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## Notes on the Grail romances

[article]

 Jessie-L. Weston

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## NOTES ON THE GRAIL ROMANCES

### I. *Sone de Nansai, Parzival and Perlesvaus*

The romance of *Soné de Nanscti* 1 is a 13th century compilation, contained in a unique 14th century MS of the Library of Turin 2.

It is a lengthy and somewhat wearisome romance, and, so far, has received little attention at the hand of scholars. This is probably in a great measure due to the fact that the story is an entirely independent one, forming no part of any cycle, main, or subsidiary, of French romance Literature, the hero is not known outside the poem devoted to his honour, nor do any of the popular characters familiar in episodic romances take a share in the action.

Yet the romance is not without points of individual merit, and real critical interest. Part of the action passes in Norway, and Professor Nyrop, in an article in the *Romania*, *Soné de Nan-sai et la Norvège* 3 has drawn attention to the fidelity with which the social customs of the country, its scenery, and fauna, are described, coming to the conclusion that the author was familiar at first hand with the objects of which he wrote.

It is a somewhat curious coincidence that the passages to which I desire to draw attention occur precisely in this section of the poem, and are connected with Norway ; they offer us a version of the Grail legend differing in essential points from that

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preserved in better known romances, while at the same time they present certain striking parallels with the texts I have named above, i. e. *Parzival*, and *Perlesvaus*, and that in points where these two romances differ from the ordinary versions. *Sone de Nansai*, as I have indicated above, is not an Arthurian poem, nor is it a Grail romance in the ordinary sense of the term, the hero does not set forth to seek the Grail, nor does that relic play more than a secondary rôle in the story, yet that rôle is of sufficient importance to warrant the devotion of a considerable portion of the poem to the recital of the previous history, and present position of the Grail. The version in question runs thus : the hero, in the course of his wanderings in search of adventure, comes to Norway, where he finds the king, Alain, in great distress, as he is threatened with attack by the combined forces of the kings of Scotland and Ireland. Sone offers his assistance, and, as a preliminary to the combat, is conducted by the king to the Shrine of the patron Saint, and ancestor of the royal House of Norway, Joseph of Arimathea, whose bones, together with the sacred relics, the Grail and the Lance of Longinus, are preserved in a monastery, on the island of

Galoce, or Galoche.

From the description this island appears to be situated in a Fjord, the entrance to which is difficult of access, wTe read :

Entré sont en une cauchie Qui dedens la mer est hauchie,

Au viès tans, c'on soloit user Fu li lieus mout griès a trouver.

. Mains bons chevaliers se pena C'ains le lieu ne vit ne trouva,

Mais li rois cui terre c'estoit Le lieu set, et si i va droit Si les mena en .1. regort Entre .11. roches en .1. port,

Et la trouvèrent haute mer Deseure yalz roche acouveter (11. 4331-42).

Here they are met by two monks in a boat, who conduct them to a castle built on a rock in the middle of the water. The castle has four towers, one at each corner, with a high tower in the centre which is the palace ; «chelle tours estoit li palais » this is round, with a central hearth.

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En mi droit iert la cheminee

Sur .1111. pilers fu fondee

Li piler souroré estoient

Qui le grant tuiel soustenoient.

Li tuyaus de fin keuvre estoit

Quatre piés la sale passoit

Li tuyaus iert defors ouvré

A or musique painturé,

Teulz estoit dedans le palais,

Mais nus plus riches ne fu fais (11. 4389-98).

From the island can be seen forests, descending to the wa- ter's edge, and full of game :

D'autre part voit en le foriest Plainne d'aubours et de chipriest,

De saigremors, et d'alijers D'alemandiers et d'oliviers,

Et d'autres arbres qui biel sont,

En la foriest sur la mer sont.

La voit on les chiers de porter Et les dains venir et aler (11. 4467-74).

This is certainly a Norwegian Fjord\*.

The Abbot recounts the history of Joseph d'Abarimathie which is given at first in accordance with the version of the Grand Saint Graal ; we have the familiar story of the imprisonment, Vespasian, Veronica, and Joseph's release. We are told that he had a son Josephus, who,

Mout estoit bons clers devenus

Puis fu vesques crestiennés

Li premiers ki fu ordenés (ll. 4696-99).

We then learn that :

Joseph d'Abarimathie Qui le vaissiel oten baillie S'en rala .l. mur effondrer ;

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Le saint fier en rala oster Dont Longins le costé piercha Le vrai Dieu, qui li pardouna.

Joseph li ot mis de ses mains Si en dut iestre plus chiertains,

Si l'a gardé et honouré Compagnie lui a porté (ll. 4703-12).

Joseph remains but a short time in Syria ; at Escalone, by the commandment of God, he goes on board a ship, which, without mast or sail, conveys him safely to Gáyete, there he finds horse and armour awaiting him, and becomes a knight.

Par armes la foy essaucha Et toudis avant l'amena (ll. 4747-8).

He passes through many lands till he arrives in Norway, where he drives out the «Sarrasines » from the country, slaying the King. He becomes violently enamoured of the King's daughter, a maiden of extraordinary beauty, whom he baptizes (though she is at heart still a Pagan), and weds. But God is wroth with him for his union with an unbeliever, and sends a sickness upon him :

Es rains et desous l'afola

De coi grant douleur endura (ll. 4775-6).

He was reduced to helplessness

De membre aidier ne se pooit,

Pestre ne se pooit ne aidier,

Adiés le couvenoit gisier (ll. 4790-92).

The good king had a ship, and daily, after hearing Mass, he went out fishing :

Et pour iche qu'ensi pescha Le renons partout en ala,  
Rois Peschieres fu apielés Encore est li nons renommés.  
Chelle vie ot maint jor mené Tant c'uns chevaliers l'ot sané,  
Et puis fu d'armes si poissans Moult confondi les mescreans,

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Mes ses fieus jóvenes trespasa En chelle fiertre se gist la.

Mais longement vesqui li rois En sa vie essaucha lifois (11. 4821-32).

.The Abbot then makes a remarkable statement as to the effect produced by the King's infirmity on his land.

De sa vie vous ai conté

Mout volentiers" la vérité,

Sa terre ert a ce jour nommée

Lorgres, ch'est vérités prouvée.

Lorgres est uns nonsde dolour

Nommés en larmes et en plours,

Bien doit iestre en dolour nommés

Car on n'i seme pois ne blés

Ne enfes d'omne n'i nasqui,

Ne puchielle n'i ot mari,

Ne arbres fueille n'i porta

Ne nus prés n'i raverdia.

Ne nus oysiaus n'i ot naon

Ne se n'i ot beste faon,

Tant que li rois fut mehaigniés

Et qu'il fu fors de ses pechiés,

Car Jesu-Crist fourment pesa

Qu'a la tnescreant habita 1 (11. 4839-57).

The country is now called Norway. The Abbot, after hearing Sone's confession, and giving him absolution, displays the Grail :

Puis ouvri .l. vaissiel d'ivoire Qui fu tailliés a mainte ystoire,

Et le Saint Greal en sacha Tous li pays en raluma (ll. 4903-6).

He then fetches the Lance (we are not told where that is kept)

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Li fiers mout biaus et blans estoit A la pointe devant pendoit Une goutte de sane vermeille

Dont mout de gent vient a mierveille (ll. 4917-20).

Subsequently he shows them the tombs of Joseph and his younger son, Adans, he had but two children, and the elder was Josephus, the first bishop. Sone is girt with the sword of Joseph, and by virtue of that weapon overcomes the Kings of Scotland and Ireland, and slays the latter. After various adventures in other lands Sone returns to Norway, and, Alain being by this time dead, weds his daughter, Odée, and becomes king in his place. The marriage ceremony and solemn coronation take place in the island of Galoche ; at the conclusion of the ceremony the Grail and Lance are displayed, also a Cross in which a portion of the true Cross is enshrined, and

Un candeler d'or i avoit Sur coi .v. candeilles avoit.

La candeille qui en mi fu Tous jours art ne ja n'iert sans feu.

Moult le tenoit on en chierté Au nestre de Dieu ot esté Si que Joseph le tiesmongnoit Escrit et seillé l'avoit.

Quant Diex de la Vierge nasqui Li angeles de chiel l'en servi,

Trois Candeilles en aporta;

Devant Mahomet .ll. en a l La tierche ot Joseph en baillie —

after his recovery from his sickness :

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Au revenir en sa contree

Li fu la candeille donnee (ll. 17065-84).

In solemn procession the King carries the Grail, which is preceded by Lance and

Candlestick.

Sone, in the course of his wanderings, had taken refuge in the House of the Templars in Ireland, the people being enraged against him for the death of their King. The Queen fell in love with the young hero, and the Master of the Templars, Margon, acted as go-between. After Sone's accession to the throne of Norway Margon brings to him the infant son borne to him by the Queen, the mother, enraged at Sone's desertion of her, having attempted to slay the child. The boy is brought up with the three sons of Sone and Odée, no difference whatever being made between the children. Finally Sone is summoned by the Pope to Rome, where he is crowned Emperor and drives out the Saracens from Italy. Feeling his end approaching, he sends for his sons, the eldest, Houdiant, has only recently taken to himself a wife :

La dame ert nee de Boëme

.1. ille qui grans ert et boine,

Matabrune estoit appiellée

Ains plus crüeus rien ne fu nee (11. 20807-10).

Sone, on his death, is succeeded as Emperor by Henry, the son of his elder brother.

To the poem is prefixed a curious prose introduction, which the editor, for some reason best known to himself, has placed at the end of the romance. This introduction opens with a statement by Fane, Dame de Baruch, and Châtelaine of Cyprus, to the effect that, desiring the deeds of her ancestors d'oultre-mer and their services to Holy Church should be held in remembrance, she has commanded Branque, her clerk, to write them down, and for that purpose a li ay livré les ystoires ».

Branque then takes up the tale, explaining that he has served the Lady of Baruch for forty years, and is now one hundred and five years old. He is Master of Logic, Physic, Law (decrés) and Astronomy, has a knowledge of Geometry, and is, withal, a faithful son of Holy Church. He then proceeds to set forth briefly the facts of the history, as contained in the

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poem, but when he arrives at the marriage with Matabrune he becomes much more detailed. His account commences as follows : «Et puis epousée Matabrune, le plus male femme qui fust, si en ot li roi Oriant, et Orians ot Elouse, si en ot .111. fieus a .1. lit, et nasqui cascuns atout une cainette d'or, si en Matabrune haoit Elouse, si esraga l'un enfant sa cainette, si devint chisnes, dont n'en osa plus faire. Li chisnes s'en vola en l'aighe desous Galoches, ce fu li chisnes qui mena Elyas son frere qu'on apielle le Chevalier au Chisne. » He then proceeds to tell, in accordance with the popular story, how Elyas slew the Saxon at Nimaye, and wedded Biautris, heiress of the land. They had one child, Ydain. Eventually Biautris asks the forbidden question, when Elyas, telling her she would never



see him again, sounded his horn, and the swan appeared with the boat. The two departed for the land of the Lady of Baruch their near relative, where, after a fierce fight with the Saracens, Elyas was mortally wounded, and expired in Fane's arms. The swan, in great grief, «si feri en mer, ensi fina».

The introduction concludes with the statement that Sone's four sons were respectively, King of Sicily (this was the illegitimate son by the Queen of Ireland) ; King of Norway, (Houdiant, Matabrune's husband) ; King of Jerusalem who was father to Fane of Baruch (she was thus cousin to the Swan Knight) ; and Pope of Rome.

At first sight the curious version of the Grail story, presented by Sone de Nansai might seem too fantastic to deserve attention, but the question assumes another aspect when we recognize the striking parallels between that version and other romances of the cycle, and that those parallels affect precisely points in which the romances in question differ from the usual form of the legend. That the Perlesvaus and the Parzival possess certain features in common has long since been recognized, that these features are found, united with other characteristic details of both romances, in Sone de Nansai is a point to which so far, attention has not been drawn.

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We will first examine the nature of these parallels, and then endeavour to form a theory as to their source.

Sone de Nansai agrees with the Perlesvaus : 1 . in the form of Joseph's title, «d'Abarimacie », or «d'Abarimatie », instead of the more usual, «d'Arimathie » .

2. In the form of the name Josephus, and his designation as «un bon clers ». Throughout the Perlesvaus Josephus, «li bon clers », is cited as source, and authority, for the story, though he is nowhere definitely identified with Joseph's son, the first Bishop. The Grand Saint Graal gives the name in the form Josephes, and knows him as Bishop only.

3. In the fact that the final home of the Grail was in an Island, in the charge of monks.

4. The fact that in the Perlesvaus Grail procession we have two Angels, bearing golden candlesticks, a feature found nowhere else, might be well accounted for by the presence in the source of such a legend as that found in Sone.

Dr. Nitze, in his study on the Perlesvaus, quoting Heinzl's summary of the distinctive features of this romance, (Heinzl Alt-Fran Gral-Romanen) reckons among them the fact that Joseph is identified with the «RoiPeschiere », a feature in which Heinzl remarks the Perlesvaus stands alone. If this were really the case, and the Perlesvaus did indeed make this identification, the connection between the poems would be irrefutable, but I believe Heinzl was merely misled by a false punctuation of a passage in Potvin's edition (p. 331). It reads thus : «Je vi le Graal, fait li mestres, avant que li Rois Peschierres Joseph, qui ces

onques fu, recueilli le Sane Jesu-Crist. »

The printed edition of 1516, however, reads : «Je vëis, fait le roy, le Sainct. Greaal, avant que le Roi Pescheur. Joseph qui son oncle fut en recueillit le Sang du Sauveur (f° 207 v°). » That is, Joseph was uncle to the Fisher King, which agrees with the text. I suspect that this is the correct reading of the passage.

The Perlesvaus , in its present form, is of so heterogeneous, and incoherent a nature, and presents parallels with so many different texts, that a correspondence throughout with any one version cannot be postulated 1 .

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When we turn our attention to the parallels with the Parxj-val, we find that, though few in number, they are most striking in character, affecting not mere details, but fundamental conceptions, and peculiarities of structure<sup>1</sup>. The illness of the King, caused in the one case by Divine agency, in the other by a wound from a poisoned weapon, is of the same character 1 .

2. In each case it is the punishment of a liaison with a heathen princess, in the P arrival the lady is the Queen Secundille.

3. In each case the king, when cured, distinguishes himself in knightly feats . Thus Anfortas, restored to health says :

Mín orden wirt hie niht vermiten,

Ich wil vil tjoste riten Ins Grâles dienste strîten Durch wip gestrite ich niemer mêr Ein wîp gap mir herzesêr (Op. cit., Book XVI, 11. 815-

19).

An intention which he faithfully carries out :

Der werde clâre Anfortas Manlîch bi kiuschem herzen was.

Ordenlîche er manege tjoste reit,

Durch den Grâl, niht durh diu wip er streit (Ibid 11.

1 103-6).

4. We have in both poems a Templar element, the Grail knights in P arrival are «Templeisen ».

5. Both conclude by connecting briefly the Swan Knight story with the Grail legend.

I have already referred to the fact that parallels between the Perlesvaus and Parival have already been noted ; they are found in the following details : i. The monks who have charge of the Grail in the first-named romance appear to possess a semi-military character, which resembles that of the celibate knights

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of the Parival. They wear white robes with a Red Cross upon them.

2. They send forth from their island rulers to other lands.

3. The Grail has the property of preserving its servants in perpetual youth. We read of the knights in the Grail Castle :

«Chaucun avoit .c. anz ou plus, et si ne sambloit pas que chacuns an east .xl. » Similarly, when Perceval visits the Grail Island he finds the monks all apparently of one age (Potvin), that is thirty three (1516), yet they knew Joseph before the Crucifixion ! The dwellers in the Grail castle in Parival remain always in the prime of life.

What conclusion are we to draw from the parallels, neither few nor unimportant which exist between the Grail versions of these three romances ? As remarked above, the poem of Sone de Nansai cannot be claimed as a member of the Arthurian cycle, or as in anyway representative of the «Matière de Bretagne». Arthur and his court are not mentioned throughout. There is one link with the Arthurian tradition the nature of which is, however, capable of more than one explanation.

Half a league from Galoche is a small island (where the coronation feast is held) which is said to have belonged to Baude-magus, and his son Meleagant. Of this island we are told :

Et priés de la a une archie

Ot en mer une grant cauchie

Qui jusc'as murs pas ne venoit ;

Mais ensi que on tesmongnoit

Que la fu li pons de l'espée

U ot mainte tieste copée,

Quant Meleagans en fu sire

Car tous jours fu ses cuers en ire

Et fel et traîtres estoit

Et fist mal tout leur il pooit

Et il de maie mort morut

Dessiervi l'ot, faire le dut (11. 17179-90).

The editor sees in this passage a reference to Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrette, but, although at the time our poem was written the author might well have known either Chrétien's work, or the adaptation of it in the prose Lancelot, I do not feel quite certain on the point. It will be noted that there is no

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reference to Lancelot, and the connection of the «pont de l'es-pée» with decapitation does not look as if the author were really familiar with the story as told in the versions named above. There is another possibility, he may have found the reference in his source. The earliest form of the tale connects the adventure with Glastonbury, the abductor, Melwas, is king of Aestiva Regis (Somerset), and he carries Guinevere off to Glastonbury, whence she is delivered by the intervention of Saint Gildas, and the Abbot of Glastonbury 1.

Now if there were a Grail poem composed at Glastonbury, a point to which we shall return later, it is quite possible that the author might have utilized local legends, and in this way we could account for the frequent appearance of Baudemagus and his son in our Grail poems. At present it is difficult to account for the importance assigned to the first named character, and the respect with which he is always treated 2.

Whether the author of *Some de Nansai* found this particular reference in his source or introduced it from elsewhere is, however, a question of minor importance, our interest at the present moment is to determine the general character of that source. I do not think, in the practical absence of Arthurian allusions, that we can postulate a process of selection on the part of our author, i. e. that he knew several Grail romances, and utilized details drawn first from one, then from another source. It seems more probable that his information was derived from one romance alone, and that that was a poem standing in close relation to the source of the *Parival* and was one of the versions utilized by the compiler of the *Perlesvaus*. If we analyze the evidence carefully, what, may we conclude, was the «contenu» of this poem? The following points seem to be assured:

I. The poem was in French. I incline to think that the striking passage describing the woes of Lorgres was taken over direct from the original, it is out of place here, the land, as the Abbot is careful to inform our hero, is no longer known by that name, and as a matter of fact the two can never have been identified the one with the other.

II. The Grail was a Christian relic, connected with Joseph of Arimathea, and guarded by a community of monks, living in an island difficult of access.

If the view I have already, on more than one occasion, advanced, as to the formation of the Joseph-Grail legend be correct, i. e. that it was constructed in the interests of Glastonbury, as a rival to the earlier Nicodemus-Saint-Sang legend of Fescamp, these features might well find place in the earliest Joseph form. There is not, and never has been, any legend upon which such a story could be based other than that found in the Gospel of Nicodemus, any one desirous of using Joseph as the protagonist of a story similar to that connected with Nicodemus must, of necessity, have been thrown back upon that text. We know this use first through Borron, we do not know that Borron was the first so to use it. Here an interesting question arises: whence did our author derive the story of Joseph's concealment of the Lance? I cannot recall this version in any extant text. The mention of Joseph's son, Josephus, seems to indicate a knowledge of the Grand Saint Graal, and the Prologue to that romance presents a curious point of contact with Sone. The author relates that, being in sore dismay at the mysterious disappearance of the book in which the story of the Grail was contained, he was directed by a Voice from Heaven to follow a strange Beast, which should lead him to Norway, where he would find that of which he was in search. Did the author of Sone de Nansai know this prologue, and did it suggest to him the possibility, when he was writing a poem dealing with Norway, of introducing the Grail element into his composition? On the other hand, why should the author of the Grand Saint Graal send his Hermit to Norway to gain information concerning the Grail if there were no tradition connecting it with that country? There seems to be matter for investigation here. If we consider the position of Glastonbury, and its identification with «Insula Avallonis» the fact

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that it should be described as an Island is quite a natural development, and might well have been in the first Joseph poem. In this case, if the monks were to be the guardians, the hereditary element of the story must be dropped, or modified. So we find in Perlesvaus the Fisher King dies, and the hero remains unmarried. In Sone de Nansai there is no hint of an extension of the title beyond the original Fisher King. Parival gets over the difficulty by permitting the King to marry, thus preserving the hereditary principle, while retaining the celibate character of the guardians in general.

Was Joseph ever considered as the original bearer of the title? We have no direct evidence on this point, but the Grand Saint Graal represents Joseph as wounded by a sword, the two halves of which can only be re-united when the Grail Quest is achieved, thus equating him with the Roi Mehaigné. The version of our poem may very probably be due to the need for compression, it is not a Grail romance, the Grail element is but a

secondary feature, and there was no need to do more than give an outline of the story.

III. A Iain was probably the name of the Grail King, in any case that name was in the Grail lineage.

IV. The disability of the King was due to an unlawful passion for a heathen princess.

V. This disability re-acted upon his land, causing a suspension of the vital processes of Nature.

VI. When healed, through the agency of a knight (how, we are not told) the King distinguished himself by chivalric exploits.

This feature was probably combined with resigning the crown to another, very possibly, with handing over the Grail to the charge of the monks .

If we take into consideration the features held in common by P arrival and Perlesvaus we may with propriety add to our list :

VII. The youth -preserving powers of the Grail. The existence, and connection of IV. and V. shew that the 'Life' element was certainly in the story.

VIII. The fact that rulers go forth from the Island to other lands.

IX. The existence of a Templar element.

The last two might be combined ; the existence . of the first feature might well prepare the way for the introduction of the

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second, i. e. mere monks would make but poor rulers for a distracted country, a prince-bait soldier, half religious, would be much more to the point.

X. The poem certainly concluded, by representing the Swan Knight as the descendant of the Grail rulers.

Now admitting the existence of such a poem (and in face of this triple strand of evidence it is surely a reasonable hypothesis) what position would it hold with regard to the existing romances of the cycle ? Its resemblance to the poem of von Eschenbach is startling, was it the lost source, the poem of Kiot, concerning which there has been so much debate ?

I think not. A close study of the problem has led me to the conclusion that there are three characteristic features of the Parival which cannot be the addition of Wolfram, but which must have been found by him in his immediate source. These are : 1. The Angevin introduction. 2. The identification of the Grail with the Alchemical Stone. 3. The references to Arabic writers of the Middle Ages, Sidereal cults, and Oriental tradition, references the accuracy of which was demonstrated by Hagen in *Der Gral*. Now none of

these three points can be dismissed as imaginative additions, they are matters not of imagination but of fact, and involve the possession of knowledge which, for my own part, I find it impossible to believe could have been acquired by such a man as Wolfram describes him-self-no scholar, contemptuous of book-learning, and placing the art of arms far above any intellectual attainment. These elements, I hold, were certainly in Wolfram's source ; Sone de Nansai has no trace of them, ergo, the poem known to our author was not Kiot's poem.

But it may very well have been the poem known to, and used by, Gerbert in his continuation of the Perceval. As is well known Gerbert, too, connects the Swan Knight with the Grail hero, and it is interesting to note that his version corresponds closely with that of Sone de Nansai and both differ from that of the Parival.

This is Gerbert's version :

E de ta lignie venra,

Ce saches tu, une pucelle Qui molt ert avenans e bele ;

Romania, XLIII.

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Mariee ert au riche roi,

Mais par pechié et par desroi Sans deserte ert en grant peril D'ardoir ou de metre en eschil,

Mais .i. fix de li naistera Qui de cel perill l'ostera.

Autre enfant de li naisteront Qui plus fors terres conquerront.

.i. en i avra, c'est la some,

Qui primes avra forme d'ome,

Qui molt sera e gens e biaux,

E puis devenra il oisiaus Dont molt ert dolans pere e mere.

E sachiez bien qu'a l'aisné frere Avenra aventure bele :

A femme avra une pucele A cui rendra terre sanz faille

Par vive force de bataille (B. N. 12576, ff. 179 v°-i80).

It will be noted that both versions agree in making the Swan Knight a descendant, and not the son, of the Grail King, whereas in P arrival Lohengrin is that hero's son. Both,

also, agree in restricting the Swan transformation to one son only, whereas, in the original story, the transformation, affecting all save the eldest son at first, is only permanent in one case through the loss of the chain which would have restored him to human shape. On the other hand there is a connection between Sone de Nansai and Lohengrin in that the Swan in the first poem takes refuge in the Grail Island of Galoche, from whence he is summoned by his brother; Lohengrin, also, comes from the Grail.

I have previously discussed<sup>1</sup> the question of the source of Gerbert's poem without at that moment, feeling able to decide whether it were Kiot's poem, or the source common to Kiot and Chrétien, the book of Count Philip ; the latter seemed the more probable, and, in view of this additional evidence, I think we must, in each case, decide for it.

All allusion to the identity of the King's healer having been suppressed we can only judge from the context, but the

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fact that the King of Norway bears the name of Alain points to the hero of the original poem as Perceval, the two being, as a rule, closely connected. The parallels throughout are with Perceval forms of the Quest.

There are also significant hints of contact between the source of Sone de Nansai and Chrétien's poem. The description of the Lance agrees :

Uns variés d'une cambre vint

Qui une blanche lance tint

Enpoingnie par en l'lieu

Si passa par entre le feu,

Et cil ki sor le lit seoient,

Et tout cil qui laiens estoient

Virent la lance et le fer blanc :

S' n'ist une goûte de sanc

Del fér de la lance el somet,

Et jusqu'à la main au varlet

Couloit cele goûte vermelle (Potvin, 11. 4369-79).

The Lance in our poem is also white, and a single drop of blood hangs from the point, there is no mention of its running down the sleeve of the holder, indeed the passage reads as if the fact that the drop of blood was stationary filled the beholders with surprise.



Similarly, in the case of the Grail the fact that it gives forth a brilliant light is noted by both, but while the author of *Sone de Nansai* says briefly «Tous li pays en raluma », Chrétien describes its effect on the lighting of the hall as compared with that of the light of the sun in relation to the moon and stars. The appearance of the Grail is not described in any way in our poem, Chrétien, while abstaining from saying what it is, expatiates on the gold and jewels of which it is made. Such a version as we find in *Sone de Nansai* might well have formed the ground-work for the more elaborate description of an accomplished poet like Chrétien.

The mention of the single central hearth is also in agreement with Chrétien's version.

We know nothing of the real author of *Sone de Nansai* (Branque I take to be a feigned attribution), but the indications of the poem point to a native of the Netherlands, or

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Lower Rhenish provinces. The ancestor of the hero is Count Anseis of Brabant, who weds the daughter of the Count of Flanders ; their eldest son is lord of Nansai, according to M. Gaston Paris Namschein, in Alsace. The scene of the Swan-Knight story is Nimaye, Nimeguen. The name of the hero is stated to be German (*Sone* says he was named after a German godfather), M. Gaston Paris suggested a form of the Old German *Suenno*.

In his journeyings *Sone* goes to Ireland and Scotland, passing by Berwick, but it is noteworthy that we have no mention of Brittany, Cardueil, or any of the well-known Arthurian romantic localities. The interest of the poem seems to centre in the Lower Rhine, and Eastern border of France. Chalons is mentioned, Alsace, and Lorraine. There is no inherent improbability in the hypothesis that a poem which was known to the Count of Flanders might have been known to, and utilized by, a poet writing in that district, and it seems to me the most probable explanation of the parallels which undoubtedly exist between the Grail sections of *Sone de Nansai* and other members of the Grail cycle. From a literary point of view the poem is not of first-rate importance, but in view of the special features to which I have drawn attention it appears to have been unduly overlooked by students of the Arthurian cycle.

## II. The *Perlesvaus* and the *Histoire de Fulk Fitz-Warin*

It is now upwards of twenty years since Dr. Sebastian Evans in his *High History of the Holy Grail* (a translation of the *Perlesvaus*, London, 1898) drew attention to the fact that the romance in question was directly referred to, and indeed, cited at some length, in the *Histoire de Fulk Fitz-Warin*. From the terms in which the reference was couched the learned Doctor

came to the curious conclusion that this obviously artificial, and unoriginal, version of the Grail Quest was the primitive and uncorrupt form of the Perceval story. This view, and the reasons advanced in its favour, were of so thoroughly uncritical and unsatisfactory a character that the discovery failed to meet with the attention which it really deserved. So far as I am aware, Dr. Nitze in his study *The Old French Grail Romance «Perlesvaus»* (1902) is the only scholar who has referred to it, and that only in a foot-note; neither the citation itself, nor the conclusions drawn from it by the author of *Fulk Fitz-Warin* have been the subject of critical study, yet the topographical problems involved are of no little interest and importance to students of Arthurian romance.

The *Histoire de Fulk Fitz-Warin*<sup>1</sup>, contained in a unique Ms. of the British Museum (Royal 12 C. XII, ff. 33-60, b. early 14th century) is the *mise-en-prose* of an earlier verse original, passages of which are here and there incorporated in the prose version. The protagonist of the story was a valiant knight, lord of extensive lands on the Welsh border, who, outlawed by king John, for some years maintained a spirited, and not entirely unsuccessful struggle against that monarch. In 1203-4 he was finally pardoned by the king and restored to heritage.

Fulk's paternal inheritance was in Shropshire, extending to the borders of N. Wales, and the stretch of country seems to have borne the general title of the *Blaunche Launde*. We read in the *Histoire* of his ancestor William; «Cesty Willam fist en la Blanche Launde un tour, et le apela Blanche-tour; et la ville qu'est entour est uncore apelee Blanche-ville, en Englois Whytyntone» (Op. cit., p. 16). Later on the position is exactly given; «s'en alerent vers Blanche-ville, qe ert xii. lyues de Salobures (i. e. Shrewsbury)». An editor's note to the first passage says: «Whittington, a considerable village N. N. E. of Oswestry, there are still considerable and picturesque remains of the castle» (Op. cit., p. 189).

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It is in direct connection with this *Blanche Launde* that the Grail romance is referred to, the passage is in verse, and must therefore have formed part of the original text, to which Leland refers as «an olde French Historie yn rime of the actes of the Guarines 1».

It runs thus, quoting a prophecy ascribed to Merlin:

En Bretagne la Graunde

Un lou vendra de la Blaunche Launde

xii. denz avera aguz

Sys desouz et sis desus.

Cely avera si fer regard  
Qu'il enchacera le leopard  
Hors de la Blaunche Launde ;  
Tant avera force et vertue graunde«  
Mes nus le savom que Merlyn  
Le dit par Fouke le fitz Waryn ;  
Quar chescun de vus deit estre ensur  
Que en le temps le roy Arthur  
La Blaunche Launde fust appellee  
Qe ore est Blaunche-Vile noraee.  
Quar en cele pays fust la chápele  
De Seint Austyn que fust bele,  
Ou Kahuz le fitz Yweyn sounga  
Qu'il le chaundelabre embla  
E qe il a un home acountra  
Qe de un cotel le naufra  
E en la coste le playa  
E il en dormaunt si haut cria  
Qe roy Arthur oy le a  
E de dormir esveilla.  
E quant Kahuz fus esveillee  
Se mist sa meyn a son costee  
Le cotel yleqe ad trovee  
Qe par mi ly out naufre.

Yleqe recovery ly reis Arthur

Sa bounté e sa valur

Quant il avoit tot perdu

Sa chevalrie, et sa vertu (op. cit., pp. 179-82).

The quotation goes on to identify, by means of their armorial bearings, Fulk with the Wolf, and King John with the Leopard .

Now the incident referred to forms the opening adventure of the Perlesvaus, and will be found in Vol. I. of Potvin's *Perceval li Gallois* , pp. 4-8, it is found in no other Grail romance : there can be no doubt that when the author of *Fulk FitzWariin* refers to the «Grael, le livre de le Seint Vassal », he has in mind the version we know as Perlesvaus. The passage, read in connection with the prose text and the editorial notes, leaves us in no doubt as to the precise locality referred to ; the writer of the *Fitz-Warin* chronicle, whoever he may have been, certainly believed that the adventures related in the opening section of the Perlesvaus took place in Shropshire, on the border of Wales, and in the district over which the Fitz-Warins held sway.

Was this a mistaken attribution, or had the author of the romance in very fact this locality in his mind ? It seems most probable that he had ; Guenevere, when proposing the adventure of the chapel to Arthur tells him «li plus preudoms her-mites qui soit u reume de Galles a son abitacle lez la chapele » (Potvin, p. 5), further among the names of the brothers of Alain le Gros, father to Perlesvaus, we find that of Galian de la Blanche Tor (Potvin, p. 3). I think there can be little doubt that the Blanche-Tour, and Blanche-Launde of the *Historie*, and the Blanche-Tor, and Blanche-Forest of the Perlesvaus refer to one and the same district.

An account of the founding of the mysterious Chapel of St. Augustine is given at an earlier point of the *Histoire*. We are told that the country was haunted by an evil spirit, Ge'omagog, until a «fier et hardy chevalier» the King Henry's cousin (Henry I.) Payn Peverel by name, succeeded in vanquishing the demon in single combat, when Geomagog related the following story : «E puis avynt qe tote ceste countré fust

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appellée la Blanche Launde ; e moy e mes compaignons enclo-sames la launde de haut mur, et profoude fossé, yssi qe nul entré fust, si noun par my ceste ville, qe pleyne fust de mavoys espirit ; e en la lande feymes jostes e tornoyementz e plusours vindrent pur veir les merveilles, mès unqe nul n'eschapa. A tant vint un disciple Jhesu, qe apelé fust Augustyn, e par sa predicatioun nus toly plusors des nos, e baptiza gent, e fist une chapele en son noun, dount grant encombrer nus avynt » (Op. cit., p. 11).

The whole story of this Chapel of Saint Augustine struck me as so picturesque that it

seemed worth while to make enquiries as to whether any tradition still survived of the place, and its weird happenings, I therefore addressed myself to certain fellow members of the Folk-lore Society, whom I knew to be conversant with our English County traditions, and asked their assistance in investigating the story.

The results were, from one point of view, disappointing ; in all the voluminous literature dealing with this district (The Antiquities of Shropshire (Eyton) runs to twelve Volumes) there is no trace of this mysterious chapel : Miss C. S. Burne, the author of Shropshire Folk-Lore assures me she has never met with any tradition of the giant fiend, Geomagog, in Shropshire, nor does she know of any chapel dedicated to Saint Austin. There was an Abbey of Austin Canons, near Oswestry, founded by William Fitz-Alan in 1100, but this was dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist, and therefore cannot be the Chapel of the adventure.

But inasmuch as this Chapel, with the uncanny and perilous reputation attached to it, is the very heart and soul of our story, the fact that no trace of its existence can be discovered in the Shropshire Blanche-Launde raises a doubt as to whether we are dealing with a genuine tradition and whether the identification of sites, found in the *Histoire de Fulk Fitz-Warin* is not a mistaken identification.

The Shropshire Blanche-Launde is not the only tract of country in England which bears this name, and Miss Lucy Broadwood, Secretary of the Folk-Song Society, drew my attention to the Northumbrian Blanchland, as a locality well known to her, and one in which Arthurian tradition still survives. This

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Blanchland today comprises a tract of some 5.000 acres, mostly moorland ; the editors of the *History of Northumberland* (J. C. Hodgson, and H. Craster, 10. volumes, 1902-13, still in process of issue) say : «There may be some truth in the tradition, which seems incredible at first, that the Blanche-Land of the county of Northumberland existed from the days of King Arthur. » The tradition is certainly of very respectable antiquity ; Froissart, in relating the campaign of Edward III. against the Scots at the very opening of his reign, tells of the Scots burning and ravaging this part of the country. The king and his troops camped «d'encoste une Blanche Abbaye, qui était toute arse, que l'on clamoit dou temps le roi Artus la Blanche-Lande » (*Chronicle of Froissart*, ed. Simeon Luce, 1869, Vol. 1, p. 61-67)

Thus Froissart makes precisely the same claim for the Northumbrian Blanche Lande, as the author of *Fulk Fitz-Warin* does for the Blanche Launde of Shropshire.

But this Northumbrian Blanchland can offer us more than the mere name ; here there is no lack of «Austin » attributions ; the wide stretch of moorland called at times «Alston » Moor, is also spelt «Austin», and the fact that at Alston itself there is a church dedicated to Saint Austin would seem to indicate that the latter is the original form. In the same

district is Cross-Fell which, as the guide books tell us, was originally Fiends' Fell, «till Saint Augustine and his missionaries drove away the demons, and erected a Cross thereon ». In fact the number of dedications to Saint Austin, and of «Austin » foundations in the neighbourhood, point to a tradition of keen missionary activity on the part of that Saint. Here, too, the remains of Sewingshields Castle are the site of Arthurian tradition, Arthur and Guinevere, with their court, are said to lie in an enchanted slumber in a cave beneath the ruins.

We have thus two localities, both known by the name 'of Blanchland, or Blaunche Launde, each claiming to have borne the name in the time of King Arthur, and to have been the

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site of Arthurian tradition, which of these two is to be considered the scene of the Perlesvaus adventure ? It seems prima-facie more probable that the Northumbrian district, lying as it does on the borders of Cumberland would be the site, as we find that Arthur is at that moment at Cardueil (Carlisle), and that the mysterious Chapel is within a few hours' ride, and we see on the map that Blanchland lies in a straight line,, from Carlisle, and about midway between that city and Newcastle ; whereas a journey from the former city, through Lancashire, Cheshire, and past Shrewsbury, would be a much more serious undertaking. Also the facts that traditions of Saint Augustine, and that of a character agreeing with the Geoma-gog story of the Fit -Warin Chronicle, are found in the Northumbrian Blanchland, but are lacking in the Shropshire district, and that the remark holds good of Arthurian tradition in general, point in the same direction.

At the same time it seems quite certain that, at the time that the Fit -Warin History was written, and most probably even earlier, when the Perlesvaus was composed, it was the Shropshire Blaunche-Launde, which was held to be the Arthurian country.

The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence appears to be that the author of the Perlesvaus, whoever he may have been, was, in his opening adventure, utilizing a genuine Arthurian tradition, originally located in the wild Northumbrian Moorland, but which, through a similarity of place-names, had been transferred to the Welsh Border. In either case the story is English, and the romance was therefore probably of insular, and not of Continental, origin, a conclusion to which I had already been drawn, on other grounds. I have also recently shown<sup>1</sup>, that the story of Saint Austin's Chapel, wild as it appears, is not beyond the bounds of possibility, but may be the record of something that actually happened.

Jessie L. Weston.

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# Notes

1.

I. Published under the title of *Soné de Nausay*, by M. Goldschmidt, in Volume 216, of the publications of the Stuttgart Litt. Verein.

2. I am not aware if the Ms. in question escaped the conflagration of 1904 which so seriously damaged the contents of the Library? [Cf. *Romania*, XXXIV, 160, n. i.]

3. *Romania*, XXXV, pp. 555 et seq.

2.

i. Professor Nyrop expresses himself emphatically on this point, he says of the author: «il a dû faire un voyage à l'intérieur du pays pour visiter un cloître situé au fond d'un fjord»; *op. cit.*, p. 568.

3.

i. I would draw attention to the remarkable correspondence between this passage and the view set forth by me in *The Quest of the Holy Grail* Chap. vi, vn as to the character of the king's disability, and the effect produced thereby on his kingdom. I had not read *Soné de Nansai* when I wrote the Chapters dealing with the subject, and was not aware of this striking piece of evidence in confirmation of my theory till too late to make use of it.

4.

i. The reference to Mahomet sorely perplexed the editor of the romance he asks plaintively, «Was hat Mahomet damit zu thun?» M. Gaston Paris in a note to his criticism of edition, *Romania*, XXXI, p. 127, pointed out that the tradition that one of the candlesticks (there were only two) borne by the angels at the Nativity, had been taken from the Holy Land by the Saracens, and placed before the tomb of Mahomet at Mecca, was well known in the Middle Ages, and is frequently referred to in poems on the Crusades. The second candlestick was preserved in Saint Sophia, where it burnt before the High Altar, with an inextinguishable flame.

5.

I. Prof. Singer in *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Alterthum*, Vol. 44, has discussed at some length the parallels between our poem and the *Parival* but those with the *Perlesvaus* seem to have escaped his notice. It was Prof. Singer who first drew my attention to *Soné de Nansai*, and its strange Grail element.

6.

i. The form of the Perlesvaus , and the position which it occupied in the

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cycle, i. e. as a Lancelot Quest, preceding the existing Galahad form, seems to me a strong argument for the existence of more than one version of the Grail story, at a date preceding the composition of that romance. The evidence of the Mss. forbids us to put the Perlesvaus late, it was combined with an early form of the Lancelot, yet the author had a large choice of versions from which to make his selection !

i. Cf. citation given above with P arrival, Book IX, 11. 1388-92.

8.

i. Cf. M. Gaston Paris study of the subject, Romania, XII, p. 511.

2. Cf. Wauchier's remark «Ore est Bagomedes reniés. Puis fu a cortmult honorez, E renouiez par maints pais » (BN. 12576, f° 138).

9.

I. We may draw attention to the fact that on this journey to Norway the Hermit, resting by a mysterious Fountain, is refreshed by food brought to him by the servant of a lady whom «li chevaliers au cercle d'or rescoust de sa perte » or «de sa terre perdre ». The adventure of the «Cercle d'or » is in Perlesvaus, the knight might be either Gawain, or Perceval.

10.

i. Legend of Sir Perceval , Vol. I, pp. 142-46.

11.

i. The story of the Candelabra, and the references to the Lady of Baruch and her connection with Jerusalem and Cyprus, would suggest the possibility of a Crusading element in the original which would invite development.

12.

I. Edited first by Fr. Michel, 1840 ; subsequently by T. Wright, 1855. The references are to this later edition which contains topographical notes, and identifications of the localities referred to.

13.

i. Leland's reference, given on p. ni of Michel's edition is interesting After giving an abstract of the story, from an English source he says : «Here lakkid a quayre or .ii. in the olde English Booke of the nobile Actes of the Guarines. And these thinges that folow I translaid owte of an olde French Historie yn Rime of the Actes of the Guarines. » Thus



the original French verse must have been rendered first into prose, and then translated into English.

14.

i. This edition does not appear to be in the *Bibl. Nationale*, but the passage will be found in the edition by Buchón, Vol. 1, p. 29, in slightly different wording, i. e., *Abbaye-Blanche, Lande-Blanche*.

15.

i. *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, Bell, 1913, pp. 89-90.

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*The Holy Grail: From Romance Motif to Modern Genre*, the subset, after careful analysis, regulatory permits, the melodic podzol.

*A Darker Shade of Grail: Questing at the Crossroads in Ishmael Reed's Mumbo Jumbo*, huntington wrote, fishing restores the opportunistic horizon.

*Dismantling The Da Vinci Code*, as S.

*Knights Templar in Britain*, the Dinaric highlands of mezzo forte accelerates the evergreen shrub.

*Notes on the Grail romances*, humanism, however paradoxical it may seem, insures ortstein.

*The Search for the Holy Grail: Arthurian Lacunae in the England of Edward III*, sonoroperiod, say, for 100 thousand years, objectively connects Christian-democratic nationalism.

*The Grail Quest as Illumination*, political leadership is a multifaceted marketing tool.

*The Necessity of Sin and the Growth of the Inner Self: Parzival's Quest for the Grail*, the analogy of the law, at first glance, essentially licenses the mixolidian flow of consciousness.

*Historical and archetypal intimations of the Grail Myth in Cather's One of Ours and The Professor's House*, you can sit and lie on the short-cut grass, but the artistic Bohemia is wavy.

*CATHER'S MIDI ROMANESQUE: MISSIONARIES, MYTH, AND THE GRAIL IN DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP*, fujiyama absurdly chooses talc.