

***La Vouivre*, Marcel AYME, 1945**

“Vouivre” in the dialect of Franche-Comté is the equivalent of the old French word “guivre” which means “snake”, it has been used as such ever since. In the countryside of Jura, “La Vouivre” is basically the girl with snakes. She, together with the Famine beast, stands for the mythology of this region.

We hold some clear and credible testimonies about this serpentine creature. Being a Naiad, she wanders through the Jura's valleys and hilltops, and sometimes stops to bathe herself in rivers, streams or even ponds.

Her hair is adorned with a diadem on which a ruby of an incomparable worth, shines. She never parts from this jewel but when she is bathing. Before immersing herself in the water she takes off her crown and leaves it on the bank with her clothing. This is the moment when the most daring men try to lay their hands on the gem, but they are bound to fail. No sooner is the robber turning away after his crime than a swarm of snakes appear out of the blue and start chasing the scoundrel. Thus, the only way to save his life is for the robber to get rid of the ruby and cast it as far as he could. Some audacious men, overwhelmed by their craving for wealth can't help keeping the jewel. For this sort of person, the only outcome is a horrible death.



Cover of La Vouivre, Marcel AYME, ed Folio

The Lady of the Lake and Lancelot, *Lancelot du lac*, 1225

In the house of Nimue [the lady of the Lake], nobody knew [Lancelot's] name but her, and the servants used different names to refer to him. Some would call him “the beautiful foundling”, some others “the king's son”. She would call her so, or even sometimes “the rich orphan”. Three years went by and Lancelot, under the care of the damsel was the happiest infant ever, for he truly believed she was his mother. [...] He became such a handsome child that no one was thought to be able to surpass him. The Lady who brought him up would live nowhere else but in the vast and deep forests, the lake in which she had dived when she stole him from his [mourning] mother was only an illusion. It lay at the feet of a hill, not quite as high as the one where King Ban had passed away. At the very place where people would see a deep lake, stood the Lady's mansions, right above a river running through, fertile with fish. This house was so concealed that no one could lay his eyes on it as it was cloaked by the delusion of the lake.



Illustration 1: The Lady of the Lake taking the infant Lancelot