

Wilderness

The Historical Forest

- ▶ Economic value
 - ▶ Pastureland for swine
 - ▶ Game
 - ▶ Nuts, berries, honey
 - ▶ Bark
 - ▶ Firewood, construction wood
 - ▶ Clearance → agricultural uses
- ▶ Royal hunt
- ▶ Refuge for outlaws
- ▶ Asceticism

The Forest in European History

▶ Continent

- ▶ Extensive forest cover until s. IX
- ▶ Three waves of clearance:
 - ▶ ss. VI–VII (modest)
 - ▶ ss. VIII–IX (affecting most types of forest)
 - ▶ ss. XII–XIII (peak deforestation)
- ▶ Reforestation s. XIV following abandonment of settlements (pestilence, urbanization)
- ▶ Today's forest cover much like that of 1400

▶ Britain

- ▶ Extensive clearing in Roman times
- ▶ Reforestation for the royal hunt and royal exploitation in Anglo-Norman times

Forest Associations

(Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*)

- ▶ Religious: the northern European desert
- ▶ Psychological: chaos and passion

NB “desert” refers to *social* emptiness, not an absence of flora or geographical features.

Forest in Romance

- ▶ Geographic dualism with the court
- ▶ Domain in which to prove one's *individual* worth
- ▶ Domain of fairies
- ▶ Domain of exile
- ▶ An environment that induces dream-visions

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Bibliography II



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