

Perspectives on the Grail: Subjectivity of Experience in *La Queste del Saint Graal*.

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In *La Queste del Saint Graal*, important aspects of the author's use of narrative technique as a reflection of certain central thematic concerns have gone largely undiscussed by critics. The narrative of this Grail Romance recounts a series of adventures experienced by the Knights of the Round Table as they seek an understanding of the significance of the Holy Grail and of its appearance in the realm of Logres. During the course of their wanderings, many, indeed most, knights fail to varying degrees in their Quest, with ultimately only Bors, Perceval and Galahad achieving the Grail. Success or failure in the Quest seems to be measured according to the ways in which the 'aventures del Graal' are perceived, understood, or even misunderstood by the individual characters, and these 'aventures' tend to be presented ambiguously or paradoxically, with single events in the text being given a multiplicity of interpretations.

Two planes of existence overlap in the Grail adventures: on the one hand, the world perceived as 'real' by the majority of the knights, and on the other, the world of the 'aventures del Graal' where things are not as they seem and are only comprehensible to a few characters: in fact, the failure of several knights on the Quest is due to their misinterpretation of events which they have understood literally rather than metaphorically. In this Grail Romance, the reader frequently finds a single episode presented from more than one perspective: I intend to look at some examples of this narrative technique and the ways in which the author foregrounds these scenes through the use of certain linguistic signposts.

P.Matarasso states that '[T]he Grail is not merely a symbol, it is also an object';¹ this statement may indeed be applied to various characters in *La Queste* as well, in the sense that we find several instances of characters playing both a literal and a metaphoric rôle in the narrative. For example, in the episode describing the adventures of Melyant, the two men who attack him represent the young knight's

two sins, pride and covetousness, but one of the brothers from the abbey in which the youth convalesces explains that his attackers were also real: '[L]i anemis [...] se mist [...] en guise de chevalier pecheor et entia tant a mal fere, come cil qui suens estoit, que il ot talent de toi ocirre [...] mes la croiz que tu feis te garanti' ('The devil entered into the person of a sinful knight who was already his servant, and so inflamed his wickedness that he desired to kill you, but you protected yourself by making the sign of the cross.') Similarly, the Seven Brothers in the *Château des Pucelles* adventure are seven evil knights (thus seven mortal sinners) (p.54 l.23-25), but Gauvain is also told that they represent the Seven Deadly Sins (p.55 l.4).

Later in the narrative, Lancelot takes part in a tournament which he subsequently discovers has symbolic significance: the recluse who explains the adventure to him states that:

[S]anz faille quan que vos veistes ne fu fors [...] come senefiance de Jhesucrist. Et neporquant sanz faillance nule et sanz point de decevement estoit li tornoiemenz de chevaliers terriens; car assez i avoit greignor senefiance qu'il meismes n'i entendoient. (p.143, l.13-17).

[Without a doubt, what you saw was nothing other (...) than a sign from the Lord. Nevertheless, it is certain that real knights participated in the tournament, for it had much greater significance than they themselves understood.]

Shortly after this episode, Lancelot's horse is slain in the following way:

[Il] li avint une aventure merveilleuse; car il vit de l'eve issir un chevalier armé d'unnes armes plus noires que meure, et sist sus un grant cheval noir. Et la ou il voit Lancelot, si li adrece le glaive sanz lui mot dire et fiert le cheval si durement qu'il l'ocit, mes lui ne touche; si s'en vet si grant erre que Lancelot n'en pot en poi d'ore point veoir (p.146 l.4-10).³

[Then there occurred a marvellous adventure, for he saw emerge from the water a knight, with arms and armour blacker than blackberry, upon a huge black horse. And when he saw Lancelot, he pointed his lance at him without saying a word, and struck Lancelot's horse so violently that it was killed, but

did him no harm. Then the knight left at such a speed that he soon vanished from Lancelot's sight.]

Several features of this apparition (the fact that it comes out of the water, which is described as 'parfonde et perilleuse' (p.145 l.33) and as 'noire et parfonde' (p.146 l.27); the fact that it does not speak to him, attacks only his horse and then disappears unnaturally quickly) suggest that this black knight is no ordinary human being, but represents Lancelot's benighted spiritual state and the fact that he must be willing to humble himself (signified by the loss of his horse) if he is to make further progress in the Quest. However, the *effects* of the black knight's appearance are, from Lancelot's point of view, all too real: his horse is dead, and he now cannot escape from his entrapment by the *Eau Marcoise* without divine assistance. Earlier in the narrative we saw that the veracity of Lancelot's Grail adventure in the Waste Land was confirmed to his mind by the material evidence of the disappearance of his horse and chivalric accoutrements (all of which were taken by the ailing knight): 'si ne troeve ne son hiaume ne s'espee ne son cheval: si s'aparçoit maintenant qu'il a veu verité' ('He could not find his helmet, nor his sword, nor his horse: then he realised that what he had seen was real.': p.61 l.28-30).⁴

It is noteworthy that the knights involved in adventures which are explained to them on a dual level are those who are guilty of understanding adventures literally when a symbolic interpretation is required: Melyant, Gauvain and Lancelot are all in this category, and, indeed, they are the *only* major characters in *La Queste* who fail in this particular way.

In *La Queste*, knights are only able to transcend appearances when they are worthy to do so. In earlier texts, an example being Chrétien de Troyes' *Charrete*, characters needed external (indeed non-Christian supernatural) assistance to penetrate illusions: for example, Lancelot is provided with a ring that dispels enchantments.⁵ In *La Queste*, by contrast, the ability to avoid deception is internalized, with a character's faith in God to 'deliver him from evil' manifesting itself outwardly in the making of the sign of the cross, as we see, for instance, in the case of Perceval (p.110 l.8) and Bors (p.182 l.3).

The dual function of characters (that is, both metaphorical and literal) and their varying ability to perceive that they are being deceived by their senses sometimes gives rise to interpretative problems in *La Queste*, not only for the knights, but also for the reader. For example,

there seems to be an internal contradiction in the *Château des Pucelles* adventure: on the one hand, as noted above, the Seven Brothers represent the Seven Deadly Sins when they are defeated by Galahad; however, when Gauvain slays them, even though it was in self defence, he is accused of having sent seven human souls to Hell without having accorded them the possibility of repentance and salvation (p.54 l.23-25). This conflict of interpretation is only apparent, however, and the key lies in the correct understanding of the moral and religious explanation provided by the hermit (p.55). The Seven Brothers represent the Seven Deadly Sins in *Galahad's* adventure and from his point of view only, and once they leave the *Château des Pucelles* and encounter Gauvain and his cronies who, being sinful, are operating at the literal level of the narrative, the Seven Brothers lose their metaphoric value and resume a literal function: so the hermit's criticism of Gauvain's behaviour is indeed consistent. L.Cornet has noted that, in *La Queste*, 'le meurtre, base de l'ancienne activité chevaleresque, est la malédiction de la chevalerie "terrienne"'.⁶

Melyant is told by the monk that his failure in the adventure of the Crossroads is due to his misunderstanding of the instructions he saw engraved on the cross: 'Li escriz parloit de la chevalerie celestiel, et tu entendoies de la seculer [...] et por ce chais tu en pechié mortel' ('The inscription referred to the spiritual path of chivalry, and you interpreted it as meaning the worldly way [...] thus you fell into mortal sin'; p.45 l.23-25). Thus Melyant has interpreted the inscription literally, whereas the words had figural significance, heralding as they did a test of spiritual worth – in fact, one of the 'aventures' of the Grail.

Lancelot is also guilty of putting a literal interpretation on events, as we can see in the episode in which he is granted a partial vision of the Grail, at Corbenic. There he is presented with an image of a priest who is weighed down under the burden of a figure of the Christ child (itself a clear reference to the legend of Saint Christopher), and despite having been warned not to set foot in the room in which the Grail has appeared, Lancelot, concerned for what seems to him to be an elderly man in danger of falling under a heavy weight, rushes forward to help the priest, and is cast from the room as punishment (pp.255-256). For the vision was intended to be symbolic, and Lancelot was unable to understand it as such. Furthermore, from the outset he has (erroneously) conceived of the Quest in terms of worldly glory: 'la ou il cuidoit joie trover et toutes *honors terrianes* [my emphasis] a il failli, ce est as aventures dou Saint Graal' ('he has failed in those

endeavours wherein he thought to find joy and all worldly honours, that is, in the adventures of the Holy Grail'; p.62 l.16-18). Although all the knights engaged in the Quest have been told from the outset that the trials awaiting them are essentially spiritual rather than physical in nature (p.19 l.19-210), most of them are not sufficiently free of sin to be able to apply that knowledge and interpret their adventures successfully. Indeed, even Galahad (although generally speaking he acts in a way which suggests he comprehends the metaphorical significance of his part in the Quest) does not always grasp all the implications of his adventures: for instance, after the adventure of the Tomb and the monk's explanation of it, Galahad declares that 'molt i a greignor senefiance que il ne cuidoit' ('it had much deeper significance than he had thought'; p.40 l.1-2). Moreover, the *Bon Chevalier* is at times in need of reassurance that his interpretation of events is correct: at the *Château Carcelois*, he expresses the concern that he, Perceval and Bors have committed a great sin in taking the punishment of the Castle's wicked inhabitants upon themselves (p.230 l.33 - p.231 p.20). The resident Holy Man, however, is able to confirm that they have acted according to God's will (p.231 l.27-28).

Several of the interpretations of events given by Holy Men in *La Queste* are described as being specific to the knight concerned, which demonstrates the individual nature of the adventures of the Quest; this is signposted in the text by the use of the collocation: 'par [x] doiz tu entendre [y]', 'by [x] you are to understand [y]', where x is a figural event, character, object or place occurring in an adventure, and y is the interpretation offered. Some examples of this include Melyant's experiences (p.45 l.11), Gauvain's *Château des Pucelles* episode (p.55 l.1), and Gauvain and Hector's vision in the Waste Chapel (p.160 l.6). In other cases, however, we find that the same event, witnessed and reported by more than one knight, is experienced differently by each. There are instances of this throughout the narrative, the first being in the scene at Camelot in which the Grail feeds all the Companions of the Round Table, each man receiving that which he likes best to eat (p.16 l.13-15). As the Quest progresses, the technique of multiple perspective on events is used to establish a hierarchy amongst the questers and other characters. For example, Lancelot's experience of the Waste Land scene was in complete contrast to that of the ailing knight (p.59 l.24-25): Lancelot remained in a state of torpor whilst the ailing knight got down from his litter and prayed, with the result that the

Grail not only appeared before him, but also healed him of his affliction. Furthermore, Lancelot's insight is inferior to that of one of the Holy Men he encounters during his travels. The monk in question conjures the Devil in order to discover the fate of his fellow companion whom he fears damned, and the text tells us that the '[preudons] voit l'anemi devant lui en si laide figure qu'il n'a cuer d'ome el monde qui poor n'en eust' ('The Holy Man saw the devil before him in such a hideous form that no earthly man's heart would not quail at the sight'; p.119 l.32-33). Soon after the apparition has vanished, Lancelot asks: 'Sire, [...] qui fu cil qui tant a parlé a vos? Son cors ne poi je veoir, mes sa parole oï je bien, qui est si laide et si espoantable, qu'il n'est nus qui poor n'en deust avoir' ('Sir [...] who was it that spoke to you at such length? I could not see his shape, but I heard his voice, which is so horrid and frightful that no-one can but fear it'; p.122 l.20-22). Thus Lancelot could only hear the Devil, whereas the Holy Man could *see* him as well.

During the *Cerf Blanc* adventure, there are four characters present: Galahad, Perceval, Bors, and the hermit into whose chapel they pursue the vision. When the Grailwinners ask the hermit to interpret that which they have just witnessed, he responds: 'Quel chose [...] avez vos donc veue?' ('What is it [...] then, that you have seen?'; p.235 l.22-23), which suggests that he has seen nothing, as does the fact that, whilst the three Companions are picking themselves up and recovering from their shock at hearing the divine Voice, the hermit is calmly divesting himself of his ceremonial robes (p.235 l.19-20). Thus it seems that the vision was accessible to the Grailwinners alone, who, although their enlightenment at this stage is incomplete, nonetheless are more spiritually advanced than the celebrant of the mass.

Likewise at Corbenic, during the liturgy of the Grail, only four angels are mentioned by the narrator as being present (p.269 l.3-5); however Galahad later claims to have seen an entire host of both angels and 'choses esperitex' (p.274 l.18-19): his vision was different from that of the others, and was presumably on a higher plane, given the greater numbers described.

In *La Queste*, the terms of reference of the narrative fluctuate, and what a character (and, by extrapolation, a reader) sees in any particular adventure depends entirely upon his perspective, which in the context of the Quest means the degree to which he has progressed along the

path to spiritual enlightenment and an understanding of the mysteries of the Grail.

As mentioned earlier, the author has placed linguistic signposts in the narrative to indicate subjectivity in the depiction of particular events. The collocation used repeatedly by the author in these circumstances is 'il fu avis a [x] que [y]', 'It seemed to [x] that [y]', where x is the character concerned, and y the event. On close examination of the text, we find that this collocation is used in all of the passages describing appearances of the Grail itself,⁷ barring the final one, at Sarras. There are other ambiguous turns of phrase employed in these passages: 'il sembloit que',⁸ '[fere] semblance de',⁹ and so forth. Critics have attempted to explain these in various ways: A.Pauphilet claims that 'malgré plusieurs précautions de forme de l'auteur ("et *sembloit* qu'il fust el sacrement de la messe"), plus le roman approche de sa conclusion, plus les cérémonies du Graal ressemblent à celles de l'Eglise';¹⁰ and E.Baumgartner states that:

Il est [...] très significatif que la formule qui introduit très souvent les visions, rêves, apparitions etc. est du type *si li fu avis que* suivi de l'indicatif. Jamais le moindre doute n'est porté sur la 'réalité' du procès perçu.¹¹

Several objections may be levelled against E.Baumgartner's statement. She is suggesting that the narrator presents a single valid interpretation of events, but, as I have already shown, there are several episodes for which more than one interpretation is offered, and the various homilies often even seem to be conflicting. In any case, surely the whole point here is that in these passages, by means of ambiguous collocations, the author is emphasising the individuality of the Revelations. Furthermore, it cannot be repeated often enough that the Mystery of what is contained in the Grail is *ineffable*: language is inadequate to describe it. Indeed, there are Biblical precedents for the kinds of collocations we find in *La Queste*, significantly in the Book of Revelation, with the use of 'sicut'. Finally, E.Baumgartner's statement to the effect that the 'veracity' of passages introduced by 'il fu avis a [x] que [y]' is *never* in doubt is in fact false, for there is a striking counter-example to be found in the part of the narrative recounting Bors' adventures, where we are told that he 'voit un cors gesir a terre toz estenduz et sanglanz, novelement ocis. Il le resgarde et conoist, *ce li est avis*, que ce est son frere [that is, Lionel; my

emphasis]' ('he saw a body, stretched out and bloody, recently killed, lying on the ground. He looked at it and recognised, it seemed to him, the body of his brother'; p.178 1.4-6). When Bors picks up what he believes to be his brother's body, he 'le lieve en la sele come cil qui riens ne li poise, *ce li est avis* [...] et porte devant lui, *ce li est avis*, le cors de son frere ('he lifted it up on to the saddle, and it seemed to weigh nothing [...] and he carried in front of him, it seemed to him, the body of his brother'; p.178 1.17-18 & 24-25, my emphasis). Soon we discover that this vision is one sent him by the Devil in order to try and tempt him into committing a mortal sin: Lionel is in fact alive.¹² We therefore need to proceed with caution before making generalised statements about the use of these collocations by the author of *La Queste*.

What is indisputable, however, is that no such collocation appears in the episode describing Galahad's final vision at Sarras. Here, events having symbolic significance are described as though they were real: the distinction between the literal and the metaphoric breaks down at the climax of the narrative. The lack of any 'il fu avis a [x] que [y]' type of locution at Sarras indicates that the earlier limitations of the characters have now been transcended. It may at first seem paradoxical that the new-found 'objectivity' of the text here is accompanied by metaphor so dense as to be almost impenetrable, but this is only to be expected given the subject-matter of the final scene.

Throughout the Grail adventures there is a contrast drawn between the inability of characters to see (in both the literal and the metaphoric sense), and their aspiration to 'veoir apertement', to 'see clearly', the secrets of the Grail. In the earliest extant Grail romances, the Holy Vessel is described as 'trestot descovert',¹³ or 'a descovert'¹⁴ as it passes through the room, but it is far from clear exactly what this collocation was intended to mean, or indeed if the fact that the Grail was uncovered had any figural significance at all.

In *La Queste*, the most striking use of the expression 'veoir apertement' is in the context of achieving the Quest, and this is in keeping with the fact that the barriers separating characters from the Holy Object are, until its final two appearances, visual. In the early Grail scenes (Camelot, the Waste Land and the first appearance at Corbenic), the Vessel is covered by a cloth. Lancelot also finds himself separated from the Grail by bars (in the Waste Land) and closed doors (at Corbenic). However, there are subtle distinctions to be made: various characters (for instance Gauvain and Mordrains)¹⁵ desire

to 'veoir le Saint Graal apertement' (p.16 l.17 & p.85 l.10), which means they wish to be in its presence, but Galahad is to see 'apertement' 'les merveilles dou Saint Graal' (p.19 l.20-25), which are only visible if one approaches the Holy Vessel and looks *inside* it, as Galahad does in Sarra.

We find that the collocation 'veoir apertement' is also very frequently employed in the context of, for instance, understanding the meaning of a parable.¹⁶ Therefore, it seems to have the double meaning of seeing in the literal sense, and in the metaphoric sense of understanding. We are reminded here of the passage in 1 Corinthians 13:12: 'Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum'.¹⁷ In Christian tradition, Christ is regarded as being 'veiled' in flesh, and there is a reference to this in *La Queste*, where he is described as being 'coverz de couverture terriane, ce est de char mortel' (p.236 l.1-2). The crux of the Quest for the Grail is precisely the aspiration to 'veoir apertement'; for instance, the monk says to Lancelot that were it not for his sinful relationship with the Queen 'li oil ne te fussent pas avuglé devant la face ton Seignor, ainz le veisses apertement' (p.126 l.32-33), and whenever in the narrative we find characters afflicted by blindness, that state is a symbolic representation of sin and its consequent lack of enlightenment.¹⁸ By contrast, the Grail is often compared to Light, and its appearances in the narrative are accompanied by candles and supernatural brightness.¹⁹

In *La Queste*, even the Grailwinners are, for the majority of their adventures, limited by what they can perceive through their senses. Bors, for example, when asked during the liturgy of the Eucharist to explain what the priest is holding in his hands, replies:

Sire [.j]e voi que vos tenez mon Sauveor et ma redemption en semblance de pain; et en tel maniere nel veisse je pas, mes mi oil, qui sont si terrien qu'il ne pueent veoir les esperitex choses, nel me lessent autrement veoir, ainz m'en tolent la veraie semblance. (p.167 l.4-8)

[Sir, [I] see that you hold my Lord and my Salvation in the shape of bread; and I would see beyond this, but my eyes are mortal, thus unable to perceive spiritual things, and they allow me to see Him in no other way, but hide His true form from me.]

But the knight believes in the Transubstantiation, and the text here is orthodox, for he continues: 'Car de ce ne dout je mie que ce ne soit veraie char et verais hons et enterine deité' ('I have no doubt that this is truly flesh and truly man and wholly divine'; p.167 l.8-9). The Presence of Christ is real in the Bread, but he cannot be seen there with mortal eyes. M.Lot-Borodine²⁰ has pointed out that the Corbenic scene, in which the Grail Companions actually see Christ enter the Host, compensates for Bors' 'blindness' in the earlier episode, although the Host still tastes like bread. She claims that the reasons for this may be political, to the extent that the author wished to avoid any possible connotations of pagan sacrifice or cannibalism: however, the explanation would appear to be more straightforward. If we look closely at the turns of phrase used in this passage, '[there was not a single knight] a qui *il ne fust avis que l'en li meist la piece en semblance de pain en sa bouche*' ('there was not a single knight to whom it did not seem that a host appearing like bread was being placed in his mouth'; p.270 l.20-21, my emphasis), we see that there is much linguistic ambiguity, in the form of the usual signposts associated in the text with subjective experience. Although they have seen Christ enter the Host, the knights still experience Communion at a physical level, and this is borne out by the description of the taste in terms of its appeal to the senses. Even Galahad does not fully understand what he sees, and Christ's question, '[S]ez tu que je tiegn entre mes mains?' ('Do you know what I am holding in my hands?'; p.270 l.26), reflects that of the priest to Bors. The level of enlightenment of the Companions in this passage is actually closer to that of Lancelot in the previous Corbenic scene (the difference between the two Corbenic episodes is one of degree as opposed to kind) than it is to that experienced by Galahad in the 'palais esperitel' at Sarras: indeed the second Corbenic scene is intended to provide a contrast of a qualitative nature with the climactic episode in the narrative. The notion that the ultimate Mystery of the Grail is 'ce que langue ne porroit descrire ne cuer penser' ('that which the tongue cannot describe nor the heart imagine'; p.278 l.4-5) probably has its sources in the Bible. The Epistles to the Corinthians (2:9) tell us of 'Quod oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quae praeparavit Deus iis qui diligunt illum', 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him', and mention 'arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui', 'unspeakable words which it is not lawful for

man to utter'.²¹ It should be noted that in *La Queste* (unlike in the antecedent Grail romances), the Grail itself is never actually described. The *Prose Lancelot* is consistent with *La Queste* in this respect, as the former states that the substance of which the Holy Vessel is made is impossible to identify.

Despite the ultimately elusive characteristics of the Grail, during the Quest, we see that to each character is revealed as much of the Mysteries of the Grail as he is able to comprehend, given his particular spiritual state. E. Baumgartner comments that the Grail:

se donne à voir sous la 'semblance' la mieux adaptée à chaque destinataire [...]. Ainsi, lorsque le Graal apparaît à la cour terrienne d'Arthur, c'est sous sa forme la plus littérale [...] de dispensateur de nourritures abondantes. [...] A Gauvain et Hector, les pécheurs qui se connaissent comme coupables sans faire pour autant l'effort de se convertir, la représentation morale, moralisée par l'ermite, de la main, du cerje et du frein. A Lancelot le pécheur en quête d'une pénitence sincère, la manifestation du Graal guérisseur (rédempteur) [...]. Aux trois élus, la révélation du sens mystique à travers la représentation concrète, à Corbenic, des grands mystères de la foi. A Galahad enfin la vision nue, ineffable et insoutenable, de l'origine de toutes choses, du moment où le Pain devient Vie.²²

E. Baumgartner's comments provide an illuminating résumé of the appearances of the Grail and their meanings for each character: however, she has omitted to mention Lancelot's second vision, which occurs after his conversion. He is shown a Mystery, but, unfortunately, one he can only interpret literally. Nor is her summary of Galahad's experience of the Grail in terms of the Mystery of Transubstantiation altogether satisfactory. At the climax of the narrative, set in the holy city of Sarras, Galahad, the knight chosen to experience the mysteries of the Grail most completely, looks inside the Holy Vessel, and sees the ineffable, which, by its very nature, surely cannot be closely defined. Gauvain and Hector are told by a hermit, in words recalling John 4:13-14, that the Grace of the Holy Grail is such that 'len ne la puet espuisier [...]. Car de tant come ele est plus large et plus plenteuse, d'itant en remaint il plus' ('one can never exhaust its capacity [...]. For the more generous and abundant it is, the more of it remains'; p.159, 1.1-7). The same could be said of

the interpretative possibilities offered by the text itself: although homilies are frequently provided, the Grail ultimately remains in the metaphoric dimension. Its mysteries are never fully explained to the characters, nor to the reader, whose understanding of 'les aventures del Saint Graal' really depends upon how much he or she has learned from the trials and tribulations, successes and failures of the protagonists.

NOTES

¹ P.Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: a study of La Queste del Saint Graal*, Geneva, Droz, 1979, p.182.

² A. Pauphilet (ed.), *La Queste del Saint Graal, roamn du XIIIe siècle*, Paris, CFMA, 1984 (first published 1923); p.46, l.1-4. All page references to this text (hereafter *QSG*) are from the 1984 edition. All translation of *QSG* are my own.

³ Here Lancelot's inability to see is a metaphor for his sinful state.

⁴ Here again, the loss of his horse and of the trappings of knighthood is symbolic of humility, although at the time, Lancelot sees his situation merely as one of humiliation.

⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, ed. M.Roques, Paris, Champion, 1978, l.3118-3129.

⁶ L.Cornet, 'Trois épisodes de la *Queste del Saint Graal*', in *Mélanges Rita Lejeune*, Gembloux, Duculot, 1969, vol.2, p.988. Gauvain's failing is here compounded by the fact that he refuses to do penance (*QSG* p.55 l.23-24). We should note that this 'malédiction' also applies to Lionel (*ibid.*, pp. 190 & 192).

⁷ See *QSG* p.15 l.9; p.57 l.25; p.254 l.25; p.255 l.22, 28 & 30; p.256 l.4 & 6; p.268 l.16; p.270 l.20 & 23.

⁸ For example p.255 l.21.

⁹ For instance p.269 l.13.

¹⁰ A.Pauphilet, *Etudes sur La Queste del Saint Graal*, Paris, Champion, 1980 (first published 1921), p.22.

¹¹ E.Baumgartner, *L'arbre et le pain*, Paris, SEDES, 1981, p.74.

¹² See p.188.

¹³ Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte dou Graal*, ed. W.Roach, Geneva, Droz, 1959, l.3301.

¹⁴ *La Première Continuation du Perceval*, ed. W.Roach, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949, l.1363.

¹⁵ Significantly, Mordrains is physically blind, yet able to prophesy.

¹⁶ See, for example, *QSG* p.69 1.19; 101 1.8; 122 1.8; 157 1.32, 160 1.30, 275 1.2.

¹⁷ Biblical references are taken from the *Biblia Vulgata*, A. Colunga and L. Turrado eds., Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1977. The King James version reads: 'For now we see as through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am knowm'.

¹⁸ There is a contrast drawn in *La Queste* between, on the one hand, the Enlightened Church, and, on the other, the Benighted Synagogue (see p.103 1.4-10). We are of course reminded of the topos of Synagogue blindfolded, which is a commonplace in Medieval Art. The Holy Man who interprets the Adventure of the Tomb also mentions the spiritual blindness of the sinners who crucified Christ (p.38 1.32- p.39 1.6), and one of the hermits who counsels Lancelot says to him: '[S]e li Sainz Graax venoit devant vos, je ne cuit pas que vos le poissiez veoir, ne plus que uns avugles feroit une espee qui devant les eulz li seroit. Et neporquant maintes genz ont demore en teniebres de pechié lonc tens et en obscurté, que Nostre Sires rapeloit puis a veraiie lumiere [...]' ('If the Holy Grail were to appear before you, I do not think that you would be able to see it, no more than a blind man would see a sword in front of his eyes. However, many people have remained a long time in the shadows and darkness of sin, yet Our Lord has brought them back into the true light'; p.123 1.6-10). This speech makes quite explicit the connection between the Quest for the Grail and spiritual enlightenment.

¹⁹ See, for instance, pp.15 1.11-12; p.58 1.33-p.59 1.1; p.255 1.3-4; p.269 1.4.

²⁰ M.Lot-Borodine: "Les grands secrets du Saint-Graal dans la *Queste* du Pseudo-Map" in R.Nelli (ed.) *Lumière du Graal*, Paris, Cahiers du Sud, 1951, p.166.

²¹ 2 Corinthians 12:4. In the earlier Grail Romances, we find that part of the mysteries of the Grail consists of secret words. In the *Conte dou Graal*, Perceval's uncle tells him a secret prayer which includes the Names of the Lord (*loc. cit.* 1.6485-6488); we find similar mystical teachings in Robert de Boron (see *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal* Paris, Champion, 1983, 1.3329-3336) and the *Deuxième Continuation du Perceval* (ed. W.Roach, *loc. cit.* 1.25830-25838).

²² E.Baumgartner, 'Les aventures du Graal', in *Mélanges Charles Foulon*, Rennes, 1980, vol.1, p.27.