



The Ideological Dynamics of the Forest in *Ywain and Gawain*

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APA Citation:

Pekşen Yakar, A. (2022). The ideological dynamics of the forest in *Ywain and Gawain*. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 10(19), 28-37.

Abstract

This paper analyses the forest of *Ywain and Gawain* (c.1300) as an ideological space constructed with chivalric ethos by exploring Ywain's journey of being an exemplary knight due to his adventures and challenges in the forest. Playing a crucial role in *Ywain* vis-à-vis Ywain's accomplishments and failures, the forest works for the benefit of Ywain, who is expected to be an ideal knight as the embodiment of chivalric cause. Therefore, the forest not only enhances and boosts Ywain's knightly skills and virtues but also employs non-knights such as the women, the hermit, and the lion to be put at Ywain's service. In this regard, this paper argues that the forest in *Ywain* is designed as a chivalric space in which Ywain is provided with many opportunities and obstacles to (re)establish his chivalric reputation and to prove himself as a praiseworthy knight.

Keywords: medieval romance; Arthurian romance; *Ywain and Gawain*; space; ideological space; forest

Introduction

This paper aims to analyse the forest in *Ywain and Gawain* (c. 1300) as an ideological space formed in accordance with chivalric principles and argues that the forest presents opportunities and challenges for the knight to improve his knightly virtues and skills as well as his prowess and to display them through his encounters, relations, combats, spiritual transformations, and failures within the forest.

Ywain and Gawain, a translation and adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* (c. 1180), narrates knightly adventures of Ywain through which Ywain's progress of becoming a perfect knight can be observed. Most of these chivalric adventures and challenges start with the knight's departure from the court, which is a common pattern frequently repeated in most of romances. That is, after the knight departs from the court to complete his quest, he rides into the forest in at least one stage of his journey before he returns to the court. In this circular structure, the forest is an essential phase and space in the knight's adventure. This fundamental pattern is sometimes enriched with other spaces such as castles, chapels, and lakes. Yet, the forest constitutes a necessary path for the ideological dynamics of

the genre. Purposely formed in accordance with the meanings of the dominant medieval chivalric ideology, the forest is the arena where the knight achieves self-realisation. Therefore, it can be stated that the knight sets forth to the forest for various reasons: In the case of Ywain, he leaves the court and goes to the forest to take revenge of his cousin Colgrevice, then seeks adventure and takes on several quests that culminate in his formation as a worthy knight in *Ywain and Gawain*.

The knight's movement from the court to the forest is rather interesting in the context of the romance, a courtly genre with courtly audience and known for its emphasis on and praise of the courtly world (Barron, 1987, p. 4). Yet, it is usually the forest, an uncourtly place, that hosts the adventure of the knight, which generally constitutes the main action of the romances. The forest acting as "an archetypal romance landscape" (Saunders, 1993, p. ix) supplies the knight with protection and danger, bliss and conflict, reality and mystery, serenity and chaos, normal and supernatural, past and future, and home and exile. The forest is designed as a space of potentiality serving any of the parts of the binary oppositions above. This is determined according to the knight's needs in his progress of perfection in chivalric principles throughout the romance.

As stated, the romance forest supplies the knight's needs and favours them due to its ideological formation according to chivalry. In this context, it is important to assert that Arthurian romances are generically ideological themselves as they are the products of the dominant medieval chivalric ideology. Medieval chivalric ideology was mostly produced by two powerful institutions, namely, aristocracy and the Church (Power, 1989, p. 9). Therefore, these two institutions influenced and were influenced by the literature of the time. Romance, originally invented as a genre in France in the twelfth century, arrived at England relatively late. Thus, it can be stated that romances were unsurprisingly produced by chivalric ideology, which was dominant especially in the fourteenth century England.

In addition, romance as a genre was produced for the aristocratic taste and pleasure. Therefore, it needed to support and promote the aristocratic values, which inevitably makes the romance genre ideological. Also, romancers were able to compose their romances if only they had been supported financially by their patrons. Because of the patronage system, romancers needed to produce romances which appealed to their patrons's ideology. Therefore, the world the romances create cannot be thought separately from the ideologies. As Rouse (2014) maintains, "romance constructs an image of the world that reveals its narrative and ideological purposes" (p. 19). Clearly, romance forests or spaces are more than landscapes or settings which are used for decorative purposes. As Westphal (2011) also explicates, "[. . .] description of a place does not *reproduce* a referent; it is discourse that *establishes* the space" (p. 80). Hence, forest as space cannot be considered independent of ideologies; on the contrary, it is produced by them.

The idea of the forest as an ideologically designed space can be affirmed in the knight's movement to the forest with specific motivations in his mind. In Rouse's (2014) words, the knight's movement through the romance spaces is made up of feats of prowess: "he defeats knights who guard bridges, fords, or other impediments to movements, and wins access to new places and establishes new allegiances via feats of arm" (p. 21). Yet, the most important of all is that "[k]nights move outwards from a court discovering, or *producing*, the world" (Rouse, 2014, p. 21). In other words, when they return to the court, they narrate their adventures and *the places* they have passed by (emphasis mine); thus, "bringing this expanded space within the textual and political orbit of the central organi[s]ing court" (Rouse, 2014, p. 21). Hence, romances are the "part of a chivalric system" (Rouse, 2014, p. 21), and their protagonist knights and forests are also depicted in the same line with this chivalric system.

Eric Auerbach (1991) explains the relationship between chivalry and romance and states that "the fundamental purpose of the courtly romance" is the "self-portrayal of feudal

knighthood with its mores and ideals” (p. 131). Thus, Auerbach (1991) emphasises that the romance as a genre is imbued with chivalric ideals (p. 131). In this context, to illuminate the intertwined relationship between forest and chivalry in a romance, it is important to explain what chivalry is and how it functions. Chivalry is an aspirational ideology encompassing a set of ideas, ideals, mores, and morals, which are associated with the *chevalier* meaning knights with horses elected from the aristocratic male members. Hence, chivalry can also be considered the set of behaviours expected from the knights.¹ In a general sense, as Keen (1984) states, chivalry is made up of several classic virtues, which include “*prouesse*, *loyauté*, *largesse* (generosity), *courtoisie*, and *franchise* (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth with virtue)” (p. 2).

Among these “classic virtues” listed by Keen, prowess stands out. The definition of *prouesse* or prowess in English is given as “[a]n act of bravery; a valiant deed; a daring feat or exploit” or “valour, bravery, gallantry, martial daring; manly courage, fortitude” (2021, “prowess”). At first glance, it denotes the physical strength and martial skills of the knight. However, it also includes the ability to control the violence the knight may perform and channel it into something useful and good. Therefore, the term “prowess” embodies several characteristics of the knight such as his physical power, martial abilities, and also his ability to control his strength and to direct it to his opponents. “Prowess” that holds the first place in Keen’s list of chivalric virtues is assessed as “the key chivalric trait” (Kaeuper, 1999, p. 135). For instance, Kaeuper (1999) accentuates the importance of it and states that “[n]ot simply one quality among others in a list of virtues, prowess often stands as a one-word definition of chivalry in these texts” (p. 135). Clearly, prowess is central to chivalry, and it is even used as a synonym for it. Despite being often regarded as a key chivalric quality, prowess is also accompanied by other critical traits such as loyalty, generosity, courtesy, honour, wisdom, courtliness, and practice of courtly love.

Ywain and the Forest as an Ideological Space

Ywain and Gawain starts with Ywain’s cousin Colgrevice’s anecdote of seeking adventure in the forest. He encounters a herdsman who questions Colgrevice’s reason for being in the middle of the forest. When Colgrevice tells him that he is seeking adventure, the herdsman leads him to the well. Colgrevice’s encounter with a mysterious giant-like herdsman enables him to find the right place for the adventure within the forest. However, the function of this chance meeting is not limited to the information about the well’s location. It is also important as the herdsman is described in a monstrous way. The herdsman’s portrayal as an ugly giant suggests that something unusual and supernatural may take place. The elements of marvel and peril, which are generally associated with forests, are sustained and strengthened through the knight’s encounter with a mysterious herdsman. Colgrevice anticipates a supernatural adventure in the location the herdsman reveals because the herdsman assures the knight that there will be some kind of marvel if he pours water on the basin.

Colgrevice follows his instructions and pours water from a golden basin onto a stone, and a storm breaks out. Significantly, Colgrevice encounters the knight of the well while he is in active pursuit of adventure to gain personal glory. Thus, it can be argued that both knights fight for different motives. While Colgrevice is seeking adventure so as to improve his chivalric reputation, the knight of the well defends his own estates. Colgrevice is defeated by the knight, and the case is resolved. However, the anecdote of his defeat urges Ywain to avenge Colgrevice after six years. After this point, Colgrevice disappears from the narrative. As David Faris (1981) states, Colgrevice “is a foil for his superior cousin and not, it would seem, otherwise of much concern either to Ywain or to the author” (p. 95). Therefore, for Colgrevice, the forest only functions as a space where a knight-errant may seek and find

adventure to boost his chivalric reputation. As Colgrevice is used as a foil to Ywain, the ideological function of the forest is not effectively reflected in this incident.

Ywain, as the eponymous character of the romance, sets forth to the forest for revenge. As Colgrevice narrates how and where he went in the forest in a very detailed manner, Ywain remembers Colgrevice's anecdote accurately and follows his steps in the forest: "He passed many high mowntayne/In wildernes and mony a playne" (588-599).² This topographical description creates a sharp contrast between the court and the forest, constituting the conventional opposition between the civilised and the uncivilised world. What Ywain experiences in the forest is identical to Colgrevice's. He encounters the wild man directing him to the magical well. Interestingly, nothing has changed around the place when he finally finds the location of the well. Everything seems in its proper place described in Colgrevice's account. For Faris (1981), "this unrealistic suspension of time serves as a measure of the knight's special power" (p. 95). Faris (1981) states that,

the physical setting of the adventure has no existence separate from the knight and the knight's pursuit of self-fulfillment. For this reason, in part, one can say that geography in romance is subservient to the demands of the plot, or alternatively, that the hero enjoys the ability to generate the conditions necessary for his self-realisation. (pp. 95-96)

Therefore, the forest in *Ywain* provides excellent conditions for Ywain to prove his mettle with his encounters and challenges.

The forest equipping Ywain with necessary conditions to prove his valour hosts the final battle between Ywain and the knight of the well. Ywain's success is implied in that his opponent is thrown off his horse. Ywain's rival flees the battle severely injured. Ywain pursues his mortally wounded opponent to his castle and is trapped by the portcullis and rescued by Lunet. She gives him a magical ring making him invisible. Hiding in the castle, Ywain watches the funeral of the knight he has killed and falls obsessively in love with Alundyne, the mistress of the castle. After a while, he marries Alundyne with Lunet's help. Indeed, the romance continues in the style of the *roman d'aventure* until Ywain sees Alundyne at her husband's funeral. As John Finlayson (1969) notes, however, "[t]he subsequent events [. . .] change the nature of the story to that of *the roman courtois*" (p. 324). Thus, Ywain is described as possessed by love, which is one of the important characteristics of the *roman courtois*. The knight "wounded" by the love of a lady is a frequent image of courtly love tradition. Yet, the problem is that Ywain and Alundyne are married because "marriage and love are [deemed] incompatibles" (Finlayson, 1969, p. 325) according to the rules of courtly love. Still, with their marriage, the central theme of the romance shifts from the feat of arms to love, and the romance becomes an analysis of "the relationship between the two ideals of love and prowess" (Finlayson, 1969, p. 327). K. S. Whetter (2009) also comments on this change of themes and discusses the types of love dealt with in the narrative:

Although all of Ywain's adventures in the poem are instigated by the act of familial and brotherly love whereby he avenges Colgrevice, Ywain's love of his cousin is quickly superseded by Ywain's love of Alundyne. From the moment that Ywain first sees her, Alundyne becomes the dominant love interest in the story. (p. 97)

The conflict between prowess and love that Ywain experiences predominates the romance which is an influential element in Ywain's becoming of a worthy knight. To give an example, this conflict first shows itself immediately after Ywain and Alundyne's wedding. Noticing Ywain has left for revenge, King Arthur and his knights set forth to the woods, find the well, and create the storm out of which Ywain appears and unhorses Sir Kay at first. Later, they

arrive at Ywain and Alundyne's castle. After a while, Gawain persuades Ywain to return to the glorious days of knightly adventures. Now a married man, Ywain asks the permission of Alundyne to leave her for a period of time to seek adventure:

The lady said, 'Sir, verrayment,
I wil do al yowre cumandment.'
'Dame,' he said, 'I wil the pray,
That I might the king cumvay
And also with my feres founde
Armes forto haunte a stownde.
For in bourding men wald me blame,
If I sold now dwel at hame.' (1491-1498)

Ywain tells Alundyne that he will be blamed and belittled if he stays at home instead of seeking adventures as a proper knight. Alundyne reluctantly agrees on the condition that he will return within a year; otherwise, he will lose her love for good.

Accepting Alundyne's condition, Ywain leaves Alundyne to follow knightly adventures. Yet one day, while he is preoccupied with his adventure, he realises that one year has passed, and he has broken his vow when a maid of Alundyne calls him a traitor. While he is in the pursuit of knightly activities, he also disregards another important knightly virtue, that is, being true to his word. Keeping a promise or a vow is one of the key characteristics of chivalric knights. The vow performed in the castle and broken when obsessed with adventure will be atoned in the forest.

When he is called a traitor by one of Alundyne's maids, Ywain goes mad with grief and escapes into the forest. Ywain's madness derives from the consequence of his broken vow and his separation from Alundyne. In fact, madness due to the separation from a beloved one is a feature of courtly love tradition. However, Ywain's mental health does not deteriorate when he realises one year has passed, and he does not return to Alundyne. It is when a maid of Alundyne calls him a traitor publicly and accordingly tarnishes his reputation, he abruptly goes mad. Therefore, it is inferred that his madness will be cured only if he regains his chivalric reputation and Alundyne's love at the same time.

During Ywain's sleep under a tree, a young lady sees him and knows he is Ywain because of the scar on his face: "Allas, that him es thus bityd,/ So nobil a knyght als he was kyd" (1727-1728). This lady also understands the reason of Ywain's madness, which is grief: "In sum sorow was he stad,/And tharfore es he waxen mad" (1737-1738). She cures his madness by the use of a magical ointment, which has been given by Morgan the Wise who is associated with medical art (1753-1754). After Ywain lives as a "wilde beste" (1654) and wanders randomly, the lady's recognition of him as a noble and valiant knight is not only a random plot twist, yet again the forest's chivalric formulation. Explicitly, one of the important functions of the forest is employed in this specific example of Ywain's madness and restoration of his mental health due to the ointment. In this instance, the forest is used as a space of healing and recuperation of the knight.

Particularly, this lady assumes the role of a helper to the knight in the forest. Nevertheless, she does not help Ywain for the sake of helping, yet she does because she needs Ywain's assistance in return of her favour. That is, she is not only a helper figure without any further function. She is threatened by an earl called Sir Alers who intends to possess her lands and herself by force. Now that Ywain has regained his wits, he fights against Sir Alers for her and accordingly defeats him: "Sum he losed of hys men,/Bot the eril lost swilk ten" (1885-1886). The lady offers Ywain her hand and lands: "And I wil yelde into yowre hands/Myne awyn body and al my lands" (1961-1962), which is declined by Ywain. This encounter, the lady's offer, and Ywain's rejection are strategically important details in the narrative. Though

her help is not entirely disinterested, she is still an accessory character employed for the sake of Ywain to show his prowess and add to his chivalric reputation. Still, he needs to improve himself as a knight rather than settle down, which is why Ywain rejects the lady's offer. His encounter with the lady and her charity in the forest help Ywain regain his sanity, confirming the forest as a space of healing and recuperation. In this perspective, Ywain's refusal of her offer of marriage opens new possibilities for him. In these new opportunities, the forest will be both a space of potentials in which he ascertains his martial skills and chivalric virtues and a space of atonement for his previous fault.

After leaving the lady, Ywain continues his journey in the forest and hears a gruesome cry: "Thurgh a forest by a sty;/And thare he herd a hydose cry" (1977-1978). This is nothing but the sound of a lion which is attacked by a dragon: "Than was he war of a dragoun,/Had asayled a wilde lyoun" (1981-1982). Ywain saves the lion's life, and it thanks him in a royal manner in return:

Grete fawnyng made he to the knyght.
Down on the grund he set him oft,
His fortherfete he held oloft,
And thanked the knyght als he kowth,
Al if he myght noght speke with mowth;
So wele the lyon of him lete,
Ful law he lay and likked his fete. (2002-2008)

The way the lion shows his gratitude is quite exceptional as it bows to Ywain to thank him for rescuing itself from the dragon. This manner suggests its future and never-ending loyalty to Ywain. Henceforth, the lion offers Ywain assistance whenever he is in need, and Ywain is identified as "The Knight with the Lion," and he does not use his own name any longer.

The pseudonym of Ywain, "The Knight with the Lion," both provides him with fame as a zealous and strong knight and the opportunity to disguise himself, thus concealing his past faults. In Susan Crane's (1997) words, Ywain makes use of the pseudonym – The Knight with the Lion for "chivalric incognito" (p. 63). Crane (1997) suspects that the knight who decides to "disguise himself seeks to conceal a part of his identity from scrutiny and judgment, to make himself a stranger to his own chivalric community" (p. 63). In the case of Ywain, he may want to refashion himself a new identity because his former identity is burdened with his guilt of forgetting his vow to return to Alundyne within a year. Due to his failure of keeping his promise and the grief caused by it, Ywain goes mad. Even though his madness has been cured, the feeling of this guilt still exists and disturbs him. In addition, he has been shamed in front of a crowd, and this "transform[s] what could be an occasion for private guilt into a public scene of shame" (Crane, 1997, p. 68). This scene in which Ywain is reprimanded as a traitor is also a critique of Ywain's chivalric identity:

It es ful mekyl ogains the right
To cal so fals a man a knight.
[...]
So lang gaf sho him respite,
And thus he haves hir led with lite.
Certainly, so fals a fode
Was never cumen of kynges blode,
That so sone forgat his wyfe. (1611-1623)

Ywain's chivalric identity and his lineage have been reproved because of his former failure of being true to his word. Even, Ywain questions his worthiness: "I was a man, now am I nane" (2116). Here, it is clear that, in order to be a man, the physical power the knight shows is not

sufficient. A knight is also expected to be courteous, and he must be loyal to his word. Ywain fails in the latter aspects. As a result, he fashions himself a new identity as a selfless and worthy knight. In this process, his pseudonym provides him with people's fresh judgement. Susan Crane (1997) comments on the function of chivalric incognito:

[t]he pivotal function of chivalric incognito [. . .] is to establish or revise the perception of others concerning the disguised knight's merits. That is, incognito is not significantly self-concealing and self-protecting, but the reverse: the disguised knight draws the curious and judgmental eye and stands clear of his past to be measured anew. (p. 68)

As Crane (1997) emphasises, the disguised knight is not easily criticised, and even his deeds are impartially assessed (p. 68). Ywain uses these advantages of incognito to improve chivalric values he lacks such as loyalty, courtesy, and worthiness. In this process, Ywain gradually achieves perfection in these chivalric aspects. As Braswell (1995) also puts forward, "he is in pursuit of his own self-aggrandi[s]ement and [. . .] [h]e now acts solely for justice and right as steps toward personal atonement."

Additionally, the lion's function is evidently not only providing a pseudonym for Ywain and helping him in his combats. The lion, which is a non-human character, is not employed merely as an instrument through which the knight proves himself or displays his prowess, either. On the contrary, it is individualized and can be considered an active character in the forest. Significantly, the lion offers a parallel to Ywain's spiritual transformation and chivalric identity. After his madness is cured, he begins to grow spiritually, and his acts transform in a positive way. His growth and regeneration are strongly correlated with his relationship with the lion. Specifically, as Penelope Doob (1974) argues, "Ywain's friendship with the lion eventually signifies, among other things, his growing self-mastery" (p. 148). The more he learns to control his lion, the more he achieves the self-control and self-esteem he aspires to have. In the light of these, along with its helping function, the lion's function can be given in a list of values such as "courage, prowess, gratitude, fidelity, perfect knighthood, Christ, and God's grace" (Doob, 1974, p. 150).

The lion can be considered a symbol of any of the concepts stated above; however, the lion's role is much more multifaceted and is more about Ywain's transformation from a wild man to an ideal knight. Specifically, the lion is often regarded as a grateful animal. This feature of the lion openly evokes Ywain's former sin: "his ungrateful neglect of his wife" (Doob, 1974, p. 150). According to Doob (1974), "this neglect reduced him to the status of a beast, and it is fitting that he should learn the value of gratitude from one who is nobler as a beast than the forgetful Ywain" (p. 150). Ywain's saving the lion from the dragon also teaches him to be charitable, selfless, and compassionate. Thanks to his adventures accompanied with the lion in the forest, his education in these virtues continues. Therefore, Ywain's motivation before and after meeting the lion dramatically differs. His motivation during the time he uses the pseudonym of the Knight with the Lion is undeniably "more noble, than it had been when he fought under his own name" (Mills, 2001, p. 121-122).

In addition to Ywain's encounter with the lion and dragon, he comes across Lunet, who is imprisoned in a forest chapel. Lunet explains her predicament to Ywain and tells him that she has been accused of treason and will be executed if she cannot find a champion to fight for her. In this occasion, she assumes the role of a victim, – a victim to be rescued by the knight; otherwise, she will be executed by being burnt:

I have no man to defend me,
Tharfore to-morn brent mun I be.'

He sayd, 'What if thou get a knyght,
That for the with thi fase wil fight?' (2135-2138)

Ywain offers his help to her at once. This typical scene in which the knight vows to rescue the lady holds more importance than it seems. It is not a simple repetition of the knight rescuing a damsel in distress; on the contrary, it is Ywain's first test to regain his confidence as a noble knight after his failure of keeping his word to his wife Alundyne. Ywain does not miss the opportunity to fight for her and exonerate her. However, Ywain tells Lunet that he needs to go on another mission, but he will return to rescue her. After accomplishing his mission, Ywain arrives at the forest chapel on time:

Thare he fand a mekil fire
And the mayden with lely lire
In hyr smok was bunden fast
Into the fire forto be kast. (2509-2512)

When Ywain arrives at the forest chapel, Lunet has already been dressed in her smock and stands ready to be cast into the fire. Ywain rescues Lunet and intends to kill everyone watching the execution. However, people say that they are innocent and ask for mercy. Ywain finds out the ones who misjudged Lunet and challenges them. They are defeated by Ywain only with the help of his lion. Ywain punishes them by throwing them into the fire which was prepared for Lunet's execution. In this occasion, Ywain does not only rescue Lunet but also secures justice. Ywain proves his martial skills once more, and his knightly reputation has been restored with justice he has secured.

Lunet's position in the plot goes hand in hand with Ywain's. That is, both characters are presented as worthy at the beginning, yet they end up in failure. At the beginning, Lunet was a loyal maid of Alundyne, and Ywain was a noble and questing knight who defeated the knight of the well. However, when they meet each other in the forest, Ywain summarises his current situation as far worse than the former one:

I was a man, now am I nane;
Whilom I was a nobil knyght
And a man of mekyl myght;
I had knyghtes of my menye
And of reches grete plenté;
I had a ful fayre seignory,
And al I lost for my folý. (2116-2122)

Lunet's fall from her former situation to the status of an imprisoned woman is narrated in similar lines to Ywain's: "I was a mayden mekil of pride/With a lady here nere beside" (2131-2132). Unsurprisingly, both Ywain and Lunet's situations get better in the denouement of the romance.

In addition to Lunet, the nameless man is also one of the important minor characters, who clearly displays the forest's chivalric arrangement favouring the knight in any situation with his sudden appearance in the forest. As argued above, Ywain has been accused of treason publicly by one of the maids of Alundyne, because of which he has suddenly gone mad and has fled to the forest. While Ywain wanders as a mad man in the woods, he encounters "the man" appearing suddenly out of nowhere:

On a day als Ywayne ran
In the wod, he met a man;
Arowes brade and bow had he,
And when Sir Ywayne gan him se,

To him he stirt with bir ful grim,
His bow and arwes reft he him. (1657-1662)

Prominently, this is one of the most interesting encounters in *Ywain*, and it is equally important in clarifying the relationship between a non-knight and the forest as a chivalric space. As stated, this man abruptly appears and provides Ywain with hunting weapons. No further detail is given about him. Not even his name is mentioned. He is obviously an ancillary figure to the knight in the forest. As Faris (1981) emphasises, “[w]here he came from, and where he goes afterwards, the narrative gives no clue” (p. 98). He only hands Ywain the hunting equipment and disappears never to be seen again in the narrative. Hence, this man’s sudden existence in the forest is only for Ywain’s benefit. The anonymous man “is patently a reflex of [...] needs of the hero” (Faris, 1981, p. 98). Therefore, the unnamed man’s brief existence in the forest proves once more that the forest as a chivalric space supplies the knight’s needs.

Conclusion

By analysing the forest of *Ywain and Gawain* as an ideological space constructed in accordance with the precepts of the dominant medieval chivalric ideology and Ywain’s experiences within it, I have demonstrated that the forest is a chivalric space serving the benefit of Ywain, an Arthurian knight, who is designed and perfected as the embodiment of the chivalric ethos. Therefore, the forest acts as the supplier of Ywain, offering him numerous adventures, tests, encounters, combats, and various challenges to thrive on chivalric characteristics and (re)establish his chivalric identity. All in all, the forest in *Ywain and Gawain* serves the chivalric ideology by helping, healing, testing, and challenging Ywain with regard to his capability in many chivalric aspects, and it affirms Ywain’s self-realisation as an accomplished knight eventually.

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¹As chivalry is a complex and multifaceted concept, many scholars explain it with various approaches. Most of them choose to explain chivalry in several categories. Richard Kaeuper, for instance, attempts to classify the term chivalry into three essential clusters, namely, military, social, and ideological aspects, which manifest themselves more or less in Arthurian romances, especially in *Ywain and Gawain*.

²References to *Ywain and Gawain* are given in line numbers from *Ywain and Gawain* (1995) edited by M. F. Braswell.

* This article was produced out of my dissertation entitled "'Into a Wyld Forest': The Forest as an Ideological Space in Middle English Metrical Arthurian Romances", and a short version of the paper was presented at the 14th International Idea Conference: Studies in English organized by Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon in 2021.