

IV

La Chace aus woupils

Quoi de neuf en la Montaigne noire ?

Juste avant l'aube, chake petit bruit rehausse tous sens aiguz du chaceour qui a l'impression d'estre observet lui-mesme. A chake tournant, a chake pente y a une novele piste a choisir, une autre preie a suivre : conil ; esquireul ; mulot ; loir. Anuit qui surveille le chaceour si attentivement ? Arbres de toutes sortes l'observent : boulel ; bourgene -- l'aulne noir du Morvand; verne ; if ; sapin et ses varietez argentees -- l'aidin et le double. Au printemps la seve transperce et repousse chake fibre, en haut et en bas, au destre et au senestre. Tous arbres font bougeote sans cesse.

En passant noue gargarisante chaceour sursaulte-t-il en voyant un tronc transformet en creature aquatike endormie. Par tout y a des arbres benevoles et malefikes. Chaceour n'ose s'approcher des malefikes. Tel contact causerait cauchemars. En sournois la vieille bourgene se baisse-t-elle capturer l'esperit du passant :

« Enemi qui vient ! »

Il peut courre plus vite que la meschante ne descende ! Tous arbres en sa voie le suivent des yeus, benevoles s'inclinant pour indiker bon chemin, le pointant aus rythmes du vent, leurs tiges en esventail feerike, chake foille ayant sa propre colour printaniere.

IV

The Fox Hunt

What's new in the Black Mountain?

Just before dawn, each sound enhances the acute senses of the hunter who feels he too is being observed. At every turn and slope, there are new tracks he must choose to follow: hare; squirrel; field mouse; dormouse. At night who is observing this hunter so intently? Trees of all kinds are monitoring him: birch; *bourgene**--- the black alder of the Morvand; *verne*;* yew; silver fir and its varieties -- the *aidin** and the *double*.* In springtime sap extends each fiber, top to bottom, right and left, stretching constantly the growing twigs.

Passing a gurgling stream, the hunter is startled by a fallen trunk transforming itself into an enchanted water creature. Everywhere the hunter looks -- benevolent and maleficent trees. He dare not approach the evil ones. Such contact would cause nightmares. Deviously, the old *bourgene* begins to lower her branches to grab the passerby:

“Enemy acoming!”

He scurries faster than wicked branches can reach! All trees are watching, the benevolent ones bowing toward the right path, swaying with the wind, their stems flaring into arrays of spring colors, each leaf its own shade of green. The Morvand is

*[*bourgene* = black alder, derived from the Gaulish *eburigena*; *verne* or *vergne* = alder, derived from the Gaulish *vernos*; *aidin* = fir, derived from the Gaulish *adlinos*; *double* = silver fir, derived from the Gaulish *dubus* ‘dark’]

Le Morvand est region moult pluviouse ; par tout -- verdure ; mousse ; brume ; nublesse ; y a aussi marais et sable mouvant, mais arbres benevoles indikent la saine et saulve a suivre, la mesme voie choisie par Jules Cesar et cele du solenel voyage de Charlemagne pour enterrer le vaillant Roland en Aix-la-Chapele. Chaceour connaist bien le danger en Morvand, alors prend-il cete mesme voie gallo-romaine.

Au brouillard breuil touffut au prochain tournant ressemble aus cheveus d'une deesse assomee. A costet d'ele -- massacre ! Billes rudement coupees et moribondes, leur seve freschement coulee et gluante. Scene morne et blesme : le blanc des boulels et le gris des aulnes, entremeslez avec des geants tordus, ces chesnes plus anciens que Marie-Madeleine.

Soudain ruissel chuchote un autre avertissement et foilles bruissent une alerte : jour se leve !

Un parlement de pinsons, jais, rougecoues, chardonnerets, beks-croisez, martins-pescheours, moucheroles, mesanges -- tous s'esveillent. Entre-temps imbibe-t-il humide odour du sol et parfum matinal des flours intoxicantes : jonquille et jacinthe sauvages ; pediculaire des marais ; chevrefoille ; orchidee ; primerose.

Aus rais du soleil, son haleine se vaporise en forme de miniscules fees et appetit fait redoubler son courage. D'un coup a l'ouie la walopade impossible a discerner, ou conil ou esquireul ? Petits pas font venir l'ewe a sa bouche.

Tout de go s'agit d'un chaceour omnivore -- un solitaire -- ce woupil rous qui chace sur tout a l'aube. Son alimentation varie, mais sa methode ne change ; grace a ses

extremely wet -- everywhere -- verdant moss; misty vistas; heaps of clouds. There are also swampy stretches and quicksand, but the benevolent ones point to the safest way, the same road chosen by Julius Cæsar and the route for Charlemagne's solemn journey from Spain to Aachen to bury valiant Roland. Knowing the dangers of the Black Mountain, this hunter follows the Gallo-Roman road.

In the fog, around the next bend, dense thickets resemble a downed goddess. Next to her corpse -- a massacre! Roughly-hewn logs freshly fallen, bleeding sticky sap. A pallid scene: white of birch, grey of alder, interspersed with twisted giants, those once-mighty oaks, more ancient than Mary Magdalene.

Suddenly the stream whispers a warning, and leaves rustle an alert: sunrise!

A parliament of finches, jays, redstarts, crossbill, kingfishers, flycatchers, chickadees -- all awaken. Meanwhile the hunter imbibes the smell of wet soil and the morning scent of intoxicating flowers: daffodils and wild hyacinths; marsh lousewort; honeysuckle; orchids; primroses.

In the rays of the rising sun, the hunter's breath vaporizes into miniscule fairies and his appetite redoubles his courage. All of a sudden, he perceives muffled movement of paws, impossible to discern -- rabbit or squirrel? Tiny steps make his mouth water.

To put it bluntly, we're talking about an omnivorous hunter -- a loner -- this red fox who hunts mostly at dawn. His diet varies, but his method does not change. Thanks

grandes oreilles detecte-t-il sa preie au bruit, puis s'en approche sans faire le moindre son. Ses oreilles orientees Roussel bondit-il a sis pieds de sa victime pour retomber sur ele, tuee sur le coup par morsure a la nuke -- soit esquireul soit mulot ; par contre, nostre acrobate evite musaraignes a cause de leur odour. Roussel savoure egalemeent oisels, enlevant leurs plumes avant de les croker, mais pour quoi perdre temps a courre apres les levres mercuriels, et qui oserait bondir sur porc-epin ou raton-lavour, armez, l'un et l'autre, d'espines et de griffes coupe-gorge ?

Respectant les cycles sesoniers, Roussel consomme insectes en estet, saultereles et crickets, et en automne mange-t-il graines, champignons et fruits -- myrtilles, mures, framboises, cherises, pomes, belloches, raisins et glands. L'opportuniste s'adapte, et Roussel peut estre mesme necrophage, se contentant de la carogne. En toute seson, come les chats de la citet d'Avallon, Roussel joue souvent avec sa preie, sans la tuer, avant de l'abandoner.

Si fault manger pour vivre, chace enjouee de woupil est bien vivre !

En effect, Roussel use de ruse pour arriver, en faisant parfois le mort pour duper corbels, une preie aussi intelligente que lui. Ses yeus rient en face d'espiegle. En plus, Roussel est bon pescheour, capable d'attraper truites, bondissant sur eles en ewe peu profonde.

Roussel a-t-il des enemis ?

Mais oïl ! A costet de la forest, en Avallon, elevours haissent woupil en leurs enclos ou cet intrus gobe a son gret. C'est pour quoi les chaceours du Castel d'Avallon

to his big ears, the fox can detect prey from quite a distance, approaching it without making a sound. With ears focused, Roussel jumps six feet to land on target, killing his victim with one bite to the neck – be it squirrel or field mouse. On the other hand, our acrobat avoids shrews on account of their smell. Roussel does enjoy tasty birds but removes their feathers before the crunch. But why waste his time chasing mercurial hares, and what predator would dare pounce on porcupines or raccoons, armed with spikes and cut-throat claws?

Respecting seasonal cycles, Roussel consumes insects in summer, such as grasshoppers and crickets, and in the fall he eats seeds, mushrooms and fruit -- blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, apples, sloes, grapes and acorns. The opportunist adapts, and Roussel can even be a scavenger, content to eat carrion. In any season, like the cats in Avallon, Roussel often plays with prey without killing it, before abandoning his catch altogether.

If one must eat to live, then the playful hunt of a fox is life well lived!

Roussel uses ruse to capture his victims, sometimes playing dead to fool crows, a critter as smart as the fox. Just look at Roussel's mischievous face! Look again, this sly fisher knows how to catch trout, pouncing on them in shallow water.

Roussel, does he have any enemies?

But of course! Next to the Morvand, outside Avallon, farmers despise any fox in their pens, where he gobbles at will. For this reason, hunters from the Castel d'Avallon

laissent a courre leurs kenez, eschirant en mille morsels ces maldits woupils. Grand mercy ! Au printemps passet catre woupils furent-ils observez tuant, chacun, dis-vint perdris rouges.

Bontet divine ! Persone, ni serf ni sire, ne peut endurer ces pertes en elevage et en venison !

En seson clere, de la Pentecoste a l'Ascension, Roussel s'accroupit souvent en sillon de la ferme a colombages et toit de chaume. Rien ne bougeait ce dimanche-ci. Soudain prit-il ses gambes a son col a toute allure vers la poulaille, passant, arpent apres arpent, une suite de monstres effrayants : charrues a roues ; socs ; versoirs pour tourner la terre au destre et au senestre ; peles en bois aus bords coupants en fer ; herces ; haches a lame trenchante ; et pour assomer le foin : faus a long manche et a poignes laterales ; faucilles ; et en fin, vanels pour glaner les dernieres bribes des victimes. Tout de mesme, bestes de charrue se reposerent ce dimanche a l'auvent, a costet des boucs et brebis, ce dernier groupe esloignet expres de la soue des cochons et truies.

Y a sentiers a pleintet de hamel a hamel -- de la Chaume-aus-Woupils au Vieus Dun, jusqu'en Dun-les-Places -- et les ponts en bois croisent a maints endroits les riveres navigables : Yone ;* Arrous ; Cousin ; Auxois. Aus rives de ces ewes barges attendirent-elles paisiblement touages et peages pour demain, encore amarrees et lourdement chargees de merchandise des catre coins. Ces costs lucratifs de transport font aussi partie des revenuz de l'entreprenante Gwenhevre, et au sud d'Avallon se trouvent en

*[Yone derivet du wauleis *Icauna* « rivere qui parle »]

let loose their dogs, to rip to pieces the intruders. Thank God! Last spring four foxes were observed killing hundreds of partridges – around 200 per fox.

Goodness sakes! Nobody, neither serf nor sire, can endure such losses in livestock and venison!

During the clear season, from Pentecost to Ascension Day, Roussel often crouches in the field of a half-timbered, thatched farmhouse. Nothing was moving this particular Sunday. Suddenly the fox took off at full speed towards the chicken coop, passing, acre after acre, a series of scary monsters: wheeled ploughs; ploughshares; moldboards to cut and turn the earth, right and left; wooden shovels with sharp iron edges; harrows; axes with cutting blades; and to knock down dead the hay – long-handled scythes with their side handles; sickles; finally, Roussel passed lapwings used to glean the last bits of the harvested victim. But beasts of plough were resting this Sunday under an awning, next to goats and ewe, the latter group separated, on purpose, from the pigsty.

In this region, there are trails aplenty, hamlet to hamlet – from Chaulme-aus-Woupils to Vieus Dun, all the way to Dun-les-Places – with wooden bridges to cross navigable rivers: Yone;* Arrous; Cousin; Auxois. At their banks, barges waited peacefully till the morrow for towing and to pay tolls, still moored and heavily loaded with goods from all corners. These lucrative transport costs also constitute part of Gwenhevre's income, and south of Avallon, fish are abundant – trout, dace, grouper and

*[Yone derived from the Gaulish *Icauna* 'talking river']

abondance -- truite, vandoise, loche, et lote -- en la Vallee du Cousin, ou Gwenhevre a-t-elle affaire ce dimanche-ci avec le pescheur-hermite, Alain des Bois.

Puis que tous Morvandiaux oient messe, preient Dieu et boivent trop a table le dimanche, Gwenhevre n'encontre d'habitude persone en route, mais des huy, une bande de valets estormit au walop l'estreit sentier et faillit renverser Gwenhevre de son palefrey.

Quel tourbillon ! « Hare ! Hare ! » Ce cri excitait le kenil, interromput a maintes reprises par « Taïaut ! Taïaut ! » pour animer encore plus les limiers harassez.

He ! Qui chace le dimanche ? Sa chair pantelante, Gwenhevre put voir passer ce vif-argent sur la piste -- deus allants-vautres* et treis seus !*

Leur preie ?

Roussel !

Le quel ?

Les deus et le mesme, l'un et l'autre. Durant son aventure de purification, Roussel la bevre eut tournet en woupil. Mais oïl, y aura transformations a pleinet !

Roussel n'est le sol qui se transforme aus rythmes du calendrier solaire-lunaire. Y a toute une tribu de warouls* en Valous. A cheval -- toute sole -- Gwenhevre pensait au danger de les rencontrer, en traversant hamels assombriz en Vallee du Cousin : Moulin-

*[vautre « levrier » du wauleis *vertraha* de *vertragos* composet de *ver* « sur » + *tragos* « pied » = « leger a la course » ; seus « limier » du wauleis *segusios* de *segu* « suivre » ; waroul derivet du francike *werwulf* « home-lou »]

monkfish – all swimming in the Vallee du Cousin, where Gwenhevre is headed this very Sunday to see Alain des Bois, the fisher-hermit, her client.

Since all Morvandiaus attend mass, pray to God, and drink too much at table on Sunday, Gwenhevre usually encounters not a soul on the road, but this day, a band of grooms stormed the narrow path, galloping and nearly knocking Gwenhevre off her palefrey.

What a whirlwind! *“Hare! Hare!”** This cry excited the hounds, interrupted many times over with shouts of *“Taïaut! Taïaut!”* * to animate even more the bloodhounds already harassed.

Hey! Who hunts on Sunday? Her flesh aquiver, Gwenhevre had seen quicksilver pass by on the trail – two greyhounds and three bloodhounds!

Their prey?

Roussel!

Which one?

Both are one and the same. During his purification adventure, Roussel, formerly the beaver, had turned into a fox. Yes, of course, there’ll be transformations aplenty!

Roussel is not the only one who changes forms according to the solar-lunar calendar. There is a whole tribe of *warouls** in Valous. On horseback – all alone – Gwenhevre was worried about this danger, while crossing overshadowed villages in the

*[**hare** or **haro**, an interjection to excite hunting dogs, derived from Frankish *hara* ‘here, on this side’; **taïaut**, a cry to the dogs when the hunted animal is in sight; **waroul**, derived from the Frankish *werwulf* ‘man-wolf’]

Rion ; Valous ; Vermoron.

Soudain aus bornes de Vermoron fut folie ! A tierce Gwenhevre vit jour glisser en nuit ! Aucune clarté ne pouvait plus percer les nues. Orage esclata en noirceur de minuit ! Oisels cherchaient soulas, se tenant coi et sec au foillage. Chevreuil, daim et sanglier donerent conget au brout et prirent refuge aus recoins moult secrez. Tous disparurent et s'en allerent a l'abri ; a vue d'œil n'y resta ni blond ni brun.

Plevait dru, come des clous, rendant sourd et cassant les oreilles.

Foudre tomba du ciel come martel giganteske en plomb, suivie des tonnerres terribles, secouant arbres et terre, la pluie trempant a flot bestes et plantes du Morvand. Branches et foilles des benevoles et malefikes tremblaient de crainte, mesme celes de la meschante bourgene. Quel veray cauchemar !

C'estait pitiet de les voir a la mercy des cieus.

Mais terroure ne fait conte et impose aus plus craintifs silence, sans y avoir recours. Ce matin-la, tous connurent paralysie et respiration coupee, mesme nostre intrepide Gwenhevre ! Mais, Dieu mercy, ele s'en tira les braies netes, sa volontet intacte.

Pour se revancher contre ces actes insensez de Nature, Gwenhevre mit pied a terre, toute esbouriffée, et fit esclater son indignation, agitant vers ciel sa vois rauke et son poing crispé :

« Ta menace vault moins pour moi qu'un dour* de cendres ! »

Qu'en pensez-vous, cher lecteur ? La tempeste fut-elle message celeste a propos ?

*[dour = poignée, derivet du wauleis *durnos* « poing »]

Vallee du Cousin: Moulin-Rion; Valous; Vermoron.

In a flash, fury thundered near the village of Vermoron! At terce, Gwenhevre saw morning slip into nightfall. Storm clouds ushered in darkness! Birds scattered, seeking solace under leafy branches. In a wink, stag, deer and wild boar fled meadows finding refuge in secret places. All woodland critters vanished.

It rained hard as nails, deafening and overpowering everything.

Then lightning struck like giant hammers of lead, followed by thunder pounding trees and earth. Downpours soaked animals and plants of the Morvand. Boughs and leaves of the good and evil trees trembled with fear, even those of the wicked bourgene.

What a nightmare!

It was a pity to see them at the mercy of the heavens.

But terror never holds itself accountable and inflicts fearful silence without recourse. That morning, every critter -- breathless and paralyzed -- even our intrepid Gwenhevre, but, gramercy, she emerged unscathed, her will as strong as ever.

To avenge these senseless acts of Nature, Gwenhevre dismounted, all disheveled, and gave vent to her indignation, projecting to the sky a hoarse voice and clenched fist:

“Your threat means less than a fistful of ashes!”

What do you think, dear reader? Was the storm a celestial warning?

Alors, si non, de quoi s'agit-il ?

Pour Gwenhevre, n'y avait ni rime ni reson.

Ele ne voyait aucun dessein ; c'était solement un abus de Nature sans motif. Puis, mouillee jusqu'aus os, Gwenhevre remonta et se dirigea vers la Vallee du Cousin voir Alain des Bois, pescheour-hermite et client.

Avant d'y arriver, ses yeus et cœur ovriront moult grands -- et, la, quel immense tourbillon a l'interiour de son estre ! Pour la premiere fois, Gwenhevre sera enflamnee d'un bel home, un saulvage des bois, et ele saura de quoi Foudre et Tonerre voulaient l'alerter.

Amour est double : cendre et sucre ; suie et miel ; blanc come neige ; rouge come feu. Amour warantit aussi contentement et misere. Bref, y a toujours anguille sous cete roche precieuse. Tomber amorous aboutit a desordre perpetuel, puis parfite amour sera, bel et bien, amere et douce, alternativement, douce et amere, une chose impossible a mestriser. Vois-la avertissement ce matin de Foudre et Tonerre.

Comment descrivre ce phenomene qui suit, estant a la fois deus choses : illusion optike ; coup de foudre authentike ?

Chemin faisant, a une lieue de sa destination, Gwenhevre fit l'experience d'un effect estrange sous les esclers intermittents de la tempeste, de sorte que ses yeus ne capterent qu'images interrompues et successivement visibles. Par essample, a chake esclat de lumiere, Gwenhevre voyait, en mouvement clignotant, courour des bois qui avait du garret et des gambes bien fites. Ele s'estona aussi de ses espaulles larges et bras

If not, what was it?

For Gwenhevre, it was senseless.

She saw no purpose to it, only an abuse of Nature without cause. Then, wet to the bone, Gwenhevre remounted and headed toward the Vallee du Cousin to see Alain des Bois, the fisher-hermit, her client.

Before arriving there, her eyes and heart will open wide -- and then, what an immense whirling will erupt inside her soul! For the first time Gwenhevre will flame for a man, for a wild woodsman, and she will know then why Lightning and Thunder warned her.

Love is twofold: ash and sugar; soot and honey; white as snow; red as fire. Love also ensures contentment and misery. In short, there is always a snake lurking under this precious stone. Falling in love results in perpetual disorder; perfect love is even more bitter and sweet, alternatively, sweet and bitter, something impossible to master. This explains the warning of Lightning and Thunder.

How to describe the phenomenon that follows, being two things at once: an optical illusion; an authentic love at first strike?

Along the way, one league from her destination, Gwenhevre experienced a strange effect from the intermittent flashes of the storm, such that her eyes captured images interrupted and successively visible. For example, at each burst of light, Gwenhevre saw in flashing movement a strapping woodsman with mighty legs. She also marveled at his broad shoulders and blacksmith's arms.

de forgeron.

Mais contraire au bon sens, courour ne portait ni chemise ni braies ni souliers. Son corps estait bien taillet, blanc come ivoire et nu come un verm ! Un home a hure, libre come l'air -- ses cheveus herissez et sa barbe flourie !

Fut-il chaceour ou la preie lui-mesme d'une chace ?

Ou...tomba-t-il en pleine forest d'un enchantement mal tournet?

Ou...fut-il un waroul esgaret de Valous ?

A le voir approcher, Gwenhevre s'aperçut qu'il fut non solement forsenet mais aussi blesset ; une raie sanguine coulait de la barbelee implantee a son cœur. Accident de chace ? Qui aurait put tirer cete fleche ?

Soudain ulla-t-il un cri de lou plus fort que Tonerre. Tournant en rond seisit-il une dalle sis fois son poids et la leva, mieus que sis homes l'auraient fait en y mettant toutes leurs forces. Tournant encore, estourdit se mit-il a la waite s'en leschant les doigts, prest a devorer la beste toute crue ! En fin se battit-il les flancs, mais ne pouvant plus s'accroupit-il et s'affaissa, tombant come une guenille, perdant connaissance.

A catre coudes du Dormour des bois, Gwenhevre grogna tendrement, prise d'une faim jusque-la inconnue.

« Quels corps et cœur sans pareils ! Que faire ?

« Va chercher de l'aide ! » se dit-ele.

He ! Le laissera-t-ele en tel estat ? Mais non !

But contrary to common sense, the woods-runner wore no shirt or breeches or shoes. His body was brawny, white as ivory and stark naked! A wild man, free as a bird -- his hair spiked from wind and rain, his beard flowing!

Was he himself the hunter or the prey?

Or ... did he land there from an enchantment gone bad?

Or ... was he a stray werewolf from the village of Valous?

Watching him approach, Gwenhevre could see he was not only frenzied but hurt; blood was flowing from the metal barb implanted in his heart. A hunting accident? Who would have shot that arrow?

Suddenly he howled a wolf cry louder than Thunder. Turning round he grabbed a slab six times his weight and lifted it, better than six men would have done it with combined strength. Turning again, dizzy, he began tracking, licking his fingers, ready to devour the beast alive! Finally he slapped his thighs but could no longer stand up, so he crouched and sagged, falling like a rag, losing consciousness.

At four cubits from the sleeping runner, Gwenhevre growled tenderly, consumed by a previously unknown hunger.

“What a man! What to do?”

“Go look for help!” she told herself.

Hey! Will she leave him just like that? Of course not!

Après enlever son mantel, Gwenhevre remit pied a terre. Ahurie de la tempeste n'estait-elle jamais de sa vie si bele ! Jous roses, ses yeus vifs, tresses aubornes lui tombaient jusqu'aus hanches et porta-t-elle une magnifique goune de soie blanche, diapree de menues flours bleues. Gwenhevre s'habilla en grande dame ! Par contre, la petite tenue du saulvage, faut le dire, fit sensation et impressionna grandement la dame ! Dis donc, tous deus aiment le panache en habillement et en deshabillement !

Agenouillee, Gwenhevre inspecta les signes vitaus du Dormour avant de le couvrir de son mantel -- d'abord Gwenhevre verifia son pouls, en suite sa respiration, et en fin, les yeus tout ronds -- sa virilite a gogo.

Bontet divine ! Que le Dormour sentait bon ! Gwenhevre s'en delita -- ce parfum masculin naturel : moitiet suour, moitiet saulge des bois. Elle finit l'inspection par le couvrir, puis remonta-t-elle son cœur gaillard, walopant tout droit chez Alain des Bois, pescheour-hermite et client.

After removing her cloak, Gwenhevre dismounted. Dazed by the storm, she had never in her life appeared so stunning! Rosy cheeks, eyes shining, auburn braids falling to her hips. She wore a beautiful white silk gown with tiny variegated blue flowers. Gwenhevre dressed like the courtiers of Avallon! In contrast, the nakedness of the woods-runner, it must be said, caused sensation and greatly impressed the lady! Say, both like to display with flourish, one in silks, the other naked as a worm!

Kneeling, Gwenhevre inspected the Sleeper's vital signs before covering him with the cloak – first, she checked his pulse, then his breathing, and finally, her eyes all round -- his manhood galore.

Goodness sakes! How wholesome! His natural scent delighted Gwenhevre -- half sweat, half woody sage. She finished the inspection by covering him before remounting. Heart pounding and soaring, she galloped straight to Alain des Bois, the fisher-hermit, her client.