint-Père-sous-Vezelay, 1982, p. 946.

(15) H. Dupin, *La Courtoisie au Moyen Âge*, Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1973, (réimpression de l'édition de Paris, 1931), p.96.

(16.) G. S. Burgess, *Contribution à l'étude du vocabulaire pré-courtois*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

(17) P.-Y. Badel, *Introduction à la vie littéraire du Moyen Âge*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

(18) H. Dupin, *La Courtoisie au Môyen Âge*, *op.* cit., p. 114.

(19) P. Ménard, *Le Rire et le Sourire dans le roman courtois en France au Moyen Âge (1150-1250)*, Genève, Droz, 1969, p. 251.

(20) Y. Robreau, *L'Honneur et la Honte (leur expression dans les romans en prose du Lancelot-Graal (XII-XIII siecles)*), Geneve, Droz, 1981, p.127.

(21) E. Kohler, *L 'Aventure chevaleresque*, *op. cit.* p. 9-10.

(22) v. 2447-2464.

(23) *Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, n° 1675 cité par M.-L. Chênerie, *Le Chevalier errant dans les romans arthuriens en vers des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, *op.. cit.*, p. 310.

(24) J. Grisward, "Ider et le tricéphale : d'une 'aventure' arthurienne au mythe indien", *Annales, économies, sociétés, civilisation*, n°33 (1978), p. 288.

(25) Sur cette question, voir K. J. Hollyman, *Le Développement du vocabulaire féodal en France pendant le Haut Moyen Âge*, Paris et Genève, Droz et Minard, 1957.

(26) B. Schmolke-Hasselmann,"King Arthur as Villain in the Thirteenth-Century Romance *Yder*", art. cit., p. 36.

(27) v. 427-430.

(28) J. Grisward, "Ider et le tricéphale : d'une 'aventure' arthurienne aun mythe indien", art. cit., p. 289.

(29) F. L. Ganshof, *Qu'est-ce que la féodalité ?*, Paris, Tallandier, 1982, p. 151.

(30) M.-L. Chênerie, *Le Chevalier errant dans les romans arthuriens en vers des XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, *op. cit.,* p.480.

(31) v.523-526.

(32) G. Duby, *Mâle Moyen Âge (de [lamour et autres essais),* Paris, Flammarion, 1988, p.80.

(33) Même si dans la réalité historique la courtoisie n'est jamais passée dans les moeurs, elle jouit dans la littérature d'une existence bien réelle, où elle se trouve presque assimilée à une institution.

(34) J. Grisward, "Ider et le tricéphale : d'une 'aventure' arthurienne aun mythe indien", art. cit., p. 289.

(35) Peut-être faudrait-il ajouter ce facteur d'unité à la la liste fournie par Alison Adams dans «La conception de l'unité dans le roman médiéval en vers», *Studia Neophilologica*, 5 (1978), p.101-112.

(36) H. Dupin, *La Courtoisie au Môyen Âge*, *op.* cit., p.36.

(37) M.-L. Ollier, "Statut de la vérité et du mensonge", *Tristan et Yseult, mythe européen et mondial*, Göppingen, Ktimmerle Verlag, 1978, p.315.

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ARTHUR'S CHARACTER AND REPUTATION IN *YDER*

Norris J. LACY

When Arthur is first mentioned in the early thirteenth-century French romance Yder, the young knight Yder has saved the king's life, but without knowing the identity of the person he has rescued. When, the following day, he asks someone who that stranger was, the reply is an entirely traditional and expected encomium :

Ço est li rois Artur", dist cil.
"Est", dist Yder, "vallet ?" "Oil,
Li preus, li sages, li cortois,
Qui d'ennor ad passé les rois,
Cels qui furent e cels qui sunt :
De cels qui empris lui vendront
N'en sera nuls ne vaille meins ;
N'en di pas trop ke tant est pleins
De valur e de corteisie
Ke nus n'en ment qui bien en die. (v. 35-44) (1)

Such praise is a standard Arthurian trope; and there is in principle very little to surprise us about it. Numerous romances go to great lengths to speak of Arthur's greatness, even as many of those same romances set out to dramatize his flaws.

This romance, however, offers a special case, because here Arthur, according to traditional assessments, is not just flawed but genuinely evil. If those views are correct, the praise quoted above should soon begin to ring hollow : it is clearly not the portrait of an evil or despicable man.

Arthur's character in this romance is the central focus of an important 1980 article titled "King Arthur as Villain in the Thirteenth-Century Romance *Yder*" by Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, and of a related 1988 article by Alison Adams(2). Both emphasize Arthur's conspicuous character flaws, identified by Adams as jealousy and especially a lack of loyalty. She characterizes the narratorial depiction of the king as "hostile" (p. 72) and refers to "the unconventional representation of values within which Arthur and his henchman Keu are consistently depicted in the harshest of possible lights [...]" (p. 75). The notion of Arthur as villain is echoed most dramatically by Keith Busby, who writes that Yder is an "anti-Arthur romance" and that "[...] everything that has to do with Arthur and the court [is] evil, and everything non-Arthurian (especially the hero), good."(3)

It is indisputably correct that Yder is in some ways an anomalous romance. Most romances, especially in French(4), show Arthur as a flawed monarch, but scarcely to the extent indicated by the three judgments – and especially Busby's – cited here. Although I have no desire to refute those judgments entirely, nor do I believe it could be done, my purpose here is to inject some nuance into the traditional reaction to the Arthur of Yder.

Two episodes in particular appear to sponsor critical condemnations of Arthur. One concerns Arthur's intense jealousy ; and jealousy, as the narrator reminds us, is a cruel thing ("Cruele chose a en gelosie", v. 5244). Roughly two-thirds through the romance, Yder returns to court after a triumph, and

Li reis e li barons qui l'ouent
En sont joiant e tuit le loent ;
De lor joie sunt tuit joios
Fors solement Keis l'envios. (v. 5129-5132).

Although Kay's jealousy is emphasized here – and as I shall argue, he will turn out to be the real villain of this romance – the king, along with the barons, reacts in a quite positive manner to Yder's return. This is hardly the portrait of an evil Arthur. However, the very next passage does dramatize his jealousy. The narrator, in one of his frequent interventions (this one twenty-five lines long, v. 5143-5167), characterizes jealousy as a "fever of the heart", an incurable attack, an overwhelming passion ; he says that a jealous man can never know happiness or have rest ; jealousy will destroy him, etc.(5) These observations are then illustrated dramatically (v. 5185-5220), as Arthur asks Guenevere what she would do were she to lose him ; she replies that she would die. Although most of us would take this to be a prudent and satisfactory answer, he continues to interrogate her and to modify the form of the question, asking whom she would marry in the event of his death – her answer is "no one" – and finally pressing her to indicate whom she would accept if he were dead and she were *required* to remarry. She replies that if she could not avoid that terrible situation, Yder would perhaps displease her less than others. Having forced such a response, a furious Arthur vows that he will find an opportunity to do harm to Yder – to cause him a "mal trebuc" ("ruin" or "downfall", v. 5235). He wants to destroy Yder (v. 5241). He never asserts unambiguously – and this is an important fact – that he seeks Yder's death, but it is undeniable that his extreme jealousy and anger are dangerous emotions indicative of profound flaws in the king(6).

The second of the passages that seem to convict Arthur occurs when he goes in search of adventure, taking with him Gauvain, Yvain, Yder, and Kei. Yder ventures ahead of the others to fight two giants or monsters ; the smaller of the two is fifty feet tall or more, v. 5502-5503). The other knights arrive to find him victorious, sitting beside the giants' bodies. Adams's translation informs us that Arthur and Kei would have preferred that he be dead (v. 5671). Specifically, the Old French rendering reads :Li reis quide qu'il seit grevez / E Keis, mes il fust mort lor voil ; / Tost en eussent fait le doel » (v. 5670-5672). She translates that as : "Arthur thought he [Yder] was wounded, and so did Kei, but they would have liked him to be dead ; they would have grieved for him at once". Here is the romance's most explicit expression of Arthur's jealousy and perhaps of his evil nature. Yet the passage is problematic and, I suspect, corrupt.

Obviously, both editing and translating are at the same time acts of interpretation. In this passage, if we accept the editor's punctuation, we have to concur with Busby's contention about the evil that Arthur incarnates. Yet, punctuated differently (as" mes il fust mort, lor voil tost en eussent fait le doel"), the passage reads : "but if he had been dead [or, literally, « were he dead"], they would have wanted to grieve for him immediately."

A simple change of the editor's punctuation thus modifies the characterization of Arthur. Still there remains a problem here, because in either case, Arthur's and Kei's views coincide. Thus, if we repunctuate so as to avoid contending that Arthur sought Yder's death, we also have to concede that Kei would grieve for the hero, and that is patently untrue. Nonetheless, that reading appears preferable, for two reasons. First, although Arthur, in his jealous rage, had vowed to rid himself of Yder and thus might well be threatening death, such a threat, as I noted earlier, is not explicit. Thus, the scene with the giants' bodies is the only instance in which, at least as Adams interprets it, Arthur clearly wants Yder dead. Second, and more important, there is strong support for my emended reading in the next scene. There Kei poisons Yder(7), and Arthur's reactions are telling : he is greatly "esbahi" (astonished or appalled, 5800) ; then the king "Le cors a seignié si s'en part ; / Il prie Deu que l'alme en gart / Des mals e des peines d'enfer" (v. 5825-5827). These are reactions inconsistent with a desire for Yder's death. In fact, when Yder, healed, returns to court, the king is happy to see him, and from that point on he remains on the best of terms with Arthur ("mult bien del rei", v. 6397).

If it is agreed that Arthur is not the entirely evil villain of the romance, then just what are his flaws, beyond irrational jealousy ? In fact, the king does not always do the wrong thing, but often he neglects the right thing or does things in the wrong order, by which is meant that he is irresponsible and forgetful and that he rarely has his priorities correctly ordered.

As we noted, Arthur, at the beginning, has been rescued by a young, unknown knight, who happens to be Yder(8). Learning whom he has saved, Yder hopes to join Arthur's court, but inexplicably, Arthur largely ignores the young man, forgetting to reward him or even to thank him. Yder's anger and disappointment at this affront are exacerbated when Arthur soon makes what appears to be an irresponsible decision. A young woman arrives to say that her lady needs Arthur's assistance, because her castle is besieged by the Black Knight (v. 67 ff.). Arthur, who had given the castle to the lady and had sworn to protect her, readily agrees to offer assistance but insists that the task will have to wait. First he must besiege the castle of Rougemont, because its lord, Talac, refuses to accept Arthur as liege lord, and Arthur must remedy that. The messenger berates him, pointing out that his prior duty was to her lady, because Arthur had given his promise to her first. The king, though, insists that he must first besiege Rougemont, arguing stubbornly that : "Dist l'ai, si ne m'en veil dedire" (v. 109)(9). Yder soon leaves court, distressed to see that Arthur is not doing his duty (v. 129). The narrator does not indicate that either of Arthur's tasks is unworthy or improper, but clearly the king's priorities are disordered.

Before long, Arthur is reminded of Yder and asks that the young man be brought to him. Informed that Yder has left, Arthur announces that he, the king, has shamed himself by forgetting about the young man who saved him. He sends twenty men to seek Yder, promising them rich gifts if they bring him back to court. Just when we have evidence of Arthur's failings, he seeks to redeem himself : he does so too late, of course, but with good intentions. His forgetting Yder, then regretting it and sending men to search for him, suggests that Arthur could be forgetful, distracted, or perhaps even irresponsible – but his actions argue against the contention that he is simply evil.

The text later offers a sequence that reflects and almost duplicates the one in which Arthur had to choose between defending a lady's castle and fighting Talac. Yder's ladylove, Guenloie, decides to besiege Talac's castle ; since the latter is now Arthur's vassal, the king will surely – so Guenloie thinks – come to his assistance, and just as surely he will bring Yder with him, enabling her thus to see the man she loves (v. 3399-3551). But Arthur refuses to help Talac, or more precisely, he postpones the deed because, he says, he must first go and avenge the shame he has suffered at the hands of the Black Knight, now besieging the castle of the "orgoillose pucele" (v. 3485).

Again we have competing demands on Arthur, and it appears that he has again made the wrong decision, as he seems more intent on avenging his own shame than on discharging his feudal obligation to assist his vassal. Neither of his tasks is ill-advised or unusual in Arthurian fiction, but there is decidedly a question of priority. Indeed, his declining to offer immediate assistance to Talac appears more serious now than had been his neglect of the besieged lady who first asked his aid. In the earlier episode, it was acknowledged that the lady's castle, well fortified and filled with provisions, could hold out for an extended time without assistance. She was not in dire straits, and her entreaty to Arthur was based solely on the shame that would attach to him if he failed to assist her. But now, in the second of these paired sequences, Talac's castle is not well equipped, and without Arthur's assistance, his situation will quickly become desperate (v. 3434-39). No matter : faced with a pressing need to come to Talac's aid, Arthur chooses instead to undertake a different task, related again to his self-interest(10).

So we are left with the question : who is the villain in this romance ? To my mind, it is not Arthur, or certainly not only Arthur – not even primarily Arthur. Unsurprisingly, on the other hand, Kei surely qualifies. At one point, he stabs Yder in the back – literally – and at another time he poisons him. He is resentful and hateful. Far from being the usually harmless (albeit irascible and sarcastic) gadfly of the court, Kei clearly represents here the nadir of chivalric behavior and character, lacking any redeeming social value. At the other end of the spectrum are Gauvain and Yvain. (Uncharacteristically for the French tradition, Gauvain appears to be an authentic hero in this work.)

Between these two poles – Kei at one end, Gauvain (and Yvain) at the other – stand Yder and Arthur. Yder often appears to be something of a Perceval figure, remarkably talented for chivalry, but unknown and untried when the romance begins. On more than one occasion, it should be noted, he also demonstrates a prodigious talent for self-pity indicative of immaturity.

And then there is Arthur. As my comments have demonstrated, it would be both impossible and senseless to paint him as an admirable character. I would argue, however, that he often has benevolent intentions, as when he wishes to express his gratitude to Yder for saving him ; but he is distracted and forgetful, and it occurs to him to thank Yder only after the latter has left court. In addition, his intense jealousy is unarguably a destructive force. In official matters, he appears disengaged and erratic, and he is strongly decisive only when he is doing the wrong thing : acting out of jealousy or inverting his priorities and postponing legitimate obligations.

His disengagement is perhaps most remarkable in regard to Kei. Traditionally Arthur had tolerated Kei's sarcasm and invective, and he generally limits himself to reprimanding the seneschal for his failings. In Yder, however, he does not do even that, remaining passive when Kei is at his most outrageous. Kei's two attempts to murder Yder do not elicit even a rebuke from the king(11), and Kei's position at court is not threatened even when Gauvain argues to Arthur that the seneschal must be punished. We cannot of course know how the king would ultimately have responded to Gauvain's complaint, for just at that point, news comes that Yder is alive, and the incident is promptly and completely forgotten. Treacherous and cowardly assault on a knight from behind is apparently unobjectionable as long as the victim survives – at least when the attacker is Kei and the king is Arthur. The episode clearly does not add any luster to Arthur's character, though it appears not to compromise his reputation with others. Surprisingly, even Gauvain seems largely to forget about Kei's crime, as if life at the court is separated out into discrete experiential units. These units are sometimes linked – sometimes not – by the continuity of narrative threads, but they often remain entirely unrelated to one another in terms of the characters' reactions and memories.

But it cannot be said that everything concerning the court is evil. At most, part of it is. The court contains the full range of human behaviors, from Kei's treachery and hatred to Gauvain's near perfection. The problem is precisely that the court, while not in itself evil, also does not function as a force for good. The romance and the court have no ideological core. Other romances, even as they dramatize Arthur's failures, generally maintain a sense of the Arthurian ideal, and that provides an anchor, a mooring for the text and the court. But in this text, the court has been cut conspicuously loose from its mooring in the ideal of Camelot and the Round Table. It has no anchor to stabilize it.

The court, I suggest, is not evil as much as it is simply adrift. It is a space within which events are often severed from their expected consequences. Of course, we can easily enough argue that Arthur is by no means what he should be or even what he is described as being. He is indecisive and irresolute, and he is tormented by jealousy and in serious need of lessons in anger management. As a result the court is largely without direction. All of that is patently obvious, but whereas it surely contradicts the description, quoted at the beginning, of Arthur as a great and inspiring monarch, a paragon of valor, wisdom, courtliness, and honor surpassing all others, it does not make either the king or the court unequivocally or irremediably evil.

An evil Arthur is by no means inconceivable, but I would argue that the Arthur of *Yder* is far more complex and intriguing than he would be as a simple villain – or perhaps even as a genuine hero. Primarily, he is inconsistent ; his characteristics range from magnanimity and generosity to disengagement and distraction to jealousy and rage. (Indeed, this may well be the most complex Arthur to be found in French romance.) And since the court is a reflection of the king, his flaws have shaped (or perhaps misshapen) the court so that it is no longer an ideal, but just a place. It provides the sense of a center in little more than a geographical way ; the knights (except for Gauvain, Yvain, and sometimes Yder) are not a brotherhood, but merely a loose collection of individuals, almost of strangers. In fact, apart from those I have mentioned, the author names only about fifteen knights of the Round Table, and fully a dozen are names that occur only in this romance. The experience, for anyone who knows the Arthurian tradition, is a shock of non-recognition. There is not only a faithful and loving Guenevere – itself already something of a novelty – but a king who, although praised, is at very least erratic and clearly flawed. And he presides – more or less – over a Round Table whose members include such "illustrious" knights as Bedouer, Gastinel, Gasoudenc, Guhu, Buhout, and Buflout. Yet, if his court and many of his knights appear to lack distinction and consistency, I would still maintain that Arthur himself does not incarnate evil. He simply fails to be the standard-bearer and enforcer of good, and as a result, he is the leader of a decaying ideal : a rudderless Camelot that is no more than the locus of random, fragmented, and almost alien experience.

Le Roman d'Yder l'étude d'un récit de la *Matière de Bretagne* au prisme de la juslittérature

Propos introductifs

Le motif de la jalousie dans le roman arthurien. L'exemple du Roman d'Yder de Dietmar Rieger

King Arthur as villain in the thirtheen-century romance 'Yder' de Beate Schmolke -Hasseslmann

Le motif du *covenant* dans le *Roman d'Yder* de Louise Morin

Arthur's Character and Reputation in *Yder* de Norris J. Lacy

NOTES

ARTHUR'S CHARACTER AND REPUTATION IN *YDER*

* Cet article a été initialement publié dans *Cahiers de recherche médiévales et humanistes*, n°14 (2007), p. 41-48.

(1) *The Romance of Yder*, Cambridge, (éd. et trad.) A. Adams, Cambridge, Brewer, 1983, p. 29.

(2) The former was published in *Reading Medieval Studies*,n° 6 (1980), p. 31-43 ; the latter, titled "*The Roman d'Yder* : The Individual and Society", is in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, (dir.) N. J. Lacy, D. Kelly, and K. Busby, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1988, vol. 2, p. 71-77.

(3) « *Yder* », in *New Arthurian Encyclopedia,* (dir.) N. J. Lacy, New York, Garland, 1991, p. 529.

(4) Though in French, the romance may reflect English attitudes more than French ones. B. Schmolke-Hasselmann has suggested that the hostile representation of King Arthur may reflect the political situation in England under King John. See *Der arthurische Versroman von Chrestien bis Froissart*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1980, p. 2042-05. A. Adams concludes that the romance was written "[…] either in the Western part of France which was subject to the English crown or else, perhaps more probably, by a poet of continental origin living in England during the reign of King John, 1199-1216" (p. 13).

(5) In one of these lines the narrator argues that : "Il n'i a tel mal en tot le monde" (v. 5157). Adams translates "mal" as "evil", and although that is certainly not a mistranslation, one wonders if her choice may not have been dictated by the traditional view that Arthur himself is evil. "Mal" can as easily mean "illness", which fits the characterization of jealousy throughout this passage.

(6) Soon afterward, Arthur asks Gauvain about Yder but curiously does not mention the latter's name. He first characterizes him as the knight whom the ladies find so attractive, then as the handsome one who wins ladies' hearts. Gauvain does not know whom Arthur is referring to until the king simply calls Yder "the good knight" at which time Gauvain understands the reference. Yder is most clearly identified – other than by Arthur – by his chivalric qualities rather than by amorous reputation. See v. 5260-5272. In Adams's translation, Gauvain says of Yder that :"[…] in love I know no better than him"(v. 5271-5272), but the manuscript reading is not "en amor" but "en demuor" and in her note to that line Adams suggests that another acceptable emendation is "sans demuor", without delay. She considers that her choice better fits the context, but in fact I find the alternative preferable : Gauvain does not recognize the description of Yder as ladies' man, but when he is described as a good knight, Gauvain immediately ("sans demuor") knows who it is.

(7) In her summary of the romance, Adams says that Kei poisons Yder out of hatred but also because he "know[s] Arthur's wishes" (p. 17), but I find no such indication in the text.

(8) The beginning of the romance is lacking in the unique manuscript (Cambridge University Library, Ee.4.26), but retrospective reference to events makes it simple enough to reconstruct the major narrative lines that open the work. Yder's mother's lover had abandoned her, leaving her with half of a ring. Eventually, Yder sets out to find his father. During his travels, he falls in love with Queen Guenloie, but she demands that he earn her love by his exploits. Leaving her, he meets a knight who has become lost while hunting. He serves the man, killing two attackers. Thereupon, the extant text begins. A slightly more detailed summary is offered by Adams, p. 13. The passages in *Yder* that enable us to make this reconstruction are v. 909 ff. and 1754-1832.

(9) The messenger angrily responds, "Si de cel estes desdisanz, / Li desdiz est de ça plus granz / Ke de premiers diz vos desdites" (v. 111-113).

(10) That we are meant to compare and contrast these two sequences cannot be in doubt. And there is even more. The first episode immediately followed Yder's disappointment and bitterness at being forgotten by Arthur. The second sequence is followed by another scene in which Yder considers himself mistreated and abandoned. In that one, Gauvain and Yvain, who are now Yder's friends, decide to join Talac but to leave Yder behind, because he was recently wounded, and they think him unable to ride and do battle. Yder, who considers himself entirely healed, is distraught and angry. Feeling more than a little self-pity, he laments his lot, considering himself dishonored and doubting the loyalty and friendship of the two other knights (v. 3521-3543). And, as he had done when he thought himself mistreated by Arthur, he leaves court.
These sequences, though separated by over 3000 lines, are connected by symmetrical form, commonality of theme, and the reactions of both Arthur and Yder, the former appearing to value personal honor or fame over feudal obligations, the latter concerned with his status and easily offended when he thinks himself slighted. Yder laments, concerning Gauvain in particular, that "Es granz bosoins vait sanz moi" (v. 3527). He adds (in quite an impressive diatribe) :

Deus, o trovera l'om mes foi ?
Il n'en est mes point com mei semble ;
Il e sire Ywain ensemble,
Compaignons estions ensemble,
Il e sire Ywains e joen ;
Itant avoie de mon boen,
Non de mon boen, mes de confort.
Mult one eu vers moi grant tort.
Ore en vont mi dui compaignon,
Ne me dient ou ne non ;
Vis m'est que nostre compaignie
Que prise estoit par foi plevie
Define en vilanie parclose.
Ne me prisent guers de chose,
N'ont de ma compaignie cure » (v. 3528-42).

The narrator then explains that Gauvain, "out of loyal love" ("odfeelamor", v. 3548) wanted Yder to be able to rest and recover from his wound.

(11) As noted, even if we choose to assume that Arthur's jealousy led him to wish for Yder's death – and I do not think it goes quite so far – at other times Arthur is fond of the hero and delighted at his successes. We cannot therefore make the argument that Arthur tolerates Kei's treachery merely because Kei was carrying out the king's wishes. Instead, Arthur seems almost indifferent to what is occurring around him.