WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE: STRUCTURE AND FANTASTIC IN SELECTED 12TH- AND 13TH-CENTURY FRENCH NARRATIVES

by

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This study examines six texts of the 12th and 13th centuries for the fantastic mode. It first refutes the critical assertion that the fantastic could not exist in medieval literature, but also establishes that most of the casually denominated “fantastic” is not. For the genuine fantastic, both in general and in its medieval appearances, questions of reality are at most peripheral. Rather the fantastic mode encodes itself in the narrative structure, creating ambiguity and openness. The structural approach frees the discussion of the fantastic from theories predicated upon issues of thematics, reality-based analysis, and didactic categorizations of supernatural objects.

The first two chapters synthesize those elements from modern works of fantastic theory, (re)defining the fantastic based upon a semiotic approach. The introduction concentrates on the need to reexamine the corpus of critical works addressing the fantastic. Chapter 1 summarizes the theoretical discussion in order to adjust the definition of “fantastic” as a critical term according to a more pre-Renaissance view of reality. Chapter 2 proposes the parallel worlds model as a structural model for the identification of the fantastic mode in texts where the supernatural is evident, with an emphasis on fantastic space as an intermediary locale between worlds. The last four chapters apply the parallel worlds model to a selected corpus of six narratives. While the structures of these texts vary in length, the fantastic is consistently manifested in a pattern that alternates between the real world, fantastic space and the otherworld. The open-ended structure of five narratives indicates that journeys to the
otherworld are rarely accomplished with a high degree of completion, and therefore the narrative program remains incomplete.

The conclusion is a defense of the fantastic within medieval French literature, concentrating on how the supernatural creates /otherness/, fantastic space and openness in the narrative program. The fantastic as a powerful but elusive force within Old French romance narratives often shifts to the merveilleux in the end. The parallel worlds model, when used in conjunction with other theories for identifying the fantastic, is a structural method that emphasizes openness as a characteristic of the fantastic within medieval romance narratives.
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Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

Colossians 3:23
Introduction

For the past several decades, the number and diversity of critical works devoted to the study of the fantastic in the western literary tradition have steadily increased. In the 40's and early 50's, beginning with Howard Lovecraft and Pierre-Georges Castex, critics began to gather together collections of fantastic texts from the 19th century and later. Research focusing on the fantastic was generally limited to a thematic discussion which concentrated on cataloguing a wide array of supernatural elements within literature. Few ventured beyond a superficial examination of their source material, preferring to categorize texts into subgenres and variants. With the publication of *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* in 1970, Tzvetan Todorov changed the direction of research into theories of the fantastic by moving away from the thematic and instead focusing his attention upon the structural elements of fantastic literature.

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Subsequently, many critics have taken up the subject of fantastic theory and built upon the seminal work of Todorov by expanding the definition of what constitutes fantastic literature to include such diverse viewpoints as the fantastic as a mode rather than a genre, the fantastic as a manifestation of social disorder, and the fantastic as a reflection of the author’s desire to project his own role as textual creator onto the reader. While some critics have examined the “medieval” nature of 19th- and 20th-century fantastic literature, few have actually applied fantastic theories to the narrative works of medieval authors. However, I believe that the impact of fantastic themes, elements, and motifs on medieval narratives and their structure should not be overlooked.

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4 Each of these questions is discussed in detail in Chapter 1, “Defining the Fantastic.”


6 For an example, see Dubost, *op. cit.*
It is worthwhile to begin this investigation by noting that while the concept of *merveilleux* is well-established in French medieval literature, it is not a parallel to, nor a replacement for, the fantastic. Often, the two terms are treated as synonyms with “fantastic” and “*merveilleux*” both indicating the presence of the supernatural. In discussing the *matière de Bretagne*, Joseph Bédier implied that there is a qualitative degree of similarity between the fantastic and the *merveilleux*. “Il est assuré que les Bretons ont donné aux Français le goût d’un certain *fantastique*, d’un certain *merveilleux*.” But there is a basic underlying difference between the two. With the *merveilleux*, there is no attempt to hide the supernatural. With the fantastic, on the contrary, there is a necessary illusion of reality on the surface that belies the supernatural nature of people, places, and events.

A medievalist can easily dismiss out of hand the notion of the fantastic, believing that “fantastic” as a critical term has no relevance to the study of medieval literature. Indeed, Zumthor, in his *Essai de poétique médiévale*, warned against the tendency to interpret the fantastic nature of medieval literature as “notre fantastique.” A medievalist, upon pursuing

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7 In this dissertation, I use the following terms interchangeably: reality, mimesis, natural and étrange all refer to the real world; supernatural, *merveilleux*, unnatural and unreal all refer to the otherworld; otherness and alterity refer to the fantastic.


this question, will be assured that the fantastic did not and could not exist before the 19th century. William Irwin emphatically states that “in no significant sense does fantasy have a history.”\textsuperscript{10} Rosemary Jackson implicitly requires an industrial society as a necessary foundation, providing a cultural framework for the production of fantasy.\textsuperscript{11} Each of these three critics limits the scope of the fantastic to the literary corpus of the last two centuries.

Opposing the opinions of Zumthor, Irwin, and Jackson, several recent critics have come out in favor of applying fantastic theory to medieval literature. Marcel Schneider, in compiling his \textit{Histoire de la littérature fantastique en France}, begins by examining several works from the 12th through 15th centuries.\textsuperscript{12} Francis Dubost, in \textit{Aspects fantastiques de la littérature narrative médiévale}, begins his study of the fantastic by examining works that go as far back as St. Augustine.\textsuperscript{13} He has extensively discussed what constitutes the fantastic as opposed to the \textit{merveilleux} in medieval literature. He points out in his introduction, “L'\'idée que dans l'immense domaine du merveilleux médiéval existaient quelques îlots fantastiques a commencé

\begin{enumerate}
\item Irwin, \textit{The Game}..., 10. For a detailed discussion of fantasy and the fantastic, see section 1.1.2.1 of this dissertation.
\item Jackson, \textit{Fantasy}..., 26.
\item Among the texts Schneider examines are \textit{Le Chevalier de la charrette} and \textit{Le Conte du graal} by Chrétien de Troyes. He also discusses \textit{Le Roman d'Alexandre}, the \textit{Lais} of Marie de France, \textit{Amadas et Ydoine}, \textit{Le Jeu de la feuillée}, \textit{Le Paradis de la reine Sibylle}, and \textit{Le Livre de la fontaine périlleuse}. Schneider, \textit{Histoire}..., 15–44.
\item Dubost, \textit{Aspects fantastiques}..., 31.
\end{enumerate}
à prendre corps. [...] Les années 70 ont marqué un tournant dans l'étude de l'imaginaire médiéval. Des médiévistes comme Charles Brucker, Robert Deschaux, Laurence Harf-Lancner, Philippe Ménard, Danielle Régnier-Bohler, Joël Grisward, et j'en oublie certainement, accueillent volontiers la notion de ‘fantastique’,"14 acknowledging a shift in the critical debate away from Zumthor’s position and towards a more open approach to the question. Dubost asserts that fantastic and merveilleux are in direct opposition in a narrative. The former embodies the concept of disorder or chaos while the latter represents an alternate system or world view with its own internal unity.15 The real world is defined as a physically possible world, one that “has the same natural laws as does the actual world.”16 The otherworld, in contrast, is a physically impossible world and is based on Celtic tradition as opposed to a purely spiritual otherworld or Christian concepts of the afterlife. According to Celtic mythology, the otherworld exists neither above nor below reality, but parallel to it.17 This parallel world has its own laws of time, logic, and social behavior yet does not directly control the human world. Often the laws of the otherworld are such that they create a

14 ibid., 3, 5.

15 ibid., 126–128.

16 Raymond Bradley and Norman Swartz, Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979) 6.

supernatural aura associated with the characters from this parallel realm. The keystone of the fantastic is thus the opposition between the physically possible and the supernatural worlds. The presence of the fantastic is signaled by the conflict between the real and supernatural worlds resulting in chaos. The \textit{étrange} results when the hero chooses reality. The \textit{merveilleux} is produced by choosing in favor of the supernatural.

To what degree, then, can one apply the methods and definitions of critics who examine modern fantastic texts to the works of medieval authors? Certainly the tendency to adopt the assumptions and circumstances of one body of literature and apply them to another, unrelated literary period is to be studiously avoided. However, the basic question of what differentiates reality from the supernatural remains and is not limited to the last two centuries.\textsuperscript{18} Inasmuch as that differentiation is addressed specifically by fantastic theory, then a valid theory of the fantastic should rightly be able to speak to the particular conditions of any given literary period. In this dissertation, those conditions of production concern medieval literature in

which the real and the supernatural are often in opposition to each other. In section 2.1 “The One-to-Many Model of Mimesis and the Fantastic,” I propose an approach to accounting for the variety of supernatural elements found in medieval literature, rather than a simple inverse relationship between reality and the supernatural. The way in which the conflicting forces of mimesis and anti-mimesis are treated in literary production makes it possible to examine the fantastic and its influences upon the composition of medieval narratives. For, if one adopts the basic premise of earlier critical examinations of the fantastic, then the juncture where the representations of the real world (mimesis) and the supernatural otherworld (anti-mimesis) meet creates an intermediary space in which the fantastic may be said to exist. Or, as Todorov explains it, the fantastic is born of the conflict created when the real world and the otherworld come into contact.  

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Introduction

Goals

The purpose of the present study is to examine the fantastic—its related theories, the application of those theories to a selected corpus of 12th- and 13th-century French narrative literature, and the validity of developing a structural model for the fantastic based on those medieval narratives. I look at the way in which the fantastic acts as an organizing principle within the narrative and the development of the fantastic in relation to the structure. Does the role of the fantastic remain stable over time or does it shift as authors become more adept at integrating the otherworld into reality within their texts?

This dissertation does not examine the conte fantastique21 but rather the fantastic as a mode22 coexisting with mimesis.23 The fantastic is not addressed as a genre24 or even a sub-


22 Gerald Prince defines “mode” according to Frye’s five types. “A fictional world considered from the point of view of the hero’s power of action in relation to human beings and to their environment.” Gerald Prince, A Dictionary of Narratology (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987) 54. Nancy Trail writes, “The concept of mode permits a crossgeneric and transhistorical approach to the fantastic, helping us to decide how one fantastic narrative differs from, or resembles, another.” Trail, “Fictional Worlds...,” 199.

23 For a discussion of the fantastic as a mode in relationship to mimesis, see Hume, Fantasy and Mimesis..., 20. Roland Barthes, writing about the relationship between mimesis and meaning, explains the basic flaw in the mimetic view of narrative: “Ainsi, dans tout récit, l’imitation reste contingente ; la fonction du récit n’est pas de « représenter », elle est de constituer un spectacle qui nous reste encore très énigmatique, mais qui ne
genre of medieval literature. This dissertation does not attempt to prove that medieval people would have perceived any of the texts I examine herein as “fantastic.” I seek rather to bring the literature of the past into the present by applying contemporary academic knowledge to the past. Therefore I propose to examine the relationship between the fantastic mode and the structure of medieval narrative texts through the application of modern literary theory.

The goal of Chapters 1 and 2 is to establish a critical framework for examining the fantastic within medieval literature. To that end, Chapter 1, “Defining the Fantastic,” synthesizes those elements from contemporary fantastic theory which are not period-specific in order to generate an encompassing theory of the fantastic, defined herein as a mode of literary expression that affects the structure and means of producing a text. In Chapter 2, “A Structural Model for the Fantastic,” I propose that an examination of the structure of

saurait être d’ordre mimétique ; la « réalité » d’une séquence n’est pas dans la suite « naturelle » des actions qui la composent, mais dans la logique qui s’y expose, s’y risque et s’y satisfait... Le récit ne fait pas voir, il n’imite pas ; la passion qui peut nous enflammer à la lecture d’un roman n’est pas celle d’une « vision » (en fait, nous ne « voyons » rien), c’est celle du sens, c’est-à-dire d’un ordre supérieur de la relation, qui possède, lui aussi, ses émotions, ses espoirs, ses menaces, ses triomphes...” Roland Barthes, L’Aventure sémiologique (Paris: Seuil, 1985) 206.

24 I agree with Northrop Frye’s definition of genre. Frye defines “genre” according to the means of presentation chosen by the author to communicate with his audience. “The basis of generic distinctions in literature appears to be the radical of presentation. Words may be acted out in front of a spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener; they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader. [...] in the sense that the genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public.” There are three basic genres identified by Frye: drama, epic and lyric. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957) 246–47.
narratives can show how an ambiguous resolution (a lack of the anticipated “happy ending”), or sometimes no resolution at all, reinforces the sense of uncertainty\textsuperscript{25} and hesitation\textsuperscript{26} commonly associated with fantastic texts. This “open-ended” structure enhances the quality of the text by furnishing it with any number of possible outcomes. I also present a definition for fantastic space as a means of identifying the passage ways to the otherworld and to show how those locations provide a source of counterpoise to the mimetic in a text. By defining fantastic space, it is possible to develop a pattern by which to recognize that a particular character has left his own world for the supernatural otherworld. This also allows the establishment of a zone where the fantastic resides. Such a region is found somewhere between the real and supernatural worlds.

The purpose of Chapters 3 through 6 is to present a selection of six narratives from the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries, examine their structures, account for the presence of fantastic elements in light of the preceding theoretical discussion, and to conclude to what degree the structure of the text supports a fantastic interpretation of the narrative. The premise of this inquiry into the relationship between narrative structure and fantastic theory is a view of the fantastic not as a genre, but as a mode employed throughout the narrative.

\textsuperscript{25} See Bessière, \textit{Le Récit fantastique...}, \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{26} See Todorov, \textit{Introduction...}, \textit{passim}. 
Literary Corpus

The scope of this study is limited to the discussion of the fantastic and narrative structure in two romances of Chrétien de Troyes, a pair of *lais*, and pertinent episodes from two other romance narratives. Each of the primary texts was chosen on the basis of several criteria. Foremost, the presence of the otherworld is a key element to the study of the fantastic.27 Another factor related to the otherworld is the semblance of an inexplicable or paradoxical situation created by the interaction of real and otherworldly characters.28 Fear, as experienced by a character or the implied reader, is frequently singled out in studies of the fantastic as a defining element of fantastic literature, but I believe it is not necessarily a mandatory feature. Rather, the inexplicable may evoke fear, but it also frequently evokes curiosity. In each of the six texts I have chosen to examine, the above elements are all present on a thematic level. Many of the critics I cite in Chapter 1 have addressed the thematic aspects of the fantastic at length. I will concentrate on the structure of the narratives as an additional (and complementary) way of assessing the fantastic within medieval narratives.

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27 The presence of the otherworld as a central motif critical to theories of the fantastic is discussed in Chapter 1, "Defining the Fantastic."

28 The paradoxical or inexplicable situation is discussed in section 1.4.2, "The Fantastic as a Paradox" and in Chapter 2, "A Structural Model for the Fantastic."
I start with an inquiry into the structure of *Le Conte du graal*.29 As the protagonist, Perceval is discussed in light of his paradoxical nature. The fantastic mode is revealed through the ability of various characters to communicate with each other about the supernatural. When faced with an ambiguous situation, Perceval’s response or lack thereof determines whether he proceeds or is subverted in his three goals—knighthood, reunion with his mother and knowledge of the Grail. Chapter 4 examines *Le Chevalier de la charrette*,30 where Lancelot travels between Logres and Gorre. While journeying in search of the queen, Lancelot makes choices that reveal the fantastic mode in the *Charrette* as an elusive and transitory state. In other words, Lancelot’s actions within and reactions to the otherworld are indications that the fantastic mode is operating within the narrative. Chapter 5 addresses the fantastic mode within two anonymous *lais* from the collection published by Prudence Mary O’Hara Tobin.31 The *lai* of *Guingamor* presents a journey, where the young knight enters the otherworld yet consistently ignores the supernatural implications of his adventure. I also examine *Graelent* for evidence of the fantastic by comparing and contrasting its narrative program and structure.


to that of *Lanval* and *Guingamor*. Chapter 6 accounts for two narratives which contain fantastic episodes and yet are primarily mimetic texts. Specific portions of *Amadas et Ydoine* and *L’Atre périlleux* are analyzed, which highlight the reactions of the characters and reflect the attitudes of those characters towards the supernatural. The changing nature of the fantastic mode from the 12th century to the 13th century will be seen in the treatment of the otherworld adventure which, I believe, evolves from a fundamental element of the text to a purely optional episode within highly mimetic texts.

**Critical sources**

The primary critical sources I use as a basis of fantastic theory are Todorov's *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Francis Dubost's *Aspects fantastiques de la littérature narrative médiévale* and Umberto Eco’s *The Open Work*. Studies by Kathryn Hume, Rosemary


35 Todorov, *Introduction*...

36 Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques*...


38 Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*...
Jackson, Jean Molino and Marcel Schneider contribute to the development of a comprehensive fantastic theory that is independent of a particular period of literature. The discussion of these critical works investigates the link between the presence of the fantastic as a mode and the structure of narration.

I begin with Todorov because he, more than any other, is responsible for bringing a literary theory of the fantastic into the realm of credibility. Francis Dubost is an important source as well, having contributed the first major work exclusively devoted to the examination of the fantastic aspects of medieval French literature. Approaching the topic from a thematic point of view, Dubost examines various aspects of medieval composition which furnish the source material for the fantastic literature of later literary periods. Umberto Eco presents a persuasive argument that a work can be viewed as an open text encoded with multiple possible meanings. Marcel Schneider, in *Histoire de la littérature fantastique en France*, addresses the historic perspective of fantastic literature, encompassing texts from the 12th century.

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39 Jackson, *Fantasy...*


41 Schneider, *Histoire...*

42 Narrative structure is defined as “the network of relations obtaining between the various constituents of a whole as well as between each constituent and the whole.” Prince, *Dictionary ...,* 93. Prince bases his definition on the work of Greimas and Courtés, “The Cognitive Dimension of Narrative Discourse,” *New Literary History* 7 (1976): 433–47.
through the 20th century. Kathryn Hume regards the fantastic as having an equal impetus to that of mimesis in producing fictional narratives. Rosemary Jackson discusses the social implications of the fantastic as a subversive force within literature. Each of these critics’ works are discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, “Defining the Fantastic” and “A Structural Model for the Fantastic.”

Methodology

The primary methodological approach of this dissertation is the structural analysis of medieval narratives. I choose the structural method43 because of its ability to quantify the openness44 of a narrative on the basis of conflicts and their resolution. The structuralist method has been developed by such critics as Propp, Todorov and Greimas.45 Their theories generally claim to be applicable to most narrative works, and they address issues central to this dissertation, such as the structure of relations (through antagonism and rivalry) between the various characters (the subject and other actants), narrative closure as realized by the

43 Appendix A contains a general overview of the structural method of analyzing texts, followed by a table of basic symbols used in the equations.

44 The concept of “openness” based on the research of Umberto Eco is discussed at length in Chapter 2. As a quality of a narrative, openness is provisionally defined by Eco as a work that is susceptible to “…countless different interpretations…” Eco, The Open Work..., 4.

satisfaction of desire, and the social implications of desire (specifically when that desire is fulfilled or denied). Although the specifics of each critic's application differ, they all agree that narratives are generally expressed by means of a finite narrative code—a process characterized by the insistent, paradoxical interplay between the uniformity of the system and the variety of its specific manifestations.46

According to Greimas, each narration is composed of a number of narrative units. Each narrative unit represents a disjunctive situation which must be resolved. In a similar fashion, Umberto Eco describes a narrative according to a process of moving from a situation to its resolution. "... [G]iven a situation S₁ and a situation S₂ which represents the solution of S₁ (its terminus ad quern) what we call 'process' is the transition from the first situation to the second—a transition during which S₁, structurally incomplete and ambiguous, gradually finds a definition and a solution as S₂."47 Clearly, according to this definition, the plot moves closer to the final resolution as each subsequent situation is resolved. When a conflict remains unresolved, there is a question in the mind of the reader as to what the outcome could have been. The greater the degree of questioning, the more openness a story has. By utilizing a

46 Todorov, *Introduction*..., 11, 26–27. See also Propp's contrast of the amazing multiformity of the Russian folk tale with its striking uniformity and repetition, which produces "... le double aspect du conte merveilleux : d'une part, son extraordinaire diversité, son pittoresque haut en couleur, et d'autre part, son uniformité non moins extraordinaire, sa monotonie." Propp, *op. cit.*, 30.

47 Eco, *The Open Work*..., 74–75.
formal method for quantifying the structure of a text, I will be able to show which narrative conflicts are resolved and which ones remain unresolved, or open. Also, the use of equations to outline the structure of a work, according to a method established by Greimas, Eco, and Courtés, provides a uniform way to compare divergent narrative types to each other.

I will argue that the presence of the fantastic mode in these six medieval narratives influences their structure, which in turn strengthens and sustains a fantastic interpretation of their narrative program and the ambiguity within them. The question therefore is based on the symbiotic relationship between the two: that is, the fantastic mode cannot exist without a narrative structure that supports the inherent ambiguity of the events narrated. The fantastic is most apparent within a narrative where the resolution offers at best conflicting interpretations but is most often inconclusive, lacking a clear explanation of the intrigue. One may consider that the presence of the fantastic mode in medieval narratives has created a unique literature that cannot be readily compared with the literary production of subsequent social periods.

The scientific approach of the structuralists and the deep penetration into a text (espoused by post-structural critics such as Lacan) complement each other in the search for textual meaning. The structuralist method provides a way to systematically categorize the elements of a text and how they are combined. This inventory provides a rational basis for measuring the effectiveness of a text to follow or subvert the narrative program. For a detailed analysis, see Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction, Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 22–30.

Narrative program refers to “a syntagm at the level of narrative surface structure representing a change of state effected by an actor and affecting another (or the same) actor.” Prince, *Dictionary...*, 62. For a further discussion of the narrative program, see Appendix A.
(most notably the Renaissance). It becomes necessary to examine modern theories of the fantastic in order to develop a synthesis of ideas to support the fantastic as a mode within medieval romances. Based on the epistemological question of uncertainty, the fantastic narrative in the six texts I examine follows a line proceeding, in simplified terms, from the étrange (in which an answer of some sort, either rational or irrational, is provided) through the "pure" fantastic (in which the question of uncertainty becomes itself the answer) to the merveilleux (in which the question in fact disappears from the realm of representation).
1. *Defining the Fantastic*

An examination of the current state of critical theory addressing the fantastic can establish a clear foundation from which to begin an analysis of the fantastic elements of medieval narrative literature and their influence upon the structure of narratives. In this chapter, I review and analyze critical definitions of the fantastic and then evaluate the relationship of the fantastic to the *merveilleux* and the *étrange.* Because of the fantastic’s contrast to the mimetic mode, I also look at the role of mimesis in literature. Finally I discuss the distinction between the *merveilleux* and the fantastic within medieval texts.

1.1. *The Fantastic as a Critical Term*

Historically, “fantastic” has meant many different things. In Greek, the term *φανταστικός* indicates a “product of the imagination.” But in Latin, the adjective *phantasticus* means “imaginary” and the noun form *phantasia* denotes that which is made visible or visionary.1

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1 I am using Todorov’s terminology, as these are the accepted critical terms. For more information and a definition of *étrange* and *merveilleux*, see section 1.2.1.


What started out as a product of the mind has been transformed into something visible before the eyes, much like a hallucination. In Old French, the term *fantasie* means a vision or imagination. It still refers to illusions and enchantment but now also encompasses product of imagination, bringing about a merging of the original Greek and Latin terminology. In the recent past, the fantastic was often associated with hallucinations, dream-like trances, and overactive imaginations.

Defining the fantastic from a critical point of view is much more problematic. In the past thirty years those who have been engaged in the discourse of the fantastic have been aware of a lack of common theoretical ground, failing to agree on whether the fantastic is a genre, a sub-genre, a mode, or an attitude towards reality. Todorov classifies it a genre by situating it as an intermediary stage between the two more established genres of the *étrange* and the *merveilleux*.

Irwin writes that the fantastic is a “violation of what is generally accepted as possibility.” Thus the fantastic is seen as taking what is considered impossible and turning it

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5 Todorov, *Introduction...*, 47.

6 Irwin, *The Game...*, x.
into verifiable reality.7 Louis Vax, in *L’Art et la littérature fantastiques*, despair of defining fantasy formally, and settles for a definition based on subject matter.8 According to Vax, fantasy is that literature which deals with the supernatural motifs of werewolves, vampires, portions of the human body which become detached and autonomously active, personality troubles (especially of an extravagantly sexual sort), the invisible, human degeneration, and changes in causality, space, and time. Later, in *La Séduction de l’étrange*, Vax moves away from thematic considerations of what is fantastic and settles for a more modal definition: the fantastic is "une manière de sentir."9 Richard Alewyn speaks of the fantastic as the "Altersneurose der Aufklärung."10 Taking a broader view, Jean Bellemin-Noël sees it as a form or an aesthetic mode, but also calls it a narrative technique and a manner of telling stories.11 Irène Bessière states that the fantastic is "l’expérience imaginaire des limites de la

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7 "Fantasy is that kind of extended narrative which establishes and develops an antifact, that is, plays the game of the impossible ..." *ibid.*, ix.


10 Richard Alewyn, *Probleme und Gestalten* (Frankfurt: Insel-Verlag, 1974) 355. See especially his chapter “Die Lust an der Angst,” 307–30, which discusses the role of desire turned to fear as a key to defining the fantastic.

11 Jean Bellemin-Noël, “Notes sur le fantastique (textes de Théophile Gautier)” *Littérature*, 8 (Dec. 1972) 3, 4, 7, 19. “A manner of telling stories” is very close to being a mode according to one of the definitions of “mode” supplied by Prince. “Showing and telling are two different modes.” Prince, *Dictionary*..., 54.
raison.”  Jean Baronian believes that it is not related to actions: “Le fantastique, à la vérité, est plus un état d’âme, un état de coeur qu’un état de fait.”  Tobin Siebers writes that the fantastic moves toward the supernatural and away from the everyday: “Fantastic literature enshrines differences, highlighting those aspects of experience that venture beyond the strictly human toward a supernatural realm.”  He also emphasizes the exclusionary nature of the fantastic.  Charles Grivel categorizes the fantastic as that which is invisible and yet seen.  Francis Dubost writes that the fantastic in the Middle Ages is a “forme de l’imaginaire dont l’expression littéraire relève d’une esthétique de la peur…”  Given such a wide variety of opinions and definitions, the lack of agreement becomes evident. The fantastic remains open to critical investigation as to its exact form and function in literature.


15 “Moreover, the idea of exclusion serves the critic of fantastic literature particularly well because fantastic stories often reproduce exclusionary gestures. Even at its most superficial level, fantastic literature refers to ideas and characters existing outside of natural laws.” *ibid.*, 27.


17 Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques* ..., 9. (Emphasis in the original.)
A notable issue remaining to be resolved for fantastic theory is the need to clarify the critical terminology, when so often "fantasy" and "fantastic" are taken to mean the same thing. Rosemary Jackson and Kathryn Hume, to name only two, use the terms "fantasy" and "fantastic" interchangeably throughout their writings. Is the similarity in terms between fantasy and fantastic compelling enough to warrant a casual interchange? Theorists who use the two as a noun/adjective pair have been criticized by Neil Cornwell for being imprecise and misleading.

In 20th-century terms, "fantasy" literature is frequently grouped together with science fiction rather than with the gothic or grotesque common to 19th-century fantastic literature. When applied to medieval narratives where there is no distinction between "fantastic" and "fantasy" literature, as defined within the context of his reproach, Cornwell's point becomes moot. The modern concept of "fantasy" (which generally refers to a narrative

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19 "It may well be apparent by now that a certain inconsistency, not to say confusion, exists in the application hitherto of the expressions 'the fantastic', 'fantastic' (as an adjective) and 'fantasy'." "Jackson and Hume are more problematical and require a slightly more detailed examination." "More culpable perhaps in this regard is Jackson. ... More seriously misleading – or perhaps misled – with regard to precision in this question is Hume." Neil Cornwell, "Critical Approaches to the Literary Fantastic: Definitions, Genre, Import," *Essays in Poetics: The Journal of the British Neo-Formalist School* 13.1 (1986): 19, 20, 21.
which takes place solely in another world) is more readily associated with the critical term \textit{merveilleux}.\textsuperscript{20}

1.2. Theories of the Fantastic

The term fantastic has often been used in a variety of ways to discuss everything from the supernatural to the sensational. Critical theories related to the fantastic abound and often are in conflict. In this section, I examine several of the prevalent theories of the fantastic, beginning with Tzvetan Todorov. Recent critics have raised the critical discourse concerning the fantastic to new heights, preferring to view it as a mode, which I discuss as well. I also examine the role of the reader in identifying the fantastic according to the theories put forth in several well-known works.

1.2.1. Todorov’s Fantastic

Todorov was the first who wrote about the fantastic as a unique movement within the larger body of narrative literature. He laid the groundwork for most modern critics who address the fantastic. Since any kind of literature can be most adequately defined by comparing it with other forms, it is useful to position the fantastic within the context of a larger organization, and briefly consider some of its neighboring literary manifestations.

\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{merveilleux} is discussed in detail in section 1.4 of this chapter, “The \textit{Merveilleux} in Relation to the Fantastic.”
Todorov situated the fantastic in relation to two frequently used terms: the *étrange* and the *merveilleux*. For Todorov, *étrange* refers to mysterious occurrences that have natural causes, and yet are disquieting. I note without completely endorsing Todorov’s critical definition of the *étrange*: “Dans les œuvres qui appartiennent à ce genre, on relate des événements qui peuvent parfaitement s’expliquer par les lois de la raison, mais qui sont, d’une manière ou d’une autre, incroyables, extraordinaires, choquants, singuliers, inquiétants, insolites...” 21 Todorov associates *merveilleux* with the supernatural, fairy tales, and inexplicable events:

> “Dans le cas du merveilleux, les éléments surnaturels ne provoquent aucune réaction particulière ni chez les personnages, ni chez le lecteur implicite. ... On lie généralement le genre du merveilleux à celui du conte de fées ... le merveilleux pur, qui ne s’explique d’aucune manière.” 22

According to Todorov, the *étrange* is associated with a mimetic attempt to explain unusual phenomena, whereas the *merveilleux* is governed by its own laws of plausibility and makes no attempt to explain the supernatural phenomena. There is an accepted harmony within the supernatural world characteristic of the *merveilleux*, whereas the *étrange* excludes supernatural events.


22 *ibid.*, 59, 62.
Todorov’s approach suffers from a few self-imposed limitations. First, of course, Todorov is primarily discussing the fantastic as a genre, but he is trying to establish both the nature of the fantastic part or mood of the better-known “fantasy” novel and the nature of the fantastic novel qua fantastic novel. As Robert Scholes says in his “Forward” to Todorov’s The Fantastic, “Todorov ... seeks to examine both generic theory and a particular genre, moving back and forth between a poetics of the fantastic itself and a metapoetics or theory of theorizing.” Todorov’s theory of the fantastic is formed on features which are not consistent among a majority of works that can be deemed fantastic (such as depending solely on the supernatural); and ignores features which are common among other fantastic works (such as the “otherworld” element, first discussed by Tolkein and more recently developed by T. E. Little in his “Towards a Definition of Fantasy”). Nonetheless, Todorov makes major contributions to the theory of the fantastic. His discussion of a tension caused by a reader’s inability to decide between two incompatible explanations is a compelling description of the effects of the fantastic. A reader must receive a sense of a mood, a sense that the text calls either for the literary approximation of fear, confusion, or ambiguity, or else for reasonable


detachment. One should be able to identify elements in the text that suggest or require particular responses among a range of readers.

Prior to Todorov, critics such as Howard Lovecraft, Roger Caillois, and Louis Vax\textsuperscript{26} ignored the categories of traditional literary genres and attempted (often successfully) to carve out a separate, isolated category for fantastic literature. Rather than examining the fantastic within the whole of the literary tradition, they chose to limit the fantastic to a narrowly-defined movement in 19\textsuperscript{th}-century literature—grouping together texts which often defy traditional categorization by virtue of the inclusion of grotesque, magical, horrific, or scientifically impossible motifs. These earlier studies, as Todorov observed,\textsuperscript{27} simply drew up lists of supernatural elements. But the categories inherited from these past critics no longer seem to fit the needs of a new generation of critics who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. More recent critics (including, Rosemary Jackson, Kathryn Hume, and Jean Molino) have continued Todorov’s work by going beyond the mere categorization of texts, focusing instead on the way the fantastic text compares to and fits into the mainstream of Western literature. They have examined the way in which the structures, themes, and social contexts of narration are influenced by the inclusion of fantastic episodes. These critics view the fantastic as a

\textsuperscript{26} Lovecraft, \textit{Supernatural Horror}...; Caillois, \textit{Anthologie}...; Vax, \textit{L'Art}...

\textsuperscript{27} Todorov, \textit{Introduction}..., 102.
Defining the Fantastic

necessary counterbalance to the mimetic mode, and therefore the fantastic is able to transcend traditional genres, becoming a mode within (rather than a sub-category of) literature.

An additional issue is the degree to which the mimetic and the fantastic modes work together in the production of narrative texts. Todorov made a considerable effort to explain what constitutes the fantastic before he moved on to a discussion of how the fantastic is not mimetic. Some critics, notably Jackson and Hume, identify the fantastic as anti-mimetic, that is "unreal." But defining the fantastic as "not mimesis" does not explain what it is. Such a definition merely places us within a frame of reference to begin exploring the fantastic as it relates to mimesis.

1.2.2. Rosemary Jackson and the Fantastic as Social Repression

Rosemary Jackson attempts to go beyond Todorov’s definition of the fantastic by examining the fantastic as a subversive force undermining society and as a means for dealing

28 "The fantastic is predicated on the category of the ‘real’, and it introduces areas which can be conceptualized only by negative terms... It is this negative relationality which constitutes the meaning of the modern fantastic.” Jackson, Fantasy..., 26. (Emphasis in the original.)

29 “I am saying that most literature includes fantastic elements, even as it includes mimesis.” Hume, op. cit., 22.
with that which has been repressed and therefore is unable to be expressed. Jackson emphasizes the societal framework and ideological aspects of the fantastic, which she considers to be a mode, in the production of literature. According to Jackson, readers are forced to reconsider all that they perceive as “normal” in a new and somewhat disturbing way. When calling the fantastic “a literature of subversion” she implies that the fantastic is a cultural phenomenon and intrinsically linked to the precepts of the society that produced it. In other words, the bonds of social interaction are reflected within fantastic literature and debated upon via its production. By concentrating on the social backdrop of the fantastic, Jackson intrinsically links (and therefore limits) the fantastic to a time and society which could have produced the proper climate for the fantastic, namely the 19th and 20th centuries.

30 “Structured upon contradiction and ambivalence, the fantastic traces in that which cannot be said, that which evades articulation or that which is represented as ‘untrue’ and ‘unreal’.” Jackson, Fantasy..., 37.

31 “…fantasy is a literary mode from which a number of related genres emerge.” ibid., 7.

32 ibid., 1. Referred to also in the book’s subtitle.

33 “Like any other text, literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context. Though it might struggle against the limits of this context, often being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it. [...] fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss.” ibid., 3.
For Rosemary Jackson, "the issue of the narrative's internal reality is always relevant to the fantastic, with the result that the 'real' is a notion which is under constant interrogation." Therefore, a reexamination of critical presuppositions and ways of representing reality is essential to a thorough discussion of the fantastic. Accordingly, reality provides the only theoretical framework by which the fantastic is judged. To define the fantastic would be to confine it to the realm of the real world. Jackson states, "Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real, but does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real. The fantastic cannot exist independently of that 'real' world which it seems to find so frustratingly finite." Thus has the discourse on the fantastic been "framed" within the discourse of reality.

A somewhat self-evident and yet even more complex problem is that everyone seems to know what the fantastic is on a surface level, but at a deeper critical level to state that the fantastic is the equivalent of "unreal", as Jackson does, lacks the precision necessary for a serious discussion. There are many "unreal" aspects of a given story that could be seen as merveilleux rather than fantastic. The details of how and to what degree the fantastic in

34 ibid., 36.

35 ibid., 20.

medieval literature would have been perceived as non-mimetic are indeterminable. In the first place, we do not know what real thing (real in the author’s or audience’s opinions) an author might have been imitating: a report? a picture? an idea? In a Neo-Platonic culture an idea might have been more “real” than a physical object, so that if the idea of a dragon is “real,” and “fantastic” means “unreal,” then a dragon in literature cannot be fantastic in the sense of “unrealistic.” And the medieval author may well have thought that dragons existed in nature, or had at one time existed in nature, so that it was an imitation of what he or she believed to be reality. We can speculate; we can establish probability; but we cannot be sure enough to say, on the basis of some definitive mimetic reality, “this feature is fantastic, in some critical sense of the term” and “this feature is realistic, from a medieval viewpoint.” Again the material leads to a conceptual dead-end when approached from a thematic methodology. It is necessary therefore to establish a clearer definition for “fantastic” as a critical term (compared to étrange and merveilleux) before examining any particular fantastic elements found in medieval narrative literature. The distinctions between the fantastic, the étrange, and the merveilleux are discussed in more depth later in section 1.4 of this dissertation.

1.2.3. Kathryn Hume and the Fantastic as Altered Reality

A long tradition of marginalizing the fantastic in literature exists, as Kathryn Hume shows in her study, *Fantasy and Mimesis.* Due to the prevalence of mimetic traditions in literature,
it is customary to dismiss fantasy and fantastic elements in narratives as unworthy of academic attention. There is a need to apologize for the fantastic, or condemn it out of hand, a need that presents fantasy literature as free-floating escapism, child-like, and full of wonder. I believe this attitude has been primarily caused by a tendency to treat the themes and motifs of the fantastic as a *de facto* definition, rather than by looking at the structure of narrative texts for a more formalized approach to the question of what constitutes the fantastic.

Hume proposes that literature is caught up in the dilemma of the desire to imitate reality versus the need to alter that reality. The fantastic, when contrasted to mimesis in literature, would present an alternate view of the world. (I however propose in Chapter 2 that it is not just an alternate view but indeed an alternate world.) Mimesis confirms conventional views of the world, whereas the fantastic implicitly denies them. Hume uses as one of her critical

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39 Jackson, *op. cit.*, 1.


41 “It is truer to literary practice to admit that fantasy is not a separate or indeed a separable strain, but rather an impulse as significant as the mimetic impulse, and to recognize that both are involved in the creation of most literature.” Hume defines fantasy as “the deliberate departure from the limits of what is usually accepted as real and normal.” Hume, *op. cit.*, xii.
foundations the writings of Erich Auerbach, who has demonstrated the breadth of possibilities in representing reality. The variety of different assumptions and selections that goes into the creative process of writing reveals that the pursuit of mimesis is most often a reflection of the author's cultural background. Hume agrees with Eco, who writes, “In every century, the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality.”

Hume’s work examines a very important aspect of the fantastic, namely its opposition to accepted reality, yet her definition is far too simplistic to account for the complexity of situations found in many texts containing fantastic elements. She establishes a one-to-one corollary for the fantastic and mimesis. In other words, there is a single standard of reality placed in opposition to a single concept of what is supernatural. She employs terms such as “consensus reality,” relying primarily on 19th-century examples to support her opinions. This type of model restricts the fantastic to an inverse relationship of “real vs. unreal.” But to give

42 Auerbach devoted much of his intellectual effort to exploring the nature of representation in the late antique, medieval, and early modern periods; he conceived of mimesis primarily as a formal function of the literary work. Auerbach thought of literature as a kind of representation that actualized phenomenal reality by means of language. Thus he could argue that the basic goal of Homeric style was “to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their parts, and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relations.” Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) 6.

the fantastic an equal position with mimesis seems to be an unbalanced approach. Even a
cursory survey shows us that the vast majority of Western literature supports the mimetic
view. But I believe there are sufficient examples of departures from mimesis to warrant a
deeper examination. To state simply that the fantastic is the absence of mimesis however is
incredibly appealing because, to the average reader, the absence of mimesis is a primary tool
for the initial identification of the fantastic.

1.2.4. Jean Molino and Fantastic Models

Jean Molino finds Todorov’s definition of the fantastic unsatisfactory. He criticizes
Todorov’s definition of the fantastic as a type of hesitation because it constitutes a
psychological definition. Confining the fantastic to the notion of hesitation excludes all
structural analysis because the hesitation only lasts for a moment. Finally Molino rejects
Todorov’s premise because hesitation represents only a partial definition, ignoring other
manifestations of the fantastic, such as fear or a sense of strangeness. “Enfin, la définition, loin
d’être « structurale », n’est qu’une définition partielle: l’hésitation n’est qu’un des modes, une
des formes que prend le fantastique, ...”44 Molino asserts that a structural analysis of a
fantastic narrative is impossible if one uses the criteria presented by Todorov.45 In Chapter 2, I


45 “L’ensemble ne constitue pas une analyse structurale, et encore moins une analyse
scientifique. Une analyse structurale est-elle donc impossible ? Certainement, si on entend
la faire selon les principes posés par T. Todorov.” Molino, art. cit., 25.
present a structural model for the fantastic, where hesitation is only one of the symptoms of the fantastic mode rather than a de facto definition. By removing hesitation from the center of the fantastic to its periphery, the discussion is broadened to include other aspects of the fantastic. Aspects such as deception, alienation, and fear are evaluated along side of hesitation rather than being subordinate to it.

If it is possible to acknowledge the fantastic as a mode (instead of as a genre as Todorov did46), then one is freed from the constraints of a narrowly-defined corpus. Accepting the fantastic as a mode solves one of the three problems identified above by allowing for the inclusion of mimetic works (which also contain some degree of fantastic elements) that would otherwise be excluded from a genre-based approach to the fantastic.47 I acknowledge their view of the fantastic as a mode and it is in this sense that the term “fantastic” will be used

46 "Il paraît se placer plutôt à la limite de deux genres, le merveilleux et l'étrange, qu'être un genre autonome. ... Mais, d'abord, rien ne nous empêche de considérer le fantastique précisément comme un genre toujours évanescent." Todorov, Introduction..., 46, 47. See page 24 of this dissertation.

47 Nancy Trail is concerned “with the literary fantastic, but the broader aesthetic view lends support to a basic contention: the fantastic is constituted by the confrontation and interplay within the fictional world of two alethically contrastive domains, the supernatural and the natural. For this reason, the literary fantastic is not a genre in its own right: it cuts across established genres, surfacing as short story, drama, novel, epos, ballad, and so on. It appears as well in such different period styles as romanticism, realism, and surrealism, to name only three.” Nancy Trail, “Fictional Worlds...,” 197. (Emphasis is mine.)
henceforth. I therefore put aside any attempt to create a “fantastic genre” for medieval literature.

1.2.5. Dubost and the Fantastic in Medieval Texts

Francis Dubost provides the first major work devoted to the examination of fantastic aspects within medieval French literature. He examines various facets of medieval composition which form the thematic foundation of fantastic literature that is manifested much later in the Western literary tradition. He proposes to trace the roots of fantastic literature back to the Middle Ages. He chooses this more “archaeological” approach in order to better acquaint himself with the traditions that inspired the writers of the 19th century:

“Observer d’une manière plus precise les premières manifestations littéraires de l’imaginaire noir, les décrire ensuite dans la perspective d’une archéologie du fantastique pour interroger les réseaux qui structurent en profondeur ces matériaux, tel est le triple cheminement que l’on se propose de suivre ici.”

Dubost does not claim that there is a fantastic trend in medieval literature, per se. Instead, he states that medieval texts are the source from which future authors will draw thematic inspiration. He concludes that while there is much that is merveilleux in medieval literature, the pure fantastic is difficult to find and occurs as a transient state rather than as an on-going condition. “Réduit à sa plus simple expression dans la question de fiance, [le

48 Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 2.
Defining the Fantastic

fantastique médiéval] ne dure que le temps exigé pour l'identification de la merveille.” In other words, the characters in medieval compositions hesitate less and more freely accept the inexplicable events they find themselves in than those in 19th-century fantastic narratives. According to Dubost’s evaluation of the fantastic, hesitation occurs more as an afterthought than as a primary condition: it is a questioning of the fantastic experience based on a post-event self-examination by the protagonist.

The Queste del Saint Graal and the Perlesvaus are examined by Dubost in detail with a special emphasis on the significance of disorder caused by the fantastic, the need to re-establish order, and the refutation of that imposed (and therefore unnatural) order. He proposes three distinct categories of “fantastic disorder” in medieval literature: “le fantastique d’intimidation; le fantastique obsidional;” and “le fantastique essentiel.” Dubost concludes

49 ibid., 808. (Emphasis in the original.)

50 For example, Le Diable Amoureux (Jacques Cazotte), Aurélie (Gérard de Nerval) and La Vénus d’Ille (Prosper Mérimée) have been identified as fantastic texts by Todorov in Introduction..., passim.

51 Dubost states that these three forms of fantastic are based on the subversion of language by the various agents of the other world (for example, the demon in the Queste del Saint Graal). “La parole falsifiée” establishes a perverted sense of virtue whereby the character, here Gauvain, is led into a situation that suddenly reverses itself into a subversion of its previous semblance of reality. ibid., 803-806.
that, for medieval literature, to impose an order just for order's sake is to violate the spirit of a
time when people were more ready to accept the inexplicable.

Dubost catalogues in detail the themes and motifs of medieval literature that distinguish
the boundaries between the real world and the otherworld. By establishing the differences
between the real world and otherworld, Dubost delineates where the fantastic is most likely to
occur. Dubost therefore agrees with Todorov\textsuperscript{52} that the fantastic is a catalyst that creates a
frontier between two opposing world orders—reality (obedience to the known laws of nature)
and the supernatural (subversion of the known laws of nature). Dubost postulates the
existence of an atmosphere of fear through the textual inclusion of specific physical locations
and descriptions; namely, the forest, crossroads, islands, and isolated castles. Of special note
are "espaces morts et espaces des morts"\textsuperscript{53} such as cemeteries, which force characters to face
the ultimate unknown—death. Dubost espouses the concept of \textit{altérité}\textsuperscript{54} as a medieval
construct used in composition upon which future authors may draw. This \textit{altérité}
encompasses the thematic category of the chance encounter with animals or people who are

\textsuperscript{52} See section 1.2.1 for a discussion of Todorov’s definition of the fantastic.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, 390 ff.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, 426 ff.
not of this world and who cannot be classified according to the known laws of nature; included are fairies, giants, dragons, monsters, and other bestiary phenomena.

Dubost’s emphasis on the thematic is also evident in his study of the fantastic in Yvain.55 Beginning his discussion with Calogrenant’s tale, Dubost examines the narrative direction in Yvain as leading from the merveilleux to the fantastic by virtue of a transformation of the hero’s relationship with the supernatural.56 The temporal and spatial axes of the ailleurs and the autrefois, through references to Brocéliande and the court of Arthur, cause a double displacement in Calogrenant’s tale which acts as a prologue to Yvain’s adventure. However the parallel assertion that the story is true belies its merveilleux nature and sets up paradoxical conditions that lead Dubost to classify this narrative as fantastic.

One of Dubost’s critical statements of the distinction between reality and the merveilleux actually emphasizes the ambiguity in what is perhaps the most important aspect of Yvain’s adventures. Dubost states, “Le statut de la merveille se situe alors en un lieu incertain, quelque


56 “Avec Le Chevalier au Lion, Chrétien transforme les thèmes et structures qu’il emprunte au merveilleux traditionnel jusqu’à les déconstruire subtilement. En plaçant la merveille à distance critique, il renverse le rapport que l’homme entretenait avec le surnaturel tout en développant une interrogation sur l’étrangeté de l’Autre, selon un cheminement qui nous conduira du merveilleux vers l’imaginaire fantastique.” Francis Dubost, art. cit., 48. (Emphasis in the original.)
part entre vérité et mensonge” (49–50). If by “vérité” Dubost refers to a measurable quality of reality and by “mensonge” the negation of that reality, then I disagree that it is the merveilleux which resides between the two extremes. Rather, I believe that the fantastic may quite possibly be found in the uncertainty created by the confusion between truth and lies. In the adventure of the fountain, what is key to Yvain’s experiences is not truth versus lies, but that the truth is superseded by a new standard. The confusion that Yvain encounters between Arthur’s court and Laudine’s kingdom is embodied in the torrential storm of the fountain (and reoccurs later in the narrative as madness). This episode guides Yvain into a new existence, where his purpose as a member of Arthur’s court is still valid but must be balanced with his new duties as the defender of the fountain. So the question of “vérité” versus “mensonge” is actually incidental to the true meaning of the fountain adventure and to the story as a whole. As a standard for determining the fantastic in Yvain, Dubost’s clear-cut distinction between truth and lies is too inflexible to prove fruitful. 57 The fantastic could be more appropriately viewed as the indeterminate standards of confusion and deception.

In another article, “Yonec, le vengeur, et Tydorel, le veilleur,” 58 Dubost makes a clearer distinction between the fantastic and the merveilleux when examining two lais. Yonec, by

57 This lack of a deeper basis for the fantastic is why I have not included Yvain as a part of the corpus for this dissertation.

Marie de France, contains much that is supernatural and therefore *merveilleux*. According to Dubost, there is a parallel emphasis on the *merveilleux féerique* and the *merveilleux chrétien*:

"... l'alliance du merveilleux féerique et du merveilleux chrétien s'est nouée pour faire échec aux lois et aux pouvoirs qui structurent le monde féodal ..." (453). *Tydorel*, an anonymous *lai*, also contains supernatural motifs, but the Christian aspects are totally lacking, indeed God is not even mentioned. For this tale, ambiguity is the hallmark of the fantastic according to Dubost. "Dès lors, c'est tout le système de représentation qui se trouve marqué négativement et orienté vers une ambiguïté fantastique que la comparaison avec la transparence merveilleuse du lai d'Yonec permettra de mettre en évidence."59 Dubost cites the anonymity of the knight, his white horse, and his aquatic realm as proofs of his ambiguous nature and progeny.60

Tydorel's lack of sleep is also proof that his father was of a supernatural lineage. All of these proofs are *merveilleux* in nature. But Dubost fails to mention the most significant (in my opinion) ambiguity in the text: Tydorel disappears into the lake and the reader never finds out if he reaches his father's kingdom. The ending of this *lai* is ambiguous on a structural level, and it is this level of analysis that I will address in Chapter 6. The presence of what Dubost considers to be fantastic elements are restricted to a thematic discussion and do not in my opinion constitute a fantastic structure.

59 In this article, Dubost emphasizes that which was lacking in his earlier study of *Yvain*. Namely, that the fantastic is an elusive and transitory state somewhere between reality and the supernatural. *ibid.*, 454.

60 *ibid.*, 455–459.
1.2.6. The Fantastic and the Implied Reader

In order to progress beyond the concept of the fantastic as a purely thematic category, it is necessary to examine the way in which the fantastic influences the acceptance or rejection of supernatural events in the text (both internally by characters and externally by readers). From Vax's point of view, the fantastic can be seen as permeating the entire history of literary and artistic production, a position that is not held by all critics. According to Vax, the fantastic cannot be judged or understood, but rather must be accepted as a phenomenon perceived by the senses and experienced much as the tragic or comic modes are accepted.

Vax's concept of modes reflects what Todorov calls the levels of reading, where the reader must reject a certain type of interpretation and instead accept the fantastic at face value, a type of "willing suspension of disbelief." Todorov's approach implies that, from a critical stance, one should be able to identify elements within the text that provoke a response

61 The opinion that the fantastic can be found in the literature of any given period is a position that is developed in great depth by Kathryn Hume in Fantasy and Mimesis.

62 Vax, La séduction ..., 19.

63 Todorov, Introduction..., 38.

64 Coleridge proposes the "suspension of disbelief" as the definition of "poetic faith," a type of causeway that leads us from one secure island of faith to another. Samuel T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, chap. 14, I. A. Richards, ed., The Portable Coleridge (New York: Viking, 1950).
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in most readers. The fantastic therefore would rely on the ability of the critic to first identify those elements in the text that the author has chosen as departures from consensus reality and secondly to analyze how the reception of those elements affects the act of reading. However, Todorov deliberately avoids the tendency of directly linking the fantastic in literature to the reader’s response, especially a response of fear.

Todorov addresses the issue of the reader response theory by proposing an implied reader. He states that an implied reader, without a pre-existing familiarity with the location where the fantastic events take place, has no reason to call into question the events as narrated. For both the medieval and modern reader, the lack of familiarity with the Celtic otherworld is a common factor. The use of mimesis establishes an immediate link with the empirical reality familiar to its readers. The fantastic severs that link by undermining natural laws. Wolfgang Iser theorizes that when readers are forced to take an active role in the formulation of meaning for a given text, they are acknowledging a basic divergence from the familiar that is woven into the text. “This active participation is fundamental to the novel; the title of the present collection sums it up with the term ‘implied reader’. This term incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader’s actualization of this

65 In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I examine the frontiers and boundaries of the otherworld in order to define fantastic space.

potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process—which will vary historically from one age to another—and not to a typology of possible readers.”67 Iser refers to the discovery by the reader of the author’s “prestructuring” as an ongoing process that is not linked historically to any particular audience. This active process is pursued by the reader as an attempt to (re)discover the author’s encoded meaning. The author and the reader work in conjunction to produce meaning. Therefore according to Iser, it is not necessary for an implied reader to be a part of the author’s original intended audience, but rather what is necessary is a reader who can actively decode the authors prestructured meaning.68 It is in this sense that I use the term “reader” to encompass both medieval and modern audiences.

With the fantastic mode, there is a deliberate ambiguity in the details of the supernatural events. This allows the reader a certain amount of liberty (as well as uncertainty) in the interpretation of the story. This uncertainty often engenders a sense of dreaming or of being caught in a soporific state where distinguishing between reality and the supernatural is at best difficult.69 In spite of Todorov’s statement that it is not possible to define the fantastic in terms


68 “The fact that completely different readers can be differently affected by the ‘reality’ of a particular text is ample evidence of the degree to which literary texts transform reading into a creative process that is far above mere perception of what is written.” ibid., 279.

69 “I would emphasize that, even though the dream had become by the Middle Ages a topos backed by a long learned tradition, recourse to the dream or the vision opens wide the gates to the flood of the popular imagination. Monastic phantasms are situated at the
of its opposition to the faithful reproduction of reality, the very tension which provokes hesitation is the ambiguity between a supernatural event and reality. If a literary work truly exhibits the fantastic mode, then we should find on various levels consequences of that ambiguous perception by the reader which characterizes the fantastic.

1.2.7. Fear as a Reader’s Response

Subsequent to Vax’s *La Séduction de l’étrange*, many other critics, notably, Caillois and Penzoldt, have cited evocation of fear in the reader as a significant indicator of the fantastic in a text. In other words, the reader enters into the story by vicariously experiencing fear and crossroads of this popular oneirism and the visionary apocalyptic tradition. Dreams, which can hardly be controlled by the Church, unfold freely in the imaginary universe of the beyond.” Jacques Le Goff, “Journeys in the Otherworld,” *Understanding popular culture*. ed. Steven L. Kaplan (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984) 31.

70 “Ainsi, il n’est pas possible de définir le fantastique comme opposé à la reproduction fidèle de la réalité, au naturalisme.” Todorov, *op. cit.*, 40–41.


72 Peter Penzoldt, throughout *The Supernatural in Fiction*, tends to take the Jungian view by reducing the archetypal themes and motifs found in fantastic literature to the level of the collective unconsciousness of social humanity trying to re-exert itself into everyday reality. That is, when presented with the fantastic in a story, a contemporary person is disturbed to find a certain amount of familiarity with the alterity of the subject presented, and is thus perversely attracted to the fantastic events being described. Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965).
confusion as he identifies more and more closely with the circumstances and experiences of the protagonist. Todorov states quite emphatically his position concerning this aspect of reader reaction: "Il est surprenant de trouver, aujourd'hui encore, de tels jugements sous la plume de critiques sérieux. ... La peur est souvent liée au fantastique mais elle n'en est pas une condition nécessaire." There is, however, an increasingly popular argument for including the reader's response in the critical discussion of fantastic narratives. For example, Charles Grivel offers continued support for the tradition of "universal fear" as the primary indicator of the fantastic. There is a widely accepted tendency to view literature as a work of art disassociated from the period in which it was created. However, a story can be viewed as a product of its time, and still be able to stand on its own merits, independent from its author and its historic moment of creation.

73 Todorov, *op. cit.*, 40.


75 "Modern criticism's increasing emphasis on narratology, theories of signs and meaning, the rhetorical nature of the literary text and its readiness to produce multiple and incompatible meanings, and especially the reader's contribution to the formation of these meanings has largely influenced the revival of the fantastic. [...] Indeed, the relative freedom of the fantastic from the constraints of verisimilitude has pushed "the suspension of disbelief" advocated by Coleridge to new extremes, thus allowing the fantastic story to encompass elements previously seen as disparate, heterogeneous, or even contradictory." Ora Avni, "Fantastic Tales," *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) 675.
In direct contrast to Todorov's definition of the fantastic, what is being put into question here is neither the character's reactions nor the narrator's commentary, but the reader's need to distinguish between what happened and what might have happened. At various moments, the narrative offers what appear to be two simultaneous stories: the supernatural and the mimetic. The reader participates in the narration by being forced to provide a reasonable explanation of the events narrated. There is a lack of narrative comment on the events being narrated. The tales become self-referential in their ability to mirror plot lines, characters, and probable interpretations, which allows the narrator to present a double view of the intrigue and expands the number of possible resolutions.

But the reader response approach raises an obvious, yet often ignored, question: How can a consistent, yet flexible definition of the fantastic be formulated which accommodates the diversity of texts that are considered to be fantastic? The reader's abilities should not be the determining factor in deciding whether or not the fantastic exists. Quite the contrary—the author should use the fantastic mode to affect the reader's ability to enter into the character's experiences. Clayton Koelb examines the issue of disbelief, the reader's and also the writer's. Concerning fantastic episodes and the reader's interpretation of them, he writes, "The reader cannot know with certainty how to 'explain' the events of the fiction."76 While a reader can participate in the fantastic by interacting with the narrative, only the author can incorporate

within a story the elements necessary to create the fantastic. Therefore, while the reader’s response to a narrative may be a symptom of or a reaction to the fantastic mode, one cannot rely on the reader as the sole defining standard for the fantastic.

There are three unresolved issues related to the usage of the word “fantastic” as a critical term: how to account for the presence of the fantastic in mimetic texts; the relationship of the fantastic to reality and the supernatural; and the confusion between the fantastic and the merveilleux. To gain a better perspective on the ambiguous nature of the fantastic, I now examine its neighboring categories: first mimesis and then the merveilleux.

1.3. Mimesis and the Fantastic

The problem of defining the fantastic as a critical term is complicated by the need to account for examples that exceed the accepted definition of the fantastic. How does one deal with fantastic episodes in minor works that are normally excluded from critical discussions of the fantastic? For example texts such as Amadas et Ydoine contain episodes which offer considerable possibilities for critical examination. Yet there remain to this day few serious

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77 Using the concepts of possible-worlds semantics, Nancy Trail uses a typology of modes of the fantastic based on two criteria: the interaction of two alethically contrastive domains, the supernatural and the natural, and the supernatural domain’s existential status, determined by authentication. Two questions are therefore addressed: how do we distinguish fantastic from non-fantastic texts (and by implication the episodic from the fully integrated), and how do we distinguish one fantastic text from another? Trail, “Fictional Worlds...,” 196–210.
discussions of this story and of other narratives which contain blatantly fantastic scenes. When dealing with a work that contains unrealistic elements, the tendency has been to apologize for or explain away anything that does not fit within the confines of acceptable, mimetic categories. Often the results of this apologetic stance are that many works which contain a few fantastic elements and episodes are excluded from consideration because they don't clearly fall within the accepted definition of the fantastic.

In the previous two sections, it was seen that most definitions for the fantastic revolve around a few common elements: the use of supernatural themes and motifs, the presence of contrasting world views, hesitation and the evocation of fear in the reader. Also, some theories combine the concepts of fantasy and the fantastic into the same definition. Another aspect of the debate surrounding mimesis presents itself in what Kathryn Hume defines as "consensus reality, the reality we depend on for everyday action." She suggests that in any historical period, most people would accept some things as real and reject others as unreal. How then does one determine what the consensus at any given time would have been? First of all, how can one know what a medieval author considered to be real? In an age when the natural world was to some degree viewed as a reflection of the spiritual, angels and demons would not have necessarily violated the accepted concept of reality. Or, for example, in a neo-Platonic culture, ideas may be seen as more real than physical objects. Plato and Aristotle

78 Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis...*, xi.
rejected non-mimetic literature, but what if they were wrong to assume that mimesis was the only approach to writing? For certainly not all writing can be categorized as strictly mimetic. Robert Scholes writes, "It is because reality cannot be recorded that realism is dead. All writing, all composition, is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poiesis."\(^7^9\) In this section I examine an additional dimension of fantastic theory, namely the contrast of the fantastic mode with the mimetic mode of discourse. First, I will briefly discuss the history of mimesis in order to have an understanding of why the fantastic has been traditionally marginalized or rejected outright.

1.3.1. Reality and Realism

Since the time of Aristotle and Plato,\(^8^0\) theory of the representation of reality, known as "mimesis," has shaped the way reality has been represented in literature. The saying "All art is but imitation of nature"\(^8^1\) is a well-known maxim. Mimesis is a long-standing tradition that the

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80 Plato, in the third book of the *Republic*, uses *mimésis* in the sense of impersonation (*Republic* 3. 392d and ff.); in the second book of the *Laws*, however, he mentions the theory that art is imitation as an obvious truth accepted by poet, actor, and audience alike (*Laws* 2. 668b-c). Aristotle agrees with Plato when he says that poetry is imitation (*Poetics* 1. 1447a). He states that this view can be taken for granted and made the basis for the differentiation of poetry into genres by the differences in the objects, means, and manner of their imitation.

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Medieval and Renaissance worlds were well acquainted with. For example, John of Salisbury, in Book 1, chapter 14 of the Metalogicon (1159), defines grammar as “an imitation of nature.” Accordingly any writing, by its nature, is assumed to be mimetic. Hermannus Alemannus, in 1256, translated Averroes of Cordoba’s commentary on Aristotle’s Poetics, thereby ensuring the mimetic a place in late medieval critical thought.

But literature has always been much more than a basic description of the world and its rules. Writers frequently make deliberate departures from describing the known world in the process of composing fiction. The definition of mimesis has been the subject of long-standing debates: Does it help to fix an image of objective reality in the mind of the reader to show how the physical substance of the world really is? Or does it rather demonstrate the performative role of artist and viewer, speaker and reader, in determining reality as a subjective experience of the world? And if mimesis is subjective, based on the author’s ability to communicate his experiences, how does one distinguish between the concrete facts of reality and the author’s opinions, impressions, and value judgments that create an atmosphere of realism?

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1.3.2. "Scientific" Reality

Fantastic theory often depends on a distinction between reality and the supernatural, yet without addressing (or even acknowledging) the problem of the amorphous nature, or changing definition, of the real, either assuming or stating—usually the former—a modern approach to perceiving reality, and a consensus in that perception. Lance Olsen calls this blind spot "the ethnocentric bias at the heart of most attempts to explain fantasy." As a result of equating reality with the scientifically verifiable, the supernatural consists of whatever is not scientifically verifiable, including the entire spiritual world—angels, demons and God. Sartre, for example, divides fantasy into two types: in any period in which religious faith was prominent, the fantastic was merely escapist or didactic—and hence trivial and unsuitable as literature; in a secular period however, the fantastic acquires a valuable social function and some concurrent literary status. Even a medievalist, Kathryn Hume, with an approach to the fantastic that should allow a focus on fantastic elements within works of medieval literature, reverts to modern assumptions and mainly modern examples in her practical applications.

How then can one establish a baseline for "reality" as experienced by the medieval audience? If Hume’s concept of “consensus reality” is applied to the 12th and 13th centuries, it


becomes necessary to examine what the medieval audience would have accepted as "real" and how they viewed their world. In modern terms, reality is based on scientifically identifiable phenomena that form and inform the world view as rational. Day-to-day reality is based on a causal logic, where for every event there is an identifiable action that produced the observed results. In spite of recent efforts, modern science does not begin to address the sum of reality. In the cultural milieu of the Middle Ages, both the logical and the irrational are attributed to the work of the same divine author. Therefore, it becomes necessary to investigate the way in which reality is interpreted.

As Irène Bessière has pointed out, the definition of reality for any given period is a byproduct of cultural and social circumstances. Reality is composed of people, nature, the world, objects, causes and effects. Yet it is the representation of those elements and the values placed upon them that defines reality for a given culture. This type of values-based idealism forms the framework for realism in the Middle Ages. The most revealing texts of the 12th century would allow the definition of the supernatural to be considered as a manifestation of the reality of the period.

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87 "Now, a too systematic idealism (this is what realism meant in the Middle Ages) gives a certain rigidity to the conception of the world." Huizinga, *The Waning...*, 195.
and 13th centuries for defining reality are quasi-scientific treatises such as *L’Image du monde*. At the most mundane level, the purpose of such encyclopedic works is to associate the name of an object with its physical description. This implies that all things can be catalogued and described with words, in other words to represent reality through a text. But these didactic texts are often based on oral descriptions, as the writer may have never seen what is being described. Therefore the implicit contract between writer and reader is that the words are a faithful reproduction of reality. If the writer has not seen first-hand the majority of these objects, then it is highly possible that his descriptions will contain distortions. Dubost describes this phenomenon as follows:

> “A ces données purement livresques s’ajoutent souvent des éléments fabuleux incorporés à la masse des connaissances et confondus avec elles, des informations rapportées par des voyageurs avec toutes les déformations que l’on peut imaginer, ainsi qu’un ensemble de croyances dont il est difficile de préciser l’origine. C’est dire que la représentation du réel est rarement le fruit de l’observation ou de l’expérience, mais le résultat de toute une série de réfractions idéologiques et de contaminations accidentelles.”

This “data collecting” about the real world often produces results that are subtle and yet have a profound impact on medieval societal views of the world. What the medieval audience relies on for scientific truth is in all likelihood a deformed version of reality.

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89 Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques...*, 169.
1.3.3. Reality and Bretagne

Another approach to defining reality is to examine the text's content for internal standards. The use of Bretagne as a primary setting for narrative fiction is a well-established motif for 12th- and 13th-century authors. Bretagne is both vague and precise: it refers to areas in France and Great Britain as well as the legendary realm where Celtic tales are situated. The matière de Bretagne produces texts in which encounters with the otherworld are high-frequency events. The use of such Celtic settings provides a mildly familiar background for supernatural activity: a character from another world enters the Celtic world and interacts with the protagonist. Many authors, such as Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, use Bretagne as the locale from which the main character travels to another world or realm where the supernatural events may occur. Therefore, I define the real world as the literary Bretagne, the standard by which reality and truth are measured in medieval romance texts of the 12th and 13th centuries.

1.4. The Merveilleux in Relation to the Fantastic

A story may contain elements that are merveilleux by virtue of exotic details; supernatural objects, animals, or people; or by the inclusion of devices that were undeveloped at the time the story was written. Most frequently, critics avoid the issues surrounding supernatural elements in medieval literature by labeling monsters, fairies, and unrealistic objects as merveilleux without a pause in the scholarly debate at hand. But can one really place such diverse elements in medieval literature as the fairy lover in Lanval or the marvelous horse in Doon in the same category as the cemetery in L'Atre périlleux or the dark knight in Amadas
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*et Ydoine?* The first two are positive, non-threatening examples of the supernatural; the latter two evoke a sense of fear. What popularly distinguishes the fantastic from the *merveilleux* is a sense of fear and estrangement when one is confronted by the supernatural. Therefore, if one were to accept fear as the primary criterion for the fantastic, the latter two examples would be fantastic, while the first two would fall into the *merveilleux* category.\(^{90}\) According to Todorov, a narrative that is presented as fantastic and by its end turns into the *merveilleux* is the closest to the pure fantastic\(^ {91}\) in that the boundary between the two is always ambiguous yet still allows readers to decide for themselves. Therefore a reexamination of the first two examples, *Lanval* and *Doon*, may show that the fantastic is initially present and is transformed into the *merveilleux* by the end of the story.

1.4.1. *Alternate Order and Chaos*

Dubost distinguishes between the *merveilleux* and the fantastic based on the way the text initially treats the supernatural elements: “Du point de vue structurel, l’opposition principale entre récit merveilleux et récit fantastique, tient à la *position originale* que chacune de ces formes narratives attribue au surnaturel dans la syntaxe du récit.”\(^ {92}\) Dubost relies on the

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\(^{90}\) These narratives are examined in greater detail in Chapters 3–6 of this dissertation.

\(^{91}\) Todorov, *Introduction*, 57.

\(^{92}\) Dubost, *op. cit.*, 130. (Emphasis in the original.)
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paradigmatic nature of the text to reveal the *merveilleux*, while the actantial sequences are revealed by the presence of the supernatural. The fantastic arises when the hero or another character, in confronting the supernatural, must of necessity question the narrator's version of the story.\textsuperscript{93} Dubost agrees with Roger Caillois who, writing about fairy tales, asserts that the *merveilleux* constitutes a world where magic and enchantments are the rule, rather than the exception. Supernatural events neither shock nor produce fear: the supernatural is the reigning order.\textsuperscript{94} To the contrary, the fantastic ignores all the rules and is "une agression interdite, menaçante, qui brise la stabilité d'un monde dont les lois étaient jusqu'alors tenues pour rigoureuses et immuables."\textsuperscript{95} The fantastic does not produce an alternate order, but instead results in apparent chaos, a negation of established order.

1.4.2. The Fantastic as a Paradox

If the text initially treats the supernatural elements as a contradiction to established order, then it may be seen as a paradox. Charles Grivel uses the term *orthodoxe merveille* in his discussion of the paradoxical nature of a supernatural episode in narratives: "Ainsi,

\textsuperscript{93} ibid., 131.

\textsuperscript{94} "Le féerique est un univers merveilleux qui s'ajoute au monde réel sans lui porter atteinte ni en détruire la cohérence. Le fantastique, au contraire, manifeste un scandale, une déchirure, une irruption insolite presque insupportable dans le monde réel..." Caillois, *Au coeur*..., 8.

\textsuperscript{95} ibid., 9.
paradoxalement — mais c'est un paradoxe simple ! —, l'impossibilité même de ce qui m'arrive dans le conte en démontre la solvabilité. [...] Quelle chance d'avoir un imaginaire complice, même le pire est serviable !’’

For Roger Caillois, the relationship between fantastic and merveilleux is also based on a paradox where the supernatural found in myths and fairy tales is no longer acceptable, yet cannot be dismissed. While myths codify and uphold social values, the fantastic, as Jackson points out, subverts social order. When common sense and the supernatural are in conflict, the fantastic is present.

Paradoxical situations are also indicative of an unresolved conflict in the narrative plan. The presence of a paradoxical situation (often embodied in a particular character) engenders structural openness in the narrative. For example, ambiguity, fear and hesitation all work against the obtainment of a clear and definitive answer to resolve the conflict. In a fantastic adventure, the deferment or the prolonging of the conflict creates a sense of disorder surrounding the paradoxical element. While the paradox creates chaos, it also highlights the lack of a real-world solution, giving the person or events associated with the paradox a sense

96 Grivel, Fantastique-Fiction..., 237. (Emphasis in the original.)

97 “Le fantastique suppose la solidité du monde réel, mais pour mieux la ravager.” Caillois, Images, images..., 19.

98 “Undoing the unifying structures and significations upon which social order depends, fantasy functions to subvert and undermine cultural stability.” Jackson, Fantasy..., 69.
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of otherness. Resolving the paradox dispels the ambiguity and otherness while also bringing closure to the narrative. Until the paradox is resolved or made to fit into the real world’s ordering principles, that portion of the narrative structure lacks closure. Therefore as long as the paradox remains, the fantastic persists.

It has been shown that the terms merveilleux and fantastic denote two separate, yet inextricably entwined, concepts in literature. The critics I discussed above agree that the merveilleux represents an alternate world view, with its own integrity and internal system of laws. The fantastic subverts and undermines the laws of both the real and supernatural worlds by presenting the conflict between the two worlds.

1.5. A Typology of the Fantastic

The fantastic, despite critical assertions that it could not exist before the 19th century, is alive and well in French literature of the medieval period—but not exactly where or how one might expect. The medieval penchant for preserving information, even questionable information, has contributed to a modern sense that medieval opinions about the real world cannot be trusted: we might feel that distinctions in medieval literature between reality and the supernatural are either obscure or irrelevant, and conclude that the fantastic is impossible to discern. Reserving judgment, however, does not imply lack of judgment, and a taste for the sensational is not an exclusively modern phenomenon. The medieval mind was at least as complex and varied as the modern mind, which is reflected in the literature it produced.
The most obvious difficulty with previous critical approaches to the fantastic in medieval literature is that the treatment of odd or unusual circumstances, strange events, and disturbing characters has become a *de facto* definition for the fantastic of any given period, and, for medieval literature, the motifs associated with the unusual and supernatural have already been relegated to the realm of fairy tales or the *merveilleux*. Problems arise when such a focus forces the inclusion of mimetic reality within the definitions of "fantastic" so that the varied degrees of unreality are misconstrued as being part and parcel of the truly supernatural. In other words, there is a tendency to ignore the mildly disturbing as part of the otherworld without distinguishing degrees of nuances leading from the scientifically verifiable to the blatantly supernatural. Critics such as Todorov and Jackson have been content to dismiss the literature of the medieval period as unsuitable for the fantastic due to their unwillingness to view the question from a more ontologically-based point of view.

Rather than worry about whether a character or object is or was perceived as “real”, one can focus on textual evidence for structural openness, ambiguity, and the deliberate inclusion of multiple encoded resolutions. Such an approach lets us take seriously the material which medieval French literature takes seriously, providing a way to respect the integrity of the text. It also permits discriminating among various potentially fantastic episodes in a text, particularly by providing a way of accounting for a difference in the effect that such superficially similar episodes have. If one were to place all the unrealistic elements together, with lack of realism as the common denominator, an effective approach for accounting for noticeable differences in literary impact would be missed. If instead the question of reality is
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put aside as a peripheral issue, then it is possible to approach the text with a view to
determining the ways in which the author has provided for us as readers to comprehend the
various structures and messages of the text. When one looks at theories of the fantastic, there
is agreement that a lack of realism, although the definitive feature of the fantastic in a popular
sense, is both too ontologically problematic to be useful and insufficient to explain the
different effects the fantastic has on readers.

Although some theories focus on the lack of realism as a critical benchmark, most focus
instead on conflicts, ambiguities, and tensions inherent in fantastic texts. The fantastic mode
does not result from a lack of realism, but conceptual ambiguity (a blending of borders and
boundaries that denies or defies an orderly, hierarchical understanding of the world). As a
mode, the fantastic presents a continuum of expression within the text rather than being an
identifiable element connected to themes, genres, or motifs. There are many themes that are
symptomatic of the fantastic mode, such as fear, hesitation, and uncertainty. The fantastic is a
mode of writing that destabilizes the semantics of language. That destabilization occurs on a
semiotic level, where the use of language that is subversive undermines the reader’s ability to
believe what is being recounted. If one were to examine the text and its context for semiotic
evidence of language and for structural deviations, then it would be possible to escape the

99 Semiotics, according to A. J. Greimas, describes the elementary structure of signification
and is logically represented in the three relationships of contradiction, contrariety, and
complementarity as formalized by the semiotic square (shown in Appendix A of this
dissertation).
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need to determine what was “real” for a remote period. The lack of reality becomes peripheral to the fantastic. The “unreal” is particularly misleading for medieval literature, where the merveilleux maintains such a prominent tradition. The presence of merveilleux is also misleading in that the fantastic is most likely to transform into the merveilleux in narratives from subsequent centuries.100

From the preceding discussion of the critics quoted, I arrive at a thematic definition of the fantastic that contains three features: the presence of a supernatural world, ambiguity, and fear. I accept these definitions as valid on a thematic level. However, it should be possible to discover an element common to all these conditions within fantastic texts—a definition of the fantastic that arises from the structure of a text rather than relying on thematic details. The presence of the supernatural world is the prerequisite element from which a structural model may be derived. For without the supernatural world, there is no cause for fear and hesitation. The interaction of two opposing worlds—real and supernatural—reveals a common narrative program beneath which an underlying structural model may exist. This study so far has concentrated on the theoretical questions surrounding the fantastic and will now turn to the task of extracting the consistent structural features which make a fantastic interpretation possible.

100 For example, by the 13th century, the various Grail texts present the story of Perceval’s adventure as a mystical experience, discarding all of the ambiguity of Chrétien’s original tale for the symbolism of divine mysteries.
2. *A Structural Model for the Fantastic*

In order to establish a more stable foundation for the study of the fantastic, I propose that an examination of the underlying structure of narratives is necessary. In this chapter, I quantify the need for a one-to-many model by presenting "otherness" as an organizing principle as a means to account for the variety of supernatural events in medieval texts. Then I summarize some of the most popular models for the fantastic. I present an additional criterion for the identification of the fantastic within a text, namely that the narrative presents a number of plausible and implausible resolutions without choosing between them—in other words, the structure of the narrative is open-ended and lacks the characteristic "happy ending" associated with fairy tales.¹ I also propose a new model for the fantastic which allows for a more encompassing view of the interaction between the real and supernatural worlds, namely that the worlds create overlapping spheres of authority rather than merely being in a tangential relationship to one another.

¹ Edmund Little writes, "The happy ending is not a descriptive feature of many fantasy worlds and should hardly be made prescriptive." Little, "Towards a Definition of Fantasy...," 67.
2.1. **Otherness—an Organizing Principle**

In the previous examination of critical theories related to the fantastic, it was shown that the fantastic has been most commonly associated with three characteristics: the presence of a supernatural otherworld, ambiguity, and the evocation of fear in a character or the implied reader when confronted with the otherworld. Critics, most notably Kathryn Hume, have also contrasted the fantastic with mimesis, where the presence of the "unreal" is indicative of a fantastic episode. But these descriptions of the fantastic have proven only partially satisfactory as a basis for examining the function of the fantastic within narratives. These definitions are based on an examination of what the fantastic is not—it is not "real." The negative aesthetics of such approaches confine the fantastic to being neither the subject nor the object, but the lacunae in a text. The development of a more inclusive model for the fantastic is necessary.

When one speaks of the supernatural, many images come to mind—primarily images of strange places populated by unusual people, where extraordinary events dominate the experience of characters creating a sense of "otherness." Obviously otherness takes many different forms in 12th- and 13th-century romance literature. Otherness provokes reactions such as fear, hesitation, confusion, ambiguity and lack of direction. Rather than grant undue significance to any one of these types of otherness, one must begin by recognizing otherness as a minimal unit of signification susceptible of identification according to specific criteria. In terms of the following model, otherness is characterized by the condition of "Appearing + Not Real," or "Delusion." The normal differentiation between what appears real and what is not real becomes blurred. We see that otherness results from a confusion between True and False,
in that the two categories overlap. This model is articulated in terms of the opposition between reality and mere appearances:

![Figure 2.1—Organizing model for /otherness/](image)

We now have a *classemé*\(^2\) called /otherness/, illustrated in Figure 2.1, which we may use as a means of identifying systems of signs in 12\(^{th}\)- and 13\(^{th}\)-century romance narratives that use the same basic signifying configuration to organize specific varieties of /otherness/. Hesitation, ambiguity, and fear now become just two of many possible symptoms of the fantastic, rather than its definition. It is no longer possible to distinguish surface appearances from inner reality: What appears true may not be real. The deceptive nature of /otherness/ causes a misinterpretation of signs, and language itself becomes the deceiver.\(^3\) Whether in the real world or the otherworld, the hero no longer has a firm basis upon which to judge his experiences. The objective is to identify as many types of /otherness/ in a variety of texts as possible.

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\(^2\) "In Greimasian terminology, a contextual seme as opposed to a nuclear or basic one; a seme educed by the context in which it recurs." Prince, *Dictionary...,* 13.

possible by showing that their uniquely intricate structures are founded by the same uniform configuration of /otherness/. While medieval readers were more willing than their modern counterparts to accept the existence of the merveilleux, the acceptance of /otherness/ does not necessarily reduce its contrast to reality. Therefore, I believe that the presence of the unreal in a medieval narrative is not satisfactory as the sole standard for the fantastic.

Veridiction, which concerns the manner in which truth is communicated, can be seen in the formation of /otherness/ around which delusions are organized. That which appears to be true by virtue of its being describable is actually not real. On a semantic level, it becomes possible to identify systems of signs that create /otherness/ and result in fear, hesitation, or ambiguity. The points at which /otherness/ can be most clearly identified are indicative of the fantastic mode and are founded on the same uniform configuration of contrary opposition between reality and deception. When there is a resurgence of /otherness/ within the bounds of reality or on the fringes of the acceptable, a clustering effect (in a particular episode) occurs that undermines the basis of sound judgment on the part of the hero. In other words, when the incidences of /otherness/ are surfacing in the same locale or in association with the same person and scenario, then the fantastic mode is operative.

2.2. The One-to-Many Model of Mimesis and the Fantastic

When discussing critical definitions of the fantastic in Chapter 1, I examined Kathryn Hume’s one-to-one relationship between mimesis and the fantastic, which she characterizes as “reality” and the “unreal.” While Hume’s one-to-one model is sufficient when applied to the modern fantastic text, I suggest that a one-to-many correlation of reality to the supernatural
provides a more inclusive model for the discussion at hand, that is applying fantastic theories to medieval narrative literature. This approach frees the discussion of the fantastic from its 19th-century association with technological anomalies and scientific improbability. The one-to-many model also accounts for the subtleties of medieval supernatural elements as opposed to the blatantly unreal supernatural elements found in 19th-century fantastic texts. Such a relationship permits a range of supernatural events, rather than relying upon a simple inverse (or negative) relationship to the mimetic. With this more flexible model, it becomes possible to account for varying degrees of fantastic elements within a text, because it becomes possible to identify varying degrees of supernaturalness in those elements.

In this proposed model, the supernatural aspects of a character’s experiences are defined within and by the parameters of the story rather than by the social context of the writer. The one-to-many model frees us from the need to justify traditional definitions of reality and period-specific definitions of what is or is not considered supernatural. A critic can instead investigate a range of supernatural aspects within a text rather than trying to justify speculations on what a medieval reader considered to be mimetic. I therefore reject the exclusiveness of Hume’s socio-historic approach to the “mimesis vs. fantastic” debate for a broader, more flexible view of the fantastic mode within Western literature.

2.2.1. Poesis and the One-to-Many Model

A lingering problem with prior critical approaches to the fantastic is their tendency to treat unusual animals and magical objects as typical signifiers of a potentially fantastic element
within a text. Focusing on those types of objects intensifies the fundamental problem of
delineating between mimetic realism and the fantastic. Such a focus forces the discussion to
concentrate on things that have a degree of unreality along with the blatantly supernatural
objects of the merveilleux simply in terms of their common lack of reality. If the association of
places and objects with the fantastic is meant to define “unrealistic,” then the definition must
continually change to keep pace with changes in society and technology. This debate too is
rendered moot by the use of the one-to-many model, in that the text (not society) defines the
standards for the realistic and supernatural aspects it contains. The text being studied is
therefore auto-referential and liberated from the need to simply record events according to
societal expectations of what is literature. Scholes implicitly supports the one-to-many model
for the fantastic within medieval texts.  

To the degree that those many constructed versions succeed in imitating the world, the text achieves a purer degree of mimesis. Conversely, the
more supernatural a text is, the further away it moves from the mimetic mode and the closer it
approaches the fantastic mode. Scholes highlights the paradoxical nature of mimetic theories
of literature, namely that an author can never totally recapture the essence of what he is
writing about—he can only record his impressions of that object or event.

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2.3. Beyond the "Unreal"

At question is whether or not the structural aspects of medieval narratives support a fantastic interpretation of 12th- and 13th-century texts. Medieval narratives often take the form of cycles or continuations, where an author picks up a story in mid-stream and continues a previous writer's work. Examples can be found in narratives such as the Arthurian cycles and epic stories such as the *Chanson de Roland*. Such narratives have no clear ending or seemingly stop midway in the story. A writer may leave the work to be completed by a colleague, as is the case with Chrétien de Troyes, who designated Godefroi de Leigni to finish *Le Chevalier de la charrette*. Or perhaps, at some later date, a writer decided to continue the cycle by adding his own version of the story or by reviving an existing tradition, as is the case with the numerous reworkings of the Grail legend. Prior to the Renaissance, texts were

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5 Rosemarie McGerr examines the medieval concepts of literary closure. "For example, there are some medieval texts that remain implicitly open, even though they may come to a formal close—texts that support Smith's argument that 'the fulfilling of formal expectations is never a sufficient condition for the experience of closure.'" She not only looks at the way a text ends, but the inner movement in the direction of completeness as well. McGerr uses the *Chanson de Roland* as an example of a narrative text that is technically complete and yet lacks true closure. Rosemarie P. McGerr, "Medieval Concepts of Literary Closure," *Exemplaria*, Vol. I, N° 1 (1989): 164. See also, Barbara Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968) 45.

manuscripts, subject to the whim of the scribes who were frequently inspired by oral sources, and usually several decades separate the composition of a work from its oldest surviving version.

2.3.1. Ambiguity and the Fantastic

In direct contrast to the medieval tradition of romance production, the Renaissance had a highly structured concept of narratives that necessitated a beginning, middle, and end to each story. It is also noteworthy that the printed text of the Renaissance ensured a greater unity between copies of the text, though not necessarily any greater accuracy. The requirement for textual unity is based on the Classical tradition established by Aristotle. The Classical model for narratives emphasized the importance of unity in that a story must contain everything necessary to its being understood. The importance of a clear relationship between the three stages of a narrative is essential to the unity of action. Accordingly, if there is no clear ending to a story, then the unity of action is broken and the plot remains unresolved.

The Aristotelian need for an ending that resolves all of the conflicts in the narrative is meaningful to the question of the fantastic and offers an additional explanation as to why the fantastic has received so little attention for medieval literature. The inclusion of fantastic elements in medieval texts would violate Aristotle’s rules of narrative structure in many ways,

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See section 1.3 of this dissertation.
especially in averting a tidy conclusion. Dubost maintains that the most common structural component of the *merveilleux* is the happy end achieved through the intervention of a supernatural agent.\(^8\) Since real life is often not very tidy, the mimetic must cede to the *merveilleux* to produce a complete, satisfying ending. But Dubost does not pursue the question of what happens when the ending is subverted by the supernatural agent.

In a text containing the fantastic mode, one sees that the ending is left ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations—there is no happy end *per se*, only a number of possible endings that may or may not bring satisfaction. Without a return to equilibrium, there can be no closure and therefore no happy end to the narrative. The lack of a happy end also means that the reader must choose a satisfactory resolution and thereby complete the text, even though the author has stopped the process of creating narrative input. Umberto Eco also writes of this need to reestablish equilibrium within a basic narrative: “But it is precisely because it eventually arrives at a conclusion that the cycle *stimulus*—*crisis*—*expectation*—*satisfaction*—*re-establishment of an order* acquires a meaning.”\(^9\) The beginning and end are states of equilibrium, while the middle is composed of a process built upon the four other

\(^8\) “La caractéristique structurelle la plus évidente du conte merveilleux, le *happy end* consécutif à un renversement de situation, est obtenu grâce au concours d’un agent surnaturel.” Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques*..., 132.

\(^9\) Eco, *The Open Work*..., 75. (Emphasis in the original.)
stages of stimulus, crisis, expectation and satisfaction. I illustrate this cycle in Figure 2.2 according to the standard stages of the fantastic mode in narrative texts.\textsuperscript{10}

As shown in Figure 2.2, the stimulus for the fantastic in a narrative is a supernatural event, which causes the protagonist to experience a crisis based on /otherness/. This crisis manifests itself as an inability to take action, resulting in uncertainty, fear and hesitation. The crisis is representative of a state of Greimassian disjunction (symbolized by $S \cup O$)\textsuperscript{11} for the protagonist in that the crisis reveals the lacunae of a hero’s life or a weakness in character. In

\textsuperscript{10} For a discussion of these stages, see section 1.2 of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{11} See Appendix A for an explanation of the symbols used in this formula.
a crisis, the protagonist expects to be able to depend upon what society considers to be normal, based on the laws of the real world. That expectation is violated by the use of the fantastic mode, forcing the protagonist to question the real world. The questioning results in a rejection or acceptance of the supernatural event. This satisfies the protagonist’s need to account for the supernatural event that provoked the crisis. Therefore the protagonist can only return to a state of equilibrium by accepting or rejecting the supernatural event.

2.3.2. Lack of Closure and the Fantastic

By integrating or rejecting the supernatural, the character moves into a state of Greimassian conjunction ($S \cap O$) where the very act of making that decision causes the crisis to disappear and the narrative equilibrium to be restored. However, if the protagonist never progresses towards a resolution of the crisis, the state of equilibrium is never restored, the story is unsatisfactory and incomplete according to Aristotle’s model. This cyclical model is realized through the narrative program as a series of episodes that form the plot. The protagonist may go through the cycle numerous times within a single romance. Open-endedness is created by the lack of a clear definitive resolution and, I would argue, is characteristic of the fantastic within medieval romance texts.

Todorov discusses the basic narrative as being a movement between two states of equilibrium: “On commencera par se construire une image du récit minimum, ... L’image sera
The fantastic narrative itself appears to be caught up in a series of digressions and subplots pulling the story in opposite directions: some lead us as readers to believe that the character is hallucinating or is in a dream-like state (the natural interpretation); other subplots and digressions hint at the possibility of parallel worlds (the supernatural interpretation). Each of these represents a pole in Todorov's definition of the minimal story.

The textual equilibrium is restored by means of a character's or implied reader's decision to accept or reject the supernatural. By the end of the story, the protagonist must complete the story, and thus of necessity exit from the fantastic mode into either the étrange or the merveilleux. When there is no closure provided by the protagonist's choice, the implied reader is left to choose for him- or herself. The author does not choose a single specific ending to the story—rather he presents any number of plausible endings. I propose that it is the very

12 Todorov, *Introduction...*, 171. (Emphasis in the original.)

13 "At various moments the narrative offers what appear to be (at least) two simultaneous 'stories': the supernatural and the other one or ones. The reader (and often the character) is called upon to furnish an explanation, to prolong the story beyond its textual boundaries—in short, to mirror and rival the author." Avni, *art. cit.*, 678.

14 See section 1.2.6 for a discussion of the implied reader.

15 "In other words, the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work to be completed." Eco, *The Open Work...*, 19. (Emphasis in the original.)
quality of “openness” that makes a story fantastic from a structural point of view. An example of this can be seen in Tydorel, where the author’s conclusion does not offer a solution that accounts for Tydorel’s mystery. “Poignant en est au lai venuz, / el plus parfont s’est enz ferua ; / illec remest, en tel maniere, / que puis ne retorna ariere.” (vv. 485–488) There is no “happily ever after” implied here. The mystery of Tydorel remains intact to the end. Jackson compares the fantastic elements within the text to a kind of oxymoron holding together contradictions and sustaining “them in an impossible unity without progress towards synthesis.” Until that synthesis can be achieved, there is no resolution of the conflict, no return to a state of equilibrium, and therefore no definitive end to the narration.

2.4. Openness and the Fantastic

To identify the fantastic, an examination of the need for an ending to the narrative is essential. Umberto Eco, in The Open Work, challenges some of the more traditional interpretations of literature. Concerning the openness of a work, Eco writes, “A work of art, therefore, is a complete and closed form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity.” Eco asserts

16 O’Hara Tobin, Lais anonymes..., 224.

17 Jackson, Fantasy and mimesis..., 21.

18 Eco, op. cit., 4. (Emphasis in the original.)
that the author of a narrative includes in his work everything necessary for the average reader to be able to understand and interpret that narrative. However, at the same time, the author leaves the interpretation of the narrative up to the reader.

According to this theory, each reader brings a different set of circumstances and experience to the work and therefore derives a different understanding. While a work in movement is open to numerous interpretations, that openness is not a limitless quality. There is a lack of chaos because the implied organizing rule behind these relations controls the way in which the work should be approached. Eco does not address the need, important in my opinion, to clearly distinguish between the author’s role in offering multiple situations open to interpretation and the structuring of those situations into a cohesive narrative which directs the reader toward some interpretations and away from others.\(^{19}\) I agree with Eco’s assertions that the author includes a number of possibilities within a text, but find his statement that “a particular taste, or perspective, or personal performance”\(^{20}\) is a position that grants excessive

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\(^{19}\) Eco addresses this concern in a later work. “In analyzing fiction, one must frequently decide in which sense—on the grounds of our knowledge of the actual world—we can evaluate individuals and events of imaginary worlds (differences between romance and novel, realism and fantasy, whether the Napoleon of Tolstoy is identical with or different from the historical one, and so on). Since in every state of a story things can go on in different ways, the pragmatics of reading is based on our ability to make forecasts at every narrative disjunction. Take the paramount case of criminal stories where the author wants to elicit false forecasts on the part of the readers in order to frustrate them.” Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 72.

\(^{20}\) *ibid.*, 21.
power to the reader. This type of personal interpretation by the reader would outweigh the author's encoded *san*, or “meaning” which is difficult to validate for a medieval text. For in medieval texts, the co-existing purposes of a story as both entertainment and instruction imply a deliberate agenda on the part of the author.

2.4.1. *Integrations and Structural Vitality*

In order to account for the author’s encoded possibilities, Eco proposes the concept of integrations, which fill in the lacunae between the various possibilities within a predetermined structure: “The ‘openness’ and dynamism of an artistic work consist in factors which make it susceptible to a whole range of integrations. They provide it with organic complements which they graft into the structural vitality which the work already possesses, even if it is incomplete. This structural vitality is still seen as a positive property of the work, even though it admits of all kinds of different conclusions and solutions for it.”\(^{21}\) These integrations become the muscles and sinews which bind together the fundamental structure provided by the author.

In relation to the one-to-many model for reality and the supernatural, the various degrees of supernaturalness in a text may be seen as integrations between the poles of solid reality and the blatantly supernatural. The presence of such supernatural integrations supports the structure of a work and fills it with a sense of *otherness*. While Eco’s concept of integrations

\(^{21}\) Eco, *The Open Work...*, 20.
A Structural Model for the Fantastic

clarifies the role of the reader, it does little to account for the author’s role in creating a vital
structure for the narrative. It is necessary to scrutinize the methods of composition that the
author employs in order to create what Eco calls structural vitality.

2.4.2. Ordering the Text

What makes a work “open” according to Eco is its ability to break away from traditional
modes of expression and to embrace a more ambiguous method of communication.22 By its
ambiguity this new system is naturally susceptible to a wider range of interpretations. Because
of this wider scope, the work seems to be in a chaotic state, lacking order and method.
However, Eco maintains, this is not necessarily the case. “That is, all deviation from the most
banal linguistic order entails a new kind of organization, which can be considered as disorder
in relation to the previous organization, and as order in relation to the parameters of the new
discourse.”23 When applied to the fantastic, this apparent lack of organizational cohesiveness
is directly contrasted with the highly-organized system of mimetic, Aristotelian discourse. This

22 “In Opera aperta the idea of the open work serves to explain and justify the apparently
radical difference in character between modern and traditional art.[...] In traditional art,
contraventions occurred only within very defined limits, and forms of expression remained
substantially conventional. [...] In the modern open work, on the other hand, the
contravention of conventions is far more radical, and it is this that gives it its very high
degree of ambiguity; since ordinary rules of expression no longer apply, the scope for
interpretation becomes enormous. Thus, according to Eco, traditional art confirms
conventional views of the world, whereas the modern open work implicitly denies them.”
Robey, “Introduction”..., ix, xi.

23 Eco, op. cit., 60. (Emphasis in the original.)
new, more discrete ordering of the text is perceived by the reader who enters into the narrative process by virtue of shared experiences with the characters.

“But although the transmission of signs conceived according to a rigorous code, based on conventional values, can be explained without having to depend on the interpretive intervention of the receiver, the transmission of a sequence of signals with little redundancy and a high ratio of improbability demands that we take into consideration both the attitudes and the mental structures by which the receiver, of his own free will, selects a message and endows it with a probability that is certainly already there but only as one probability among many.”\textsuperscript{24}

Eco refers here to what Todorov calls the “implied reader,” who discovers one of a number of possible, structurally-encoded interpretations. The text is ordered in such a way as to ensure that the implied reader is able to discern the encoded message with a relative degree of certainty.

\section*{2.4.3. Textual Ambiguity and Inertia}

The introduction of textual ambiguity by the author is the primary means for increasing the reader’s sense of crisis. Eco states that contemporary poetics reflects the processes that “create ‘ambiguous’ situations open to all sorts of operative choices and interpretations.”\textsuperscript{25} Ambiguity becomes the hallmark of openness. Notably, ambiguity is one of the fundamental

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{ibid.}, 70.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid}, 44.
aspects of the fantastic mode, as I discussed in Chapter 1. In his introduction to *The Open Work*, David Robey writes, “Ambiguity, for Eco, is the product of the contravention of established conventions of expression: the less conventional forms of expression are, the more scope they allow for interpretation and therefore the more ambiguous they can be said to be.”

By greatly increasing the number of possible options, the overload of information creates a sense of paralysis or hesitation encoded into the text and vicariously experienced by the reader. “[I]n its reliance on ambiguity and information as essential values of a work of art, contemporary poetics rebels against the *psychic inertia* that has been hiding behind the promise of a *recovered order*.” This psychic inertia is seen in terms of “determinate cultural patterns” which create expectations based on assumptions. As the cultural patterns are violated in order to create new patterns, they become a new system of assumptions which also in turn attempt to satisfy the expectations of the reader. There is a constant need to reestablish order for both the text and the reader.

26 Robey, “Introduction...,” xi.

27 Eco, *op. cit.*, 80. (Emphasis in the original.)

28 *ibid.*, 78.
A Structural Model for the Fantastic

The type of inertia Eco refers to is the reader's cultural assumption that the text will contain a resolution precluding the need for the reader to choose one. Yet, I believe, the fantastic has its own type of inertia as well: the inertia of the reader who is reluctant to choose a resolution (expecting the text to provide it), and the inertia of the text which refuses to offer an obvious or easy solution to the reader (expecting the reader to formulate it). Both the text and the reader are disinclined to proffer an easy solution which would result in an étrange interpretation, yet they both also resist the acceptance of the supernatural which connotes a merveilleux text. And yet this inability or unwillingness (on the part of both the text and reader) to act creates the very effect against which Eco's psychic inertia rebels, it creates the unexpected. Psychic inertia renounces the unexpected that fantastic inertia promotes.

The process of ordering the text to account for its deliberate ambiguity, I believe, presents another significant function of the fantastic mode in romance narratives: to present

Rosemarie McGerr states, "Like modern theorists, medieval theorists understood that, because we perceive patterns retrospectively, our perception of literary structure develops through a process of recognition of a pattern, hypothesis about continuation of that pattern, and readjustment in the light of new evidence. Since the conclusion of a text reveals the last of the evidence, only with the conclusion can we perceive the whole pattern and the true place of each element within the pattern." McGerr, "Medieval Concepts ...." 155. McGerr's statement implies that the structure of a medieval work is only truly recoverable at the conclusion of a story. However, if the author had a clear plan in mind, that plan should be at least to some degree discernible throughout the development of the narrative. While the ending of a story does allow one to refine and confirm the basic structure of any text, the lack of an ending does not imply that there is no clear structure. Whether a work is complete or not, there should still be some latent structure noticeable within the text.
multiple choices, each probable and yet somehow dissatisfying. Eco writes, “Confronted by disorder, we are then free to establish temporary, hypothetical systems of probability that are complementary to other systems that we could also, eventually or simultaneously, assume. By so doing, we can enjoy both the equiprobability of all the systems and the openness of the process as a whole.”

When choosing an ending, the reader is forced to assume the co-creative role with the author and yet is simultaneously constrained by the author’s assumptions about the “implied reader.” When an individual reader makes a choice as to the most probable outcome for a story, that choice does not nullify any of the other possibilities. The structure only compels us toward a choice, it does not make that choice obvious or easy.

2.5. *A New Model for the Fantastic*

In developing a structural model for the fantastic, it is useful to examine existing models of the fantastic to see why they have proven to be applicable to only a select group of period-specific texts. Jean Molino asserts that a more sophisticated model is needed in order to develop a complex, multi-form view of the fantastic. Molino examines three models: “l’approche historique et philologique, l’approche thématique et sémantique, et l’approche

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30 Eco, *op. cit.*, 80.
structurale.” 31 He deliberately rejects the psychoanalytical and sociological theories of the fantastic in his discussion. 32

2.5.1. Current Models for the Fantastic

The historic/philological approach to the fantastic, Molino asserts, is crippled by its confinement to the conditions of its creation: “...un objet historique ne peut être étudié que dans le double système de limitation qu’imposent une culture et une époque définies...” 33 Any examination of the fantastic from a historic perspective will of necessity focus on the specific works rather than on the general subject, thereby excluding from consideration any variations or other time periods. The thematic/semantic model is typified according to Molino by the writings of Roger Caillois. Molino characterizes this analytical model as concentrating on the content of fantastic stories: “Ce n’est donc pas la littérature fantastique qui est visée, mais le monde fantastique...” 34 The strengths and weaknesses of these two models have already been discussed at length in Chapter 1. Turning to the third model of the fantastic, Molino discusses Todorov’s concept of structures within a fantastic text. Molino has three specific objections to

31 Molino, “Trois modèles...,” 12.

32 “On ne peut mettre en relation un texte avec les structures de l’inconscient ou de la société que si l’on a déjà construit un ou des modèles du texte lui-même.” ibid.

33 ibid., 13.

34 ibid., 16.
Todorov's work: it is not any different from other theories, in that it relies upon psychological criteria; it excludes any real structural analysis; and it represents only a partial definition by structural standards. I agree with Molino that the previous structural models are limited by virtue of their specificity. The fantastic, as defined in each of these models, occurs in the real world when the protagonist is confronted by a supernatural event and reacts accordingly. According to this school of thought, reality provides the only theoretical framework by which the fantastic is evaluated. The hero never leaves the real world, as I illustrate in Figure 2.3:

![Diagram of real world and supernatural event](image)

Figure 2.3—Model for current representations of the fantastic

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35 For an in-depth discussion of reality as the basis for evaluating the fantastic, see section 1.2.3 of this dissertation.
The hero must integrate the supernatural occurrence into his existing world view.\textsuperscript{36} When that integration is difficult or impossible, the conflict is prolonged. When the supernatural event is merged into the character's view of reality, then the conflict is resolved and equilibrium is reestablished for the protagonist. According to this model, reality becomes the only referential axis and the ultimate value judgment in the discourse on the fantastic.

2.5.2. \textit{Dubost's Model of Verticality}

Francis Dubost examines the structure of the \textit{conte merveilleux} in relation to the fantastic according to a vertical model. The supernatural elevates or abases the hero along a vertical axis of competence. Dubost states that the situation in a \textit{conte merveilleux} is directly related to how the hero reacts to the supernatural.

"Dans les récits de ce type, le surnaturel se situe exclusivement au niveau du faire, de l'acte, du projet actantiel; soit pour amener le héros à agir; soit pour favoriser son action; soit pour la contrarier ou l'empêcher; soit pour la sanctionner, la reconnaître et la manifester publiquement."\textsuperscript{37}

The supernatural found in the \textit{conte merveilleux} invests the hero with an ability to act and overcome adversity. Challenges are met with confidence and ease. The orientation of the

\textsuperscript{36} This integration is characteristic of the paranormal mode, as identified by Nancy Trail: "The paranormal mode [...] lays the problem to rest: the alethic opposition is neutralized because the domain of the physically possible is expanded." Trail, "Fictional Worlds...," 203.

\textsuperscript{37} Dubost, \textit{Aspects fantastiques...}, 130–131.
situation goes from one of dysphoria to one of euphoria. In other words the hero attains a higher level of achievement and his social standing is also enhanced. The vertical progression of the hero is emphasized by Dubost as one of empowerment.

On the contrary, the supernatural found in fantastic examples is seen by Dubost as moving the hero downward on the vertical axis. His situation, often dismal at first, is only worsened by the supernatural. The hero eventually begins to question his own faculties:

"Un débat douloureux s’instaure alors, porteur de questions de plus en plus urgentes qui restent malgré tout sans réponses, sauf à admettre l’hypothèse surnaturelle et terrifiante, ce qui reviendrait à s’abandonner à l’emprise fantastique."38

This questioning upsets the equilibrium of the hero, both mentally and within the narrative program.39 The hero arrives at a state of total alienation, causing the story to end in tragedy (or at the very least on a negative note). The ending is not in question. Rather Dubost states that the results of the supernatural within the merveilleux and the fantastic lead the hero in opposite directions. In the former, the supernatural confers upon the hero a higher status, in the latter it demotes the hero, until he can be freed of the supernatural’s influences. Dubost’s model of verticality concentrates on the social progress of the hero. He measures the effects of

38 ibid., 131.

39 The need to return to a state of equilibrium is addressed above. See Figure 2.2.
the fantastic according to the hero's progress rather than by relating it to the structuring of episodes.

2.5.3. The Parallel Worlds Model

Both Molino and Dubost present cases that are confined by their specificity: Molino rejects other critics' approaches and endorses a purely anthropological approach. Dubost explains away the fantastic as a thematic phenomenon without accounting for the parallel relationship between the real world and the otherworld. I would assert that a more complex and satisfactory model for the fantastic is necessary in order to account for a wider variety of the fantastic in medieval narratives. As previously stated, the presence of the supernatural world is the requisite thematic element for the fantastic. The parallel relationship of the real and supernatural worlds to each other suggests a common narrative program for the fantastic within medieval texts. I propose a parallel model that may be represented as follows:

![Proposed model of the fantastic](image_url)

**Figure 2.4 —Proposed model of the fantastic**
In this model, the characters are free to move between worlds, passing through the fantastic, which represents an intersection between the real and the supernatural worlds. In Figure 2.4, I show that the fantastic results when the *merveilleux* is superimposed on mimesis. The two worlds are in parallel relation to each other in a horizontal orientation where they are neither above nor below each other, but in a side-by-side relationship. Mimesis and *merveilleux* comprise the two extreme poles between which fantastic space is situated. The fantastic arises out of the interaction, in one space, of the two opposed and irreconcilable world views; it comes into being as the result of the tensions produced by the inclusion of the supernatural within the framework of reality. The fantastic is thus characterized by the constant shifting of the diffuse boundaries between reason and chaos. In a word, there is no fine line, no point of junction between the *merveilleux* and the fantastic that is easily grasped. The conflict that takes place within fantastic space results from the reluctance of the hero to choose between a rational interpretation and an acceptance of the supernatural. Figure 2.5 shows the possible responses of the hero to the supernatural.

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When I speak of “intersection,” I am not referring to a linear boundary, but to a shifting, overlapping space that is not a clear line. “Medieval representation was less an apanage of power than a means of affirming and describing—of reassuring—that there was a world of material reality whose boundaries (from our point of view) seem amazingly fluid. These boundaries may be spatial as in the cases of heroes of lay and romance who cross over from the real world to the *irréel* of the Celtic other world;...” Nichols, “The New Medievalism...,” 2–3.
Figure 2.5—Possible narrative scenarios for the fantastic

Scenario 1 represents the rejection of the supernatural: the hero decides to explain the supernatural event according to the mimetic laws of the real world. Scenario 1 is an *étrange* episode. Scenario 3, is the exact opposite of 1. 3 represents the acceptance of the supernatural: the hero does not rationalize the supernatural event. The hero instead accepts it, and acknowledges the existence of the supernatural as a manifestation of the presence of the otherworld. He enters into the otherworld and thereby participates in a *merveilleux* adventure. Scenario 2 is the fantastic episode, where the hero neither accepts nor rejects the supernatural, and therefore the narrative program is unable to progress towards a satisfactory closure. If a story has a satisfactory conclusion (that is, one where all of the disjunctions are accounted

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41 "Disjunction" is used here in the Greimassian sense of separation of the subject from the object. "Along with conjunction, one of two basic types of junction, or relation, between the subject and the object (‘X is not with Y,’ ‘X does not have Y’)." Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1987) 22. Prince bases his definition on that of Greimas and Courtés, *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Appendix A contains a discussion of the basic concepts of Greimas’ theories about semiotics.
for and resolved), it emerges from the fantastic mode to be ultimately quantified as either étrange or merveilleux, which are both legitimate interpretations in themselves. It is this model that will be tested and used to examine the various medieval texts in Chapters 3–6.

2.6. Defining Fantastic Space

The Celtic otherworld is distinguished by its supernatural aspects. Since fantastic space is created through the intersection of the real world and the otherworld, it is useful to define how that otherworld reveals itself. The otherworld is portrayed as separated from the real world by physical barriers, such as a forest or a body of water. The themes of the otherworld and the way that it interacts with the real world present a number of fascinating correlations: the most striking similarity is the way in which the interaction of the real world and the otherworld produces fantastic space. To know with certainty that he has traveled through fantastic space to a supernatural world, the protagonist should be able to recognize the signs that delineate the entry and exit points between the real world and the otherworld. The description of locations may help to create an atmosphere of /otherness/. For example in medieval romances, when the hero enters a forest, crosses a river, or arrives at some other

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natural boundary, the narrative description may contain clues that indicate movement from the real world into another realm. Places, particularly sources of water, may be fantastic by their nature, and their descriptions are clearly intended to evoke /otherness/ and lead the character into the supernatural otherworld. Identifying the transition points between the real world and otherworld is crucial to pinpointing the presence of fantastic episodes within romance narratives.

If the fantastic truly resides within the intersecting space between the real and the supernatural worlds, as I proposed above, then a closer examination of that frontier is necessary to provide a way to identify when a character has left his own world and entered a supernatural one. These frontiers are the spatial coordinates of the fantastic, as previously shown in Figure 2.5. I examine three distinct locales that contain the most common routes to the supernatural world: forests, bodies of water, and cemeteries. The first type of natural frontier examined is the forest.

43 I have chosen to concentrate on these three physical spaces, because they all are common to the texts I examine in Chapters 3–6 of this dissertation. However, other spaces are equally capable of being defined as “fantastic space,” as the term is defined within this dissertation. Possible categories of fantastic space include ruined or deserted castles, deep caves, and enchanted or secret valleys and remain as topics for the future investigation of fantastic space as an organizing principle of the fantastic mode. Francis Dubost examines several possible types of spaces associated with the fantastic: crossroads, exotic spaces, islands, forests for hunting, castles, shadow lands, wasted lands, and what he calls “espaces morts” and “espaces des morts.” See Part 3 of Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 243–425.
2.6.1. Forests

Among the most evocative scenes found in medieval romance are those passages where the hero finds himself roaming in the forest: the initial battle scene described by Gawain in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*; hunting the white boar in *Guingamors*; and the desolate forest surrounding the Grail Castle in *Le Conte du Graal*. The forest acts as the setting for regeneration, adventure, spiritual visions, and love. Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter describe the forest as "a place of mystery, a place of testing, and always potentially evil [...], an alien wilderness."\(^{44}\) The forest may be typified according to three heroic experiences: chaos, secret or forbidden love and (perhaps most important) adventure.

2.6.1.1. A Place of Chaos

The forest is frequently portrayed in literature as an opposing force to society—the primordial abundance of nature being directly contrasted with the social order of the castle, city, or farming communities. Corinne J. Saunders, in her work *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, posits three distinct types of forests in medieval romance.\(^{45}\) According to Saunders, in the Classical tradition the forest is associated with disorder (*hyle*, from which order rose), and primordial matter (*silva*, the basic matter from which nature arose). *Silva*, the Latin term

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for forest, is also used by such philosophers as Chalcidius to be the allegorical equivalent of untamed emotions and passions.\textsuperscript{46} The interaction between apparent randomness and natural order reveals a prototype of the inherent disorder that distinguishes the fantastic mode. This disorder is to be resolved through the intervention of the hero. By traveling through fantastic space, the hero mediates between the real world and the otherworld\textsuperscript{47} and is able thereby to resolve any conflicts engendered by the interaction of two incompatible world orders.

\subsection*{2.6.1.2. The Locus Amoenus}

In direct contrast to Saunder's description of the forest as a threatening chaos or labyrinth, Pierre Gallais views the forest as a \textit{locus amoenus}, or pleasant setting. The \textit{locus amoenus} is the space where the fairy makes her initial appearance to the knight.

“\textit{Le locus amoenus, que nous avons souvent rencontré dans l’Autre monde, peut en fait apparaître n’importe où. Certes, il peut être le lieu merveilleux où vivre éternellement (Autre monde [...]); mais d’autre part, il n’a rien d’extra-naturel, puisqu’il est une sorte de condensé, de ‘concentré’ de nature familière, facile à trouver en ce monde-ci [...]; mieux encore, peut-être, il se situe entre les deux mondes, dans cet ‘inter-monde’ où nous avons vu apparaître – et parfois – la fée: lieu idéal de la rencontre discrète, de l’intimité amoureuse [...].}”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ibid.}, 19.

\textsuperscript{47} This interaction of two worlds and the movement of the hero between them is illustrated in Figure 2.5.

\textsuperscript{48} Gallais, \textit{La Fée ...}, 287.
Gallais’ discussion of the locus amoenus in romance texts mirrors, in my opinion, Todorov’s categories of the étrange, fantastique, and merveilleux. Gallais identifies three functions of the locus amoenus: it reflects the real world (étrange); it is the eternal otherworld (merveilleux); but most importantly, it is the space between worlds (inter-monde) where the real and the merveilleux meet (fantastique). Gallais characterizes the location of the fountain and the forest as the transitional point where extremes are brought into conjunction and the future of the hero is mediated through those extremes.49 However, Gallais’ definition presents the supernatural as the source for all three types of experiences, whereas Todorov views these same experiences as being produced by three different sources: mimesis, the fantastic and the merveilleux. While also acknowledging Gallais’ definitions as an alternate interpretation, I align more closely with Todorov’s position.

2.6.1.3. A Place of Adventures

In the romance texts of the latter part of the 12th century, the forest motif (as intermediary for the otherworld) is exploited more fully with the inclusion of the matière de Bretagne, based on Celtic oral tradition.50 Wace, in Le roman de Rou, describes the forest of Broceliande as the traditional location to seek romance and adventure, “La alai jo merveilles

49 ibid., 312.

50 The association of the forest with Celtic deities and the otherworld parallels the classic tradition of the forest as a place where mortals and gods interact. In the Celtic tales of the Mabinogion, the forest appears to be a transitory setting for passage to the otherworld.
querre,/ vi la forest e vi la terre,/ merveilles quis, mais nes trovai,"

Wace himself expresses credulity at the thought of the forest as the source of adventures. Thus for Wace, the real forest and the literary forest are two different landscapes altogether. The real Broceliande does not offer him any adventures, and yet the literary forest is full of encounters between knights and the otherworld. The forest becomes the locale of choice for pursuing knightly activities. Saunders, in comparing the works of Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, states:

"Through Chrétien, the forest becomes the habitual landscape of a new figure, that of the knight errant. Marie de France’s heroes, while they are clearly medieval knights ruled by the precepts of chivalry, do not fall into this category, for their adventures come about through chance event or, literally, aventure. Chrétien’s knights, on the contrary, actively seek adventure through their wanderings, pursuing the potentiality of the forest."

Upon closer examination of the works of Chrétien de Troyes, Saunders’ statement does not always hold true. For example in Le Conte du Graal, Perceval, who is not yet a knight, enters the forest as a way to seek people (Arthur and then his mother in Wales) and is not “actively” seeking adventure. Or, in the case of Le Chevalier de la Charrette, Lancelot is pursuing a definite object (the queen) rather than just looking for random adventures.


52 Saunders, op. cit., 58.
However, it is true that the forest, as the customary location of the wandering knight, produces adventure both by chance and by deliberate searching. Whenever a protagonist, such as Guingamors or Graelent, enters the forest, he not only leaves behind his homeland to enter another region or world but he does so through a type of dusky netherland where time and distance become distorted.

The resurgence of the supernatural within a forest setting represents a rupture in the fabric of reality, a type of chaos overtaking the calm and peacefulness. The themes of adventure, surmounting of obstacles, and completion of quests are just beginning to appear in their most primitive forms in the romans antiques. As a precursor to the romance texts, the romans antiques present the forest as a place of disorder, where the supernatural is more readily apparent. As a locale of conflict as well as access to the otherworld, the forests found in the romans antiques present a credible prototype of fantastic space.

The romance forest embodies many themes and images, all of which add to the definition of the forest as paradoxical location where anything can happen. It may be the locus amoenus

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53 For example, the forest of Pollinices’ exile in Le Roman de Thèbes presents the forest as a wild area (1, 649–52). Le Roman de Thèbes, ed. Guy Raynaud de Lage, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1966, 1968). Another example is found in the forest in which Dido and Aeneas seek refuge (1, 280–83) in Le Roman d’Eneas. Aeneas also enters a forest to seek Anchises and discovers that he is in the Underworld (1, 2348–55). Eneas: Roman du XII siècle, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925).
of lovers, the testing ground for a young knight, the pathway between Bretagne and the otherworld for mortals and immortals alike. The forest becomes fantastic when it acts as the conduit to the otherworld. Without the potential encounter with the supernatural, a forest is just a grouping of trees. When that opening or path to the otherworld is stumbled upon, the hero finds himself in fantastic space, caught between two worlds. The character of the forest is one of both protection from and mediation with the otherworld. The forest insulates the gateway to the otherworld from the casual seeker. That gateway is often a body of water or fountain. As an intermediary space, the forest is the location where mortals and supernatural beings come into contact. The ambiguity and changing nature of the forest make it the perfect setting for the fantastic to emerge.

2.6.2. Water

As a transitional location between the real world and the otherworld, the forest can contain a lake or be divided by a river. The association of deities with such natural features as lakes, streams, rivers, and other bodies of water is common to many ancient traditions. In the Arthurian tradition, the Lady of the Lake, (known as Morgan le Fay, Nineve, and Vivien), is associated with the world of Avalon, attainable only by passing through the water. Water carries man to the other shore where his destiny awaits. Water fascinates, drawing the

54 "Que la fée se manifeste si fréquemment auprès de la fontaine et (ou) de l’arbre, c’est-à-dire dans un ‘lieu plaisant’ (le locus amoenus des rhétoriciens), dans une ‘tranche de nature’ aimable et hautement symbolique, cela n’est pas l’effet du hasard.” Gallais, op. cit., 6. See also Chapter 9, “Le ‘Locus Amoenus,’” 285–323.
observer to its edge, where the mystery of what lies beyond and beneath captures the imagination. “L’eau nous invite au voyage imaginaire.”

Water is found in many forms within romance narratives, including the “spring,” which plays a key role in delineating fantastic space. Springs are situated in forests, away from civilized society. In an episode from the Roman d’Alexandre, four giants reveal to Alexander the location of three magic fountains: the first restores the youth of anyone who bathes in it; the second gives immortality; and the third restores life to the dead. Similarly, the use of a fantastic fountain in Yvain indicates an on-going tradition of associating a water source with magical or supernatural events. The fountain becomes the means by which Yvain


56 “Fleuves sabbatiques, sources intermittentes, fontaines pétrifiantes, fontaines de jouvence, eaux chaudes, thérapeutiques, cicatrisantes, aphrodisiaques, colorantes, représentent autant de phénomènes déroutants rangés dans la catégorie des merveilles ! La mythologie des fontaines tient pour une bonne part à l'impossibilité de rendre compte de leurs propriétés naturelles. L’eau bienfaisante et rafraîchissante, miroir des grâces dans le verger d’amour, peut se transformer en un élément hostile et redoutable, pour devenir l’eve felonesse, des récits médiévaux.” Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 172. (Emphasis in the original.)


gains entry into the otherworld, here Laudine’s kingdom. It is the storm at the fountain that signifies the beginning of Yvain’s adventure (vv. 800–810). In the *Lancelot en prose*, the head of Lancelot’s grandfather is entrapped in the lead basin of a boiling spring, while the body remains unperished in a tomb nearby. The fountain boils as a testimony to murder.  

Fantastic space now has a focal point around which to organize itself. The spring becomes a definitive marker by which the hero must pass in order to enter the otherworld. The forest is the frontier leading up to the aquatic boundary marker.

The recurring motif of water is associated with a woman from another world (often a *fée*), functions as a symbol of separation between worlds, and is a strong indication of a voyage between the real world and the otherworld. A journey over water clearly signifies that the hero is leaving behind the familiarity of his society to face the unknown, supernatural realm of the otherworld. Large bodies of water, such as lakes, seas and oceans are frontiers between worlds, shapeless voids that capture, carry, and sometimes kill men. Rivers and


fountains constitute boundaries by virtue of their compactness and linear form. Water, no matter its form, is essentially feminine, mysterious, and evocative of the fantastic.

2.6.3. Cemeteries

The sensation of fear and dread often associated with dead people and cemeteries in general may be linked to our own fear of death itself. Death is the ultimate unknown, and the cemetery provides a place where one can contemplate both the past and the future destiny of all flesh. The cemetery becomes fantastic when the natural order of life and death is reversed. As Dubost remarks, "Ce lieu devient fantastique lorsque s’y déroulent des actions visant à inverser l’ordre naturel qui va de la vie vers la mort, à nier l’irréversibilité de la mort et du temps, à retrouver, sous quelque forme que ce soit, le vivant dans le cadavre, [...] à créer la confusion si redoutée au Moyen Age, du mort et du vif, à rechercher l’autrefois de la vie dans l’atemporalité du tombeau.”61 The cemetery contains the former members of the society and provides a way to remind the living of their past. This hearkening back to the past is the autrefois to which Dubost refers.

Dubost recognizes two elements of the fantastic cemetery as key to the thematic definition of what he calls “l’espace des morts”. There is a wall surrounding the cemetery and there are frequent nocturnal visits by strange characters. He relates these two elements by noting that

61 Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 410.
when the wall is breached, it is always at night. The chaos which ensues breaks the atmosphere of peace. Nocturnal exhumations represent the transgression of social contracts which ensure the protection and peace of the cemetery. The wall defines sanctified space but there are also ancient cemeteries which have no specific Christian association. For example, the cemetery “de la Douloureuse Garde” in the *Lancelot en prose* has the heads of knights mounted on the walls. These knights were decapitated because they had tried to put an end to the evil customs of the place.

Even though a cemetery may be sanctified space, demons frequently take up residence there. In several texts from the 12th and 13th centuries, the demon is in an unnatural relationship with a woman who is imprisoned. In *L'Atre périlleux*, *Amadas et Ydoine*, and the *Didot-Perceval*, a tomb is the means of entrapment. In *Claris et Laris* and *Cristal et Clarie*, the woman is kept in a tree within the cemetery walls. In each scenario, the prisoner is fed by the demon, who visits the cemetery only by night and frequently for sexual reasons.


63 All the texts mentioned are discussed in Chapter 6, with the exception of the *Didot-Perceval*.

This pattern of dominance is recognized by Dubost as a key element of the fantastic cemetery, where the natural order is violated in both a spiritual and physical manner. "Toutefois, malgré la double clôture matérielle et spirituelle qui en protège l'accès, la paix du cimetière est souvent troublée par des créatures indignes. Le diable, en particulier, manifeste pour les tombeaux une prédilection attestée dès l'origine de son histoire." A demon should not dominate what is ordinarily sanctified space. The resulting paradox causes the literary cemetery to become fantastic space.

Fantastic space influences the circumstances surrounding a hero's actions. The distortion of space causes the hero to lose his point of reference in the real world. The hero therefore cannot know precisely where he is or even how to get back to the real world. In other words, if the hero cannot truly know that an event has occurred or that a person or object is part of the real world, then he is forced to re-examine the veracity of those events. Did the adventure really happen, or can it be explained away? Such is the crux of the fantastic as mediated through fantastic spaces.

2.7. The Fantastic Mode and Medieval Narratives

From the preceding analysis, one obtains a view of the fantastic and its related theories as they are defined within the larger scope of narrative criticism. Three common elements exist in

65 Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 412–413.
fantastic texts and episodes: the intrusion of the supernatural into the everyday life of the hero which produces fear; a hesitation by the hero based on the author’s use of deliberately ambiguous scenarios within the text; and the presence of the otherworld. Critics, such as Jean Molino⁶⁶ and Roger Caillois⁶⁷ have hinted at a fourth element, the open-ended structure of the text, but no critic has actually examined the way the structure is affected by the fantastic.

The fantastic is definable as a mode because of its many distinguishing features: the presence of inexplicable events; the attitude of the characters and readers; the details that indicate /otherness/ within the assumptions and representation of “reality.” The fantastic, as I show through the analysis of my corpus in Chapters 3–6, is more than a compilation of common themes and motifs. It is inextricably inscribed into the very structure of the text as well. What the fantastic offers to the plot of narrative texts is another perspective that interrupts the accepted order and forces both the reader and characters to reevaluate a static situation. But the fantastic is more than just a modus operandi of the plot, it also re-energizes and controls the narrative program, directing the movement of characters from one episode to the next. If the protagonist decides to interpret the supernatural event as just an aberration in nature or something that can be accounted for by his current paradigms of reality, then that character does not progress to the next stage of development. If, however, the character


⁶⁷ Caillois, _Images, images..._, 16.
interprets the supernatural event as a sign to go onward, he enters into the otherworld and the
adventure continues. The distinction between the merveilleux and the fantastic may be based
on the way the text treats the supernatural elements. If the narrative treats the supernatural as
an accepted, normal part of the textual experience, then it is merveilleux. If the supernatural is
treated with ambiguity, fear or hesitation, then it is fantastic.68

Todorov couched the initial definition of the fantastic in terms of a genre that he compared
to the “neighboring” genres of the étrange and the merveilleux. The theories of Dubost,
Jackson, and Hume support the notion of the fantastic as a mode contrasted with mimesis.
This foundational shift in the way the fantastic is approached by critics offers a response to the
debate surrounding the fantastic in medieval literature. When the fantastic is viewed as a
genre, it becomes difficult if not impossible to allow space for the unique aspects of medieval
literature that are seen as naive or ridiculous by modern standards of /otherness/. When the
fantastic is viewed as a mode, the definitions of /otherness/ and reality are established by the
text itself rather than by current societal standards. Freed from the constraints of 19th- and
20th-century prejudices, medieval narratives (and all medieval literature in general) are only
now being opened up to a multiplicity of disciplinary approaches that would have been
heretofore unthinkable.

68 See section 2.1 for a discussion of the symptomatic nature of fear and hesitation as it
relates to the fantastic.
The *merveilleux* has been the *de facto* standard for categorizing the supernatural within French medieval texts for literary criticism since the late 19th century. The tendency to group together all types of strange, unusual and blatantly supernatural events into a single category seems to be the primary reason for a lack of studies addressing the fantastic within medieval literature. Even Francis Dubost only goes so far as to claim that there are "aspects" of the fantastic within the corpus he addresses. However, it has become apparent, through the studies of modern scholars such as Jackson, Molino, Hume and Dubost, that there is a case to be made for the presence of the fantastic in medieval literature. The tendency to allow the *merveilleux* to overshadow the disturbing side of supernatural events within narrative texts has reduced the impact that those darker aspects may represent. That darker side of the supernatural cannot merely be dismissed as a chimera of medieval imagination. While there is much that is *merveilleux* in the main corpus of 12th- and 13th-century French literature, there remains an unacknowledged movement of medieval authors to address the more disturbing experiences as well. To confront the unknown and the ambiguous, one must put aside the need for a satisfactory answer in order to seek a better understanding of that which resists being known.

The "one-to-many" model for the supernatural addresses this issue by accounting for varying degrees of unreality. This approach alleviates the need to justify the philosophical and/or political views which led former critics who concentrate on the fantastic to reject medieval literature as a potential area for research. The structural model I have proposed is based on movement of the hero between parallel worlds (Figure 2.5). Each phase of the his
progress can be identified based on the outcome of the adventure. If the character travels into fantastic space and returns to the real world without entering fully into the otherworld, then the hero has experienced the étrange. The étrange is characterized by a low incidence rate of /otherness/. When the hero passes through fantastic space and arrives in the otherworld, the merveilleux dominates the episode and contains a very high degree of /otherness/. The fantastic episode is an intermediary component in both the étrange and merveilleux episodes, but can also constitute its own type of adventure where /otherness/ is present in a disturbing enough quantity to cause the hero (and reader) to question both reality and the supernatural. Such a model accounts for all the standard symptoms of the fantastic such as hesitation, fear, and ambiguity, but bases them on an underlying support of a deep structure.

The deep structure of the fantastic episode is founded on the inability to discern among a variety of possible endings. The étrange has a logical ending based on the rejection of the supernatural. The merveilleux ends on the characteristically happy note associated with the ability to overcome the trials and difficulties by simply overriding the laws of nature through extraordinary or magical plot devices. The fantastic however has no clear ending and is "open" in the sense that there is a multiplicity of probable endings, an ambiguous ending, or no ending at all. This confusion about the resolution of the narrative program leaves the story
open to all sorts of interpretations. The plausibility of each potential interpretation (or lack thereof) lends a sense of modernity\(^{69}\) to those medieval texts where the conclusion is in doubt.

My model codifies the narrative program of the fantastic according to the unifying theme of the otherworld in conflict with the real world. What makes this different from just any other structure is the presence of the two worlds interacting to create fantastic space. That conflict in turn produces the quantifiable themes of secrecy, deception, fear and hesitation. Also the presence of multiple encoded endings creates ambiguity within the text, causing the reader to experience a sense of crisis in the need for closure. That closure is often impossible to find except within the *merveilleux*, because the real world and its fantastic reflection are not always a neatly defined entity with all the answers provided.

This model is different from existing models for medieval romances by its inclusion of the supernatural as a force flowing from the otherworld, a force that directly influences the narrative program. The supernatural highlights the conflicts and disjunctions within a text by virtue of encoding /otherness/ into the structure as a vital element to understanding and

\(^{69}\) Referring to a trend towards modernism in medieval criticism, Bloch writes, “This disparate group of writings is united by an enthusiastic sense of wonder at the discovery of how familiar the Middle Ages seem within the context of the contemporary discourses of cultural criticism, and thus a sense of relief that those who studied medieval texts are not as irrelevant to the present as many of our own teachers had hoped we would be.” R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, “Introduction,” *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 3.
interpreting that text according to the author's highly organized possible readings. The author uses /otherness/ as a means to create what Eco calls "integrations" as well as what I refer to in section 2.2 as the one-to-many model for the relationship of two conflicting worlds. My model for the fantastic is also different in that it proposes a number of narrative programs that may result from the supernatural influence of the otherworld. The possible scenarios now are expanded to account for the failure of the hero, as well as the traditional scenarios of success associated with merveilleux tales. If it is possible to identify the fantastic mode by virtue of people, places or circumstances that evince /otherness/ (according to the internal standards established by the text), it presents no great leap to extend the effort further by drawing an association between highly fantastic episodes and the structural makeup of the narrative program.

The failure of the hero to complete an adventure is "localized" through the hypothesis of fantastic space. Fantastic space creates a location of uncertainty and ambiguity where the indecisiveness of the hero is characterized by the thematic association with conflicting duties and loyalties. Fantastic space represents the presence of two worlds in one physical space. The fantastic distinguishes itself from the traditional form of the merveilleux by its radical challenge of the authority of realistic discourse and its attitude of questioning the border between reality and the supernatural. Therefore, the fantastic, while conducting a renegotiation with the real, is structured in the intermediate areas between reality and reverie, natural and supernatural, decisive and indecisive. Mimetic discourse is based on an ontological absolute; the fantastic is concerned with the indefinite and the uncertain. Viewed from this
position, mimesis is characterized as presence, structural closure, totalization; the fantastic is open, disruptive, and concerned with indefinite production.

The fantastic represents that unknown part of the supernatural and as such represents a source of questions. By confronting the supernatural and delving into the nuances and variants of its manifestation, the text itself provides the basis for judging the supernatural, supplying the standard by which to evaluate the effects of the fantastic mode. In applying my model for the fantastic, I address the six texts from a common approach. I first develop a structure for the text, then explore the relationship between the fantastic mode and that structure, and consider the use of fantastic space as a means of mitigating between the real world and the otherworld. What I offer in the following chapters is by no means an exhaustive or systematic survey of 12th- and 13th-century romance literature, but a small sampling of narratives that highlight some of the most intriguing aspects of writings from that period. While each work is analyzed with respect to its own internal coherence, similar issues appear in various forms: communication and the use of language to deceive, the use of multiple points of view, the role of the narrator in creating deception and secrecy, and the ability of the hero to decode signs, actions and discourse. Although the selection of texts is small, I hope to raise questions and propose hypotheses that may be applied to other works in order to validate the fantastic mode for those medieval narratives in which the otherworld appears.
3. Le Conte du graal

Chretien de Troyes’ account of the Grail legend is one of the most popular in literature and the topic of much critical discourse. Most probably written between 1180 and 1190, the story of the Grail has subsequently been rewritten and analyzed in a myriad of ways. Indeed there are numerous continuations that attest to the ongoing desire to see the Grail quest accomplished. Because it is far more complex than Chretien’s other works, Le Conte du

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Le Conte du graal offers a particularly rich field for semiotic analysis. It is by far the most open-ended and intricately profound of Chrétien's romances.\footnote{4}

Le Conte du graal is composed of two distinct narratives concerning Perceval and Gauvain. The Gauvain portion (4176 of the total) amounts to nearly half of the poem's 9184 verses, and threatens to become an independent narrative in its own right.\footnote{6} However


\footnote{5} "Because works like Chrétien's romances are to be read on the literary level alone, without reference to allegorical meanings, and because the literal level, as we have seen, lacks the divinely authoritative unity and harmony found by exegetes on the spiritual level(s), such works may seem mysterious or contradictory and thus require the reader's active participation in solving their mysteries, answering their unanswered questions, or filling in their 'blanks' or 'gaps.' However, without the guidance that allegorical works find in church doctrine (and which even non-religious allegories provide, since their symbolic meanings determine their literal actions), the reader of such works can never be certain that any one interpretation is true or correct; these works remain to some extent ambiguous, their meaning indeterminate." Robert S. Sturges, Medieval interpretation: Models of Reading in Literary Narrative, 1100-1500 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991) 33.

\footnote{6} One of the earlier studies entirely devoted to the character of Gauvain is by Jessie Weston, who considers the Conte du graal to be an early version of the "Gawain story," as she discusses in Chapter 3 of her book. She points out a possible ending for the Gawain portion: "Chrétien would have left Gawain lord and master of the Château Merveil, as Perceval was of the Grail Castle." Jessie L. Weston, The Legend of Sir Gawain, (London: David Nutt, 1897) 42. The problem with Weston's assessment is that Perceval was never established as the "master" of the Grail Castle in Chrétien's tale.
Gauvain's adventures are interrupted by the death of the author. Indeed, there are only three distinct narrative units for Gauvain whereas the Perceval section, as shall be shown, contains five major units. Due to the unfinished state of the Gauvain portion, I will concentrate upon Perceval's adventures which offer a complete narrative program, more appropriate for semiotic analysis.

In this chapter, I examine Chrétien's narrative for the fantastic in the structure, themes and content that form Perceval's adventures. The creation of a structural formula for the narrative emerges from the supposition that the fantastic as a mode is revealed in the deep structure of texts (see Chapter 2). The approach is one that seeks to find openness in the narrative plan as a means of evaluating the impact of the fantastic mode on the development of any given adventure. By formalizing the structure in terms of openness, it is possible to comprehend the various structures and messages the author has encoded into a narrative that create a sense of /otherness/ and mystery characteristic of the fantastic. By seeking insight into the formulation of the fantastic mode, I also hope to reveal the structure of Perceval's adventures as one of openness that is able to be interpreted on multiple levels. That is, the structure (as encoded by the author) shifts according to which character's point of view is adopted in the process of narration. The structure for Perceval is different than that which is associated with the widow and with King Arthur.
3.1. Segmenting the Narrative

In order to establish an orderly progression for this discussion of Perceval’s adventures in *Le Conte du graal*, I begin with an analysis of the syntagmatic aspects of the narrative plan before addressing the paradigmatic. It is often necessary to expose as many levels of structuring as possible, both the logical infrastructures that form around actants, and the more obvious level of episodes and points of view. The task of constructing a framework for this narrative begins with the identification of as many of the initial conditions as possible. Todorov has described the *recit* as a succession of states linked by intermediary actions, forming a structure framed by homologous initial and final situations:

Un récit idéal commence par une situation stable qu’une force quelconque vient perturber. Il en résulte un état de déséquilibre; par l’action d’une force dirigée en sens inverse, l’équilibre est rétabli; le second équilibre est bien semblable au premier mais les deux ne sont jamais identiques. Il y a par conséquent deux types d’épisodes dans un récit: ceux qui décrivent un état (d’équilibre ou de déséquilibre) et ceux qui décrivent le passage d’un état à l’autre.7

Todorov’s classification of episodes into states of being and states of becoming8 allows the text to be characterized according to static and dynamic modalities which interact to form the structure of content. In applying my structural model to *Le Conte du graal*, I will first

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8 See section 2.3.1 and Figure 2.2 of this dissertation for a discussion of the need to return to a state of equilibrium.
determine the states of being for Perceval and then examine how they are interconnected in order to proceed logically with the analysis.9

As the central, heroic character, Perceval reveals five distinct states of being, three of disjunction and two of conjunction.10 Linking these five states are four transitional voyages, or states of becoming, that Perceval takes during his adventures: Wales to Logres, Logres to the Grail Castle, the Grail Castle back to Logres, and the on-going quest11 to seek the Grail. In all, Perceval, intentionally or not, moves between three distinct realms. As Perceval matures, his perspective about reality in relation to these realms changes because reality is judged according to a very narrow interpretation of received knowledge. Each time Perceval applies himself to resolving a disjunction, a new voyage is undertaken. These trips are all initiated by Perceval as a means to gain an object, first knighthood (referred to as $O_K$) then reunion with

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9 Greimas sets forth in his “Eléments d’une grammaire narrative” the idea that narrative structures are logically anterior to their linguistic manifestations, thereby suggesting that the primary goal is to determine the states before linking them performatively. A. J. Greimas, “Eléments d’une grammaire narrative” *L’Homme : Revue française d’anthropologie*, Vol. 9, No 3 (1969): 71–92.

10 See Appendix A for an explanation of conjunctive and disjunctive states.

11 Keith Busby defines a quest as “… the deeds of an Erec or an Yvain; in other words, a *quest* can be an *adventure*, or a series of *adventures*, the goal of which is the resolution of a personal or social problem experienced by the hero. Thus, actions carried out with the aim of acquiring *los* and *pris*, when divorced from a quest for love, may be described as *adventure*, and not as a part of a *quest.*” Keith Busby, *Gauvain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980) 391. (Emphasis in the original.)
his mother (O_M) and finally the Grail (O_G). The contents of Perceval's story in *Le Conte du graal* may be initially represented (Table 3.1) as a series of conjunctive and disjunctive states from Perceval's point of view.

**Table 3.1—General structure for Perceval's adventures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Performative action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A_P Perceval in Wales</td>
<td>Disjunction—knighthood S ∪ O_K</td>
<td>Initiates voyage to Logres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_P Perceval in Logres</td>
<td>Disjunction—mother S ∪ O_M</td>
<td>Initiates voyage to Wales, arrives instead at the Grail Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C_P Perceval at the Grail Castle</td>
<td>Disjunction—Grail S ∪ O_G</td>
<td>Returns to Logres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D_P Perceval in Logres</td>
<td>Conjunction—knighthood S ∩ O_K</td>
<td>Wanders through Logres, arrives at hermit's chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E_P Perceval at the hermit's chapel</td>
<td>Conjunction—maternal relative S ∩~ O_M</td>
<td>Permanent state of voyaging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By acknowledging his desire for a particular object, Perceval is forced to choose a course of action that will resolve the disjunction he experiences with that object. Thus each of the states provokes a performative action by the hero—in this case, a voyage. Perceval does not travel as a means of actively seeking adventures, but various adventures do take place as a consequence of his personal goals. The distribution of content remains to be developed by a closer analysis of the actual text, with particular attention to the way those divisions of the content resolve or prolong disjunction.

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12 See Appendix A for a description of the symbols and formulae used to describe the narrative structure according to the Greimassian method.
3.1.1. The Initial Situation in Wales

The initial scene of *Le Conte du graal* reveals an equilibrium to Perceval's established routine: The reader observes a carefree young man setting out to visit men working in the field. This equilibrium is broken by the noisy clatter and racket of five approaching knights. The introductory narrative unit is composed of three episodes:

1. Perceval meets the knights
2. Perceval takes leave of his mother
3. Perceval departs for Logres

Perceval's first encounter with the Arthurian world occurs in the Waste Forest near his mother's house—"Ensi an la forest s'an antre" (l. 85). When Perceval hears the knights, he assumes, as his mother had taught him, that the approaching creatures must be devils (ll. 113–115), then upon seeing them mistakes the knights for angels (ll. 137–138). The use of ironic comedy in this scene heightens the narrative tension through the contrasting use of extremes and stereotypes. Comic irony (directed derisively against the hero) emerges in the story in

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13 The forests as fantastic space is discussed in sections 2.6.1 and 3.4.2 of this dissertation.

14 "Narrative perspective in the poem is complicated by the inscription of opposing points of view which frequently constitute, or coincide with, established modes of evaluation and judgment. For example, the knights riding through the Waste Forest judge the comically innocent Perceval from the standpoint of courtly society (Welshmen are stupid and ignorant, the boy is worse than most, etc...). This is a view with which Chrétien's narrator sympathizes in part, quite naturally because he is addressing a courtly audience, and one which he supports in his own ironic treatment of his hero." Pickens, *op. cit.*, xxii.
the guise of Perceval’s misapprehension of auditory reality. This one episode in the forest has a two-fold purpose—it initiates his quest for knighthood and sets up the paradox of Perceval.\textsuperscript{15} The forest encounter portrays Perceval as a naive and uneducated fool. In unit $B_p$, the paradox is completely formed when he is declared to be the greatest knight ever born.

Examining this narrative unit based on the cycle described in Figure 2.2,\textsuperscript{16} one sees that Perceval’s first experience with the Arthurian world fits the pattern described by Eco and Todorov. The initial state of equilibrium and peace is broken by an event (ll. 100–112) that is falsely interpreted as supernatural. Perceval initially reacts in fear and hesitation (ll. 113–116). He then questions the instructions of his mother (l. 119) and finally integrates the knights into his paradigm of reality (ll. 332–334). The maturation process for Perceval evolves from a position of equilibrium to a situation of instability by means of a change of state.\textsuperscript{17} The change that he undergoes is accomplished through the revealing of a secret. He gains the knowledge that enables him to expand his view of the world.


\textsuperscript{16} See page 75.

\textsuperscript{17} Perceval is going from a static state of being to a dynamic state of becoming. See the above discussion about Todorov, page 113.
Perceval, as the subject of narration, is separated from knighthood, the object which he seeks to obtain in his subsequent travels. As the first narrative unit for Perceval, $A_p$ may be subdivided into three episodes, where the first episode is represented by the semiotic formula $A_p1 = S \cup O_K$ ($S =$ Perceval and $O_K =$ knighthood). When Perceval returns home, he announces to his mother his intention to travel to Arthur’s court and be knighted. Thus, Perceval accepts the implied challenge of his experience and decides to leave the only place he has known (Wales) to go to a new realm (Logres).

The performative action of traveling to Logres prefigures Perceval’s change of narrative state from ignorant youth to knight. Perceval, in seeking to resolve one disjunction creates a second, more insurmountable disjunction between himself and his mother: $A_p2 = S \cup O_M$. This first narrative unit serves to set up two conflicting, yet co-existent goals for the young Perceval, represented as $A_p3 = S \cup O_{M+K}$, where he experiences separation from both goals. In order to pursue the goal of becoming a knight, he must leave his mother. It is the disjunction from his mother that constitutes the common underlying theme which connects the subsequent narrative units.

3.1.2. *Perceval’s Quest for Knighthood*

The second major narrative unit $B_p$, Perceval’s adventures in Logres, is comprised of two major stages that divide into five episodes. First there are the events at the court of Arthur, which make up the first three episodes. Then his subsequent travels through Logres are detailed in the last two episodes.
1. Perceval insults the maiden in the tent
2. Perceval arrives at Arthur's court
3. Perceval defeats the Red Knight
4. Perceval receives training from Gornemant de Gohort
5. Perceval saves Biaurepaire and Blancheflor

On his way to Arthur's court, Perceval encounters a maiden in a tent. He acts upon his mother's instructions about courtly behavior and consequently insults the maiden. This episode serves to highlight the extent of Perceval's disjunction in relation to his goal of knighthood. Misinterpreted communication is the primary cause for Perceval's conflict with the maiden. He does not have any education in the social graces. This first episode, B₁, confirms the formula $S \cup O_K$ and prefigures the negative aspects of Perceval's reception at Arthur's court.

The first voyage finds its culmination at the court of King Arthur, where the second half of Perceval's paradox is announced in the form of a prophetic statement by the laughing lady in episode B₂. By his violent reaction to the prophecy, Keu initiates a conflict involving Perceval, King Arthur, and himself. Arthur makes no attempt to resolve the separation between Perceval and the court until much later in the narrative. Arthur thus fails in his traditional role of being the Sender (one who requires the hero to pursue a quest). Perceval

18 Levels of conflict within the narrative are discussed in section 3.2 below.
Le Conte du graal

After Perceval leaves Arthur’s court, there is a series of adventures and encounters that serve to educate the young knight in the art of chivalry according to the Arthurian world. In each of these episodes, Perceval incrementally obtains the trappings of knighthood. In $B_p.3$, he gains his armor by defeating the Red Knight. Gornemant de Gohort attaches his spurs in a ceremony as part of $B_p.4$, when Perceval receives training. $B_p.5$ is comprised of deeds of valor and he gains a lady’s love. Each episode is formularized as $S \sim O_k$, indicating a partial conjunction. However, even though Perceval is now a knight, he is still separated from Arthur’s court. The goal of knighthood established in $A_p$ has been transformed in $B_p$ into a more complex desire to avenge Keu’s insults and rejoin the court. Therefore Arthurian knighthood as a goal remains incomplete until the conflict with Keu can be resolved and Perceval can be fully integrated into Arthur’s court.

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19 Compare ll. 1006–1030 and ll. 1278–1284 (where Arthur rebukes Keu for having mocked the young Welshman who would have received training at the court) to ll. 3941–45 where Perceval claims to have been made a knight by Arthur.
3.1.3. *Perceval at the Grail Castle*

After completing his training as a knight, rescuing Blancheflor and liberating Biaurepaire, Perceval desires to return to his mother in Wales. This is an attempt by Perceval to resolve the disjunction created between his mother and himself that was established in episode \( A_p 2 \). There are three episodes in narrative unit \( C_p \):

1. Perceval meets the Fisher King
2. Perceval arrives at the Grail Castle
3. Perceval leaves the Grail Castle

Perceval’s concept of reality, associated with Wales (as was seen for the initial narrative unit), has been totally reversed so that Logres is now the standard for reality. This reversal is due to his successful achievement of knighthood and its trappings in \( B_p \). The masculine world has assumed the status of the real world, and the otherworld is now the feminine realm,\(^{20}\) due to Perceval’s mother being there. While traveling, Perceval sees a boat with two men in it in the middle of the river. His main voyage is diverted and, rather than crossing the river, the young knight is directed to the Grail Castle by the Fisher King. Perceval has been turned back

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at the moment when he was the closest to achieving full conjunction with his mother
\[ C_p1 = S \cup O_M. \]

In the Grail Castle, Perceval converses with the Fisher King. While they are waiting for
dinner to be served, three processions corresponding to three objects take place: the sword,
the bleeding lance, and the Grail (all of which represent types of /otherness/\(^{21}\) in the narrative).
Perceval doesn’t speak or inquire about the things he has seen. For his silence, Perceval is
criticized by the narrator (ll. 3209–3219). Perceval is given many chances during dinner to ask
questions about the Grail Procession, but still keeps silent (ll. 3256–3277). One later learns
that the Fisher King is a maternal relative of Perceval. Therefore Perceval continues his
rejection of the feminine world by his lack of participation in the Grail mysteries. This episode
is \[ C_p2 = S \cup O_G. \]

The next morning, when Perceval awakens, all of the inhabitants are gone. The castle is
deserted,\(^{22}\) thus implying that the court of the Fisher King has returned to its own realm.
Perceval’s opportunity, where the supernatural world and the real world co-existed for one
night, has been lost because of his silence. If we consider this sequence as the third unit for

\(^{21}\) See section 3.4.1 below.

\(^{22}\) Other examples of deserted castles are found in *Partenopeus de Blois* and *Guingamor*.
For a further discussion, see Chapter 5.
Perceval, it may be referred to as $C_p^3$, where $C_p^3 = S \cup O_{M+G}$, where both knowledge of the Grail and reunion with his mother have eluded his grasp.

The otherworld rejects Perceval by denying him passage across the river and entry into the supernatural realm. Perceval has learned too well how to be a knight to be allowed into the otherworld. In turn Perceval, by hesitating to ask the necessary question, implicitly rejects the supernatural aspects of the Fisher King's castle (relying on the courtly, masculine model as taught to him by Gornemant de Gohort). If he had asked the questions (and relied on the maternal, feminine model of communication), then he would have participated in the Grail Procession. The opportunity to ask his host about the procession is lost and the mystery of the Grail Castle remains. By failing to accept the adventure and enter into the mysterious rites of the Grail Procession, he adopts an étrange interpretation of these events. Perceval's interpretation is confirmed by his attitude the following morning and later when discussing the situation with his cousin.

3.1.4. Perceval Rejoins Arthur's Court

The fourth narrative unit, like the second, is comprised of two major stages that may be divided into five episodes. First there are the adventures as Perceval travels back into Logres,

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23 For a definition of étrange, see section 1.2.1.
which are the first two episodes. Then subsequent events that reunite him with Arthur’s court comprise the last three episodes:

1. Perceval meets his cousin
2. Perceval defeats the Proud Knight of the Heath
3. Perceval defeats Keu and Sagremors
4. Perceval rejoins Arthur’s court
5. The Hideous Damsel speaks at Arthur’s court

Upon leaving the Grail Castle, Perceval intended to pursue some of the members of the Fisher King’s household into the forest to ask them about the procession. Even when the drawbridge closes, seemingly by itself, Perceval persistently tries to explain the absence of people by surmising that they have gone hunting. By attempting to rationalize the absence of people in the Grail Castle, Perceval considers his adventures to be étrange.

Perceval rides into the forest and comes upon a maiden mourning a dead knight. She is astonished at the sight of him: “Mes mout me mervoil de grant fin” (l. 3432). Her reaction mirrors that of the Fisher King when he encountered Perceval at the river. The maiden correctly guesses that Perceval has lodged at the Grail Castle. She is his cousin (ll. 3564–3567) and by her ability to interpret the Grail mysteries is associated with the feminine world model. Because she is affiliated with Perceval’s mother, she is capable of properly interpreting the significance of the Grail Procession as merveilleux (ll. 3549–3567). Perceval pragmatically concludes that the dead should take care of the dead (l. 3596), again proposing an étrange
interpretation of the events. As the first episode of the fourth narrative segment, this unit may be represented as \( D_p^1 = S \cap O_K \). Perceval has, by this time, totally rejected the feminine world of his mother and its messengers.

Perceval then encounters a wretched lady on a thin palfrey. This is the lady of the Proud Knight of the Heath. In this encounter (ll. 3657–3960), Perceval is given the opportunity to right the wrong he had previously done to her (ll. 617–813). He defeats the Proud Knight and sends him and his lady to King Arthur’s court. By operating according to the courtly, masculine world model, Perceval atones for the wrongs he did when previously operating from the maternal, feminine world model. He is now reversing the errors of former actions that were based on ignorance of chivalrous conduct and therefore \( D_p^2 = S \cap O_K \).

The next episode is the complement to the second episode in unit \( B_p \) and involves the integration of Perceval into the Arthurian court. In the morning, Perceval sets off to pursue chivalric adventures\(^{24}\) (ll. 4130–4133). He hesitates at the sound of the geese flying overhead and remains frozen in contemplation of three drops of blood on the snow (ll. 4168–4181). This hesitation is \( \text{étrange} \) rather than fantastic as the narrator gives a perfectly logical explanation for the phenomenon. In Todorov’s definition of the fantastic, hesitation by the hero was the definitive qualifier of what is and is not fantastic. As I stated in Chapter 1, I do

\[^{24}\text{This is the first time that Perceval consciously sets out to pursue adventures according to the tradition of the wandering knight.}\]
not believe that hesitation by itself is enough to warrant a fantastic interpretation of an event. Instead, as is seen here, the hesitation is logically explained by the narrator. Todorov’s hesitation is explicitly tied to an event where supernatural and natural orders are in conflict. In Perceval’s hesitation, no supernatural influence is evident. Three different knights come out to challenge Perceval while he is daydreaming—Sagremors, Keu, and Gauvain. He defeats Keu and Sagremors in episode $D_p 3 = S \bowtie O_K$. Finally Gauvain is sent out to reason with the unknown knight. If Perceval had defeated all three knights it would have represented a total defeat and rejection of Arthur’s world order. Instead, Perceval is won back into that society by the kindness, restraint, and reason of Gauvain.  

The final episode ($D_p 5$) in this unit concerns the arrival of the Hideous Damsel. She makes a speech that is very similar in nature to that of the Perceval’s cousin at the beginning of this narrative unit ($D_p 1$). Both refer to Perceval as “maleureus” (ll. 3548, 4628). They also both allude to his silence as a sin brought about by the abandonment of his mother in $A_p 2$. Both women also correctly interpret the consequences of Perceval’s silence and blame it upon his successful pursuit of knighthood. He has finally achieved a full state of conjunction with $O_K$, making this episode $D_p 5 = S \bowtie O_K$.

25 Keith Busby states that one of the primary activities of Gauvain is to bring knights to court, “On occasions where knights refuse to come to court of their own free will, Gauvain is sent to persuade them to do so.” Busby, Gauvain ..., 384.
3.1.5. Perceval at the Hermit’s Chapel

The next narrative sequence concerning Perceval occurs five years after the dispersion of knights from Arthur’s courts (ll. 6183–6189). The closing narrative unit is composed of three episodes:

1. Perceval meets the pilgrims
2. Perceval talks with the hermit
3. Perceval seeks the Grail Castle

Perceval wanders about for five years, and virtually ignores his pledge (ll. 4693–4706) to seek the answers to his questions about the Grail Procession. This episode, $E_p1 = S \cup O_{M+G}$, is not directly included in the narrative, but only alluded to in Perceval’s conversation with the pilgrims on Good Friday. He arrives at the dwelling of a holy hermit in the forest. Perceval discusses his adventures with the hermit who interprets them and provides the answers to his questions about the Grail Procession. Perceval now knows the answer to his question of what the Grail signifies and who is served from it. He has been absolved of his initial sin of separation from his mother. This episode is part two of the fifth narrative unit for Perceval,

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26 Pickens asserts that this five-year period, which is virtually unaccounted for in the Graal, serves to provide continuity with Perceval’s adventures as recounted in Cligés and Erec et Enide. "In writing Li Contes del Graal Chrétien, in effect, provides the ‘adolescent adventures’ (enfances) of the knight who, in his first two romances, appears to be an accepted figure in the Arthurian court, a fixture at the Round Table; thus, in terms of this hero’s biography, the events in Chrétien’s last romance predate those of his first two.” Pickens, op. cit., xxi.
The adventure of the Grail Procession at the Fisher King's castle (C_p2) remains unresolved. Perceval has learned the answers to his questions but the Fisher King's infirmity lingers. Perceval must therefore wander for the rest of his days (ll. 6434–6439). This final ongoing voyage represents the third episode, E_p3 = S ∪ O_G. Chrétien mentions in ll. 6474–6478 that he will speak again of Perceval. However, as Le Conte du graal remains an unfinished work, one can only speculate as to the eventual narrative resolution of C_p2. Both B_p and C_p contain threads of the narrative program that remain unresolved and may be potential sources for further action, namely his promise to return to Biaurepaire and his failure to save the Grail kingdom. Based on the above syntagmatic analysis of the text, it is now possible to refine the preliminary structure for Perceval's adventures in Le Conte du graal by dividing the narrative units into episodes (Table 3.2): 27

27 The shaded areas represent the fantastic. See Appendix A for a résumé of the symbols and formulae.
Table 3.2—Refined structure for Perceval's adventures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Performative action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ap</strong> Perceval in Wales</td>
<td>Ap1 (Perceval meets the knights)</td>
<td>Disjunction—knighthood $S \cup O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ap2 (Perceval talks with his mother)</td>
<td>Disjunction—mother $S \cup O_M$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ap3 (Perceval leaves Wales)</td>
<td>Disjunction—knighthood and mother $S \cup O_{K+M}$</td>
<td>Initiates voyage to Logres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bp</strong> Perceval in Logres</td>
<td>Bp1 (Perceval insults the maiden)</td>
<td>Disjunction—knighthood $S \cup O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bp2 (Perceval at Arthur's court)</td>
<td>Disjunction—knighthood $S \cup O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bp3 (Perceval defeats the Red Knight)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bp4 (Perceval receives training)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bp5 (Perceval at Biaurepaire)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td>Initiates voyage to Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cp</strong> Perceval at the Grail Castle</td>
<td>Cp1 (Perceval meets the Fisher King)</td>
<td>Disjunction—mother $S \cup O_M$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cp2 (Perceval at the Grail Castle)</td>
<td>Disjunction—Grail $S \cap \sim O_G$</td>
<td>Returns to Logres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cp3 (Perceval leaves the Grail Castle)</td>
<td>Disjunction—mother and Grail $S \cup O_{M+G}$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dp</strong> Perceval in Logres</td>
<td>Dp1 (Perceval meets his cousin)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dp2 (Perceval defeats the Proud Knight)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dp3 (Perceval pauses in the snowy meadow)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—knighthood $S \cap \sim O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dp4 (Perceval joins Arthur's court)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—Arthur's knights $S \cap O_K$</td>
<td>Wanders through Logres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dp5 (The Hideous Damsel condemns Perceval)</td>
<td>Full conjunction—knighthood $S \cap O_K$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ep</strong> Perceval with the hermit</td>
<td>Ep1 (Perceval meets the pilgrims)</td>
<td>Disjunction—mother and Grail $S \cup O_{M+G}$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ep2 (Perceval talks with the hermit)</td>
<td>Partial conjunction—mother $S \cap \sim O_M$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ep3 (Perceval seeks the Grail)</td>
<td>Disjunction—Grail $S \cup O_G$</td>
<td>Permanent state of voyaging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some basic observations about the structure of the narrative program for *Le Conte du graal* may prove to be beneficial at this point. Units $A_p$, $C_p$, and $E_p$ mirror each other and are connected to the feminine, maternal world. Each of these units contains three parallel episodes (Table 3.3). Each of the initial episodes finds Perceval wandering through a forest. The second episode of each segment contains a transitional event that changes Perceval’s perspective of reality and provokes a performative action on his part. The performative action is found in the third episode of each unit and is always a voyage in search of an object. $A_p3$ is Perceval’s voyage to Logres to seek knighthood. $C_p3$ is Perceval’s voyage back to Logres to find Arthur’s court. $E_p3$ is Perceval’s search for the Grail. This pattern corresponds to Todorov’s states of being and states of becoming in that Perceval starts out each episode in a state of being or equilibrium. The various adventures force him into a state of becoming, first a knight, then a redemptor and finally a seeker. The fantastic mode is operative during these states of becoming.

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28 “The hero goes out and returns to and from points on two axes, but successive pivotal episodes are modulations of the preceding episodes on the same axis. Just as the Waste Forest, the Grail Castle, and the hermitage episodes refer to each other incrementally, but are not exactly the same thing, which is obvious, so Arthur and the Arthurian court are different at Carduel and at Carlion, where the court is ‘based’ when it meets Perceval on the snowy plain.” Pickens, *The Welsh Knight...*, 53.

29 See Todorov’s *Qu’est-ce que le structuralisme...*, *passim*. 
In the process of becoming a knight and being integrated into Arthur's court, Perceval experiences several adventures that clearly align with the masculine, Arthurian model of conduct. Unit B_p accounts the formative process of knighthood for Perceval. During these events, Perceval commits many errors. He insults maidens, behaves rudely in Arthur's court, and chatters incessantly. In unit D_p, he seems to be reversing or correcting all the mistakes made in the earlier Arthurian unit, B_p (Table 3.4). Especially significant is the resolution of Perceval's paradox and the fulfillment of the Laughing Lady's prophecy.

Table 3.4—Reversed structure for Perceval's adventures in Logres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit B_p</th>
<th>Unit D_p</th>
<th>Reversal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B_p1 (Perceval insults the maiden)</td>
<td>D_p5 (The Hideous Damsel insults Perceval)</td>
<td>Perceval uses false communication; Perceval receives true communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_p2 (Perceval at Arthur's court)</td>
<td>D_p4 (Perceval joins Arthur's court)</td>
<td>The paradox is announced; the paradox is resolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_p3 (Perceval defeats the Red Knight)</td>
<td>D_p3 (Perceval defeats Sagremors and Keu)</td>
<td>Perceval avenges the King's insult; Perceval avenges Keu's insults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_p4 (Perceval receives training)</td>
<td>D_p2 (Perceval defeats the Proud Knight)</td>
<td>Perceval learns the skills of knighthood; Perceval acts as a true knight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_p5 (Perceval at Biaurepaire)</td>
<td>D_p1 (Perceval meets his cousin)</td>
<td>Perceval sets out for Wales; Perceval abandons the trip to Wales.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the real structural principle underlying Perceval’s adventures is perhaps that of disruption (or a lack of equilibrium) and the resulting tragedy. According to the theory of Gustav Freytag, Le Conte du graal fits the structure of a tragedy. The five movements of Freytag’s pyramid—Exposition, Complication, Climax, Reversal, and Catastrophe—match the five units of Perceval’s adventures. The exposition of Perceval as a paradoxical character is initiated in A_p. His character is further complicated by the combination of uncouth and chivalrous actions that typify his adventures in B_p. The central scene of the Grail Castle, for which the narrative is named, surely fits the definition of a climax. As noted above, the events of D_p reverse Perceval’s actions and errors committed in B_p. Finally, the overwhelming dispersal of Arthur’s knights can only be characterized as a catastrophe for the king and kingdom. The fate of the Fisher King also represents the continuation of a tragedy.

When the Graal is viewed as a tragedy, the events that precede and follow Perceval’s adventure are clearly associated with the link between a king’s health and the prosperity of the land. The widow’s lands are wasted and their ruler is dead. The Fisher King’s kingdom is caught between the real world and the otherworld. His people and lands remain perpetually unhealed, a state which characterizes the conflict between masculine and feminine worlds.


31 Climax is defined as “The point of greatest tension; the culminating point in a progressive intensification. In traditional plot structure, the climax constitutes the highest point of the rising action.” Prince, Dictionary..., 14.
Chrétiens creates a sense of apocalyptic doom hanging over Arthur’s kingdom. A question that implicitly demands resolution is inherent in the correlation between the three realms: Will the same fate befall Arthur’s lands as has already occurred in Wales and the Fisher King’s lands? The narrative does not give any indication of an answer or of hope that the conflict will be positively resolved.

3.2. Levels of conflict

Perceval undertakes four distinct voyages in the course of his adventure and, intentionally or not, moves between three worlds. In the preceding syntagmatic analysis of the text it was determined that these voyages are all initiated by Perceval as a means to reach various goals: knighthood, reunion with his mother, and finally knowledge of the Grail. A number of textual disjunctions are engendered or revealed by these voyages:

1. The conflict between masculine and feminine realms
2. The paradox of Perceval
3. The search for the Red Knight
4. The quest for the Grail.

3.2.1. The Conflict Between the Masculine and Feminine Realms

The preliminary conflict is enunciated by the widow. Her anguished explanation to her son Perceval reveals a blight that endured for a long time: “Les terres furent escillées / Et les povres gens avillies” (ll. 447–448). Conditions have not improved and evil has increased (ll. 428–434). The image of a war-torn land is associated with Perceval’s father, his brothers,
and all knights. Under these conditions, Perceval’s lack of instruction is deliberate and calculated to keep him from the masculine influence of knights and courtly customs of conduct. It is against a background of an imperiled Arthurian court that the discontinuity between Perceval’s actions and his words achieve their maximum significance. For not only are the widow’s lands devastated, but Arthur’s realm is also imperiled. Later in the narrative, the words of the Hideous Damsel extend the damage into the future. She notes, using the same verbal construct as the widow, that because of Perceval’s reticence “Terres an seront essilliees” (l. 4645); the wasting and ruin will continue. The five knights represent the intrusion of the Arthurian world into Perceval’s world. In contrast, there is the feminine world of peace and isolation, Wales, embodied in Perceval’s mother.32 Thus we see the first instance in this romance where two distinct and opposing world views come into contact (Figure 3.1):

The crisis in Arthur’s kingdom is personified by the Red Knight, who has stolen the King’s cup and insulted the queen. While rudely pursuing his own desire for knighthood, Perceval unwittingly becomes the only defender of the court when he unceremoniously defeats the Red Knight. During the journey from Arthur’s court to Biaurepaire, Perceval learns how to behave in the world of men and how not to act according to the feminine model he had previously learned from his mother. These episodes also serve to increase his reputation and fame as a knight in that the events still take place in Logres and are the fulfillment of Perceval’s training according to the Arthurian, masculine model of behavior. A further level of deterioration in Arthur’s kingdom becomes evident in the siege at Biaurepaire. The feminine and masculine are more directly in conflict, as manifested in the opposition of Blancheflor to the overtures of Clamadeu through Anguigeron. Thus on three different levels—wasted lands, traitorous knights assailing their lords, and attacks on women—there are serious, long-standing conflicts between the masculine and feminine modes of conduct.
The hermit indicates that Perceval was unable to ask the proper questions at the Grail Castle because of his original sin of leaving his mother (ll. 6358b–6385). Thus, by the words of the hermit, the initial narrative formula of $A_p2 = S \cup O_m$ is confirmed. Namely, the separation of Perceval ($S$) from his mother ($O_m$) results in the narrative chain $A_p \rightarrow B_p \rightarrow C_p$, so that by inference $A_p \rightarrow C_p$. Specifically, the initial sin of leaving his mother, and the maternal, feminine world for the Arthurian, masculine world, causes his failure to speak at the Grail Castle. 33

This failure may be defined in terms of a disjunction between the masculine and feminine worlds. The most poignant articulation of this situation is made by Perceval’s cousin, the Weeping Maiden, in $D_p1$: “Mes or saches que grant enui/ En avandra toi et autrui./ Por le peché, ce saches tu,/ De ta mere t’est avenu,” (l. 3557–3560). Perceval’s discussion with his cousin mirrors his previous encounter with the knights in $A_p1$. There he misinterpreted the significance of the five knights and their arms, choosing to react as if he were in the presence of the supernatural. In segment $D_p1$, he also misinterprets the role of the objects in the procession, persisting in believing that there was nothing extraordinary about the experience.

33 “Judged in the light of the Grail, however, the hero’s silence results from his sinful abandonment of his mother, who falls in the Waste Forest. Two ways of looking at the same thing; but the view of the Grail axis focuses on the prime cause, in the light of which the entire process of socialization is, incrementally, abandonment of his mother, while the courtly assessment emphasizes an effect in the long sequence of causally linked events beginning with the same sin which is, however, beyond the purview of psychological realism.” Pickens, The Welsh Knight..., 98.
What should have been interpreted as *étrange* in the first example was experienced as *merveilleux* and vice versa. This mixing of interpretations reveals a use of the fantastic mode in dealing with Perceval’s reactions, as the confusion between reality and the supernatural is inherent to the definition of the fantastic developed in Chapter 2. Perceval embodies the conflict between the masculine and feminine worlds. This conflict is textually actualized when Perceval decides to leave Wales and is most clearly enunciated in the paradoxical statements of the Laughing Lady.

### 3.2.2. *The Paradox of Perceval*

The words of the Laughing Lady reveal a paradox that causes controversy in the court. Chrétien has successfully established another level of tension in the narrative—namely how is the image of Perceval as a naïve youth going to be reconciled with the lady’s prophecy that no greater knight exists or will exist in the history of chivalry? The narrator creates such a wide gap between the reality of Perceval’s uneducated simplicity and his desire to be knighted that there is an increased level of shock and surprise produced by the pronouncement by the lady:

> "Vaslez, se tu viz par aaige,  
Je pans et croi an mon coraige  
Qu'an trestot le monde n'avra  
N'il n'ert, ne l'anne l'i savra,  
Nul meillor chevalier do toi.  
Ensi le pans et cuit et croi." (ll. 1019–1024)

Referring to the statement of the Laughing Lady and the Fool, Pickens writes, “Their statements are paradoxical in that they are unexpected and contrary to all (courtly) reason, yet
they are true.”\textsuperscript{34} Keu reacts violently to the lady’s statement and refuses to accept the paradox or to acknowledge the possibility that there may be a greater knight than himself. The jester has spoken many times about the arrival of Perceval (ll. 1039–1042). Perceval presents a contradiction to the various characters in the real world. He is masculine and yet acts according to feminine dictates. The paradox of Perceval formalizes the delusive nature\textsuperscript{35} of Perceval’s adventure, as he is the one who could bring about a reunion of the feminine and masculine. He fails to do so, only because of the predominance of the masculine influences in the story.

The process of resolving Perceval’s paradox begins when he hesitates upon seeing three drops of blood in the snow. As previously noted, this particular hesitation is not fantastic,\textsuperscript{36} as the narrator gives a perfectly natural explanation for the phenomenon. The true nature of Perceval’s hesitation is less apparent and linked to his tendency to misinterpret signs and language. In this episode, Perceval’s reactions are tied to his memories of Blancheflor and his presence in the meadow is due to the abandonment of the search for his mother. In terms of feminine symbolism, each woman represents a different world. Blancheflor is tied to the real

\textsuperscript{34} Pickens, \textit{The Welsh Knight...}, 90.

\textsuperscript{35} For a discussion of the delusive nature of the fantastic, see section 2.1 of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{36} See page 125.
world. His mother is aligned with the supernatural world.\textsuperscript{37} Once again, Perceval is treating a natural phenomenon as if it were extraordinary.

\textbf{D}_{p3} represents the fulfillment of the prophecy by the jester and the completion of Perceval’s promise to the Laughing Lady. Perceval’s reversal of perspectives causes behavior which is interpreted by Sagremors and Keu as unusual and threatening. They therefore approach Perceval as if he were an enemy. Each time Perceval reacts to an approaching knight, another portion of the paradox is resolved. First, the defeat of Sagremors establishes Perceval’s stature as a great knight. Secondly, the defeat of Keu completes the prophecy of the jester. Finally, the meeting with Gauvain brings about a conjunction and merging of Perceval as the Welshman and Perceval as the Red Knight into one person. Each of the three resolutions is accomplished through Perceval’s continued hesitation and quite obviously none of them is fantastic.

The original conflicting images that were initially juxtaposed in the statement of the laughing lady in the narrative unit \textbf{B}_{p2} are finally merged into one cohesive and consistent characterization of Perceval. Now that Perceval has been fully formed by his adventures, the young knight can finally speak forth his real name with certainty: “Sire, comant avez vos non? / –Percevax, sire.” (ll. 4448–4449a). Perceval has finally obtained a state of conjunction with

\textsuperscript{37} See the discussion of segment \textbf{C}_{p1} above.
his original goal of becoming a knight. But the achievement far outweighs the original goal in that he has become one of Arthur's knights.

3.2.3. The Search for the Red Knight

The *Graal* contains a second narrative program when viewed from King Arthur's point of view. Arthur repeatedly states that he would like to have Perceval as a member of his court. Perceval's integration into Arthur's entourage also resolves another level of conflict in the story—the disjunction between King Arthur and the Red Knight. When Perceval first arrives at court in Segment Bp2, both the Red Knight and Keu ridicule him. But Perceval remains oblivious to their scorn. King Arthur, while able to recognize his potential, remains silent and is relatively powerless to control the circumstances. The king is unable to retain Perceval as a knight in his court. "Et li rois Artus fu asis/ Au chief d'une table pansis;/ Et tuit li chevalier manjoient,/ Et li un as autres parloient,/ Fors lui qui fu pansis et muz." (ll. 887–891). Arthur's lack of control over his seneschal is emphasized by Keu's extreme ability to insult guests. Twice Arthur reproaches Keu for his evil tongue (ll. 1220–1224, 2843–2847). As the seneschal, Keu represents Arthur, yet his words convey the exact opposite message to that which the king would wish. In Dp4, Arthur sends out his knights, allowing them to speak on his behalf. The only one capable of reading the signs and communicating with Perceval is Gauvain, who convinces Perceval to join the other knights in Arthur's tents.

The initial threat to the court by the original Red Knight is converted into a desire to integrate the new Red Knight into Arthurian society. This desire increases throughout the
narrative as captives are sent to surrender themselves to Arthur. With the arrival of each new prisoner, the Red Knight, as the object of Arthur’s desire, increases in reputation and stature. Eventually, with the arrival of Clamedeau, Arthur is forced out of the immobility of court life into a voyage of his own. Whereas initially, Perceval undertakes a voyage to seek Arthur, now the king will in turn seek Perceval. Arthur’s initial appearance in the narrative coincides with Perceval’s second narrative unit—$B_p$. The voyage in search of Perceval begins while Perceval himself is at the Grail Castle—$C_p$. As presented in section 3.1.4, Arthur and Perceval are reunited in $D_p$. The resulting narrative structure from Arthur’s quest to seek the Red Knight is a linear one of $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$, with the first and last narrative units from Perceval’s structure framing the king’s experience. Arthur’s adventure is therefore formulated in terms of Perceval’s experiences. For the first time in a romance by Chretien, Arthur is not the Sender who initiates narrative actions but rather the one who seeks. Arthur reacts to the independent actions of an unknown knight. At this level of structuring, the overall narrative program of the Graal is completely successful. The disjunction created by Keu is resolved by the reasoning powers of Gauvain. Perceval is integrated into courtly life, proven by his subsequent five years of service to King Arthur. Since the resolution of the conflict is achieved

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38 In all of Chrétien’s romances, except Cligés, Arthur sends knights out on quests. In Cligés, while Arthur does not initiate the adventure, neither does he himself get caught up in the action to such a degree that he himself takes on a quest. In the case of Perceval, Arthur has a definite plan with a clear goal of finding and appeasing the Red Knight.
through logic, it represents an étrange scenario according to Todorov’s definition of étrange.\textsuperscript{39}

3.2.4. The Quest for the Grail

The fourth level of conflict is initiated when Perceval and the other knights go in search of the Grail. “As they are objects of narrative, expository and interrogatory discourse, and especially of questions that have remained unarticulated, so the Grail and Bleeding Lance must, because of Perceval’s failure at communication, become objects of quests, journeys into the unknown during the course of which heroes yield to the powers of adventure and destiny.”\textsuperscript{40} The mystery of the Grail is the only disjunction that remains totally unresolved in Perceval’s story. By choosing to pursue the Grail and abandon Arthur, the knights increase the conflict between the real world and the otherworld. They reject the court lifestyle of reticence and immobility for an adventure that offers both earthly and supernatural rewards.

For King Arthur, the return of Perceval to his retinue eventually brings about a greater loss—a great number of Arthur’s knights decide to leave the court. The pronouncements of the Hideous Damsel provoke the exodus of knights from Arthur’s court. The condemnation of the Arthurian mode of life (where the knights up to this point have remained at court instead

\textsuperscript{39} See section 1.2.1.

\textsuperscript{40} Pickens, “Introduction...,” xix.
going forth into the world) is implied. Because of the training Perceval received while in the Arthurian realm of Logres, the adventure of the Grail Procession was unsuccessful. As a direct result, the very substance of that Arthurian realm departs from the court and instead seeks the Fisher King’s court. The fantastic mode persists because there is an increase in disjunction which serves to perpetuate the mystery of the Grail.

The various levels of conflict in this first half of Le Conte du graal seemingly form a compounding disaster that culminates in the loss of knights and retainers at Arthur’s court. Perceval’s actions as he travels from realm to realm initiate a chain-reaction of loss and depopulation, the results of which are similar to the devastation and wasted state of Wales at the beginning of the story. Perceval’s failure at the Grail Castle results in its depopulation the following morning. The tragedy of the Fisher King and his court spreads outward to include Arthur’s court, where the wasting effects of miscommunication depopulate the court and threaten to ravage the land. The Hideous Damsel indicates by her words that the king who is fed from the Grail will never be healed to rule again (l. 4640) and various problems will continue to dominate society—ladies will lose their husbands, lands will be laid waste, and helpless maidens will be orphaned (ll. 4644–4649). These disasters mirror the three levels of crisis found at the beginning of the narrative and are clearly associated with Arthur’s rule. Thus the initial conflict between masculine and feminine worlds continues to be unresolved.
3.3. *Communication Models in* Le Conte du graal

All of the levels of conflict examined above have one thing in common: the inability to communicate clear and direct messages about the real world. When defining /otherness/ in section 2.1, I stated that secrecy and deception are the main ways that the supernatural affects the real world. In the *Graal*, secrecy and deception comprise the most common types of communication. Perceval’s mother creates a secret about knights in order to protect her son. King Arthur experiences a number of losses due to his inability to speak out when necessary. Arthur remains speechless when Keu ridicules Perceval. Throughout the story, Keu cannot control his tongue. In subsequent episodes, Arthur frequently laments his ineffectiveness to retain Perceval in his court. Arthur’s inability to intervene on behalf of Perceval will be mirrored later on in Perceval’s silence at the Grail Castle, only with more dire consequences. Arthur, in the episode of the Hideous Damsel, again is powerless to speak. This time he loses not one, but all the knights from his court as they rush off to seek the Grail. It seems that the only one who can reach Perceval is the hermit, and even then Perceval is taught secret prayers and unutterable words (ll. 6448–6455). Clearly communication and the lack thereof are key elements within the narrative program for *Le Conte du graal*. Secrets and delusion are created by virtue of the conflict between the masculine and feminine worlds. Figure 3.2 formalizes the relationship between world views and types of communication:
In the feminine realm, communication about knighthood is forbidden and therefore knighthood is a secret that is kept from Perceval. The concealment of knowledge about the real world from Perceval occurs by virtue of maternal actants in the narrative. However, those who are able to communicate about the supernatural in a clear fashion are also associated with Perceval’s mother, which reinforces the association of speech with the feminine aspects of the *Graal*. The first to explain the mysteries of the Grail Castle is Perceval’s female cousin. Perceval ignores her words, reinforcing his newly-formed affiliation with the Arthurian, masculine world of Logres. The hermit represents the second maternal relative to speak about the Grail mysteries. This time Perceval is receptive to the message, perhaps because the messenger is a man. However, that does not relieve him of his penance for failing to speak at the Grail Procession. Perceval has learned all too well the lessons of Gornemant and says too little too late.

### 3.3.1 Secrecy

The *Graal* contains two major secrets. The existence of knights is kept a secret from Perceval, creating a delusion that he is a fool. The secrets of the Grail realm are much more deeply held. Information about the Fisher King and his court is revealed incrementally and
Le Conte du graal

operates on several levels in the narrative program. Thus Chrétien is able to create mystery around the central object in this romance. He, as narrator, makes many comments about knighthood in relation to Perceval's thoughts, actions and speech whenever the topic is about Arthurian society and manners. In contrast, this same narrative voice is curiously silent at those moments in the story when the reader most needs clarification and direction about the Grail adventure.41

The five knights are deluded by Perceval's talkative nature into labeling him a simpleton. The delusion created by the juxtaposition of "masculine" and "talkative" is perhaps indicative of the fantastic mode where the semblance of reality conceals the underlying presence of /otherness/. The information about knighthood is a secret that can easily be unveiled. Training in courtly behavior and the skill associated with knighthood is all that is required for Perceval to rectify his lack of knowledge. His mother has sheltered him in Wales from the devastation she associates with Arthur and his court. It takes Gornemant just a few hours' work to hone Perceval's natural skills before the young man leaves for Biaurepaire.

However, there is a second area where Perceval's mother has denied him the information he needs to be successful— that is, information about his maternal heritage in relation to the

41 Rupert Pickens discusses this aspect of the narrative voice extensively throughout his article about the prologue and narrative intentions. He states that narrative commentary constitutes 1.3% of discourse about the Grail, as opposed to 51% direct discourse on the part of internal characters. Pickens, "Le Conte du graal...", 339, n13.
Grail kingdom. The location of the Grail Castle is a secret to the outside world. The Grail Procession and its objects are a mystery. This central narrative unit receives the most commentary from internal characters related to Perceval's mother.\textsuperscript{42} In spite of three separate, long discourses on the nature of the Grail, Perceval persistently ignores or misinterprets the significance of his adventure. The one who has the most knowledge about the Grail kingdom is the widow. Concentrating her speech on the loss of her husband and sons, the widow fails to even mention that Perceval still has living relatives. With more information about his family's past, perhaps Perceval would have been more capable of responding to the mysteries of the Grail Procession. To him at the time they are curiosities that bear no relation to him or his goals. In retrospect, any additional maternal instructions could have averted his silence at the Grail Castle.

### 3.3.2. Silence

As part of Perceval's training, Gornemant tells him not to talk too much (ll. 1624–1632). Reinhard states that this type of injunction is a taboo much more ancient than the dictates of chivalry. "In \textit{Le Conte du graal} it seems that the geis performs a function analogous to that in Irish literature. ... Here the story is elaborated by means of the restraint effected by the prohibition: If there were no injunction against talking, there would be no story."\textsuperscript{43} This

\textsuperscript{42} These three explicative passages are discussed in section 3.4.4, below.

\textsuperscript{43} John Revell Reinhard, \textit{The Survival of Geis in Mediaeval Romance} (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1933) 152-53.
prohibition on speech is also found in *Erec et Enide*, where the husband commands his wife to not say a word unless he addresses her first (ll. 2768–2773). Enide, thinking of his safety, breaks the injunction four times. But the violation of this taboo will exact a penalty, as Erec states to Enide (ll. 3553–3570). In both tales, speech is presented as effective for avoiding danger. Speech in the real world is forbidden by Gornemant, but is desirable at the Grail Castle. The discourse of the Hideous Damsel is prophetic in tone and implies that tragedy will result from Perceval’s silence. The Grail mystery can only be solved by the intervention of words. Thus the *geis* against speech produces a sense of impending doom and increases the level of tragedy associated with the Grail quest.

Perceval keeps silent as the Grail repeatedly passes by him. He reacts incorrectly to a supernatural event since, when he should react, he pretends that nothing extraordinary has occurred. The fantastic mode is revealed in the juxtaposition of a supernatural event and an *étrange* interpretation. This situation leaves the land a “terre gaste” as before. The power of his words would have healed all the lands. The narrative voice announces the disaster, but it is not until the next morning that we see the true effects of Perceval’s silence—the castle is depopulated. He acknowledges five years too late that he had participated in an extraordinary adventure of which he failed to take advantage. This can only bring him heartache because he didn’t fulfill his Christian duty which is the third part of knightly duties. Thus he wanders

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unrepentant and unconfined until meeting the hermit, who explains to him the significance of
the events he witnessed. Until his meeting with the hermit, Perceval is only saddened that he
did not have his curiosity satisfied. He has no awareness of the effects of his actions on others
until the hermit enlightens him.

3.3.3. The Fantastic Mode and Communication

With the fantastic mode, what is not said (what is kept secret) is often more important
than what is said. The lack of narrative commentary during C, is curiously similar to the
widow's negligence in educating her only living son. The same limitations that have influenced
the perceptions of meaning also reveal the expression of thought. Perceval does not hesitate to
question the significance of the Grail Procession, he hesitates to verbalize his thoughts. In his
ability to take signs and decode their meaning, he has progressed from the ignorant youth of
the Waste Forest, but has not developed so far as to judge properly when speech and silence
are best applied. This silence is again mirrored in his trance-like state before the three drops of
blood on the snow. In that scene, he overestimates the significance of the sign with potentially
dangerous consequences. Perceval is attacked by two knights of the court who could have
easily killed him. Keu and Sagremors both speak to Perceval before attacking. It is only their
warnings that alert the silent Perceval. Perceval himself has still not learned the timely use of
words.

As readers, we know from the narrator what the consequences of silence are. But do we
know what the consequences of speech would have been? The Perceval portrayed in \( A_p \) may
have been capable of asking questions at the Grail Castle, but could he, at that level of maturity, have understood the answers and used the knowledge effectively? Success in the narrative’s central adventure, restoration of the Grail kingdom, can be achieved only through acts of language, and Perceval’s failure is precisely his reluctance to enter into dialogue with the Fisher King. The widow tells Perceval that he is of noble lineage, yet fails to mention any of their relatives associated with the Grail kingdom—the Weeping Maiden, the Fisher King and the hermit—or even allude to the existence of that kingdom. His mother gave him instruction of the Arthurian world that he was about to enter along with some rudimentary details of his religious duties. But Perceval misuses his new-found knowledge by abusing the lady in the tent. He could not properly interpret and use the instructions. Perhaps it is the very lack of knowledge and ambiguity about the consequences of communication that tantalized Chrétien’s contemporaries and subsequent continuators of the Grail myth. The text does not offer any answers beyond the need to question. The continuous questioning of the Grail mysteries reveals the fantastic as a mode within Le Conte du graal.

3.4. Fantastic Aspects and Structure in the Graal

As manifested in the examination of the structure of narrative sequences concerning Perceval in Le Conte du graal, there is a definite correlation between movements among worlds and the pursuit of a desired object. There are three distinct realms or worlds involved in Perceval’s adventures: Wales (feminine), Logres (masculine), and the Fisher King’s realm (indeterminate). As Perceval moves between each of these worlds conflicts are engendered or resolved, objects are desired and obtained, and messages are exchanged or secrecy is
maintained. The fantastic reveals itself on three different levels—structural, spatial, and verbal.

3.4.1. /Otherness/

When examining the five narrative units of the Grail story, /otherness/ is found in several distinct yet intertwined aspects of the narrative. /Otherness/ is secrecy and deception that hides the truth and creates mystery, as depicted in the semiotic model of /otherness/ in Chapter 3. The need to interpret that mystery in terms of the Arthurian model often serves only to deepen the enigmatic aspects of Perceval’s various adventures. /Otherness/ is always associated with those narrative units that involve the feminine world and its proponents. Units A_p, C_p and E_p all contain indications of /otherness/ from Perceval’s point of view.

To Perceval alone the existence of knights represents /otherness/ when they appear in the opening scenes of the narrative. To the observer (medieval or modern) who has a pre-existing familiarity with the standards of Arthurian reality, the forest scene in A_p is an absurd comedy. Based on his reactions and interpretations of the event, Perceval incorrectly experiences the arrival of the knights as a supernatural event. His reactions and description of the knights contain indications of /otherness/ in two of his senses. Hearing and sight deceive Perceval and produce extreme reactions within the naive youth. The chattering youth who questions the five knights contrasts with the young knight who watches the Grail pass by several times and remains silent. The bright light of “angels” in the forest (described as clers et luisanz), prefigures the blinding light that accompanies the Grail Procession. In the forest, the light is a
product of the sun shining on armor. In the Grail Castle, the light does not seem to have any outside source. This first example of mistaken /otherness/ augments the mysterious aspects of the nightly procession at the Grail Castle.

In a narrative characterized by ambiguity and mystery, the most important events, which are the ones associated with the Grail unit $C_p$, remain the most mysterious. The Grail procession is the central event in the narrative. The Grail is not special because of what it is, but because of what it contains. “Furthermore, the Grail is definitively associated with a second ordinary object with mysterious properties, a white lance from the tip of which fall drops of blood. The Bleeding Lance too becomes the object of quest and discourse.”$^{45}$ These objects represent a wondrous means of redemption, but for Perceval they are a puzzle whose function still lies hidden. Even for the informed reader, these objects embody the unknown, as the narrator refrains from any type of interpretive judgment that might explain their function. The narrator never claims to have knowledge of any aspect of the entire experience. The only commentary is received from secondary characters who use direct discourse to confront Perceval about his sinful state. As tokens of /otherness/, the Grail, the lance (and to some degree the sword received from the Fisher King) act as focal points to which Perceval’s and the reader’s attention is drawn time and time again.

$^{45}$ Pickens, “Introduction...”, xviii.
There are several characters associated with the Grail that embody /otherness/.

First, the Grail King who lies beyond the banquet hall is stricken with a strange illness for which there seems to be no cure. The Fisher King also bears a wound that never heals. The Grail Maiden, who leads the procession into the Grail King’s chambers and functions as the bearer of mystery, is also an enigma. Sigmund Eisner proposes that the maiden who bore the Grail and the Hideous Damsel who later berates Perceval are the same figure. The history of Perceval’s relatives is a litany of loss, death and tragedy associated with the devastation of lands. The Grail Maiden’s potential association with the land, presented in Eisner’s theory, serves to further strengthen the connection between the Grail nobility and a distant, yet mysteriously potent, past that was first alluded to by the widow.

In contrast, the Arthurian narrative units contain no mystery or secrecy at all. Instead, they contain interpretive retellings of the Grail Mysteries. The attempt to solve the mystery through analysis indicates an attempt by the Arthurian realm to integrate the unknown into the accepted model of reality. The need to resolve /otherness/ through interpretive retellings of the history stems from an inability to accept supernatural objects as legitimate elements of the Grail realm. For the most part, Perceval is the primary indication of /otherness/ in units Bₚ and Dₚ. Perceval is the link that unites the two realms and reaffirms the history of the Fisher King


47 See section 3.4.4 for a more in-depth discussion.
and his court. For, until the Hideous Damsel appears to berate Perceval for his silence, the Arthurian court seemingly has lost all knowledge of and contact with the Fisher King. By bringing this history to their attention, the presence of Perceval at Carlion causes the other knights to pursue their own adventures.

3.4.2. Fantastic Space and the Grail Castle

The fantastic is also present in *Le Conte du graal* in the descriptions associated with Perceval’s journey through the forest surrounding the Grail Castle. Fantastic space, as discussed in Chapter 2, involves more than mere descriptive themes and motifs. In the case of segment $C_p$, there are three physical indicators of fantastic space surrounding the Grail Castle: the shrinking of space within the forest, the river and the castle itself.

3.4.2.1. The Forest

On his way to Wales, Perceval passes through a forest and comes to a river, both of which mark transition points between Logres (Arthur’s realm), the Grail Castle (the Fisher King’s realm), and the otherworld (where Perceval’s mother may be found). The Grail Castle is located somewhere between Logres and the otherworld. The forest surrounding the castle insulates it from the real world much more effectively than the forest in Wales was able to

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48 “Both sister and brother are ‘translators’ who mediate between Perceval and the worlds of immaterial reality (the kingdom of Utherpendragon, the Grail kingdom, the Kingdom of God). The widow ‘brings forward’ the past and interprets chivalric ideals as well as essential Christian beliefs and practices.” Pickens, *The Welsh Knight...*, 88.
separate Perceval from the Arthurian world. Figure 3.3 sketches the relationship of worlds revealed through Perceval’s voyage to the Grail Castle:

![Diagram of Perceval's perspective while in Logres]

**Figure 3.3—Model of Perceval’s perspective while in Logres**

The distortion of time and space is implied by the words of the Fisher King and later by Perceval’s cousin. This phenomenon reveals the fantastic nature of the forest as a transitional area between worlds. The forest becomes a shifting, diffuse space between King Arthur’s realm, the Fisher King’s lands, and the otherworld. The changeable aspect of the forest is emphasized twice by Chrétien and forms a contextual frame within which the Grail episode must be judged. The Grail adventure is respectively opened and closed by the parallel commentary of the Fisher King and Perceval’s cousin. Each of them marvels at the freshness of the horse, a paradoxical symbol supporting Perceval’s statements. Each one also states that, as far as they know, there is no lodging or civilized habitation for many days’ travel.
The disparity between physical signs and Perceval's words emphasizes the curious nature of his travels. While the Fisher King and the maiden are astonished and can offer no explanation, Perceval is oblivious to the contradiction he represents. He, having moved through the fantastic space of the forest, has no known criteria by which to evaluate his current condition. Because Perceval has experienced the effects of the shortened voyage, he has no reason to call into question their validity. The narrative itself offers no clear explanation as to why Perceval was able to travel long distances in a short time. This mystery adds to the fantastic nature of Perceval's Grail Castle adventures by introducing the inexplicable into the everyday act of riding a horse.

3.4.2.2. The River

While traveling, Perceval prayed that God would permit him to find his mother (ll. 2956–2959) on the other side of the river.\(^49\) One can surmise that crossing the river, in this case, implies either that Perceval will be returning to Wales or that he will be entering the afterlife. Since Perceval's mother is already dead, the latter supposition is more logical. Perceval does not realize that, in asking about a way to cross the river, he is implicitly seeking a route into

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\(^{49}\) Water carries man to the other shore where his destiny awaits. Water fascinates, drawing the observer to its edge, where the mystery of what lies beyond and beneath captures the imagination. According to Bachelard, water is feminine by its very nature: "Quand nous aurons compris que toute combinaison des éléments matériels est, pour l'inconscient, un mariage, nous pourrons rendre compte du caractère presque toujours féminin attribué à l'eau par l'imagination naïve et par l'imagination poétique." Bachelard, *La Poétique...,* 20. (Emphasis in the original.)
the world of the dead. Water prevents him from reaching the other side50 and therefore perpetuates an ongoing disjunction between the young man and his mother. In this passage, the language of Chrétien evokes a sense that the river itself would resist the knight’s attempts to pass over it. “L’eve roide et parfonde esgarde, Si ne s’ose metre dedanz,” (ll. 2954–55). Perceval can neither swim across the river, nor be ferried over it. Perceval meets a gentleman (whom he later knows as the Fisher King) at the river. He assures Perceval that there is no civilization for a great distance and directs the young knight to a nearby castle.

The castle is nestled between the river and trees. As noted in Chapter 3, while the forest represents an indeterminate space, a river frequently symbolizes a definitive boundary marking entrance into the otherworld. The river itself also presents substantive physical evidence for the fantastic. It constitutes a barrier that Perceval cannot conquer and keeps him back from entering the otherworld. Indeed the very water seems to oppose any attempts to civilize it through man-made means of bridges, ferries, or fords. It is treacherous, resistant, and impassable. As a physical barrier, the water also keeps the Fisher King and his court from entering into the otherworld. They are not dead, and yet they do not participate in Arthur’s

50 Frederick Will, in Belphagor: Six Essays in Imaginative Space, examines the metaphor of water. Addressing Perceval’s experience at the river near the Grail Castle, Will writes, “Here language summons up an aquatic mood, holds it before us as something morally ‘important’ and suggestive, adequate to our entry and transcendence.” Frederick Will, Belphagor: Six Essays in Imaginative Space (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1977) 89.
realm. The whole court is apparently trapped between two worlds, awaiting a redeemer who will free it from its indeterminate state.

3.4.2.3. The Castle

The insular effects of the forest are evidently at work to conceal or reveal at will the location of the Grail Castle. Indeed, Perceval's own attempts to find the Grail Castle are initially frustrated in spite of clear directions from the Fisher King. Perceval petulantly curses the King for misleading him, but then immediately espies the castle and changes his curse into a blessing. To find the castle, Perceval must find a cleft in a rock and then travel into a hidden valley. The castle seemingly resists disclosure to all but the invited, and even then requires effort and a patience that Perceval lacks. The next morning, when Perceval leaves, the castle drawbridge is raised without evidence of human intervention. The building seemingly evicts him and then disappears back into the obscurity of the forest.

While at the Grail Castle, Perceval is no longer in the real world. But, while Perceval has left behind Arthur's realm, he is not allowed entrance into the otherworld. This scenario fits well with one of the definitions of the fantastic: the interference of the otherworld causes a suspension or distortion of the laws of nature as they are commonly experienced within the real world.51 In other words, there are different rules in effect in the otherworld that seem to

51 See section 2.2.1.
both the readers (as observers) and characters (as participants in the events), to be impossible, unusual, or inexplicable. Rules of time and nature no longer apply, but instead are suspended, allowing Perceval to travel great distances in a single day. He has clearly not been participating in the real world, but rather in the world of the Grail Castle. The Grail Castle exists on the edge of the otherworld’s borders and yet is not part of the real world, existing in the fantastic space between two worlds. The Fisher King’s court isolated itself from the real world twelve years prior. After Perceval leaves, the castle, court and king all disappear into the unknown and are not heard from again in this narrative.

3.4.3. Structures of Change

If we examine the overall structure of Perceval’s adventures, the following formula is derived: \((A_p (B_p (C_p D_p) E_p))\). The nested structure of Perceval’s narrative progress is clearly evident. During his adventures, Perceval is fully successful only in obtaining the social status of knight. He does not truly gain a complete, satisfactory reunion with his mother. At the center of his adventures is the night spent in the Grail Castle. He fails to achieve a successful resolution to the adventure of the Grail Castle and the Fisher King. One can not be certain as to the potential resolution of \(C_p\) as that portion of the narrative remains unwritten, and would

52 "The title of the poem, the organization of Perceval[‘s] adventures brought to light by the hermitage episode, and the quality of judgments and interpretations made from the perspective of the Grail community (which includes the mature inhabitants of the Waste Forest), all suggest that the Grail axis is central in the poem’s structure and that it casts the proper light for a correct evaluation of characters, events, and objects.” Pickens, *The Welsh Knight...*, 80.
have been represented as $F_p$. Segment $C_p$ is the most indeterminate portion of the narrative program and reveals the open-ended nature of the text. Figure 3.4 illustrates the narrative model for this unit:

![Figure 3.4—Structural model for Perceval's voyage to the Grail Castle](image)

As illustrated in the above diagram, Perceval's reactions to the Grail Mystery create a complex narrative program, where the realization of the first goal of knighthood subverts the second goal of reunion with his mother. The two are apparently mutually exclusive: He cannot have both of them. It is as if the goal of finding his mother is commingled with the successful completion of the Grail episode. Knighthood keeps him from both those goals. The structure of $C_p$ follows the pattern set out in scenario 1, postulated in Figure 2.5. As shown in Figure 3.4, once Perceval makes a choice (in this case, to remain silent), by definition he exits the fantastic mode. Deciding not to speak represents a choice for the masculine, mimetic mode. Perceval resolves the fantastic dilemma by rejecting the supernatural and choosing the real
world and an *étrange* interpretation of the Grail episode. Deciding not to speak represents a choice for the masculine, mimetic mode. The act of choosing defines when Perceval exits the fantastic mode.

The Grail episode is situated at a juncture in the story where a serious interpretation of the widow’s advice to her son becomes possible (Table 3.5). The religious obligations of a knight are germane to the ethical dimensions of chivalry. A vacuum exists in Perceval’s adventures precisely because nothing happens at the Grail Castle that either advances or impedes Perceval’s progress as defined in terms of Arthurian knighthood. A gradual falling away on the part of Perceval from a superior form of life results in his failure at the Grail Castle.

### Table 3.5—The nested structure of the Grail adventure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A</strong> Opening unit in the forest</th>
<th><strong>B</strong> Perceval’s quest for knighthood</th>
<th><strong>C</strong> The Grail Castle</th>
<th><strong>D</strong> Perceval rejoins Arthur’s court</th>
<th><strong>E</strong> Closing scene in the forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1</strong> Perceval meets the knights</td>
<td><strong>B1</strong> Perceval insults the maiden</td>
<td><strong>C1</strong> Perceval meets the Fisher King</td>
<td><strong>D5</strong> The Hideous Damsel insults Perceval</td>
<td><strong>E3</strong> Perceval seeks the Grail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong> Perceval talks with his mother</td>
<td><strong>B2</strong> Perceval finds King Arthur’s court</td>
<td><strong>C2</strong> Perceval stays at the Grail Castle</td>
<td><strong>D4</strong> Perceval joins King Arthur’s court</td>
<td><strong>E2</strong> Perceval talks with the hermit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3</strong> Perceval leaves Wales</td>
<td><strong>B3</strong> Perceval defeats the Red Knight</td>
<td><strong>C3</strong> Perceval departs from the Grail Castle</td>
<td><strong>D3</strong> Perceval defeats Keu and Sagremor</td>
<td><strong>E1</strong> Perceval wanders unrepentant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B4</strong> Perceval receives training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>D2</strong> Perceval defeats the Proud Knight of the Heath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B5</strong> Perceval saves Biaurepaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>D1</strong> Perceval meets his cousin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The importance of Perceval’s adventures in relation to the Grail can be expressed in terms of openness and ambiguity. As the center point of narration, the Grail episode now defines who Perceval is. His name change from “Perceval” to “Perceval the Wretched” is indicative of a change of state for the young knight. He is forever known as the knight who failed to ask the necessary questions. It is noteworthy that Perceval does not personally see the Grail as an object of desire until the very end of his story, even though his disjunction from the Grail occurs halfway through the narrative. When the hermit reveals the mysteries of the Grail procession to Perceval, he is then able to see the Grail as desirable.

3.4.4. Intratextual Analysis of the Grail Episode

The Grail episode is analyzed at three different points in the narrative: when Perceval’s cousin asks him about the Grail Castle (ll. 3522 ff.); when the Hideous Damsel comes to Arthur’s court (ll. 4613 ff.); and when Perceval makes his confession to the hermit (ll. 6338 ff.). Each time new information and a different perspective on the nature of the Grail mystery are revealed. Perceval’s cousin recounts the Fisher King’s past and how he came to his current state. The Hideous Damsel discloses what the future holds for the castle’s inhabitants and society at large. The hermit is the only one who links the past, present, and future for Perceval, and thus also structurally links segments A_p, C_p, and E_p. In providing the global perspective, the hermit reveals that Perceval’s sins in A_p cause his failure in C_p and result in his future course as mapped out in E_p. It may prove instructive to look in detail at each of these retellings to see what verbal clues they reveal about the fantastic aspects of the Grail and those associated with it.
When Perceval encounters his cousin in the forest, he has barely left the Grail Castle. His cousin states that they are in a very isolated spot. Yet when Perceval reveals that he stayed in a nearby castle, she immediately recognizes the site as the Fisher King’s castle. She is able to ask Perceval all the right questions about his stay there. She discloses that the Fisher King is wounded in the thigh and has deliberately constructed a hidden mansion for himself in the midst of his forests. The fact that he cannot ride a horse and has others hunt for him indicates that the wound is serious and painful. The thigh wound is a motif that is indicative of emasculation and loss of power. Apparently the health of the king is also tied to that of his lands. The Fisher King’s impotence is not only physically disabling, but also renders him incapable of fulfilling his social duty as ruler of his lands. Perceval’s cousin reveals why the Fisher King and his court removed themselves from the civilized world. She thus supplies an answer for the narrative lacunae surrounding how the castle came to be located on the edge of the otherworld.

The second person to discuss the Grail episode is a monstrous woman riding a mule. When the Hideous Damsel curses Perceval, she also calls him Perceval the Wretched. The words of the Hideous Damsel imply that the Fisher King is lost to the real world forever. He can never be restored to his rightful position (“Del roi qui terre ne tandra,” ll. 4642). Yet apparently the Grail Castle is still attainable from the real world, as the knights are inspired to

53 For other examples of thigh wounds in French medieval narratives, see Guigemar (Marie de France), and Partenopeus de Blois.
go out and seek answers to the Grail mysteries. Thus the Grail Castle has not been forever
relegated to the otherworld. But it is now more difficult than ever to find it. The Fisher King
remains in a type of limbo where health and prosperity are denied him due to a wound that
cannot be healed.

The hermit, more than any other actant, gives Perceval insight into the causes and meaning
of the events at the Grail Castle. Whereas his cousin and the Hideous Damsel instinctively
know of his failure at the Grail Castle, the hermit hears the story in the form of a confession.
The hermit can immediately interpret the meaning of all the events after hearing that it is
Perceval to whom he is talking. Whereas the other two were able to state the facts as a type of
history telling, the hermit is able to go to a deeper level and reveal the profound nature of the
Grail mysteries. The hermit reveals that the widow, the king served from the Grail and he
are siblings, which in turn makes the Fisher King Perceval’s cousin. For the first time in the
story, the events surrounding the otherworld and the Grail Castle are given a Christian
interpretation through the acknowledgment of sin, repentance, and penance. The unknown
supernatural is transformed into a divine mystery. This transformation, however, does not

54 “Significantly, the Grail mysteries are disclosed as a function of judgments of Perceval
from the point of view of the Grail kingdom. Equally as important is the fact that the
judgments are rendered and the details revealed by ‘initiates’ who surround the Grail
Castle, as it were, and mediate between it and Perceval.” Pickens, *The Welsh Knight*..., 74.
negate the fantastic nature of the Grail Castle and its environment. The castle and its inhabitants are still suspended between two worlds, trapped in fantastic space.

3.5. *Failure and the Fantastic Mode in the Graal*

The text proffers a two-fold explanation for Perceval’s failure to ask the necessary questions at the Grail Castle. The narrator insists that his silence was due to the instructions of Gornemant de Gohort. But two of Perceval’s close relatives attribute it to sin. Each proposed explanation is valid. The ambiguity drawn between the two reasons for silence emphasizes the fantastic by forcing the reader to choose between the real world and otherworldly explanations. Insofar as we can tell, Chrétien does not mean to make that choice easy or obvious.55

The fantastic mode in *Le Conte du graal* is an elusive state of change between reality and the supernatural. It often reveals itself through the textual use of silence, hesitation, and ambiguity. The physical signs of the fantastic mode become apparent to the attentive observer and invite a post-event examination of the collision between the standards, expectations and ideologies of the real world and the supernatural world. The fantastic mode always occurs in this narrative during a state of becoming, where the hero is uncertain, seeking, and

55 "Very little comes easily to the reader of this complex narrative for reasons that appear to involve Chrétien’s intricate design at least as much as its lack of completion, not to mention the mysterious nature of his central theme.” Pickens, “Introduction...,” xxiv.
questioning. It interrogates all the assumptions and rewrites the rules of engagement. To engage the supernatural and participate in its rites, the hero must overcome his hesitation and dare to question.

The fantastic mode in *Le Conte du graal* is manifested at three different levels in the text—structural, spatial and verbal. If we examine the general, overall structure of *Le Conte du graal*, there emerges a clear open-ended pattern used by Chrétien in writing about the adventures of Perceval while at the Grail Castle, a pattern that correlates to the proposed scenario 1 of Figure 2.5. Fantastic space is used to create a realm where the Fisher King and the Grail Castle are ensnared and awaiting release. At a verbal level, the hesitation to speak, rather than a hesitation to act, is symptomatic of and most closely reveals the fantastic mode in Perceval's adventures. Perceval's actions cause him to develop into a knight of the Arthurian court rather than a member of the Fisher King's court. Perceval fails to find the Grail Castle again, and therefore in the end his adventure constitutes an étrange adventure, insofar as Chrétien was able to finish the narrative. In contrast, the general quest for the Grail constitutes an open-ended and therefore fantastic adventure that, for some, continues to this day.
4. Le Chevalier de la charrette

Of all the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, his Chevalier de la charrette\(^1\) is undoubtedly the most paradoxical and ambiguous. The simple yet graphic account of Lancelot's mission in the mysterious 'Land of No Return' goes to the heart of a problem which clearly fascinated and perplexed Chrétien's audience—the conflicting claims of feudal loyalty and courtly love.\(^2\) Before Chrétien de Troyes' tale of Lancelot and Guenievre, there is no known story of a love affair between this knight and Arthur's wife. There are many stories, according to the Celtic tradition, of knights who visit the otherworld or who have encounters with fées.\(^3\) Many involve the abduction of the wife of a king, the most famous being found in the Life of St.

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Gildas by Caradoc of Llancarfan written around 1130. However, Lancelot does not figure in this earlier tale of Guenievre’s abduction by Melwas.

In this chapter, Le Chevalier de la charrette is examined from a structuralist point of view. The distinctions between the real world and the otherworld are brought to bear upon the examination of narrative progression, digression, and the resolution of disjunctions within the narrative program. The manner in which fantastic elements are used to augment mystery and ambiguity increases a sense of /otherness/ associated with Lancelot and his travels. The relationship of desire between the protagonist Lancelot and the multiple objectives of his quest, especially the queen, is reflected in the movement of Lancelot through fantastic space. The paradoxical aspects of Lancelot’s story provide additional layers of complexity to the conflict between worlds.

Relevant to this inquiry is the question of multiple subjects, which implies multiple points of view. I also look at how the conflicting desires of various characters affect the outcome of narration. Desire characterizes the semiotic relationship between the hero and the object.

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5 Desire characterizes the semiotic relationship between the subject and the object being sought. For more details on the relationship between actants, see Appendix A.
providing a point of comparison between Lancelot and Meleagant, who both desire the same
objects. The resolution of the various disjunctions associated with the narrative program
determines the degree of closure or openness for the Charrette's structure. The goal of this
approach is to formulate conclusions about the role of fantastic events in the structuring of
narration and resolution of conflict within Le Chevalier de la charrette.

4.1. The Structure of Le Chevalier de la charrette

Le Chevalier de la charrette has been the subject of several studies concerning its
conjointure and sens,6 the most notable having been contributed by F. Douglas Kelly.7 The
plot of the Charrette has been compared to that of a traditional lai as noted by David Hult.8

6 “In Chrétien there is usually a coherence at the courtly level, a sens, the logical exposition
of some idea of love or chivalry, but an incoherence—I believe, often deliberate—at the

7 F. Douglas Kelly, Sens and Conjointure in the Chevalier de la charrette (The Hague:
Mouton, 1966). See also J. Frappier, Chrétien de Troyes, l'homme et l'oeuvre (Paris:
Hatier-Boivin, 1957); Wilhelm Kellerman, Aufbaustil und Weltbild Chrestiens von Troyes
im Percevalroman (Halle: Max Neimeyer Verlag, 1937).

8 “With respect to its plot, this ‘romance’ has been likened to another courtly genre, the lai,
which usually limits itself to an isolated episode or to the fictional elaboration of some
emblematic object.” David F. Hult, “Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in
Chrétien’s Charrette,” Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature,
eds. Kevin Brownlee and Walter Stephens (Hanover and London: University Press of New
However, the structure of the Charrette is far more complex in nature than that of a shorter narrative, such as a lai or conte. Analyses of the structure of Lancelot's quest by Kelly and Norris J. Lacy⁹ support a tripartite model, while Matilda T. Bruckner¹⁰ supports a bipartite model.¹¹

4.1.1.1. Kelly's Structure for the Charrette

Kelly’s assertion that the structure is tripartite is reflected in the way he segments the text: he frequently subdivides narrative units into groupings of three episodes. According to Kelly, the Charrette is composed of three parts, surrounded by opening and closing scenes at Arthur’s court.

“... I have shown that the poem is built upon a symmetrical pattern, with the scene in which Lancelot and Guenevere confess and analyze their love as the core. This episode is found in the center of the central structural division (B) of the plot which describes the events that took place in Bath. Embracing the central division are

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¹¹ See also Z. P. Zaddy, *Chrétien Studies: Problems of Form and Meaning in Erec, Yvain, Cligés and the Charrette* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973) 117–118. She specifically discusses bipartition and tripartition in her analysis of Kelly’s divisions (154–156) and prefers the bipartite model.
the two divisions describing Lancelot’s quest (A) and Lancelot’s imprisonment (C); they contribute to the symmetry of the plan by their respective positions directly before and after the central division as well as by the similarity of their internal tripartite structure. The opening and closing Arthurian scenes complete the symmetrical arrangement while serving as nouement and denouement to the plot.”

Kelly’s analysis of the Charrette’s structure shows subdivisions for each of the major sections. Kelly sees the basic structure as I—>(A—>B—>C) —>II, where the central narrative is composed of three parts (A—>B—>C), surrounded by a two-part framework taking place at Arthur’s court (I, II).

4.1.1.2. Lacy’s Structure for the Charrette

Norris Lacy builds upon Kelly’s analysis by focusing on the question of form, particularly of the work’s inner structure. He concentrates on the relationship between the narrative structure and the complementary motifs of hesitation and humiliation:

“The question of hesitation is as important as that of humiliation. These two motifs, which perfectly relate the final expiation to the offense, are reflected in all parts of the work; hesitation in particular seems to be structurally significant.”

12 Kelly, op. cit., 184.

13 Lacy, op. cit., 89.

14 ibid., 90.
Lacy cites, as an example of hesitation, the episode where the lady offers Lancelot lodging if he will sleep with her (ll. 931–1280), seeing this event as a condensed version of the central intrigue. Lancelot hesitates to defend the lady when he finds her being mistreated. According to Lacy, Lancelot’s actions delay fulfillment of any duties and are analogous to his hesitation at the cart. With a single action, Lancelot loses his status as a loyal lover because of his hesitation to sacrifice his reputation as a knight by entering the cart. The tournament at Noauz serves to reestablish Lancelot’s reputation as both a lover and a knight, because he humiliates himself without hesitation. Lacy concludes that Chrétien used the tool of humiliation to rebuild Lancelot’s reputation as an exemplary lover.

4.1.1.3. Bruckner’s Structure for the Charrette

Matilda T. Bruckner examines the structure of the Charrette from a thematic point of view. She places the midpoint of the romance at the revelation of Lancelot’s identity (l. 3660), “It is entirely fitting that we learn the hero’s name precisely from the lady who has been the object of his quest and the object of his constant thought.” (143). Bruckner concentrates on the importance of seeing and talking. She sees the resolution of these two sensory-based themes in Lancelot’s first big duel with Meleagant (138). Bruckner views the structure as open-ended (162 ff.) in regards to the relationship between the queen and Lancelot, but as closed when examining the conflict with Meleagant. Her assessment of the structure of the Charrette is one of the most comprehensive, when dealing with the questions

of *san* (the main idea) and *antanciōn* (artistic effort)\(^\text{16}\) because she not only examines the structure but also relates her structural analysis to the more general question of plot resolution on the level of multiple narrative programs.

Each of these critics relates the structure of the *Charrette* to a particular theme in order to address the overriding question of *san* and *antanciōn*. Lacy states, “Depending on the critic’s point of view, different episodes will assume structural significance and permit us to construct different but equally valid formal analyses.”\(^\text{17}\) Wilhelm Kellerman perceives one principal theme to the *Charrette*, namely the freeing of the prisoners in Gorre.\(^\text{18}\) However, Kellerman’s statement assumes Arthur’s point of view rather than that of Lancelot. Zumthor maintains that the hero can become his own “sender,” in Greimassian terms, by setting out on a voyage.\(^\text{19}\) As

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\(^{16}\) *ibid.*, 141. Referring to ll. 21–29, Bruckner poses the central question which occupies her discussion, “With these verses we reach one of the most controversial problems in *Charrette* criticism: what exactly does Chrétien mean when he attributes *matière* and *san* to the Countess, *sans*, *paine* and *antanciōn* to himself?” (135).

\(^{17}\) Lacy, *op. cit.*, 88.

\(^{18}\) “I have shown that the *Charrette* consists of one principal theme—the freeing of the prisoners in Gorre—and two subsidiary ones, each manifest in various parts of the poem, and dealing, respectively, with Lancelot’s and Guenevere’s love and with his hatred for Meleagant.” Kellerman, *op. cit.*, 167.

\(^{19}\) “L’action principale, l’entreprise du héros, peut résulter d’une volonté qui lui est propre : il devient, selon la terminologie de Greimas, son propre destinataire, comme l’Erec ou le Perceval de Chrétien dans la première partie des romans qui leur sont consacrés; il peut par suite d’une associabilité inexpliquée, quitter de lui-même son lieu initial, et s’engager, vers un ailleurs, dans un voyage qui constitue le récit.” Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) 356.
the protagonist, Lancelot's primary reason for traveling to Gorre is the freeing of the queen, in relation to which the freeing of the prisoners becomes secondary. This discussion of the internal structural divisions of the five main sequences is based on Lancelot's point of view and therefore, I believe, centers around the relationship of desire between Lancelot and Guenievre. As a parallel theme to his love for Guenievre, Lancelot's reputation as a knight within Arthurian society provides a strong counterpoint to his role as suitor. Love and reason are held forth as legitimate yet competing duties of a knight in the Cart episode. Lancelot's identity as both lover and knight are mirrored in these two conflicting demands of love and reason. While the details of this conflict and its significance will be discussed later, one can already appreciate how the debate focuses and directs the narrative action.

4.1.2. Segmenting the Narrative

Like Kelly, I divide the text into five narrative units. Such a division of the content concentrates on Lancelot's point of view, whereas other critics, such as Kellerman, Bruckner and Zaddy focus on the overarching question of liberating the captives in Gorre. I represent the structure in Table 4.1 according to Greimassian notation:

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20 "... we can say that Lancelot's name plus his actions equals one form of identity: his reputation—that is, identity as evaluated by the other members of an Arthurian society." Bruckner, *art. cit.*, 145.

### Table 4.1—General structure for the *Charrette*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Performative action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A₁</td>
<td>Disjunction—queen</td>
<td>Initiates quest to Gorre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$S \cup O_Q$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B₁</td>
<td>Disjunction—queen</td>
<td>Loses social reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$S \cup O_Q$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C₁</td>
<td>Conjunction—queen</td>
<td>Frees the queen and prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$S \cap O_Q$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D₁</td>
<td>Disjunction—queen</td>
<td>Regains social reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$S \cup O_Q$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E₁</td>
<td>Disjunction—queen</td>
<td>Secures the queen’s freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meleagant</td>
<td>$S \cup O_Q$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear correlation between Lancelot’s voyages to and from the otherworld and changes of state for the hero. The first voyage results in a successful conjunction between Lancelot and Guenievre. The second voyage returns the narrative state to one of disjunction. There are two distinct realms or worlds involved in his adventures: Logres and Gorre. The five-part structure reveals the complexity of detail within the *Charrette*. I will concentrate on the relationship of this structure to the fantastic through a closer examination of the episodes that comprise each narrative unit, concentrating on the way the fantastic mode is manifested and how it permeates the structure with meaning and significance—relating *conjointure* to *san*.

#### 4.1.2.1. The Opening Arthurian Scene

In most respects, the initial scene of the *Charrette* is unremarkable, starting in a similar fashion to that of *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*, which both open at the court of Arthur. However, unlike the other works by Chrétien, there is no intermediate return to Arthur’s court, from
which a second or more complex adventure is initiated. Instead the transition point occurs at Bademagu’s court in Gorre, when the prisoners are released to return to Logres. Due to the absence of the hero (Lancelot), the first narrative unit, $A_A$, is based on Arthur’s point of view.

1. Meleagant’s challenge
2. Keu’s declaration
3. Keu’s boon

Similar to the *Graal*’s initial Arthurian court scene, in the *Charrette* the court is paralyzed by the threats of a foreign knight who challenges Arthur’s authority. In the former narrative, the Red Knight has taken Arthur’s cup, whereas here Meleagant takes the queen and defeats Keu. Meleagant is from the otherworld, representing the primary source of /otherness/ by virtue of his negative, threatening character and his association with the land of the dead. This first narrative unit introduces the main conflict in the plot—the otherworld threatens the real world by having seized the queen and untold numbers of citizens from Arthur’s realm.

4.1.2.2. *Lancelot’s Quest for the Queen*

The story shifts to Lancelot’s perspective in the second narrative unit, $B_L$. Gauvain encounters a knight whom he does not recognize, just as that knight is climbing into a cart.

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1. Gauvain and the cart scene

2. The maiden

3. The two companions

Beginning with the cart scene, Chrétien has introduced a second level of mystery to the narrative program. An unknown knight (Lancelot) arrives out of nowhere and climbs into a cart, an act which in itself is a source of commentary and speculation by all who observe the knight’s passage. The “Knight of the Cart” proceeds towards Gorre and encounters many challenges along the way. His first night spent in the wondrous bed demonstrates his courage and prowess as a knight. The promises he makes to the maiden at the crossroads shows his chivalrous character towards women. Gauvain travels with the unknown knight and witnesses these traits as well as the demeanor of the Knight of the Cart. Gauvain is therefore assured that the unknown knight is seeking the queen’s best interests and is worthy of the quest.

By the time the two knights separate, Lancelot has established his intentions and his honor in the eyes of both Gauvain and the maiden who accompanies Lancelot according to the “custom of Logres.” Within the portion of the journey where the maiden accompanies Lancelot, there are two additional adventures: the spring and cemetery scenes, which are discussed later. The events leading up to Lancelot’s arrival in Gorre form a series of adventures that have seemingly no commonality among them. The “droit chemin” leads him

23 Throughout the Charrette, the narrator uses a variety of formulations to reinforce the motif of the “right path” to describe Lancelot’s progress. See specifically ll. 613–15, 680–82, 726–727, 1345, 1359–60, 1363–83, 1507, 2142–58, 2467, 3003, 6109–10, 6148–49, 6246–51, 6437–38.
towards Guenievre (who leaves her comb at the spring) and to face his own death (at the
cemetery). Thus the voyage presents great gains as well as great personal risks to the knight.

4.1.2.3. *Lancelot in Gorre*

The third narrative unit, $C_L$, covers the events at Bademagu’s court in Gorre. Here for the
first time, Lancelot directly encounters Guenievre as well as Meleagant. The quest now shifts
from a voyage to a more confrontational interchange between rivals.

1. Arrival of Lancelot
2. First combat with Meleagant
3. Guenievre refuses Lancelot’s service
4. Search for Gauvain and declaration of love
5. Guenievre rewards Lancelot’s service
6. Second combat with Meleagant
7. Departure of Lancelot

Unit $C_L$ comprises the entire period of Lancelot’s stay in Gorre. Lancelot and Guenievre
acknowledge their love for each other in the central episode $C_L4$. While searching for
Gauvain, Lancelot is taken captive and news of his supposed death reaches Guenievre.
Lancelot must face the possibility of Guenievre’s death, as he too receives false news. This
portion of $C_L$ is marked by loss and death. Gauvain is lost and is feared to have not survived
the water bridge. The two main characters of the romance confront death in the form of
deception and faulty communication about their fate. The central unit of the narrative contains
the apparent resolution of Lancelot's quest, namely the queen and prisoners are set free. But that freedom is not entirely guaranteed until Lancelot and Meleagant take up their combat again in the final narrative unit.

4.1.2.4. Lancelot's Imprisonment

This narrative unit, DL, begins with Guenievre's return to Logres and follows Lancelot's exploits up to his final return to Arthur's court. The three principal events of this unit focus on Lancelot's preeminence as a knight and a lover. During most of the unit, he is a prisoner (constrained by Meleagant's treachery) and yet in spite of the circumstances Lancelot performs his duties to the highest level of diligence and service.

1. The tournament at Noauz
2. Meleagant's challenge
3. The liberation of Lancelot

The third unit for Lancelot is actually the fourth comprehensive narrative unit. Whereas unit BL was characterized by movement towards Gorre in the form of a quest, unit DL is marked by imprisonment and a lack of movement with the notable exception of the tournament at Noauz. In general unit DL is uneventful and yet still manages to move the narrative program toward the conclusion while working to heighten narrative tension through a one-year delay of the final battle.
4.1.2.5. *Closing Arthurian Scene*

In *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*, the hero is able to return to Arthur’s court because he had successfully completed his quest. In the *Charrette*, Lancelot must return to Arthur’s court *in order to* complete his quest and ensure the continued safety of the queen. The final narrative unit, $E_L$, where Lancelot returns to Arthur’s court, is comprised of three episodes as well. The search for Lancelot, his return to Arthur’s court, and the subsequent defeat of Meleagant make up the final narrative unit.

1. Gauvain’s preparations
2. Lancelot’s tale
3. Meleagant’s defeat

When Meleagant comes to Arthur’s court to do battle, Lancelot cannot be found. The court and queen are left without a champion. The narrative thus returns to its original crisis, wherein Meleagant arrived at Arthur’s court and demanded combat for the possession of Guenievre. Gauvain begins preparing to fight on behalf of the queen and is replaced by Lancelot in an arrival scene that causes both surprise and joy for the court but consternation for Meleagant. Lancelot’s final journey represents his return from the land of the dead back to the land of the living. When he arrives, in place of the grieving there is great rejoicing in the court (ll. 6785–6793, 6814–6819). The two knights meet in an open field at the foot of a tower. There all the court gathers around to witness the encounter (ll. 6971–6982), just as the spectators had gathered around the combatants when Lancelot first faced Meleagant in Gorre.
The tale ends with a complete victory for Lancelot and, therefore, Arthur's kingdom. The freedom of the queen is assured, as well as that of the other prisoners who were liberated from Gorre. The final narrative sequence for *Le Chevalier de la charrette* is rather quickly brought to a conclusion. This sequence may be seen as $E_L^3 = S \cup O_{Q+p}$, where $S$ = Lancelot and $O_{Q+p}$ represents the queen and prisoners. Thus the original threat to the stability and peace of Arthur's court, embodied in Meleagant and his threats, has been removed by virtue of Lancelot's victory, which re-establishes the state of equilibrium and peace that was present at the start of the tale. This episode resolves the initial conflict and disjunction which resulted from Keu's defeat.

If we examine the same narrative units and consider the queen to be the object ($O_Q$), an inverse pattern emerges for the relationship of the subject to the object. Events in the first narrative unit initiate the quest for the queen by Keu and Gauvain. For Lancelot $B_L$ consists of the journey to Gorre and his arrival at the court of Bademagu (ll. 224–3135). In this unit, Lancelot is separated from Guenievre: $B_L = S \cap O_Q$. The main focus of the third narrative unit ($C_L$, ll. 3136–5358) is the physical union of Lancelot and Guenievre: $C_L = S \cup O_Q$. The fourth unit is Lancelot's imprisonment (ll. 5359–6725), where Lancelot and the queen are once more forced apart: $D_L = S \cap O_Q$. Therefore, in semiotic terms, Lancelot experiences two changes of state: he accomplishes his quest and yet ultimately loses the object he has been seeking. The

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Kelly, *op. cit.*, 168.
overall structure of Lancelot’s narrative progress (Table 4.2) can be seen as the resolution of
the initial Arthurian conflict: loss of the queen and other prisoners in Gorre. However, at the
end of the narration, Lancelot has returned to his initial state of disjunction in relation to
Guenievre.

Table 4.2—Refined structure for the *Charrette*25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Opening Arthurian scene (30–223)</th>
<th>E Closing Arthurian scene (6726–7097)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 Meleagant’s challenge (30–81)</td>
<td>E1 Lancelot’s tale (6785–6913)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Keu’s declaration (82–129)</td>
<td>E2 Gauvain’s preparations (6726–6784)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Keu’s boon (130–223)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Lancelot’s quest (224–3135)</td>
<td>D Lancelot’s imprisonment (5359–6725)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1 Gauvain and ford scene (224–930)</td>
<td>D1 Liberation of Lancelot (6388–6725)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2 The maiden (931–2111)</td>
<td>D2 Meleagant’s challenge (6147–6387)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3 The two companions (2012–3135)</td>
<td>D3 Tournament at Noauz (5359–6146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Lancelot in Gorre (3136–5358)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 Arrival of Lancelot (3136–3488)</td>
<td>C5 Guenievre rewards Lancelot’s service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2 First combat with Meleagant (3489–3898)</td>
<td>C6 Second combat with Meleagant (5757–5043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Guenievre refuses Lancelot’s service (3899–4082)</td>
<td>C7 Search for Gauvain (4083–4458)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lancelot and Guenievre confess their love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Lancelot moves between and through these worlds, he experiences the loss and
restoration of his knightly reputation through a series of conflicts structured as episodes. In
order to resolve those conflicts and reunite the king with his queen and people, the hero must
strive to maintain a balance between duty and desire.

25 The shaded areas represent the fantastic. The darker gray area represents the *merveilleux*.  

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4.2. **Conflict and Paradox**

Paradox is a significant indicator of the fantastic mode within a narrative and reveals the various levels of conflict within the *Charrette*. Lancelot represents a contradiction to established societal conventions in many respects. His actions do not fit with his apparent identity as a knight—his ride in the cart, his choice of love over reason and his contradictory behavior at the tournament at Noauz all seem to create an image of a flawed and incompetent individual. The paradoxes surrounding Lancelot are indicative of unresolved conflict within the narrative program and work against the resolution of ambiguity and /otherness/ by prolonging fear, uncertainty and confusion.

4.2.1. **The Cart**

Key to the understanding of Lancelot’s adventures on the way to Gorre is the image of the cart. The cart is associated with fear and loathing because it is used to carry criminals to their place of execution. When Lancelot confronts the dwarf with the cart, he creates a reputation for himself that persists through most of the narrative and which marks his identity. This episode (ll. 314–429) introduces the first paradox associated with Lancelot. As the hero of the story, Lancelot repeatedly chooses the path which brings him the least worldly renown and the greatest degree of public shame. But Lancelot does not sacrifice his reputation easily: he

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26 See section 1.4.2 for further details on the relationship between paradox and the fantastic.
debates with the dwarf about getting into the cart; his momentary hesitation elicits criticism from the narrator; and Guenievre rejects him for this brief, but telling moment of hesitation.

Lancelot’s ride in the cart is problematic for the people who subsequently see him as he rides through the land. They can only surmise that he must be guilty of some terrible crime. The people cannot resolve the conflicting image of a strong, handsome knight and his means of transportation—a cart which is a vehicle reserved for the lowest, meanest members of society.


The cart scene symbolizes Lancelot’s social death and reinforces his lack of a name by giving his a new designation by which he is identified. As the title of the work indicates, Lancelot is identified from that time on as the Knight of the Cart.

The narrative commentary about the cart scene is limited to prolepsis, when the narrator states that Lancelot will regret his momentary hesitation. There is no insight given as to the significance of the actual ride in the cart and what it accomplishes for the hero in terms of obtaining his goal. Therefore the cart scene increases the ambiguity surrounding Lancelot’s
actions by presenting a problematic episode that is seemingly disconnected from the narrative program. The narrator gives the reader no clue or indication as to how to interpret Lancelot's experience in the cart or how to connect it to the narrative program. The deliberate use of ambiguity through silence on the part of the narrator provokes many questions and encodes openness into the narrative structure by refusing to offer the reader an easy answer.

The cart paradox is not resolved until narrative unit $D_L$, when Lancelot redeems himself through total unhesitating obedience to the queen. In the first narrative unit, Lancelot's reputation is intact: $A_L = S \cap O_K$. However, in his quest to rescue the queen, Lancelot sacrifices one of his chief social attributes: his reputation as a knight: $B_L = S \cup O_K$. This sacrifice occurred when he entered the cart. When he travels to Gorre and fights Meleagant for the first time, his reputation is still tarnished. In the fourth narrative unit, acting as the Red Knight, Lancelot's reputation is reestablished in the tournament of Noauz: $D_L = S \cap O_K$. He can therefore return to Logres as a worthy knight and capable of acting as the queen's defender because the shame of the cart is expunged.

4.2.2. The Conflict Between Love and Reason

/Otherness/ is structured around deception based on a contradictory relationship and paradox is the embodiment of /otherness/ through the realization of those contradictory aspects within a character. If a paradox is centered around incompatible pairs such as reality/supernatural and reason/folly, then Lancelot's paradox most clearly establishes itself around
the debate between love and reason. Lancelot represents the conflicts of the Arthurian social hierarchy (reason) with the rules and demands of service to Queen Guenievre (love). In semiotic terms, the paradox is illustrated in Figure 4.1:

![Figure 4.1—Semiotic model for the paradox between love and reason]

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27 The debate between love and reason is later developed by Jean de Meung in the 13th-century continuation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Reason's speech (ll. 4191–7200) is comprised of an exposition on the nature of the God of Love, Justice, and Fortune. She argues that the Lover should accept her as his beloved and turn from his service to love. Felix Lecoy, ed., *Le Roman de la rose par Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun*. 3 vols., CFMA (Paris: Champion, 1966–75.) "Reson herself is apparently a rationalist, not a voluntarist; in her view, moral law follows from and is subordinate to reason. Reson's characterization of herself as the source of a virtue which she understands as a mean between extremes is central to the poem's dramatization of the conflict of love and reason." Donald W. Rowe, "Reson in Jean's Roman de la rose: Modes of characterization and dimensions of meaning," *Mediaevalia* 10 (1984) 99. See also Colette Rimlinger-Leconte, "L'expression métaphorique chez Jean de Meung : Etude du discours de raison dans le *Roman de la Rose*," *Etudes de langue et de littérature françaises offertes à André Lanly*, ed. Claude Brixhe (Nancy: Publications – Université de Nancy II, 1980) 301–312.

The contrary relationship reflects the underlying paradox that marks Guenievre’s connection with Lancelot. Moreover, the implied relationship of Reason/Not Love reveals the logic behind Guenievre’s refusal to speak with Lancelot after the first battle in Gorre: because Lancelot hesitated, the inference is that he does not love Guenievre. From the spectators’ point of view (seeing Lancelot riding in the cart and (not) fighting in the tournament), the knight’s actions are incomprehensible because the general public is unaware of the contrary and contradictory relationships which motivate Lancelot in his quest. From the reader’s point of view, Lancelot’s actions are to be interpreted according to the instructional commentary of the narrator, who interprets the actions according to the dictates of love which overrules reason.

In the roles of sender and receiver, Arthur experiences success through the conflicting laws of love and reason. Is this not the conflict at the center of chivalry as well? How can a knight maintain loyalty to his lord, and yet also maintain faithfulness to his lady (in the romance tradition, often the wife of his lord). Thus the paradoxical nature of chivalry is illustrated in Le Chevalier de la charrette. As a traditional hero, Lancelot manages to fulfill both the letter of the law and its spirit, resolving the paradox of his social reputation. The deeper paradox of chivalry embodied in the Arthurian world order is also addressed through the actions of Lancelot, in that the king, queen and the knight are symbolic of that world order by virtue of the social positions they hold.

29 See ll. 360–377.
4.2.3. Identity

Another point of paradox revolves around the issue of identity. Throughout the second narrative unit, \( B_1 \), the major question centers around the identity of the unknown knight. He is referred to as the Knight of the Cart, but never by name. Unlike Perceval,\(^ {30} \) who needs to discover his name, the Knight of the Cart is fully aware that he is Lancelot. Referring to the Cemetery of the Future episode, Bruckner states, “For the first time the anonymous knight endorses the narrator’s own strategy of concealment by refusing to give his name.”\(^ {31} \) Later at the tournament of Noauz, Lancelot also hides his identity, threatening the herald if he reveals the Red Knight’s true name (ll. 5550–55).

At the cart, Lancelot sacrifices his reputation by setting aside the logical aspects of his personality. Gauvain is governed by reason, and therefore becomes a mirror for that portion of Lancelot’s character. When Lancelot enters the cart, he cuts himself off from the reason of the social code, devoting himself to the service of love. Gauvain’s presence through the first part of the journey represents the chivalric rules of Arthur’s kingdom. Gauvain most clearly fulfills the role of helper on a number of levels. He acts as a substitute for the protagonist. Gauvain accompanies Lancelot on his quest and also escorts Guenievre back to Arthur’s court, thereby

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\(^{30}\) Perceval needs to discover his name as a part of his maturation process and as a part of being integrated into Arthur’s court. For further details, see sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3.

\(^{31}\) Bruckner, op. cit., 139.
returning the object of the quest to the sender and receiver.\textsuperscript{32} When Lancelot returns, Gauvain’s narrative function as a double for the “reasoning” Lancelot disappears.

The paradox of Lancelot’s identity is resolved in unit $D_L$. While the herald immediately recognizes the Red Knight, the queen confirms his identity only after testing him. She effectively reveals Lancelot’s identity to the reader by concealing it from the spectators at the tournament. Her request that Lancelot do his worst—\textit{au noauz}—affiliates the Red Knight with the Knight of the Cart, where shame and disgrace were topics of public commentary. The content of both scenes is inverse to public expectations, but is consistent with the duties of a lover. The play on words and deeds generated by Lancelot’s paradoxical conduct is commented upon and augmented by the reaction of the crowd, as had also occurred during his ride in the cart. The question of identity and recognition goes to the heart of Lancelot’s relationship with the queen.

Paradoxes evoke /otherness/ within an intrigue by posing more questions than there are answers to be found. The openness of a narrative structure is increased through the use of paradoxical scenarios that cause a character, in this case the hero, to be seen as bringing chaos rather than order to the narrative program. Often the chaos is indicative of an alternate order. For Lancelot the alternate order is defined by the rule of love which is seen as chaotic when compared with the more chivalrous rule of reason associated with knights.

\textsuperscript{32} For an explanation of the actantial roles, see Appendix A.
4.3. **Fantastic Aspects in Le Chevalier de la charrette**

Within the *Charrette*, there are many details and scenarios that are evocative of the fantastic. The thematic use of /otherness/, fantastic space, hesitation and structural openness combine to form an impression of disjointed adventures that bear no resemblance to each other. The fantastic lends a sense of irregularity and chance to Lancelot’s adventures. The fantastic mode does not serve to enlighten the reader, but rather to confuse and mislead. While Lancelot’s “droit chemin”\(^33\) may appear to lead him quickly to Gorre, the numerous fantastic aspects of his quest create a much more chaotic impression.

4.3.1. /Otherness/

One of the ways /otherness/ is revealed is through the use of paradoxical situations, as was discussed above. /Otherness/ is also manifested through the characteristics and nature of actants within the narrative. Central to the discussion of /otherness/ is the concept of “alterity,”\(^34\) that quality of an actant’s personality which indicates that they come from somewhere else and some other time.\(^35\) One of the functions of alterity is to bring color to the narrative by the inclusion of marvels and extreme examples of human traits. These extreme

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\(^{33}\) See page 177.


\(^{35}\) Francis Dubost discusses alterity in terms of *l’ailleurs* and *l’autrefois*. Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques...*, passim.
human traits are portrayed in the unusual characters who people Lancelot's adventures as he approaches the bridge to Gorre. For example, Meleagant and the dwarf with the cart both exemplify the extremes of evil. The dwarf embodies the extreme of discourteous speech. Meleagant is at the extreme opposite of the spectrum from Lancelot when the two are compared according to the standards of courtly conduct. Alterity also influences the reception of the narrative program by the reader through the destabilizing effects of /otherness/. 36

As a source of /otherness/ for the Charrette, the dwarf represents a distortion of the human form as well as evil, abusive speech. The dwarf with the cart plays a peculiar double role as a helper and opponent. Usually, dwarfs act solely as opponents in relation to the protagonist. Here the dwarf acts as a type of guide, who carries Lancelot out of the forest. As seen in Chapter 2, the forest is the most common representation of fantastic space. The dwarf helps move Lancelot through fantastic space and back onto the trail to the otherworld by carrying him through the forest. With the aid of his cart, the dwarf opposes Lancelot by destroying his reputation as a knight. The dwarf fulfills three functions in the plot: first he provides the physical means by which Lancelot regains the droit chemin; second, he acts as a guide; and third, he sets up the paradox that surrounds Lancelot throughout the first half of the story.

36 "It is generally recognized that in most of Chrétien de Troyes' romance marvels, usually with a Celtic flavor, are not just used (as often happens in the Romans d'antiquité) as a kind of adornment, giving exotic color to the poem, but are given quite an important role in the structure of the work." Kennedy, art. cit., 173.
The chief opponent is Meleagant, who has taken Guenievre to Gorre. Many of his characteristics are commonly found in giants: he is wicked, inordinately strong, large in stature, and arrogant. As Claude Lecouteux has noted, Chrétien de Troys uses standard descriptions of stock characters without actually calling them giants. Meleagant arrives at Arthur’s court and makes a challenge for possession of the queen. The manner in which he makes his challenge is typical of an adventure where the otherworld is threatening the stability and social structure of the real world. His activities have caused the land to be depopulated and sterile, as his speech to Arthur reveals. When he is defeated by a knight of Arthur’s court, prosperity is restored to the land. In this scenario, Meleagant represents evil, brings devastation and embodies a total lack of courtly standards of conduct.

Curiously, Lancelot also represents a source of /otherness/ for the people who observe his ride in the cart. The cart traditionally carries its passengers to their death. Thus the beginning of Lancelot’s quest foretells his death. A second predictor of Lancelot’s death occurs at the

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38 For example, the scene from the “Joie de la Court” in Erec et Enide contains a wicked knight “Mabonagrain, qui possède toutes les caractéristiques d’un géant...” ibid., 128.
Cemetery of the Future, where the knight views his own tomb. The crossing of the sword bridge is also symbolic of a type of death, as he must leave behind his armor and cross over on bare hands and knees. There are many aspects to Lancelot’s quest which reveal /otherness/ as a major component in his adventures. The use of quasi-magical devices such as the flaming lance, the magic ring he received from a fée\(^{39}\) and the illusion of lions on the other side of the bridge are just a few of the more obvious examples where Lancelot uses or is confronted by magical objects. But are these objects fantastic or do they merely represent magical realism?\(^{40}\) Each object is uniquely important, but Lancelot brings them with him from the real world. While the objects are obviously filled with special significance and power, they do not create fear, but rather dispel confusion and unmask deception. The magical objects associated with Lancelot are tools that aid him in his quest. Therefore they cannot be classified as fantastic in and of themselves because these objects lack any negative aspects that are traditionally associated with the fantastic mode.

\(^{39}\) “The main interests of the authors seem to lie in the presentation of an idea of chivalry through the person of Lancelot, a conception of chivalry in which the inspiration of love has to play its part, but in which the role a knight can play in helping the king to see that his vassals receive proper justice within his kingdom is given far greater emphasis. Lancelot’s magical associations are therefore treated with great discretion, and handled in such a way that they enhance his status within the Arthurian convention without interfering too much with a more rational, if perhaps not very realistic, presentation of knighthood.” Kennedy, *art. cit.*, 184.

The use of marvels and extraordinary characters influences the structure of the narrative by weaving a common thread into Lancelot’s adventures. As he approaches the border with Gorre, the use of alterity as a means to encode /otherness/ reveals Lancelot’s true characteristics as noble. His progress is not just physical but moral as well. The journey in $B_L$ builds up Lancelot’s image as a worthy knight in direct contrast to the public’s view of him as the shameful Knight of the Cart.

4.3.2. Fantastic Space

Lancelot’s quest in unit $B_L$ is one of the most adventure-filled sections of the poem, and contains several episodes that reveal the space between Logres and the bridges to Gorre to be ambiguous. Lancelot’s adventures in this space are characterized by shifting demands of duty, love and service to fellow travelers. He moves through this intermediary land with a directness and speed that is belied by his encounters along the way. These encounters impede his progress as he moves towards Gorre and their nature reflects the multi-faceted problems of the inhabitants who are caught between Logres and Gorre. Fantastic space is also embodied in the isolated tower where Lancelot is imprisoned by Meleagant in $D_L$. In that unit, the land is portrayed as desolate and void of human habitations. Two types of fantastic space are found

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41 “No external force directs these marvels; the essence of the art of a skillful writer of Arthurian romance such as Chrétien de Troyes is that marvels should appear just to happen without logical reason, but that at the same time these strange adventures should serve a structural purpose in that they are used to test the hero and to reveal his quality.” Kennedy, art. cit., 173.
in the *Charrette*: the land of strange encounters with extraordinary people and the waste land where no human chooses to live.

4.3.2.1. *The Forest, Castle and Spring*

When Lancelot begins his quest, he emerges from the forest in a cart. The forest is an ambiguous space through which Lancelot travels on the proper path to Gorre. The forest acts as a transitional space between the realm of King Arthur and a land that is populated with a variety of characters, including dwarves, amorous maidens, hermits and some of the prisoners from Logres. The dwarf takes Lancelot to a castle, where he survives the adventure of the Flaming Lance. His choice of a bedroom is shocking to his hostess, but the knight is able to fend off the threat with an almost nonchalant attitude. Lancelot goes to sleep as if nothing unusual has happened (ll. 532–534). This adventure is the first of many that serve to reestablish Lancelot’s reputation as a worthy knight. Later at a spring, Lancelot finds a comb with a few hairs of the queen caught in it. He is overwhelmed and transfixed by the sight of the hairs. The mere indication of the presence of the queen causes a strange and unusual reaction in Lancelot (ll. 1457–1469). Pierre Gallais associates the spring with the archetype of the *fée-amant* and substantiates a literary tradition of linking supernatural women to water sources, a motif that has long been associated with Celtic literature. 42 Chrétien, by alluding to this tradition, creates a mild association between *fées* and Guenievre, although as Gallais

points out she is far removed from the stereotypical image of a *fée*.\(^3\) The spring is often the scene of the rape, or the cause of a battle (as in *Yvain*).\(^4\) The use of three thematic devices (the dwarf’s cart, the bedroom with the flaming lance and the spring\(^5\)) create a sense of danger and heighten the drama associated with the pursuit of the queen. They mark Lancelot’s progress by defining points of reference as he travels between the real world and the otherworld. Constituting mildly evocative examples of *merveilleux* traditions, each adds to the formation of an atmosphere of tension and anticipation.

4.3.2.2. *The Cemetery*

Lancelot’s journey takes a sudden and unusual turn when he and the maiden arrive at the hermit’s hut, next to which is a cemetery. This encounter is the second test of Lancelot’s resolve to rescue the queen. Having already experienced a social death by virtue of his ride in the cart, Lancelot must now face the reality of his own eventual physical death. Inside the

\(^{3}\) "Guenièvre n’est pas la fée, mais elle est évidemment la Princesse - qui plus est, la Reine, l’Impératrice - à délivrer, et le récit tout entier est celui de la Quête et de la Délivrance. Cependant, si la reine Guenièvre a été une ‘fée’ à l’origine [...], chez Chrétien elle en est aussi éloignée que possible, et rien dans son comportement ni dans sa psychologie ne permet de l’en rapprocher." *ibid.*, 186.

\(^{4}\) *ibid.*, 307.

\(^{5}\) "The supernatural elements are not to be found so much in any of the characters themselves as in the traditional magic devices: the perilous bed on which Lancelot insists on lying, the slab which only he can raise, the sword bridge which he crosses [...], the magic ring worn by Lancelot—all these help to reveal Lancelot’s special qualities as a hero, and the power of love as a source on inspiration." Kennedy, *art. cit.*, 174.
cemetery, the Knight of the Cart reads the names of many great knights from King Arthur's realm (ll. 1854–1870). When Lancelot comes upon the most beautiful tomb with a great marble slab, he is told twice that the person who lifts the stone from the unnamed tomb is the one who is destined to free the prisoners of Gorre.

«Cil qui levera
«cele lanme seus par son cors
«gitera ces et celes fors
«qui sont an la terre an prison,
--------------------------------------------------
– Sire, cil qui delivrera
toz ces qui sont pris a la trape
el réaume don nus n’eschape. » (ll. 1900b–1903; 934–1936)

Lancelot does not react to the overt prophecy of his own destiny and ultimate death. He refuses to give his name to the monk and leaves in the company of the maiden. The events at the Cemetery of the Future represent an important milestone in the voyage of Lancelot on the way to the land of the dead. He is allowed to see the future and fulfills a prophecy concerning his quest.

46 The Prose Lancelot contains a variation of the cemetery scene which is even more elaborate in its mingling of the past, present and future. Lancelot kills two lions, plunges his hands into a boiling spring and pulls out the head of a man. When the head is pulled from the water, the tombstone nearby stops bleeding, and Lancelot opens the tomb to reveal an uncorrupted corpse. Again there is an old holy man, this time a hermit, who reveals to Lancelot that the occupant of the tomb is Lancelot’s grandfather, who like Lancelot, was in a relationship with another man’s wife.

“Lors vait Lanceloz a la tombe et voit que il n’an ist goute de sanc;
si la prant par le gros chief et la lieve et la met en autre leu et voit
gesir anz el tombel le cors sanz teste et delez le cors avoit une
As fantastic space, the cemetery communicates information about the past, present and future. This episode constitutes the most obviously fantastic part of Lancelot’s quest due to the overt inclusion of thematic details relating to death, prophecy and destiny as well as the distortion of time implied by Lancelot’s glimpse into the future. The reactions of the hermit, the maiden and the father and son who witness the “mervoilles” (l. 1968) consist of amazement, awe and fear. The father is so fearful for his son that he convinces the son to abandon his challenge to fight the Knight of the Cart. This episode also serves to continue the mystery surrounding Lancelot’s true identity, increasing the sense of /otherness/ surrounding the knight.

4.3.2.3. The Castle with Prisoners

On the first day of the quest, the maiden informs Lancelot and Gauvain that the entry points into Gorre are two bridges, one made of water and the other of a sword. Her words indicate that the river marks the boundary into Gorre. But in episode B13, the prisoners begin to revolt as Lancelot travels through the land leading up to those bridges. This creates an

coupe d’or moult riche et li cors estoit tout nuz piez et avoit les mains et les membres ausi biaux com s’il fust orandroit desviez.”

There are three particular aspects of the story that lend it an air of the otherworld: the boiling spring, the bleeding tombstone, and the uncorrupted corpse. Here the fate of Lancelot’s ancestor is brought forward to the present by Lancelot’s direct intervention. This scene echoes with the one from Chrétien de Troyes, in that Lancelot faces his destiny. Additionally, from the Prose Lancelot scene, he learns his name, his parentage, and his destiny all at once. Through a technique of superimposition, the mingling of the past, present and future cause a distortion of time. Lancelot, Roman en prose du XIIIe siècle, Ed. Alexandre Micha, (Geneva: Droz, 1978–1983).
impression that not all of the prisoners are on the other side of the river in Gorre. The nature of this space before the crossing of the sword and water bridges is highly questionable. If the prisoners are captive in Gorre, then why are they being held on the wrong side of the river? The anomaly in the textual description of the land lends a degree of mystery and ambiguity to the space. This inconsistency in the description of the prisoners’ location implies that they are held in an intermediary space between the real world and the otherworld, in other words, the prisoners are located in fantastic space.

The prisoners’ revolt is successful with the aid of Lancelot and his two companions. The prophecy made at the Cemetery of the Future is quickly fulfilled when the prisoners are liberated. The image of a castle situated near a dangerous river that borders the land of the dead is analogous to the location of the Grail Castle in *Li Contes del Graal*. In the Grail Castle, the people are held captive in a castle on the banks of a river due to war and cannot be restored to a meaningful existence until the wounded King is healed. In the *Charrette*, the inhabitants of a castle near the perilous river are captives of war as well, yet are successful in gaining their freedom to return to Logres. As a liberator, Lancelot is successful whereas Perceval is not.
4.3.2.4.  *The Bridge into Gorre*

The third test of Lancelot's resolve to rescue the queen occurs when he crosses the sword bridge.⁴⁷ Lancelot is intent on taking the shortest route, which leads him to a stone passage. When Lancelot and his two companions reach the pass, the reputation of the Knight of the Cart is used as a reason to refuse Lancelot passage (ll. 2211–2219). Later, a second knight reproaches Lancelot for his ride in the cart, saying that no man who had experienced the disgrace of such behavior would be so foolish as to attempt the crossing of the sword bridge (ll. 2579–2623). The sword bridge and the river it spans represent the last barrier to entering Gorre. Their questionable nature indicates that Lancelot is making his final passage into the land of the dead.

Et li ponz qui est an travers
estoit de toz autres divers ;
qu'ainz tex ne fu ne ja mes n'iert.
Einz ne fu, qui voir m'an requiert,
si max ponz ne si male planche :
d'une espee forbie et blanche
estoit li ponz sor l'eye froide ;
mes l'espee estoit forz et roide, (ll. 3017–24)

The sword bridge, which gives access to the land of Gorre, is reminiscent of the bridge of al-Sirat of the Islamic tradition, “finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword ... suspended over the chasms of hell”, which the deceased must attempt to cross, to the sinners’ perdition. W. Durant, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950) 178. If this comparison is correct, it confirms that the land of Gorre is a supernatural place and that crossing the bridge is a test. Only the hero can, with much suffering, go through it and by his merits alone allow the queen and the other captives to come back to the real world.
The other side of the bridge is guarded by two lions. Lancelot uses a magic ring, given to him by the Lady of the Lake (ll. 2345–55), to dispel the delusion created by Gorre. The crossing of the sword bridge is the final trial in Lancelot’s quest. The purpose of the sword bridge is to prevent intruders from entering Gorre by creating an impossible means of passage over a perilous river. The combination of the two is seemingly designed to cause second thoughts on the part of anyone who would attempt to cross the bridge. Lancelot does not hesitate, even though his companions fear for his safety. The fearful reactions of his two companions reveal the sword bridge and river as the ultimate limits of fantastic space, on the other side of which the land of the dead is found.

The spaces Lancelot passes through on his way to Gorre correspond to several distinct physical settings: the forest, a castle, a spring, a cemetery, and finally a river. As seen in Chapter 2, each of these locations may be indicative of fantastic space. The river crossed via the sword bridge marks the boundary of Gorre. As Lancelot is traveling to the otherworld in his journey, the path he follows up to the river becomes more narrow and restrictive as he approaches his goal. The threats, warnings and challenges also become more severe. He is confronted not only by hostility but also by deceptive magic, as seen in the illusion of lions guarding the shore on the other side of the sword bridge. Each of these aspects of the fantastic creates an impression of fear, adventure and danger associated with the land of Lancelot’s travels.
4.3.2.5.  Lancelot in the Tower

There is yet one more example of fantastic space in the Charrette to be examined. When Lancelot is imprisoned in the tower by Meleagant, the island (l. 6123) is described as being "pres de Gorre" (l. 6121). The description of the tower's location is vague and it is presented as being in an intermediary space between Gorre and Logres. Only Meleagant knows the location well and the builders are sworn to secrecy. It is isolated on the coast, according to Meleagant's sister (ll. 6425–27). The atmosphere is bleak and desolate, with little indication of life or activity. Jackson states that fantastic space is a type of indeterminate space:

"The represented world of the fantastic is of a different kind from the imagined universe of the marvelous and it opposes the latter's rich, colorful fullness with relatively bleak, empty, indeterminate landscapes, which are less definable as places than spaces, as white, gray, or shady blanknesses."48

This characterization of fantastic space serves well to summarize the space Lancelot is imprisoned in. He is in a tower surrounded by an empty, wasteland. There is no specified path to the tower. The maiden finds him by randomly wandering and with the help of good fortune. The tower's location is somewhere between Gorre and Logres, increasing the impression of its being in an intermediate space between the real world and the otherworld.

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48 Jackson, Fantasy..., 42.
In both units BL and DL, the space through which Lancelot travels is fantastic, but for different reasons. The fantastic space of narrative unit BL is peopled with a variety of companions for the Knight of the Cart, who goes through many adventures, both chivalrous and merveilleux in nature. In direct contrast, the fantastic space seen in unit DL is void of people, adventures or even a semblance of activity. Lancelot's two experiences in fantastic space function as polar opposites to highlight his mental condition. In the first series of episodes, Lancelot the liberator focuses on freeing the queen and the prisoners. In the second episode, Lancelot the prisoner focuses on why no one (especially Gauvain) has tried to liberate him from the tower. Fantastic space thus functions as a transitional location that highlights Lancelot's shifting roles as he goes from one state of being to another.

4.3.3. Hesitation

In Chapter 2, it was shown that hesitation by the hero plays a significant role in identifying the presence of the fantastic mode. In the Charrette, there are four examples of hesitation related to Lancelot's quest. Each instance of hesitation occurs at specific physical places: at the cart, the window, the entrance to a bedroom and the spring. In two of the episodes, Lancelot is inactive because he is entranced by thoughts of Guenievre. He becomes frozen at the window while Meleagant is leading her away on the morning after the flaming lance adventure and again when he sees her hairs caught in the comb at the spring. In these two circumstances, Lancelot hesitates in a similar fashion to Perceval's hesitation at the sight of three drops of blood in the snow. Both knights are not hesitating from fear, but are in a trance-like state as they reflect on the object of their devotion.
Le Chevalier de la charrette

A second type of hesitation found in the Charrette is seen in Lancelot’s two debates about his conflicting duties to love and reason. The first debate occurs just before he enters the cart, which was discussed above.\(^{49}\) He also momentarily debates defending the lady from several attacking knights (ll. 931–1280). As Lacy noted, Lancelot debates where his duty lies between love and reason and which course will bring him greater shame.\(^{50}\) Lancelot consistently avoids complications or obligations that might deter or interrupt him from reaching the queen.

When compared to Chrétien’s other heroes, Lancelot represents a different type of knight. Rather than welcoming adventures, Lancelot seems to consider the various interruptions to his quest not as challenges but as nuisances that hinder his progress. For example, when he hesitates to defend the lady who offers him lodging in return for sleeping with her, the reason he gives is that it will delay his quest for the queen (ll. 1097–1111). Lancelot consistently chooses the path that will bring him most swiftly to his goal, as seen in his choice of the sword bridge over the water bridge. In each of the encounters, the closer Lancelot gets to the queen the more determined he becomes to rescue her. The use of this technique by the author causes a heightening of desire on the part of the main character and increases the narrative tension experienced by the reader.

\(^{49}\) See sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

\(^{50}\) See section 4.1.1.2 for a discussion of Lacy’s theory.
In each of the three situations where Lancelot has actually encountered the queen or a symbol of her presence, he becomes physically immobile, yet in his pursuit of her, he lets nothing come in his way. In terms of narrative hesitation, except for the incident of the cart, Lancelot never procrastinates on his journey to Gorre. Lacy writes, “Despite the dangers he may face, delay is unconscionable to the knight whose quest was necessitated, in the cart scene, by a tragic delay.”

I would argue that, in this case, hesitation is symptomatic of Lancelot’s state of mind. Lancelot’s hesitation is not a reaction to otherworldly forces—rather, it results from uncertainty regarding the true nature of the situation. In Lacy’s example of the amorous lady, the hesitation is caused by Lancelot’s conflicting loyalties resulting from his immediate duty as a knight to protect a lady. On the other hand, Lancelot’s hesitation at the cart is the result of an internal conflict between love and reason. The former situation is much more immediate and concrete, the latter connotes the larger context of a lifetime battle couched within a philosophical debate. Both types of hesitation reflect a state of mind, forcing Lancelot to choose the greater of two obligations. In neither case is the hesitation fantastic in and of itself.

51 Lacy offers a complete catalog of adventures where Lancelot berates himself for delaying in his pursuit of the queen. Lacy, op. cit., 90, 91.
4.3.4. Openness and the Dual Ending

Another much debated aspect of the Charrette is its ending. David Hult puts forth the possibility, (as has Roger Dragonetti in his La Vie de la lettre au moyen âge,\(^52\)) that the clerk Godefroi “is a fiction of Chrétien—a ‘clerkly’ author-figure allowing our devious first author the luxury of two endings, two voices, and thus a highly nuanced, unlocalizable intentionality.”\(^53\) Bruckner writes that the numerous “loose ends” point to the open-endedness of romance narratives.\(^54\) The questions and theories surrounding Godefroi’s epilogue also seemingly indicate a lack of closure to the structure of the Charrette.

The point at which Chrétien stops writing leaves the narrative in a state that is incomplete and unsatisfactory. Concerning Chrétien’s skill and ability to compose romance narratives, Bruckner writes that the poet had more and more trouble with the endings. She believes that Chrétien, by appointing Godefroi de Leigni to finish the Charrette, was attempting to guard against unauthorized continuations. “Godefroi’s epilogue indicates that Chrétien ended his part of the Charrette with Lancelot imprisoned in the tower. May we not read this as a

\(^{52}\) Roger Dragonetti, La Vie de la lettre au moyen âge (Paris: Seuil, 1980) 13-17.


\(^{54}\) Bruckner, op. cit., 163.
comment, however wittily indirect, on romance endings as action suspended rather than finalized?" The structure of the Charrette’s dual ending is illustrated in Figure 4.2:

![Figure 4.2—Structural model for Lancelot’s voyage to Gorre](image)

At point “a,” Lancelot enters the cart and begins his journey through fantastic space toward the otherworld. Point “b” marks the crossing into Gorre over the river, at which point fantastic space ends. The greater part of the romance was written by Chrétien and is represented by the solid line. When Chrétien finishes his portion of the narrative, Lancelot is imprisoned in the tower (point A). The land is described as wasted and desolate (ll. 6422–6427). Given that this first ending is viewed as the culmination of Chrétien’s efforts, it becomes clear that Lancelot’s quest is left unresolved. Chrétien’s portion would thus fulfill all

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55 *ibid.*, 164.

56 Concerning the fantastic nature of wastelands, see Dubost, *op. cit.*, 390–425.
of the major qualifications for a fantastic interpretation: there is an atmosphere of fear, evidence of supernatural interference in the real world, and a lack of clear resolution.

The actual ending, written by Godefroi, completes the narrative program and yet also somehow is unsatisfactory. When Godefroi wrote the last narrative unit of the Charrette, he resolved the initial conflict, but left the more complex question of adulterous love unresolved. From the reader's point of view, there remains one major question: What happens to the relationship between Lancelot and the queen? At the end of the narrative, there is a clear indication that the two lovers are restricted to the traditional social roles (ll. 6820–6853). As a knight, Lancelot overcomes the paradox of the Knight of the Cart by defeating Meleagant. However as a lover, Lancelot has returned to his state of separation from the queen. The major unanswered question of the Charrette is precisely the future of Lancelot and Guenievre's love affair. Their story is decidedly not closed, and cannot be closed on a paradigmatic level, when Chrétien's romance ends, because of the adulterous nature of their relationship.

Kelly's study of the Charrette's structure provides a clear answer to David Hult's proposal that Chrétien deliberately encoded two endings into his story of Lancelot's love for the queen. Kelly shows that Godefroi's conclusion for the Charrette closely follows the structural patterns established in the earlier parts of the narrative. "The poem has a well thought-out plot with a carefully constructed structural foundation; this shows that the poem is complete as it stands and that it is in the form Chrétien had originally planned when he
began to write."\textsuperscript{57} The structure may be open-ended as Bruckner asserts, but it is neither ambiguous nor incomplete. The two major objectives have been successfully completed. Lancelot frees both the queen and the prisoners, neutralizing any threats from the otherworld by killing Meleagant in the final battle scene. The remaining issue of the love between Guenievre and Lancelot is the only unresolved disjunction.

4.4. \textit{Fantastic and Structure in Le Chevalier de la charrette}

Chrétien, as he worked on \textit{Le Chevalier de la charrette}, had a clear, complex, and well-structured plan for his tale about Lancelot. Todorov identifies three functions of the supernatural as it affects a narrative: it keeps the reader in suspense (creating narrative openness), it exists for its own sake (being an auto-designation), and it performs as syntactical function (participating in the development of the narrative’s structure).\textsuperscript{58} In the \textit{Charrette}, these three functions are present in varying degrees. The supernatural is used in narrative unit $B_1$ to increase tension and create mystery surrounding Lancelot as he journeys to Gorre. The supernatural also is found within objects, such as the magic ring Lancelot received from the fée. As a stock element of otherworldly voyages, such an object functions as a recognizable motif to add color and exotic detail to the adventure.

\textsuperscript{57} Kelly, \textit{Sens and Conjointure...}, 238.

\textsuperscript{58} Todorov, \textit{Introduction...}, 170.
In regards to the syntactical function, the supernatural in the *Charrette* does not appear to directly affect the narrative's structure. The only units where supernatural elements are found are units $A_A$ and $B_L$. Meleagnt’s arrival at Arthur’s court in $A_A$ represents an intrusion of the supernatural into the real world. The various supernatural aspects of Lancelot’s quest have been detailed above in sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.1. When Lancelot actually arrives in Gorre, the supernatural as a quantifiable aspect of the tale disappears. Bademagu’s kingdom is reminiscent of Arthur’s court in many details. For example, the way in which Bademagu and Guenievre intervene in the first battle between Lancelot and Meleagnt follows known standards of courtly conduct. The supernatural, as an indicator of the fantastic, does not apply to the *Charrette* according to Todorov’s standards for evaluating narrative structure.

When evaluating the impact of the fantastic on narrative structure, I proposed a model in Chapter 2 that defined three elements—/otherness/, openness, and fantastic space—as indicators of the fantastic mode. Openness of structure is found in unresolved disjunctions, multiple possible interpretations of events or in the lack of a clear ending to the narrative program. Deception and ambiguity were identified as hallmarks of /otherness/. Fantastic space is transitional (found between worlds) or invasive (where one world violates the other’s sovereignty). This analysis of the *Charrette* shows that ambiguity and deception are present throughout the narrative, especially in the way in which Meleagnt interacts with Lancelot in specific and the whole of Arthurian society in general. Fantastic space exists in units $B_L$ and $D_L$. However, this analysis of the structure also shows that the *Charrette* is not open-ended on a syntagmatic level because all of the major disjunctions are successfully resolved. There is
nothing ambiguous or unclear about the way in which the narrative program is accomplished. For Arthur and his court, Lancelot’s quest is a successful one in that the objective of the adventure was to obtain the release of the prisoners and the queen from the land of Gorre. For Lancelot, the adventure is also successful—he is able to gain freedom for the queen as well as reestablishing his reputation as a worthy knight, in spite of his ride in the cart. The narrative definitely contains a “happy end.” Therefore, according to the structural model proposed in Figure 2.5, the Charrette is most accurately characterized as merveilleux. Lancelot travels to the otherworld, accomplishes all that is required of him, and returns to the real world for the final triumphant battle scene that decisively dispels any lingering concerns about the fate of the prisoners and queen.

Clearly, when examining the general, overall structure of Le Chevalier de la charrette, there emerges an identifiable pattern used by Chrétien in writing about the adventures of Lancelot, as Kelly has so aptly shown. There is much of what Francis Dubost labels aspects fantastiques in the details of Lancelot’s adventures. The use of a fantastic event in \( A_a \) provides the impetus and inspiration for the resulting plot development in subsequent narrative units, especially in Lancelot’s initial adventures in unit \( B_L \). That is, if Meleagant had not come from Gorre into Arthur’s world, there would have been no need to send Keu and the queen out into a dangerous situation. Even though a fantastic event initiates the narrative program, the structure of that program is decidedly merveilleux.
5. *Graelent and Guingamor*

*Graelent* and *Guingamor*¹ are two works written in the latter half of the 12th century. Both stories are classified as anonymous, although some² have tried to attribute at least *Guingamor* to Marie de France. The structures of the two stories appear similar on the surface. The way in which the fantastic mode influences those structures is examined in three ways in this chapter. The presence of /otherness/ plays a part in creating deception through manipulated speech. Each *lai* presents a single adventure involving fantastic space³ and reveals the fantastic mode to be an elusive and shifting force within a narrative. The fantastic, as discussed in Chapter 2, creates a certain type of space through which the characters pass on their way between the real and supernatural worlds. That space, which I refer to as fantastic space, occurs when a character is in a state of transition. Most often the character is experiencing some sort of personal crisis within the real world that leads him to seek another realm. In each *lai*, the use of the fantastic mode establishes an uncertainty in the text concerning the success of

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¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotes from these four *lais* are taken from Prudence Mary O'Hara Tobin, *Les Lais Anonymes des XIe et XIIe Siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 1976).


³ For a definition of fantastic space, see section 2.5.
or failure of the hero as an individual and as a member of his society. Therefore the ending of each *lai* is particularly relevant to the assessment of the whole structure and to the manner in which the fantastic mode is manifested through the narrative program.

The *Lais* of Marie de France are sophisticated and too far removed from their original sources to provide much insight into the supernatural which is foundational to the fantastic. In the *lai* "Milun", there are many details that point to the supernatural as an explicable phenomenon: the raven who turns into a man, the lady’s journey through a tunnel to a funeral in progress, the revelation of Milun’s true patrimony. *Bisclavret* contains an obvious supernatural event, and yet even that metamorphosis is logically explained away by a wise old man. The wise man gives a rational explanation that is tested and accepted by the king, presenting an almost scientific approach to solving the problem. Most of the *lais* represent the *étrange*, where the ending provides a rational explanation for the supernatural. The characteristic manifestations of *otherness* (fear, ambiguity and hesitation) which signal the fantastic mode are totally lacking. Therefore, I will refer to Marie’s *Lais* where relevant to the discussion, but they will not be the subject of an exhaustive analysis.

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4 “In sum, one could suggest that, while Marie has written an entertaining story [*Lanval*] full of courtly glitter and social commentary, her work lacks many of the affecting elements of the Celtic tale, which are retained [in *Graelent* and *Guingamor*].” Russell Weingartner, “Introduction,” *Graelent and Guingamor: Two Breton Lays*, ed. and trans. R. Weingartner (New York: Garland, 1985) xxi.
5.1. **Graelent**

Graelent is a knight, who does not fit into the real world, where most of the events of the story take place. In a forest near the city he meets a *fée* bathing in a spring and makes her his lover. At the end, Graelent departs to the otherworld to join his *fée-amante*, because their love cannot exist in the real world.⁵ The lai of *Graelent* is similar to Marie de France’s *Lanval* in a number of elements:⁶

[As in *Lanval*], the handling of the supernatural in *Graelent* shows a respect for the Celtic legend being told. The encounter with the mysterious is presaged by the chase of the white doe, an event which often leads to an otherworldly happening, followed by a description of the pool as “clear and beautiful,” a common haunt for a water sprite or fairy maiden.⁷

In *Graelent*, the events that take place within fantastic space are open to multiple interpretations. The fantastic occurs in a variety of forms and is primarily used by the author to create ambiguity and conflict in the narrative. The pact between Graelent and his *fée*-amante is

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⁵ “And, in the end, after events in the real world have caused unhappiness and separation, it seems foreordained that Graelent should struggle desperately, with no regard for his life, to follow his beloved into the otherworld, the only place where such love can thrive.” Weingartner, *op. cit.*, xx.

⁶ E. Hoepffner proposed that the source for both Marie’s *Lanval* and the anonymous *Graelent* was the same and that *Graelent* is more faithful to the source text. E. Hoepffner, “Le Lai de *Lanval,*” *Revue des cours et conférences* (1933-34), 635-638.

⁷ Weingartner, *op. cit.*, xx.
amante reinforces the impression of otherworldly intervention in the affairs of the real world. Graelent desires to have the best of both worlds, and so accepts the fée’s offer. The testimony of the fée during Graelent’s trial condemns the real world by implying a higher order while simultaneously revealing its incompatibilities with the otherworld. Thus the otherworld modulates between being the superior reflection of the real world and its opposite. The fée brings to the forefront the inconsistencies of the real world order by undermining that order.8

5.1.1. The Structure of Graelent

Jean-Claude Aubailly, in his examination of Lanval, Graelent, and Guingamor proposes a five-part structure for the tales. Aubailly uses Jungian theory as a starting point from which he addresses this common structure. The division is based on relationships between, and positions within, the real world or the otherworld. He also characterizes the tales as an “entrelacement de deux mythes, le mythe de Phèdre/Potiphar et le mythe de la femme-cygne.”9 Aubailly’s comparison of the three texts suggests a duality of structure based on two well-known myths. Such a division would imply that the first half of the text is comprised of the “Phèdre/Potiphar” myth and the second half contains the “femme-cygne” myth. Aubailly

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8 See section 1.2.2 for a discussion of Rosemary Jackson’s theory of the fantastic as subverting social order and creating paradoxes.

supports a mythic interpretation which provides for the initiation of the hero into society via a process of individuation.

Aubailly's initial argument for five narrative units is somewhat undermined by his elaboration of the dual myth theory. I would argue, given that his comparison to the myths is acceptable, that it is more viable to see the tale of Graelent as a repetitive cycle. From a purely spatial analysis (that is based on an analysis of the locations the hero frequents), it is also possible to divide this tale into four narrative units which reveal a bipartite structure based on sequential repetition.\(^\text{10}\) The story does not actually show Graelent's life in the otherworld.\(^\text{11}\) Rather, the narrator keeps his tale within the boundaries of the real world, even though, a point which I shall discuss later in this chapter, that realistic space is transformed into fantastic space in units \(B_G\) and \(D_G\) through the physical presence of the \(fée\). The story is primarily concerned with Graelent's activities in the real world and within fantastic space as detailed in Table 5.1:

\(^{10}\) This division for the structure omits the prologue (ll. 1–14) and epilogue (ll. 735–756).

\(^{11}\) Aubailly labels his fifth episode "Départ définitif vers l'Autre Monde," indicating movement toward rather than existence within the otherworld. This portion of the text is not actually a recounting of the events that take place in the otherworld, but a movement through the forest and river to reach the far shore. The narrative point of view remains on the forest side of the river rather than following Graelent into the otherworld.
Graelent and Guingamor

Table 5.1—General structure for **Graelent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Disjunction—$S \cup O_S$</td>
<td>Real world—the court and city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Conjunction—$S \cap O_S$</td>
<td>Fantastic space—between worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Disjunction—$S \cup O_{S,F}$</td>
<td>Real world—the court and city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Conjunction—$S \cap O_F$</td>
<td>Fantastic space—heading toward the otherworld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disjunction—$S \cup O_S$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graelent’s initial desire is to regain the social status ($O_S$) he lost due to the queen’s interference. By the latter half of the story, Graelent is also seeking reunion with the fée, but it is not until the final narrative unit that he abandons the desire for social status within the court. The bipartite structure reveals a repeating cycle beginning with a real-world crisis which causes poverty for the hero. The hero is then rescued and made “socially acceptable” through financial and moral justification provided by the fée-amante. Units A and C take place in the real world. Units B<sub>G</sub> and D<sub>G</sub> show the intrusion and intervention of the otherworld to resolve a real-world crisis provoked by the queen. This intrusion creates an intermediary space where the contradictory laws of the real and the otherworld collide (in a struggle for dominance).
5.1.1.1. *Graelent Rejects the Queen*

The first narrative unit of *Graelent* is comprised of three episodes. These episodes are related to each other in that they describe how Graelent falls from a fairly enviable social position into poverty. His state of narrative equilibrium\(^{12}\) is totally reversed in 148 lines.

1. Initial situation (ll. 15–26)
2. Queen’s advances (ll. 27–138)
3. Poverty of Graelent (ll. 139–162)

By rejecting love (in general) and the queen, Graelent rejects the accepted model of social behavior. Graelent establishes his primary identity as that of a social outcast by upholding the very ideals that make the society function. In this story, social status is directly related to wealth. Therefore, wealth and possessions symbolize integration and acceptance into the real world’s system. Graelent, by losing the financial support of Arthur, is implicitly rejected by court society. Graelent’s object therefore becomes reintegration into society (\(O_s\)), which would reestablish his initial state of equilibrium and happiness. The conflict engendered in narrative unit A prepares Graelent for the arrival of the supernatural into the real world.

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\(^{12}\) See section 2.3.1.
5.1.1.2.  *Graelent Meets the Fée*

When Graelent rides out of town and enters the forest, he does so to avoid social contact in the form of the innkeeper’s solicitous daughter. The first and second episodes recall the traditional beginnings of other medieval adventure tales, such as *Guigemar* by Marie de France,\(^1\) where the pursuit of an albino animal symbolizes movement toward the otherworld. This unit of *Graelent* is divided into five episodes:

1. Graelent leaves town (ll. 163–208)
2. Ride in the forest and hunt of the white doe (ll. 209–228)
3. Graelent’s advances to the *fée* (ll. 229–266)
4. Rape of the *fée* (ll. 267–304)
5. The *fée*’s response (ll. 305–342)

This unit offers an example of a typical love adventure, where a young knight gains the love of a lady. Normally such a tale would end on the “happily ever after” note, but in *Graelent*, one sees that (like the scenarios in *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*) what follows is far from an idyllic co-mingling of lives. He enters a forest where he sees a white doe, which he follows to a spring (ll. 209–211). Pierre Gallais states that the “*fée-amante*” who appears at a

water source is an archetype that occurs 85% of the time in the *lais* and *contes* he examined, and such is the case in *Graelent* (ll. 216–221). Figure 5.1 illustrates the spatial displacement of Graelent as he moves through the forest:

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**Figure 5.1—Structural model for Graelent's spatial displacement**

In the above figure, Graelent's adventure in the forest and return to town are shown in terms of the physical landmarks indicated in ll. 208–221. The lover herself has undergone a similar journey, in that she must also leave her home to enter the forest, but the narrative only implies this journey. Where the two meet is the initial point of contact between the two worlds. That contact expands and increases, in turn enlarging fantastic space as the *fée*'s movements create an ever-widening circle of influence. As a silent and invisible partner, the

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“La présence de l'eau, autour et dans l'Autre monde, est attestée dans 85% des récits: la fontaine dans 36%, la mer dans 30%, la rivière dans 29%, l'étang dans 24%, le ruisseau dans 16%.” Pierre Gallais, *La fée...*, 280.
fee in Graelent is able to intervene in tangible ways rather than by just giving moral support to the young knight. In Lanval, a more sophisticated version of the same basic story, the fee gives Lanval moral support and love without any coercion on the part of the knight. However in Lanval the fee is much more aggressive: She sends her servants to seek out Lanval and bring him back to her tents. She offers him her love instead of being raped and then begged for love. In both narratives, the fee actively works on behalf of her lover, providing both emotional and financial support.

At this moment in the narrative program, the fee is fulfilling the role of sender. Her statement (ll.313–317) is the clearest indication in the story of a type of predestination and deliberate interference by the supernatural. While also fulfilling other roles (sender and object), the fee acts most frequently in the role of helper to Graelent. Rather than being a passive object that Graelent pursues, she moves out into the forest to meet Graelent and aid him in his goal of social reintegration. The fee continues her active role throughout the narrative. She offers him wealth, companionship and true love, which are all the traditional symbols of a successful knight and which coincidentally are the very things that have been denied to him by the king and queen.

15 Marie de France, op. cit, 72–92.
5.1.1.3. **Graelent Insults the Queen**

In the beginning of narrative unit $C_G$, the fantastic mode is fully operative, seen in the way in which Graelent's real-world needs are fulfilled by resources from the supernatural world (and ultimately from the $f\grave{e}$e). With the arrival of a servant, the influence of the $f\grave{e}$e is physically manifested. One sees here the direct interference of the otherworld in the affairs of the real world, which is a common definition for the fantastic mode (discussed in Chapter 2).  

Unit $C_G$ contains three episodes which mirror Graelent's original status in $A_G$.

1. Return to initial social status (ll. 343–426)
2. Display of the queen (ll. 427–488)
3. Graelent returns to poverty (ll. 489–578)

The beginning of $C_G$ marks the midpoint in the narrative. One sees a return to equilibrium for Graelent, as represented by his financial stability provided through the $f\grave{e}$e. Abundant wealth for the hero is the primary manner in which the supernatural otherworld intervenes in the affairs of the real world.

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16 See page 43, footnote 64.

17 The text is comprised of 756 lines, making the absolute physical midpoint line 378. Unit $C_G$ starts on line 343. So the beginning of this unit approximates the midpoint of the text in both a physical and structural sense.
When the queen demands justice, Graelent is asked to substantiate his claims in the form of a logical, physical proof of the fée’s existence. This type of proof exemplifies a rejection of the supernatural by means of a logical causality: if Graelent can not bring the fée to court, then she must not exist. The story returns to the mimetic mode, as Graelent’s depression and descent into poverty are described. Episode \( C_3 \) evokes identical emotions and mirrors actions already seen in episode \( A_3 \), where the young knight is in a state of degradation and finds no comfort. Graelent’s objective now has two parts: an accepted place in society (\( O_s \)) and the finding of his lady (\( O_f \)). If Graelent can find the fée, he can regain the happiness he had experienced at the beginning of unit \( C \). At this juncture in the narrative, there is a clear indication that Graelent puts more emphasis on the goal of finding the lady. However, he still desires social justification before the court as well.

5.1.1.4. Graelent is Justified

When a year has passed, Graelent is brought to trial a second time. His fate is again changed by the intervention of the supernatural embodied in the procession of the maidens and the fée. This time, instead of Graelent going into the forest to find the fée, she seeks him out

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18 “Graelent moine grant dolor, / Il n’a repos ne nuit ne jor ; / Quant s’amie ne puet avoir, / Sa vie met en nonchaloir.” (ll. 539–542)
in court. Narrative unit $D_G$, like unit $B_G$ contains five parts, again reinforcing a parallel structure:

1. Second trial (ll. 579–586)
2. Procession of the maidens (ll. 587–614)
3. Arrival and speech of the fée (ll. 615–654)
4. Judgment of the king’s court (ll. 655–666)
5. Departure to the otherworld (ll. 667–734)

In unit $D_G$, the influence of the supernatural world in the affairs of the court re-exerts itself in a manner that cannot be ignored. The real world can no longer reject the supernatural world by means of articulated logic, because the supernatural world is now physically manifested. At the very moment when the real world readily accepts him, Graelent emphatically chooses the otherworld. For the first time in the tale, he actively pursues the fée. His path leads back through fantastic space and into the otherworld. This path is illustrated in terms of spatial displacement for Graelent in Figure 5.2:

\[\text{Figure 5.2: Spatial Displacement for Graelent}\]

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\[\text{For a detailed examination of the parallel structure of this lai, see section 5.1.2.6 below.}\]
Figure 5.2—Spatial displacement for Graelent’s departure

Figure 5.2 diagrams the physical space and movement described in lines 677–682. Graelent’s pursuit of the fée is described in the same manner as was his chase of the white doe in lines 204–219. However, this time instead of chasing haphazardly after a wild animal, Graelent takes the “droit chemin” through the forest up to the river. Graelent has finally abandoned his original goal of social status in the king’s entourage. The semiotic state of narrative unit \( D_G \) is one of disjunction in regards to his society \( (D_G = S \cup O_S) \) and attempted conjunction with the fée \( (D_G = S \cap O_F) \).

20 Tant ont le droit chemin tenu,
Qu’il sont a la forez venu;
Parmi le bois lor voie tindrent,
Et tant qu’a la riviere vindrent,
Qui en mi la lande sordoit,
Et parmi la forest coroit. (ll. 677–682)

21 See page 182 for a discussion of the use of droit chemin in Le Chevalier de la charrette.
By intervening, the *fée* acts as a helper for Graelent, pulling him from the water after his third attempt to cross the river. Once again, she changes the natural course of events for Graelent, who should have died. Once he arrives on the other side of the river, the fantastic mode gives way to the *merveilleux* because Graelent has now entered the otherworld where the supernatural is in control.

5.1.2. The Fantastic Mode in Graelent

The fantastic mode is manifested in four distinct manners within *Graelent*. First there is the presence of disturbing or blatantly supernatural aspects which originate from the otherworld, creating *otherness*. The use of fantastic space provides a means to measure the impact of the supernatural upon the real world. Conflicting loyalties between the real world and otherworld surface in the form of Graelent’s inability to use speech correctly. When the *lai* ends, there is an incompleteness to the narrative, as one is not assured of Graelent’s eventual fate. The narrator only tells us that he is rescued from the river by his lover. The “happily ever after” scene, so common to *merveilleux* tales is absent and that conclusion is left up to the reader’s discretion.
5.1.2.1. /Otherness/

The fée represents the primary source of /otherness/ in Graelent. The fantastic is woven throughout the narrative from the moment Graelent encounters the fée in narrative unit B_G. Her presence and absence fill the story with mystery and emotion. As stated in Chapter 2, the presence of the supernatural is a prerequisite for the fantastic mode. The fée constitutes the supernatural element in the story both by her nature and her actions. She actively creates an untenable situation for Graelent in her attempt to repair an initial wrong done to him by the queen, and she perpetuates the conflict by imposing a geis on the knight. The presence of her servant at Graelent’s quarters ensures that her influence will continue to be felt in the real world. Clearly, the fée by her nature does not fit into the real world and she creates anomalies and /otherness/ that increase the narrative conflict. Of the eight specific occurrences of

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22 /Otherness/, as an organizing principle for the supernatural, was seen (in Chapter 2) to be characterized by the contrary opposition between reality and appearances. Delusion, secrecy and a confusion between truth and falsehood are seen in terms of the formula “Appearing + Not Real”. See section 2.1 for more details.

23 “La fée reste une étrangère, une ‘pucelle estrange’; son extraordinaire beauté, la prospérité qu’elle a mystérieusement apportée à son époux, l’intensité même de son amour et le bonheur sans nuages qu’elle fait connaître à son mari: tout cela augmente encore son ‘étrangeté’.” Gallais, La fée..., 68.

/otherness/, seven are directly associated with the fée.25

/Otherness/ initially surfaces in unit B. First, there is the manner in which Graelent meets the fée, while hunting an albino animal in the forest. The forest (discussed in Chapter 2) is the traditional space for unusual adventures and when combined with hunting a traditionally mythic animal becomes even more susceptible to supernatural intervention. (The hunt scene represents the eighth occurrence of /otherness/.) Graelent rapes the fée, who then informs him that she left her own world just to meet him. This scene takes place near a spring where the lady is bathing, which is also a common motif.26 Because of the fée's confessed intentions, one receives the impression of a crude seduction scene rather than a violation. She has the ability to grant special privileges to Graelent, which serve to separate him from his peers by increasing his social standing. The fée warns Graelent that none of his companions will be able to see her and that he must not tell anyone about her. These prohibitions are similar to the geis

25 The fée is first encountered at a spring (l. 216); she imposes a geis (ll. 302–304); she possesses abundant wealth (ll. 305–306); she can only be seen by Graelent (l. 311); she disappears when the geis is violated (ll. 508–512); she possesses extraordinary beauty (ll. 254, 593–596); she is able to cross the dangerous river (ll. 660–664) when the knight can not.

26 For a more detailed discussion about water as fantastic space, see section 2.6.2. “L’eau est liée à la femme; la fontaine ou le bassin appellent la jeune fille au bain, à sa toilette: idées de jeunesse, de beauté (le ‘pancalisme’ de l’eau, dit Bachelard), de nudité, de virginité et en même temps de sexualité (la ‘sexualisation’ de l’eau), d’amour (le ‘boire amoureux’); le ruisseau y ajoute la gaieté, l’amabilité, la vivacité (le chant, la musique, etc.).” Gallais, La fée..., 8.
tradition of Celtic literature.\textsuperscript{27} She repeats the prohibition twice (ll. 316–320, 331–334) creating mystery and secrecy which are also symptomatic of the fantastic mode. The merveilleux does not hide its supernatural nature, while the fantastic creates an illusion as a means of secrecy.\textsuperscript{28} Her significant wealth is indicative of her great degree of power and social standing in the otherworld.

When the \textit{fée} withdraws, the effects of her absence are immediately conspicuous and create a profound change in Graelent's life. Without her, Graelent's financial stability and mental well-being are questionable at best. He is in worse standing with the king and queen than he was before the \textit{fée} entered his life. Now he faces imprisonment as well as poverty. The \textit{fée} embodies the supernatural as both the initiator and motivator of narrative action surrounding Graelent. The often confusing mix of the \textit{fée} as sender, helper and object\textsuperscript{29} in relation to Graelent's role as hero also highlights the fantastic mode within \textit{Graelent} by presenting a shifting, multi-faceted profile of an otherworld character. The depth of her impact is only truly revealed by the void her departure creates in Graelent's life. The fantastic mode,

\textsuperscript{27} For a comprehensive study of \textit{geis} in medieval literature, see John R Reinhard, \textit{The Survival of 'Geis' in Mediaeval Romance} (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1933).

\textsuperscript{28} Concerning the secretive nature of the fantastic, see section 1.4, which discusses the difference between the merveilleux and the fantastic.

\textsuperscript{29} See pages 220–25.
established in $B_G$ through /otherness/ is quickly destroyed by reality in $C_G$. $D_G$ reestablishes the fantastic through the arrival of the fée at court. Therefore the structure shows an alternating pattern between highly mimetic narrative units and highly fantastic ones that contain numerous examples of /otherness/.

5.1.2.2. Fantastic Space

The fantastic, as established in Chapter 1, exists when there is a conflict between the real and the merveilleux that results in disorder.$^{30}$ In Chapter 2, fantastic space is defined as “an overlapping space that is not a clear line.”$^{31}$ Both of these conditions are present in the way the fée and Graelent conduct their relationship. The ambiguous movements of the fée leave one wondering if she is residing in the otherworld and only occasionally visiting the real world,$^{32}$ or if she is constantly by Graelent’s side. The initial encounter takes place in a sort of inter-monde$^{33}$ between the two realms. She states that she came to this place just for him.

$^{30}$ See section 1.2.1.

$^{31}$ See section 2.4.3.

$^{32}$ This is the actual situation in Lanval, as stated by the fée (ll. 159–170). Marie de France, op.cit., 77.

$^{33}$ “Rares sont les Voyages dans l’Autre monde – pour une femme/fée ou non – qui se terminent mal, par une Perte définitive: nous trouverons donc la plupart sous le § 3 (la Recherche – qui n’existe donc pas dans les lais) et le § 8 (le Voyage dans l’Autre monde, sans union avec une fée, ou bien où l’union n’est pas le plus important). Mais il existe encore une autre variante au sous-type 2, intéressante parce que presque exclusivement
By coming to the forest to meet Graelent, and then promising to visit him in the town, the 
*fée* personifies the ongoing intermingling of supernatural and real-world affairs. Her promise is 
the first evidence in the story that this episode and the following narrative units are operating 
in the fantastic mode. The fantastic mode comes into play when the supernatural mixes with 
the real and creates a question in the mind of the hero (or the implied reader) as to whether or 
not the events are real. The *fée*’s willingness to take an active part in the real-world affairs of 
court (through her involvement with Graelent) and her supernatural nature combine to create 
fantastic space wherever her influence reaches. The *fée* sets herself up as the rival to the king 
by extending her financial support to a knight of the court. With her physical beauty, wisdom, 
and judicious speech, the *fée* implicitly challenges the queen’s position in court as well. By 
virtue of her supernaturalness, as the *fée* comes to the forest (in unit $A_G$) and then when she 
sends her servant to his quarters (in unit $C_G$), she extends the range of fantastic space beyond 
the traditional frontier of natural surroundings and moves directly into courtly society. The 
extension of fantastic space is shown below in Figure 5.3:

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littéraire: la *fée* ne vient pas s’installer chez le Sujet et ne l’épouse pas, le Sujet ne se rend 
pas davantage dans l’Autre monde, mais ils se retrouvent – voire vivent ensemble – entre 
les deux, dans une sorte d’”inter-monde”.” Gallais, *La fée*..., 63.
In narrative unit $C_G$, the fantastic mode is directly related to the creation of fantastic space. When the fée extends fantastic space into the "civilized" arena of the city and court, she creates a state of conflicting loyalties for Graelent. The conflict is manifested by Graelent's inability to speak at the proper time (discussed in the next section). By virtue of her position of power and moral superiority, the fée defines the ground rules. In establishing those rules, she undermines the power and legitimacy of the real-world rules. When she retreats, fantastic space retreats with her because that extended fantastic space is predicated upon her presence and activity within the real world.

5.1.2.3. **Speech**

Graelent's abasement by the queen and his resultant social downfall is a type of *quid pro quo* on the part of the queen. Only Graelent is silent as the queen is exhibited, which is taken as a tacit insult. Since she has been threatened, the queen has no choice but to protest. When
asked why he has insulted the queen, Graelent speaks of his love, betraying the fée by
breaking the one promise he had made to her—to be silent.

Li rois l’oï, molt l’empesa,
Par serement le conjura
S’il en savoit nule plus gente.
“Oîl,” fet il, “qui vaut teus trente.” (ll. 485–488)

Throughout most of the lai, Graelent is reacting to the fée. His first moment of independent
action is when he speaks. Again the fée takes the dominant role by departing and ignoring
Graelent for a year. Her aloofness and refusal to communicate represent the choices of a
person who is in control of the relationship. The fée retires, taking with her the supernatural
and therefore the boundaries of fantastic space recede as well.34 By his words, Graelent loses
his social status in both the real world and the otherworld. The mysterious nature of his wealth
is revealed and the deception is unmasked. The real world and the supernatural world prove
themselves to be incompatible when forced to acknowledge each other’s existence. Graelent’s
second social downfall exemplifies this lack of compatibility.

Remarkably, narrative unit $C_G$ includes an element that was totally lacking in unit $A_G$: the
social support of Graelent by his peers at court. They speak for him as guarantors (l. 527). In
episodes 1 and 2 of unit $C_G$, Graelent has been operating under false pretenses (due to the

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34 See Figure 5.2, where I discuss the movement of the fée in relation to the creation of
fantastic space.
secret nature of his love relationship) while acting from noble intentions. His falseness gains him the loyalty of his peers, but cannot ensure him social success.

When the fée finally returns in episode D₇₃, she criticizes the arrogance of assuming that anyone is so beautiful that an equal cannot be found. The fée’s speech, in contrast to that of the queen, is well-structured and balanced. The queen in this scene is consumed with hubris, manifested in her emotional outburst. The queen’s quick disappearance to hide her shame mirrors her quickness to speak out in pride. The fée in contrast presents a picture of wisdom and calm elegance: Her slow stately approach on horseback contrasts with the queen’s rapid retreat by foot, showing the former to be more noble in bearing.

Silence as a condition of love and the role of social testimony as a sign of fealty to one’s lord create a tension in the narrative. The conflict exists at the level of social standards and laws of conduct. Silence is the rule imposed by the otherworld. Public testimony is demanded from the real world. From the moment the prohibition is announced in unit B₇₃, the anticipation that Graelent will break it is also formed. The self-assured manner and quickness to speak about the fée to the king reveals that Graelent’s deepest desire is to be fully integrated into the court. His object of desire is still O₅. The two modes of communication (silence and testimony) are diametrically opposed in the “exhibition” scene. By not speaking about the queen, Graelent commits the sin of publicly criticizing the king (unit C₇₃). The greater sin of betraying his lady is committed through forbidden speech in the same unit. Only
the speech of the flee in unit DG saves him from prison. The role of communication, secrecy, and mystery35 resurfaces in the brief exchange between the king and Graelent (ll. 443–498).

Throughout the story, the narrator is relatively silent, giving insight into Graelent’s choices and actions on only two occasions. The first instance of narrative intervention occurs when the narrator states that Graelent could not have asked (notably, a lack of speech) for anything more (l. 408), giving the first indication that Graelent’s circumstances have reached an apex. Conversely, the next narrative commentary (l. 478) predicts the knight’s impending downfall due to an overabundance of words. The contrast between asking and not asking is highlighted by the narrative voice in such a way as to move the narrative program forward by creating anticipation on the part of the reader.

While the activities in Graelent take place in the real world, the fantastic mode is nonetheless present in the way communication is manipulated. Graelent’s actions exemplify the fantastic mode, which is manifested in his inability to distinguish when he should speak and when he should not. He is redeemed solely by the speech of others. He cannot by his own words clarify the blurred lines between truth and deception that were established by /otherness/ in unit BG.

35 See Figure 2.1 and following for an explanation of /otherness/ in relation to false communication, secrecy and mystery.
5.1.2.4. The Ambiguous Ending

Narrative unit $D_G$ sees the return of the fantastic mode, when the fée arrives at Graelent's trial. The real world is no longer secretly challenged. Rather the conflict becomes very public as the two worlds influence each other in a collision of ideals and standards. The final episode ($D_G5$) shows the journey the lovers take but does not discuss the success and happiness of the hero. Graelent does not experience the mature growth which accompanies (for the most part) the experiences of other heroes (Yvain, Erec, Lancelot, etc.) when faced with similar demands of adulthood. The main textual evidence that Graelent enters the otherworld is found in two lines: “Si l’enamoine ensemble o li.” (l. 728) and “En sa terre o lui l’enmena.” (l. 732). The narrative recounts a few events that take place on the other shore (Graelent is cleaned and dried). It is therefore certain that the fée took him to the otherworld, but the narrator does not give many details as a part of the story. Such details would assure the implicit reader of a clean ending, where Graelent’s happiness is assured. His horse returns to the forest and represents a type of physical testament that the story is true (ll. 745–750).

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36 If his existence in the otherworld were detailed, that portion of the story would be structurally represented as narrative unit $E_G$.

37 “The added myth about the abandoned horse heard for many years mourning its lost master serves the purpose of leaving tangible proof in the real world that a supernatural event has really occurred, again a common device in legends and similar to the use of the boar’s head in Guingamor.” Weingartner, op. cit., xx.
In *Graelent*, the implied outcome for court society is failure and loss. A contrasting example of success may be found in *Yvain*, where the couple are reunited, live in Laudine’s kingdom and yet maintain a balanced interaction with Arthurian society.\(^3^8\) It is Graelent’s failure to deal with his own societal standards of behavior that characterizes the ending as one of abandonment rather than adaptation. It becomes apparent that the two worlds are incompatible, and inevitably the hero must make a choice between those two worlds.

“And, in the end, after events in the real world have caused unhappiness and separation, it seems foreordained that Graelent should struggle desperately, with no regard for his life, to follow his beloved into the otherworld, the only place where such love can thrive.”\(^3^9\)

The only part of *Graelent* that may be characterized as approaching the *merveilleux* of more traditional tales is the final scene where the couple emerges on the other side of the river. Yet the journey is marked by a negative note of resignation due to their forced departure from the real world. Characteristically, the fantastic mode in *Graelent* transforms into the *merveilleux* at the last moment. In *Lanval*, the case for a *merveilleux* ending is much

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\(^3^8\) Except for the “perilous fountain” scene and a few *merveilleux* motifs (such as Lunette’s ring), there is little indication of /otherness/ associated with Laudine and her realm.

\(^3^9\) Weingartner, *op. cit.*, xx.
stronger, as Marie actually states at the end, “Od li s’en vait en Avalun/ Ceo nus recurent li Bretun,/ En un isle ki mut est beaus/ La fu raviz li dameiseaus!” (ll. 641–644). Lanval goes to the otherworld with his mistress without any of the drama of Graelent’s final scene at the river (Figure 5.4). Graelent must repeatedly fight to join his lady in the otherworld. His struggle for happiness verges on suicidal as he attempts to overcome the forces that bind him to the real world.

Figure 5.4—Narrative program for Graelent’s adventure

Graelent chooses to abandon the real world, opting for the merveilleux. His choice represents scenario 3, as laid out in Figure 2.5. When first given a choice, in narrative unit $B_G$, Graelent thought that he could have the best of both worlds. He chose then to return to the

40 Marie de France, op. cit., 92.
real world and bring the supernatural back with him. But the real world is complex and challenging. The relationship between the fée and Graelent can not survive in the real world and he must of necessity return to the otherworld if that relationship is to succeed at all. In terms of his real-world ambitions, Graelent is unsuccessful and is forced to abandon his initial goal of social success \((O_3)\). The lack of narrative closure in *Graelent* marks the tale as open-ended and it is the reader who must supply the ultimate outcome.

5.1.2.5. Parallel Structures

The parallel structure of the story serves to reinforce a fantastic interpretation of events by emphasizing the presence of the supernatural within the real world through forced repetition. In effect, Graelent’s choice in the first half has been to make no choice at all, since he tries to merge the two worlds into one way of living. The forced repetition of the conflict heightens the presence of /otherness/ by showing the void in Graelent’s life that appears when the supernatural influence is gone. Narrative units \(A_G\) and \(C_G\) take place in the real world and are for the most part mimetic. Units \(B_G\) and \(D_G\) are fantastic, with \(D_G\) shifting to the merveilleux at the last moment. The repeating structure of the narrative reinforces the sense of frustration for Graelent. He must repeat his adventure twice before learning the lesson—he does not fit into the real world. Table 5.2 illustrates the bipartite structure of *Graelent*:
Table 5.2—Refined structure for *Graelent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graelent at Arthur’s court</td>
<td>Initial situation (ll. 15–26)</td>
<td>Graelent at Arthur’s court</td>
<td>Return to initial social status (ll. 343–426)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_G = S \cup O_S$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$C_G = S \cup O_{S+F}$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queen’s advances (ll. 27–138)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Display of the queen (ll. 427–488)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty of Graelent (ll. 139–162)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graelent returns to poverty (ll. 489–578)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graelent in the forest</td>
<td>Graelent leaves the city (ll. 163–208)</td>
<td>Graelent’s departure</td>
<td>Second trial (ll. 579–586)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_G = S \cap O_S$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$D_G = S \cap O_F$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ride in the forest and hunt of the white doe (ll. 209–228)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Procession of the maidens (ll. 587–614)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graelent’s advances to the <em>fée</em> (ll. 229–266)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arrival and speech of the <em>fée</em> (ll. 615–654)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rape of the <em>fée</em> (ll. 267–304)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Judgment of Arthur’s court (ll. 655–666)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The <em>fée’s</em> response (ll. 305–342)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Departure to the otherworld (ll. 667–734)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each episode in gray involves a combination of the real and otherworld, which creates a chaotic situation. Often the conflict is hidden beneath a false sense of stability. However, the basic instability introduced by the supernatural rules out any chance of true success for

\[41\] The shaded areas represent the fantastic. The darker gray area represents the *merveilleux.*
Graelent in the real world. The majority of the tale is typified by an unnatural situation. It embodies the conflict between reality and the supernatural, where the hero is forced to choose. The volatility of the narrative program surfaces within the final court scene. The supernatural tries to mediate a solution on behalf of the hero and yet it too cedes to reality, as its intervention is unwelcome. Therefore the real world maintains a great deal of power over the otherworld by virtue of exclusionary practices.

The structure of *Graelent* more closely follows the modern concept of the fantastic (see Figure 2.3) where the supernatural is encapsulated within the real world. In other words, the otherworld is implied but never substantiated through the narrated experiences of the hero. The narrative program never permits the reader to experience the part of Graelent’s adventure that takes place in the otherworld. The *fée*’s existence remains a question of testimony until the very end of the story and her presence alone implies the existence of the otherworld. In the end, she takes Graelent back with her to the otherworld, but we only see their departure not their arrival. This story is different from the modern model for the fantastic in one respect. The supernatural is not absorbed and integrated into the social views of reality, as is the case in most of the “scientific” fantastic stories from the 19th century where /otherness/ is rationalized through logical analysis of the phenomenon. *Graelent* represents a rejection of the supernatural by the real world and vice versa.
5.2. Guingamor

In Guingamor, one observes a mortal who enters the otherworld, where an adventure takes place. He then returns to the real world, only to find he no longer fits in. He must therefore return to the otherworld. Guingamor’s movements to and from the otherworld reveal fantastic space to be a desolate labyrinth of trees, thickets and heaths. The forest represents a space of loss and alienation: the first hunt causes the king’s absence at court, the second hunt concerns the lost knights, and of course, Guingamor’s own pursuit of the white boar results in his alienation from court. As he moves through fantastic space during the hunt, Guingamor consciously pursues his goals and unconsciously breaks through the boundaries between worlds.

The supernatural nature of the lai is gradually revealed to the reader through narrative foreshadowing and commentary on the part of various characters. The hero, Guingamor, is the one exception to this internal commentary: he neither accepts nor rejects the supernatural circumstances as he moves through fantastic space and into the otherworld. Guingamor allows himself to be deceived and then refuses to let go of the deception even when his lover reveals the truth. Throughout the lai, Guingamor refuses to confront the supernatural characteristics of his adventure.

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42 Guingamor is an example where the fée takes the knight to live with her in the otherworld. “... la fée ne vient pas s’installer chez le mortel, ou ne reste pas à proximité, mais l’emmène dans l’Autre monde ...” Pierre Gallais, La Fée..., 57.
5.2.1. The Structure of Guingamor

This narrative is composed of four parts: A_G takes place in Brittany, at the court; B_G recounts the hunt in the forest; C_G is comprised of the three-day stay in the fée's world; D_G occurs in the woods of Brittany, where Guingamor meets the woodsman. At its simplest level, the narrative structure of *Guingamor* is represented in Table 5.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A_G Guingamor rejects the queen</td>
<td>Disjunction—S ⨿ O_S</td>
<td>Real world—the court and city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G Guingamor hunts the white boar</td>
<td>Disjunction—S ⨿ O_S</td>
<td>Fantastic space—the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C_G Guingamor spends three days in the otherworld</td>
<td>Disjunction—S ⨿ O_S, Conjunction—S ⨩ O_F</td>
<td>Otherworld—the empty castle and the fée at the fountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D_G Guingamor briefly returns to Brittany</td>
<td>Disjunction—S ⨿ O_S</td>
<td>Fantastic space—the forest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these narrative units has its own distinct qualities, yet all contain a common element: Guingamor's refusal to heed the warnings of those around him who tell of the adventure and its dangers in clear detail. The knight does not believe that he is at risk until the very end of the tale when he recounts his story to the woodsman. His intentions are to accomplish the impossible, from a real-world point of view. He shows no regard for the desires of the court, nor does he hesitate to pursue his personal goals.
5.2.1.1. Guingamor Rejects the Queen

As with *Graelent*, the biblical motif of Potiphar's wife is used to initiate the main narrative action. The story begins when the queen offers her love to a young and inexperienced knight who rejects her. Guingamor, (like the heroes in *Graelent, Guigemar*, and *Lanval*), is a young knight who, up to this point, has renounced love (ll. 81–86). Because of her fears about the knight's immaturity, the queen sets out to entrap her nephew into undertaking "l'aventure de la forest" (l. 171), namely hunting the white boar. The ensuing discussion of the characteristics of the white boar and the fate of those who hunt it cause the tale to start out on a note of mystery and fear.

This first unit, $A_G = S \cup O_S$, establishes the narrative program as one of loss and compromise. Guingamor has lost his comfortable life due to a compromising situation with the queen. Guingamor is the subject ($S$), and the white boar is the desired object ($O_B$). The white boar represents success, social status, and wealth to Guingamor. The boar plays an equivalent role to the fée's financial support in *Graelent*, where the object pursued represents the greater goal of acceptance and esteem within the social arena. One can therefore say that the object in this narrative is also (and more truly) represented as $O_S$. 
5.2.1.2. Guingamor Hunts the White Boar

Guingamor takes up the challenge to hunt a white boar, an objective which acts as a token for the restoration of his social status. Therefore Guingamor can only regain a state of equilibrium through an exchange of goods—the boar for his social position. The boar assumes a much greater role than did the white doe who led Graelent to the fée’s pool. While he rides through the forest, Guingamor’s main goal is still a triumphant return home with the boar. The second narrative unit may be represented as $B_G = S \cup O_S$. Guingamor wants to be successful in this adventure, so that he will have a prominent position in his uncle’s court.

When Guingamor emerges from the forest, he crosses the boundary between the real world and the otherworld, represented by a perilous river (II. 356–360). At one point in the hunt, the boar allows itself to be seen. The chase changes from a hunt to a game of hide-and-seek, where the boar guides Guingamor to the otherworld. The hunting motif occupies a major section of the story and merges with an ancillary Celtic myth, by leading the hero to

43 “The thrust of the story is also social: his quest for a fame which will be spoken of forever and which will give him eternal renown.” Weingartner, op. cit., xxi.

44 “Au motif de l’Autre monde est étroitement associé celui de la chasse – la chasse à l’animal merveilleux (blanc), messager de l’Autre monde, et guide vers [l’autre monde]. ... Chargé d’attirer le mortel vers la fée, l’animal merveilleux peut en être une (des) métamorphose(s).” Gallais, La fée..., 59.

an empty place in the otherworld. By noting the unusual circumstances of the situation, Guingamor implicitly acknowledges the supernatural but never consciously admits to himself that he is in another world.

5.2.1.3. Guingamor Spends Three Days in the Otherworld

When Guingamor leaves the palace and continues the hunt, instead of finding the white boar, he finds a lady bathing in a spring (ll. 421–427). He falls in love with the fée and wants her to grant him her love in return. At this point, Guingamor takes on a second goal: $C_G = S \cup O_F$, where $F$ stands for the fée as another object he desires. To attain this new goal, Guingamor steals her clothes so that he can come back and speak to her later. However, as his primary goal is still to catch the white boar $C_G = S \cup O_B$, he rejects the lady’s offer of hospitality (ll. 459–462). Changing roles to that of helper, the fée offers to aid him in obtaining his first goal, if he will stay with her three days:

"Et je vos promet loiaument
Que le sengler pris vos rendrai
Et le brachet vos baillerai
A porter en vostre païs
Jusqu’a tierz jor; je vos plevis." (ll. 470–474)

Like the queen, the fée twists Guingamor’s desires to her will, creating a complementary link between the two women who both act as opponents. In Graelent, the two women are functional opposites in relation to the narrative program (the queen is an opponent and the fée acts as a helper). This fée convinces Guingamor to stay with her, whereas the fée in Graelent instructs him to return to his land. Both are lovers and objects, but the fée in Guingamor
ultimately acts as an opponent to Guingamor’s original desires. Comparatively speaking, the fée in Graelent aids her knight with his social ambitions until it becomes impossible to balance the divergent demands of the two conflicting worlds. The fée in Guingamor has distinctly negative aspects compared to the high moral standards and positive aura associated with Graelent’s fée.

The third narrative unit is represented as $C_G$, where Guingamor has received the white boar ($O_B$) from his mistress: $C_G = S \cap O_B$. Thus, with the supernatural aid of his mistress, Guingamor achieves union with the object he was pursuing, but it is only a partial success. To achieve his initial goal, the young knight must deliver the white boar to his uncle’s court. He remains in a state of disjunction with the goal of social integration. Therefore $C_G = S \cup O_S$, where $O_S$ is the successful return to society with the boar. Concerning the fée-amante, Guingamor is also successful in winning her love causing $C_G = S \cap O_F$.

5.2.1.4. Guingamor Returns to Brittany

Guingamor leaves his mistress and returns to his own world with the boar’s head, his dog, and his horse.\textsuperscript{46} He wanders for a long while until he meets a woodsman, who confirms the

\textsuperscript{46} These three objects symbolize his rightful citizenship in the real world. Two of these possession are valued by the king (ll. 217–222) and the third assures Guingamor’s admission back into his uncle’s court.
fee’s words and recounts Guingamor’s own story to him (ll. 596–608). He leaves his testimony with the woodsman in the form of a tale and the boar’s head.

"Au charbonier a respondu:
Entent a moi, ce qui dirai.
M’aventure reconterai:
.................................
La teste du porc li donna," (ll. 612–614, 625)

The exchange of tales between the knight and the woodsman marks the moment when Guingamor emerges from his state of denial and thereby breaks out of the fantastic mode through his acceptance of the supernatural. The woodsman takes on the role of an intermediary narrator. He receives the tale from Guingamor and then transports the token boar’s head to the court on behalf of the knight. This transmission of narration is a technical fulfillment of the first goal, but an incomplete one.

The return of Guingamor to his world comprises unit DG of the narrative. This section of the tale is represented as DG = S ∩ OB, where Guingamor accomplishes his initial task by carrying the white boar’s head back to his uncle’s court. However, the young knight is only partially successful, in that his uncle and the court have been dead for several centuries. His

47 The boar’s head represents the “seule attestation de son bonheur édénique de trois cents ans au château de la fée” (Gallais, La fée..., 164) and as such is the only remaining artifact by which to verify the story.
greater goal of social reintegration and the establishment of his reputation as a knight of the
court are denied him, producing only a partial conjunction in this unit—\( D_G = S \Leftrightarrow O_S \).

This narrative unit may also be represented as \( D_G = S \cup O_F \), where Guingamor is
separated from the \( \textit{fée} \) (\( O_F \)). His decision to leave the otherworld jeopardizes his state of
conjunction with his lover. We do not see the resolution of this separation, except where it is
implied by the woodsman’s testimony that two ladies carried the knight back across the river
in a boat. We are somewhat reassured that Guingamor was successful in his secondary goal of
returning to live with his mistress in spite of his disobedience. He acknowledges the
\textit{merveilleux} nature of his adventure. He must return to the otherworld or die in the real world.

5.2.1.5. \textit{The Woodsman’s Perspective}

There is another character whose experiences reveal the fantastic mode in \textit{Guingamor}.
When perceived from the woodsman’s point of view, Guingamor’s return to the forest, his
aging and his subsequent voyage back to the otherworld with the help of the two maidens are
inexplicable from a real-world perspective. The woodsman becomes the only witness to the
conclusion of what, by that time, has become a local legend. Because he accepts the story of
Guingamor (and the white boar’s head as well), the woodsman vicariously participates in
Guingamor’s adventures. Andre Maraud interprets this scene as a type of re-emergence of the
repressed. The woodsman adopts the voice of the narrator by accepting the story as truth, recounting the adventure (ll. 669–674), so that the tale will not be forgotten. The woodsman's tale represents a type of epilogue that ensures the continued narration of the tale by virtue of his transformation from mere charcoal producer to a type of contemporary narrator in his own right by faithfully reproducing the text. The dissemination of Guingamor's adventure secures a place in history for the young knight even though his direct participation in the real world is no longer possible.

From the above analysis of the four narrative units, a refined structural plan for Guingamor can be derived (Table 5.4). The tale contains two units where the fantastic dominates and one where the prominence of the merveilleux is evident.


49 "Au Moyen Age, l'acte d'écrire est volontiers présenté comme un acte de reproduction plutôt que de production." Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 145.
### Table 5.4—Refined structure for Guingamor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guingamor</td>
<td>The queen's rejects the queen</td>
<td>Guingamor at queen at the fée's court</td>
<td>Guingamor returns to the green palace (ll. 503–518)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_G = S \cup O_S$</td>
<td>advances (ll. 5–134)</td>
<td>$C_G = S \cup O_S$;</td>
<td>$C_G = S \cap O_F$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queen recounts the tale of the white boar (ll. 135–182)</td>
<td>Guingamor's reunion with the ten lost knights (ll. 519–544)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guingamor asks permission to go hunting (ll. 183–247)</td>
<td>Guingamor asks permission to return to Brittany (ll. 545–574)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guingamor hunts the white boar</td>
<td>Guingamor leaves town (ll. 248–312)</td>
<td>Guingamor leaves the fée (ll. 575–581)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_G = S \cap O_S$;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_G = S \cup O_F$</td>
<td>Guingamor goes back to Brittany</td>
<td>Guingamor crosses the river and rides through the forest (ll. 582–586)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ride in the forest and hunt of the white boar (ll. 313–361)</td>
<td>Guingamor finds the woodsman (ll. 587–632)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guingamor arrives at the green palace (ll. 362–396)</td>
<td>Guingamor violates the geis (ll. 633–654)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guingamor resumes the hunt (ll. 397–420)</td>
<td>Guingamor return to the otherworld (ll. 655–667)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guingamor finds the fée (ll. 421–503)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure of *Guingamor* contains two distinct quests, one for social acceptance ($O_S$) and a second one that centers around the love relationship with the fée ($O_F$). Unlike *Graelent*, *Guingamor* does not exhibit a parallel structure. This *lai* contains a voyage to the otherworld at its heart, whereas the *lai* of *Graelent* shows movement between fantastic space...
and the real world, that is repetitious. The fantastic mode predominates in Guingamor most clearly in units B_G and D_G due to the presence of supernatural elements within the real world (discussed further in section 5.2.2.1) and the use of internal narrative commentary that indicates an atmosphere of fear and hesitation (discussed in section 5.2.2.3). The merveilleux is found in unit C_G while Guingamor stays in the otherworld.

5.2.2. Evidence for the Fantastic in Guingamor

There are five ways that the fantastic mode operates in Guingamor. /Otherness/ appears in a variety of details. The deceptive aspects of /otherness/ allow Guingamor to ignore the truth and pursue his goals with abandon. Fantastic space is evident as an intermediary location between worlds. The narrative voice is multiplied and serves to reinforce the impending loss. Delayed acceptance of the supernatural permits Guingamor to repeatedly suspend the inevitable choice he must make. The ambiguous nature of the resolution shows that the supernatural has by default imposed a fate upon the hero.

5.2.2.1. /Otherness/

During his time in the otherworld, Guingamor has received several signs that he is participating in a supernatural adventure. These signs constitute the main source of fear, hesitation, and ambiguity within the text for most of the ancillary characters. These thematic

50 All of these aspects are symptoms of the fantastic mode. See section 2.1.
aspects have an opposite effect on Guingamor, creating an overall sense of delusion that enables him to view the otherworld as an extension of the real world (rather than as a separate realm with its own rules). There are four kinds of /otherness/ in Guingamor: the supernatural animal, the empty palace, the distortion of time, and the use of a geis and the effects of violating it. The fée, while clearly a supernatural character, does not leave the otherworld. She instead sends her emissary, the white boar. Therefore she does not play a similar role to the fée in Graelent in the creation of fantastic space. However, all examples of /otherness/ are directly linked to the fée. She is the source of 100% of /otherness/ found in the tale.

The white boar is a common theme in Breton lais and evokes the sense of adventure associated with hunting, where chance encounters with extraordinary creatures are more frequent. The hunt also allows for the hero to be removed from his normal society and therefore be more open to the arrival of the supernatural within the context of the forest. The white animal may be a biche (Graelent, Guigemar), a cerf (Tyolei) or a sanglier (Guingamor) that leads the hero to another space controlled by other laws—"c'est l'Autre monde lui-même qui peut appeler le Sujet: soit l'inviter (7%), soit l'attirer, notamment par le moyen de l'animal (souvent mythique, blanc) poursuivi (16%)."51 In Guingamor, the hunt of the white boar is associated with death and loss: ten knights are lost and presumed dead, the boar eventually dies, Guingamor almost dies through a process of rapid aging. The fée states later that no

51 Gallais, La fée..., 226.
knight may catch the white boar without her help (l. 465–467) enforcing the image of the boar as a type of messenger from the otherworld. This association in Guingamor increases the sense of /otherness/ associated with hunting the mythic animal, as the motif of the hunt is superimposed on that of the voyage to the otherworld.

The first time Guingamor enters the otherworld, he finds an empty palace. It is richly furnished, yet there are no people there: “Home ne fame n’i trova” (l. 393). The palace itself is the focal space of the otherworld. It is enclosed with green marble (l. 365) and its tower appears to be constructed of silver (l. 367). The role of the empty palace is found in Celtic tales and is most often associated with Partonopeu de Blois, where the fée Mélior has

52 Green coloring is indicative of the unworldly nature of people and objects. Aubailly describes green as the “couleur rassurante qui concilie les opposés et symbolise une connaissance profonde, occulte des choses et de la destinée; couleur féminine qui est aussi celle des eaux primordiales et renvoie à la mère et au regressus ad uterum”. Aubailly, La fée..., 83. (Emphasis in the original.) Green is used in Gawain and the Green Knight as the only outwardly visible sign that the knight is not human in nature. His strange appearance is indicative of a more important characteristic of the green knight, namely that he cannot be killed by normal means. J. Huizinga explains that in the Middle Ages, “symbolic assimilation founded on common properties presupposes the idea that these properties are essential to things.” Applying this statement to the symbolism of colors, Huizinga uses the example of roses to show that there is a strong link between reality and attributes of an object. “But this similarity will only have a mystic meaning if the middle-term connecting the two terms of the symbolic concept expresses an essentiality common to both; in other words, if redness and whiteness are something more than names for a physical difference based on quantity, if they are conceived as essences, as realities.” J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (London: Edward Arnold, 1924), 185.

constructed a palace but the mortal knight cannot see any of the people who serve him. The empty palace is representative of Guingamor’s lack of social integration into the fée’s court. Because she has not yet accepted him as her lover, Guingamor does not truly have a social position in her world.

Narrative intervention informs the reader that Guingamor will be disappointed in his decision to stay for three days. It is at this point in the story that one of the more overtly supernatural aspects of the otherworld is revealed, namely that one day there is equivalent to one hundred years in real-world time:

Autrement li fu trestorné,
Car trois cenz anz i ot esté;
Mors fu li rois et sa mesnie,
Et toz iceus de sa lingnie,
Et les citez qu’il ot vetées
Furent destruites et cheües. (ll. 539–544)

The stretching or compressing of time reveals the physical differences between the two worlds. The distortion between three days and three hundred years\textsuperscript{54} serves to quantify the vast separation between the fée’s realm and Guingamor’s world of origin. The separation is both in time and in distance and constitutes the primary textual evidence for viewing the

\textsuperscript{54} The three-hundred year trip is most often associated with the Voyage of Bran from the Irish literary tradition, in which the Voyage of St. Brendan finds its origins. For an analysis of the relationship between these two tales, see Chapter 8, “Le Voyage dans l’autre monde” in Gallais, La Fée..., 225–235.
otherworld as a supernatural realm. This detail alone makes a successful return to the king’s court impossible for the young knight.

To lend further credence to the adventure, Guingamor receives physical confirmation that he truly has been gone for three centuries. When Guingamor insists on returning to his uncle’s realm, the fié puts a geis upon his conduct—while in the real world, Guingamor must not eat anything (ll. 564–570). He forgets his mistress’ warning and eats three apples (l. 641), which causes him to begin aging immediately (ll. 644–650). By virtue of eating, he is actively participating in the real world. This physical participation is a violation of the geis. Guingamor is brought back under the rules and natural laws of the real world.\textsuperscript{55} The logic behind his aging reinforces the forest as a stage for the fantastic mode. The otherworld intervenes in the form of two maidens who help the decrepit Guingamor back to the otherworld in a boat.

5.2.2.2. Fantastic Space

The forest represents the frontier between the real world and the otherworld,\textsuperscript{56} and is characterized as dense, dark, and perilous. It is a mysterious, labyrinthine space from which no

\textsuperscript{55} “At the story’s end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous.” Todorov, \textit{Introduction...}, 41.

\textsuperscript{56} Speaking of the hunt of a white animal, a common theme in Breton lais, Dubost states, “Toutefois, le texte le plus marqué par l’imaginaire fantastique est le lai de \textit{Guingamor}
Graelent and Guingamor

knight returns, causing a general reaction of fear and dismay. In the second narrative unit, when Guingamor races through the forest and crosses the river, he has no clear awareness of his surroundings. The fantastic lasts as long as the passage between the two worlds—between the realm of the king and that of the fée. The boar acts as an escort, leading Guingamor further away from the king and toward the fée. Chasing the boar takes up almost 200 lines of the text (ll. 248–420), nearly one third of the whole. The woodland goes from a traditional hunting ground (ll. 23–24) to a dense thicket (brueil, l. 269) to a forbidden forest (ll. 304–307). As fantastic space, the forest undergoes a change of its physical composition based on how far from the real world and how close to the supernatural Guingamor rides.

The forest is split by a river that forms the border between worlds. The river represents a linear boundary within the enveloping forest. In the fourth narrative unit, Guingamor must be carried back across that river by two maidens. They transport him in a boat into the otherworld, where, the narrator tells us, he remains to this day (ll. 656–667). The following diagram (Figure 5.5) shows the four narrative units according to spatial coordinates:

dans lequel la forêt est le théâtre de plusieurs scènes de chasse bien différentes les unes des autres.” Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques...*, 337.
Graelent and Guingamor

Figure 5.5—Structural model for Guingamor’s spatial displacement

Guingamor’s movements between worlds reveal the inability to complete his return to the real world. He is caught in a supernatural adventure from which there is no return. There are many similarities between Graelent and Guingamor, as pointed out in the previous discussion of Aubailly’s work. However, when viewed from the level of the narrative program, the two stories diverge significantly.57 Graelent does not enter the otherworld until the last scene. Guingamor becomes entrapped in the otherworld and cannot safely return home.

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57 “In Guingamor we see the one in which a mortal enters the Otherworld, where both his encounter with the fée and many of his adventures take place, before he returns to the earthly world. Graelent utilizes the other myth, in which a fée seeks out her lover in the mortal world, where the events of the story take place and from which the mortal enters the Otherworld at the end.” Weingartner, op. cit., xxiv.
5.2.2.3. Narrative Voice

There are four narrators in the story: the main narrator; the queen, who initially recounts the adventure at court; Guingamor, who recounts his tale to the woodsman; and finally, the woodsman himself, who (as the only living witness to Guingamor’s return) tells the tale at court, where it is written down so that the adventure can be remembered. Three internal voices combine to reinforce the main narrator’s initial statement that the tale is true:

D’un lay vos dirai l’aventure :
Nel tenez pas a trouventire,
Veritez est ce que dirai ;
Guingamor apele on le lai. (ll. 1–4)

The first narrative unit sets the stage for the main adventure, which occurs in the last three narrative units. Similar to Calogrenant’s tale (Yvain), the queen presents a narrative of an old adventure within the main narrative that inspires a new adventure. This secondary narrative also predicts the eventual failure of Guingamor. The queen acts as a narrative voice, manipulating Guingamor through her tale (ll. 153–162).59

58 “Et dans toute oeuvre de langage, une petite quantité d’énoncés sert à affirmer la vérité de ce qui va suivre : au Moyen Age, il est peu de textes sans prologue, et le prologue est le lieu privilégié où se met en branle tout l’appareil de la conviction, tout le rituel linguistique de la véridiction, que l’on invoque des garants extérieurs, ou que l’on assume, es qualités, la position de celui qui dit vrai.” Christiane Marchello-Nizia, Dire le vrai : l’adverbe “si” en français médiéval (Geneva: Droz, 1985) 1.

59 The deceitfulness of the queen is revealed in her thoughts when she hears Guingamor’s request. She knows that if Guingamor hunts the white boar, she will never have to fear again (ll. 235–242).
The queen’s role as narrator in $A_G$ is marked by the use of prolepsis: the foreshadowing of events within a story by narrative intervention. Unlike the style of foreshadowing found in the knights’ discourse, the queen provides details that are meant to entice Guingamor rather than discourage him. The queen’s narrative is motivated by a desire to deceive. She, like the fée-amante in the third unit ($C_G$) of the story, twists the situation and holds back pertinent information both from the king and Guingamor. Both men are manipulated by her words into doing her will. The queen’s ability to shape narrative direction by words reinforces her role as an internal, character-based substitute to the main narrative voice. Once Guingamor departs, the conflict with the queen never arises again.\textsuperscript{60}

The entire court warns him of the danger of the hunt, but he does not accept their counsel. Guingamor refuses to believe that the adventure is supernatural or dangerous. In this first unit, the fantastic is not directly active as a mode. Rather, the fantastic nature of the rest of the story is foretold by the courtiers and townspeople, acting as a choral voice of despair. The response of the king follows that of the knights, by predicting failure for Guingamor. He indicates that the adventure of the white boar has already exacted a great cost from society.

\textsuperscript{60} In contrast to \textit{Graelent}, where the conflict with the queen comprises an integral part of the structure, the conflict with the queen in \textit{Guingamor} is a devise to initiate the voyage to the otherworld.
“La lande i est aventureuse
Et la riviere perilleuse.
Molt grant dommage i ai eũ:
Diz chevaliers i ai perdu,
Toz les meillors de ceste terre,
Qui le sengler alerent querre.” (ll. 177–182)

However, the king cannot keep his nephew from pursuing the adventure. The king and all his subjects are greatly upset at Guingamor’s decision (ll. 266–268), and will not accompany him any further than the forest (ll. 305–312). The other knights refuse to go with him, knowing that he will not return from the adventure. The narrator uses these incidental characters to provide narrative foreshadowing. The reader learns much from the comments and choices of the knights and the king. They show prudence and caution born of a maturity that Guingamor lacks. The knights reveal the true outcome of the story, as opposed to Guingamor’s hoped-for outcome. Their words also set a tone of tragedy for the story, because the loss of Guingamor is practically assured from the start.

The woodsman acts as a third internal narrative voice on this occasion. The first was by the queen who predicts the future failure of Guingamor based on precedence. The king and court recount the present situation from a real-world perspective. The third time the adventure is recounted as an historic account by the woodsman, indicating a past event. Thus the three narrative perspectives of future, present, and past are used to reinforce the sense of destiny and tragedy surrounding Guingamor’s adventure. He finally accepts the supernatural content of his adventure, but only when an independent, secondary character confirms what the others had told him.
It is common for the narrator as well as principal characters to insist upon the veracity of events being narrated, and this because of the astounding nature of a given adventure. The need to establish truth telling at a narrative level speaks of an insecurity with the subject matter, as if the narrator assumes that the majority of the readers will not believe the story. The insistence upon representing the otherworld as equal to the real world increases the sense of superficiality. When the ability to trust narration at its most basic level—words are symbols of reality according to the mimetic model—is undermined, the narrator-reader relationship is jeopardized. Such destabilizing effects, which undermine the narrative contract, are frequently associated with the fantastic mode.

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61 Eco speaks about this requirement for setting up fictional worlds as necessitated by the author's inability to account for every detail: "In order to outline a fictional world in which many things must be taken for granted and many others must be accepted even though scarcely credible, a text seems to tell its Model Reader: 'Trust me. Do not be too subtle and take what I tell you as if it were true.' In this sense a fictional text has a performative nature: 'A non-actualized possible state of affairs becomes a fictional existent by being authenticated in a felicitously uttered literary speech act' (Dolezel 1988: 237). Such an authentication assumes usually the form of an invitation to cooperate in setting up a conceivable world at the cost of a certain flexibility or superficiality." Eco, Limits of Interpretation..., 75. (Emphasis in the original.)

62 "The agreement between the narrator and the narratee, the teller and his or her audience, underlying the very existence of a narrative voice and affecting its very shape: an act of narration supplies something which is (to be) exchanged for something else." Prince, Dictionary..., 61.

63 "L'aventure représente ici l'autrefois du lai, selon les conventions d'un genre qui n'admet pas que la littérature puisse proposer autre chose que du vrai, conventions sans lesquelles le fantastique ne serait pas possible." Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 341. (Emphasis in the original.) For a more detailed discussion of the fantastic in relation to narrative voice
In *Guingamor*, the narrator states that he is telling a true story, whereas the implied reader discovers many details to the story which are questionable. As seen in Figure 2.1, *otherness* is evident in a confusion between what is real and what appears to be visible. The deceptive nature of *otherness* embodies the fantastic and blurs the distinction between true and false. The fantastic mode acts as a negative influence in this narration due to its ability to blur the boundary between truth and lies.\(^64\) In the narrator's insistence upon the truth of his narration, there is an underlying sense of an attempt to deceive or at least to persuade the reader to accept the supernatural.\(^65\) The very insistence upon the truth of the story by multiple narrative voices leads one to ask why it is so important to the various narrators that the tale be believed? Does the fear of being perceived as liars provoke the internal characters to insist upon the truth of their story. This sort of uneasiness with the supernatural subject matter implicitly points to the fantastic mode.

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and veridiction, see Chapter 7, “La modalité du vrai” in Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques*..., 143–164.

\(^64\) “The fantastic confronts us with a dilemma: to believe or not to believe?” Todorov, *Introduction*..., 83. “L’allocutaire doit croire, est censé croire, que le locuteur croit que ce qu’il énonce est vrai. Et pourtant, toute langue possède l’appareillage spécifique qui permet au locuteur de préciser que ce qu’il dit est vrai, qu’il lui est légitime de parler ainsi qu’il le fait.” Marchello-Nizia, *op. cit.*, 1.

\(^65\) “Let us be realistic: there is nothing more meaningful than a text which asserts that there is no meaning. If there is something to be interpreted, the interpretation must speak of something which must be found somewhere, and in some way respected.” Umberto Eco, *Limits of Interpretation*..., 7.
5.2.2.4. Delayed Acceptance of the Supernatural

Guingamor experiences the fantastic throughout his adventure, but for the most part remains unaware of his circumstances. There are numerous supernatural aspects to his adventure, yet Guingamor consistently misinterprets or refuses to interpret those signs. When he enters the empty palace, he does not question its significance. Upon meeting the fée, he does not question her offer of aid to capture the white boar. And later, when he sees the ten knights lost by the king, Guingamor does not ponder their presence nor does he ask them about their adventures. Like Perceval, he fails to ask the obvious questions. Guingamor does not account for the adventure by giving the events an étrange interpretation. Neither does he accept that he is experiencing a supernatural adventure, thereby interpreting his experiences as merveilleux. He persistently remains in a fantastic state of hesitation: he hesitates to accept the supernatural. The hero must choose either to believe or reject the supernatural in order to progress beyond the fantastic.

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66 See section 5.2.2.1 above.

67 “Parler de la conscience du réel au Moyen Age impose de prendre en compte le réalisme des mots au même titre que celui des objets. Il y aura donc des sujets que le texte médiéval n’abordera pas, car en parler serait les provoquer, à tous les sens du terme, les défier et les appeler à l’existence. Une bonne partie du matériel fantastique lié à la sorcellerie, à la magie, à l’invocation des esprits, se trouve ainsi rejeté dans le non dit.” Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 178.
When he persists in his desire to return to his own world, the fée tells him the truth (ll. 549–552). Guingamor, just as he did not believe his uncle and companions, now refuses to believe what his mistress is telling him. In essence, he is repeating the mistakes of his real-world conduct while in the otherworld. The refusal to believe those around him who care causes Guingamor to make a decision contrary to common sense (ll. 559–563). The rejection of the supernatural strongly indicates that Guingamor is still clinging to the real world.

5.2.2.5. The Ambiguous Ending

Even though Guingamor is personally successful, at a social level he and his society experience a mutual loss. The author leaves the ultimate destiny of the young man as an uncertain future lived out in the otherworld. The reader is allowed to make his own decision as to Guingamor’s ultimate fate. We can speculate that he remained an old, decrepit man from eating the apples. Alternately, we can believe the testimony of the woodsman (whose tale is the substance from which the lai is composed) and presume that Guingamor succeeded in returning to his mistress in the otherworld and is living there still, but as an old man. Therefore, from the hero’s point of view, the ending is merveilleux and conforms to scenario 3 from Figure 2.5. However, from the implied reader’s point of view, the ending is fantastic. The narrative program for Guingamor is illustrated in Figure 5.6:
Figure 5.6—Narrative program for Guingamor’s adventure

*Guingamor* retains its ambiguity to the very end of the tale. The lack of a reunion scene in the actual narrative heightens the sense of /otherness/ experienced by the reader. It also makes the story open-ended. The most conclusive indication of the fantastic in *Guingamor* is the lack of a happy ending. Whereas a *merveilleux* tale would contain a happy end, there is no such guarantee for the fantastic.68

“Finally, in a fitting finish to the unresolved tension which gives the story its poignancy, the poet has left his tale open-ended, and it is we who must create the ultimate destiny of the likable young knight who has captured our affection.”69

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68 “La caractéristique structurelle la plus évidente du conte merveilleux, le *happy end* consécutif à un renversement de situation, est obtenu grâce au concours d’un agent surnaturel.” Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques...*, 132. (Emphasis in the original.)

69 Weingartner, *op. cit.*, xxii.
Graelent and Guingamor

Graelent and Guingamor never loses sight of his original goal, to return home after capturing the boar. When he is wandering through the forest (ll. 345–350) he seeks the boar. When he meets his mistress (ll. 440–441), he intends to come back and talk with her only after he has captured the boar. And finally, when he decides to return to his world on the third day (ll. 533–538), he still desires to tell of his adventures and deliver the boar to his uncle. Only then will he return to his mistress. Despite his best efforts, Guingamor is only partially successful in attaining these goals. He captures the white boar with the aid of his mistress; however he fails to deliver it to his uncle. He returns to his mistress, but is now an old man because of his disobedience.

5.3. Fantastic and Merveilleux

In this examination of two anonymous lais, it was seen that the basic structure of each narration is built around four narrative units which form the core of the adventure. The second and fourth narrative units of each tale are decidedly fantastic, due to their inclusion of a high number of incidents that exhibit /otherness/, the use of fantastic space and the presence of the supernatural. In Graelent, the supernatural aspects of the tale permeate the overall content from the moment the fée appears. Numerous supernatural details occur in the midst of a mimetic tale. In Guingamor, the fantastic mode is revealed through an examination of the character’s attitude toward his supernatural adventure. Two of four narrative units occur within fantastic space, and are accompanied by signs of supernatural influences upon the real world. However, there is no doubt on the part of the reader that an awareness of the merveilleux permeates the entire tale for other characters, as seen in the narrator’s commentary and in the reactions and judgments of such secondary characters as the king, the
townspeople, and the woodsman. The merveilleux is evident in Guingamor in the third narrative unit, whereas the equivalent unit in Graelent takes place in the real world.

These two *lais* have one thematic aspect in common, namely the intent of the hero to undertake an adventure for personal benefit. In each case, the hero’s pride overpowers any sense of social responsibility and yet paradoxically both knights desire to regain their rightful social position. In Graelent, social status is symbolized by wealth, in Guingamor by the white boar’s head. Graelent fails to gain personal and social satisfaction. He is content to replace his initial goal with a more rewarding situation in the otherworld. Guingamor’s success is a technical fulfillment of a goal rather than a true and satisfactory achievement. He receives the white boar from the *fée* (rather than killing it himself) and returns it to the real world. Because of the hunting adventure, Guingamor’s uncle lost eleven knights. Thus society, represented by the king’s court, did not receive any clear benefit from the young knight’s adventure. Neither knight is truly successful in resolving the semiotic disjunctions that caused their departure from the real world, proving that the demands of the otherworld have overruled the knights’ personal goals.

Each of these tales reflects specific aspects of the fantastic mode which affect the structure of the narration. The fantastic as a mode is seen in the care with which the author established /otherness/ in the narrative and the extent to which the hero embraces the supernatural. Fantastic space frames the voyage to the otherworld by revealing increasing degrees of /otherness/. Fantastic hesitation is used in the advancement of narrative action and reveals the
intent of the author to infuse mystery and a sense of fearful anticipation into the plot. The otherworldly phenomena become a force in the direction that the narration takes, but without presupposing the reactions of the hero. The way the hero handles the supernatural intervention into the affairs of the real world defines his narrative state as étrange, fantastic, or merveilleux. If that hero accepts the merveilleux interpretation, he may be successful on some levels but overall success is not necessarily guaranteed. Both knights experience the fantastic in different ways and, whether by choice (Graelent) or necessity (Guingamor), end their adventures in a final journey to the otherworld where the fantastic must vanish in order to make way for the merveilleux.
6. *Amadas et Ydoine* and *L’Atre périlleux*

The 13th century produced many texts in the romance tradition that typically involve a young man who wins a maiden, loses her, and then wins her again. In this chapter, I examine two cemetery adventures from *Amadas et Ydoine* and *L’Atre périlleux*. The hero’s battle with a demon over his lover’s body is one of the most unique episodes of *Amadas et Ydoine*. Gauvain’s battle, similar in many respects to that of Amadas’ adventure, is more oblique in its treatment of the supernatural. The demon in *L’Atre périlleux* seemingly aligns more closely with the traditional Christian view of the otherworld than with the Celtic one. Yet the details of both battles reveal the Celtic otherworld to be a force behind the scenes in both adventures. The structure of these two episodes is developed according to the parallel worlds model (Figure 2.4) in order to discern if the fantastic mode is present as a factor in the narrative program.

Each adventure takes place in an ancient cemetery. Both authors present the cemetery as a place of fear.1 Removed from the city, the cemetery becomes the staging ground for

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1 “Centre géographique de toutes les terres humains. Le cimetières est pour toutes les civilisations un lieu sacré, le jardin du repos éternel, où tous ceux qui y sont couchés ont droit au respect et à la vénération; d’où l’idée de malédiction liée à tout individu osant profaner ce lieu.” Alain Pozzouoli and Jean-Pierre Krémer, eds. *Dictionnaire du Fantastique* (Paris: Jacques Grancher, 1992) 86. “La puissante expressivité fantastique qui s’attache aux tombes, aux lieux de sépultures, et même aux rites funéraires est fondée sur la peur qu’inspir-ent les morts et, à un degré moindre, sur la peur de la mort, mais toutes
questionable nocturnal activities, providing an ambiance that allows for the thematic development of /otherness/ as revealed through an analysis of the reactions and descriptions of various actants. The first cemetery is described as an ancient burial ground for nobility, and has no overt Christian association (Amadas et Ydoine: 5340 ff.). The second cemetery I examine is distinctly christianized in that it is situated next to a chapel and because the contrasts drawn between the devil (L’Atre périlleux: 1265) and the Blessed Virgin (L’Atre périlleux: 1407) mark it as such.

An obvious but often overlooked location that acts as a intermediary between worlds is the cemetery. Cemeteries constitutes an excellent model for fantastic space, because they act as portals between worlds, where people go from this life into the next and where they will come back from the next world at the resurrection of the dead, according to Christian tradition. Hence the association of cemeteries with ghosts, which represent false resurrections.2 In discussing various medieval aspects of the fantastic, Dubost devotes an entire chapter to the importance of cemeteries. Dubost postulates that the nature of the cemetery is to act as an intermediary space between life and death. The normal direction is from life to death. The cemetery becomes fantastic when that order is reversed, where death

ces peurs semblent bien être dépassées par l’étrange fascination qu’exerce la mort en tant qu’inconnue.” Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 410.

2 For a complete discussion of this topic, see Claude Lecouteux, Fantômes et revenants au Moyen Âge (Paris: Imago, 1986).
leads to life. “Ce lieu devient fantastique lorsque s’y déroulent des actions visant à inverser l’ordre naturel qui va de la vie vers la mort,...” According to Dubost, it is the very presence of the dead in the everyday world of the living which makes the cemetery a place of fear and loathing instead of its intended atmosphere of peace and final rest.

The cemetery has a distinct boundary, being in most circumstances surrounded by a wall or other enclosure to mark its territorial limits. It is also important to keep in mind the dual nature of the cemetery—its ground, occupying the space of this world, is representative of the afterlife. The dual role of the cemetery provides a unique opportunity for the presentation of some of the most distinctive and overtly fantastic scenes in medieval literature.

3 Dubost, *op. cit.*, 410.

4 There are several examples of walled cemeteries in the texts examined herein:

*Lancelot:*

- s’ont jusqu’a none chevalchié;
- et truevent en un leu molt bel
- un mostier et, lez le chancel,
- un cemetire de murs clos (ll. 1836–39)

*L’Atré périlleux:*

- une capelle ...
- dont l’atre estoit enclos de mur (ll. 749–51)

*Amadas et Ydoine:*

- De mur fu close toute bien
- La place du tans anciien (ll. 5343–44)

5 “The grave provided the focus for a dialogue between this world and the next, and was believed to be only a temporary ‘resting place’, a fundamental aspect of medieval eschatology being the belief in bodily resurrection at the Last Judgment. The dead
“On peut donc considérer que la réflexion médiévale avait construit deux modèles principaux destinés à réduire le surnaturel chaque fois que ce dernier se trouvait en conflit avec une vision chrétienne du monde. D’une part l’*explication*, avec toutes les réserves qui s’imposent sur les procédures explicatives; d’autre part, l’*intégration* pure et simple. Mais, alors que le merveilleux peut entrer sans difficultés dans un projet intégratif, par simple substitution de destinateur, le fantastique résiste à la mise en ordre.”

Dubost states that, for the characters, there are two acceptable reactions to the fantastic of the cemetery: either to explain the situation logically or to accept that situation by integrating it into the everyday existence of the real world. Both options constitute an *étrange* response to the supernatural aspects of the cemetery as fantastic space because both logical explanations and simple integration neutralize the effects of the fantastic by normalizing them.

In *Amadas et Ydoine*, the fantastic occurs in a variety of forms and is primarily used by the author to create an ambiguous event in the narration that is open to multiple interpretations. Ydoine, after an attempted kidnapping by a dark knight, falls ill and apparently dies. She is entombed in an ancient cemetery, known as the Cemetery of the Nobles. When Ydoine is in

therefore maintained a presence amongst the living through their graves, analogous to the belief that saints were ‘alive’ and present in all their relics and shrines.” Robert Dinn, “‘Monuments Answerable to Men’s Worth’: Burial Patterns, Social Status and Gender in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol. 46, No 2 (1995): 238.


7 The author takes great pains to establish the ancient nature of this burial ground as a background to the events that take place (ll. 5340–5344).
the grave, everyone (including the implied reader) truly believes the deception that she is dead. When Ydoine returns to the town, the people there may interpret her return in one of three ways: she was resurrected through a miracle, she was buried alive and then freed, or she was involved in some magical event.

In *L'Atre périlleux*, Gauvain must spend the night in a cemetery next to a small church, where a demon holds a young woman captive within a tomb. No one will go near the place after sundown (ll. 728–35). The young lady being held captive is only allowed out at night, when the demon comes to her for sexual favors (l. 1219). Her nocturnal release from the tomb represents a symbolic exhumation. She is living in the realm of the dead during the day. She is possessed of a demon by night. The story does not reveal how the demon came to have power over the cemetery, but it is obviously no longer a sacred space. In the end, Gauvain not only frees the lady from the tomb but also frees the townspeople from their entrenched fears. The extraordinary nature of *L'Atre périlleux* rapidly becomes apparent through both narrative commentary and thematic use of *otherness*.

Each cemetery has an ancient tradition associated with it. The Cemetery of the Nobles has been a revered place associated with long-standing customs. The Perilous Cemetery has been a space of fear and superstition for an indeterminate time. Each space undergoes a reversal of the normal function of a cemetery: a living woman is freed from her domination by an otherworldly lover and restored from the land of the dead to that of the living. I first examine the cemetery adventure from *Amadas et Ydoine*. 

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Amadas et Ydoine

Composed between 1190 and 1220, Amadas et Ydoine is the story of a young man who wins a lady’s love, loses her to another man, then wins her back. In such simple terms, the story is not extraordinary. While Amadas et Ydoine is typical in its basic structure, in the realization of that structure through the plot, and in its social and moral attitudes, the contrivance of the three witches employed by the heroine and the hero’s battle with a demon over Ydoine’s body stand out as uniquely supernatural episodes. The purpose of the work is to show how a young man rises through the ranks of his society by marriage to a lady. At first, Ydoine acts as the opposition to Amadas, then through the transformative power of love, becomes the helper. She plays a role in the story only to the extent that her actions aid or hinder Amadas in the accomplishment of his goals. Thus, the overt emphasis on the exploits of Amadas causes the poem to have a single point of view.

In this romance, one episode in particular exemplifies the fantastic mode. The cemetery episode (ll. 4605–6774) tells the tale of an attempted abduction (while Amadas is absent) by a dark knight who places a ring on Ydoine’s finger causing her to fall into a death-like trance.

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9 Gallais examines a similar scenario in Tydorel, where the arrival of a male lover from the otherworld presents a sexual reversal in the typical pattern (a real-world male paired with an otherworld female). In both cases, the chevalier faé arrives while the true lover is absent. “Le chevalier faé ne vient sans doute que les jours où le roi et tous ses chevaliers sont absents.” Gallais, La fée..., 53.
After Ydoine’s burial, the same knight comes at night to the cemetery to take Ydoine away to be his bride. In doing so, the dark knight encounters Amadas (mourning at the tomb) who defeats the knight and sends him back to the otherworld.

### 6.1.1. The Structure for the Cemetery Adventure in Amadas et Ydoine

This episode of the tale is foremost the history of how Amadas is able to rescue Ydoine from her false death. As in the myth of the rape of Proserpina by Pluto, Ydoine is entrapped in the land of the dead. The division of the adventure is based on the presence or absence of the dark knight, who instigates the crisis and provides the remedy to revive Ydoine. The cemetery adventure is divided into four distinct units represented in Table 6.1 as a series of conjunctive and disjunctive states from the hero’s (Amadas) point of view:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Performative action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt; Attempted abduction of Ydoine</td>
<td>Temporary conjunction—&lt;br&gt;S ∩ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Ydoine is rescued and reunited with Amadas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt; Ydoine dies</td>
<td>Disjunction—&lt;br&gt;S ∪ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Amadas mourns Ydoine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt; Amadas at the cemetery</td>
<td>Disjunction—&lt;br&gt;S ∪ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Amadas defends Ydoine’s body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt; Amadas revives Ydoine</td>
<td>Conjunction—&lt;br&gt;S ∩ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>Amadas restores the proper ring to Ydoine’s finger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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10 John Reinhard makes this comparison on the level of motifs between the myth and this romance. John R. Reinhard, Amadas et Ydoine: *An Historical Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1927) 84.
One may say that, at its most basic level, the narrative structure of the adventure is represented by the straight-forward equation $A_A \rightarrow B_A \rightarrow C_A \rightarrow D_A$. In the first segment, Amadas is not present when the supernatural knight tries to abduct Ydoine. However, Amadas arrives in time to escort her back to the city, where she apparently dies. The third narrative unit contains a scene at the cemetery, where a supernatural knight comes to claim Ydoine by exhuming her from the tomb. Amadas defeats the knight and is able to revive Ydoine by breaking the spell of an enchanted ring. The arrival and departure of the mysterious knight in the first and third segments reveals the presence of the otherworld within this adventure. I examine each unit to form a more detailed structure for the adventure, concentrating on the importance of the cemetery battle in $C_A$.

### 6.1.1.1. Attempted Abduction of Ydoine by the Dark Knight

The narrator introduces the adventure using the adjective *estrange*: “Mais oës estrange aventure” (l. 4614). There is a clear emphasis on the unusual aspects of the events being narrated. While returning to Lucca, Ydoine is seized by an unknown knight who lets her go and disappears. “Que nus ne sot que il devint.” (l. 4663) From the beginning, segment $A_A$ of the adventure is inexplicable and seemingly unrelated to the main story. This episode represents a break from the main narrative program and presents a somewhat problematic interruption into an otherwise ingenuous romance.

Amadas and Ydoine are reunited and return to Lucca together: $A_A = S \cap O_Y$. There is nothing in this segment, other than the mysterious nature of the abductor, to suggest that
anything is amiss. The lack of narrative commentary about the knight and his actions causes the attempted abduction to take on a sense of the ordinary, as if the incident were trivial. However, in retrospect, the arrival of the mysterious knight marks the beginning of a supernatural adventure for the couple.

6.1.1.2. Ydoine Falls Ill and Dies

Unbeknownst to the two lovers, an enchanted ring has been placed on Ydoine’s finger. After arriving in the city, Ydoine falls ill and seems to die. Her apparent death is actually due to a supernatural enchantment induced by the ring of death.\(^{11}\) She is buried in a marble tomb in an ancient cemetery. Again, the nature of this segment is deceptive. The suddenness of Ydoine’s death, while questionable, is not the subject of narrative commentary. As before, the narrator does not spend any time analyzing Ydoine or her fate. The only direct commentary comes from Ydoine. She consoles Amadas by lying to him about her faithfulness. Ydoine is duly buried with all the accompanying signs of mourning.

In direct contrast, the narrator analyzes Amadas’ reactions in much more detail. Amadas mourns Ydoine much longer than her own people. He even goes out at night to the tomb (ll. 5430–5435). His emotions are the subject of 182 lines (ll. 5401–5583). It becomes evident

\(^{11}\) The ring of death and its equivalent, the sleep pin (a common motif in Celtic literature), are used as devices to cause a deep sleep or the appearance of death. cf. J. Curtin, *Hero-Tales of Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 1894).
that the narrator uses Amadas’ point of view in recounting the story. Amadas’ adventure centers around Ydoine as the object of his desire. Therefore $B_A = S \cup O_Y$, because the death and burial of his lady puts Amadas in a state of disjunction.

6.1.1.3. Amadas Fights the Dark Knight in the Cemetery

While keeping watch in the cemetery, Amadas sees a great procession approaching the cemetery (ll. 5584–5593). The incident takes place at midnight and is described as an unusual adventure. Amadas is certain that he is witnessing the arrival of devils\textsuperscript{12} who wish to take the body of Ydoine (ll. 5599–5610). He is not shocked or frightened away by the supernatural event, but decides instead to fight to the death to protect the tomb from being desecrated. Amadas thus accepts the supernatural, otherworldly adventure that presents itself to him.

However, instead of devils, Amadas is confronted by a supernatural knight. Amadas defeats the dark knight, but he still does not have Ydoine, causing $C_A$ to be $S \cup O_Y$. After Amadas defeats the knight, it is revealed that Ydoine is not truly dead, but only under the enchantment of a ring (ll. 6377–6389). Amadas’ victory defuses the supernatural knight’s hostility and turns him from an opponent into a reluctant helper. Before leaving, the dark knight gives Amadas instructions about the enchanted ring (ll. 6442–6447). Amadas gains the

\textsuperscript{12} Perceval, as seen in Chapter 3, also thought that approaching knights were devils. However in \textit{Le Conte du graal}, the scene was ironic comedy. For Amadas, that assessment is closer to the truth.
knowledge to revive Ydoine and thus eventually obtain that which he desires. The achievement of this goal represents a state of conjunction between the subject and the object.

6.1.1.4. Amadas Revives Ydoine

Amadas removes Ydoine from the tomb and the two are reunited, resulting in $D_A = S \cup O_Y$. Ydoine hears her own story as recounted by Amadas. The narration of her adventure from Amadas’ point of view causes Ydoine to declare the dark knight to be a demon. As the object of a fantastic adventure, Ydoine experiences the effects of fantastic space in her body. When the truth is explained to her, she is absolved of her earlier lies, receiving spiritual as well as the physical restoration. Amadas and Ydoine pledge their love and return to Lucca, bringing the cemetery adventure to a close.

Throughout the adventure Amadas accepts the strange events and participates in a fantastic adventure. However, there is no movement between worlds for Amadas. The supernatural of the otherworld is presented as penetrating into the real world. The moment of violation occurs when the dark knight initially attempts to abduct Ydoine in $A_A$. Amadas does not question the circumstances that bring the dark knight to the cemetery in $C_A$ nor does he question the validity of that knight’s intentions. Amadas is successful in his attempts to defend both Ydoine’s body and her honor, for which he is rewarded with the knowledge of what has truly happened (which restores his belief in Ydoine’s faithfulness), and with the means by which he can restore Ydoine to life (restoring her physical presence). Thus, by facing the supernatural intrusion and confronting the adventure, he receives two rewards.
6.1.2. **Fantastic Aspects in Amadas et Ydoine**

The fantastic mode is found in several aspects of the tale. /Otherness/ is created through descriptive details of the dark knight and commentary about his activities and deceptive nature. Fantastic space provides a staging ground for the extensive battle between the dark knight and Amadas. The ending of the cemetery adventure is somewhat anticlimactic, in that there is no attempt by the characters to explain Ydoine’s sudden return from the grave. Acknowledgment of the supernatural is lacking on the part of the actants, whereas the narrator practically predicts it. The narrative voice comments frequently on the events that are about to be recounted. Each time the adventure reaches a new stage, the narrator states that an extraordinary event is about to occur. This type of commentary prepares the reader to expect the inexplicable. Each of these aspects contributes to the sense of /otherness/, fear and unease created by the cemetery adventure. Combined, these elements reveal the fantastic to be an encoded reaction of unease with the otherworld in the face of the inconceivable.

6.1.2.1. **/Otherness/**

/Otherness/ is found principally in the otherworldly knight, who controls the intrigue through the use of a magic ring. The locations of the dark knight’s activities in the real world are always spaces that are isolated and dangerous. The atmosphere of fear and trepidation

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13 “Mais oés estrange aventure.” (l. 4614); “Oir une aventure fiere/ Et de si trescruel maniere/ Que nus n’oï onques mais dire/ Si grant doleur netel martire.” (ll. 4733–4736); “Mais or oés que li avient,/ Quel mervelle et quelle aventure.” (ll. 5584–5585).
associated with the long remote road and the ancient cemetery (place d'antiquité) make these two locales fantastic by virtue of implied association with negative aesthetics. The clandestine operation at the grave increase one's sense of foreboding.

A clear sense of /otherness/ surrounds the dark knight’s activities. The knight can apparently disappear into thin air. He is surrounded with mystery. The distortion of space, the nocturnal nature of his activities, and the use of a magical ring characterize the nature of the dark knight as supernatural and are indicative of an alternate order. The dark knight makes two statements about himself: he can never be killed according to the laws of this world and he must return to his world before daybreak. These statements are the clearest textual indication that this knight is from the otherworld.

“Et si vous di, amis, de moi,
Que par armes ne puis morir :
Ma nature nel puet sosfrir,
N’a Diu ne plaist que vous mesface.
A demorer n’ai plus d’espace,
Car li jor vient : a Diu m’en vois.” (ll. 6430–6435)

The knight states that he is returning to Diu. However, Ydoine refers to the dark knight as a demon (ll. 6685, 6712), explicitly recognizing the dark knight as part of the otherworld. The knight does not do anything that is specifically evil to Ydoine (who remains oblivious to the circumstances until after the fact) during his time in the real world. The dark knight’s statement about returning before the break of day indicate that he is constrained by other rules
and yet, similar in nature to the raven knight in Yonec, he is able to acknowledge a belief in God. The text does not clarify whether the knight is a type of "ruler of the dead," a straightforward example of the supernatural lover, or a demon—his true character remains ambiguous and open to interpretation. The dark knight is able to enter the real world but because of his defeat is forced back into the otherworld. His adventure is not successful, because he does not bring Ydoine back with him. He is the reverse of Amadas at every stage of the adventure, and falls neatly into the role of opponent.

The use of a ring to cause false death indicates the motif of a magical talisman, whereby supernatural goals are achieved through deceptively realistic means. The knight later uses the ring as a symbol by which he lays claim to the body of Ydoine. The dark knight shows Amadas the ring he had given to Ydoine. This news throws Amadas into a state of confusion—what is true and what is a lie? "Ne set que croire ne que non. / Mult li est grans confondison" (ll. 5793–5794). It is through the power of the ring that the fairy knight had hoped to abduct Ydoine. Here again, /otherness/ is embodied in an appeal to the supernatural to accomplish a difficult task. The deceptive nature of the fantastic mode is revealed when the

14 After the lady prays to God for a lover (ll. 103–104), the raven knight in Yonec arrives, professes his faith in the same God (ll. 145–164) and takes communion (l. 187) to prove that he is not an evil creature. Marie de France, Les Lais..., 105, 108.

15 A tant li a moustre l'anel
Letré qu'en son mal faire fist, (ll. 5754–5755)
dark knight states: “Sachiés de voir, ne morut pas, / Et vous et li sien autresi / Furent deceü et traï / Par moi” (ll. 6400–6403a). While instructing Amadas about the ring, the supernatural knight states that the ring must remain within the tomb, or Ydoine will not be freed from the enchantment. “Mais d’une rien bien vous gardés, / Que d’iloeç n’emportés l’anel, / Ains le lairés sour le tombel.” (ll. 6448–6450) Thus, defeating the supernatural knight is not enough to free Ydoine. Amadas must also perform other acts that are ritualistic in nature. Leaving the death ring in the tomb acknowledges that the ring is not part of the real world and must remain behind as one of the artifacts of death.

Ydoine’s circumstances represent a truly dreadful ordeal. /Otherness/ in this episode is created through the thematic use of fear and horror. She participates consciously in the deception of Amadas by her lies about her faithfulness. /Otherness/ is characterized by secrets and deception (see Figure 2.1) and Ydoine is the first in this adventure to lie.16 When revived, she reacts with fear and hesitation,17 uncertain of how she came to be in a tomb. Throughout the cemetery adventure, she has been the object18 of a fantastic encounter, and yet remains

16 Ydoine has a prior history of deception. Earlier in the story, she hires three “sorcieres” (l. 2007) who are skilled in black magic (ll. 2023–2026, 2030–2038) to deceive Nevers and frighten him into breaking his engagement with her. Note also her use of a ruse to keep her husband from the marriage bed (ll. 2315–2440).

17 As seen in Chapter 2, fear and hesitation are two of the symptoms of the fantastic mode.

18 While in other adventures, the object of desire is a fée, Ydoine is only compared to a fée. “Ne fu ausi bele trouvée,/ Se ne fu figure de fee ;” (ll. 4697–4698). The inference to the
ignorant of the circumstance and actions surrounding her supposed death and liberation. In the final unit (D_A), Ydoine experiences the fantastic through the narration of her own story. She thus vicariously participates in Amadas’ experiences with the supernatural knight.

6.1.2.2. Fantastic Space

The cemetery constitutes the space where the real world and the otherworld overlap, creating a conflict. The collision is quite literal in this case, as the two knights battle over Ydoine’s body. As the median point between Lucca and the otherworld, the cemetery embodies fantastic space, creating a juncture between rival realms. The supernatural is confronted and defeated at the cemetery. C_A repeats the pattern that was revealed in Li Contes del Graal (Figure 3.4), where a hero enters fantastic space, confronts the supernatural and returns to the real world. In the case of Amadas et Ydoine, that process is presented as a positive victory for the real world, while Perceval’s adventure had decidedly negative results for the real world. Figure 6.1 maps out Amadas’ travel to and from the cemetery:

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tradition of the lai, established by the narrative voice, is suggestive of the same Celtic tradition discussed by Reinhard. Namely, a fée of great beauty is loved by a mortal man, kidnapped by a supernatural lover, and rescued by her mortal partner. “This is the situation of the fairy claiming as his wife the wife, sometimes a fairy herself, of a mortal man.” Reinhard, op. cit... 87.
Figure 6.1— Narrative program for Amadas’ cemetery adventure

In this model, we see that Amadas is able to enter into fantastic space and come back out again with Ydoine by his side. He liberates her from fantastic space and also from an (implied) extended sojourn in the otherworld. For Amadas, the adventure becomes étrange, according to scenario 1 in Figure 2.5, due to his rejection of the supernatural for the natural. The chevalier-faë must also make a similar journey from his home. He comes from the otherworld and is unsuccessful in his attempt to use the fantastic space of the cemetery to gain the object he desires, Ydoine. From the dark knight’s point of view, there is a reversal of the standard heroic pattern:

Figure 6.2—Narrative program for the dark knight’s displacement
Like the *fée* in Graelent, the knight creates fantastic space by imposing his supernatural aspects on the real world. He brings the supernatural into civilized space by leading a procession of his people to the walls of the cemetery. While the cemetery is outside the city walls, the implications of this entourage are somewhat threatening. Just as the knight jumps over the cemetery walls on his horse so too the supernatural has broken through the boundaries of the real world to impose its will on Ydoine. However, the powers of the dark knight are constrained by specific rules: he must retreat to his world at the break of day. This cautionary indication of limits reveal that the cemetery is not necessarily a safe place for the dark knight. Fantastic space is caused by his presence and yet it is not totally controlled by his will. With the arrival of the sun and the departure of the dark knight, the cemetery returns to a real-world status. It is no longer the stage for conflicting worlds. Ydoine is awakened and restored to her normal status as well, in spite of her part in the deception.

6.1.2.3. Structure and Fantastic in *Amadas et Ydoine*

The structure of the cemetery adventure (Table 6.2) is based around a repeated attempt to abduct Ydoine in the first and third units. The second and fourth units are an analysis of events in the previous units. The rational attempts to explain the irrational of the abduction scenes act as an *étrange* interpretation of the supernatural, where the hero attempts to integrate the supernatural through a logical analysis of circumstances.
Table 6.2—Refined structure for the cemetery adventure 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempted abduction</td>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt;1: Amadas arrives at Lucca (ll. 4589-4604)</td>
<td>Amadas at the cemetery</td>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;C&lt;/sub&gt;1: Amadas leaves town (ll. 5401-5442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Ydoine</td>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt;2: The dark knight attempts to take Ydoine</td>
<td></td>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;C&lt;/sub&gt;2: Amadas mourns at Ydoine's tomb (ll. 5443-5568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt; = S ∩ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;A&lt;/sub&gt;3: Amadas fights the dark knight (ll. 4664-4736)</td>
<td></td>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;C&lt;/sub&gt;3: Amadas fights the dark knight (ll. 5569-6461)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ydoine apparently</td>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;B&lt;/sub&gt;1: Ydoine becomes ill</td>
<td>Amadas revives Ydoine</td>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;D&lt;/sub&gt;1: Amadas takes Ydoine from the tomb (ll. 6462-6580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dies B&lt;sub&gt;B&lt;/sub&gt; = S ∩ O&lt;sub&gt;Y&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;B&lt;/sub&gt;2: Ydoine lies to Amadas (ll. 4840-5246)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;D&lt;/sub&gt;2: Amadas recounts the adventure (ll. 6581-6774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;B&lt;/sub&gt;3: Ydoine apparently dies (ll. 5247-5400)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;D&lt;/sub&gt;3: The couple return to Lucca (ll. 6775-6862)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above analysis of the four narrative segments, I construct the following narrative formula for the cemetery adventure in *Amadas et Ydoine*: \((A_{A} → B_{A})(C_{A} → D_{A})\). Similar in form to *Graelent*,\(^{20}\) the cemetery adventure contains four units that alternate between the real world and fantastic space (however, in this tale the spatial sequences are reversed with the real world units occurring after the fantastic ones). The adventure reveals itself as bipartite in

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19 The shaded areas represent the fantastic.

20 Aubailly indicates in the preface to his edition of *Amadas et Ydoine*, that the narrative is directly produced from the tradition of the *lai*. "Par son contenu—personnages, péripéties et déroulement de l'aventure—par sa tonalité et par son sens profond, le roman d'Amadas et Ydoine se rattache à la littérature du lai dont la vogue est encore grande à l'époque." Jean Claude Aubailly, "Introduction," *Amadas et Ydoine*, ed. J. C. Aubailly, Traductions CFMA N° 36 (Paris: Champion, 1986) 8.
structure, with scenes and events that repeat themselves. In each half of the story, the inhabitants of the real world are able to overcome the intrusion of the supernatural knight. In segments $A_A$ and $C_A$, a conflict with the dark knight is central. Due to her deception in $B_A$, Ydoine is destined to repeat the events of $A_A$ in unit $C_A$. In segments $B_A$ and $D_A$, the sickness and healing of Ydoine dominate the narrative.

In retrospect, segments $A_A$ and $B_A$ take on fantastic overtones once more knowledge is revealed. While seemingly ordinary events take place in the first two narrative units, a reinterpretation of what they signified makes the sequence of events more ominous and fearful than they first appeared. The use of the enchanted ring in $A_A$ causes us to modify our interpretation of events so far. The illness and death in segment $B_A$ become unnatural and fearful, as the normal explanations for Ydoine's demise are replaced with supernatural explanations. Also, there is an added sense of horror for Ydoine's fate. Segment $C_A$ contains the essential information for understanding the whole cemetery adventure. The nature of Ydoine's death, the purity of her character, and the foolishness of Amadas' lamentations are proclaimed by a supernatural knight. These revelations are not communicated by anyone associated with the real world. Those actants who are associated with the otherworld can clearly see the truth beneath the deception, since the otherworld is the source of the deception. Deception is one of the major indicators of /otherness/ within this adventure.\footnote{See section 2.1 for a discussion of deception as a signifier of /otherness/.}
In two of the four narrative units ($A_A$ and $C_A$) of the cemetery adventure, the presence of the fantastic mode is evident. A third unit ($B_A$) becomes fantastic only in retrospect. The fourth unit contains a narrated version of the fantastic adventure. The arrival of a supernatural being from a different world is neither accepted nor explained away by the main characters in unit $D_A$. The adventure is merely presented in a straightforward fashion and dealt with as yet another challenge to their love, another obstacle that must be overcome. When Ydoine returns from the cemetery, the townspeople are amazed. Yet they do not question the explanation of the adventure nor Ydoine’s return from the dead. This episode represents an explicit example of an otherworldly insurgence into the reality of everyday life.

Yet the fantastic events recounted in the cemetery adventure do not in any clear way directly change the eventual outcome of the overall story nor do they ensure the success of the two lovers. Rather the fantastic is simply presented in an almost rational fashion. Amadas and Ydoine take their destiny into their own hands and work to aid each other in achieving a mutually successful conclusion. If the cemetery episode could be removed from the main story without altering the structure of the romance as a whole, the following question arises: What purpose does the cemetery adventure serve? The inclusion of a fantastic adventure in an otherwise realistic romance is problematic. Perhaps the words of Amadas explain it best:

“Tant avons enduré grans maus,
Angouses et ires mortaus,
Tous nos aages sans confort” (ll. 6663–6665)
As lovers, Amadas and Ydoine have survived all sorts of challenges and difficulties. The cemetery adventure reinforces the concept that neither death nor supernatural forces can stop their love. Having overcome the dark knight in the cemetery adventure, Amadas becomes the consummate knight and lover. He has withstood the worst and prevailed. The cemetery adventure challenges him on the levels of faith and loyalty as no other adventure has. This adventure paves the way for the public acceptance of their love (ll. 6936–6963). In confronting the fantastic, Amadas and Ydoine prove themselves worthy of each other.

6.2. L’Atre pétrilleux

Written about 1250, L’Atre pétrilleux is a fine example of a 13th-century romance and maintains a sense of unity with the themes of Arthurian literature that were established primarily in works from the 12th century. Alexandre Micha indicates a thematic similarity between the cemetery episode in Amadas et Ydoine and the episode I am examining in this romance. Brian Woledge notes in his introduction to the 1936 edition of L’Atre pétrilleux

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22 “In the first thirty or forty years [of the thirteenth century] the romancers contrive with more or less skill to maintain a kind of unity, and about the middle of the century the Atre Pétrilleux provides a good example of this control. But afterward there are signs of decadence.” Alexandre Micha, “Miscellaneous French Romances in Verse,” Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) 359–360.

23 “The cemetery episode has no counterpart in Arthurian romance but resembles a scene in Amadas et Ydoine; differences in treatment, however, exclude the derivation of one version from the other.” Ibid., 367–368. Nancy Black writes, “Ydoine only appears to have died and is entombed in the cemetery where a fairy knight comes to claim her, while in L’Atre Pétrilleux the lady is under the spell of the demon, who keeps her entombed by
that the battle scene between Gauvain and the demonic lover is very similar to Amadas’ battle
with the dark knight, which also takes place in a cemetery. Woledge does not go so far,
however, as to suggest a direct connection between the two. He only notes a similarity of
tradition.24 The cemetery scene in L’Atre périlleux may have been influenced by a Breton
belief in a King of the Dead.25

L’Atre périlleux opens, like Le Chevalier de la Charrette, with the feast of Pentecost at
King Arthur’s court (ll. 8–15), where the knights of the Round Table are gathered at dinner.
The wicked knight Escanor de la Montaigne rudely intrudes and abruptly kidnaps Arthur’s
cupbearer, stating that if any knight wants to win her back he (Escanor) will await the
challenger in a nearby forest (ll. 151 ff.). This is also similar to the Charrette, where the
intruder disputes the possession of a woman by challenging an Arthurian knight to combat.26

day and sexually enslaved by night.” Nancy Black, “Introduction,” The Perilous Cemetery

24 Speaking of the cemetery battle, Woledge writes, “On le trouve déjà dans Amadas et
Ydoine, ..., sans qu’on puisse toutefois affirmer que ce poème est une source de l’Atre


26 There is yet a third similarity with the Charrette. Soon after Gauvain sets out he meets
three maidens who inform him that they have just seen Gauvain killed, and so he hides his
identity and, much like Lancelot, becomes “the knight without a name” until the end of the
romance when he finds and defeats his supposed murderers.
The hero of the romance, Gauvain, seeks to avenge the kidnapping and sets off on a series of quests that revolve around doing good deeds, especially rescuing ladies in distress.

This story, while sharing many thematic details with the *Charrette*, nonetheless presents quite a different focus from Lancelot’s adventures. Gauvain primarily concentrates on uniting various sets of lovers. He, accompanied by his bachelor companions, returns to Arthur’s court where the young knights all marry women they have met during the course of the tale. Thus after a series of adventures, the bachelors are integrated into a stable domestic order when they finally marry and settle down. I will focus on one particular adventure, that of the Perilous Cemetery (ll. 712–1443). In the Perilous Cemetery, from which the romance takes its title, Gauvain successfully vanquishes a demon who holds a young lady captive. The tale

27 “Gawain is nearly always the same at the end of a romance as he is at the beginning: unlike Lancelot or Perceval (or any number of other heroes), he undergoes no real crisis whence he emerges a wiser and better knight.” Keith Busby, *Gawain in Old French Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980) 387.

28 Keith Busby asserts that one of the primary activities of Gauvain is to welcome strangers at court. Often, these strangers are young men. “Gawain’s courtesy and eagerness to befriend the young knight is often matched by the desire of the young knight to become acquainted with him. On some occasions, the young main is sent to Britain specifically to make contact with Gawain.” *ibid.*, 383.

presents a fascinating glimpse into Gauvain's exploits: he battles a demon through the night, similar to Amadas' battle with the dark knight.

6.2.1. The Structure of the Cemetery Adventure in L'Atre périlleux

The cemetery adventure forms the first of a series of adventures where Gauvain rescues a lady on behalf of her lover, setting the tone for Gauvain to be portrayed as a knight who restores the social equilibrium in situations where the natural order is out of balance.\(^{30}\) In the cemetery episode, as is the case for most of Gauvain's adventures in L'Atre Périlleux, he is acting on behalf of the missing subject. By a combination of chance and substitution, Gawain becomes the temporary subject of another man's adventure. In this situation, the squire whom Gauvain meets eventually marries the lady entrapped in the tomb. Therefore, since the squire had established the castle and lands by giving them to his sister (ll. 806–808) and since he also benefits from the adventure by gaining a wife, he normally would be the subject of the

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\(^{30}\) Busby, in his study of the character of Gauvain, does not specifically discuss L'Atre périlleux, as it falls outside of the dates for his texts. He studies works from 1155 to 1225 (22), L'Atre périlleux being a work from approximately the mid-13\(^{\text{th}}\) century. (For a discussion of the approximate date of the text, see Brian Woledge, L'Atre périlleux (Paris: Champion, 1936) vii.) Concerning Gauvain's role as an arbiter of social imbalance, Busby states, "... both Köhler and Cormeau have been led to see Gauvain as the social conscience of the court, the interpreter of its behavior, and the one who often seeks to reintegrate the hero into the court." Keith Busby, Gawain ..., 384. Busby is referring to Erich Köhler, Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1956) and Christoph Cormeau, Wigalois und die Crône: zwei Kapitel zur Gattungsgeschichte des nachklassischen Aventurierromans, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 57 (Munich: Artemis, 1977).
adventure. The object is a lady entombed by a demon \( O_L \). Table 6.3 shows the narrative structure for the cemetery adventure:

Table 6.3—General structure for the cemetery adventure in *L’Atre périlleux*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Performative action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cup O_L )</td>
<td>Gauvain disarms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cup O_L )</td>
<td>Gauvain refuses the squire’s hospitality and stays at the cemetery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cup O_L )</td>
<td>The cupbearer is protected from rape at the hands of Escanor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cap O_L )</td>
<td>Gauvain rearms for battle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cap O_L )</td>
<td>The lady and cemetery are liberated from the demon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F&lt;sub&gt;G&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>( S \cap O_L )</td>
<td>The townspeople are liberated from fear.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the other tales examined so far in this inquiry, which have four or five narrative units, Gauvain’s adventure has six units. The structure is based on an on-going interchange of roles between the squire (the displaced hero) and Gauvain (active hero).\(^{31}\) Gauvain is both the witness of the events that take place in the cemetery and the liberator of a lady entombed by a demon. The story does not give many details as to how the demon was able to gain control of the cemetery. The narrator simply states that this has been the case for an indeterminate length of time.

\(^{31}\) See section 6.2.1.3 below for a more detailed discussion.
6.2.1.1. Gauvain Lodges at the Perilous Cemetery

At the beginning of the cemetery episode, Gauvain is refused lodging at a castle. Gauvain is given no reason why they will not let him enter the castle after sundown, other than that it is the custom. One later finds out that this custom has been kept for 100 years (1. 798). The refusal to allow him entrance into the castle represents a break in the narrative program. Gauvain knows that Escanor and the cupbearer are inside the castle walls. However, he is deterred from the goal of freeing the cupbearer for one night.

This narrative unit highlights Gauvain’s disjunctive state. If he had not hesitated to get up from Arthur’s table, Gauvain would have easily caught up with and defeated Escanor that day. There is a forced separation from the lady he is pursuing. This first segment is represented as $A_G = S \cup O_L$. The object in this first unit is two-fold. $O_L$ represents the cupbearer, but it also

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32 “Car li sire de ceste honor,
   Et li clerc et li chevalier,
   Serjant, borgois, et escuier,
   Ont tout communement juré
   Que ja por home qui soit né
   N’ert li guicés destorelliés
   Puis que li solax ert couciés.” (ll. 728–35)

33 The narrative program is established in the first scene involving Escanor (ll. 155–200). Escanor kidnaps Arthur’s cupbearer and challenges a knight to combat in order to free her. Thus, Gauvain’s main goal is to rescue the cupbearer. This narrative program acts as a unifying theme throughout all the subsequent adventures as the search for the cupbearer justifies Gauvain’s journey.
prefigures the presence of a second lady. The lady entombed by day becomes the object of Gauvain’s quest for one night. Chance leads him astray from his main quest. Gauvain now is in a position to free the lady from her demonic captivity and thus he now takes up a new goal.

6.2.1.2. Gauvain Converses with the Squire

When Gauvain confronts a squire, who is passing by the cemetery on horseback, the squire reacts in fear and superstition. As fear is one of the hallmarks of the fantastic mode, the squire implicitly recognizes in his prayers against the demon that the cemetery is fantastic in nature. Gauvain in turn is surprised at the squire’s prayer (l. 778), as he has no point of reference from which to discern the cause of the squire’s fear.

It is at this point in the adventure that Gauvain learns why the cemetery is so feared by the castle’s inhabitants. The squire assumes the traditional role of narrator and insists upon the veracity of his narration (l. 795). He then recounts how any knight that takes refuge at the cemetery is found dead in the morning. Now the adventure becomes a narration looking back at the prior 100 years of the cemetery’s history. However, the squire as an outside observer offers no details of how the cemetery has gained its reputation. The lack of historical details therefore augments the mystery associated with the cemetery. This account of the cemetery as a place of strange encounters and mysterious deaths utilizes the fantastic mode within a fantastic narrative within a romance. Gauvain’s story has now reached a third level of *mise en abîme*, where the first two levels are the main romance and the cemetery episode.
The squire offers Gauvain lodging at the castle but Gauvain declines. The episode is thus characterized by a deliberate disjunction between Gauvain and the cupbearer: \( B_G = S \cup O_L \).

Curiously, Gauvain cares more for his reputation concerning his horse, Gringalet, than he does for the cupbearer’s dilemma (ll. 846–863). The cupbearer is subject to rape if she spends the night with Escanor. However, Gauvain cares only that his reputation will be damaged if the rape occurs (ll. 898–899). Gauvain instructs the squire to persuade his brother-in-law to separate Escanor and the cupbearer for the night if possible (ll. 871–904). In this passage, Gauvain’s initial reluctance to take up the adventure surfaces again. Gauvain is portrayed in this romance as caring more for the outward appearance of correctness and his public reputation than for defending the right causes. By delegating his duty (as protector of the cupbearer) to the squire, Gauvain is free to pursue an encounter with the cemetery’s demon.

6.2.1.3. The Squire Recounts Gauvain’s Tale at the Castle

There is an interlude of 225 lines, during which the squire narrates Gauvain’s story to the castle’s inhabitants (ll. 906–1130). The “active” subject (Gauvain) is not present and instead forms the object of secondary narration. As noted above, Gauvain represents a substitution for the squire, who is the displaced subject. Thus this segment presents a type of embedded narration. The squire’s second tale interrupts the cemetery adventure and returns the reader to

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34 At the beginning of the romance, Arthur and Kay chastise Gawain for his slowness to respond when the cupbearer is initially taken captive. Gawain states that his lack of reaction is due to a deference for correct table manners (ll. 208–241, 312–365).
the main story-line for the purpose of ensuring the cupbearer’s safety. The “true” subject (the squire) is narrating his own adventure in the form of an adventure being experienced by his substitute. Having been initially substituted by Gauvain, the squire now narrates on behalf of Gauvain who cannot be there himself to tell the story. This circularity, created by a series of exchanging actantial roles, highlights and reinforces the notion that the squire and Gauvain are intimately linked in the adventure.

In segment $C_G$ the squire takes over, for one night, Gauvain’s role of protector. By convincing the court to protect the cupbearer for the night, the squire uses narration to accomplish what Gauvain’s prowess could not. Since the cupbearer is separated from Escanor, this sequence relieves Gauvain of his moral and social obligations to the cupbearer and King Arthur. Now he is capable of acting in the service of God by defeating a demon. $C_G$ is represented as $S \cup O_L$, because Gauvain has yet to gain freedom for the cupbearer or for the entombed lady.

6.2.1.4. Gauvain Converses with the Captive Lady

Gauvain finds himself alone in the cemetery when the tombstone he is sitting on begins to move. He reacts in surprise in spite of the squire’s warning. “Mervellies fu quant n’i vit ame” (l. 1142). Even though the demonic possession has lasted for 100 years, the lady lying in the tomb is still young and beautiful. Gauvain reacts in the same manner as the squire when confronted with an unexpected event: he raises his hand to make the sign of the cross (l. 1152–1155). Just as Gauvain assured the squire that he believed in God, now the lady assures
Gauvain that she too fears God. Thus this episode, \( D_G \), is a repeat of \( B_G \): Gauvain moves into the squire’s role so much that he even mirrors the squire’s instinctive reactions to the supernatural. Additionally, in this episode, Gauvain has obtained his first conjunction with the lady: \( S \cap O_L \). That conjunction will be challenged by the demon in the next episode, so it represents only a partial success.

\( D_G \) also mirrors \( B_G \) by the inclusion of a narrative concerning the cemetery’s demonic past. Gauvain deliberately asks for details about the Perilous Cemetery from the lady (ll. 1182–1188). The lady, having direct personal experience, provides Gauvain with even more supernatural details. She fills in the gaps in the squire’s tale and completes the picture of the cemetery as a fantastic place. She is suspended between life and death, earth and hell, while under demonic control. The image presented in her tale of being trapped between two realms directly corresponds to the structural model for the fantastic mode proposed in Chapter 2.

6.2.1.5. *Gauvain Battles the Demon*

The account of Gauvain’s battle with the demon mirrors a typical battle scene between two knights. However, the narrator comments that this battle is between good and evil. In this romance, Gauvain is characterized as the “bon chevalier” (l. 241), sometimes in sarcasm as found in Kay’s speech, but always in sincerity by Arthur. The demon by nature personifies evil. Gauvain continually relies on the cross to regain his strength. By battling with the demon, Gauvain establishes his reputation as the defender of good. The lady states, “Bien puet trestox
li mondes dire / Que c'es ci le bon chevalier” (ll. 1410–1411). In this sequence, Gauvain frees the cemetery and the lady from the influences of the demon: $E_G = S \sim O_L$. In the process of defeating the demon, Gauvain cuts off its hand, effectively removing its ability to control the maiden. The battle with the demon restores Gauvain’s right to be known as the “bon chevalier,” a title that had been challenged by Kay. Now that the blemish on his reputation as the preeminent defender of Arthur’s realm has been restored, Gauvain is once more in a position to take up the defense of the cupbearer and gain her freedom as well.

6.2.1.6. Gauvain Recounts his Tale to the Townspeople

The cemetery adventure is concluded by yet another act of narration. Gauvain is the narrator, finally capable of telling his own story. The cemetery’s freedom from demonic possession is extended to the surrounding region, which was also afflicted. For 100 years, the cemetery has evoked fear in the townspeople. “Si en furent moult petirox, / Qu'il n'en i ot nul si hardi / N’en fust trestout acouardi” (ll. 938–940). When the townspeople are finally freed from fear, that freedom is communicated to them through the act of narration. They are able to recognize Gauvain as their deliverer. With the sight of the demon’s body, they too are able to make their own narration: “La nouvelle est partout alee / Que le diable estot destruit.” (ll. 1440–1441). Most significantly, the cemetery loses its name: “Que l’atre avoit son non
perdu.” (l. 1443). The cemetery returns to being just an ordinary burial ground, rather than a portal for demonic activity. Thus the cemetery is reintegrated into the real world and no longer constitutes fantastic space.

This episode marks the end of the interchanging roles between the squire and Gauvain. The squire takes his place as Gauvain’s companion instead of his substitute. Gauvain is free to return to his initial quest for the cupbearer, and the narrative direction returns to the main plot. Thus all the disjunctions in the cemetery episode are accounted for, the actantial roles are reestablished, and the main narration returns to the forefront. Surprisingly, this adventure is one of the few in this romance that stands on its own.\(^{35}\) The cemetery adventure interrupts Gauvain’s quest to rescue Arthur’s cupbearer. It is curious that Nancy Black, in her brief analysis of the plot structure for \textit{L’Atre périlleux}, omits the cemetery adventure from her list of episodes.\(^{36}\) This omission only serves to highlight the problematic nature of the adventure in relation to the rest of the narrative. And yet, the cemetery episode gives this work its name. Therefore, the episode must in some manner be of importance to the author. The overall structure for this adventure is represented in Table 6.4:

\(^{35}\) “Only two episodes could be omitted without leaving loose ends, one of them, strangely enough, being the cemetery adventure which gives the poem its title.” Alexandre Micha, \textit{art. cit.}, 368.

\(^{36}\) Nancy Black, \textit{op. cit.}, xvii.
Table 6.4—Refined structure for the cemetery adventure in *L’Atre périlleux*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Gauvain stays at the Perilous Cemetery  
A<sub>G</sub> = S ∩ O<sub>L</sub> | A<sub>G</sub>1: The porter refuses him entry. (ll. 712–747)  
A<sub>G</sub>2: Gauvain finds the cemetery (ll. 748–757)  
A<sub>G</sub>3: Gauvain disarms (ll. 758–768) | Gauvain converses with the lady from the tomb  
D<sub>G</sub> = S ∩ O<sub>L</sub> | D<sub>G</sub>1: The tomb opens allowing the lady to exit (ll. 1131–1188)  
D<sub>G</sub>2: The maiden recounts the tale of the cemetery (ll. 1189–1233)  
D<sub>G</sub>3: Gauvain rears himself (ll. 1234–1264) |
| Gauvain converses with the squire  
B<sub>G</sub> = S ∪ O<sub>L</sub> | B<sub>G</sub>1: Gauvain greets the squire (ll. 769–789)  
B<sub>G</sub>2: The squire recounts the cemetery’s tale (ll. 790–820)  
B<sub>G</sub>3: Gauvain decides to stay at the cemetery (ll. 821–904) | Gauvain battles the demon  
E<sub>G</sub> = S ∩ O<sub>L</sub> | E<sub>G</sub>1: The demon arrives in the chapel (ll. 1265–1280)  
E<sub>G</sub>2: Gauvain battles with the demon (ll. 1281–1403)  
E<sub>G</sub>3: Gauvain recovers from the battle (ll. 1404–1424) |
| The squire recounts Gauvain’s tale at the castle  
C<sub>G</sub> = S ∪ O<sub>L</sub> | C<sub>G</sub>1: The squire returns to the castle (ll. 905–940)  
C<sub>G</sub>2: The squire recounts Gauvain’s tale (ll. 941–1011)  
C<sub>G</sub>3: The cupbearer is protected from Escanor (ll. 1012–1130) | Gauvain recounts the tale at the castle  
F<sub>G</sub> = S ∩ O<sub>L</sub> | F<sub>G</sub>1: The castle’s inhabitants return to the cemetery (ll. 1425–1433)  
F<sub>G</sub>2: The story of the cemetery is recounted far and wide (ll. 1434–1442)  
F<sub>G</sub>3: The cemetery loses its name (ll. 1443–1444) |

In this representation, the parallel structure of B<sub>G</sub> to D<sub>G</sub> and C<sub>G</sub> to E<sub>G</sub> gives the story a four-part structure where the inner episode divides and repeats much like the duplication that takes place between the actantial roles of Gauvain and the squire: A<sub>G</sub>→B<sub>G</sub>→C<sub>G</sub>→

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37 The shaded areas represent the fantastic.
(Dₐ→Eₐ)→Fₐ. From this perspective, the adventure takes on a similar structure to that of the two lais examined in Chapter 5 and Amadas et Ydoine, where Bₐ and Cₐ combine into one sequence and Dₐ and Eₐ into a second, giving the structure four distinct parts. The two pairs of units comprise a repeating pattern of action and the narration of that action to the inhabitants at the castle.

6.2.2. Fantastic Aspects in L’Atre périlleux

The fantastic mode operates on several levels in L’Atre périlleux. At its most apparent surface level, the use of demonic power reveals the presence of /otherness/ as a fearful and dark influence within the adventure. Extended life for the lady is analogous to a suspension of time which also points to the fantastic mode as an active force within the cemetery. The cemetery, where the conflict between good and evil is staged, embodies fantastic space. However, there is a deeper level at work as well in this adventure. The secondary level of the fantastic mode reveals itself in the forms of narration that take place about the cemetery. Superstition and fear have become codified into the everyday patterns of life for the townspeople. They avoid traveling at night, so as not to be locked out of the city. Tales are told about how knights who seek lodging in the cemetery are found dead in the morning.

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38 See Section 2.6.3 for a further discussion of cemeteries as fantastic space.

39 The textual interpretation given for the closed gates is because of fear surrounding the cemetery (ll. 791–820).
6.2.2.1. /Otherness/

L'Atre périlleux contains several overt examples of /otherness/, primarily built upon the presence of a demon in what should be sacred space. A secondary story is told when the maiden is freed from the tomb in $D_G$, that reveals the historic nature of this fantastic adventure through the generational influence of /otherness/. /Otherness/ is present in the deceptive aura that surrounds the cemetery. The first narrative unit ($A_G$) also serves to reveal the dual nature of the cemetery: it is sacred ground ruled by the demon. This paradox is an unnatural arrangement that Gauvain eventually resolves.

Historically, /otherness/ originates in the maiden’s family through the arrival of a stepmother, who is a sorceress (ll. 1194–1199). The stepmother’s use of witchcraft and sorcery (ll. 1194) causes the maiden to go mad. The maiden’s tale, similar in content to the fairy tales such as Sleeping Beauty, contains several indications of /otherness/. The lady is for all intents and purposes “dead” to the real world and she has become the whore of the demon (ll. 1268). The veiled implication of sexual perversion underlying the main tale adds an additional dimension of horror.

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40 The role of deception is discussed in section 2.1 and shown in Figure 2.1.

41 Dubost, Aspects fantastiques..., 416.

42 Francis Dubost maintains that Gauvain, as the liberator, ends the domination of the maiden through restoration of a correct view of love. “L’amour sous séquestre mime étrangement...
The demon first appears to the maiden in the form of a man—"Un diable en sanlance d'ome" (ll. 1202). His deceptively normal appearance and logical speech cause her to immediately agree to whatever he wants. In payment for having cured the maiden, the demon sexually enslaves her (ll. 1200–1215). The secrecy and deception of the exchange is mildly Faustian in flavor, as she exchanges her moral purity for mental health. The maiden believes she will be cured of her madness, but does not consider the consequences of the exchange with the demon. Entombment without aging causes time to be suspended for the lady.43 She receives everything she wants and yet would rather be dead than continue in her state of enslavement. /Otherness/ is manifested in her lack of physical aging as well as the abundance of material possessions available to her. Her unnatural existence is plainly due to the demon's powers over her and the cemetery.

6.2.2.2. Fantastic Space

Different from the cemetery in Amadas et Ydoine, where the cemetery becomes fantastic space for one night only, the Atre périlleux is the site of a long-standing conflict between good and evil. The story does not specifically indicate how long the demon has controlled the cemetery, other than to say that the tradition goes back over 100 years. The narrator indicates

l'enfermement du tombeau, comme si l'on ne pouvait aimer véritablement l'autre qu'en le tenant pour mort." ibid., 417.

43 As discussed Chapter 2, one of the effects of lingering in fantastic space is the suspension or distortion of time.
to the reader that this will be a dangerous night for Gauvain, as the cemetery is reputed to be the most dangerous place in the area. The cemetery is designated as fantastic space by a three-fold marking: mystery, death and deception, all of which result from the sexual domination of a mortal by inhuman power. Unlike the situation in *Amadas et Ydoine*, where the demon who attempted to abduct the heroine, there is in the *Atre périlleux* no movement between worlds for either Gauvain or the demon who inhabits the cemetery (Figure 6.3):

**Figure 6.3—Spatial model for the fantastic in *L'Atre périlleux***

Demonic control of sacred space surfaces in another tale from the 13th century—*Cristal et Clarie*. Cristal arrives one day at a locked chapel. When he bends to drink at a nearby spring in the shade of a tree, he hears the voice of Lynarde warning him not to drink. Like the maiden in *L'Atre périlleux*, Lynarde is the captive of a demon (who supplies her every need) and is also the victim of feminine sorcery. The location is deceptively presented as a type of *locus amoenus*, but contains a triple danger. Cristal defeats the *luiton* and in the process cuts off its hand. Cristal also defeats a demon in the tree and a monster in the chapel guarding a treasure. The use of the tree and the spring in conjunction with a chapel ties the imagery of
sacred space to the tradition presented by Gallais who studied the relationship of *fées* to water sources and trees.\(^{44}\)

The cemetery as fantastic space is a locale of conflict and deception. The ruse of death when in fact the lady in question is alive is one type of deception. The pleasant and peaceful atmosphere also deceptively lures the hero into a sense of safety. Captivity and enslavement mark the *Atre périlleux* as a dangerous location that perverts the normal order of life. Knights who enter the chapel at night meet their death at the hand of a demon. Like the demon in *Cristal et Clarie*, the only way to liberate the cemetery and return it to a place of peace and rest, is to remove the hand by cutting it off, in essence to “unhand” the demon.

6.2.2.3. **Narrative Voice**

Hearsay and generational tales are the primary forms of narration about the cemetery. The tale has been passed down through the generations for the last 100 years, indicating a narrative tradition that has been integrated into the culture of the nearby castle. The squire states, “Ne tenés pas mon dit a fable,” (l. 795), as if to warn Gauvain that this is not mere chatter, yet fables and *contes* come from the same source as the squire’s tale—oral tradition. The squire’s need to preface the story with such a caution indicates the nature of what he is about to say may sound suspiciously like old wife’s tales. Hearsay is revealed in the squire’s

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\(^{44}\) See Pierre Gallais, *La fée* ...
uncertainty about details of the demonic presence: “U dex u trois, je ne sai quans.” (l. 797). In reality there is only one demon present.

There are two types of narration active within the story. Direct narrative commentary reveals the opinions and fears of the author. Indirect narration occurs when the cemetery’s story is told as a second-hand account. Second-hand narration occurs in analeptic and proleptic forms. The squire engages in analepsis by giving a retrospective account of the cemetery’s reputation. The entombed lady uses analepsis and prolepsis by recounting both her past and future to Gauvain. Both forms of narration—direct and indirect—reveal the fantastic mode by the evocation of fear associated with death, mystery and the cemetery. For example, the narrator reveals that Gauvain is walking into a dangerous adventure, alerting readers to be more attentive to the coming events. The fantastic mode is evident here, as the narrator instills a sense of fear in the reader by foreshadowing the imminent danger.

“Mais s’onques li fu nul mestier
D’estre prox, or l’en ert gregnor
Onques mais de si grant paour
Jor de sa vie n’escapa.” (ll. 754–757)

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The story of the cemetery is retold three times. Donald Maddox refers to this type of narration as "reflexive discourse," where each subsequent retelling of an adventure "reveals heretofore unknown information" concerning the life and experiences of the characters. In the cemetery adventure, it is the lady’s imprisonment that is the subject of repeated narration. Additionally, the narrative structure of the story supports the use of reflexive discourse in the way segments $B_G$ and $C_G$ are mirrored or repeated in segments $D_G$ and $E_G$. The narrative use of reflexive discourse builds the tension and sense of fear to a breaking point. The fear of the unknown is vocalized by the townspeople, who are keeping vigil for Gauvain (ll. 1123–1130). Each narration adds to the anguish and makes the situation increasingly uncomfortable for those concerned. The final narration, by Gauvain, breaks the fear and returns life to normal for the townspeople, as well as for the lady and squire.

6.2.2.4. Structure and Fantastic in L’Atre périlleux

In the cemetery adventure, four of the six narrative units take place in the cemetery. Only $C_G$ and $F_G$ are located in the castle and its environs, where narration about the demon’s

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46 Repeated discourse about a supernatural event is also a component of *Le Conte du graal*. The Grail Mysteries were discussed three times in the narrative by different actants. However, in Perceval’s case the explanations all occurred after the actual event. In Gauvain’s situation, he hears two of the narratives before his encounter with the supernatural, and the third narrative is told by himself.

activity dominates the unit. The presence of the demon at the cemetery, the attitude of the castle's inhabitants, and the history of the maiden's stepmother enforces an interpretation of the cemetery adventure as fantastic. In the final unit, $F_G$, Gauvain explains the adventure to the crowd and by doing so, causes the ending of the adventure to shift to the étrange, as the lady's history is incorporated into social record of the cemetery. The cemetery adventure in *L'Atre périlleux* represents an autonomous adventure in the midst of another adventure. The main plot forms a type of frame around the cemetery adventure, and yet that adventure itself remains curiously separate from Gauvain's other exploits.48

The use of the fantastic mode also sets apart the cemetery adventure by tainting it with a pervasive sense of domination and evil. The fantastic mode becomes evident in the various types of narration surrounding the topic of demonic possession. Structurally, the fantastic is found in units $A_G$ and $B_G$ where Gauvain receives incomplete or deceptive information about the cemetery. In units $D_G$ and $E_G$, the fantastic mode is intensified by the arrival of the supernatural in the form of a demon. By the end of the tale, Gauvain has overcome the supernatural, and the fantastic nature of the cemetery disappears when the demon is defeated and the cemetery is proclaimed to be free.

In this examination of the two short cemetery episodes, the basic structure of each narration appears at first to be a simple and straight-forward sequence of events. Upon further investigation, the cemetery episodes reveal a structural complexity giving the tales a sophisticated sense of balance. In *Amadas et Ydoine*, the fantastic events near the end of the narrative serve to prepare the hero to take a permanent place in society. In *L'Atre périlleux*, the fantastic occurs near the beginning of the romance and sets the tone for subsequent episodes. The cemetery adventures in both stories establish the respective heroes as the defenders of social order: Amadas rescues Ydoine and becomes the Count of Burgundy, Gauvain regains his reputation as “li bons chevalier.”

These two episodes have one basic aspect in common, namely that both heroes undertake an adventure for the welfare of their respective societies, and in doing so benefit personally. Amadas clearly benefits by rising in his society to a higher rank. He personally gains a wife, wealth and social acclaim. But his society is no better or worse than it was when Ydoine’s father ruled in Burgundy. In Gauvain’s case, he works on behalf of no one in particular, yet his actions profit individual bachelors by securing them a place in society through marriage. Society benefits by virtue of the marriages that result from the heroic actions of Amadas and Gauvain.

Another aspect that the two have in common is the presence of an otherworldly being who invades the real world and dominates a mortal woman for sexual reasons. The demonization of characters from the otherworld is documented as an aspect of 13th-century literature by...
Jeannine Horowitz. She states that the demonization of people, especially women, from the otherworld is indicative of an unease with the integration of Arthurian sources into a continental literary tradition that is heavily christianized.

"A l'évidence, les motifs celtiques païens ou paganisants, qui forment la trame de l'univers arthurien, ne s'intègrent pas immédiatement dans une littérature déjà très policée et foncièrement chrétienne sans qu'il se produise en chemin des pertes de sens, voire des contresens et des ajustements indispensables au public destinataire. C'est dans le rapport sexualité/christianisme que cette constatation se voit vérifiée avec le plus d'acuité."  

This trend is already in evidence in the two fantastic tales analyzed above, and present as well in the briefly mentioned passage from Cristal et Clarie. In Amadas et Ydoine, the dark knight is able to acknowledge Diu, but Ydoine declares him to be a demon. In L'Atre périlleux, the luiton is able to take the shape of a man, but is truly demonic in nature. Finally, the otherworldly character is unequivocally recognized as a demon from the start in the adventure from Cristal et Clarie. The evolution of the otherworld opponent from human form to demonic perversion is briefly but clearly evident in the cemetery adventures.

By the 13th century, the fantastic begins to invade sacred spaces. The otherworld no longer is parallel to the real world. Rather, the otherworld has been redefined to be a subversive force that must be controlled and brought under the dominance of the real world. Chapels,

49 Jeannine Horowitz, "La diabolisation de la sexualité dans la littérature du Graal, au XIIIe siècle, le cas de la Queste del Graal" Arthurian Romance and Gender...,. 238.
cemeteries, and churches are no longer immune from the influences of the fantastic mode, rather their very nature (being Christian, hallowed ground) serves to heighten the contrasting effects of the fantastic within everyday life. The supernatural appears within that space from which it should by all rights and rules be barred. In these two episodes, there is no longer any indication of the hero from the real world traveling to the otherworld. Thus the direction of movement and the order of events shift so that the otherworld becomes an insurgent force invading the normal order of things, a force that must be repulsed and banished. The otherworld of the 13th century is defined in terms of negativity and quantified fear. While each of the cemetery adventures examined above does contain the traditional “happy end,” in neither case is the hero able to confront the supernatural and integrate it into a concept of reality. Instead, the supernatural is rejected and banished from the land. It has been contained and closed off.

In these 13th-century texts, the fantastic mode is transformed into a reflection of the battle between good and evil. The otherworld is less apparent as a separate world with its own rules and is more or less relegated to the role of counterpoise in relation to the role of mimesis. The fantastic in the 13th century, therefore, much more closely resembles its modern counterpart. Yet it is not the same as a fantastic story from the 19th century. In the 19th-century fantastic genre, the supernatural is characterized by a sense of /otherness/ that is rooted in an inexplicable phenomenon, scientific or otherwise. The 13th century experiences the fantastic as a mode that creates an atmosphere of fear and confusion, but there is no attempt to explain away the supernatural. Rather the supernatural becomes an adjunct part of the real world.
order by being codified into the accepted world view. The locus of the fantastic mode moves from the natural space of forests and water sources into the civilized space of churches and cemeteries. As has been found in this brief examination of two literary cemeteries, during the night the peace and tranquillity are shattered by the violation of tombs, the return of the (presumed) dead, and the activity of demons. These themes create an atmosphere of /otherness/ and place the adventures in a distant past, where the supernatural was more prevalent and accepted as a daily force within peoples’ lives. The perspective created by the inclusion of a fantastic episode in the midst of a traditional mimetic romance effectively alters the structural pattern so that the adventure is not seen in terms of a direction towards the otherworld by the hero. Instead, the adventure is couched in terms of an appearance by the supernatural being in the real world. The presence of the otherworld is implied, but not truly substantiated, by the supernatural characters.

Upon an initial appraisal, the structure of the two cemetery episodes follows the modern model for the fantastic, where the supernatural invades the real world, causing disorder and unexpected results. Each of the cemetery adventures interrupts a normally mimetic scenario. Therefore, the first narrative unit of the cemetery stories is fantastic, because the supernatural invades the real world, causing a redirection in the narrative program. (In the four examples from the 12th century, the first narrative unit is always mimetic.) Upon further reflection, this shift in the pattern established in Figure 2.5 is accounted for by the surrounding mimetic tale, which provides the real-world context from which to evaluate the supernatural intrusion. If the apparently missing initial unit is attributed to the mechanics of including a fantastic episode
Amadas et Ydoine and L'Atre périlleux

in a mimetic romance (which acts as a frame to the fantastic adventure) then the structural model of Figure 2.5 is validated. The cemetery adventures in both Amadas et Ydoine and L'Atre périlleux contain a majority of fantastic units and conclude with an étrange interpretation of the supernatural. This étrange ending suspends the fantastic mode and the main narrative program resurfaces, showing that for these two texts, the fantastic mode constitutes an elusive and transitory state.
Conclusions

This dissertation has concentrated on six texts from French romance fiction of the 12th and 13th centuries. I use the term romance fiction to include both longer romances and shorter lais which frequently use the same source materials and are intended for the same audience. Both types of narratives are clearly perceived by their audience as fiction uninhibited by certain principles of reality and yet relate in some fashion to the experiences of their medieval public. What I have offered in the preceding chapters by no means represents an exhaustive or systematic survey of the corpus of French romance, but is rather a limited sample of works that represent some of the most significant examples of romance writing in the period. Chapters 3–6 present an analysis of the structure and fantastic aspects of the six texts, in order to show the depth and degree to which the two elements are connected. To attempt a single characterization of the main critical issues that give rise to this study would be to reduce the fantastic to a formulaic device, whereas I believe that the fantastic mode exercises a far more subtle and complex influence upon the narratives. However, there are a few common traits that may be pointed to as characteristic of the fantastic. The fantastic requires the presence of the supernatural in the form of a character who acts as either the object or the opponent in relation to the hero. Also, it is necessary to have a sense of /otherness/ (or “alterity” as Jauss defines it) when confronted by the supernatural. In other words, it is not enough for the supernatural to be present, it also must be in some way disturbing or, in some extreme scenarios, a chaotic force. The ending of the narrative is ambiguous or non-existent, causing
the structure to be open, which increases the sense of chaos. By refusing to provide an easy
resolution, in which all the disjunctions are resolved, the structure invites interpretation and
remains dynamic to a variety of audiences, both modern and medieval.

This study of the fantastic has proven to be fruitful on a number of points. First I have
attempted to define the fantastic as it is currently viewed in critical theory—the fantastic is
based on the presence of the otherworld which provokes a certain type of reaction—most
notably uncertainty, fear and hesitation. Without the otherworld the fantastic can not be said
to exist. The otherworld is characterized by the quality of /otherness/ when compared to the
real world. /Otherness/ is quantified through a one-to-many relationship between reality and
the supernatural. /Otherness/ appears in many forms and is most easily identified by its
properties and outcomes. The symptomatic use of fear and hesitation points to the source of
the fantastic mode as a heightening of /otherness/ within the narrative. /Otherness/ increases
the tension and conflict within the narrative through deception and secrecy.

Further, the fantastic requires a certain type of environment in which to flourish. This
fertile environment, where a supernatural otherworld overlaps with the real world, allows one
to create a model for the relationship between the two worlds. In the six texts, the space
created by the mixture of real and supernatural elements is typified by a forest containing a
spring, river, or cemetery. Within fantastic space, the hero is isolated from society and open to
the arrival of the supernatural. Fantastic space is not neutral or safe, illustrated in the lai of
Guingamor, where one bite of food condemns him to spend eternity as a 300-year old man.
Fantastic space contains the conflict but doesn’t prevent that conflict from spilling over into
the real world. Graelent’s lover and the servant exemplify the protrusion of the otherworld
into the knight’s society.

One of the most notable aspects of the fantastic mode is its quality of openness. The
process by which the fantastic is revealed can be identified through the motifs used to
produce fear, hesitation, and uncertainty. However, what suffices to produce openness and
ambiguity in a text from one period in literature may not work for audiences from other times.
As culture changes so do the themes associated with the fantastic. There are different ways to
produce a sensation of /otherness/, and these can be readily identified and tied to various
literary periods (most notably in the critical works focused on the fantastic in 19th-century
works). However the underlying structure of openness is a constant that ties the various
manifestations together to create the fantastic mode as a structuring principle within diverse
literary periods.

The fantastic mode and the narrative program

The examination of the internal structures of these six medieval narratives has shown that,
whether on a simple or complex level, the fantastic mode is employed as a stratagem to
advance and control the direction of narration. In each story, the use of a supernatural event
energizes and propels the hero into an adventure. Indecision and ambiguity interrupt the flow
of the narrative by breaking the action and introducing confusion into the narrative program.
At each juncture in the story where a decision must be made, the hero is forced by an
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interruption in the action to stop and examine the supernatural element. An advancement or
delay in the narrative program is accompanied by the need to choose between reality and the
supernatural.

The use of the fantastic mode controls the progress of narration in *Le Conte du graal*,
where the ability of various characters to either speak or remain silent is key to the success of
the narrative program. Hesitation in this example does not equate with a controlled use of
language, but rather an inability to decide when and how to use language. Perceval debates
with himself about whether or not to speak. He does not even approach the question of how
to speak, which would be a type of controlled language usage. Rather he faces a more basic
question of the appropriate time to speak—now while at dinner, or in the morning? The lack
of a decision prolongs the fantastic mode, whereas a decision to become a participant in the
Grail mysteries would have resulted in a *merveilleux* adventure, initiating Perceval into rites of
the Grail castle. Language thus becomes the dominant factor in the ability of the hero to
succeed. Perceval speaks when he should remain silent and vice versa. Arthur gets caught in a
state of indecision because he fails to speak in defense of Perceval when the young knight first
arrives at his court. For these two characters, the correct usage of speech directly affects their
ability to be successful in their quests.
Lancelot’s journey toward Gorre (unit BL)\(^1\) contains the greatest concentration of /otherness/ within Le Chevalier de la charrette. Once the knight reaches Gorre, much of the supernatural is no longer employed by Chrétien as a way to facilitate Lancelot’s progress. Also, three of the four examples of hesitation (at the cart, the spring, and the cemetery) occur in unit BL. A fourth example of hesitation occurs in the tower, where Lancelot laments his imprisonment but does nothing to try and escape. In both narrative units, the fantastic mode is used to create a transitory state for the hero, as represented by his nameless state in BL, and his questioning, lamenting monologue in DL, where he first loses his reputation and then reestablishes it only to be betrayed. Both units take place within an ambiguous space that forms the route between Logres and Gorre. Communication or the lack thereof in the Charrette is used to control information from the various groups of spectators with regard to Lancelot’s identity, increasing the mysterious nature of his quest. The narrative program is structured around the freeing of the queen and prisoners (which occurs in unit CL) and the defeat of Meleagant (which occurs in unit EL). The narrative program is successfully completed in the third and fifth narrative units only because Lancelot has been able to progress through fantastic space in the second and fourth units.

Guingamor is filled with numerous supernatural elements that create /otherness/ within the lai, found in both overt references to the fearful nature of his quest and more subtle indicators

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\(^1\) See Appendix B for a summary of the narrative structures for each text.
such as the use of spatial ambiguity during the hunt scene. Guingamor’s refusal to acknowledge the *merveilleux* nature of his adventures reveals the fantastic mode. He consistently rejects any counsel or interpretation of his experiences as supernatural. His meeting with the charcoal burner in the woods significantly changes his attitude. Speech is used to predict the inevitable. Guingamor fails in his quest because he fails to hear the truth. He is self-deceiving and deceived by the *fée*. The function of communication in *Guingamor* is to actualize /otherness/ through the information conveyed by those who act as narrative voices in the tale. The young knight does not make a decision for or against the otherworld until the very end of the story, and then only because he is forced to by circumstances. One knows, as discovered through the narrator’s commentary, that Guingamor is destined to fail in his goal of returning to his own society. The quest to hunt the white boar, while ultimately incomplete, is technically achieved through the supernatural intervention of the *fée*. Guingamor’s second goal of returning to the otherworld to live with the *fée* is accomplished again through the intervention of the supernatural, and is witnessed by the charcoal burner. The *fée* uses deceitful tactics to control Guingamor and reach her own goals. In both scenarios, the inclusion of /otherness/ creates a sense of the supernatural associated with the young knight’s adventure. The narrative program is alternately subverted and achieved through the use of the fantastic mode, where supernatural forces interfere with the knight’s quest.

*Graelent,* another *lai* that employs the fantastic mode to create ambiguity and bring about a reversal of fortunes, also focuses on the love relationship between a mortal knight and an unnamed *fée*. In direct contrast with *Guingamor*, the tale of *Graelent* is narrated from the
perspective of the real world. There is an implied journey to the otherworld at the end of the intrigue; however, the events as narrated all take place in the real world or in fantastic space. The *fée* represents the primary source of *otherness* in the tale, as she moves with ease between her realm and the real world. *Otherness* takes the form of wealth which results in an inexplicable restoration of Graelent’s social position. There does not seem to be any conscious quest by Graelent around which a narrative program is formed. When he travels in the forest it is a way of escaping from the real world not a pursuit of an otherworldly adventure (representing the exact opposite motivation from that found in *Guingamor*). Rather, the narrative program arises out of the actions of the *fée* who creates an untenable situation for Graelent—the knight can be her lover but he must keep silent about it. Speech in *Graelent* functions in the same manner but to the exact opposite effect as it had in *Le Conte du graal*. The tenuous equilibrium Graelent maintains between his duties to the king and to the *fée* is maintained through silence, which is portrayed as a desirable state of secrecy. Silence in the *Graal* text is criticized because it prolongs the undesirable form of existence for the court of the Fisher King. In *Graelent*, the fantastic is manifested in the way in which communication about the relationship is controlled. Secrecy and deception create a subtext to the surface level events which are narrated. When the secret is uncovered through unauthorized communication, the supernatural withdraws from the real world it had previously sought to influence. Therefore the success or failure of the narrative program is directly determined by the presence of the supernatural within the context of the real world.
Conclusions

In the cemetery episode from *Amadas et Ydoine*, the intrusion of a supernatural knight results in a battle for the right to Ydoine. While this adventure is seemingly detached from the main narrative program, when judged on its own merits the cemetery episode exhibits many fantastic aspects common to the other texts examined. The disturbing nature of the events results from the supernatural as a violation of the real world. The primary source of *otherness* in the tale is the dark knight, whom Ydoine labels a demon. While Amadas is victorious over the challenger, his success in this adventure never ensures that he will be permanently united with Ydoine in marriage and thereby achieve social status. The inclusion of a fantastic episode in this text does not directly affect the outcome of the main story. The reason behind the cemetery episode is open to debate. The supernatural is never explained or commented on by the narrator. Amadas is the only one who proffers a possible explanation, stating that the confrontation of the supernatural represents the ultimate obstacle to the couple's happiness. This statement by the hero implies that the fantastic episode is the penultimate challenge in a long list of trials. Therefore, in this adventure, the fantastic mode is employed to produce the extreme limits of danger in a continuum of trials and challenges running from the realistic to the supernatural.

The cemetery episode in *L'Atre périlleux* represents an example of *otherness* that is disassociated from the otherworld altogether. Nonetheless, the otherworld is present in the events leading up to the unnatural arrangement between a demon and a mortal maiden. The stepmother who initially caused the maiden to lose her senses is linked to the negative aesthetics of deception associated with otherworldly women by virtue of being described as a
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sorceress. /Otherness/ is apparent in numerous aspects of the maiden’s tale. She is the object of a fantastic adventure as revealed through the types of stories told about the cemetery. There is a century-long tradition that establishes the cemetery as a place of fear and death rather than a peaceful sacred space. The demon kills any knight who stays in the cemetery overnight. The narrative program is the liberation of the lady, and yet Gauvain does not actively seek out the adventure. Instead he stumbles upon it due to the circumstances of being denied lodging at the castle for the night. The narrative program is gradually revealed through the narratives of the squire and the maiden herself. Gauvain accomplishes his goal without much difficulty. The fantastic cemetery, presented as a historic artifact in the tale as well as an on-going state of chaos, must be brought back into alignment with the real world’s order through reestablishing the correct order. The defeat of the demon represents the final resolution of a 100-year tradition of fear. Gauvain defeats the demon, who had heretofore embodied /otherness/ and the evil that caused the cemetery to be perilous, and thereby puts an end to the fantastic adventure experienced by the maiden.

My analysis of the six texts demonstrates how complex their respective narrative programs are when viewed in light of the fantastic mode as an influential force. These narratives are not easily systematized, and yet common features emerge in spite of their varied structures and content. The multidimensional continuum of meaning within the controlled form of the romance narrative illustrates how the fantastic mode creates mixed messages and false signals that serve to both distance and involve the public by virtue of creating a sense of /otherness/ with regard to the supernatural. The implied reader experiences a strange attraction to the
unknown that invites him to resolve the mystery himself. With the fantastic mode, the supernatural becomes a negative influence that creates fear, chaos and miscommunication, whereas with the *merveilleux* the supernatural is portrayed as a positive force to aid the hero. The fantastic complicates the narrative program, sometimes subverting the hero’s efforts and at other times supporting the hero’s need for secrecy, but always deepening the conflict rather than resolving it.

The use of the fantastic mode provides a means for heightening tension and conflict between the two worlds. Reality and the supernatural are never portrayed as being compatible, as often occurs in fairy tales. The negative aesthetics of the fantastic mode are used to question the established order, to open it up for a closer examination of the dichotomy between reality and fictional imagination. When that which is known is portrayed as “other” it becomes suspect and therefore may more easily be examined in the light of the improbable instead of only being confined to the humanly possible. Through the variety of questions generated by the fantastic mode, the medieval public was able to explore the nature of the human world, the possibilities and accomplishments of the human experience as well as the limits thereof. The modern public too can still benefit by participating in such a vigorous interrogation of the past through similar literary explorations.
Structure and the fantastic

In the introduction I asked the question "To what degree does the structure of a text support a fantastic interpretation of the narrative?" making an examination of the underlying structures of narratives necessary. I have examined the general, overall structure of two romances, two lais and two episodes from larger romance works. There emerges a clear pattern used by the various authors in writing about the adventures of their hero. The use of supernatural events and the presence of fantastic space in the development of the initial scenes provide the impetus and inspiration for the resulting actions and subsequent narrative units. Each time a character is confronted by a supernatural event, the choices of that character lead him into the next stage of narration, either to ultimate success or failure. When the hero accepts the supernatural, it results in a merveilleux adventure. He obtains the object of his quest and thus becomes a successful individual. When the hero rejects the supernatural, he fails to accomplish his goal of conjunction with the object he seeks. Thus the acceptance or rejection of the fantastic event directly influences the outcome of the narrative program. The fantastic mode ends when a particular interpretation of the supernatural is decided upon, that decision being in favor of or against the /otherness/ inherent in the supernatural. That decision can be transmitted by a number of possible agents—via the text by the hero, actants, or even extra-textually by the reader. Once a decision is made, the openness of the structure is decreased by the provisional perceptions of the agent.

The safeguarding of our assumptions against all incoherence and ambiguity is one of the basic conditions of our existence within reality. The fantastic mode violates assumptions, destabilizing reality in the process. It creates a type of informative disorder, where the lack of
a response to /otherness/ creates openness and ambiguity within the narrative. While the structural analysis provides an objective quantitative measure of openness, the qualitative value of openness is present in the effects of the fantastic mode upon the content and message inherent within the plot of each story. Satisfactory closure, based on the Aristotelian standard of completeness, is revealed when there is a balance to the structure as discerned through repeating patterns and formalized through the application of Greimassian methodology. On an aesthetic level, the structural and thematic openness of the fantastic provide a communicative value that leads us from the basic message within the text to the question of how the reader relates to the message. The meaning within the message is derived from the particular situation of its reception. The message and its form are intrinsically linked and tend to reinforce each other in a symbiotic relationship. In other words, structural openness and thematic ambiguity play upon each other to reveal the fantastic mode.

The structure of *Le Conte du graal* contains five distinct narrative units that concern Perceval as the hero. The definitive scene for Perceval is his night spent at the Grail Castle, where he fails to ask the necessary questions. The Grail Castle adventure is located at the midpoint in narrative unit $C_P$. Perceval’s reactions in $C_P$ places the Grail adventure in the *étrange* as outlined in scenario 1 of Figure 2.5. The open-ended nature of Perceval’s Grail quest is

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2 As noted in Chapter 3, the Gauvain portion of this romance, containing only three narrative units, is too incomplete to allow the creation of a complete narrative program that would reveal a comprehensive view of Chrétien’s intended plan.
further complicated by the lack of any direct resolution to the disjunction. Therefore structural openness is created by a lack of questioning on the part of the hero, but in itself also creates a deeper level of questions for its contemporary public as well as the modern reader. Questions such as where the Grail Castle is located are key to the resolution of Perceval’s quest. I postulate that the Grail Castle is to be found in fantastic space, a locale that encourages the interrogation of the real world by the hero by virtue of challenging the real world’s expectations and assumptions about the human condition. The lack of a definitive ending to Perceval’s adventure invites readers to question the text as well and thereby supply their own potential closure to the text based on the types of questions they might ask. There is another unresolved disjunction in Perceval’s adventure, namely his promise to return to Biaurepaire and Blancheflor. This disjunction receives no further narrative treatment and stands as Perceval’s remaining obligation to the real world. Perhaps, if Chrétien had finished the romance, both disjunctions would have found their resolution in one another. This narrative structure conforms to scenario 2 of Figure 2.5. Chrétien’s successors who have continued Perceval’s story have shown this to be an appropriate reaction to the disjunctions within the Graal romance. The Grail is a mysterious object eternally sought by those readers who feel a need for unity and a type of closure that Chrétien’s text does not provide.

Lancelot’s adventures in Gorre also contain five distinct narrative units, albeit he is not present in the first unit. The first instance of /otherness/ in the narrative is associated with Meleagant’s arrival in Logres, where the supernatural is invasive and threatening. The evil knight proclaims an adventure that is clearly supernatural and serves to establish the narrative
program for this romance. The primary source of /otherness/ and the use of fantastic space occur in units $B_L$ and $D_L$. In unit $B_L$, there are numerous questions asked about Lancelot: who is he, why is he in the cart, where is he going? However, the Knight of the Cart gives no answers nor does he attempt to justify his actions to those who see him. The use of magical devices, deliberate misinformation and secrecy occur in both the second and fourth narrative units. The third narrative unit $C_L$, which takes place in Gorre, is curiously lacking in any signs of the supernatural, even though the characterization of Gorre is that it is the land of the dead. The only supernatural aspects associated with Gorre are the two bridges that must be crossed. The final narrative unit $E_L$ contains the resolution of all of the disjunctions that were announced by Meleagant in his initial challenge. The structure of the Charrette contains evidence of the fantastic mode, but is not open-ended as was the Graal. Because Lancelot confronts the supernatural and defeats it in the person of Meleagant, the outcome of the narrative program places the Charrette in scenario 3 of Figure 2.5, the merveilleux. Lancelot’s adventures are thoroughly explained and accounted for in $E_L$, causing the ending technically to be structurally closed.

The structure of Graelent contains four narrative units with a bipartite, parallel structure. The second and fourth units (and the first episode of the third) are fantastic in nature. The final episode in unit $D_G$ implies a merveilleux ending for the tale. The supernatural invades the real world in the form of the fée and her servants, who by their presence create fantastic space and introduce conflict into society. Autoreferential in nature, the supernatural in Graelent is taken at face value by the court. The supernatural is never explained rationally. There is no
attempt to accept or integrate it into the real world, and the fée rejects the real world as inadequate. The entire adventure takes place within the real world and fantastic space. As Graelent and the fée reach the distant shore of the river, the reader is given a brief assurance that everything has worked out well in the end. The need for a clean closure to the narrative causes the structure to provide a merveilleux ending (scenario 3 of Figure 2.5) at the last possible moment. Up until that point, the lai’s structure is an alternating sequence of étrange and fantastic episodes.

Guingamor also contains four narrative units with an alternating pattern of fantastic episodes in the second and fourth units. Unlike Graelent, Guingamor actually does enter the otherworld in unit C_G. The forest as fantastic space represents a transitional locale for the knight as he moves from the real world to the otherworld and then fails to reverse his voyage. As with Graelent, the ending of the lai contains a brief resolution to one of the disjunctions, that between the fée and Guingamor. However the quest for the white boar remains incomplete. The ending to Guingamor is hardly a happy one and may be more accurately characterized as disturbing and negative. The knight is now an aged man due to his disobedience. He must be carried back to the otherworld by maidens. The ending for the charcoal burner’s experience is fantastic, as he attests to the impossible in the court of the current rulers. For Guingamor, the ultimate ending is merveilleux and follows scenario 3 of Figure 2.5, because he must remain in the otherworld. The structure is open-ended due to the ambiguity and lack of resolution for the narrative program.
Amadas et Ydoine's cemetery scene has four narrative units. The fantastic is found in the first and third units, when the dark knight violates the real world and attempts to abduct Ydoine. The supernatural is disturbing, and yet is never critically examined by any of the characters, who just continue to accept whatever happens. The alternating pattern of fantastic and étrange units provides a good comparison of the effects of the fantastic on the real world. The fantastic in unit A produces deception and death in unit B. The victory over the supernatural in unit C produces rejoicing in unit D. The supernatural does not provoke questions in the same manner as it had in the four previous texts. Communication in this adventure is used to deceive Amadas, but it is not a stimulus to self-examination. Amadas accepts the messages he receives from Ydoine and from the dark knight who reveals the means by which to revive Ydoine. The structure is centered around a rejection of the inconceivable by Amadas. While he explicitly receives messages, he rejects their implications and acts on his emotions instead of on the information (false or otherwise). Until the final episode when Ydoine wakes up, Amadas does not even consider the implications of his adventure. Structurally, the cemetery adventure follows scenario 1 in Figure 2.5 and is étrange in that all of the disjunctions are resolved.

In the cemetery adventure for L'Atre périlleux, the narrative is somewhat more complex on a structural level, containing six narrative units. The past informs the present by actualizing the supernatural of a somewhat mythic past event (demon possession to escape the effects of sorcery) within the context of a standard romance adventure. The cemetery adventure remains disconnected from the rest of the romance and yet gives the narrative its identity. Through
their interchanging roles of hero and narrator, Gauvain and the squire complicate an otherwise mimetic tale of captivity and possession. By becoming involved in what to that point had been a narrative about the history of the cemetery, Gauvain unites the supernatural past with the reality of the contemporary cemetery in a bid to end the fantastic domination of both the maiden and a sacred locale. The third and sixth units take place in the real world, while the remainder of the adventure is located within the fantastic space of the cemetery. The exchange of roles by Gauvain and the squire takes place at the end of the second and beginning of the sixth units. This same juncture in the text is where a shift from the fantastic to the étrange takes place. The structure exhibits an alternating pattern of movement between the real world and fantastic space. The structural shifting occurs on two levels. First, the narrative program is announced in units A_G and D_G, where Gauvain is forced to step into a new role. Then in units B_G and E_G, Gauvain confronts the supernatural via the squire's tale and then in the form of the demon. The shift back to the real world occurs only after order has replaced the chaos caused by the conflict between the real world and the otherworld. In this tale, the ending is logically closed (through Gauvain's narrative in F_G) and therefore étrange according to scenario 1 of Figure 2.5.

In each of the six texts examined, the hero's movement between the worlds is represented by the parallel worlds model initially presented in Chapter 2. The hero travels along a route that passes through fantastic space in order to enter the otherworld. To complete the journey, and thereby bring about structural closure, fantastic space must be traversed twice (once going and once returning). During these two movements through fantastic space
Conclusions

(corresponding to narrative units B and D of three texts, units A and C of two texts, and units A, B, D and E of one text) the hero is susceptible to various interruptions of his journey. When the journey is interrupted or incomplete, the structure is incomplete and therefore open-ended. If there is no clear ending to the story then the Aristotelian unity of action is broken because the plot remains unresolved. The ambiguity and confusion surrounding the resolution of various disjunctions undermines a tidy ending to the narrative plan.

The open-ended quality of the narrative plan is enforced in direct proportion to the number of possible resolutions. In other words, if there is a handful of resolutions, then the task is much more straight-forward for the implied reader than would be the case in a narrative where the resolutions multiply beyond a manageable number. I have proposed three possible resolutions (illustrated in Figure 2.5) for the structure of these texts that provide a means to evaluate the impact of the fantastic on the narrative structure. Scenario 1 is found in two of the six texts (Amadas et Ydoine and L'Atre périlleux), scenario 2 in one (Le Conte du graal), and scenario 3 in three (Le Chevalier de la Charrette, Graelent and Guingamor). Amongst the texts examined, the fantastic as shown in scenario 2 persists in four of the structures (Graelent, Guingamor, Amadas et Ydoine and L'Atre périlleux) until the final lines of the adventure, and then a merveilleux ending is provided by the narrator at the last moment. These three scenarios are illustrated in Figure 7.1. The way in which an ending is provided or denied to the reader creates an on-going sense of uneasiness with the text for its public, as their anticipation of a conclusion to the intrigue is repeatedly undermined. Until an
acceptable resolution is found, the fantastic mode continues to influence the structure by refusing an easy, clean closure to the reader.

\[ \text{Figure 7.1—Revised narrative scenarios for the fantastic} \]

\textit{The parallel worlds model}

Previous studies of the fantastic have provided much in the way of thematic, historic and categorical information about the fantastic as a literary mode. However, none has produced structural models by which to identify common elements within a larger range of texts. This analysis of six texts according to the parallel worlds structural model has brought forth several distinguishing characteristics of the fantastic mode within romance narratives. The parallel worlds model is an attempt to begin the process of identifying structural patterns for the fantastic in medieval romances.

I have identified three distinguishing aspects that define the parallel worlds model: the use of the supernatural within the real world to encode /otherness/ into the hero’s experience; the creation of fantastic space as a transitional locale, and the ambiguous, open-ended nature of
the structure. In turn there are three characteristics of structural openness that may be identified with specific endings. The étrange ending resolves the fantastic by providing a resolution that is logical and dismisses the /otherness/ associated with the supernatural. The merveilleux ending accepts the supernatural and by doing so resolves the fantastic conflict through the rejection of the real world. The merveilleux is characterized by the actions and reactions of the hero when confronted by the supernatural according to Dubost. However, the fantastic results from the interaction in one space of two opposing elements: the supernatural and the real. The open ending provides no clear resolution at all to the opposition between the two worlds. Instead the fantastic mode perpetuates the conflict through questioning both the real and supernatural through a process of continually undermining the expectations of the implied reader.

/Otherness/ is created by the inclusion of the supernatural within the real world, where the real world is threatened. /Otherness/ presents a continuum from the mildly disturbing to the supernatural. In all six romance narratives, /otherness/ is associated with a character from the otherworld, usually the opponent, but sometimes the object of the hero’s quest. In Le Conte du graal, /otherness/ is found in the Fisher King and the Grail Castle inhabitants. /Otherness/ in three narratives (Graelent, Guingamor, and L’Atré périlleux) is in the person of object of desire, usually a fée. In three narratives (Le Chevalier de la charrette, Amadas et Ydoine and L’Atré périlleux), the opponents introduce /otherness/ into the narrative by virtue of their supernatural characteristics. Guingamor is the only text where /otherness/ is first introduced by an animal and then is transferred to a person. There can be multiple sources of /otherness/
as well. Objects, such as Lancelot’s ring, the Grail, the ring on Ydoine’s finger, and the bridges to Gorre are all examples of objects with a supernatural provenance that subvert the real world’s authority. A sense of alterity provides the first textual indication that the hero is entering a fantastic space.

The second characteristic of the parallel worlds model is the inclusion of fantastic space. By developing a typology of fantastic space, one is able to identify the fantastic by a location’s association with supernatural phenomena and inexplicable events. The voyage from one world to the next is accompanied by clear signs that indicate movement through fantastic space. As a frontier between worlds, fantastic space can be a forest, a body of water, or a cemetery. The frontier may be guarded by an opponent: a giant, knight, or monstrous demon. The otherworld contains something, an object, that the hero needs to accomplish the quest. It could be a lover, or an object that will allow him to win favors from the lover. The process of accepting and assimilating the signs, people, and objects of the otherworld represents all or part of the hero’s adventure. Entering the otherworld to obtain the desired object or person and then returning to the real world is the primary goal of the hero. When the hero is able to assimilate the telltale signs of the supernatural or conquer the opponent(s), the adventure is successful and he gains a mature standing in his original society. If the primary character hesitates or draws back from the challenge, he must then confront society and himself on a different level. Thus, how a knight or young lover deals with an encounter with the otherworld (along with its accompanying supernatural forces and events) presages the final success or failure of that adventure.
Conclusions

It is now possible to refine the model proposed in Chapter 2, by clarifying fantastic space according to the physical coordinates discussed in the six texts (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2—Physical model of fantastic space

Fantastic space contains a gateway or path leading to the otherworld, where the supernatural dominates. The possibility of finding that entryway is available to all, but is found primarily by chance and rarely by deliberate seeking. The metaphor of the labyrinth encapsulates this experience. Fantastic spaces are shapeless areas, able to expand or contract (Le Conte du graal). They can be fearful and mysterious (L'Atre périlleux and Amadas et Ydoine).

Sometimes, the peace and solitude of the “locus amoenus” is shattered by the hidden dangers of the forest and water (present in Graelent and Guingamor). Fantastic spaces are often paradoxical, characterized by peace and fear. Their boundless form and changing nature provide the perfect backdrop for the arrival of the supernatural. Nonetheless, lack of physical reality is not only peripheral to the fantastic in general, it is particularly misleading as concerns the literature of the medieval period since the merveilleux, which depends on stretching perceptions of reality, is prominent, similar from a casual inspection to many of our examples.
of the fantastic, and the method of choice for diffusing the power of the fantastic. In other words, it is easy to confuse the merveilleux with the fantastic, especially since the true fantastic in the medieval period is likely to deteriorate into the merveilleux in later developments. This trend was particularly evident in the 13th-century texts examined in Chapter 6.

Open-endedness, the third characteristic of the parallel worlds model, is created by the lack of a definitive resolution and distinguishes the fantastic mode within medieval romance texts. Reality tends to compose “reversible” structures, whereas /otherness/ has no quality of reversibility, in other words it is an entropic terminal stage. The quality of /otherness/ in an event precludes its undoing. The fantastic mode causes the narrative program to have any number of possible endings. Ambiguity ensures that the reader is forced to choose a resolution without any help from the author. Todorov’s definition of the minimal story as a movement between two equal but non-identical equilibriums is informative for the definition of the fantastic, in that the fantastic mode causes that movement to become extended and the plot never to settle back into a state of equilibrium. The fantastic perpetuates movement through

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3 “To obtain a general measure of irreversibility, we have to consider the possibility that nature favors certain states over others (the ones at the receiving end of an irreversible process), and we must find a physical measure that could quantify nature’s preference for a certain state and that would increase whenever a process is irreversible. This measure is entropy.” Eco, *The Open Work...*, 47.
digression, which multiplies the number of possible outcomes for a story. The fantastic is the ambiguous uncertainty between the real and the supernatural. It is an intermediary state characterized by contradictions, confusion and digressions.

The three types of structural endings are realized through movement between worlds. Type one is movement between the real world and fantastic space, but no voyage to the otherworld: *Le Conte du graal, Graelent, Amadas et Ydoine*, and *L’Atre périlleux*. The possibility of a journey to the otherworld is only implied by the narrator. In these examples, the units that are located in the real world alternate with the units that take place in fantastic space. Type two is movement from the real world, through fantastic space and into the otherworld, but the hero unable to return to the real world: *Guingamor*. The knight reaches fantastic space and then must turn back. Type three is movement from the real world, through fantastic space, into the otherworld and back again (*Le Chevalier de la charrette*). Lancelot is able to return to the real world, where his triumphant victory brings about a complete resolution to the narrative program, the only example of closure in this corpus.

There is a new type of order to the structure that is viewed as disorder in relation to the previous organization, and as order in relation to the new parameters of discourse. The relative degree of certainty by which the implied reader is able to discern the new order is directly proportional to the author’s success in encoding the text with recognizable sequences of signals with a high ratio of redundancy. Ambiguity is the product of contravention of established conventions of expression. There is a promise of a recovered order that is not
fulfilled. The need to recover a sense of order fills the open, fantastic text with a sense of unresolved disjunctions. The supernatural introduces an element of the unpredictable, which marks the narrative structure with chaos. The fantastic presents multiple choices, each probable yet dissatisfying to the reader. The structure compels a reader toward a set of possible choices, but it does not make the choice easy.

As originally proposed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, using a one-to-many model for comparing the real world to the otherworld provides for a wide variety of fantastic experiences. Therefore it should be possible to apply this same model to other texts in order to confirm its validity for a larger group of narratives. Viable candidates for further research are found throughout the matière de Bretagne including several tales from the collection of anonymous lais assembled by Prudence O'Hara Tobin, such as Tydorel, Tyolet, Desiré and Mélon, all of which contain to some degree the characteristic traits identified with the parallel worlds model. The Lais by Marie de France contain sophisticated versions of otherworld voyages that may prove interesting as well. Additional candidates are found in the many continuations of the Graal and Lancelot narratives, along with Claris et Laris, Cristal et Clarie and La Fontaine périlleuse.

I have sought to distinguish the elements by which the fantastic may be described, supported by both thematic and structural elements. The fantastic is most often found within the complex and conflicting struggles the hero goes through in the attempt to individuate himself. In seeking an archetypal experience of the fantastic, one finds in the paradox of
Perceval the elementary enigma of the fantastic—the conflicting image of a naive youth and a great knight resident within one young person constitutes the quintessential representation of the fantastic mode, where diametrically opposed ideologies and images coexist.

The paradoxical conflict within the hero speaks to the issues of the fantastic mode by actualizing the conflict between the real world and the otherworld. The resolution of this paradox annuls the fantastic mode by eliminating the supernatural. What then is the essential function of the fantastic mode? To render powerless the supernatural? Or merely to highlight it in contrast with reality? While both of these possibilities are tempting in their simplicity, I would argue that the fantastic mode does not merely heighten the hero's experience of the real world, but rather augments it with a richer tapestry of imagery and increased potential for adventure. It brings intricacy and depth to an otherwise mimetic tale. The fantastic mode presents the complexities of life within the context of a journey between worlds. The resolution is ambiguous and in the case of Perceval, the prototypical hero of the fantastic experience, the quest continues indefinitely.

Each hero experiences the fantastic mode in a particular way. For Perceval, the fantastic is present in the inability to remain silent or to speak at the appropriate times. For Lancelot the fantastic exists where a choice must be made between conflicting loyalties. In Amadas et Ydoine and L’Atre périlleux, the fantastic is neither explained away nor accepted. It is merely dealt with as another textual conflict to be resolved. In Graelent, the fantastic mode surfaces when the supernatural invades the real world. One sees in Guingamor that the fantastic
surfaces in the young knight's inability to accept the counsel of others when they warn him about the dangers of the fairy world.

These six romance narratives have their own distinct characteristics which give them an identity. Yet the four stories and two independent adventures have several characteristics in common. The intrusion of the supernatural into the real world, the use of the fantastic mode to control and heighten the narrative conflict, and the reaction of the hero to the supernatural all create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The lack of a resolution also creates ambiguity and openness in five of the narratives. These narratives are open-ended, forcing one to acknowledge the lack of a clean closure as a hallmark of their structure. While no one of these elements solely defines the fantastic mode within a text, each works in conjunction to reveal the fantastic mode as a means of literary production. The parallel worlds model for the identification of the fantastic provides one more method by which to support, where appropriate, a fantastic interpretation of medieval narratives and augments existing critical theories such as those proposed by Dubost, Molino and Todorov. However, the open-ended aspect of this structural model by itself is not conclusive enough to qualify as a sole standard for the evaluation of the fantastic.

In order to arrive at a conclusion to the narrative program, it is necessary to move beyond the fantastic mode. This is achieved through the reconciliation of the possible with the impossible when the hero makes decisions and draws conclusions. As long as the hero refuses to make a choice for either the étrange or the merveilleux, he cannot progress in his
adventure. At each point of intersection between the real and the supernatural world, there is a choice to make. Each choice leads to an additional set of possibilities and more choices. But in order to progress and arrive at a resolution to his disjunctive state, the hero must make one choice or the other. If he remains indecisive, there is no narrative progress.
Appendix A

Summary of Structuralist and Semiotic Methods

This appendix contains a brief explanation of the structural analysis of narratives according to the theories of Vladimir Propp, A. J. Greimas and Joseph Courtés. A structural analysis according to semiotics is composed of three parts—the syntagmatic analysis, the structuration of the narrative units and the paradigmatic analysis. A table describing the various symbols I have used in the equations for quantifying the narrative units for each text in the corpus is also included.

Overview of structuralist and semiotic theories

In simplest terms, structuralists take linguistics as a model and attempt to develop “grammars”—systematic inventories of elements and their possibilities of combination—that would account for the form and meaning of literary works; post-structuralists investigate the way in which this project is subverted by the workings of the texts themselves. Structuralists are convinced that systematic knowledge is achievable by moving the focus of criticism from thematics to the conditions of signification, the different sorts of structures and processes involved in the production of meaning. Semiotics, the successor to structuralism, is best defined as the science of signs. It involves the study of any medium as a semiotic study of signs. While the analysis of content involves a quantitative approach to the analysis of a text, semiotics seeks to analyze texts as structured wholes.
Vladimir Propp, in his analysis of Russian folk tales, *Morphologie du conte* (1928), concentrated on an internal analysis rather than historical explanations to formulate his classifications for folk tales. In distinguishing between form and structure, he argued that structure included both form and content, whereas form restricted one to examining the medium of a given system of communication. Propp’s seminal work greatly influenced Greimas, who replaced Propp’s concept of “functions” with that of “actants.” Greimas developed a semiotic approach to narrative structure, the “semiotic square” and the “actantial model.” He uses the term “seme” to refer to the smallest unit of meaning in a sign.

I use Greimas’ model of the semiotic square, where the interaction of opposing symbolic interpretations creates semantic categories based on three relationships: contradiction, contrariety, and complementarity.

“Cette structure élémentaire (...) doit être conçue comme le développement logique d’une catégorie sémique binaire du type

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3 Greimas described the actantial system in *Sémantique structurale* (Paris: Larousse, 1966); he has elaborated upon his concepts somewhat in later writings, such as *Du sens* (1970), and in *Sémiotique narrative et textuelle* (Paris: Larousse, 1973).
blanc vs. noir, dont les termes sont, entre eux, dans une relation de contrariété, chacun étant en même temps susceptible de projeter un nouveau terme qui serait son contradictoire, les termes contradictoires pouvant à leur tour contracter une relation de présupposition à l'égard du terme contraire opposé.  

The semiotic square, as summarized by Courtés and others, is represented as follows:  

\[ \text{Figure A.1—The semiotic square} \]

Courtés uses this figure to summarize the theories of semantic relations proposed by Greimas in both *Sémantique structurale* (1966) and *Du Sens* (1970). Using the example of true and false, S1 represents true, S2 represents false, \( \overline{S^1} \) not true, and \( \overline{S^2} \) not false. Its primary value resides in its usefulness as a means of establishing for a text the pertinent opposition(s) which generate(s) signification. One may substitute any valid set of contradictory terms into the semiotic square. For the general purpose of discussing theories of the fantastic, “real” and “supernatural” provide the contradictory pair. One of the most

4 A. J. Greimas, *Du Sens*..., 160.

prominent types of operations anticipated by the model of veridiction is the narrativization of /otherness/ in the process of linking, or concatenating, episodes that contain examples of the supernatural. The narrative dimension of a text signifies itself as a series of states and the transformations linking them. There are two states, conjunction and disjunction, while there can be numerous types of transformations.

Semiotic analysis details the relations between these static and dynamic aspects of narrative by studying the characters and the roles that they play in the succession of transformations between states. According to Greimas, the actantial model defines the relationships between characters according to six categories of actants: the subject (who desires the object), the object (which is desired by the subject), the helper (who aids the subject), the opponent (who opposes the subject), the sender (who initiates the quest of the subject), and the receiver (who benefits from the acquisition of the object). Greimas' system is

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8 The English translations of Greimas' terms are taken from Gerald Prince, Dictionary..., 40, 67, 80, 86, 93.
particularly appealing because of the way it highlights the Subject and the desire for the Object. The actantial model is often represented in the following diagram: 9

Sender⇒Object⇒Receiver

Helper⇒Subject⇒Opponent

Figure A.2—The actantial model

The Greimassian method of narrative analysis creates correspondences among the various themes of a story, which serve as the spatio-temporal coordinates for the continuity of the intrigue. The narration of a story that is encoded by the author thus encourages the cognitive and pragmatic act of decoding the meaning of a text by the reader. 10 Chapters 3–6 of this dissertation make considerable use of the Greimassian method of analysis.

Stages of a structural analysis

A structural analysis can be said to have three major stages. First, it is necessary to determine the principal actants, their relationships, and the resulting episodes of the narrative (syntagmatic analysis). Segmenting the text in this manner leads to the problem of deciding what is significant and what is secondary. Next, the critic must establish major divisions or


units of the text that underlie the episodic structure in order to determine the larger, overall meaning of the narrative pattern. As a final step, the relationship between episodes is defined (paradigmatic analysis).

The syntagmatic analysis usually involves studying the text as a narrative sequence. The first step in such an analysis is to identify the actants and their relationship to each other. Who is the subject? Can there be multiple subjects (and therefore multiple points of view) within a single narrative? Can a subject desire multiple objects and how do the conflicting desires affect the outcome of the narration? The relationship of desire between the subject and object provides motivation and closure to the narrative. The social implications of desire are manifested in the motivation of the subject. Does his desire for the object benefit the society at large or is it self-serving? On another level, the consequences of desire are played out within the “sender–object–receiver” relationship. The “sender” is the agent who grants the subject permission to pursue the object—for example, King Arthur initiates the quest for Guenievre in *Le Chevalier de la charrette* by sending Gauvain to search for Keu and the queen. The most frequent example of the receiver, the one who possesses the object at the end of the story, is the hero’s society. In this example Arthur’s court and kingdom benefit from the return of their queen and seneschal. Secondary characters fulfill the roles of helper if they aid the hero in acquiring the object. When hindering the hero from reaching the object, secondary characters take on the function of opponent. These actantial roles are used in Chapters 3–6 to show how the various characters within a narrative work together to create the narrative program and thus reinforce the semiotic structure. By identifying the major roles in the text, one is able to
divide the text into units and episodes. A unit represents a major segment of the text, while episodes are subdivisions of units.

The next stage of a structural analysis is to formulate a narrative structure, or outline, for a given text. In this dissertation, that structure is expressed in terms of equations. These serve as a means of summarizing the relationship of desire between the subject and object. When linked together, the narrative units permit one to quantify the structure of the whole text. These equations reveal the narrative development of actants as they interact with each other and the object of desire. I base my examination of representative texts and their division into narrative equations on the methods expounded by Greimas and J. Courtés.11 Greimas, in his *Sémantique structurale*, proposed a mathematical representation of semiotic structures in order to more precisely reveal the hierarchical structure.12 In the preface to Courtés’ book, Greimas reemphasizes that the division of a text may be based on the various actantial and thematic roles of interaction with the object.13 Courtés builds upon the work of Greimas by


12 “L’exemple des mathématiques, mais aussi de la logique symbolique et, plus récemment encore, de la linguistique, montre ce qu’on peut gagner en précision dans le raisonnement et en facilité opératoire si, en disposant d’un corps de concepts défini de façon univoque, on abonde la langue « naturelle » pour noter ces concepts symboliquement, à l’aide de caractères et de chiffres.” Greimas, *Sémantique structurale,* 17.

incorporating the concept of “isotopes,” which are defined by Greimas as a redundant set of semantic categories which makes possible a uniform reading of the narrative.\textsuperscript{14}

I am indebted to Courtés’ work for the specific method of equations used to describe the disjunctive and conjunctive states of characters.\textsuperscript{15} When a subject (S), such as the hero, obtains an object (O), he is said to be in a state of conjunction (symbolized as \( \cap \)) with that object, represented by the formula \( U_N = S \cap O \), where \( U_N \) is the narrative unit. When the hero is separated from the object he desires, he is said to be in a state of disjunction (symbolized as \( \cup \)), represented in the formula as \( U_N = S \cup O \). At any given moment in a text, the opponent may possess the object desired by the subject. The subject is thus a potential agent of the function(s) that will bring him into a state of conjunction with the object. The transformation

\textsuperscript{14} “Par isotopie nous entendons un ensemble redondant de catégories sémantiques qui rend possible la lecture uniforme du récit...” Greimas, Du Sens..., 188.

enacted in this instance is an exchange by transfer of the object from the opponent to the subject. The process whereby the subject realizes this objective is called a narrative program.16

According to Greimas, the final step in this type of structural analysis is to examine the ways in which the various narrative units (or situations) relate to each other. This is referred to as the paradigmatic analysis. The distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures is a key concept in structuralist semiotic analysis. These two dimensions are often represented as axes, where the vertical axis is the paradigmatic and the horizontal axis is the syntagmatic. A paradigm is a set of associated signs which form a defining category of meaning or significance, such as “love.” A paradigmatic analysis of a text studies patterns other than internal relationships (which are covered by the syntagmatic analysis). The use of one paradigm rather than another shapes the preferred meaning of a text. This is the author’s encoded meaning for the text which the reader must decode. The approach I have taken in Chapters 3–6 is first to analyze the texts on a syntagmatic level in order to derive a structure for them. Then I approach the paradigmatic analysis, which searches to discover relationships of meaning according to categories of signs, from the point of view of fantastic theory in order to relate the narrative units to the themes of the fantastic.

Table A.1—Symbols used for narrative structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Subject: “An actant or fundamental role at the level of deep narrative structure, in the Greimasian model. The subject (analogous to Propp’s hero) looks for the object. At the level of narrative surface structure, it is concretized as the protagonist.”(^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Object: “An actant or fundamental role at the level of deep narrative structure, in the Greimasian model. The object (analogous to Propp’s sought-for person and Souriau’s sun) is looked for by the subject.”(^{18})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U_N)</td>
<td>Narrative unit: “A component unit of narrative that is itself capable of functioning as a narrative; a series of situations and events of which the last one in time constitutes a partial repetition or transform[ation] of the first one. […] The combination of sequences through linking embedding and alternation yields ever more complex stories.”(^{19})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\cap)</td>
<td>Conjunction: Along with disjunction, one of the two basic types of junction, or relation, between the subject and the object (‘X is with Y,’ ‘X has Y’).(^{20})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\cup)</td>
<td>Disjunction: Along with conjunction, one of the two basic types of junction, or relation, between the subject and the object (‘X is not with Y,’ ‘X does not have Y’).(^{21})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) Prince, *Dictionary...*, 93.

\(^{18}\) *ibid.*, 67.

\(^{19}\) *ibid.*, 87.

\(^{20}\) *ibid.*, 15.

\(^{21}\) *ibid.*, 22.
Appendix B
Summary of narrative structures

This appendix contains summaries of the narrative structures for each of the texts that were analyzed. The first two narratives exhibit a nested structure, with a reversal of the narrative sequences with a central unit that contains the main intrigue. The latter four texts show a bipartite structure where the scenarios of the first half are repeated in the second half. The white sections show *étrange* units which take place in the real world, gray shaded areas represent fantastic units, the darker gray are *merveilleux* and take place in the otherworld.

### B.1 Le Conte du graal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Opening unit in the forest—$S \cup O_K$</td>
<td><strong>E</strong> Closing scene in the forest—$S \cap O_M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_1$ Perceval meets the knights (ll. 24–345)</td>
<td>$E_3$ Perceval seeks the Grail (ll. 6400–6473)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_2$ Perceval talks with his mother (ll. 346–580)</td>
<td>$E_2$ Perceval talks with the hermit (ll. 6205–6399)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_3$ Perceval leaves Wales (ll. 581–616)</td>
<td>$E_5$ Perceval wanders (ll. 6183–6204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Perceval’s quest for knighthood—$S \cup O_M$</td>
<td><strong>D</strong> Perceval rejoins Arthur’s court—$S \cap O_K$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_1$ Perceval insults the maiden (ll. 617–812)</td>
<td>$D_5$ The Hideous Damsel insults Perceval (ll. 4569–4712)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_2$ Perceval finds King Arthur’s court (ll. 813–1046)</td>
<td>$D_4$ Perceval joins King Arthur’s court (ll. 4379–4568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_3$ Perceval defeats the Red Knight (ll. 1047–1280)</td>
<td>$D_3$ Perceval defeats Keu and Sagremor (ll. 4108–4378)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_4$ Perceval receives training (ll. 1281–1678)</td>
<td>$D_2$ Perceval defeats the Proud Knight of the Heath (ll. 3657–4107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_5$ Perceval saves Biaurepaire (ll. 1679–2941)</td>
<td>$D_1$ Perceval meets his cousin (ll. 3394–3656)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **C** The Grail Castle—$S \cup O_G$
  - $C_1$ Perceval meets the Fisher King (ll. 2942–3031)
  - $C_2$ Perceval stays at the Grail Castle (ll. 3032–3324)
  - $C_3$ Perceval leaves the Grail Castle (ll. 3325–3393)
### Appendix B

#### B.2 Le Chevalier de la charrette

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Opening Arthurian scene—$S \cup O_Q$</td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Meleagant’s challenge (ll. 30–81)</td>
<td>A2 Keu’s declaration (ll. 82–129)</td>
<td>E3 Meleagant’s defeat (ll. 6914–7097)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Keu’s boon (ll. 130–223)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E1 Gauvain’s preparations (ll. 6726–6784)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B</strong></th>
<th>Lancelot’s quest—$S \cup O_Q$</th>
<th><strong>D</strong></th>
<th>Lancelot’s imprisonment—$S \cup O_Q$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3 The two companions (ll. 2012–3135)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D1 Tournament at Nauz (ll. 5359–6146)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C</strong></th>
<th>Lancelot in Gorre—$S \cup O_Q$</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1 Arrival of Lancelot (ll. 336–3488)</td>
<td>C2 First combat with Meleagant (ll. 3439–3898)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3 Guenevere refuses Lancelot (ll. 3899–4082)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4 Search for Gauvain (ll. 4083–4458)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancelot and Guenevesse confess their love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### B.3 Graelent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Graelent at Arthur’s court—$S \cup O_S$</td>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 Initial situation (ll. 15–26)</td>
<td>A2 Queen’s advances (ll. 27–138)</td>
<td>C1 Return to initial social status (ll. 343–426)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Poverty of Graelent (ll. 139–162)</td>
<td></td>
<td>C3 Return to poverty (ll. 489–578)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B</strong></th>
<th>Graelent in the forest—$S \cup O_S$</th>
<th><strong>D</strong></th>
<th>Graelent’s departure—$S \cup O_{F+S} \cup O_S$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B3 Speech to the fee (ll. 229–266)</td>
<td>B4 Rape of the fee (ll. 267–304)</td>
<td>D3 Arrival and speech of the fee (ll. 615–654)</td>
<td>D4 Judgment of Arthur’s court (ll. 655–666)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5 The fee’s response (ll. 305–342)</td>
<td></td>
<td>D5 Departure to the otherworld (ll. 667–734)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B.4 Guingamor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guingamor rejects the queen—S ∪ O_S</td>
<td>Guingamor at the fée's court—S ∪ O_S; S ∩ O_F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_G1 The queen's advances (ll. 5–134)</td>
<td>C_G1 Guingamor returns to the green palace (ll. 503–518)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_G2 Queen recounts the tale of the white boar (ll. 135–182)</td>
<td>C_G2 Guingamor's reunion with the ten lost knights (ll. 519–544)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_G3 Guingamor asks permission to go hunting (ll. 183–247)</td>
<td>C_G3 Guingamor asks permission to return to Brittany (ll. 545–574)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th><strong>D</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guingamor hunts the white boar—S ∩ O_S</td>
<td>Guingamor goes back to Brittany—S ∩ O_S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G1 Guingamor leaves town (ll. 248–312)</td>
<td>D_G1 Guingamor leaves the fée (ll. 575–581)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G2 Ride in the forest and hunt of the white boar (ll. 313–361)</td>
<td>D_G2 Guingamor crosses the river and rides through the forest (ll. 582–586)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G3 Guingamor arrives at the green palace (ll. 362–396)</td>
<td>D_G3 Guingamor finds the woodsman (ll. 587–632)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G4 Guingamor resumes the hunt (ll. 397–420)</td>
<td>D_G4 Guingamor violates the gates (ll. 633–654)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_G5 Guingamor finds the fée (ll. 421–503)</td>
<td>D_G5 Guingamor returns to the otherworld</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B.5 Amadas et Ydoine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
<th>Narrative unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted abduction of Ydoine</td>
<td>Amadas at the cemetery—S ∪ O_Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S ∩ O_Y</td>
<td>C_A1 Amadas leaves town (ll. 5401–5442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_A1 Amadas arrives at Lucca (ll. 4589–4604)</td>
<td>C_A1 Amadas leaves town (ll. 5401–5442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_A2 The dark knight attempts to take Ydoine (ll. 4605–4663)</td>
<td>C_A2 Amadas mourns at Ydoine's tomb (ll. 5443–5568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A_A3 Amadas fights the dark knight (ll. 4664–4736)</td>
<td>C_A3 Amadas fights the dark knight (ll. 5569–6461)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_A Ydoine apparently dies—S ∪ O_Y</td>
<td>D_A Amadas revives Ydoine—S ∩ O_Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_A1 Ydoine turns ill at dinner (ll. 4737–4839)</td>
<td>D_A1 Amadas takes Ydoine from the tomb (ll. 6462–6580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_A2 Ydoine lies to Amadas (ll. 4840–5246)</td>
<td>D_A2 Amadas recounts the adventure (ll. 6581–6774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_A3 Ydoine apparently dies (ll. 5247–5400)</td>
<td>D_A3 The couple return to Lucca (ll. 6775–6862)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B.6 L’Atre périlleux

#### Narrative unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-plot</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A**   | Gauvain stays at the Perilous Cemetery | S ∪ O₁ | A₁. The porter refuses him entry (ll. 712–747)  
A₂. Gauvain finds the cemetery (ll. 748–757)  
A₃. Gauvain disarms (ll. 758–768) |
| **B**   | Gauvain converses with the squire | S ∪ O₁ | B₁. Gauvain greets the squire (ll. 769–789)  
B₂. The squire recounts the tale of the cemetery (ll. 790–820)  
B₃. Gauvain decides to stay at the cemetery (ll. 821–904) |
| **C**   | The squire recounts Gauvain’s tale at the castle | S ∪ O₁ | C₁. The squire returns to the castle (ll. 905–940)  
C₂. The squire recounts Gauvain’s tale (ll. 941–1011)  
C₃. The cupbearer is protected from Escanor (ll. 1012–1130) |
| **D**   | Gauvain converses with the lady from the tomb | S ∪ O₁ | D₁. The tomb opens allowing the lady to exit (ll. 1131–1188)  
D₂. The maiden recounts the tale of the cemetery (ll. 1189–1233)  
D₃. Gauvain rears himself (ll. 1234–1264) |
| **E**   | Gauvain battles with the demon | S ∪ O₁ | E₁. The demon arrives in the chapel (ll. 1265–1280)  
E₂. Gauvain battles with the demon (ll. 1281–1403)  
E₃. Gauvain recovers from the battle (ll. 1404–1424) |
| **F**   | Gauvain recounts the tale at the castle | S ∪ O₁ | F₁. The castle’s inhabitants return to the cemetery (ll. 1425–1433)  
F₂. The story of the cemetery is recounted far and wide (ll. 1434–1442)  
F₃. The cemetery loses its name (ll. 1443–1444) |

---

Appendix B
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