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Narrative Patterns and the Case of Parzival's Grail Quest

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Abstract: Based on the three-layer model of narratives, proposed by Mieke Bal, the present transdisciplinary research describes narrative patterns as story layer constructs that help guiding how the story will be told. Narrative patterns are formed by sequences of episodes, which in turn are sequences of classes of events characteristic of the narratives of a chosen genre. Vogler's rendering of Campbell's *monomyth* is mentioned as a narrative pattern applicable to heroic quests, but it is argued that it does not match adequately Grail quest narratives, such as the unfinished romance of Chrétien de Troyes and its *Continuations*. A Grail quest pattern is then proposed, and its application to the special case of the *Parzival* romance of Wolfram von Eschenbach is discussed. As part of the discussion, it is claimed that the main source of Wolfram's divergent treatment of the final episodes of the Grail quest pattern is Ovid's classical *Fasti* poem. The research work resulting in this thesis is separately reported in an appendix.

Keywords: Narratology, Transdisciplinary Research, Computational Narratology, Narrative Patterns, Grail Quest, *Parzival*, *Fasti*.

Resumo: Baseada no modelo em três camadas, proposto por Mieke Bal, a presente pesquisa transdisciplinar descreve padrões narrativos como construtos na camada de estória que ajudam a guiar como a estória será contada. Padrões narrativos são formados por sequências de episódios, que por sua vez são sequências de classes de eventos características das narrativas de um dado gênero. A esquematização de Vogler do *monomito* de Campbell é mencionada como padrão narrativo aplicável a buscas heróicas, mas é alegado que não casa adequadamente com narrativas de busca do Graal, tais como o romance não terminado de Chrétien de Troyes e suas *Continuações*. Um padrão de busca do Graal é então proposto, e sua aplicação ao romance *Parzival* de Wolfram von Eschenbach é discutida. Como parte da discussão, é afirmado que a principal fonte do tratamento divergente dado por Wolfram aos episódios finais do padrão de busca do Graal é o poema clássico *Fasti* de autoria de Ovídio. O trabalho de pesquisa que resultou nesta tese é relatado separadamente em um apêndice.

Palavras-chave: Narratologia, Pesquisa Transdisciplinar, Narratologia Computacional, Padrões de Narrativa, Busca do Graal, *Parzival*, *Fasti*.

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1. Introduction

In a seminal paper, announcing *computational narratology* as a very promising new discipline, Marc Cavazza and David Pizzi called attention to the two-pronged search of concepts and formalisms for computer implementation [Cavazza and Pizzi]:

Most research in Interactive Storytelling (IS) has sought inspiration in narrative theories issued from contemporary narratology to either identify fundamental concepts or derive formalisms for their implementation. In the former case, the theoretical approach gives raise to empirical solutions, while the latter develops Interactive Storytelling as some form of “computational narratology”, modeled on computational linguistics.

The appeal to consider narrative theories to orient interactive storytelling characterizes computational narratology as *transdisciplinary* [Jantsch]. Accordingly, our ongoing **Logtell** interactive storytelling project¹ has consistently followed a transdisciplinary approach [Feijó] for the design and implementation of tools, both for digital entertainment and for business information systems applications [Ciarlini et al.].

In particular, narratology models developed by literary scholars proved to be essential to our research projects – and served to guide the formulation of *narrative patterns*, which constitutes the objective of the present report.

One of the most influential researchers in narratology, Mieke Bal, has postulated that the study of narratives should encompass three distinct *layers*, which she respectively denominates [Bal]:

1. **Fabula** – a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.
2. **Story** – a fabula that is presented in a certain manner.
3. **Text** – an artifact in which an agent tells a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof.

So, fabula constitutes the contents of the narrative, corresponding to *what* is told, whereas story is *how* the fabula is told, and text is the material *form* through which the story is communicated. Mieke Bal hastens to explain that she is contemplating the readers (casual readers or learned critics), not the authors, and consequently has in mind the reading and *interpretation* activity, rather than composition [ibidem]:

In fact, logically speaking, the reader first ‘sees’ the text, not the fabula. The fabula is really the result of the interpretation by the reader, an interpretation influenced both by the initial encounter with the text and by the manipulations of the story.

According to the above remark, we depend on a close reading of the texts to discover, generalize and keep in a repertoire at the fabula layer, the events found in the texts. Then we observe, in those same texts, how the events are structured to form narrative plots. Informally speaking, we define a *narrative pattern* – the object of the present study – as sequences of episodes, which in turn are sequences of classes of events characteristic of the narratives of a chosen genre. Here we shall assume that a given text is *analogous* to another text if their plot structures match the same pattern. Patterns belong to the story layer, since they are one of the determinants of how a narrative is arranged to be told, another relevant determinant being *story arcs* [Lunenfeld], purporting to show graphically, as in figure 1, the rising and falling emotional flow along narrative plots.

¹ <http://www.icad.puc-rio.br/~logtell/>

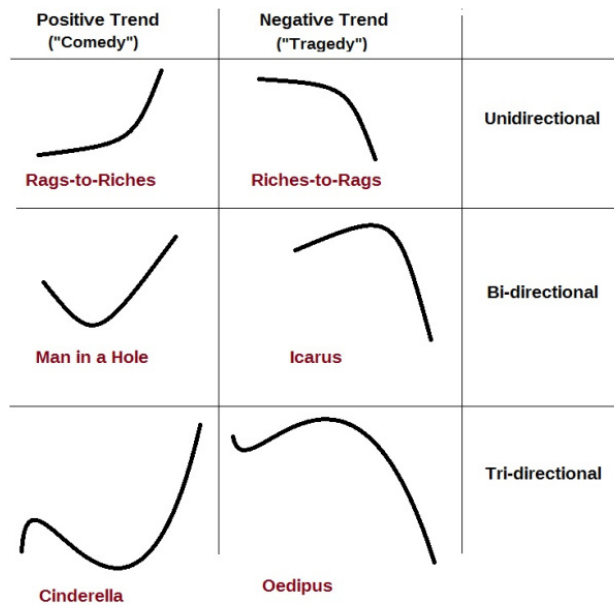


Figure 1. Story arcs

All examples here concern *linear* narrative patterns, but must note that in interactive digital entertainment environments *network* patterns gain preference, giving to users the chance to make choices at branching points, sometimes affecting how the story shall end.²

This report is structured as follows. Section 2 begins with the specification, at the fabula layer, of classes of events extracted from texts of a chosen genre, next proceeding to explain how events can be grouped to form the episodes of narrative patterns, regarded as story layer constructs able to match the plots that different authors have used to tell a given narrative pertaining to the genre; Vogler's [Vogler] narrative pattern representing Campbell's monomyth [Campbell] is displayed at the end. Section 3 introduces a tentative narrative pattern, arguing for its adequacy to represent an extended version of the unfinished French text of Chrétien de Troyes [Chrétien] that originated the Grail quest tradition at the end of the twelfth century. The special case of the *Parzival* romance, the variant Grail quest narrative of the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach [Wolfram], written in the thirteenth century, is discussed in section 4. The thesis that its main source is Ovid's *Fasti* Latin poem [Ovid] is formulated in section 5, and exposed in detail in the Appendix, based on a thorough survey of a number of intriguing aspects of Wolfram's overwhelmingly complex retelling of the Grail quest.

2. From events to patterns

What events to consider depends of course on the *genre* on hand. In [Ryan] we are reminded that Aristotle recognized two forms of narrative: the **epic** and the **dramatic**, the distinction being primarily based on the mode of presentation — the epic representing events through verbal narration (*diegesis*), and the dramatic through an imitation of action (*mimesis*). In the nineteenth century, she notices, a third kind of narrative made its

² Cf. http://bib-di.inf.puc-rio.br/ftp/pub/docs/techreports/22_01_furtado2.pdf for a Petri net narrative pattern.

appearance: the **epistemic narrative**, driven by the desire to know. According to Ryan, its standard representative is the mystery story, to which applies a remark made in [Todorov et al.] about one of the mystery genres, namely detective fiction, to the effect that in this kind of fiction the narratives are in fact formed by the combination of two narratives – comprising, respectively, the events that took place in the past and those occurring in the *investigation* that leads to their discovery.

Epic narratives are the essence of medieval romances, marked by chivalric *quests*. In [Howard] four classic theorists are cited whose work would help to understand the reach of quest narratives:

- Vladimir Propp.
- Joseph Campbell;
- Northrop Frye;
- W. H. Auden;

The first theorist in the above list, in his proposed model of the Russian folktale genre [Propp], restricted the possible events to 31 ‘functions’. Propp represents such event-generating functions in a generic style (‘independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled’). The functions are predefined and form a fixed repertoire of just 31 numbered members. Plots are specified as sequences of functions always occurring in the increasing order of their numbers [ibidem]:

1. Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.
2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.
3. The sequence of functions is always identical.

As a matter of fact, as Propp himself recognizes, there is some flexibility. A tale does not necessarily include all the 31 functions, and the order of occurrence obeys a partial rather than a total order. In section D of chapter IX, he analyzes a few tales, whose structural ‘schemes’ he compares to the ‘general pattern’ [Propp]. We started our work on interactive plot composition by adapting Propp’s ideas. First of all, we realized that his model for the folktale genre was applicable to any genre for which a fixed repertoire of event-producing operations could be defined. In addition, we found that the partial order of occurrence, which is imposed by the conventions of the genre on hand, could be enforced by defining the operations in terms of preconditions and postconditions. The postconditions (i.e. effects) of an operation Op1 might fulfill the preconditions of another operation Op2 whose occurrence would be thereby enabled, thus justifying placing Op1 before Op2 in a plot. And this interplay of preconditions and postconditions made possible our use of plan generation to interactively compose narrative plots, both for fiction and for ‘serious’ business information system applications [Ciarlini et al.].

Initially working directly on folktales, we found useful to group Propp’s functions into four *episodes*, as follows:

- **preliminaries** – 1. absence, 2. interdiction, 3. violation, 4. reconnaissance, 5. delivery of information, 6. fraud, 7. complicity
- **quest** – 8. villainy or lack, 9. mediation, 10. counteraction, 11. departure, 12. proof, 13. reaction, 14. receipt of magical object, 15. translocation, 16. struggle, 17. marking, 18. victory, 19. liquidation
- **homecoming** – 20. return, 21. pursuit, 22. rescue, 23. arrival, 24. pretensions, 25. task, 26. solution
- **reckoning** – 27. Recognition, 28. exposure, 29. transfiguration, 30. punishment, 31. wedding

Most tales tend to include the first two episodes, ending as the normality of the world state is reestablished (in case of villainy), or when the desired object is obtained (in case of lack). Later, we organized the functions in a tree-structured hierarchical pattern, which happened to be instrumental for the implementation of a plan-recognition algorithm [Karlsson et al.]; the numbered functions are shown in boldface:

```

tale
  preliminaries
    absence (1)
  injunction
    interdiction (2)
    violation (3)
  survey
    reconnaissance (4)
    delivery of information (5)
  trick
    fraud (6)
    complicity (7)
  quest
    villainy or lack (8)
  voyage
    mission
      mediation (9)
      counteraction (10)
      departure (11)
    preparation
      proof (12)
      reaction (13)
      receipt of magical object (14)
      translocation (15)
  confrontation
    struggle (16)
    marking (17)
    victory (18)
    liquidation (19)
  homecoming
    return (20)
  capture
    pursuit (21)
    rescue (22)
  entrance
    arrival (23)
    pretensions (24)
  testing
    task (25)
    solution (26)
  reckoning
    revelation
      recognition (27)
      exposure (28)
      transfiguration (29)
    retribution
      punishment (30)
      wedding (31)

```

Coming next in the previously mentioned list of theorists [Howard], we find the heroic *monomyth* [Campbell]³. It formulates a universal hero's journey pattern, expertly offered as

³ Other patterns for heroic narratives can be found in [Rank et al.].

a guide to the journey of prospective authors by [Vogler], where it is displayed, like our four-fold grouping of Propp's functions, under the form of a sequence of generic episodes:

1. Ordinary World
2. Call to Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting with the Mentor
5. Crossing the First Threshold
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave
8. The Ordeal
9. Reward
10. The Road Back
11. The Resurrection
12. Return with the Elixir

The third theorist listed in [Howard], Northrop Frye, poses a question applicable to the study of literary patterns, to which he provides a wide-ranging response: "...are there narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres? There are four such categories: the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the ironic or satiric." He then proceeds to associate the four categories with four *mythoi* named after the seasons of the year. One way to understand these categories is to view them as differently balanced relations between the hero and his world, as sketched below:

- comedy (mythos of spring) – happy outcome, with full integration into the community – **the hero is accepted**
- romance (mythos of summer) – the essential components are adventures, the search for an ideal – **the hero conquers**
- tragedy (mythos of autumn) – the inevitable succession of hybris and nemesis, recognition and reversal – **the hero succumbs**
- irony and satire (mythos of winter) – the grotesque, the absurd – **there is no space for heroism**

The first two *mythoi* would assume a just world, to whose conventions the hero has simply to adapt his behavior, whereas in the second the hero is called either to recover it from a temporary crisis or to move it into an even better state – quest patterns pertain to this category. The third *mythos* still assumes a just world, which however is implacable to human misbehavior, in special to excesses caused by the hero's arrogant pride. The fourth *mythos* evokes a hostile world that resists any attempt to counteract its arbitrary commands, an extreme modern example being presented in George Orwell's well-known novel ⁴.

The fourth and last theorist in the [Howard] list, W.H. Auden, discusses Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as a particularly representative example of heroic quest narrative [Auden]. Strangely enough, in apparent contradiction to the desirability of the marvelous object of the quest inherent in Campbell's monomyth, the Ring of Power is abominated as a source of evil – and, as the sage Gandalf warns, it must be "destroyed lest it destroys us". And yet, as we wonder what may signify to Arthur's court in Camelot that most desirable object, the Grail, whose quest will be treated next, we read to our surprise that "...if we assume that the Grail quest and Arthurian chivalry are ultimately incompatible, we must recognize that, with the accomplishment of the quest, Camelot *must* fall" [Lacy 2008]. If we partake of this sentiment, our vision of the Grail quest will be displaced from the romance to the tragedy Northrop Frye category or, even worse, to the hopeless irony and satire category – since it

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteen_Eighty-Four

is added that ‘achieving’ this quest “will end worldly (i.e. Arthurian) adventures” [ibidem]. But let us try to forget these pessimistic remarks, as we proceed to the next section...

3. Towards a Grail quest pattern

Despite its proclaimed universality, the Campbell / Vogler pattern does not seem to match, in particular, one much cherished heroic narrative: the quest of the Grail. And the reason why it fails to match is that the Grail quest is not purely a heroic narrative. Recalling the three forms of narrative that we discussed earlier [Ryan], the Grail quest has also an epistemic angle proper of mystery stories, since achieving the Grail requires formulating questions whose answer depends on the discovery of a past narrative that explains its origin (cf. the previously cited remark in [Todorov et al.]). Moreover, the dramatic angle is not missing, given that Grail achievement has also been understood as the hero’s progress, in the course of moving interpersonal contacts, towards a higher personality stage (cf. [Jung and Franz], and also [Jacobi] about the Jungian process of individuation).

The essence of the original Grail narrative, contained in the poem *Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal* [Chrétien], can be roughly summarized as follows:

Perceval is the youngest son of a widowed lady, whose husband and other sons have perished in combat. Thinking to avoid that her only remaining son might suffer an identical fate, she rears him in solitude, and forbids the servants to ever mention the word ‘knight’. But one day he meets a group of knights and departs to Arthur’s court, wishing to also become a knight. He kills his first adversary, the Red Knight, and after donning his armour he now imagines that he truly *is* the Red Knight. From a worthy gentleman, he learns about chivalry, about courteous behavior and the need to refrain from asking too many questions (a sage advice with unfortunate consequences), how to ride and bear arms in combat and grant mercy to a surrendering opponent. Meeting Blancheflor, a damsel in distress, he frees her from those who were besieging her castle, and the two young people fall in love with each other. He takes leave of Blancheflor, intending to rejoin his mother. Coming close to a river, he finds a man fishing, who offers him lodging in his castle, which happens to be the Grail castle. Sitting beside his maimed host, he receives a sword as a gift, and watches a bleeding spear and a grail (the word, denoting a large platter, is not capitalized at this point) being carried into a secluded chamber. He then fails to ask about the meaning of this procession (in special, who was served from that platter). At King Arthur’s court, he is admitted among the members of the Round Table. Summoned shortly afterwards by the ‘ugly damsel’, he leaves the court and seeks the Grail in vain for several years. On a holy Friday, he chances to meet a hermit, his uncle, from whom he receives the religious guidance that he still lacked, after removing his armour and confessing his sins. The hermit reveals to Perceval that the Grail is such a ‘holy thing’ that it is able, by bringing and serving a single wafer, to preserve the life of the father of the maimed Fisher king

Probably due to Chrétien’s death, the poem remained unfinished, and, except for this vague indication anticipated to the hero by the hermit, the more fundamental questions that Perceval should normally ask after learning who was served from the Grail – concerning the nature and the origin of the Grail and of the lance – remained unanswered.

And yet, the incompleteness of Chrétien’s narrative did not fail to attract other poets, intent on leading it to a compelling outcome. Most influential was the elucidation provided by Robert de Boron [Robert], who linked the Grail and the spear to scenes from the Bible, or more precisely from apocryphal gospels. The Grail would be a cup in which Joseph of Arimathea collected Christ’s blood, and the spear would be the one that pierced His flank, held by Longinus. Figure 1 reproduces a twelfth century illumination showing Longinus with his lance, and also Christ’s blood being collected in a cup by a womanly impersonation of the catholic church.

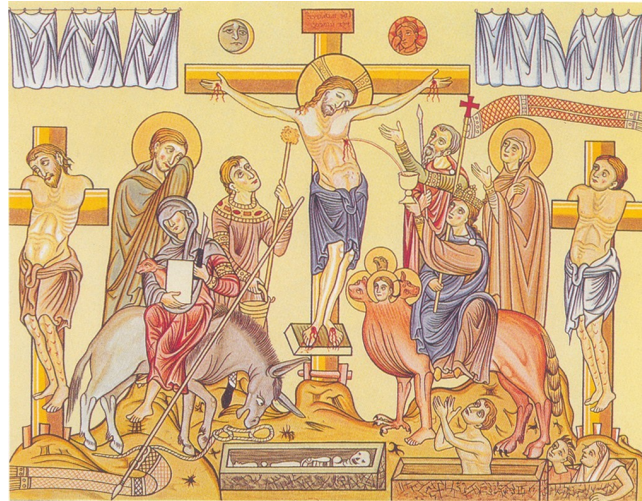


Figure 2. Twelfth century Crucifixion illumination

Robert's view influenced a number of variants of the Grail narrative, among which the four so-called *Continuations* [Bryant] and the *Vulgate and Post-Vulgate Cycles* [Lacy 2010] deserve special attention.

As a result from Robert's intervention, a tentative Grail narrative pattern can be outlined, by extending (in blue) Chrétien's original beyond episode 9, so as to add an outcome where the questions are fully answered and the quest is in some sense achieved:

1. Ordinary word
2. Crossing the threshold 1
3. Meeting with a mentor 1
4. Call to adventure 1
5. Failure
6. Reward 1
7. Call to adventure 2
8. Errance
9. Meeting with a mentor 2
10. Revelation 1
11. Crossing the threshold 2
12. Revelation 2
13. Success
14. Reward 2

In terms of the story arcs displayed in figure 1, this pattern exhibits a positive trend / tri-dimensional flow, reaching peaks at episodes 6 and 12. Or perhaps, in a deeper sense, the peculiarly deceptive reward of episode 6 should be ignored, in which case the flow would be classified as bi-dimensional, with a single decisive peak at the last episode, when the hero receives the reward deserved for the Grail achievement.

The pattern proposes to fit Chrétien's narrative extended by the *Continuations*.⁵ The Grail hero crosses for two times the threshold separating the ordinary world from the wondrous land of the Grail. He learns worldly knighthood from the first mentor, and

⁵ It does not fit the narrative in [Lacy 2010], which follows the Robert de Boron tradition but is arranged so as to accommodate a new paragon of religious knighthood: Lancelot's son Galahad.

religious knighthood⁶ from the second. Failing to ask the required questions he is nevertheless temporarily rewarded by his acceptance to Arthur's court. Summoned again to the Grail quest, he travels aimlessly until he meets the second mentor, who gives him spiritual counsel and to some extent reveals facts concerning the Grail. Then, if we heed to the continuators, he is now duly prepared to accomplish his mission. After crossing the threshold for a second time, he learns what was still unknown to him about the Grail and succeeds in asking the questions (cf. in special the start of the *Third Continuation* [Bryant], where the maimed king completely answers all questions asked by the hero), and ultimately receives whatever reward might be deemed worthy of a successful quest hero. In harmony with the conventions of the genre, he should be entitled to become the new Grail guardian, and marry his beloved damsel.

4. The case of the *Parzival* Grail quest narrative

This tentative pattern introduced in the previous section is general enough to cover the *Parzival* romance, written in the early thirteenth century, in Middle High German, by Wolfram von Eschenbach [Wolfram]. However the fully explanatory narrative corresponding to the Revelation 1 episode [Wolfram, book IX] differs radically from what is spread across the two Revelation episodes in the extended French *Perceval* romance. In the German romance, the hero should ask just one question: "Uncle, what troubles you?". Quite appropriately, the elucidation offered by the hermit in Revelation 1 is so complete that Revelation 2 merely consists of this single question being addressed by the hero to the king, whose tacit response is his total cure and transfiguration. Asking this question, the hero shows *compassion*, perhaps learned by recollecting and reviving the emotions, experienced during his years of errance, in the tranquility of the hermit's refuge. Richard Wagner did surely recognize this while reading Wolfram's text, turning it into a motif when composing his *Parsifal* opera: "Durch Mitleid wissend, der reine Tor" ⁷[Learning through compassion, the innocent fool].

More fundamentally, what the hermit playing the role of spiritual mentor reveals in the *Parzival* romance diverges entirely from the traditional view inaugurated by Robert de Boron. In contrast to the catholic orientation of the French narrative, the view espoused by Wolfram has pagan overtones. The Grail would be a sacred stone fallen from the sky and kept in a temple by knights who were all obliged to keep absolute chastity, with the exception of their king, whose love choice, however, was subject to the Grail's explicit approval. The sufferings of the maimed Grail king would be a punishment for pursuing a lady-love unauthorized by the sacred stone, and the punishment is crudely described [Wolfram]: "He was wounded in the joust by a poisoned spear, so that he has never regained his health, your gentle uncle – pierced through his genitals".

Wolfram attributes his divergence from Chrétien's account to an unidentifiable scholar, Kyot, who would have found in Toledo the writings of a certain heathen, Flegetanis. Kyot then "began to seek for those tidings in Latin books." We, accordingly, imitating Kyot, decided to look for some possible Latin analogue and found a convincing one in the poet Ovid, of notorious reputation at that time, associated with the courtly love fashion clearly manifested in both Chrétien, who translated some of his texts, and Wolfram himself.

⁶ A possible echo from the teachings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux [Bernard].

⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsifal>

In the *Fasti* poem [Ovid], one learns about Cybele, a goddess whose image, under the form of a sacred stone, was originally adored in ancient Phrygia. Ovid tells in detail how a boy elected to serve the goddess, Attis, broke his pledge of chastity and was punished by the goddess with self-castration. Impelled by prophecies that her protection was necessary to Rome against the perils of the Punic wars, emissaries were sent to Phrygia in a quest for Cybele's image. When it arrived in Rome, it was placed in a temple under the guard of (foreign) eunuch priests. The fact that the original image consisted of a stone, which is may not be entirely clear in Ovid's text, is made explicit in a Roman history text written in Latin between 27 and 9 BC [Livy]. Our main thesis is that Ovid was the primary source chosen by Wolfram to assume the place of Robert de Boron, but the plural form of the reference of Kyot to "tidings in Latin books" justifies our secondary inclusion of Livy, among others.

But putting two narratives together often requires adaptations to keep a minimum of consistency, a task much stressed in [Fauconnier and Turner] and by us in [Lima et al. 2021] under the name of *blending*, which calls for high creative artistry.

In an earlier paper on the *Little Red Riding Hood* folktale [Lima et al. 2015], we compared Perrault's tale, which ends with the girl and her mother in the wolf's belly, with Grimm's variant, where a second part is added wherein they are rescued. We suggested that the Grimm brothers composed their variant by concatenating the original distressing tale with another tale where this sort of rescue takes place, *The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids*, also contained in their compilation. But blending the two narratives, *conflating* the two wolves who played the villain in each tale, required a clever change: the girl's famous question about the wolf's teeth in Perrault is replaced by the Grimm brothers to: "But, grandmother, what a dreadful big mouth you have!" This is a vital change – not being bitten, the victims could (with the tolerance granted to folktales...) be gobbled up alive.⁸

More generally, to provide a semi-formal explanation [Casanova], blending involves four spaces: source, target, generic and blend. Source and target denote, in the present discussion, two narratives that one wishes to put together. The four spaces can be viewed as forming a lattice (a diamond-shaped diagram). In lattice theory terms, the generic space constitutes the *meet* of the source and the target spaces and denotes the elements that correspond to each other in these two spaces. By contrast, the blended space reflects the *join* of source and target and inherits all their elements, corresponding or not. The blend is the space wherein one can detect whatever is incomparable or conflicting when putting together source and target, often calling for some form of adaptation. Figure 3 depicts a phase of the process.

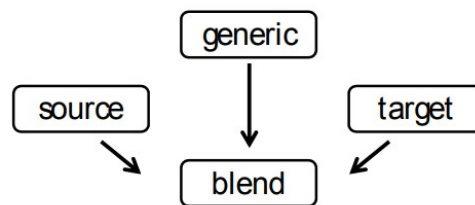


Figure 3: Blending the source and target spaces

Indeed, quite a few particularly radical adaptations should have been in order as Wolfram thought to combine, as we claim here, Chrétien's narrative with the pagan myth. If Rome had to import foreigners as guardians of Cybele's image, since to a Roman citizen

⁸The collection that we assembled of variants of type AT333 and other related tales is available at: http://www-di.inf.puc-rio.br/~furtado/LRRH_texts.pdf

castration was unacceptable, this injunction was no less incompatible with Chrétien's unfinished narrative – and had to be reduced to the attenuated chastity requirement imposed to the Grail guardian knights. Similarly, the Grail king could not suffer castration, which, in addition, would conflict with the expectation that he might be cured with the hero's intervention – and, as a compromise preserving the sexual connotation of his punishment, the ambiguous mention of a wound “parmi les hanches ambedeus” (“through the two thighs”) in [Chrétien] was replaced by the crude assertion that he was “pierced through his genitals” [Wolfram].

Nevertheless a pagan flavor persisted in Wolfram's rendering of the quest, demonstrated for example when, quoting Flegetanis, he does not contradict that heathen's claim that he: “... knew well how to impart to us each star's departure and its arrival's return – how long each revolves before it stands back at its station. By the star's circuit's journey all human nature is determined”, which brings to mind how that other heathen starts his *Fasti* [Ovid] by announcing: “The order of the calendar throughout the Latin year, its causes, and the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again, of these I'll sing”.

5. Concluding remarks

When proposing her three-layer model, Mieke Bal stressed that she had in mind the process of *interpretation*, the reader's attempt to understand the meaning of a text. And yet, for the purposes of digital interactive narrative composition, her model proved to be most convenient and we have used it successfully in our transdisciplinary **Logtell** project. To specify narrative events at her fabula layer we applied the notion of event-producing operations, defined in terms of preconditions and postconditions. In the present work, we formulated narrative patterns as constructs to start guiding, at the story layer, how the narrative would be told. At the text layer, not treated here, we resorted to several media for dramatization – comic strips, animation, video-recorded sequences – to finally tell the story.

The narrative patterns that we presented do not purport to cover everything that figures in the texts that served as examples. To model a quest, only the quest-orienting episodes are considered. Certain episodes, such as Gawain's parallel adventures in Grail romances, can be ignored as inessential to the Grail quest proper, even though they enhance our pleasure as we accompany his feats of courtship and chivalry. In game design [Lebowitz and Klug] it is usual to distinguish between the main quest, whose pursuit by the player determines whether a happy or a disastrous outcome will result, from optional quests, which may have no effect on the outcome but contribute to make playing more enjoyable.

The thesis that Wolfram's main source to lead Chrétien's unfinished narrative to an outcome was Ovid's *Fasti* came as the result of close reading and analysis of a number of literary texts, as well as of religious and historic tracts in order to learn about the context at the time of composition. This research work – reported in the Appendix – had, by necessity, to be both wide-ranging and thorough. Besides looking for sources and analogues, we did our best to examine the many aspects involved in this surprisingly complex text, confirming an observation of Cyril Edwards when rendering the Parzival romance into English (cf. [Wolfram]): “This translator, emerging with shaking head from Oxford's libraries, has often wondered whether Wolfram had access to an even bigger library than Oxford has to offer.”

At the present time, we feel that, in addition to such big book libraries, digital libraries storing narrative patterns would constitute a handy resource for interactive story

composition and game design projects. The need for narrative patterns as a guidance, both for professional designers and casual users, cannot be discounted as reviving an outmoded structuralist stance. Narrative patterns are found everywhere, under the form of storyboards in the movie industry and in the schedules of space exploratory missions.

For the continuation of our work, we are considering, among other promising goals for further work, the development and implementation of increasingly automatic methods for deriving narrative patterns from plot collections.

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Appendix

The fall and rise of Parzival

...os homini sublime dedit caelunque videre
iussit et erectos ad sidera tolere vultus

[Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book I, vv. 85-86]

The story of the heroic protagonist of the *Parzival* poem, composed in the early thirteenth century, in Middle High German by Wolfram von Eschenbach⁹ (trans. C. Edwards, D.S. Brewer, 2004), undisputedly had as its primary source a French poem of the twelfth century, namely *Le Conte du Graal* of Chrétien de Troyes¹⁰. The central thesis of this study is that Ovid's *Fasti* – even though the Latin poet's name was never cited explicitly by Wolfram – constituted the main source of the German poet's reconstruction of the Grail quest.

The basic plot, in what concerns the Grail hero, is quite similar in the two stories. He is raised in a solitary place by his widowed mother, so that, never learning about chivalry, he would not suffer his father's mortal fate. Despite these precautions, having met a group of knights and fascinated by what they tell him, he decides to go to King Arthur's court to also be made a knight. After killing a knight, he dons his red armour and seizes his weapons, which he does not know how to wield. From a worthy gentleman he learns some skills about wearing arms and behaving courteously. Next, he learns about love, having met a damsel in distress, whom he frees from her enemies.

And yet, all that knowledge is not enough to even understand what is involved in a crisis that he is urged to face. Coming close to a river, he finds a man fishing, who offers him lodging in his dwelling which happens to be the Grail castle. Seated beside his maimed host, he receives a sword as a gift, and watches a bleeding spear and the Grail being carried into a secluded chamber. He then fails to ask about the meaning of this procession.

Frustrated but still confident in his knightly valour, he is invited to Arthur's court. Shortly afterwards, he is summoned again – and blamed for his complacent attitude of mindlessly enjoying his present status – to pursue the mission that he had failed to comprehend. Still lacking an indispensable spiritual skill, he wanders aimlessly for several years. On a Holy Friday, he meets an old sage, from whom he receives the instruction that he lacked. Only then it can be said that the search for the Grail effectively begins for him, with ample chance of success.

How the story would end is ignored in Chrétien's case, supposedly left unfinished because of the poet's death. To reach the missing outcome, four *Continuations* were written by four distinct writers (*The Complete Story of the Grail*, trans. N. Bryant, D. S. Brewer, 2015). The quest is finally achieved, the Fisher King recovers his well-being and the redeemed hero is rewarded, either by becoming the new Grail king, or by wedding his beloved, or by achieving both guardianship and marriage.

Wolfram's plot proceeds all the way to the double happy outcome and is much richer in detail. Two major strongly related deviations from Chrétien's text deserve to be discussed with special care: the nature of the Grail as a sacred stone, upon which inscriptions occasionally appear to govern its servers, and the sequence of events explaining how the Grail guardian came to be punished for transgressing one of its strict commandments (book IX, p. 153): “whichever Grail's lord, however, desires love other than that which the inscription grants him must suffer for it, and enter sigh-laden heart's sorrow.”

Finding the sources of these differences, or at least locating suggestive analogues, is still a provocative challenge. At the end of book II, Wolfram claims to be totally illiterate (p. 37): “I don't know a single letter of the alphabet.” In other passages (book IX, p. 145; book XVI, p. 346) he attributes his true knowledge of the Grail, correcting Chrétien's ‘injustice’ to the tale, to an otherwise unattested authority, Kyot the Provençal, who in turn would have relied on writings found in Toledo^{11 12} produced by the ‘heathen’ Flegetanis, ‘born of

⁹ Original text at: http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/germanica/Chronologie/13Jh/Wolfram/wol_pa00.html

¹⁰ *Le Roman de Perceval, ou Le Conte du Graal*, ed. W. Roach, Droz, 1959.

¹¹ Footnote 388 in book IX, p. 145: “Toledo was an important meeting-point of Christian, Arab and Jewish learning.”

¹² We regret to admit that, until now, we found no evidence of a thirteenth century manuscript of *Fasti* in Toledo. On pages 37 and 59 of (E.H. Alton, D.E.W. Wormell, E. Courtney. ‘A Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ovid's *Fasti*’. *BICS* 24 (1977) 37-63) there are references to a ‘Toledo manuscript’ kept at the Biblioteca del Cabildo – but it is attributed to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

Solomon's line'. The same Kyot would look for tidings in 'Latin books' – a clear indication that Latin sources ought to be considered besides those allegedly coming from Toledo.

Indeed, Wolfram's illiteracy claim has been universally discounted as a common literary trope. In the introduction to his *Parzival* translation, Cyril Edwards, while expressing his belief that Kyot was a fiction to mask Wolfram's originality, pointedly observes (Introduction, p. xxi)¹³: "This translator, emerging with shaking head from Oxford's libraries, has often wondered whether Wolfram had access to an even bigger library than Oxford has to offer." And the translator concludes that attributing it to Kyot, a still unidentified cleric, "merely serves to shift the burden of scholarship and genius" (ibidem). Not only a smattering of Latin, but even a minimum of Arabic is demonstrated in the text, enough to name seven stars in that 'heathen tongue' (book XV, p. 249).

Flegetanis believed that human fortune is determined by the movement of the celestial orbs. The Grail itself would be a sacred stone fallen from the skies. It was known by another name of questionable Latinity: 'Lapsit exilis', whose multiple meanings have remained an object of debate. Various sacred stones merit notice, but one of them, imported by Rome in a time of troubles, a veritable Roman Grail, should be considered apart. The story of this stone, image of the goddess Cybele, covering both her coming from Phrygia to be tended in a temple by eunuch priests, and the dread punishment of her unfaithful Attis, is told by the poet Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) in his *Fasti* (trans. Sir James George Frazer, Harvard University Press, 1989) dedicated by "that player of tender loves", as he styled himself, first to Augustus and then to Germanicus, in the vain hope of being allowed to return from exile to his native home.

The present work, besides surveying a number of facets of Wolfram's notably complex narrative, will try to show how the scenes vividly enacted in Ovid's *Fasti* provided his main inspiration for modelling the Grail quest in a way that artfully combines ancient beliefs on the power of the stars with canonical Christian doctrine.

Starry signs

Wolfram von Eschenbach tells in his *Parzival* that the script found in Toledo by Kyot, wherefrom that renowned scholar would have learned those hidden tidings concerning the Grail, showed how human fortune is intimately linked to the motions of the celestial bodies (book IX, p. 145):

Flegetanis the heathen knew well how to impart to us each star's departure ['hinganc'] and its arrival's return ['widerwanc'] – how long each revolves before it stands back at its station. By the star's circuit's journey all human nature is determined.

That is essentially Ovid's plan for the composition of his *Fasti*, outlined in the very first verses (book I, p. 2):

"Tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum lapsaque sub terras ortaque signa canam".

[The order of the calendar throughout the Latin year, its causes, and the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again, of these I'll sing.]

noting that, like Wolfram, Ovid employs the fall-rise sequence, rather than the more common rise-fall. And notice too that the original Latin term for "set beneath" is "lapsa", suggestive of Wolfram's enigmatic (and grammatically incorrect) "lapsit". The term "signa" (signs), in turn, is rich in meaning, covering primarily the "starry signs" (the phrase used in the translation), but arguably connoting whatever might be associated with them, such as all sorts of agents – divine, angelic or human –, as well as the fastus/nefastus succession of days, whereupon some of the foundation myths and customs of the Roman state were grounded.

Since the star motions constitute a cyclic phenomenon, it should not matter whether one talks of "rise and fall" or of "fall and rise". Both sequences lend themselves to significant metaphors. The former suggests the fatal birth-death succession that plagues mankind, and extends, according to some theories of history, to nations and entire civilizations (P.A. Sorokin, *Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis*, Beacon Press, 1950). But the other sequence, which is the one that underlies the structure of Wolfram's poem, is even more inspiring, denoting death-resurrection, sin-forgiveness, exile-recall, the essence perhaps of any

¹³ In the same page, Edwards notes the early "attempts to identify Kyot with the poet Guiot de Provins, a French writer dating from c. 1200".

"Bildungsroman" and of the withdrawal-and-return thesis of Arnold Toynbee (A.J. Toynbee. *A Study of History*. D.C. Somervell's abridgement, Oxford University Press, v. 1, p. 217-seq.). And one should not forget the ancient fear that the sun would not rise again, as well as the rites to avoid that catastrophe, and the relief when it shone brightly and warmly once more.

The celestial orbs and their motions were then the object both of Astronomy¹⁴ and, perhaps more importantly in a literary context, of Astrology. They determine, so Wolfram claims through the voice of Flegetanis in the above quotation, 'all human nature'. Planets had been named after the Greek/Roman gods, and those capricious rulers of our destiny, transmuted into angels (good or 'neutral') and demons by medieval lore, still survived between heaven and earth in defiance to our vain philosophy. As an example, the wound of the Grail king was painfully affected by the farthest visible object circling the sun: "When the star Saturn stood at its station again, we were informed of it by the wound, and by the summerly snow. Never had the frost hurt him so much, your gentle uncle" (book IX, p. 157).

Indeed, Roman tradition had it that Saturn was associated with cold and unfavourable auspices, wintry December being the month of the propitiatory Saturnalia festival. Virgil referred to the planet in *Georgics* 1.336 as "frigida Saturni ... stella". Even more explicit is Germanicus Caesar in his free translation of the *Phainomena* of Aratus (A. Breysig, *Germanici Caesaris Aratea: ACC. Epigrammata*, Teubner, 1899, pp. 45-46):

Haec ut quisque deus possedit numine signa,
Adiungunt proprias uires. Torpere uidentur
Omnia Saturno; raras ille exprimit ignis
Et siccas hiemes adstrictis perficit undis.
Grandine durantur pluuias, niue grandio putrescit
Et rigor accedit uentis

[The gods confer their power to the signs that belong to them. Everything seems to languish under Saturn; scarce are the fires it radiates, it produces dry winters by freezing the waters. Rains harden into hail, hail decays into snow, and cold rigour arrives with the winds].

Occasionally one such "star", rather than merely vanish in the horizon, would fall down all the way from heaven to earth. One would call it a falling or shooting star, an expert astronomer would more precisely call it a meteorite. Given its origin, credulous people were bound to revere it as a sacred token and appoint a devoted group of priests to serve it, as the image of a deity, by enacting propitiatory festivals and rituals. This happened in Roman antiquity with the Cybele stone (Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, book XXIX), and in the Islamic world with the Kaaba's black stone. Along this line of reasoning, it seems fair to assimilate to these sacred stones the "thing called the Grail" that "a host (of angels) abandoned ... upon the earth" (book IX, p. 146).

Accordingly, the Grail procession in Wolfram (as also in Chrétien) has the earmarks of a ritual, and Wolfram classifies as a "templeis" (often translated as "templar", but having no connection with the crusading Order of the Knights Templar) each of those who served the Grail in Munsalvaesche.

The *Fasti* opening verses, quoted above, are followed by the poem's dedication to Germanicus, whose poetic achievement Ovid praises ("thysself a poet", cf. vv. 25-26, p. 4) – which the translator interprets, in a footnote, as a reference to the previously mentioned translation of Aratus's *Phainomena* by Germanicus. Incidentally, the fall-rise sequence of the celestial bodies also occurs in the verses of Germanicus: "... quod cadat aut surgat ..." (v. 578). Ovid himself worked on a translation of Aratus, but unfortunately only five verses are now extant, transcribed by other writers.

When the *Fasti* religious calendar comes to the fourth month, wherein Venus is honoured, the festival of Cybele is treated in fascinating detail (book IV, pp. 200-215). As will be discussed in detail later in this article, Ovid's readers are invited to follow Erato's long explanation to the poet, starting with the god Saturn and the stone used to deceive him, which "went down the heavenly throat". And the poet learns that for the Phrygian goddess chastity was an absolute imperative, whose transgression would lead to the ordeal of Attis, her disloyal servitor, a sin-and-punishment pattern closely fitting the fate of Anfortas, the maimed guardian of Wolfram's Grail stone.

¹⁴ A reputable astronomical account of such motions was in effect offered by the 'Toledan Tables', composed in Arabic near the end of the eleventh century, and translated into Latin in the twelfth.

On the 'Lapsit exilis' alternate name of the Grail

About the intriguing Latin phrase used by Wolfram to refer to the Grail, Cyril Edwards points out in his translation (book IX, p. 150, footnote 401): "These corrupt Latin words are rendered variously by the manuscripts, and interpreted even more variously by critics. The sense would seem to be 'it (or: a stone) fell from the heavens'".

Indeed, partly as a consequence of the different spellings found in the Parzival manuscripts, the words lend themselves to an open set of suggestive interpretations. Matthias Meyer, posting on the regrettably extinct *Arthurnet* discussion list, once remarked: "By the way, the reading 'lapsit exillis' has a great variety of manuscript variants: for 'lapsit' one finds iaspis, lapis; for 'exillis' one finds exilis, exillix, exilix."

One possible grammatically correct reading, according to Wolfram's English translator A. T. Hatto (*Parzival*, Penguin, 1987, p. 431), in a commentary, is 'lapis exilis' which means a 'small or slight stone'. These exact words are both attested in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (ed. P. G. W. Glare, Oxford University Press, 1996). 'Exilis' (p. 643) means thin, narrow, of small weight, slight, etc. And 'lapis' (p. 1001) is stone, pebble; curiously the entry includes "a stone, usu. meteoric, supposed to have divine or magical properties."

Hatto's proposal reinforces the widely accepted conjecture that one of the sources that led Wolfram to describe the Grail as a stone might have been the anonymous *Alexandri Magni Iter ad Paradisum*, composed sometime between 1100 and 1175 (cf. Dennis M. Kratz, *The Romances of Alexander*, Garland, 1991, pp. xxxii-xxxiv). It was translated into German and inserted in a redaction of Pfaffe Lamprecht's *Alexander*, known as the *Strassburg Alexander* (1187). It is also referred to in Ulrich von Eschenbach's *Alexander*.

The text shows the king at the farthest place touched by his victorious expedition to conquer the known world: the margins of the river Ganges, also called the Physon, "whose source is the paradise of joy". He exclaims: "I have accomplished nothing in the world and consider the results of all my ambition as nothing unless I earn a share of this joy". He boards a ship, with five hundred of his men, and sails against the current for more than one month. Finally, he reaches a long wall and his men bang and shout for the entrance to be opened. Someone comes, who causes them to wait for almost two hours, and then brings a gift to Alexander. The gift was a "gemstone of incredible brightness and rare color. In size and shape it looked like a human eye". It was intended as an 'exemplum' to the King: "... Once you have learned its nature and power, from then on you will desist from all ambition". Then, he counsels the visitors to go away to avoid suffering a shipwreck.

Immediately after returning, Alexander summons "the wisest of the Jews and Gentiles" to explain to him the meaning of the stone. Only one decrepit old man, a Jew named Papas, so debilitated by infirmity that he had to be carried in a litter, professed to have the answer. For the King's instruction, he calls for a practical experiment: "This stone is of moderate size, but of such immense weight that nothing can equal its heaviness. Therefore have brought to me now a scale and a pound of gold". It turns out that no amount of gold can counterbalance the stone, despite the fact, noticed by the King, that "the tiny substance of this gem seems almost weightless when held in the hand". But then the wise old man covers it with a slight amount of dirt – after that, even a delicate feather proves to be heavier than the stone. Papas concludes that the "essence of the omen is contained in these overt warnings, as the nature of the stone testifies". As it appeared in form and color, the stone actually signified the human eye, avid to acquire all sorts of things – but taking pleasure in nothing and seeking after nothing as soon as "bereft of life and handed over to the bowels of its mother earth".

The 'small or slight stone' interpretation agrees with the apparent – but misleading – moderate size and tiny substance of the gemstone offered to the Macedonian conqueror, as also to the unsuspected weight of the Grail carried by the chaste Repanse de Schoye (Hatto, p. 243; Cyril Edwards, p. 153). Unfortunately, as professor Matthias Meyer objected in a subsequent post, this felicitous conjunction of words, 'lapis exilis', does not occur in any of the now extant manuscripts.

Now let us consider the two words separately, beginning with 'lapsit'. Cyril Edwards, as noted, understood it as 'it fell', but in Latin that should be 'lapsus est' (indicative) or 'lapsus sit' (subjunctive), since the Latin verb meaning 'to fall' or 'to sink', is passive. Poetical liberty, for the sake of metric requirements, may allow to transform 'lapsus sit' (or, if plural is intended, 'lapsi sunt' or 'lapsi sint') into 'lapsit' – by agglutination followed by syncope.

The figurative sense of 'falling' as 'sinning' (shown in the verbal form 'lapsi sint') has ample currency in religious writings. In Eusebius (*The Church History*, book VII, chapter 30: *The Epistle of the Bishops against Paul*), for example, we find: "Neque illud ignoramus quot ex ejusmodi mulierum contubernio partim praecipit lapsi sint, partim in suspicionem venerint." [And we are not ignorant how many have fallen or incurred suspicion, through the women whom they have thus brought in].

Sinners and being forgiven – or not forgiven – was the theme of a major crisis in the beginning of the Christian era, in the fervid dispute about the repentant 'lapsi', the fallen ones, those who had abjured their faith in the course of the Decian persecution of 250 A.D. and later tried to be readmitted to the Christian fold.

An authoritative early Christian father, St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, preached that forgiveness could only be granted by full penitence and clerical absolution, other proposed means being a falsity, equivalent to a renewed persecution and temptation inspired by the devil (*De lapsis and De Ecclesiae Catholicae unitate*, ed. and trans. Maurice Bévenot, Clarendon Press, 1971, caput III):

Persecutio est haec alia et alia tentatio per quam subtilis inimicus inpugnandis adhuc lapsis occulta populatione grassatur, ut lamentatio conquiescat, ut dolor sileat, ut delicti memoria evanescat, ut comprimatur pectorum gemitus, statuatur fletus oculorum, nec Dominum graviter offensum longa et plena poenitentia deprecetur, cum scriptum sit: ‘memento unde cecideris, et age poenitentiam’

[This is another persecution, and another temptation, by which the crafty enemy still further assaults the lapsed; attacking them by a secret corruption, that their lamentation may be hushed, that their grief may be silent, that the memory of their sin may pass away, that the groaning of their heart may be repressed, that the weeping of their eyes may be quenched; nor long and full penitence deprecate the Lord so grievously offended, although it is written, ‘remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent.’]

But St. Cyprian has a severe warning to add (*ibidem*):

Caeterum se quis praepropera festinatione temerarius remissionem peccatorum dare se cunctis putat posse, aut audit Domini praecepta rescindere, non tantum nihil prodest sed et obest lapsis

[But if any one, by an overhurried haste, rashly thinks that he can give remission of sins to all, or dares to rescind the Lord’s precepts, not only does in no respect advantage the lapsed, but it does them harm.]

This controversy concerning the lapsi brings to mind what *Parzival* commentators call ‘Trevrizent Retraction’ (trans. C. Edwards, book XVI, p. 255)¹⁵. The hero’s uncle confesses to have lied to his nephew when he talked before about the ‘neutral angels’ who were the first to tend to the Grail, “those who stood on neither side when Lucifer and the Trinity began to contend” (book IX, p. 151). Trevrizent had initially pretended not to know whether they would ultimately be forgiven. Now he withdraws those words, as if they had been spoken in the ‘overhurried haste’ condemned by St. Cyprian, and proclaims that for all eternity they would be doomed by a God that is ‘constant in His ways’.

Turning now to the second word qualifying the Grail, ‘exillis’, we can also, returning even farther to the past, refer to a particular ‘lapsed’ one, truly the very first: St. Peter in the moment when he thrice denied Christ and then repented and was forgiven. We see that by first decomposing ‘exillis’ into ‘ex illis’, and then finding a passage where ‘ex illis’ designates ‘one of them’, namely Matthew, 26, 73: “Et post pusillum accesserunt qui stabant, et dixerunt Petro: Vere et tu *ex illis* es: nam et loquela tua manifestum te facit” (in St. Jerome’s Vulgate) [“And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one of them*; for thy speech bewrayeth thee” (in King James Version)]. And let us not forget that this ‘lapsus’ (fallen one) is also a ‘lapis’ (stone): Matthew 16-18: “et ego dico tibi quia tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam et portae inferi non praevalerunt adversum eam” (Vulgate) [“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (King James Version)].

Another possibility suggested by ‘exillis’ is the not too different Latin neutral word ‘exilium’ genitive ‘exilii’ (‘exile’ in English). In his desperate desire to die as the only way to end his suffering, Anfortas, the Fisher King, addresses his company of knights, who do not let him part from them (book XVI, p. 251): “Exile from joy that I am, at the Judgemental End I alone shall accuse you all”.

Although ‘exile from joy’ (in German ‘freuden ellende’) is used in a figurative sense here, the notion of ‘exile’ as a generic form of punishment seems to pervade the text, with six explicit mentions of the word. And if the ‘starry signs’ did influence earthly events, the exile and return of a pagan god, associated with a planet that looms large in Wolfram’s narrative, ought to be remembered (*Fasti*, book I, vv. 235-238):

hac ego Saturnum memini tellure receptum:
caelitibus regnis a Iove pulsus erat.

¹⁵ For a brief commentary on this problematic so-called ‘Trevrizent Retraction’, see footnote 655 on page 255.

inde diu genti mansit Saturnia nomen;
dicta quaque est Latium terra, latente deo.

[I remember how Saturn was received in this land: he had been driven by Jupiter from the celestial realms. From that time the folk long retained the name of Saturnian, and the country, too, was called Latium from the hiding (latent) of the god.]

Sacred stones

Wolfram's Grail is not simply a stone; it is a *sacred* stone. Could the poet find others at the time of composition?

Two sacred stones from Islam deserve mention. The first, in particular, because, like the Cybele stone (more about it in the next section), it attracted the anathema of early Christian fathers. In his book, originally written in Greek during the VIIth century A.D., but amply available in Latin translation at Wolfram's time, John of Damascus counters the Islamic blame of idolatry against the Christians with an accusation concerning the rituals around the black stone kept in Mecca. The supposed intercourse of Abraham with Agar upon the stone stand as a remarkable coincidence with the attempted assault of Jupiter narrated by Arnobius, to be quoted later when discussing the Cybele stone. Stressing its alleged erotic character, John dubs the stone as the "head of Aphrodite" (*The Fathers of the Church, St. John of Damascus Writings*, vol. 37, trans. F.H. Chase Jr., The Catholic University of America Press, 1999):

They furthermore accuse us of being idolaters, because we venerate the cross, which they abominate. And we answer them: 'How is it, then, that you rub yourselves against a stone in your Ka'ba and kiss and embrace it?' Then some of them say that Abraham had relations with Agar upon it, but others say that he tied the camel to it, when he was going to sacrifice Isaac. And we answer them: 'Since Scripture says that the mountain was wooded and had trees from which Abraham cut wood for the holocaust and laid it upon Isaac, and then he left the asses behind with the two young men, why talk nonsense? For in that place neither is it thick with trees nor is there passage for asses.' And they are embarrassed, but they still assert that the stone is Abraham's. Then we say: 'Let it be Abraham's, as you so foolishly say. Then, just because Abraham had relations with a woman on it or tied a camel to it, you are not ashamed to kiss it, yet you blame us for venerating the cross of Christ by which the power of the demons and the deceit of the Devil was destroyed.' This stone that they talk about is a head of that Aphrodite whom they used to worship and whom they called Khabár. Even to the present day, traces of the carving are visible on it to careful observers.

The second sacred stone (or, perhaps more appropriately, talismanic magic stone) of Islamic provenance is the 'Tabula Smaragdina' (Emerald Tablet), engraved with an inscription whose authorship was attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the "thrice-great Hermes", to whom 'Hermetic' knowledge and the (pseudo-)science of Alchemy are attributed (cf. Hermes Trismegiste, *La Table d'Emeraude Et Sa Tradition Alchimique*, pref. D. Kahn, Les Belles Lettres, 2017). At that time green stones of any kind were often believed to be precious emeralds, and as such priced much above their real value, as was the case of the 'Sacro Catino', pillaged from Caesarea by Genovese Crusaders (cf. A.L. Furtado, "The Crusader's Grail", in *The Grail the Quest and the World of Arthur*, ed. N.J. Lacy, D.S. Brewer, 2008).

The 'Tabula Smaragdina', of probable Ptolemaic Egyptian origin, bore an inscription whose oldest extant version is given in an appendix to an Arabic text of the VIth century, entitled *Book of the Secret of Creation* ('*Kitáb sirr al-Halika*'). From the Arabic versions, several Latin translations were produced in the XIIth century. Transcribed below are a Medieval Latin translation (Kahn, p. XIX) and an English translation due to Isaac Newton (B.J.T. Dobbs, "Newton's Commentary on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus - Its Scientific and Theological Significance" in I. Merkel and A.G. Debus, *Hermeticism and the Renaissance*, Folger, 1988):

Verum sine mendacio, certum, et verissimum.
Quod est inferius, est sicut quod est superius.
Et quod est superius, est sicut quod est inferius, ad perpetranda miracula rei unius.
Et sicut res omnes fuerunt ab uno, meditatione [*sic*] unius, sic omnes res natae ab hac una re,
adaptatione.
Pater eius est Sol, mater eius est Luna.

Portavit illud ventus in ventre suo.
 Nutrix eius terra est.
 Pater omnis telesmi totius mundi est hic.
 Vis eius integra est, si versa fuerit in terram.
 Separabis terram ab igne, subtile ab spisso, suaviter cum magno ingenio.
 Ascendit a terra in coelum, iterumque descendit in terram, et recipit vim superiorum et inferiorum.
 Sic habebis gloriam totius mundi.
 Ideo fugiet a te omnis obscuritas.
 Haec est totius fortitudinis fortitudo fortis, quia vincet omnem rem subtilem, omnemque solidam
 penetrabit.
 Sic mundus creatus est.
 Hinc erunt adaptationes mirabiles, quarum modus hic est.
 Itaque vocatus sum Hermes Trismegistus, habens tres partes philosophiae totius mundi.
 Completum est, quod dixi de operatione Solis.

[Tis true without lying, certain & most true.
 That which is below is like that which is above & that which
 is above is like that which is below to do the miracles of one
 only thing

And as all things have been & arose from one by the
 mediation of one: so all things have their birth from this
 one thing by adaptation.

The Sun is its father, the moon its mother, the wind
 hath carried it in its belly, the earth is its nourse. The
 father of all perfection in the whole world is here. Its
 force or power is entire if it be converted into earth.

Separate thou the earth from the fire, the subtile from
 the gross sweetly with great indoustry. It ascends from the
 earth to the heaven & again it descends to the earth
 & receives the force of things superior & inferior.

By this means you shall have the glory of the whole
 world & thereby all obscurity shall fly from you.

Its force is above all force. For it vanquishes every
 subtile thing & penetrates every solid thing.

So was the world created.

From this are & do come admirable adaptations
 whereof the means (or process) is here in this.

Hence I am called Hermes Trismegist, having the
 three parts of the philosophy of the whole world

That which I have said of the operation of the Sun
 is accomplished & ended.]

Obscure as it is, the text, suggestively like Wolfram's text, contains allusions to celestial orbs and their
 'operation', as well as to the trope of falling and rising between heaven and earth.

The Latin translator rendered the Arabic word 'tilsam' as 'telesmus' (or 'telesmum'), a neologism
 possibly derived from the Greek 'telesma'. The English translation should be 'talisman', as made clear by the
 entry for this word in the Webster Collegiate Dictionary¹⁶, wherein both the Arabic and the Greek origins are
 indicated: "Etymology: French *talisman* or Spanish *talismán* or Italian *talismano*; all from
 Arabic *tilsam*, from Middle Greek *telesma*, from Greek, consecration, from *telein* to initiate into the
 mysteries, complete, from *telos* end." The dictionary entry lists two meanings: "1: an object held to act as a
 charm to avert evil and bring good fortune, 2: something producing apparently magical or miraculous
 effects." In turn, an entry for the English word 'telos' is also provided: "Etymology: Greek; probably akin to
 Greek *telein* to accomplish, *tEnai* to bear", meaning in English "an ultimate end".

Thus the role of 'talisman' in the 'Tabula Smaragdina' may combine the magical object and, by
 metonymy, its desired effect as completely accomplishing an 'ultimate end'. Notice that to Newton this
 intriguing word meant 'perfection' – quite in agreement with the notion of a complete accomplishment – "The

¹⁶ <http://www2.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/mwdictsn?book=Dictionary&va=talisman>

father of all perfection in the whole world is here". Curiously, Edwards twice interpreted as 'perfection' the word 'wunsch' (English 'wish'), in the first entrance of the Grail (book V, p. 75):

man sach die maget an ir tragen
pfellel von Arâbi.
ûf einem grüenen achmardi
truoc si den wunsch von pardîs,
bêde wurzeln unde rîs.
daz was ein dinc, daz hiez der Grâl,
erden wunsches überwal.

[This maiden, they saw, wore phellel-silk of Araby. Upon a green achmardi she carried the perfection of Paradise, earth's perfection's transcendence.]

Worthy of notice in this passage are also the Arabic traits. Nothing is said about the color of the Grail, but the greenness of the 'archmardi' upon which it is carried might be seen as another coincidence with the 'Tabula Smaragdina' (Emerald Tablet). Moreover, like those containing the Biblical Ten Commandments, both stones bore inscriptions, contrary to the other sacred stones surveyed here. A distinguishing feature of Wolfram's Grail, however, was that the inscriptions were not fixed – what appeared on the Grail were words appropriate to the moment, whereby the Grail's injunctions were communicated to its faithful servers, and such words vanished after being read.

The Roman Grail

Having recognized that there was no lack of sacred stones in historical or fictional accounts, we now turn to the one that, according to our thesis, inspired Wolfram's image of the Grail.

The *Fasti* passage about Cybele mentions a first stone somehow related to her rituals, having been used to deceive Saturn. It was delivered to him in lieu of the newborn Jupiter. The episode is thus narrated by Ovid (*Fasti*, book IV, vv. 197-206):

reddita Saturno sors haec erat: "optime regum,
a nato sceptris excutiere tuis."
ille suam metuens, ut quaeque erat edita, prolem
devorat, immersam visceribusque tenet.
saepe Rhea questa est totiens fecunda nec umquam
mater, et indoluit fertilitate sua.
Iuppiter ortus erat: (pro magno teste vetustas
creditur; acceptam parce movere fidem)
veste latens *saxum caelesti* gutture sedit:
sic genitor fati decipiendus erat.

[Saturn was given this oracle: 'Thou best of kings, thou shalt be ousted of thy scepter by thy son.' In fear, the god devoured his offspring as fast as they were born, and he kept them sunk in his bowels. Many a time did Rhea grumble, to be so often big with child, yet never be a mother; she repined at her own fruitlessness. Then Jove was born. The testimony of antiquity passes for good; pray do not shake the general faith. A stone concealed in a garment went down the heavenly throat; so had fate decreed that the sire should be beguiled.]

The fortuitous vicinity of the words 'saxum' and 'caelesti', which would suggest a 'celestial stone' – even though the adjective does not refer to 'saxum', but rather to 'guttur' – might perhaps deserve to be put side by side with the 'stone fallen from heaven' ('ex coelis') already mentioned reading, proposed by Edwards.

Roman myth told of Cybele herself as a second sacred stone of foreign origin, believed to be an incarnation of the goddess. It was brought to Rome (and later housed in a temple built upon the high western slope of the Palatine hill), during the war against Carthage, then of still uncertain outcome due to Hannibal's bold generalship. A modern highly readable summary is offered by the late American writer, Will Durant (*Caesar and Christ*, Simon and Schuster, 1944, p. 94):

When the disaster of Cannae seemed to leave Rome defenseless against Hannibal, the excitable populace fell into a panic, and cried, "To what god must we pray to save Rome?" The Senate sought to still the commotion by human sacrifice; then by prayers to Greek gods; then by applying the Greek ritual to all the gods, Roman and Greek alike. Finally the Senate decided that if it could not prevent superstition it would organize and control it. In 205 it announced that the Sibylline Books foretold that Hannibal would leave Italy if the Magna Mater – a form of the goddess Cybele – should be brought from Phrygian Pessinus to Rome. Attalus, King of Pergamum, consented; *the black stone which was believed to be the incarnation of the Great Mother* was shipped to Ostia, where it was received with impressive ceremony by Scipio Africanus and a band of virtuous matrons. When the vessel that bore it was grounded in the Tiber's mud, the chaste hands of Claudia Quinta freed it, and drew it upstream to Rome, by the magic power of her chastity. Then the matrons, each holding the stone tenderly in her turn, carried it in solemn procession to the Temple of Victory, and the pious people burned incense at their doors as the Great Mother passed.

Fully consistent with Will Durant's lively retelling, an ancient account available at the time of Wolfram, and hence capable of containing some of 'those tidings in Latin books' examined by the learned 'Kyot', was supplied by the Roman historian Livy (Titus Livius). Dealing with Rome's troubles during the war against Carthage, it confirmed that the black stone from Phrygia was taken as an incarnation of the goddess Cybele (*Ab Urbe Condita*, book XXIX, 10-11):

ciuitatem eo tempore repens religio inuaserat inuento carmine in libris Sibyllinis propter crebrius eo anno de caelo lapidatum inspectis, quandoque hostis alienigena terrae Italiae bellum intulisset eum pelli Italia uinique posse si mater Idaea a Pessinunte Romam aduecta foret. id carmen ab decemuiris inuentum eo magis patres mouit quod et legati qui donum Delphos portauerant referebant et sacrificantibus ipsis Pythio Apollini omnia laeta fuisse et responsum oraculo editum maiorem multo uictoriam quam cuius ex spoliis dona portarent adesse populo Romano ... legati Asiam petentes protinus Delphos cum escendissent, oraculum adierunt consulentes ad quod negotium domo missi essent perficiendi eius quam sibi spem populoque Romano portenderet. responsum esse ferunt per Attalum regem composites eius fore quod peterent: cum Romam deam deuexissent, tum curarent ut eam qui uir optimus Romae esset hospitio exciperet. Pergamum ad regem uenerunt. is legatos comiter acceptos Pessinuntem in Phrygiam deduxit *sacrumque iis lapidem quam matrem deum* esse incolae dicebant tradidit ac deportare Romam iussit.

[The state was at this time suddenly occupied with a question of a religious nature, in consequence of the discovery of a prediction in the Sibylline books, which had been inspected on account of there having been so many showers of stones this year. It ran thus: "Whensoever a foreign enemy should bring war into the land of Italy, he may be driven out of Italy and conquered, if the Idaean Mother should be brought from Pessinus to Rome." This prophecy, discovered by the decemviri, produced the greater impression upon the senate, because ambassadors also, who had carried a present to Delphi, had brought word back, that they had both obtained a favourable appearance in sacrificing to the Pythian Apollo, and that a response was delivered from the oracle, to the effect, that a much greater victory than that from the spoils of which they now brought presents, awaited the Roman people ... The ambassadors, on their way to Asia, having landed at Delphi, immediately approached the oracle, inquiring what hopes the deity held out to themselves and the Roman people, of accomplishing the business for which they had been sent from home. It is said that the answer given was, "that they would obtain what they were seeking by means of king Attalus. When they had conveyed the goddess to Rome, they must take care that the best man at Rome should receive her to his hospitality." They came to Pergamus to the king, who received the ambassadors graciously, and conducted them to Pessinus in Phrygia, and putting into their hands a *sacred stone, which the inhabitants said was the mother of the gods*, bid them convey it to Rome.]

In his *Fasti*, Ovid also tells how this Phrygian mother of the gods was brought to Rome, where her image (which Ovid does not explicitly reveal to consist of a stone) was placed in a temple. As briefly told in the passage quoted from Will Durant, shortly before the end of the voyage, when the vessel that bore it was grounded in the Tiber's mud, only the chaste hands of Claudia Quinta were able to free it (book IV, vv. 297-325):

sedula fune viri contento bracchia lassant:
vix subit aduersas hospita navis aquas.

sicca diu fuerat tellus, sitis usserat herbas:
 sedit limoso pressa carina vado.
 quisquis adest operi, plus quam pro parte laborat,
 adiuvat et fortes voce sonante manus:
 illa velut medio stabilis sedet insula ponto;
 attoniti monstro stantque paventque viri.
 Claudia Quinta genus Clauso referebat ab alto
 (nec facies impar nobilitate fuit),
 casta quidem, sed non et credita: rumor iniquus
 laeserat, et falsi criminis acta rea est.
 cultus et ornatis varie prodisse capillis
 obfuit ad rigidos promptaque lingua senes.
 conscia mens recti famae mendacia risit,
 sed nos in vitium credula turba sumus.
 haec ubi castarum processit ab agmine matrum
 et manibus puram fluminis hausit aquam,
 ter caput inrorat, ter tollit in aethera palmas
 (quicumque aspiciunt, mente carere putant),
 summissoque genu voltus in imagine divae
 figit, et hos edit crine iacente sonos:
 "supplicis, alma, tuae, genetrix fecunda deorum,
 accipe sub certa condicione preces.
 casta negor: si tu damnas, meruisse fatebor;
 morte luam poenas iudice victa dea;
 sed si crimen abest, tu nostrae pignora vitae
 re dabis, et castas casta sequere manus."
 dixit, et exiguo funem conamine traxit.

[The men wearied their arms by tugging lustily at the rope; hardly did the foreign ship make head against the stream. A drought had long prevailed; the grass was parched and burnt: the loaded bark sank in the muddy shallows. Every man who lent a hand toiled beyond his strength and cheered on the workers by his cries. Yet the ship stuck fast, like an island firmly fixed in the middle of the sea. Astonished at the portent, the men did stand and quake. Claudia Quinta traced her descent from Clausus of old, and her beauty matched her nobility. Chaste was she, though not reputed so. Rumour unkind had wronged her, and a false charge had been trumped up against her: it told against her that she dressed sprucely, that she walked abroad with her hair dressed in varied fashion, that she had a ready tongue for gruff old men. Conscious of innocence, she laughed at fame's untruths; but we of the multitude are prone to think the worst. When she had stepped forth from the procession of the chaste matrons, and taken up the pure water of the river in her hands, she thrice let it drip on her head, and thrice lifted her palms to heaven (all who looked on her thought that she was out of her mind), and bending the knee she fixed her eyes on the image of the goddess, and with dishevelled hair uttered these words: 'Thou fruitful Mother of the Gods, graciously accept thy suppliant's prayers on one condition. They say I am not chaste. If thou dost condemn me, I will confess my guilt; convicted by the verdict of a goddess, I will pay the penalty with my life. But if I am free of crime, give by thine act a proof of my innocency, and, chaste as thou art, do thou yield to my chaste hands'. She spoke, and drew the rope with a slight effort.]

Recall that the Grail at the castle and temple of Munsalvaesche, like this veritable Roman Grail kept at the Palatine temple, was too heavy except to chaste hands. As Trevrizent confides to Parzival (book IX, p.153): "One maiden, my sister, still practices such ways that chastity follows in her train. Repanse de Schoye tends the Grail, which is of such heavy weight that false humanity can never carry it from its place."

The word 'Schoye' in the name of the chaste Grail-bearer is generally interpreted as 'joy'. Coincidentally, Ovid reports two manifestations of joy at Claudia's vindication of her chastity (book IV, v. 328): "index laetitiae fertur ad astra sonus" [a sound of joy was wafted to the stars], and again (vv. 343-344): "Claudia praecedit laeto celeberrima vultu / credita vix tandem teste pudica dea" [Attended by a crowd, Claudia walked in front with joyful face, her chastity at last vindicated by the testimony of the goddess].

Not in total disagreement with Ovid and Livy, the Christian ante-Nicene father Arnobius of Sicca (IVth century A.D.) accepted the heathen gods as real beings, though subordinate to the Christian god, and preached against pagan idolatry as full of contradiction and gross immorality. Citing a certain Timotheus, reputed to be

an authority on the cult of Cybele, he thus described how Jupiter polluted the stone believed to be the material manifestation of the Magna Mater (Arnobius, V, 5.1; *The Seven Books of Arnobius Adversus Gentes*, trans. A. H. Bryce and H. Campbell, Kessinger Publishing, 2010):

Apud Timotheum, non ignobilem theologorum virum, nec non apud alios aequae doctos super Magna deorum Matre superque sacris eius origo haec sita est, ex reconditis antiquitatum libris et ex intimis eruta, quemadmodum ipse scribit insinuatque, mysteriis. "In Phrygiae finibus inaudita per omnia vastitatis petra, inquit, est quaedam, cui nomen est Agdus, regionis eius ab indigenis sic vocata. Ex ea lapides sumptos, sicut Themis mandaverat praecinens, in orbem mortalibus vacuum Deucalion iactavit et Pyrra, ex quibus cum ceteris et haec Magna quae dicitur informata est Mater atque animata divinitus. Hanc in vertice ipso petrae datam quieti et somno quam incestis Iuppiter cupiditatibus adpetivit, sed cum oblectatus diu id quod sibi promiserat optinere nequisset, voluptatem in lapidem fudit victus. nunc petra concepit, et mugitibus editis multis prius mense nascitur decimo materno ab nomine cognominatus Agdestis. Huic robur invictum et ferocitas animi fuerat intractabilis, insana et furialis libido et ex utroque sexu; vi rapta divastare, disperdere, immanitas quo animi duxerat; non deos curare, non homines, nec praeter se quicquam potentius credere terras caelum et sidera continere".

[In Timotheus, who was no mean mythologist, and also in others equally well informed, the birth of the Great Mother of the gods, and the origin of her rites, are thus detailed, being derived as he himself writes and suggests, from learned books of antiquities, and from his acquaintance with the most secret mysteries. Within the confines of Phrygia, he says, there is a rock of unheard-of wildness in every respect, the name of which is Agdus, so named by the natives of that district. Stones taken from it, as Themis by her oracle had enjoined, Deucalion and Pyrrha threw upon the earth, at that time emptied of men; from which this Great Mother, too, as she is called, was fashioned along with the others, and animated by the deity. Her, given over to rest and sleep on the very summit of the rock, Jupiter assailed with lewdest desires. But when, after long strife, he could not accomplish what he had proposed to himself, he, baffled, spent his lust on the stone. This the rock received, and with many groanings Agdestis is born in the tenth month, being named from his mother rock. In him there had been resistless might, and a fierceness of disposition beyond control, a lust made furious, and derived from both sexes. He violently plundered and laid waste; he scattered destruction wherever the ferocity of his disposition had led him; he regarded not gods nor men, nor did he think anything more powerful than himself; he contemned earth, heaven, and the stars.]

Deucalion and Pyrrha, mentioned in the above passage, created a new humanity, after the Greek version of the flood, by throwing stones in obedience to the instructions of Themis. This scene is thus evoked by Ovid, notably also alluding to the primordial great mother (*Metamorphoses*, I, 381, 383): "Mota dea est sortemque dedit: 'discedite templo et velate caput cinctque resolvite vestes ossaque post tergum magnae iactate parentis!'" ["The goddess was moved and gave this oracle: 'Depart hence, and with veiled heads and loosened robes throw behind you the bones of your great mother.'"]

The abusive action of Jupiter in Arnobius seems to find an echo in Parzival. Trevrizent, after mentioning the Christian first couple, Adam and Eve, tells the hero a lewd – and on first sight incredible – desecrating act against grandmother earth (book IX, pp. 148-149):

One man was prompted by his insatiety to deprive his grandmother of her maidenhead in his greedy pursuit of fame. Now many are inclined, before they have heard this tale out, to ask how that might be – nevertheless, by sin it became manifest." Parzival said to him in reply: "Lord, I cannot believe that ever happened. Of whom was that man born by whom his grandmother lost her maidenhead, as you tell me? You ought to have refrained from uttering these words!" The host replied to him in turn: "From that doubt I shall remove you. If I do not tell the truth, then may my deception offend you! The earth was Adam's mother. Adam nourished himself by the earth's fruit. At that time the earth was as yet maiden. Nor have I yet told you who took her maidenhead from her. Adam was Cain's father. Cain slew Abel for paltry possessions. When the blood fell upon the pure earth, her maidenhood was forfeit. It was Adam's child took it from her. Then for the first time, man's malice arose; it has so persisted ever since."

As seen in the Arnobius passage, Jupiter's act had as a consequence the birth of the irrepressible Agdestis. His attachment to the raving Attis – who is said to be born from Nana, daughter of the river Sangarius – ultimately serves to explain an ancient custom of covering a pine with a veil of flowers (Arnobius, V, 7.1):

Attis fistulam, quam instigator ipse gestitabat insaniae, furiarum et ipse iam plenus, perbacchatus iactatus proicit se tandem et sub pini arbore genitalia sibi desecat dicens: "Tibi Agdesti haec habe, propter quae motus tantos furialium discriminum concitasti". Evolat cum profluvio sanguinis vita, sed abscessa quae fuerant Magna legit et lavit Mater deum, inicit his terram ut erant veste prius tecta atque involuta defuncti. Fluore de sanguinis viola flos nascitur et redimitur ex hac arbor: inde natum et ortum est nunc etiam sacras velarier et coronarier pinos.

[Attis snatches the pipe borne by him who was goading them to frenzy; and he, too, now filled with furious passion, raving frantically and tossed about, throws himself down at last, and under a pine tree mutilates himself, saying, "Take these, Acdestis, for which you have stirred up so great and terribly perilous commotions." With the streaming blood his life flies; but the Great Mother of the gods gathers the parts which had been cut off, and throws earth on them, having first covered them, and wrapped them in the garment of the dead. From the blood which had flowed springs a flower, the violet, and with this the tree is girt. Thence the custom began and arose, whereby you even now veil and wreath with flowers the sacred pine.]

A garland placed upon a tree figures in the episode of the Gweiz Prelljus (perilous ford), wherein Gawan (Gawain), in obedience to the plea of the duchess Orgeluse de Logres, has to jump on horseback over the river Sabins to fetch the garland. Orgeluse's intent is to provoke Gawan's fight against king Gramoflanz, so as to avenge her dead lover Cidegast, who had been killed by that king. But note that 'Cidegast' is a close anagram of 'Agdestis' (and of 'Acdestis') (book XII, p. 193, p. 196):

He was in some distress, however, for Love commanded it of him. Resplendent Orgeluse had hunted him in pursuit of the garland. That was a brave ride! The tree was so guarded that even if there had been two Gawans, they might have yielded their lives in the cause of the garland. It was in the custody of King Gramoflanz. Nonetheless, Gawan plucked the garland. The river was called the Sabins. Gawan collected ungentle interest when he and his charger paddled in it. ... The lustrous and mighty duchess said, weeping from her heart: "... Never can I lose more joy than I lost by peerless Cidegast".

Maimed guardian

We now turn to an inevitable implication of our argument: if Wolfram's Grail is in fact associated with the Cybele sacred stone, then the unfaithful Grail guardian should correspond to Cybele's chosen boyish server, the ill-fated Attis.

In the temple at Munsalvasche, the knights chosen to serve the Grail should be chaste, and only the king was allowed to marry (book IX, p. 158)¹⁷: "Whoever undertakes to serve the Grail must renounce the love of women. The king alone is to have, lawfully, a pure spouse".

But the Grail behaved towards its guardian as a jealous master (or, perhaps more appropriately, if its identification with the Cybele stone is correct, jealous mistress¹⁸). Indeed, the king could not love anyone 'lawfully' except if explicitly permitted by an inscription appearing on that most sacred stone. A transgression should bring an awesome punishment (book IX, p. 153):

Dô Frimutel den lîp verlôs,
mîn vater, nâch im man dô kôs
sînen eltsten sun ze kûnege dar,
ze vogte dem grâl unts grâles schar.

¹⁷ Also allowed to marry were those "whom God has sent into lordless lands to be lords", as would happen with Parzival's son Loherangrin (named 'Lohengrin' in Wagner's opera).

¹⁸ Indeed, the intriguing word "Termagant", member of an unlikely triad with Apollo and Muhammad (cf. for instance the *Song of Roland*), may be the result of misreading Cybele's reverential name, "Magna Mater", from some ancient manuscript.

daz was mîn bruoder Anfortas,
 der krône und rîcheit wirdec was.
 dannoch wir wêneç wâren.
 dô mîn bruoder gein den jâren
 kom für der gransprunge zît,
 mit selher jugent hât minne ir strît:
 sô twingts ir friunt sô sêre,
 man mages ir jehn zunêre.
 swelch grâles hêrre ab minne gert
 anders dan diu schrift in wert,
 der muoz es komen ze arbeit
 und in siufzebæriu herzeleit.
 mîn hêrre und der bruoder mîn
 kôs im eine friundîn,
 des in dûht, mit guotem site.
 swer diu was, daz sî dâ mite.
 in ir dienst er sich zôch,
 sô daz diu zageheit in flôch.
 des wart von sîner clâren hant
 verdûrkelt manec schildes rant.
 da bejagte an âventiure
 der sûeze unt der gehiure,
 wart ie hôher prîs erkant
 über elliu rîterlîchiu lant,
 von dem mæer was er der frîe.
Amor was sîn krîe.
 Der ruoft ist zer dêmuot
 iedoch niht volleclîchen guot.
 eins tages der kûnec al eine reit
 (daz was gar den sînen leit)
 ûz durch âventiure,
 durch freude an minnen stiure:
 des twanc in der minnen ger.
 mit einem gelupten sper
 wart er ze tjustieren wunt,
 sô daz er nimmer mêr gesunt
 wart, der sûeze œheim dîn,
 durch die heidruose sîn.

[When Frimutel, my father, lost his life, his eldest son was chosen after him as king, to be steward of the Grail and the Grail's company. That was my brother Anfortas, who was worthy of that crown and power. We were only small as yet. When my brother approached the years of downy beard-growth – Love wages war with such youths, she presses her lovers so hard that it may be reckoned to her dishonour – whichever Grail's lord, however, desires love other than that which the inscription grants him must suffer for it, and enter sigh-laden heart's sorrow – my lord and my brother chose himself a lady-love who seemed to him of goodly ways. As to who she was, let that be. He entered her service, cowardice fleeing from him. Consequently, by his radiant hand many a rim was riddled with holes. That gentle and comely king won such renown by adventure that, if ever higher fame was known in all knightly lands, he was spared such tidings. "*Amor!*" was his battle-cry. Such a call is, however, not entirely compatible with humility.

One day the king was out riding alone – that was greatly to the grief of his people – in search of adventure, seeking joy with Love's guidance, compelled to it by Love's desire. He was wounded in the joust by a poisoned spear, so that he has never regained his health, your gentle uncle – pierced through his genitals.]

Ovid's narrative about Cybele, already cited in the previous section, tells how a boy, Attis, being attached to the goddess by a 'chaste passion', was chosen by her to be the guardian of her temple – on condition that he should forever reject love. Just as happened to the Grail's guardian, he broke his faith and was punished to a similar but more radical degree. Surely Wolfram would not go so far beyond Chrétien's Fisher King, who was

merely said to have been wounded between his legs: (*Le Conte du Graal*, vv. 3512-3513) “Il fu feruz d'un javelot / parmi les hanches amedos”. As intensely as in Wolfram’s account, a moving dramatic feeling is conveyed by Ovid’s passage (*Fasti*, IV, vv. 223-244):

Phryx puer in silvis, facie spectabilis Attis
 turrigeram casto vinxit amore deam.
 hunc sibi servari voluit, sua templa tueri,
 et dixit ‘semper fac puer esse velis.’
 ille fidem jussis dedit et ‘si mentiar,’ inquit
 ‘ultima, qua fallam, sit Venus illa mihi.’
 fallit et in nympha Sagaritide desinit esse
 quod fuit: hinc poenas exigit ira deae.
 Naïda volneribus succidit in arbore factis,
 illa perit: fatum Naidos arbor erat.
 hic furit et credens thalami procumbere tectum
 effugit et cursu Dindyma summa petit
 et modo ‘tolle faces!’ ‘remove modo verbera!’ clamat;
 saepe palam Stygias iurat adesse deas.
 ille etiam saxo corpus laniavit acuto,
 longaque in immundo pulvere tracta coma est,
 voxque fuit ‘merui! meritas do sanguine poenas.
 a! pereant partes, quae nocuere mihi!
 a! pereant’ dicebat adhuc, onus inguinis aufert,
 nullaque sunt subito signa relicta viri.
 venit in exemplum furor hic, mollesque ministri
 caedunt iactatis vilia membra comis.

[In the woods a Phrygian boy of handsome face, Attis by name, had attached the tower-bearing goddess to himself by a chaste passion. She wished that he should be kept for herself and should guard her temple, and she said, “Resolve to be a boy for ever.” He promised obedience, and, “If I lie,” quoth he, “may the love for which I break faith be my last love of all.” He broke faith; for, meeting the nymph Sagaritis, he ceased to be what he had been before. For that the angry goddess wreaked vengeance. By wounds inflicted on the tree she cut down the Naiad, who perished thus; for the fate of the Naiad was bound up with the tree. Attis went mad, and, imagining that the roof of the chamber was falling in, he fled and ran for the top of Mount Dindymus. And he kept crying, at one moment, “Take away the torches!” at another, “Remove the whips!” And oft he swore that the Stygian goddesses were visible to him. He mangled, too, his body with a sharp stone, and trailed his long hair in the filthy dust; and his cry was, “I have deserved it! With my blood I pay the penalty that is my due. Ah, perish the parts that were my ruin! Ah, let them perish,” still he said. He retrenched the burden of his groin, and of a sudden was bereft of every sign of manhood. His madness set an example, and still his unmanly ministers cut their vile members while they toss their hair].

Most in the spirit of Ovid’s love poetry, inexhaustible inspiration of the courtly love mode at that time, was the battle-cry of the Grail King, ‘*Amor*’, inserted in Latin in Wolfram’s Middle High German poem. Ovid himself, even in the religious context of the *Fasti*, could not repress his natural inclination. When trying to learn about Cybele and her festival, celebrated in the month of Venus, he rejoices that the muse Erato was selected to respond to his questions, given that her name was derived from ‘tender love’, i.e. from ‘Eros’ (book IV, vv. 195-196).

One of the questions posed by the poet is (vv. 361-366): “Why then do we give the name of Galli to the man who unman themselves, when the Gallic land is so far from Phrygia?”. To which Erato replies: “Between green Cybele and high Celanae a river of mad water flows, ‘tis named the Gallus. Who drinks of it goes mad. Far hence depart, ye who care to be of sane mind. Who drinks of it goes mad.”

This question about the ‘Galli’, with its denied association with the ‘Gallic land’, brings to mind the difficulty in interpreting the word ‘Waleis’, name of a land bequeathed to Herzeloide and attributed as a byname to her son, ‘Parzival the Waleis’ (in Chrétien, ‘Perceval le Galois’). Cyril Edwards in a note discusses how confusing this word is, in a curious echo to Ovid’s doubt (book II, p. 19, note 46): “*Waleis* may be Wales, or Gaul, or Valois. Wolfram’s Arthurian geography defies definition.” And the madness of the Galli, the castrated priests of Cybele, seems to reappear, under the attenuated form of foolishness, in the first encounter of the boyish Waleis with a group of knights that he believes to be a heavenly band. The foremost

knight in the group grows angry at the boy lying in his path and exclaims (book III, p. 39): “This foolish Waleis is barring us from swift passage” to which Wolfram, as narrator, adds a comment (ibidem): “One thing for which we Bavarians are famed I may also apply to the Waleis: they are more foolish than Bavarian folk.”

That player of tender loves

Surely Virgil was one of the Latin sources directly contributing (or indirectly, if ‘Kyot’ is not a fiction...) to the composition of *Parzival*, since his name is explicitly cited in book XIII (p. 275) as “one who also devised many marvels”, such marvels being traceable to Virgil’s *Fourth Eclogue*, taken at Wolfram’s time as a prophetic announcement of Christ’s birth (*Eclogues*, ed. G.P. Goould, Harvard University Press, 1999):

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;
magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo:
iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;
iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum
desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,
casta fave Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.

[Now the last age by Cumae's Sibyl sung
Has come and gone, and the majestic roll
Of circling centuries begins anew:
Justice returns, returns old Saturn's reign,
With a new breed of men sent down from heaven.
Only do thou, at the boy's birth in whom
The iron shall cease, the golden race arise,
Befriend him, chaste Lucina; 'tis thine own
Apollo reigns.]

Also, an indirect reference to Virgil can be found in book X, where Wolfram expresses his own sentiment – but note that he does not restrict his debt to a single master (book X, p. 171):

Many a master of mine says that Amor and Cupid, and Venus, the mother of those two, confer love upon people thus: by shot and fire. Such love is monstrous. If a man is in heartfelt loyalty’s company, he will never be free of love, along with joy, sometimes with grief. Real love is true loyalty. Cupid, your arrow misses me every time, as does Sir Amor’s dart.

In fact, this allusion to Venus and her two children is generally recognized to come from a translation of Virgil’s *Eneid*, elaborated by Heinrich von Veldeke (cf. note 470), who shared the same patron with Wolfram, namely Hermann I, landgrave of Thuringia. Besides being exposed to Veldeke’s influence, Wolfram would have enjoyed the benefit of the presence of many other scholars in landgrave Hermann’s Wartburg Castle. Among several other notables, one should mention Albrecht von Halberstadt, translator of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. If Wolfram actually had access, as in Edwards’s remark, to a “bigger library than Oxford has to offer”, it does not seem too farfetched to suppose that Wartburg kept a plurality of Ovid works, not only *Metamorphoses* but also *Amores*, *Trostia*, and especially *Fasti*, of crucial relevance to the present study.

Book IV of *Fasti*, containing, among other matters, Ovid’s lengthy passage on the Cybele rituals, starts with an invocation to Venus, proclaimed in the first verse of book IV as mother of twins¹⁹, to be compared with the allusion to Venus, Amor and Cupid in *Parzival* and in the Veldeke’s translation of the Virgilian epic – which is consistent with Wolfram’s avowed debt to “many a master of mine.” Curiously, also bringing to mind Wolfram’s invocation to ‘lady Adventure’ at the beginning of Wolfram’s book IX, Ovid starts by appealing to his patron goddess, whom he served so faithfully in his young years, turning afterwards to higher matters associated with the fall and rise of starry signs (vv. 1-12):

'Alma, fave', dixi 'geminorum mater Amorum';
ad vatem voltus rettulit illa suos;

¹⁹ In a footnote, the translator, sir James Frazer, calls the unnamed twins Eros and Anteros.

'quid tibi' ait 'mecum? certe maiora canebas.
 num vetus in molli pectore volnus habes?'
 'scis, dea', respondi 'de volnere.' risit, et aether
 protinus ex illa parte serenus erat.
 'saucius an sanus numquid tua signa reliqui?
 tu mihi propositum, tu mihi semper opus.
 quae decuit primis sine crimine lusimus annis;
 nunc teritur nostris area maior equis.
 tempora cum causis, annalibus eruta priscis,
 lapsaque sub terras orta que signa cano.'

[“O gracious Mother of the Twin Loves,” said I, “grant me thy favour.” The goddess looked back at the poet. “What wouldst thou with me?” she said, “surely thou wast wont to sing of loftier themes. Hast thou an old wound rankling in thy tender breast?” “Goddess,” I answered, “thou wottest of my wound.” She laughed, and straightway the sky was serene in that quarter. “Hurt or whole, did I desert thy standards? Thou, thou hast ever been the task I set myself. In my young years I toyed with themes to match, and gave offence to none; now my steeds treat a larger field. I sing the seasons, and their causes, and the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again, drawing my lore from annals old.”]

Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram’s predecessor and primary source, openly admitted his debt to Ovid, whose *Ars Amandi* he had translated, as indicated in the first verses of his *Cligès* (eds. C. Méla and O. Collet, *Le Livre de Poche*, 1994, p. 44). However, whereas quoting chaste Virgil would be sensed to be entirely acceptable in view of his ‘many marvels’ prophetic verses, Wolfram had a motive to hesitate to directly cite Ovid’s name. Chastising wordly chivalry, a new chivalry inspired by crusading ideals was emerging, preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in his “Rule of the Knights Templar” (“Liber ad milites templi de laude novae militia”, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. J. Leclercq and H.M. Rochais, Editiones Cistercienses, 1963).

And yet, under skillful disguise, that no less illustrious poet, prime inspiration of courtly love adventures, could well be revived. Even before referring to Kyot’s search for ‘Latin books’, Wolfram says of Flegetanis the heathen that he was ‘born of Solomon’s line’ (book IX, p. 146). Hear now what Ovid tells of his native town and the origin of the town’s name in *Fasti* (IV, vv. 79-82):

huius erat Solimus Phrygia comes unus ab Ida,
 a quo Sulmonis moenia nomen habent,
 Sulmonis gelidi, patriae, Germanice, nostrae.
 me miserum, Scythico quam procul illa solo est!

[He (Aeneas) had a comrade, Solymus, who came from Phrygian Ida; from him the walls of Sulmo take their name – cool Sulmo, my native town, Germanicus. Woe’s me, how far is Sulmo from the Scythian land!]

The sad memory of the pleasant town of his birth came thus together with a heartfelt lament for the inhospitable city of Tomi in Moesia (a Roman province since the final years of reign of Augustus²⁰), whereto he had been banished by emperor Caesar Augustus. Though Ovid uses the word ‘exile’, a different sort of punishment was involved (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, Simon and Schuster, 1944, p. 257): “The decree was ‘relegatio’, softer than exile in allowing him to retain his property, harsher in commanding him to stay in one city”). The declared reason was the offensive eroticism of his *Amores* book, enlivened by scenes of love and hatred involving a charming but too often unfaithful girl, dubbed Corinna. Yet, according to the poet, the real reason was “an error”, something that he had involuntarily seen²¹ (*Tristia*, III, 5, vv. 43-52):

Denique non possum nullam sperare salutem,
 cum poenae non sit causa cruenta meae.
 Non mihi quaerenti pessumdare cuncta petitum
 Caesareum caput est, quod caput orbis erat:

²⁰ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Moesia

²¹ Again according to Will Durant, possibly in connection with an escapade of Julia, a granddaughter, of Augustus, banished by him in the same year.

non aliquid dixiue, elataue lingua loquendo est,
 lapsaque sunt nimio uerba profana mero:
 inscia quod crimen uiderunt lumina, plector,
 peccatumque oculos est habuisse meum.
 Non equidem totam possum defendere culpam:
 sed partem nostri criminis error habet.

[In fine 'tis possible for me to hope for some salvation since the cause of my punishment involves no stain of blood; I never sought to wreck everything by assailing the life of Caesar, which is the life of the world. I have said nothing, divulged nothing in speech, let slip no impious words by reason of too much wine: because my unwitting eyes beheld a crime, I am punished, and 'tis my sin that I possessed eyes. I cannot indeed exculpate my fault entirely, but part of it consists in error.]

Now, as quoted before from the first verses of book IV of *Fasti*, abandoning the amorous themes of his young years, Ovid turned to singing “the starry signs that set beneath the earth and rise again”, the religious theme of the entire book, which he first dedicated to Augustus and, after the emperor’s death, to Germanicus.

Also in *Tristia*, where he wept his unending absence from his home and his family, he offered precious autobiographic information (4.10, vv. 1-132). The first verses once more refer to Sulmo and, while describing his poetic achievement in a most revealing way, also proclaim with some pride the knightly rank legitimately inherited by himself and his elder brother:

Ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum,
 quem legis, ut noris, accipe posteritas.
 Sulmo mihi patria est, gelidis uberrimus undis,
 milia qui nouiens distat ab urbe decem.
 editus hic ego sum, nec non, ut tempora noris,
 cum cecidit fato consul uterque pari:
 si quid id est, usque a proauis uetus ordinis heres,
 non modo fortunae munere factus eques.
 nec stirps prima fui; genito sum fratre creatus,
 qui tribus ante quater mensibus ortus erat.

[Listen, future ages, to find out who I was, *that playful poet of tender loves* whom you read. Sulmo is my native land, richest in ice-cold streams, ninety miles from Rome. I was born there, and if you want to know the date, it was when both consuls perished by the same fate. If it counts for anything, I was heir to a rank of ancient lineage, not made a knight by the gift of fortune. I was not the first child; I was born after my brother, who was twelve months my senior.]

Even abstaining to cite Ovid explicitly, Wolfram often demonstrated a close consonance with him. As he introduces himself as a poet, he affirms his hatred (and thereby seems to confess his love) for one unidentified woman (book II, p. 36): “I am Wolfram von Eschenbach and know a little of singing, and I am a pair of tongs holding my anger against one woman in particular: she has inflicted such wrong upon me that I have no choice but to hate her.” He, too, recalling Ovid’s misfortune, repented of an error when dealing with women: “I have spoken out of turn and done myself wrong – the chances are it will never happen again!” He was equally proud of his knightly rank, over and above his talents, as he next declares: “If any lady wishes to assess my order – both see and hear it – I shall not make a fool of her: the shield’s office is my lineage ... If my courage is ever stunted, if any woman then loves me for the sake of my song, then I think her weak of wit.” And in the concluding verses of the poem, despite all protestations in favor of heavenly as opposed to worldly chivalry, he thus dedicates the entire book in tender Ovidian style (book XVI, p. 265): “Good women, if they are of sound mind – I shall be all the worthier in their estimation if any one of them wishes me well, now that I have told this tale to its end. If it is for a woman’s sake that this has happened, she may concede that I have spoken sweet words.”

There is a much hated woman in *Parzival*, the duchess Orgeluse of Logrois, taken from Chrétien’s Grail romance, made even worse by Wolfram – it was because of her that Anfortas, the Fisher King, was condemned to endless suffering. Nevertheless Gawain (Gawain) felt for her a passion impossible to resist. Daunting Orgeluse, as well as Wolfram’s ‘one woman in particular’, fits in the model of the troublesome Corinna, justifiably hated but, to the end, inevitably loved (Ovid, *Amores*, III 14.31-40):

cur totiens video mitti recipique tabellas?
 cur pressus prior est interiorque torus?
 cur plus quam somno turbatos esse capillos
 collaque conspicio dentis habere notam?
 tantum non oculos crimen deducis ad ipsos; 35
 si dubitas famae parcere, parce mihi!
 mens a bit et morior quotiens peccasse fateris,
 perque meos artus frigida gutta fluit.
 tunc amo, tunc odi frustra quod amare necesse est;
 tunc ego, sed tecum, mortuus esse velim! 40 (Ovid Amores III 14.31-40)

Why do I so often see that my letters are disregarded and returned?
 Why has your bed been pressed down hard before and rather intimately?
 Why do I notice that your hair is disturbed from more than mere sleep
 And that your neck has the mark of a tooth?
 The only thing you do not do is escort your crime toward my very eyes,
 If you hesitate to spare your reputation, spare me.
 My mind is absent and I die, how often you admit to have sinned,
 And a frigid drop flows through my frame each time.
 Then I do love you, then I do hate you but in vain, since it is necessary to love you;
 Then I should like to die, but to die with you.

The life of one personage, the hermit Trevrizent, follows even more closely the Ovid pattern. His unnamed counterpart in Chrétien's narrative played exclusively the role of a devoted hermit, but, in sharp contrast, Wolfram tells how Trevrizent proudly dismisses Parzival's impression that his fully armed arrival might have troubled him. Fearless still, in his early days he had been a knight, too fervently dedicated to the pursuit of 'lofty' love (book IX, p. 147):

In my combative time I was a knight as you are, also striving for lofty love. There was a time when I
 pied sinful thoughts with chastity. I adorned my life in the hope that a woman would grant me her
 favour. That I have now forgotten.

Like Ovid, he had an elder noble brother, the unfortunate Anfortas. Unlike Ovid, what made him change his ways was not a punishment for his frivolous sorties, which he confessed to be unacceptable to the Grail, but rather his brother's fault and consequent disgrace. After that occurred, he exiled himself from the Grail community (book IX, p. 154): "I fell down in genuflection, vowing to God's might that I would never more enact any knightly deeds, if God, for His own honour's sake, would help my brother in his need ... That was a second sorrow for the company, dear nephew, I tell you – that I parted from my sword."

In the all-important book IX, where one of the main innovations of Wolfram with respect to Chrétien is revealed – namely the nature of the Grail as a sacred stone – Trevrizent assumes the narrative voice; it is up to him to explain the true facts to Parzival, and, by extension, to the reader. Even when the author seems to be speaking it is clear that what he says is no more than a paraphrase of what Trevrizent is revealing. His claim cannot be treated as a casual irrelevancy (p. 148): "Although I was a layman, I could read and write the true books' tidings." If Ovid's *Fasti* was a source as claimed here, and if the crucial narration of how Anfortas was wounded for transgressing the Grail commandments was inspired by the punishment of Attis for violating his vows to Cybele, then it is fair to conjecture that, while he enlightens Parzival and the reader, Trevrizent is impersonating Ovid.

Accordingly, as a minor aside, one may remark that a clue to the impersonation is perhaps provided in Trevrizent's name. If the syllable 'Tre' is to be understood as a prefix, then the name could suggest 'Trismegistus', the 'thrice great' Hermes, legendary author of the 'tabula smaragdina' – but it could instead suggest 'triviri', a group of three magistrates of which the young Ovid once became a member, thus allowing him to identify himself as one of them (*Tristia*, 4.10, vv. 34-35):

cepimus et tenerae primos aetatis honores,
 eque uiris quondam pars tribus una fui.

[I received the first honours of tender youth, and for a while I was one of the *triviri*].

Avowing his weakness to resist to Cupid's arrows in his youth, in the age of maturity Ovid graduated from frivolous erotic affairs to the tenderest sort of sentiment: love for the wife who sincerely cared for him, and consistently did her best in favour of her suffering husband in exile (*Tristia*, 4.10, vv. 65-75):

molle Cupidineis nec inexpugnabile telis
cor mihi, quodque leuis causa moueret, erat.
cum tamen hic essem minimoque accenderer igni,
nomine sub nostro fabula nulla fuit.
paene mihi puero nec digna nec utilis uxor
est data, quae tempus per breue nupta fuit.
illi successit, quamuis sine crimine coniunx,
non tamen in nostro firma futura toro.
ultima, quae mecum seros permansit in annos,
sustinuit coniunx exulis esse uiri.

[My heart was soft and defenceless against Cupid's arrows, moved by even the slightest thing. But although my nature was such, and I was inflamed by the smallest spark, no scandal was ever attached to my name. When still almost a boy I was given an unworthy and useless wife, my bride for a short time. Though she was beyond reproach, the wife that succeeded her was not destined to remain in my bed. The last, who has stayed with me into my late years, has endured to be the wife of an exiled husband.]

In this change of tone, he was also imitated by Trevrizent, who, as noted before, in his 'combative years' followed the medieval tradition of courtly love of Ovidian provenance, but in his late harsh solitude praised Parzival's dedication to 'true marriage', a remedy to sorrows, capable even to terminate exile in Hell (book IX, p. 150):

You are in rightful sorrow's endurance, since it is because of your own wife that you give yourself anxiety's fostering. If you are found in true marriage, then even if you suffer in Hell, that extremity will soon be at an end, and you will be freed of those bonds by God's help, without any delay.

The virtues of 'true love' are also recognized, in amazing circumstances, when the chaste Grail-bearer, Repanse de Schoye, ceases to be a maiden by becoming the wife of a half-brother of Parzival. About this peculiar personage of Wolfram's invention, it is amusing to recall how his mother gave him a no less peculiar name just after his birth (book I, p. 18):

diu frouwe an rehter zît genas
eins suns, der zweier varwe was,
an dem got wunders wart enein:
wîz und swarzer varwe er schein.
diu kûngîn kust in sunder twâl

vil dicke an sîniu blanken mâl.
diu muoter hiez ir kindelîn
Feirefiz Anschevîn.
der wart ein waltswende:
die tjoste sîner hende

manec sper zebrâchen,
die schilde dürkêl stâchen.
Als ein agelster wart gevar
sîn hâr und och sîn vel vil gar.

[When her time was due the lady gave birth to a son, who was of two colours. By him God devised a miracle – both black and white was his appearance. The queen kissed him incessantly, very often on his white marks. The mother called her baby *Feirefiz* Angevin. He became a wood-waster – the jousts of his hands shattered many a spear, riddling shields with holes. His hair and his entire skin, too, became, in hue, like that of a magpie.]

Perceval's mother also covered her son with many kisses, and called him by a name also containing the word 'fiz', meaning 'son' in English, cleared derived from Old French 'fils' (book II, p. 35):

die künigîn des geluste
daz sin vil dicke kuste.
sî sprach hînz im in allen flîz
«bon fiz, scher fiz, bêâ fiz.»

[The queen delighted in kissing him over and over again, saying to him, assiduously: '*Bon fiz, scher fiz, bêâ fiz.*']

Feirefiz does not occur in Chrétien's book, but a clue to his name can perhaps be found in the conversation of the young, still naïf, Perceval with the first knights he chances to meet (*Le Conte du Graal*, vv. 342-349):

- Mes or te pri que tu m'anseignes
par quel non je t'apelerai.
- Sire, fet il, jel vos dirai.
J'ai non Biax Filz. - Biax Filz as ores ?
Je cuit bien que tu as ancores
.I. autre non. - Sire, par foi,
j'ai non Biau Frere.

["By what name do I call you?" "My lord, I will tell you. My name is Fair Son." "Fair Son is your name now? I think that you still have another name." "My lord, yes, my name is Fair Brother."]

So Perceval is called both 'son' and 'brother'. Both appellations would equally apply to Feirefiz, but, to distinguish him from Parzival, the two-word sequence might be inverted, suggesting, successively, if the Old French spelling is kept: Frere-Filz, Frerefilz – which is not too distant from Feirefiz.

Born a pagan, Feirefiz asks to be baptized as a requirement for marrying Repanse de Schoye. She and her husband, returning to his Oriental possessions, soon contribute to spread Christianity there (book XVI, p. 263): "She gave birth afterwards, in India, to a son, who was called Johan. Prester John they called him; forever after they retained that name for the kings there. Feirefiz had letters sent all over the land of India, telling them about the Christian way of life."

Looking back at the previously cited passage about the birth of Feirefiz, one notes the prediction that in his adventures he would have "shattered many a spear, riddling shields with holes." Writing about good quality spears offered to Gawan, Wolfram indicates an intriguing place name, Oraste Gentesîn, wherefrom such stout spears could be imported (book VI, p. 107):

ze sînen friwenden er dô nam
zwelf schârpfiu sper von Angram,
starc rœrîne schefte drîn
von Oraste Gentesîn
ûz einem heidenschen muor.

[From his friends he then obtained twelve sharp spears from Angram, with strong reed shafts, from Oraste Gentesin from a heathen marsh.]

In footnote 289 at the same page, the translator remarks: "Oraste possibly derives from Orestae in Solinus. Gentesin may be a corruption of Latin *gentes*, 'peoples'". Another possibility, potentially more informative, can be examined, if the the two final letters of 'Gentesin', which would make it a corruption of 'gentes', are appended to 'Oraste'. Now, numbering the letters in the resulting 'Orastein' by their order of occurrence, and then applying the permutation [8, 6, 4, 5, 1, 2, 7, 3], the word 'Nestoria' is obtained. About the other apparent place name, 'Angram', the translator, in the appended glossary of people and place names, admits to have no inkling of its origin (p. 319): "Obscure place name, source of stout spears." Perhaps the enigmatic 'Angram' is there to warn the reader that what follows – 'Oraste Gentesin' – should be taken as an anagram...

Though still in questionable Latin, the phrase 'Nestoria Gentes' brings to mind a feature related to the Prester John legend and the Nestorian doctrine he preached with success in India. The – surely apocryphal – letters of Prester John to other Christian potentates were much publicized in Wolfram's time; one of them, addressed to the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus, is still extant in Latin redaction. An English

translation appears in a book by M. Uebel (*Ecstatic Transformation: On the Uses of Alterity in the Middle Ages*, Palgrave Macmillan; 2005). In that letter, while boasting about the riches of his dominions, the presumed Prester John thus describes a wondrous feature of his palace (Appendix, p. 159):

... Indeed at the top of the uppermost column there is a mirror, consecrated by such art that all machinations and all things which happen for and against us in the adjacent provinces subject to us are most clearly seen and known by the onlookers. Moreover it is guarded by twelve thousand soldiers in the daytime just as at night, so that it may not be by some chance or accident broken or thrown down.

This passage may stand comparison with a wonder found by Gawan in the Schastel marveile, where the adventure of the Lit Marveile takes place (book XII, p. 189):

No column that stood amongst them could compare with the great pillar in the middle. The adventure tells us what wonders it could command. To view it, Sir Gawan went, alone, up into the watchtower, where he saw many a precious stone. There he found such a great marvel that he could never weary of watching. It seemed to him that in the great pillar all countries were made known to him, and that the lands were going round and round, and that the great mountains were on the receiving end of one another's joust. In the pillar he found people riding and walking, some running, some standing. He sat down at one of the windows; he wanted to investigate the marvel further.

If Wolfram actually took from the Prester John letter, this would once again reinforce the translator's remark about the "bigger library than Oxford has to offer" to which the German poet had access. But, so is the claim of this study, the main source besides Chrétien appears to have been that supremely melodious classic Latin poet harshly condemned to exile, immortal 'player of tender loves'.

Poetic justice

And what can be added here about Ovid's long banishment? Augustus never forgave him, neither Germanicus, to whom he dedicated his partly revised but still unfinished *Fasti* after the death of Augustus. In medieval times, despite any resistance to their occasional seductive impropriety, his verses were heartily acclaimed in many places, including the court of Wartburg frequented by Wolfram.

It would seem fair to conclude, once again metaphorically in consonance with the leading fall-rise motif of this study, that, while Ovid never left – in person – his exile in Tomi, his poetic images rose again from the dark in literary masterpieces, such as the *Parzival* poem, inspired on his late work in particular.

The French word 'Provence' (originally 'Provincia Romana') means 'province'. In the previous section, another Roman province of special interest was mentioned, Moesia, where Tomi was situated. Admitting that 'Kyot' is actually a byname of Wolfram and letting 'Provence' be understood as a generic reference to 'province', then one assertion close to the end of Wolfram's poem might indeed gain a suggestive interpretation (book XVI, p. 265): "from Provence into German lands the true tidings have been sent to us". If the one named "Germanicus" remained insensitive to Ovid's supplication, a German poet would render him poetic justice.