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IN: A COMPANION TO
WOLFRAM'S PARZIVAL

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Introduction

WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH'S *PARZIVAL*, composed in the first decade of the thirteenth century, was the most popular vernacular verse narrative in medieval Germany and one of the most vibrant of the High Middle Ages. *Parzival* expands and transforms the Arthurian tradition as it existed in the works of predecessors such as Chrétien de Troyes and Hartmann von Aue into a grand depiction of the medieval cosmos around the year 1200, a depiction that demonstrates detailed knowledge of astronomy, natural sciences, medicine, geography, theology, and philosophy. The brilliance, boldness, and astonishing originality of *Parzival*, along with the allure of its forceful but elusive author, contributed to the ongoing popularity of Wolfram well into the fifteenth century, when Wolfram's works were first published by Johann Mentelin in Strasbourg (1477), and to the ongoing fascination *Parzival* has continued to exert on modern readers since the rediscovery of Wolfram's works in the eighteenth century. At the close of the twentieth century, Wolfram continues to be held in the highest regard. He has been considered Germany's greatest poet (Bertau 9) and his *Parzival* is included in Harold Bloom's *Western Canon* alongside the works of Virgil and Dante (500).

Despite the regard in which Wolfram was held in the Middle Ages, there is no extra-literary reference to his life. Although this is the rule rather than the exception with the authors of epic narratives in Germany (Bumke 1991,1), it is unfortunate that Wolfram's works, which reveal so much of the medieval cosmos, yield so little clear information about the life of their author. Only the vaguest of outlines about Wolfram's life can be conjectured on the basis of these works. References to contemporary events such as the military conflict between Philip of Swabia and Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia in 1203 (*Parzival*, verses 379,18–20) and the coronation of emperor Otto IV in 1209 (mentioned in *Willehalm*, verses 393,30–394,5), along with the death of Wolfram's possible patron Landgrave Hermann of Thuringia in 1217, suggest a period of literary productivity falling in the first two decades

pear, by virtue of their contact with the grail, not only as good readers and writers, but also as worldly clerics who know as much about God as the traditional ones because they have access to books, are learned, know how to read and write, and can communicate in many different languages.

In a way that is similar to Wolfram's conception of the grail as a divine book and the grail community as a reading community, Dante (1265–1321), some ninety years later, conceived of the book as a mirror of one's life and as a reflector of things divine when he composed his *Vita Nuova*: "In the book of my memory, after the first pages, which are almost blank, there is a section with the heading *Incipit vita nova*. Beneath this heading I find the words which it is my intention to copy into this smaller book, or if not all, at least their meaning" (Reynolds trans., 29). Dante turns more to his own self, his personal life, and metamorphoses it into a book, but both Wolfram and Dante fully grasped the significance of the book as the ultimate catalyst for self-experience and the experience of God, the original creator and scribe.

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Otherworlds, Alchemy, Pythagoras, and Jung: Symbols of Transformation in *Parzival*

IN HIS TIMELY AND HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT WORK, *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom cites only one Arthurian romance from the German High Middle Ages in Appendix A: "The Theocratic Age," namely, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (500). There is a compelling reason to include it among the works which, in Bloom's opinion, constitute an integral part of Western culture. By no means limited to the historical parameters of the High Middle Ages, Wolfram's romance presents, in many respects, the predicament of modern man, of man at any time in any historical context. It depicts him at his best and at his worst, but the vision that it ultimately holds out for him is one of hope and salvation, one in which (perhaps in contrast to the view that Wolfram's and Gottfried von Strassburg's ethics and aesthetics were diametrically opposed to one another) the intent is ultimately to address, and perhaps even *accept*, the duality of good and evil, of joy and suffering, to establish or re-establish a balance of both within the Arthurian world, in particular, and the cosmos in general.

If one were to employ the catchword "relevant" so popular over the past three decades, then the presence of the *Parzival* figure in the person of Luke Skywalker in the recently revived *Star Wars* trilogy directed by George Lucas should underscore to anyone familiar with the medieval legend just how vital both the character of *Parzival* and his "development" have remained throughout the ages. (For George Lucas, who had more than a nodding acquaintanceship with Joseph Campbell, it could scarcely have been otherwise!) As was the case with his medieval precursor, Luke Skywalker has his encounter with the "other," both in a physical and metaphysical sense, in a process of maturation which involves encounters with indispensable mentors of both sexes, otherworlds, periods of depression and desperation, doubt, and ultimate triumph. Both *Parzival* and *Star Wars* are, to use C. G. Jung's term,

"visionary" works of art, based on "primordial experiences" that "rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomable abyss of the unborn and of things yet to be" (Jung 1972,90-91).

Part of what might be called the hero's maturation process, in terms of analytical psychology his "process of individuation," is the passage through uncivilized (here: uncourtly) geography with which he is unfamiliar and which presents him with formidable obstacles to his further development. These may take the form of external adversaries such as knightly opponents, as well as life-threatening encounters with beasts of prey, giants, dragons, and other mythological creatures, but they may also consist of internal demons, repressed or denied elements of the hero's own psyche which need to be recognized, combatted, and defeated before the hero can proceed on his ultimate journey. Overcoming them is part of the archetypal quest faced by the hero. The geographical setting for such encounters is normally far removed from the (Arthurian) court: traditionally, the forest, an enchanted castle, or an island (often at the periphery of the then known world). Wolfram's *Parzival* abounds in such "otherworldly" landscapes. The entry into or sojourn of the hero in the physical otherworld corresponds to a psychic transformation of great significance for his process of individuation.

It is important to understand from the outset what is meant by the concept of the otherworld with respect to *Parzival*. One could argue that, in the medieval imagination at least, the entire Arthurian world constituted something of an "otherworld," a mythical or semi-mythical realm unfettered by either historical time or place, a stark contrast to the reality of the time. Unlike works such as *Herzog Ernst*, *Kudrun*, and the *Nibelungenlied*, the major otherworldly landscapes in *Parzival* are not "located" in distant lands, far apart from the primary area of events. Prudence must be exercised with regard to the term "located," as otherworlds, whether of a benevolent or of a malevolent nature, are rarely phenomena which can be geographically "fixed." Within the romances themselves, Arthur's world, or court, appears to be consistently on the move, setting it apart from places such as Grahaz and Pelrapeire, and according it a certain affinity to Schastel Marveile or Munsalvaesche. All of these "otherworlds" are, above all, places of formation or transformation of the hero, where the given expectations and patterns of the rest of courtly society either do not exist, have been suspended, destroyed, or, as in the case of Arthur's court, are elevated (sometimes unjustifiably) to utopian levels. The otherworld may thus be inherently positive in nature, a veritable *locus amoenus* — which is not to suggest, however, that it is entirely unproblematic — or it may

be the antithesis of the latter, a haven for every conceivable force that stands in an adversarial relationship to the court. Above all, the otherworld should be seen as representing something far removed from "normalcy" as understood by both the protagonist and his medieval audience. My own thoughts on the matter of the otherworld and its importance in *Parzival* as well as other works of medieval literature owe much to the work of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Ernst Dick, whose article "*Katabasis and the Grail Epic: Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival*" (1978), remains an indispensable resource for scholars concerned with this topos in *Parzival*. The current study differs from Dick's focus in that I am less concerned with the topography of the journeys to the otherworld than with the make-up and (symbolic) nature of otherworldly realms per se, in particular as the latter pertain to what I believe was Wolfram's extensive knowledge of alchemy and numerology.

The realistic and the fantastic commingle in Wolfram's *Parzival*, especially with respect to the movement of the two major protagonists, Parzival and Gawan, between the courtly world and the non-courtly sphere. Even when places do not appear to have any equivalent in historical geography — such as the kingdom of Zazamanc and the town of Patelamunt in the first of the two Gahmuret Books — a realistic description of events which transpire there is provided by Wolfram, who appears eager to delight his readers with the exotic nature of its inhabitants. Yet, the common denominator, knighthood, links such unfamiliar "otherworlds" as Baghdad, Patelamunt, and Zazamanc with European knightly culture: "Knighthood . . . is practiced everywhere, and by stressing that point the hero pays high tribute to his own cherished social class" (Mustard/Passage trans., xlv-xlvi). Among the Moors of Baghdad, Gahmuret appears as much at home as he would have been among his fellow Angevins, and his subsequent offer of service to Belacane is quite in keeping with the dictates of feudal society in western Europe. Even the forest of Azagouc, in which Belacane's suitor, Isenhart, together with his challenger from Patelamunt, Prothizilas, meets his death, is described in the most succinct and matter-of-fact manner: "dâ grôz schade in niht vermeit. / zem fôrest in Azagouc" (27,28-29= "in the forest of Azagouc he found no mock death" [Mustard/Passage trans.]). There is nothing here of the image of the forest as one of those geographical locations "on the extreme fringes of society," in contrast to the "organized world" (Le Goff 1988, 56 and 58). Patelamunt is also clearly a place where East and West, more precisely, Christian and Moor, come together in a symbolic way. Apart from the subsequent liaison between Gahmuret and Bela-

cane, the issue of whose union is the bi-racial Feirefiz, Belacane's dead suitor, Isenhardt, is the son of the maternal uncle of the king of Scots. This is, perhaps, to be viewed as indicative of Wolfram's relatively high level of tolerance towards the "other" (Bertau 241-258) — it may also be indicative of his constant endeavor to integrate opposites — and Belacane's court is certainly the equivalent of anything to be found in the West.

While I have concentrated in the following on the forest of Soltane (which may be considered by some as less in keeping with the epithet "otherworldly"), Munsalvaesche, and Schastel Marveile, these are by no means the only landscapes with otherworldly features in *Parzival*. Ernst Dick has already demonstrated those properties for Trevrizent's realm as it appears to us in the ninth Book, and much could be said in this regard concerning various other terrains in the work with their waterfalls, rivers, ravines, enchanted gardens, caves, and forests. A systematic investigation of all the otherworldly landscapes in *Parzival* remains a most worthwhile desideratum.

Herzeloyde's decision to retire to the clearing in the forest of Soltane is motivated by her intent to remove Parzival as much as possible from the milieu of the knight. It has been discussed at length by previous scholars and need not be dealt with again here. We are more concerned with the alienation of Herzeloyde herself from courtly society and the nature of the locale to which she removes herself and her son (117,4-9). With the death of Gahmuret, Herzeloyde's bond to courtly society is irrevocably destroyed. She will never return: "frou Herzeloyde diu rîche / ir drier lande wart ein gast" (116,28-29 = "Lady Herzeloyde, the mighty, became a stranger to her three kingdoms"). Yet, in the context of this alienation, the narrator praises her sincerity, her lack of falsity: "der valsche sô gar an ir verswant, / ouge noch ôre in nie dâ vant" (117,1f. = "Falsity had so utterly vanished from her heart that neither eye nor ear could detect it"). The move to Soltane is prompted, however, by the extreme, one might say absolute, sorrow that she perceives following the death of her husband. As the one locale which represents the antithesis of courtly society, the forest may be seen, paradoxically, not as a place of foreboding, but rather of refuge: "si brâhte dar durch flühtesal / des werden Gahmuretes kint" (117,14-15 = "And there, for refuge, she brought noble Gahmuret's child"). The sojourn in Soltane comes at the conclusion of Herzeloyde's life, whereas it represents the place where Parzival spends his first, formative years. It is a topsy-turvy world deliberately deprived, by Herzeloyde, of the essentials of courtly existence (see Schröder 1963,13). The forest bestows upon Parzival the status of an outsider (see Stauffer 105).

Uninitiated into the ways of the court and its decorum, but quite at home in the ways of nature and himself the apogee of natural spontaneity, Parzival becomes the conveyor of chaos in the world outside the forest. His is a state of less than benign ignorance. Herzeloyde's actions in the forest appear to go beyond "protecting" her child from knight-hood. Although it might be assumed that her association of the birds' singing with her son's unhappiness causes her to order her retainers to capture and kill the culprits (119,2-4), there is the enigmatic statement by the narrator to the effect that she does not seem to understand precisely *why* she is directing her hatred against the birds: "sine wesse um waz" (118,30 = "without quite knowing why"). As her subsequent comment to Parzival demonstrates ("wes wende ich sin gebôt, / der doch ist der hœchste got?" [119,13-14 = "Why should I alter His commandment Who is, after all, Supreme God?"]), Herzeloyde appears to comprehend that her behavior represents a transgression against the natural and sacred order of things. It is intriguing that Herzeloyde recognizes that her instructions to have the birds killed are ill-conceived. But was not her decision to have Parzival removed to Soltane an equally questionable act that must be interpreted as a violation of the natural *ordo*? The Soltane episode is ultimately characterized by spiritual or psychological chaos, with Herzeloyde acting as both the confused — consider again 117,5: "ir was gelich naht unt der tac" (= "To her night and day were the same") — and the confuser, as she provides Parzival with fragmentary information that predetermines his naive identification of the material and transitory (Karnahkarnanz and his vassals) with the transcendent and eternal (God). His "natural" development as a member of chivalrous society outside the otherworldly atmosphere of Soltane is impeded by a more primal "naturalness," although the time spent by Parzival as a "country bumpkin" may also be viewed as a necessary prerequisite to his ascension to the grail throne (on the contradictions involved in the Soltane episode, see Schröder 1963, 15). Parzival receives information, regarding both the world and the nature of God, which is without a proper contextual basis and which must inevitably lead to confused behavior when he attempts to "re-enter" courtly society. At the same time, Soltane is the place of Parzival's first exposure to a mentor, in the person of his mother; but it is in a thoroughly unenlightened state that he leaves the forest, and one of the consequences of his having been raised there, without the benefit of courtly breeding, combined with his ignorance and youthful zeal (as well as his purely "natural" spontaneity), is the chaos which subsequently erupts in the Arthurian world.

One final point may be made about the sojourn in Soltane which is of considerable relevance for the later psychic development of Parzival. His early years spent in Soltane are devoid of a masculine-feminine balance. The "quest" for the grail, with which he is most understandably and justifiably associated, is chronologically, at least, secondary to his subconscious quest for his father — who is, of course, totally missing, even in surrogate form, during the time he spends in Soltane — and later on to his desire, prominent after his marriage to Condwiramurs, to return to his mother (which may be seen to take on symbolic realization through his final return to the grail). In the case of the former, the initial surrogate father-figure is Arthur, but Gurnemanz, Anfortas, and Trevrizent also have contributions to make as "foster-fathers" to Parzival, with the first two providing secular, physical guidance or encouragement, the latter two being concerned with his spiritual well-being. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that these father-figures constitute a tetralogy. Wolfram, as we shall observe, makes copious use of the number four and multiples of four throughout his romance, undoubtedly because he was fully aware of the symbolic significance that the numeral represents and its consequent relevance for the major theme of his work. Paralleling them on the feminine side are the four most significant women in Parzival's life: Herzloyde, Condwiramurs, Sigune, and Cundrie. Here, too, the tetralogy consists of two women who are primarily concerned with the secular world (Herzloyde, despite her denial of Parzival's innate knightly qualities, and Condwiramurs), and two who are indispensable to his spiritual development (Sigune and Cundrie). When he departs Soltane, Parzival cuts himself off forever from his physical mother, who embodies aspects of both the Great Mother and the Terrible Mother (see Neumann and Jung 1989), but much of his time thereafter will also be spent attempting to re-establish the connection to the feminine. Underlying his movement through time and space in the period to follow (which often appears to be timeless) is a psychological striving for wholeness and unity, ultimately culminating in his accession to the grail kingship.

Of the various otherworldly landscapes in *Parzival*, Munsalvaesche and Schastel Marveile constitute two of the most prominent and enigmatic. While Munsalvaesche, as the host castle of the grail, is most assuredly to be regarded as ultimately positive in nature, Schastel Marveile constitutes a negative pole that requires either dissolution or re-integration into courtly society. Both worlds have overseers who are sexually incapacitated, both appear to lack any firm anchorage in a geographical sense, a state of disorder reigns within each sphere that also has an influence on the Arthurian world at large. That "disorder" can

be traced in each instance to the sexual indiscretions or improprieties of the respective rulers of these domains: Anfortas and Clinschor. Munsalvaesche and Schastel Marveile have become wastelands, as the landscape around the former, in particular, underscores, yet both offer the heroes Parzival and Gawan the opportunity to restore harmony not only within the otherworlds themselves, but also within courtly society in general.

Parzival departs from Condwiramurs and Pelrapeire ostensibly to see how his mother is faring and to seek "âventiure" for the sake of his wife (223,17–25). Herzloyde is dead, however, and so Parzival's search for his mother takes on a metaphysical hew. Now ruler of Brobarz and savior/defender of the people of Pelrapeire, his attention turns from the assertion of his masculinity to the cultivation of his feminine side. This will prove more arduous in the long run than his development as a warrior and knight, which came to him quite naturally, after some refining by Gurnemanz. The path that he takes now is one he must take alone ("von allen sinen mannen / schiet er al eine dannen" [223,29–30 = "From all his vassals he then took his leave and rode away alone"]), and it is one with which he is completely unfamiliar, as the lack of guidance he provides his mount underscores: "mit gewalt den zoum daz ros / truog über ronen und durchez mos: / wandez wiste niemens hant" (224,19–21 = "The horse pulled the dragging reins over fallen trees and through marshy land, for no one's hand guided it"). While the experiences of Parzival in Pelrapeire and his marriage to Condwiramurs may appear, on the surface, to have provided him with a central axis, he is, in essence, quite lost, a novice on the path of individuation. Parzival gives himself over to being guided, and enters a realm which no longer adheres to the norms of time and space:

uns tuot diu âventiure bekant
daz er bi dem tage reit,
ein vogel hetes arbeit,
solt erz allez hân erflogen. (224,22–25)

(The story tells us that on that day he rode so far that a bird could only with difficulty have flown all that way.)

This move from Brobarz to the area of Munsalvaesche effectively transports Parzival from the anchor of a court, replete with obligations incumbent upon him as a ruler and husband to Condwiramurs, to the ethereal regions of the grail otherworld. As Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz have stated: "... it seems legitimate to treat the whole episode as a dream or as a descent into the collective unconscious" (Jung/von Franz 69). While Parzival may have left Condwir-

amurs to search out his mother, it is not she, at least not in person, whom he finds in this part of the romance, but rather father-figures, who are, in fact, related to him through his mother: Anfortas, his uncle, and Frimutel, his grandfather.

The grail world is imbued with diverse and rich forms of symbolism, but those associated with the idea of wholeness/unity are particularly striking. Ernst Dick's depiction of the realm of the grail as "a symbolic center" (Dick 71) is supported not only by the thematic "polarity of life and death" (Dick 70) to be discerned there, but also by symbols of wholeness and unity which abound in the description Wolfram provides of the area and its remarkable rituals. Similarly, Jung and von Franz underscore the significance of Anfortas's world as a "projection of the Self as an inner centre, extending far beyond the ego, which expresses wholeness and harmony and from which radiate healing, integrating influences" (333). When Parzival first encounters the grail king on the lake, Anfortas is wearing a remarkable hat: "sin huot was pfawin" (225,12= "His hat was trimmed with peacock feathers"). Peacock feathers, specifically, the multi-colored spectrum which they present when unfolded, are a symbolic manifestation of completeness: "The peacock's tail, in particular, appears in the eighty-fourth emblem of the *Ars Symbolica* of Bosch as a symbol for the blending together of all colours and for the idea of totality" (Cirlot 251). Anfortas is not the only one in *Parzival* whose hat is adorned with peacock feathers. Cundrie sports the latest fashion from London when she arrives at Arthur's court to admonish Parzival and the Round Table: "von Lunders ein pfawin huot, / gefurriert mit einem blialt / (der huot was niwe, diu snuor niht alt)" (313,10-12= "A hat from London, trimmed with peacock plumes and lined with cloth of gold — the hat was new and the tie ribbon was not old"). When Gawan encounters King Gramoflanz in the twelfth Book, the latter is also wearing a hat of peacock feathers: "phawin von Sinzester / ein huot uf sine houbte was" (605,8-9= "The hat on his head was of peacock plumes from Sinzester"). Similar images of totality abound throughout Wolfram's tale. This color symbolism is complemented by number symbolism: the grail castle is separated from the rest of mankind by a circumference of thirty miles (225,20-21), i.e., 3×10 , both integers underscoring unity and the divine. This number is repeated in 231,25 to describe the number of lands which could not have produced as many tears as those wept by the grail company when the lance is carried into the Great Hall by a squire. It is especially in the Great Hall of Munsalvaesche that such number symbolism is in evidence: a hundred (10×10) chandeliers are alight with candles (229,24), a hundred couches have been set up

(229,28), and a hundred blankets adorn them (229,30), with a carpet (a total of one hundred) before each couch (230,2). They can accommodate four knights apiece (230,1), making a total of four hundred and permitting an association with the number of women captives referred to in Schastel Marveile. The number four is the number in the Middle Ages most often used to denote completeness or unity. Referring to the work of Ludwig Paneth, Cirlot observes that "Four, as a kind of double division (two and two), no longer signifies separation (like the number two) but the orderly arrangement of what is separate. Hence, it is a symbol of order in space and, by analogy, of every other well-ordered structure" (Cirlot 235). The Great Hall also contains three great fireplaces — three being symbolic of "spiritual synthesis . . . the solution of the conflict posed by dualism" (Cirlot 232).

In the grail procession, described in remarkable detail, the countess of Tenabroc and her companion, along with an unnamed duchess and her companion, appear to form a natural grouping of four: "die nigen alle viere . . . / und waren alle wol gevar. / den vieren was gelich ir wât" (233,5-11= "They bowed, all four . . . all four dressed alike and fair to see"). Furthermore, the accent is on four and two in the description of the ladies who follow them: "nû seht wâ sich niht versûmet hât / ander frouwen vierstunt zwuo" (233,12f.= "But look how quickly they have been joined by more ladies, four times two"). Four of them are carrying candles (233,15), while the second group of four carries a brilliant hyacinth (233,17ff.). All eight women bow graciously to their host, following which the narrator again comments on the activity of four of them who then rejoin the other quartet:

viere die taveln legten
uf helffenbein wîz als ein snê,
stollen die dâ kômen ê.
Mit zuht si kunden wider gên,
zuo den êrsten vieren stên. (233,28-234,2)

(Four laid the table top on the snow-white ivory of the stools placed there before, and stepped back decorously to stand with the first four.)

They are followed by four maidens holding candles (234,28), and after them there approach two princesses, the daughters of foreign counts, who carry two magnificent knives (234,16ff.). The procession is rounded out by six more ladies (235,8) and finally by Repanse de Schoye who enters the hall carrying the grail (235,25f.). She assumes a position between two flanking groups of twelve ladies apiece. The grail procession is thus described in precise mathematical terms, whereby four, or multiples of four, are predominant. The entire ritual is domi-

nated by the feminine element. A more passive role is assumed by the knights in attendance, but here once again the number four — or derivatives thereof — are strikingly present. We are told that for every four knights there is a steward and a page carrying a white towel (236,25ff.), that one hundred tables are brought into the hall at each of which four knights can sit (237,1–4), that there are four squires assigned to each table (237,14) — two to sit and carve the meal, two to bring food and drink to the knights — that four carts bring vessels of gold to every knight present (237,22ff.), and that four knights are delegated, in each case, to place vessels upon each of the (one hundred) tables (237,26f.), and that there is one clerk for each knight engaged in the task (237,28). Finally, one hundred squires present bread to those seated at the tables (238,3f.). In addition, the bleeding spear that had earlier been carried into the Great Hall by a squire is drawn around the four walls (231,27ff.). All of this acquires yet greater significance when one considers how the numbers four and ten are symbolically linked:

Ten: Symbolic, in decimal systems, of the return to unity. In the *Tetractys* (whose triangle of points — four, three, two, one — adds up to ten) it is related to four. Symbolic also of spiritual achievement, as well as of unity in its function as an even (or ambivalent) number or as the beginning of a new, multiple series. According to some theories, ten symbolizes the totality of the universe — both metaphysical and material — since it raises all things to unity. From ancient oriental thought through the Pythagorean school and right up to St. Jerome, it was known as the number of perfection. (Cirlot 234; see also Heninger 84)

Against this backdrop, the preponderance of the numbers four and one hundred (i.e., 10×10) in the descriptions of the grail castle and Schastel Marveile is hardly coincidental. With the ritual bearing of the lance around the Great Hall, the reader is presented with the symbolically weighty image of a circle being described within a square, assuming, of course, that the squire does not stop at each corner to effect a 90° turn. This might be seen as the converse of the age-old problem of squaring the circle, something which had fascinated geometers from earliest times and which had also occupied Pythagoras and his followers. Here, however, the square is circularized, which “becomes an effort to make continuous what is discontinuous, an effort to raise the physical to the level of perfection” (Heninger 114). This symbolic transformation of the physical to the transcendental is further bolstered by the possibility that the bleeding lance carried by the squire was regarded as analogous to the lance of Longinus, believed found by crusaders during the siege of Antioch in 1098 (Jung/von Franz 87).

The preponderance of the number four (and its derivatives) as well as the number one hundred (and derivatives) cannot help but remind us of Pythagorean mathematics and the significance of the former as representing “the extended universe” and with the square root of the latter, the decad, “which exhausts the possibilities of physical extension . . . equivalent to perfection” (Heninger 84). Moreover, “. . . we have a notion of cosmos conceived as a derivative of the number 4, and the physical universe is described as an organism composed of four elements” (Heninger 79). Wolfram’s use of numbers is clearly sophisticated (note the intricacy of the design techniques elucidated by Hart in his article) and harks back, I suspect, to Pythagorean principles on numbers, specifically, “the belief that numbers are the ultimate constituents of reality” (Heninger 71). Moreover, “[t]he contemplation of numbers provides a means of rising from the temporal world to participation in the divine, the ulterior motive for study in Pythagoras’s school” (Heninger 76). Extremely important for our evaluation of the significance of numbers in *Parzival* is Heninger’s comment: “While [Pythagorean metaphysics] posits a dualism, a world of forms and a world of matter, it nonetheless effectively interrelates them . . . Numbers have existence in both worlds, embrace both worlds, allow interaction between both worlds” (77–78). Wolfram’s particular fascination throughout his romance with the number four (and its cognates and derivatives) can be understood against the backdrop of its Pythagorean significance (see Heninger 79).

Wolfram deviates from his predecessor Chrétien when he describes the grail itself as a stone instead of a vessel (as is also the case in the *Chronicle of Helinandus* [1204], while Heinrich von dem Türlin describes it as a reliquary casket in his *Krône* [composed around 1215–1220]). This, however, only becomes clear later in Trevrizent’s spiritual mentoring of Parzival:

si lebet von einem steine:
des geslähte ist vil reine.
hât ir des niht erkennenet,
der wirt iu hie genennet.
er heizet lapsit exillis. (469,3–7)

(They live from a stone of purest kind. If you do not know it, it shall here be named to you. It is called *lapsit exillis*.)

The fifteenth-century *Rosarium philosophorum* refers to verses ostensibly to be attributed to Arnold of Villanova who is believed to have died about 1312: “Hic lapis exilis extat precio quoque vilis / Spemur ut a stultis, amator plus ab edoctis” (Jung/von Franz 149= “This insignifi-

cant stone is indeed of trifling value; It is despised by fools, the more cherished by the wise"; see also Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* 180, note 125). Wolfram and Arnold appear to have shared similar astrological and alchemical ideas that were current during the High Middle Ages. While the grail is also portrayed in other strands of the tradition as a vessel (or as a goblet, as in the film, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*), it is noteworthy that Wolfram chose to depict it as a stone, thus making the link to alchemy and to alchemical symbolism that also abounds in the description of Gawan's adventures in the description of Schastel Marveile all the more compelling.

It might be suggested that Parzival's trip to Munsalvaesche is comparable to the *κατάβασις* experienced by Aeneas in the Sixth Book of Virgil's poem, or that of Heracles, Odysseus, and Orpheus to the Underworld. In a sense, Munsalvaesche embodies aspects of the land of the dead, as the sexual wound endured by Anfortas symbolizes an end to all productivity while the grail king languishes in a state of limbo awaiting the arrival of the savior who will restore life and vitality to the realm. Despite the display of obvious glamour that characterizes the grail procession, the castle itself is located in a veritable wasteland. There is, however, a major difference to be noted between Parzival's sojourn at Munsalvaesche and the journey to the World of Shades undertaken by his illustrious classical forebears. Parzival remains but an observer, he does not return to the world outside the grail castle enlightened and in a position to assist in its improvement. Given his "negligence" in not asking the question of Anfortas, Parzival actually creates further suffering at Munsalvaesche and brings disgrace upon both himself and the Arthurian court. The *κατάβασις* of Parzival is to be understood more in terms of a disjointed "landscape of the mind," and it begins *after* he has left Munsalvaesche and culminates in his denial of God subsequent to the invective to which he is subjected from Cundrie at the court of Arthur. He does not emerge from his self-made psychological wasteland until long after his meeting with Trevrizent in Book IX. In contrast to otherworldly journeys such as that of Aeneas to the Underworld to consult with his dead father Anchises, or that of Gilgamesh to his ancestor Utnapishtim for the sake of gathering information, Parzival, it should be remembered, does not *consciously* participate in any quest at this time. He "stumbles" upon the grail realm, and although it is the grail which predetermines the role Parzival is eventually to assume, he himself has, as yet, no awareness of the significance of these surroundings. In contradistinction to the classical questers, Parzival learns virtually nothing at Munsalvaesche, either with respect to the functioning of the grail or the relationship that the grail society

has to the world outside. What he learns about Munsalvaesche and Anfortas is gained from sources outside the immediate grail boundaries (although Cundrie clearly has a connection to Munsalvaesche in her capacity as intermediary between the grail castle, the Arthurian court, and Schastel Marveile) and it is knowledge which is indispensable to him if he is to return to Munsalvaesche.

Gawan's adventures have, perhaps understandably, been eclipsed in scholarship by the attention accorded Parzival and his maturation process from naive youth to king of the grail (see, for example, Dick 74). Gawan never faces, of course, the spiritual vacuum encountered by his cousin, nor has he any integral role to play in the grail quest. Yet he does, through his successes at Schastel Marveile, complement the role played by Parzival at Munsalvaesche in the restoration of harmony and the (re-)affirmation of the universal principle of unity and wholeness even if, as Dick correctly points out, the "universal aspect of Clinschor's magic power (658,26-30) is obviously not being transferred to [him]" (74).

Schastel Marveile has all of the outer trappings of an otherworldly realm: to reach it, Gawan has to pass through a great forest and be ferried across a river (after having defeated Lischoys Gwelljus). From the ferryman he learns that the entire surrounding land is one of wondrous adventure:

ez ist iu lihte unbekant:
gar âventiure ist al diz lant:
sus wert ez naht und ouch den tac. (548,9-11)

(It is perhaps unknown to you that this whole country here is a land of fantastic adventure.)

Intriguingly, however, this is not a place where questions about the wondrous castle and the ladies who can be seen therein are welcomed, as the ferryman's daughter, Bene, makes abundantly clear to Gawan: "do erschrac daz juncfreuwelin, / si sprach 'hêr, nu vrâgt es niht: / . . . / lâtz iu von mir niht swære, / und vrâget ander mære'" (555,2-3; 7-8= "The girl started with alarm. 'Sir, do not ask! . . . Do not be offended at me. Ask me something else'"). Her reaction is duplicated by her father, Plippalinot, when Gawan pursues his inquiry: "der wirt want sîne hende: / dô sprach er: 'vrâgets niht durch got: / hêr, dâ ist nôt ob aller nôt'" (556,14-16= "The host wrung his hands. 'For God's sake! do not ask!' he said. 'Sir, *there* is misery beyond misery!"). It is the ferryman who initially provides the designations of the land ("Terre Marveile," 557,6), the castle ("Schastel Marveile," 557,9), and the remarkable bed to be found inside ("Lit Marveile," 557,7). He serves

as both narrator to the reader and guide to Gawan with his detailed report of the circumstances prevailing at Schastel Marveile. This is also the juncture at which the paths of Parzival and Gawan cross, the grail king designate having ridden through on the previous day, but without any knowledge of the presence of Schastel Marveile (559,9ff.)! Pli-palnot functions as sometime gatekeeper to the otherworld, an initiate who is quite familiar with the castle and its surroundings, but whose very knowledge of the place precludes his willingness to impart that information to anyone other than the most resolute knight. As such, he serves as a mentor to Gawan prior to the latter's adventure in Schastel Marveile, a notable contrast to the situation that prevailed with Parzival in Book V when the latter entered the grail world in a state of complete unpreparedness.

Having left his horse with the tradesman before the entrance to the Castle of Wonders, Gawan proceeds toward the Great Hall, the roof of which is described as follows: "dô Gâwân den palas sach, / dem was alumbe sin dach / rehte als pfâwîn gevider gar" (565,7-10= "when Gawan saw the great hall, its roof was just like peacocks' plumes"), which reminds the reader of the description of Anfortas's hat in 225,12. Moreover, the brilliance of the roof appears to be of a permanent nature as "weder regen noch der snê / entet des daches blicke wê" (565,11-12= "neither rain nor snow could damage the roof's brilliance at all"). Prior to entering Schastel Marveile, Gawan has thus been confronted with a symbol of renewal and unity: "The peacock is an old emblem of rebirth and resurrection, quite frequently found on Christian sarcophagi" (Jung, *Archetypes* 375-376). There is thus an early symbolic link to be noted between Schastel Marveile and the properties of the grail at Munsalvaesche. This connection may be much more significant than has hitherto been perceived. Let us return for a moment to the term — "lapsit exillis" (469,7) — used by Trevrizent to describe the grail in Book IX. While the corrupt Latin form "lapsit exillis" has given rise to much speculation as to its ultimate meaning (Mustard/Passage trans., 251, fn. 11; Jung/von Franz 142-160; Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* 180, fn. 125), there may be a compelling reason to assume that Wolfram most likely meant "lapis" when he wrote "lapsit." Jung has referred to the role played by the peacock as "an ancient Christian symbol of resurrection" and in alchemy as a "symbol of renewal and resurrection, and more especially as a synonym for the lapis The exquisite display of colours in the peacock's fan heralds the imminent synthesis of all qualities and elements, which are united in the 'rotundity' of the philosophical stone" (1977, 290; see also the

chapter "The Lapis-Christ Parallel" in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* 345-431).

The "tests" to which Gawan is subjected in Schastel Marveile have direct links to alchemy. In one of the chambers adjacent to the Great Hall, Gawan encounters the Lit Marveile (566,14), which deftly moves out of his way with every step he takes. Whether one views the Lit Marveile as a test designed to determine Gawan's ability to "ride one's own unconscious, desirous impulsiveness" (Sussman 154) or simply as evidence of Clinschor's skill in combining "magic and technology" to produce, in conjunction with the remarkably smooth floor on which it stands, a "masterpiece[] of construction" (Maksymiuk 111), it is impossible to conceive of the bed as lacking symbolic significance. The marvelous bed and the lion — which Gawan will also subsequently engage in combat — are linked in legend and alchemy (see Jung/von Franz 391), both of them possibly representing unbridled passion that needs to be tamed for the sake of balance and harmony. We note, however, that the bed, in its effort to dislodge Gawan, who has jumped onto it and landed in the middle, systematically, and at a terrible speed that is coupled with incredible force and resonance, slams against all four walls of the chamber, behavior that is analogous to the "bucking bronco" of the modern-day rodeo. Gawan attempts to "tame" the bed in what is described as a series of jousts ("sus reit er manegen poynder grôz" [567,19= "In this fashion he rode the bed to joust after joust"]), but ultimately places all of his faith and trust in God's hands:

Er lac, unde liez es walten
den der helfe hât behalten
und den der helfe nie verdrôz,
swer in sinem kumber grôz
helfe an in versuochen kan. (568,1-5)

(He lay there and let Him take charge of it Who has help to bestow,
and Who never failed to grant help to one who in great need seeks
help from Him.)

In stark contrast to Parzival — and in defiance of the advice given by the latter to put his faith in women when going into battle (332,9ff.) — Gawan turns without hesitation to God when in dire peril. The reaction (or response) is immediate, and the bed, which appears to be multi-colored like the roof of the Great Hall (see 568,18), comes to a complete rest in the center of the floor, with Gawan still in the middle of it. We have in this image of the center another symbol of the movement "from the exterior to the interior, from form to con-

templation, from multiplicity to unity, from space to spacelessness, from time to timelessness . . ." (Cirlot 40).

When Gawan is assailed by gravel stones and arrows — some of which do manage to penetrate his shield and armor wounding him — these missiles may also be regarded as symbolic of unbridled passion (see Jung/von Franz 233), something which Gawan must overcome if he is to find a reliable center. The arrows, in particular, are reminiscent of the *tela passionis* associated with Mercury with which he is purported to have pierced Adam (see Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* 256, fig. 131): "In the alchemical hierarchy of gods Mercurius comes lowest as *prima materia* and highest as *lapis philosophorum*" (Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* 66–67). Viewed from a symbolic/psychological perspective then, Gawan's trials at Schastel Marveile have as much to do with effecting a spiritual transformation within his psyche as they do with his breaking the spell of Clinschor's castle and freeing its female and male captives. Again, on this plane, Gawan's subconscious search for a center and for totality demonstrates a closer affinity between his "quest" and that of Parzival than we are normally inclined to admit. That Parzival's function within the work is considered to be more important than that of Gawan is based on our own ideas of the significance of gradation in the Middle Ages, but there is no indication within the romance itself that Wolfram intended to emphasize a *process of gradation* with respect to the paths taken by Parzival and Gawan. It should be remembered at this time that the amount of space devoted by Wolfram to Gawan in *Parzival* encompasses, in the aggregate, nearly the same number of verses that are accorded the title hero.

In his fight against the lion, Gawan defends himself with acumen, slicing off one of the beast's legs while another is stuck fast in Gawan's shield, and finally piercing the lion's heart with his sword. The narrator's comment on this reads: "Gâwân het die grôze nôt / mit strîte überwunden" (572,22–23= "Gawan had now fought and overcome the supreme danger"). Jung refers to the familiarity of later alchemists with "the slaying . . . of a lion, which took the form of his having all four paws cut off" (Jung 1984,126), and, while the latter reference is to the alchemists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz clearly associate Gawan's confrontation with the lion, regarded as "an outbreak of animal greediness and overwhelming passion," with alchemical concepts contemporary with Wolfram's age (231).

Of all the wonders associated with Schastel Marveile, none is perhaps as intriguing as the "clâriu sùl" (589,5= "shining pillar") which the hero comes upon while on a "tour" of the castle following a night

of recovery from his wounds. This pillar was brought by Clinschor to Schastel Marveile from the land of Feirefiz and is thoroughly magical in nature: "ez was geworht mit liste" (589,17= "it had been wrought by sorcery"). Gawan's attention is drawn initially to the properties of the column, in which he is able to view — or so it appears to him — all of the surrounding lands and the activities of various individuals. This *speculum mundi* requires an explanation, which Gawan requests from Queen Arnive. He learns from her that its major property is that of light: ". . . hêrre, dirre stein / bi tage und alle nâhte schein" (592,1–2= "Sir, this stone has cast its glow, by day and all the nights"). (Once again the reader is reminded of the prominence of light at Munsalvaesche, primarily exuding from the candles carried by the maidens but also from the radiance of Repanse de Schoye; in Chrétien's version, the light emanating from the grail itself tends to outshine the light of the candles.) Within a radius of six miles it "records" all events, a veritable medieval surveillance system! Here, however, Gawan is distracted from Arnive's account by the appearance in the column of riders and, following a brief explanation from Arnive as to their identity (Orgeluse and the Turkoite Florant), he rushes off to do combat with the knight.

In Chrétien's *Perceval*, the marvelous pillar, designed and constructed, along with the castle, by Merlin, was depicted as a tethering post, but only the most noble knight could tie up his horse there. The pillar may originally have had a structural function similar to that of the grail in the sense that only one individual was predestined to have full access to it. In Wolfram's *Parzival*, on the other hand, Gawan is as dependent upon Arnive for a (limited) explanation of the column's origins as Parzival is on Trevrizent for an exegesis of the grail, but this is broken off once Gawan becomes distracted by the appearance of Orgeluse and Florant. The reader is also deprived of any further elucidation of the significance of the column and is left to draw his own conclusions as to its ultimate role within the work. Stolen from Secundille, queen of India and wife of Feirefiz, the pillar thus originated (along with Cundrie and her brother Malcreature) in a land on the periphery of the world. Given its peculiar properties of "surveillance," one could agree with Linda Sussman that "[t]he 'seeing' pillar in the Castle of Wonders extends Gawan's powers of perception; in possession of it, he will, from now on, always have a much broader view than was possible in the past" (Sussman 166). The pillar, as a source and conveyor of historical, temporal knowledge, is complementary to the grail as a transmitter of spiritual, transcendental knowledge.

Wolfram is undoubtedly one of the most complex and one of the most erudite writers of his time. His rendition of *Parzival* is testimony

not solely to the master storyteller, but also to his wide-ranging knowledge of contemporary physical and metaphysical phenomena. Nothing of significance in thirteenth-century Europe appears to have escaped Wolfram's attention and with each new reading, one detects yet another fascinating detail which contributes to our understanding of this most visionary of works. Many questions remain open. To what extent was Wolfram involved with Catharism? What was his actual relationship to the community of alchemists? Was he, in fact, the skilled mathematical designer that Thomas Hart suggests? Perhaps our best approach to Wolfram von Eschenbach and, in particular, his *Parzival*, should be guided by an avoidance of any tendency to underestimate the artist's interest in and comprehension of what might nowadays be considered merely the "esoteric."

Commenting on Goethe's (and perhaps the world's) most famous drama, Carl Gustav Jung maintained that

... *Faust* is an alchemical drama from beginning to end, although the educated man of today has only the haziest notion of this. Our conscious mind is far from understanding everything, but the unconscious always keeps an eye on the "age-old, sacred things," however strange they may be, and reminds us of them at a suitable opportunity. (*Psychology and Alchemy* 67)

What Jung said of *Faust* can be paraphrased to fit the medieval work: "*Parzival* is an alchemical romance from beginning to end." Once again, the words — and advice — of Karl Bertau in his introduction are especially appropriate: "Bei Wolfram geht keine Einzelheit verloren, jede spiegelt sich in schier unendlichen Variationen ihrer Wiederkehr. Wer etwas bloß so liest, ohne etwas bestimmtes wissen zu wollen, der braucht überhaupt nicht zu lesen und kann seine Zeit besser verwenden" (Bertau 12= "Wolfram does not lose track of a single detail. Each one is revisited, reflected in an infinite number of variations. Whoever reads this without wanting to know something in particular does not need to be reading at all and can spend time better with something else"). Even long-term readers who have gained an appreciation for Wolfram's multifaceted game-playing will readily admit that much remains to be uncovered among the 24,810 verses of *Parzival*.

Wolfram is a master in the application of mathematical principles and numerical symbolism that evinces, as we have seen, familiarity with the theories of Pythagoras, to whom he refers in 773,25f. ("der wise Pictagoras, / der ein astronomierre was" [= "the wise Pictagoras, who was an astronomer"], and his statement that Pythagoras was the wisest man one has seen since Adam's time ("unt sô wise âne strit, / niemen

sit Adâmes zit / möhte im glichen sin getragen" [773,27–29= "and without doubt so wise that no one since Adam's time can be compared to him"]) has prompted Wilhelm Deinert to consider the possibility that Wolfram effectively substitutes Pythagoras for Solomon as the world's wisest man, thereby casting the heathen philosopher as a spiritual predecessor of the keepers of the grail (122–127). As well as the tenets of medieval alchemy, Wolfram has presented in *Parzival* a metaphor for the synthesis of opposites, a vision of the ultimate unity of the secular and the transcendental. While we are inclined to speak in terms of "gradation" with regard to the courtly world (as represented by Gawan) and the grail World (*Parzival*), the consistent link that is maintained between both should always be kept in mind (Munsalvaesche's providing warrior-rulers to lands in need of leadership and its sending out of maidens to suitable mates; the grail's "calling" of knights from the courtly, Arthurian realm to its company, as well as its acceptance of qualified maidens [see 494, 1ff.]). Above all, the final scenes in the romance graphically underscore Wolfram's intent to portray an image of wholeness and a resolution of binary tension. All worlds come together in the festival organized by Gawan: Schastel Marveile, freed from its spell, the Arthurian court with its long-absent male and female figures re-integrated into society — underscored by the marriages of Itonje to Gramosflanz, Cundrie (Gawan's sister) to Lischos, and Sangive to Florant — the grail world, on the threshold of having its balance and harmony restored by a mature and enlightened *Parzival*, and the "peripheral" world of Feirefiz, assimilated through marriage into the grail realm. If one were to select a single phrase that might best describe the situation with regard to both Munsalvaesche and Schastel Marveile, as well as Arthur's court, at the conclusion of *Parzival*, an appropriate choice would be "transformation through integration." This phenomenon of transformation pertains not only to individuals such as *Parzival* and Feirefiz, as well as Gawan, now more firmly "rooted" with his exorcising and acquisition of Clinschor's kingdom and a wife in the person of Orgeluse. It also involves more than groups of people such as the female and male captives of Schastel Marveile, but rather encompasses entire societies. The "transformation" is from a fragmented, disjointed, disharmonious, binary existence to one characterized by balance, integration of the masculine and feminine elements, and restoration of harmony in both the individual and collective psyche. In the realization of this ideal, both *Parzival* and Gawan have pivotal roles to play. While the one is characterized more by the temporal, the other by the atemporal, the ultimate image imparted to the reader is less that of a superior existence contrasted with the mundaneness and unpredict-

ability of the everyday world than a mutual interdependence of all worlds set against the backdrop of the heroes' processes of individuation.

WILL HASTY

At the Limits of Chivalry in Wolfram's *Parzival*: An Arthurian Perspective

1

AUTHORS OF THE FIRST ARTHURIAN ROMANCES SUCH as Chrétien de Troyes and his German successors Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach participated in a complex convergence of oral and written narrative traditions and socio-cultural values and interests, during the period from the late eleventh to the early thirteenth century, that generated what has come to be known as the Arthurian tradition. Perhaps the most significant early document of this convergence is the *Historia regum Britanniae* (ca.1136) of Geoffrey of Monmouth. In this pseudo-history consisting of diverse historical and legendary elements, Geoffrey purports to relate the history of the British monarchy over a period of some two thousand years, from the fall of Troy to the death of the last British king in 542, at which time the Angles and Saxons began to reign in Britain. It is in Geoffrey's *Historia* that we first find the figure of King Arthur connected to the courtly/chivalric way of life at medieval courts. Geoffrey tells us that Arthur developed a code of courtliness that inspired imitation in faraway kingdoms and that even men of noblest birth thought nothing of themselves unless they wore their arms and dressed in the same way as Arthur's knights (222). After serious military challenges to its integrity have been overcome, Arthur's courtly/chivalric order is depicted by Geoffrey in terms of its sophistication of taste and dress and in terms of a regulation of aggression in the relationship between the sexes that will have a much more prominent position in the later romances in the form of love service, what Wolfram will later call "ritterschaft nâch minnen zilt" (*Parzival*, 115,20= "love through chivalric exploits"):

In English there are the Parzival romances by Michael Moorcock (*The War Hound and the World's Pain* [New York: Timescape Books, 1981]), by Richard Monaco (*Parsival or a Knight's Tale* [New York: Macmillan, 1977]), *The Grail War* [New York: Pocket Books, 1979], *The Final Quest* [New York: Putnam, 1980], and *Blood and Dreams* [New York: Berkley, 1985] — crude retellings with explicit references to Wolfram!), and by Peter Vansittart (*Parsifal. A Novel* [London: P. Owen, 1990]). One also thinks of the suggested, but not explicitly formulated Parzival structure in Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* (New York: Harcourt & Brace 1952), and in 1989 there was a highly successful American adventure movie about a modern American Perceval and his grail-quest: Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

The stories of Arthur and Parzival have even been used to discuss recent issues in Eastern Europe such as *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The dramatist Christoph Hein, one of the leading East German writers, wrote a drama entitled *Die Ritter der Tafelrunde* (*The Knights of the Round Table*), for which he used the German Parzival tradition, i.e. Wolfram's romance and, probably, Dorst/Ehler's *Merlin*. Hein's drama had its opening night in March 1989 at the "Staatschauspiel" of Dresden/GDR. The play depicts a senile group of knights, sitting at a damaged "Round Table" (at Camelot, of course, not in Berlin, Moscow, or Warsaw), lamenting their failures, the ruin of their politics, and the discontented young people. Among them is Parzival, a modest nonconformist, who is the publisher of a critical journal at Arthur's court. The audience quickly realizes the modern political meanings behind the medieval conversations (e.g., "Round Table" = "Politbüro"). The director of the Dresden theater has been said to have experienced some difficulties because of the performance of this drama, and the publication of the text was delayed. Seen from today's perspective, subsequent to the astonishing events in the two Germanys and in Eastern Europe since the fall of 1989, Hein's drama seems to have been a prophetic piece of literature with respect to political developments, although it is also clear that Hein's play is not merely related to specific political problems, but — in a more general way — to collapsing social orders and the archetypal conflict between the generations. A common aspect of the dramas by Dorst/Ehler, Handke, and Hein, and of the novel by Muschg is that it is no longer the grail itself (which is said to have only little value or even not to exist at all) which is of supreme importance, but rather the quest. Here can be found the beginning of a new German Parzival tradition, adjacent to Wagner and contending with Wagner's dominance.

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