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# Cil qui l'escrist: Narrative Authority and Intervention in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*

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Is poetic discourse always the passive discourse within a cultural framework?

—Eugene Vance

The twelfth century brought with it revolution in a number of areas. Chief among these were the realm of subjectivity and the creation of the individual. Among the texts which deal with the issue of nascent subjectivity is the *Yvain*, where narrative subjectivity finds new expression. I propose that it is through certain narratorial insertions and disruptions, including the traditional narrative loci of prologue and epilogue, that the question of subjectivity is raised and examined by Chrétien. Although the entire text can be said to be the "intervention" of the narrator (insofar as it is entirely his creation), specific types of narrative "intervention" can be analyzed to examine the question of how nascent subjectivity is represented in this twelfth century work. The conscious use of certain structural framing devices bears the narrator's opinion and highlights ambiguities which Chrétien then attempts to preserve at the end of his work.

## *I. Narrative Intervention and the Pleasure of Narration*

The *Yvain* is a text which celebrates the creation and telling of narrative. From the opening pages where Calogrenant relates the story of his previous *avanture*, to the furtive joining of the group by Guenièvre in order to hear a story being told, to Guenièvre's retelling of Calogrenant's story for the benefit of King Arthur—discourteous enough to leave his own feast—to Yvain's summarizing of his own subsequent trip to Esclados's fountain upon the arrival of King Arthur, characters are constantly (re)telling stories. Given the importance of the act of narration as constructed by the text itself, one can interpolate its importance to the community in which the *Yvain* was composed. In this sense, the *Yvain* is :

performative text which both constructs and communicates fundamental societal values through narrative and metaphor rather than through discursive language.

As one would thus suspect, storytelling is not merely fun and games in the *Yvain*. The very act of relating a story becomes vital for the development and justification of the plot: if Calogrenant had continued to guard his experience in silence, as he had done for nine years, not only would Yvain not have had *justification* to set out upon his journey, he also would not have known about the existence of the fountain in the first place. Similarly, nine years previously, Calogrenant himself would not originally have known where—or *what*—to seek, had not the *vilain* put him on the right track by relating an oral narrative. Narrative thus acts as a means of plot furthering; it becomes a concrete and deliberately chosen action which in turn points—and often *pushes*—other characters in a certain direction.<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another aspect of the telling of narrative that warrants inspection. Integral to the issue of narration, which is so important for the plot functioning of the *Yvain*, is the presence of a narrator. Both the physical and textual presence of a narrator are important for a text such as this, which would have depended on a combination of written and oral signs for its (re)production; in all likelihood, the story would have been written in manuscript form and read aloud from the page by a storyteller to a group of people. Thus, the probable means of transmission of the text indicates an inscription in two cultures: an oral and a “written” one. The dual existence of the text itself in a manuscript culture (a cross between the oral and written worlds) suggests that the fluctuating presence/absence of the narrator is “always already” in question. This double inscription has important consequences for the narrative structure.

Many critics, including Eugene Vance, have pointed out the importance of memory and narratorial presence in twelfth century texts of this sort (29). But few critics have concentrated on the repetitive occurrence of certain types of narratorial interruption in the text. Narratorial interruptions are perhaps commonplace in texts constructed in the dual culture of the twelfth century, but there are several interruptions which occur at various structural midpoints in the text which I would like to examine in detail. These interventions highlight both the “textual” status of the narrator and

the issue of remembering and forgetting, a cyclical structure upon which the plot itself of the *Yvain* depends.

The first interruption occurs in the midst of the contract negotiating and leavetaking between Laudine and Yvain. The narrator is describing in great detail the pain that Yvain feels upon leaving, when the frame of the narrative shifts and the enunciating *je* of the narrator steps in:

Ja, ce cuit, l'ore ne savra  
 qu'esperance traï l'avra;  
 car s'il un tot seul jor trespasse  
 del terme qu'il ont mis a masse,  
 molt a enviz trovera mes  
 en sa dame trives ne pes.  
 Et je cuit qu'il le passera,  
 que departir ne le leira  
 mes sire Gauvains d'avoec lui. (2663-2671)

The narrator informs us that he is worried for Yvain, and fears that he will not return within the time allotted. Clearly, this intervention serves several purposes. It mirrors the potential fear of the audience (will Yvain keep his word to Laudine?); it foreshadows the actual twists and turns which the plot will take; and finally, it serves as a handy point of temporary closure after an evening's worth of storytelling, a way to ensure that the audience will come back to hear the rest of the story. The interruption serves all of these functions which have been amply addressed by many critics, yet it also performs a distinctly narrative one: by inserting himself directly into the frame of the story by means of the *je*, the narrator brings up the issue of narration once again and, in doing so, highlights the issue of narrative uncertainty and ambiguity with reference to the future. By highlighting the question of uncertainty, the narrator's status is bounded by a limit. Here, the narrator is not acting as an omniscient narrator but as an intradiegetic one, one which appears within the confines of the characters' world. According to what the narrator tells us, he does not know for certain what will happen, although he has a fair idea. But it must also be mentioned that the narrator is *consciously* subjugating his manifestation of knowledge to a temporal limit set by the story, that is, by the narration itself, which gradually evolves since words cannot be spoken simultaneously, but one at a time.

A second narrative interruption further points up the shifting status of the narrator between the extra- and intradiegetic worlds encompassed by the text. This interruption situates itself in the episode of the battle between Gauvain and Yvain. Yvain has just arrived at the castle where the older sister awaits, and the narrator takes this time to tell us what he knows of Gauvain's current situation:

Jorz avoit passez ne sai quanz  
 que mes sire Gauvains s'estoit  
 herbregiez, si qu'an ne savoit  
 de lui a cort nule novele,  
 fors que seulemant la pucele  
 por cui il se voloit combatre. (5866-5871)

What is most remarkable about this narratorial insertion is not merely the narrator's insistence that he has no idea how long Gauvain has been gone from the scene, although this in itself is ironic: Gauvain has presumably been absent in the story because he is off in another diegesis also authored by Chrétien, namely, the *Chevalier de la charrette*. What is most unusual is that there is another character in this scene who *does* know the whereabouts of Gauvain, the eldest daughter, and she is the one character in this scene who is extremely negatively marked.

An analysis of how this character is negatively marked further underscores the presence of the narrator. The narrator takes care to use a seemingly simple, locative description to pass judgment on the moral rectitude of the eldest daughter. She is described as "la dameisele qui tort a" (5878), and the quarrel is similarly "la querele ou ele n'a droit" (5882). Since Gauvain has (apparently) only made his whereabouts known to the eldest daughter and to no one else, and since she is starkly portrayed as having no valid claim, Gauvain is also clearly in the wrong.<sup>2</sup> However, it is the ironic status claimed by the narrator which passes the negative judgment of Gauvain on to the reader; it is not stated explicitly as such. This stands as a prime example of how societal values and individual judgment are passed along by the narrative structure itself, rather than through purely discursive language.

I would now like to examine the question of narrative interruption in the "prologue" of the *Yvain* while foregrounding the

issue of narrative presence in the arena of a memory conceived of in oral, textual, and individual terms.

## *II. Liminary Elements I: The Question of the Prologue*

The question of the prologue in the *Yvain* has been hotly debated by a great number of critics. Although there is much discussion about the very existence of the prologue—for example, can one call Calogrenant's tale the intended prologue, or was the prologue to the *Lancelot* to serve as the Prologue for one great "super romance"?—one thing is certain: a traditional prologue to a medieval romance is missing, and as a result liminary elements are thrown into question from the beginning. Underlying the entire critical discussion around the prologue of the *Yvain* is in fact the issue of origins and boundaries (Ollier 32)—appropriately, perhaps—for such issues are what prologues themselves generally address.

Ollier's seminal article "The Author in the Text," dealing with the question of the prologue in Chrétien de Troyes's work, summarizes much of the previous debate over the issue of the prologue:

... the very existence of a prologue in *Yvain* has been debated: W. Foerster does not hesitate to deny its existence, on the grounds that the first lines of the romance introduce us at once into the story. We postulate, for our part, that *Yvain* does contain a prologue. *Where should its boundary be placed?* ... One could justifiably incorporate the whole of Calogrenant's narrative in the prologue. . . . (34, my emphasis)

While one could certainly support the argument that Calogrenant's tale serves as a type of prologue, it is especially important, given that a traditional prologue is nonextant here, to recognize what issues are thereby being thrown into question for the narratee expecting this form of textual introduction.

The prologue exists to serve very specific functions. Besides framing the narrative and introducing the text, the prologue primarily serves as the locus in which the author announces and accepts his role as enunciator of the text.<sup>3</sup> This function can readily be seen



in other prologues to Chrétien's works, including the prologue to the *Lancelot* where he states:

Puis que ma dame de Champaigne  
vialt que romans a feire anpraigne,  
je l'anprendrai molt volentiers . . .  
Del Chevalier de la Charrete  
comance Crestiens son livre. (1-25)

Here, Chrétien is clearly stating his role as enunciator of his story, which he goes on to title and to dedicate specifically to Marie de Champagne. Thus not only is his name present in this prologue, but so is the actual title of his work and the proper name of his courtly benefactor. Chrétien presents us with all of the specifics that help the enunciator to situate and begin to define the text itself.

In addition to the assumption of the narrator's persona by a speaking, enunciating *je*, one also finds in a traditional prologue an origin and *raison d'être* for the text itself. In the prologue to the *Lancelot*, the source material has been ostensibly suggested to Chrétien by the Countess of Champagne: "matiere et san li done et livre / la contesse . . ." (26-27). Chrétien thus has a preconstructed reason for embarking upon this narrative venture. By asserting that it is Marie's desire to hear this story, he obviates the need to justify his venture. The narrative enunciation in the text's prologue is in itself the justification for the text's existence in the world of the court.

In the *Yvain*, however, no such pretext for storytelling is offered to the narratee. How, then, does the *Yvain* present or justify itself to the reader? The text starts off with an invocation of the Court of King Arthur during the Feast of Pentecost, and thus with the issue of collective memory as opposed to individual memory:

Artus, li boens rois de Bretaingne  
la cui proesce nos enseigne  
que nos soiens preu et cortois,  
tint cort si riche come rois  
a cele feste qui tant coste,  
qu'an doit clames la Pantecoste. (1-6)

The text which begins in the narrative past sets up a (presumed) distinction between the time of narration and the time of the story.

In itself, this is a normal function of the prologue; the mythic time of the past is contrasted to the here-and-now of the authorial present. Ollier has observed:

... the author's presence in the text is made progressively more strongly felt, first by means of a *nous* that establishes the author/audience community around the Arthurian model; then by reflections made on the part of the author which identify themselves as such only by the break between past and present . . . (35)

As Ollier indicates, the verb tense is one means by which to identify the authorial present from the narrative past. A concentration on verb tense brings the question of the narrator's act of narration to the fore, as does the description of what *Amors* was like *lors*, "back in the good old days." The court of King Arthur is ostensibly described and placed firmly in the narrative past.

At this point, however, a strange temporal shift occurs. The narrator moves on to a description of the current condition of *Amors* as compared to its former, exalted state. Here, the temporal marker *lors* is set up in stark contrast to the *mes or* of the present, the temporal space held by the narratee:

li deciple de son [Amors] covant,  
 qui lors estoit molt dolz et buens;  
*mes or* a molt po des suens  
 qu'a bien pres l'ont ja tuit lessiee,  
 s'an est Amors molt abessiee. (16-20, my  
 emphasis)

Beginning as the story does with the analysis of the current condition of Love, the narratee is forced to confront the temporal categories assigned here. But there is a strange anachronistic conflict, for as R. Howard Bloch has written, the concept of *fin'amors* was only beginning to be invented in the twelfth century. Clearly, the temporal assignment is not performing a strictly mimetic role.<sup>4</sup> Without at least recognizing the temporal play going on in the narrator's thread and attempting to situate her/himself accordingly in relation to the text, the narratee cannot successfully continue on as active interpreter of the narrative.<sup>5</sup> As Calogrenant indicates to us during his discursive speech on how the reader must listen with not



just the ears but with the heart in order for a narrative to be truthful and not mere *mansonge* or *fable*;<sup>6</sup> the narratee must take an active role.

The issue of narration is thus brought to the fore not only by the deeply imbricated, almost *mise-en-abîme* narration of Calogrenant, but also by the mention made that other, anonymous people at court are in the middle of telling stories themselves: "Li un recontoient noveles, li autre parloient d'Amors" (12-13). The pleasure and importance of the act of recounting stories is deeply embedded in the text itself, even at this purely "descriptive" narrative level.

The extreme pleasure—and complexity—of storytelling is thrown into vivid relief during Calogrenant's telling of his story. Many critics have discussed this phenomenon of narrative imbrication and have commented on line 358. Here, Calogrenant, in the middle of his tale, relates a conversation between himself and the *villain* he encounters: "Je suis, *fet il*, uns chevaliers . . ." (358, my emphasis). As has been suggested by Dembowski, the lapse into the third person could have been either a scribal or authorial error, both of which are plausible given the complexity of narrative levels present at this point in the text and the probable means of text transmission in the twelfth century. Dembowski goes on to say that "[the error] confirms our suspicion that an extended narration or description made by a protagonist-narrator becomes indistinguishable from the voice of the author-narrator himself" (105). He further postulates that by giving the author the burden of carrying most of the monologue, the rest of the characters can be left "intact" with respect to their intradiegetic status; the characters are never forced to play an omniscient role and thus remain more plausible. I will discuss this topic more fully in relation to Lunete.

Yet another interesting, and perhaps more illuminating, narrative "slip" occurs further on in the text when Yvain is on his journey and has just encountered the wonderful host with the beautiful daughter foreshadowed by Calogrenant's tale. The narrator, in an attempt to compare Yvain's experience with the previous one of Calogrenant, finds a satisfactory, even *truthful*, description elusive:

La nuit ot, ce poez savoir,  
tel oste com il vost avoir;

car plus de bien et plus d'enor  
 trueve il assez el vavator  
 que ne vos ai conté et dit;  
 et an la pucele revit  
 de san et de biauté cent tanz  
 que n'ot conté Calogrenanz. (777-784, my  
 emphasis)

What is most striking is the primary narrator's self-attribution as the narrator of Calogrenant's original story. Considering the pains taken in the text to develop Calogrenant as the narrator of his own story, it is a surprising slip to make, especially in light of the appropriate delegation of narrative "authorship" a mere three lines farther. It is more likely that the primary narrator is attempting to highlight the action of narration in the text, while also emphasizing relative levels of narratorial credibility. Here, although both narrators were perhaps "at fault" by not relating the full quality of the host's and daughter's personal attributes, the accusation of misrepresentation falls more heavily upon Calogrenant, whose representational *décalage* is actually quantified as being *cent tanz* less powerful or accurate than "reality" as seen by the primary narrator.

The issue of the reliable narrator is brought up by several critics, most notably Grimbert and Uitti. Uitti argues that while the narratee's loyalty ultimately shifts from the events as representing objective truth to the act of narration itself, from which we must maintain a critical distance, the narrator her/himself remains reliable. However, Grimbert perceives the narratee as riding down the same path as Yvain does during the story (33). Like Yvain, the narratee has no way of knowing what will happen or where the (textual) path leads; consequently the narrator remains ultimately unreliable. One could even make the analogy that the narratee, like Yvain, thinks s/he knows exactly where s/he is headed at the outset, and it is only later on in the story that profound ambiguity sets in. After all, when Yvain sets out on his original journey, he knows exactly where he is headed and what signs to seek along the way. It is only once he gets there that errancy in the narrative flow occurs.

From Grimbert's statements, one can interpolate the following point: the narratee always has to make a conscious choice about whether to follow the narrator down the textual path that he is in the midst of creating. We have seen an example of this already in the

first part of the text which talks about the current state of Love: with romantic love as a concept that was just beginning to develop, the narratee must decide how to temporally situate this extended description of the "current" state of Love which stands in opposition to how it was in the "good old days."

However, the goal of narration in this "prologue" that is Calogrenant's story lies somewhere between the interpretations of Grimbert and Uitti. I believe that at specific times the issue of mistrust is highlighted, and at other times it disappears almost completely.<sup>7</sup> In particular, when certain characters appear on the scene, the narratee is encouraged to maintain a critical distance from the process of narration. In the case of Lunete, the ultimate *faire-faire* construction who herself directs narrative, her presence encourages the narratee to take a larger perspective and to see the role that s/he plays in the narrative itself.

One such example of this narrative distrust appears when Lunete is explaining to Yvain why she has chosen to help him after his entrapment in Laudine's castle. She informs Yvain that she has recognized him because:

une foiz, a la cort le roi,  
 m'envoia ma dame an message;  
 espoir, si ne fui pas si sage,  
 si cortoise, ne de tel estre  
 come pucele deüst estre,  
 mes onques chevalier n'i ot  
 qu'a moi deignast parler un mot  
 fors vos, tot seul, qui estes ci . . . (1004-1011)

Although Lunete herself presents the possibility that she may not have behaved in a way befitting a young woman at court, she nevertheless clearly implies that it was the fault of the knights at King Arthur's Court that no one *deigned* to address her except for Yvain (Lacy 32). The abundance of words such as *mes*, *onques*, *un mot* and *tot seul* clearly indicate the extremity of poor behavior at court. In relating how it is that she knows Yvain's name and what he has done, she endows King Arthur's court with negative value. Not only is King Arthur himself by this point in the narrative negatively marked, but so is a great deal of the rest of the life at court. Lunete, while remaining an intradiegetic character in the story, comments on the other characters and cues the narratee in as

to how to interpret them. In this sense she straddles the intradiegetic border present in the text.

In a similar sense, Calogrenant gains the status of a character which almost crosses the border from the intradiegetic to the extradiegetic world. Like Lunete, he is rather a character *désabusé*, having already undergone a humiliating experience, and also having been given a hard time verbally at court. Throughout the first seven hundred or so lines of the text, he is also granted a privileged position, since he is the one who has the power to tell a hitherto unknown story. And also like Lunete, who tells Yvain, “Bien sai comant vos avez non / et reconeü vos ai bien” (1016-1017), Calogrenant is the only character whose vision supersedes that of other characters.

The text itself portrays Calogrenant's “privileged vision” in very concrete terms at the beginning of the *Yvain*. He is the only one to see Guenièvre as she furtively joins the assembled group, and thus is the only one to respond to her presence with the appropriate courtly gesture. The text states explicitly that Guenièvre has deliberately planned her entrance so that Calogrenant will be the only one to see her: “[Guenièvre] vient sor ax tot a celee, / qu'ainz que nus la poïst veoir, . . . fors que Calogrenanz sanz plus . . .” (64-67). In a very real sense Guenièvre gives Calogrenant access to a certain privileged visual perspective which the text reduplicates on a narrative level.

As we have seen, the lack of a traditional prologue in the *Yvain* brings certain issues to the fore. Not only is there no clearly defined narrator who assumes the role and responsibility for enunciation, but the issue of memory—both collective and individual—is at stake. These issues are further complicated by the presence of temporal incertitude with reference to the idea of nascent romantic love. Finally, one finds strong characters which take over enunciation and walk the border between the extra- and intradiegetic worlds of narration. All of these structures and “interruptions” force the narratee to consciously interpret the narrative. As Ollier observes,

... the other peculiarity of this prologue is that it enters immediately into the narrative. But how does it nevertheless play its role as prologue—in other words, how does it reveal this dual relationship, the relationship of the author to the text and of the text to the listener/reader? It does so pre-

cisely—and, we feel, with much greater force—by *stripping away the didactic appearance of the other prologues*. (35, my emphasis)

More precisely, it is in the lack of a prologue, in combination with a lack of set liminary elements, which produce temporal confusion, and intradiegetic characters that act as extradiegetic ones, that force the reader from the opening lines to take an active role in the creation of a “true” narrative. As I will now examine, these issues are taken up again in the structure of the epilogue, which in some ways serves as a proper prologue.

### *III. Liminary Elements II: Epilogue as Prologue?*

Where the text begins, traditional pretextual elements and the beginning of narration are joined. Similarly, where the text ends, the extradiegetic status held by the primary narrator blends with the intradiegetic world of the characters. In the first half of the text, we have seen how Lunete’s character walks the line between intra- and extradiegetic status, indicating to the reader of the text that s/he must take Lunete’s cue and become a bit *désabusé* (i.e., step outside of the narrative frame) in order to read the text correctly.

In the last few lines of the *Yvain*, the character of Lunete provides a specific model for the reader. At the end of the story, she is well pleased with herself, for she has done all that she could to bring about not only a reconciliation between Laudine and Yvain, but also a “suitable” ending to a courtly romance. In short, she is celebrating her job completed as a narrator:

Et Lunete reste molt a eise;  
ne li faut chose que li pleise,  
des qu’ele a fet la pes sanz fin  
de mon seignor Yvain le fin  
et de s’amie chiere et fine. (6799-6803)

This mood of reflection certainly frames the end of the book since these are the last lines before the enunciating voice of Chrétien finally steps in to claim the work as his. In this segment, Lunete is clearly the narrative manipulator and the creator of a story who is portrayed here as looking back on her narrative with fond remembrance. One can even imagine her recreating and reflecting upon



certain parts of the narrative. This is a model for precisely what the reader should also be in the process of doing.

The framing effect created by Lunete's introspection is further heightened by another part of the text's ending. After the scene of reconciliation between Laudine and Yvain, the text cuts short their story line quietly and without much fanfare:

Molt an est a boen chief venuz  
 qu'il est amez et chier tenez  
 de sa dame, et ele de lui.  
 Ne li sovient or de nelui  
 que par la joie l'antroblie  
 que il a de sa dolce amie. (6793-6798)

Laudine and Yvain are turned inwards upon each other, each content in the presence of the other. Yvain, once again, forgets all else—but this time the only thing he holds in his memory is Laudine. Although this second wave of *oubli* picks up on the theme of the first loss of memory (and failure to keep his promise), this forgetfulness is not nearly as consequential for the reader in terms of narrative comprehension. In one sense this is natural, since the text's plot effectively ends here; what follows are a series of statements by narrative creators and transmitters (Lunete, Chrétien, and the scribe) who are taking the credit due them.

In another sense, it seems odd to end the story of Laudine and Yvain with such lack of detail. In particular, the castle occupied by the couple still has been given no precise physical location. This lack of precise geographic name or location given to the fief is underscored by several details. The pat ending of Laudine's and Yvain's stories, coupled with the attitude presented to the reader that we shouldn't worry about their future, highlights the unimportance of the fief's location. The lack of location is also—ironically—underscored by the definitive location of the scribe's shop as stated in the prologue: while we will never know where the story came to pass, we certainly are aware of where the manuscript itself, as object of circulation and exchange, was produced.

Thus the assertion by the narrator that "molt an est a boen chief venuz" seems to be rather a letdown after all of the trouble and intrigue undertaken by the characters to reach the end point. The pat ending, sealed off most efficiently, becomes more revealing when one realizes that Lunete, our *faire-faire* construction, is the one



intradiegetic character that has been left out of this scene of closure.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the reader is being told that the characters of Laudine and Yvain are not to be followed as active models for the interpretation of the story. The reader is instead being encouraged to look back on the story and to reflect on its message and its composition, but by using Lunete—and also Chrétien, as we shall see—as a frame in which to do so.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of agency of narration is addressed in an auto-reflexive manner, right up to the very end. Chrétien is the second of the three “producers” of narrative to reinsert his voice at the end. After Lunete fades from the scene, he steps in and announces:

Del Chevalier au lyon fine  
 Crestiens son romans ensi;  
 n'onques plus conter n'en oï  
 ne ja plus n'en orroiz conter  
 s'an n'i vialt mançonge ajoster. (6804-6808)

Suddenly we see the appearance of two traditional prologue elements, the title and the author's name, which usually help to frame the text at the beginning. Both were totally missing in the text that Ollier and others have called the “prologue”: the first seven hundred lines which comprise the imbricated narrative of Calogrenant. The mention of himself in the third person is not unusual; it appears in the Prologue to almost all of his other works. It is almost as though medieval authors recognized the implicit problem with the sliding performatives of Benveniste: if they merely said “And so I finish my story,” the narrator doing a later reading of the text would be taking the credit for the story. Nor is it surprising that we find only his name here and not a list of works also produced or translated by Chrétien (although other prologues of his do give a sort of a *curriculum vitae*); it is almost certain that Chrétien would have expected an audience to know his name. What is unusual, however, is that this auto-reflexive textual closure offered by the author is the first—and only—time that the name appears.

How, then, does the framing device of Chrétien's name work? By placing his name at the end of the text, Chrétien is lending to his text a certain symbolism. Since legal texts were the one type of text which placed the author's, or the *witness's* name at the end, the incorporation of Chrétien's name at the end lends a certain legal connotation. It is as though his name is more than a name; here it

seems to be a signature, proof of a certain identity, and proof of the text's validity and truthfulness. The lack of designation and of description (the *curriculum vitae*, further proof of Chrétien's identity as a writer) highlights the impact of the solitary name, the signature. The name in effect stands guard over the text, thus guaranteeing its genuineness. Chrétien's textually fixed and implicitly non-duplicable identity is presented as the authority to which the text refers/defers itself. It is also worth noting that the signature placed at the end of the text implies the concurrent development of a legal system or system of government which would track individuals according to their proper name, and which would judge a document as authentic based on the authenticity of the signature. By signing the text in this fashion, it is as though Chrétien is saying that from his point of view, this is the correct version of the story. The (apparent) wish for textual authority at the end seems very marked in contrast to the political lack of authority held by King Arthur, the king who holds such little authority that he must resort to word games to bring about justice.<sup>10</sup>

At this point, a third voice comes along to further nail down the narrative frame. This third voice belongs to the scribe Guiot, who adds an epilogue—spaced apart from the body of the text—onto the text itself:

Cil qui l'escrist Guioz a non;  
devant Nostre Dame del Val  
est ses ostez tot a estal. (Roques 207)<sup>11</sup>

Guiot's addendum is highly ludic and not a little ironic. By picking up on the game of (pretension to) textual authority started by Chrétien's authorial voice, Guiot blatantly breaks the textual limit set up by Chrétien, which states: "n'onques plus conter n'en oï / ne ja plus n'en orroiz conter / s'an n'i vialt mançonge ajoster" (6806-6807). What Guiot adds to the text, however, is not additional "story" text, but rather a further identification and affirmation of the means of textual production. Just as Chrétien assures/informs the reader that he, indeed, is the author, so does Guiot assure us that he, Guiot, was the copyist. He thus further adds to the text's "pedigree," all the while assuring us that the text presented here, which was written in all its "correctness" by Chrétien, has been

copied correctly by Guiot. The text we read is doubly "correct" and free from *mançonge*.

Textual authority and authenticity are both at stake. Implicit behind these desires is both the fear that the text will be changed, and the seeming certainty that without a textual "authority," the story will be altered. The threat of textual change comes from future scribes or would-be revisionists, rather than from future readers. In fact, the very ambiguities that Chrétien placed in the work for future narratees to interpret are what he wishes to preserve. With no definitive prologue to situate the reader, and with characters which straddle the line between intra- and extradiegesis, the text of the *Yvain* stands as something to be actively interpreted by the reader. Clearing up the ambiguities would remove many of the issues central to the work, and would mean that the reader's path through the text would no longer mirror Yvain's arduous journey and rebuilding of self through the second half of the text, the text itself implying that it is precisely because of Yvain's lack of analysis or of challenge in the first half which provokes and *necessitates* the second half.

Textual veracity and authenticity is the battleground in this text which transmits its values by means of narrative framing devices and narratorial status rather than by purely discursive language. Also at stake is the status of the author's name as signature. Perhaps this is not unusual in a text which deals with subjectivity, and especially subjectivity as it is forming itself in a culture where the presence of the written word, the signature, is integrating itself with the oral oath sworn in a court of law or to one's liege. The shifting status of the narrator between the intra- and extradiegetic worlds is also reflective both of the dual presence of oral/written narrative and the dependence of the text on narrative structure to pass judgment and to transmit meaning. After analyzing the placement and manipulation of narrative functioning in the *Yvain*, it is clear that poetics and narrativity are the dominant discourses, and the most appropriate discourses available for the topic of an individual's insertion into the text of early medieval society.

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## Notes

1. Witness the case of Laudine, who prudently withholds the information from her vassals that Yvain was indeed the killer of Esclados. By thus manipulating the content of her narrative, she manages to guarantee the outcome that she desires; namely, the vassals' consent to her remarriage to Yvain.

2. It can also be pointed out that Gauvain's "disappearance" (literal and figurative) from the text mirrors that of Yvain's disappearance from the court of Laudine and from human society during his madness.

3. A. J. Minnis presents four varying forms of the prologue in ancient and medieval Latin literature and scholastic culture. These prologue forms, in turn, greatly influenced nascent forms of vernacular medieval literature, and hence, prologues. See chapter 5, "Literary Theory and Literary Practice" for a look at these emerging vernacular literary forms.

4. For further reading on the creation of love in the twelfth century, see Bloch. For interpretations of Chrétien de Troyes, see in particular chapters 5 and 6, "The Old French Lay and Male Modes of Indiscretion" and "The Love Lyric and the Paradox of Perfection."

5. For further discussion of the role to be played by the narratee of Chrétien de Troyes, see Ollier, Vance, and Hanning.

6. The role to be played by the future narratee is highlighted in the prologue to Marie de France's *lais*. Here the reader is told that the Ancients purposely made their words ambiguous so that future readers would be able to come along and add their *san* to the words. Clearly, as with Chrétien de Troyes, the issue of reader participation is linked strongly to narrative truth.

7. This idea of a structure which is continually (re)appearing and disappearing will be further examined in relation to narratorial interruption.

8. This ending is highly transparent, and can be compared to a much earlier scene where the text depicts Calogrenant's listeners as being shocked and surprised by the *honte* associated with his story. This scene can be seen to foreshadow the Yvain's narratee's surprise at the upcoming actions of Yvain. I would argue that these scenes are meant precisely to offer to the reader their appropriate response to the text.

9. Tony Hunt comments briefly on the awkwardness of the ending caused precisely because the past problems and ironies have been swept away. I argue, however, that not all of the issues have been resolved, and that we must closely examine those "narrative functions" left out of the "frame" at the end.

10. Although Lunete and King Arthur both use the same kind of word trick to achieve certain goals, one must note that Lunete is in a subordinate position with reference to the object of her trickery, whereas King Arthur is (in theory, if not in practice) subordinate to no one in the story. Thus, Lunete's trickery is a means for her to become more powerful by giving her access to a power she normally would not have, whereas King Arthur's tricks merely underscore his lack of power and efficacy in the political realm.

11. In most editions these three lines are not numbered since they are presumed to be written by someone other than Chrétien de Troyes. I have designated these lines with the modern editor's name.

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