

A TRANSLATION AND LITERARY STUDY  
OF DE ORTU WALWANII,  
A THIRTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.  
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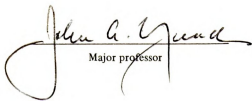
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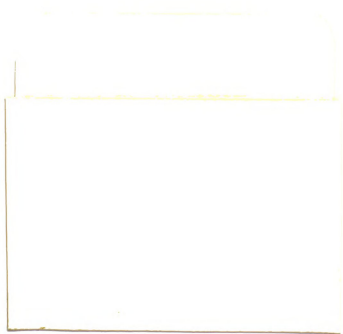
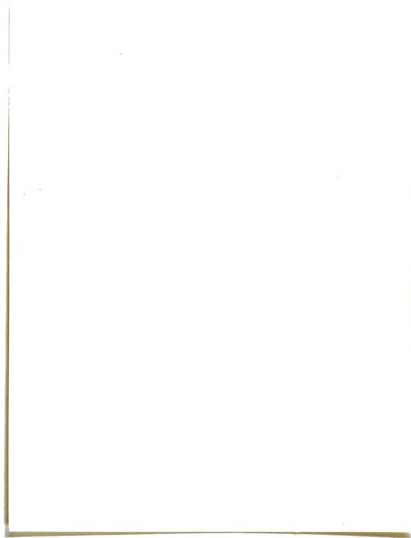
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## ABSTRACT

### A TRANSLATION AND LITERARY STUDY OF DE ORTU WALWANII, A THIRTEENTH CENTURY ROMANCE

By

James Leon Wieber

De Ortu Walwanii is an account in Latin of the birth and early life of Sir Gawain. It exists in only one manuscript, the Cotton MS. Faustina B. VI of the British Museum, and was first edited by J. Douglas Bruce in PMLA, 13 (1898), 365-456. A few years later Bruce published a second edition in Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii, Johns Hopkins University Press Series Hesperia, No. 2 (Baltimore, 1913).

The first chapter of my dissertation deals with authorship and date. While some scholars have tried to ascribe the romance to Robert of Torigni, the consensus of opinion today is that the author remains anonymous, that he was a man of considerable learning, probably a member of one of the ecclesiastical orders, and probably an Englishman or Anglo-Norman. As for the date of De Ortu Walwanii, the terminus ad quem would be the early fourteenth century as indicated by the manuscript. Although scholars have

tried to fix the terminus a quo at various points between the mid-twelfth and mid-thirteenth century, I believe that the scientific ingredients in the recipe for Greek fire indicate that De Ortu Walwanii could not have been composed before the last half of the thirteenth century.

Chapter II treats the sources of the Gawain enfances, which occur not only in De Ortu Walwanii, but also in Les Enfances Gauvain and in the French prose Perlesvaus. Previous scholars have taken the position that the story of Gawain's birth and early life was derived ultimately from the legend of Pope Gregory, or from a combination of the Coptic tale of the grandson of King Armenios and Celtic lore. I propose a theory of purely Celtic origins. I demonstrate that the major motifs--the illegitimate birth of the hero, his exposure on the sea, and his fosterage by a fisherman--as well as other incidental motifs could have been derived from that body of lore surrounding the son of the Celtic sun god. In support of this theory I use the infancy stories of Fiacha Fer-Mara in Lebor Gabála Éirenn, Gwri Gwallt-euryn in the Mabinogion, Cuchulainn in the Táin bó Cúailnge, Taliesin in the Welsh legend of that title, and the birth story of Mordrec in the Suite du Merlin.

Chapter III deals with the sources and analogues of Gawain's adult adventures. Bruce (ed. Historia, pp. lxii-lxiii) thinks that the first part of the hero's adventures on the barbarous isle--the landing of the Roman expedition, the hunting by Gawain and his men in the royal forest, and

their discovery by the king's men--shows the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (Bk. I, Chs. xi-xiv). A comparison of the two passages shows that our romancer makes the episode more colorful and dramatic. Roger Loomis in Celtic Myth (New York, 1927), pp. 12-23, points out that the second part of the episode--Gawain's rescuing of the emperor's captive niece--owes its origin to the Irish tale The Violent Death of Curoi. Our romancer follows the source more closely than does the author of the most similar romance analogue, Lancelot's rescuing of the damsel from the giant Carado in the Vulgate Lancelot. The second of Gawain's adult adventures, his naval battle with Buzafarnan, seems to be original on the author's part. This episode also contains a lengthy recipe for Greek fire, the composition of which was inspired by an actual scientific formula as well as by classical and medieval lore. Most of the description of Gawain's three-day fight with Gormundus in Jerusalem also seems to be our author's own composition, and differs in several ways from the stereotyped joust in Arthurian romance. Loomis in Arthurian Tradition (New York, 1949), pp. 132-38, indicates that the source of the queen's taunt of a boastful king in De Ortu Walwani and other romances is the Irish tale The Journeys of the Tuatha Luchra and the Death of Fergus; and that the method of the king's humiliation, the combat at the ford, comes from the Welsh tradition of the annual combat at



the ford as preserved at the beginning of Pwyll in the Mabinogion. This episode in our romance was written purely to entertain. Gawain's final adventure, his relief of the queen of the Castle of Maidens, as well as its romance analogues owe their origin to the Irish tale The Sickbed of Cuchulainn, according to Helaine Newstead in "The Besieged Ladies in Arthurian Romance," PMLA, 63 (1948), 803-30. However, because of the great emphasis put on the mission as a proof of Gawain's valor, I believe that the episode in our romance may be a blending of The Sickbed of Cuchulainn and Bricriu's Feast.

Chapter IV opens with a discussion of the characterization of Gawain in the context of his portrayal in the chronicles and in other medieval romances. Then I treat the setting of the romance, the form and style, and the author's purpose, which evidently was to tell the traditional story of Gawain in a very sophisticated prose style for the entertainment of educated readers.

My translation of De Ortu Walwani is as literal as possible while still being readable. It is based on Bruce's second edition of the romance which I cited above.

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A DISSERTATION

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Department of English

1974

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## INTRODUCTION

De Ortu Walwanii is an account of the birth and early life of Sir Gawain. Written in a very elaborate prose style, it is one of the few Arthurian romances which have come down to us in Latin. While it contains many incidents and motifs traditionally associated with Gawain, as well as other commonplaces of Arthurian romance, it possesses a few elements rarely or never found in works of this genre, such as a naval battle, a ridiculous recipe for Greek fire, a crusade adventure, a classical Roman setting for part of the story.

This romance exists in only one manuscript, the Cotton MS. Faustina B. VI of the British Museum,<sup>1</sup> and was first edited by J. Douglas Bruce in PMLA, 13 (1898), 365-456. Immediately preceding De Ortu Walwanii in this manuscript is another Arthurian romance in Latin prose, the Historia Meriadoci, which is believed to be the work of the same author<sup>2</sup> and which Bruce edited in PMLA, 15 (1900), 327-414. Upon discovering a second manuscript of the Historia Meriadoci, the Rawlinson B. 149 of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, Bruce published another



edition of both romances with corrections: Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii, Johns Hopkins University Press Series Hesperia, No. 2 (Baltimore, 1913).

Shortly after their publication these two romances received attention from a half-dozen scholars, who were interested primarily in sources, authorship and date. However, De Ortu Walwanii has been all but neglected for the past forty years. This is regrettable because, even though it must be ranked among the lesser romances, it does possess literary value and is a curiosity in the development of Arthurian romance. Thus there is a need for more scholarship, not only to explore aspects of De Ortu Walwanii which have not yet been studied, but to reevaluate past scholarship in the light of new information. This dissertation represents a beginning in the fulfillment of that need. The first chapter consists of a review of the literature with regard to authorship and date, with a suggestion of my own for determining the approximate date of composition. In Chapter II, after summarizing what other scholars have said about the sources of the Gawain enfances, I demonstrate that the origins may have been purely Celtic. Chapter III is a comparison of Gawain's adult adventures in De Ortu Walwanii with sources and analogues. Chapter IV is a discussion of the characterization of Gawain, the setting, the form and style of the romance, and the

author's purpose in writing it. Finally, as part of the dissertation I am including my translation of De Ortu Walwanii, the first to have been made of this romance.



## INTRODUCTION--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The manuscript consists of 129 folios and contains: (1) Historia Meriadoci (fols. 2-23), (2) De Ortu Walwani (fols. 23-38), (3) a brief abstract in Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae down to the beginning of Merlin's prophecies (fols. 38-40), (4) annals from Christ's birth to the year 977, in a fourteenth century hand (fols. 41-65), (5) a record of important events from the beginning of the world to the time of King Richard II, in a fourteenth century hand (fols. 66-67), (6) the names of the kings of the Saxons and the Angles, the years they reigned, and the places of their burial, from Alfred to Richard II, in a fourteenth century hand (fols. 67-68), (7) annals of England from 1066-1374, in a fourteenth century hand (fols. 69-91), (8) the names of the monks of Croxden, Staffordshire (fols. 92-93), (9) papal letters to English kings, archbishops and bishops, and one to the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, dating from the seventh to the twelfth century but all in hands of the twelfth century (fols. 94-99), (10) notices of churches and church lands in London that belong to the cathedral church of Canterbury, in a hand of the twelfth century (fol. 100), (11) a calendar obituary of the nunnery of Daunton in Kent (?), in a fourteenth century hand (fols. 101-06), (12) Contemplations of Walter Hilton (d. 1396), an anchorite, in verse (fols. 107-29). H. L. D. Ward, Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, I (London, 1883), 374, describes fols. 2-40 in this way: "Vellum; early xivth cent. Quarto; ff. 39, in double columns, having 35 lines to a column. With initials in blue and red." See also British Museum, Department of Manuscripts, A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library Deposited in the British Museum (London, 1802), pp. 606-07.

<sup>2</sup>J. Douglas Bruce, ed., Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluani, Johns Hopkins University Press Series Hesperia, No. 2 (Baltimore, 1913), p. x. E. Brugger, "Zu Historia Meriadoci und De Ortu Walwani," Zeitschrift

für Französische Sprache und Literatur, 46 (1923), 439.  
Pio Rajna, "Sono il De Ortu Walwanii e l'Historia Meriadoci  
Opera di un Medesimo Autore?" in Medieval Studies in  
Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis, ed. Roger S. Loomis  
(New York, 1927), pp. 1-16.

## CHAPTER I

### AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

The only hint as to the identity of the author of De Ortu Walwanii is the sentence "Incipit prologus R" which appears at the beginning of his other romance, Historia Meriadoci, in both manuscripts. Scholars generally agree that the "R" stands for the name of the author.<sup>1</sup> John Bale, the sixteenth century antiquary, assigned the composition of both romances to Robert of Torigni (also called Robertus de Monte), giving the source of his information as the Nordovicensis Scriptorum Catalogus which is not extant today:

Robertus sancti Michaelis de monte, inter cetera  
scripsit,  
    Chronicorum opus, li. i.  
    Gesta Walwani,     li. i. 'Vterpendragon rex pater.'  
    Gesta Maradoci,   li. i. 'Memoratu dignam.'  
        Ex Nordouicensi scriptorum catalogo.<sup>2</sup>

Having found Bale's entry, Margaret Shove Morriss tried to establish the correctness of this ascription. She demonstrated that Robert of Torigni (ca. 1110-1186) as early as 1139 had a direct knowledge of Geoffrey of

Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae which the author of the romances obviously used as a source, and that Robert had a keen appreciation of all kinds of literature, for he had gathered at the monastery of Mont St. Michel one of the best collections of manuscripts then known. Moreover, she observed that as abbot of Mont St. Michel, one of the great goals for pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, Robert had opportunities for meeting the most celebrated personages of his day and for obtaining crusading news from returning knights, from whom he could have obtained the necessary information for his description of Gawain's journey to Jerusalem in the De Ortu Walwanii. Finally, she maintained that there is nothing in the romances which would prevent their being dated during Robert's lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

J. Douglas Bruce took exception to Morriss' arguments. He said that Robert of Torigni's interest in literature has little bearing on the question of his possible authorship of the two romances, and that since Robert apparently accepted Geoffrey's Historia as authentic history, his knowledge of the work cannot be taken as evidence of his interest in romance. Furthermore, Bruce said that it would be rather surprising if a great ecclesiastic whose well-authenticated works are all of the driest and most serious character--chronicles and monastic documents of one sort or another--were found

appearing in the role of a writer of romances which contain in part materials of the most extravagant kind. But as far as Bruce was concerned, the most convincing argument against Robert of Torigni's authorship of the romances is the great contrast in style and vocabulary between his undisputed works and the romances. While the latter are marked by florid rhetoric, Robert's genuine writings are characterized by businesslike brevity, and there are great differences in syntactic construction. For example, the romancer shows a predilection for the copulative que, which is found only three times in Robert's whole Chronicle; the romancer occasionally ends his sentences with a noun that is separated by a verb from the word or words which qualify it, a feature which occurs only once in the Chronicle; and the romancer generally follows the classical practice of putting the verb at the end of the sentence, whereas in Robert's Chronicle the position of the verb in the sentence is the same as it would be in French. Bruce concluded, therefore, that Robert of Torigni could not have been the author of the romances, and that the compiler of the Norwich catalogue (which John Bale used as a reference for the Index Britanniae Scriptorum) having before him a copy of Robert's Chronicle as well as the two romances, simply mistook the "R" of the "Incipit prologus R" for the initial of Robert of Torigni.<sup>4</sup>



Just who the author is remains unknown. As Bruce pointed out, he was a man of considerable learning, probably a member of one of the ecclesiastical orders, and probably an Englishman. The reasons Bruce gave for the author's nationality are: (1) the snow-covered Welsh mountain in the Historia Meriadoci is called Snowdon, the English name for the mountain, whereas the genuine Welsh name is Eryri; (2) the author uses the word chiula 'ship' in De Ortu Walwanii, which is the Latinization of the Anglo-Saxon ceol; (3) the only citation in Du Cange for the word carpella 'saddlebow,' which occurs in both romances, is from an Anglo-Saxon gloss; (4) the only manuscripts of our author's works are found in England.<sup>5</sup>

E. Brugger, on the other hand, argued that the author of the two romances was a Welshman. He saw in the Welsh character of the Meriadoc enfances and in the Welsh setting of the last part of the De Ortu Walwanii the intent of the author to glorify his native land, Wales. Brugger argued, moreover, that a Welshman as well as an Englishman could have used the words chiula and carpella for both were educated in the same schools, and that it was due to a scribal change or error that the name of the Welsh mountain appears as Snowdon instead of Eryri in the two passages where the name occurs in the Historia Meriadoci.<sup>6</sup>

However, William Mullen convincingly demonstrated that the enfances of Meriadoc were not essentially Welsh in nature, but originated among the Scandinavians in England. He pointed out that the closest analogue to the Historia Meriadoci is the Scandinavian Hroar-Helgi story, another analogue of which is the Havelok story, whereas there is no extant Welsh story which corresponds in any way to the enfances of Meriadoc. In addition, Mullen contended that the Welsh aspects of the Historia Meriadoci were a superficial attempt to give local color, and that the sentences which contain the name of Mount Snowdon were probably not corrupt, since the author expressed himself the same way twice. For these reasons and for the reasons Bruce gave, Mullen concluded that the author was English or Anglo-Norman.<sup>7</sup>

Roger S. Loomis also maintained that the author of the two romances was not of Welsh blood, but of English or Norman blood: first, because a Welsh author would not have said that Snowdon was the Cambrian name of the mountain; secondly, because a Welshman probably would not have used the British forms of certain names (e.g. Walwanius and Gwendoloena) whereas an Englishman or Norman could easily have picked up such common Welsh names as Ivorius, Griffinus, Caradocus, and Meriadocus; and thirdly, because "the stories themselves while incorporating much that is of ultimate Celtic origin,

do not represent direct borrowings from Wales."<sup>8</sup> The combined arguments of Bruce, Mullen, and Loomis seem to me most convincing that the author of De Ortu Walwanii and Historia Meriadoci was not Robert of Torigni or a Frenchman or a Welshman, but rather an Englishman or Anglo-Norman.

As for the date of the two romances, the absolute terminus a quo would have to be about 1136 when Geoffrey of Monmouth finished writing the Historia Regum Britanniae, for our author obviously borrowed several things from this work.<sup>9</sup> The terminus ad quem would be the early fourteenth century, the date H. L. D. Ward assigned to the folios which comprise the two Latin romances in the Cotton MS. Faustina B. VI.<sup>10</sup> But it is interesting to note that according to Bruce and Brugger, the numerous errors in the two extant manuscripts of the Historia Meriadoci show that neither could have been from the hand of the author, and that neither was copied from the other.<sup>11</sup>

In trying to establish the date of the two romances, Morriss cited two items of knightly apparel in the De Ortu Walwanii--the surcoat over the armor and the helmet with a nosepiece--as well as Gawain's journey to Jerusalem in this same romance, which journey seems to have occurred at a time when Jerusalem was still a kingdom of the Christians (i.e. 1099-1187), as evidence

that the romances could have been composed during Robert of Torigni's lifetime (1110-1186).<sup>12</sup> Conceding that the knightly surcoat was worn sporadically throughout the twelfth century, J. D. Bruce maintained, however, that Gawain would not have been given credit for instituting the custom of wearing the surcoat if the custom had not already been widespread, that it was a trick of the writers of the Arthurian prose romances starting with the writer of the Prose Lancelot (ca. 1215-1230) to attribute to their heroes the introduction of some well-known custom. Bruce said that the helmet with the nose-piece affords no ground for dating the Latin romances earlier than the thirteenth century, for although the nosepiece may have been discontinued in the twelfth century, heroes of romances continued to wear it well into the thirteenth century. Moreover, it seemed to him that because the two Latin romances combine so many Arthurian commonplaces, they could not have been written during the period of Robert of Torigni's lifetime, especially when one considers that Chrétien de Troyes did not compose his romances until the latter half of the twelfth century. Bruce ascribed the two romances to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, though he said they may even be somewhat later, because he thought that certain names in the Historia Meriadoci (i.e. Moroveus and Sadocus) and the De Ortu Walwani

(i.e. Nabaor and Buzafarnan) were derived from the Prose Tristan (i.e. from Meroveus, Sadoc, Nabon or Nabor, Nabuzardan) which he supposed was written about the year 1220.<sup>13</sup>

Rajna and Brugger both took exception to Bruce's statement that these names were dependent on the Prose Tristan. They showed that the names, if not basically different from those in the Tristan, could have come from almost anywhere and therefore could not be used as evidence for dating the romances. While Rajna agreed with Morris that the Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Walwanii were written in the mid-twelfth century by Robert of Torigni, Brugger did not attempt to assign a specific date of composition.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, William Mullen, after doing extensive research on the military surcoat and accepting Bruce's arguments except for the derivation of certain names from the Prose Tristan, concluded that the romances were composed about the year 1200, just when the surcoat had become an established fashion.<sup>15</sup>

I think Bruce and Mullen are nearer the truth with regard to the date of the two Latin romances than those who say they were written during the twelfth century. Bruce's and Mullen's arguments about the surcoat, the helmet with the nosepiece and the presence in the romances of so many Arthurian commonplaces carry a

lot of weight. And as Paul Meyer pointed out, it is necessary that a legendary hero become famous before one could get the idea to write about his enfances. Just as the enfances of Roland, Ogier, Vivien and other heroes of the chanson de geste were not composed before their fame had been established by other poems, so according to Meyer the fragmentary French romance Les Enfances Gauvain, which exists in a manuscript written in a mid-thirteenth century hand, could not originally have been composed earlier than the first part of that century.<sup>16</sup> The same reasoning, of course, would apply to De Ortu Walwani. Other parallels can be found in Arthurian romance. For example, Tristan's birth and early life in the Prose Tristan (mid-thirteenth century) is greatly expanded from anything that had been written previously about him.

So far Roger S. Loomis is the only one to have found evidence which fixes a rather late terminus a quo for the Latin romances: "As for date, the terminus a quo is in all likelihood 1277, the year in which Edward I besieged Llywelyn, the last native prince of Wales, in his fortress of Snowdon and starved him into surrender, for just so Arthur [in the Historia Meriadoci] is described as starving out Griffinus in the same region. Edward's sensational triumph served as a model for Arthur's."<sup>17</sup> Loomis implied that the terminus a quo

for the De Ortu Walwanii would be approximately the same, for both works are by the same author.

However, there may be evidence in the De Ortu Walwanii itself that it was composed some time after the middle of the thirteenth century. In this romance is an elaborate recipe for Greek fire. While it calls for many preposterous ingredients (i.e. poisonous toads, poisonous water snakes, a three-headed asp, the gallbladder and testicles of a werewolf, a ligure stone, the head and heart and liver of a crow nine generations old, and the blood of a red-haired man and of a dragon), it also calls for elements one can find in a scientific formula for Greek fire: sulphur, pitch, resin, oil, tartar, and bitumen. In fact, these last ingredients are practically identical to the ones which comprise one of the oldest recipes for it:

Ignem graecum tali modo facies: Recipe sulphur vivum, tartarum, sarcocollam et picolam, sal coctum, oleum petroleum et oleum commune. Facias bullire invicem omnia ista bene. Postea impone stupas et accende. Quod si volueris extrahere per embotum ut supra diximus. Post illumina et non extinguetur, nisi cum urina vel aceto vel arena.

You will make Greek fire in this way. Take live sulphur, tartar, sarcocolla and pitch, boiled salt, petroleum oil and common oil. Boil all these well together. Then immerse in it tow and set on fire. If you like you can pour it out through a funnel as we said above. Then kindle the fire which is not extinguished except by urine, vinegar, or sand.<sup>18</sup>

The above formula occurs in the Liber Ignium attributed to Marcus Graecus. At first glance it may appear to be

somewhat different from the list of scientific ingredients in our romance. However, both recipes call for sulphur, tartar, pitch and oil; sarcocolla is a resin; and petroleum oil belongs to the bitumen family. (There is also the possibility that bitumen in the romance should have read bitumen liquidum 'naphtha,' a petroleum distillate.) So the only item left out of our romancer's recipe is boiled salt. This last item was not an essential ingredient but was added, according to J. R. Partington, so that the mixture would produce a yellow flame which looked very hot. Moreover, Partington observes that boiled salt was left out of the formula in at least one manuscript of the Liber Ignium.<sup>19</sup> Finally, both recipes call for the ingredients to be boiled together.

From what I could determine from Partington's very thorough History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder (Cambridge, England, 1960), the formula in the Liber Ignium comes closer by far to the list of legitimate ingredients in De Ortu Walwanii than any other known recipe for Greek fire, except for the one in De Mirabilibus Mundi attributed to Albertus Magnus (ca. 1193 or 1206-1280):

Ignem graecum sic facies; Recipe [sulphur] vivum, tartarum, sarcocollam, piculum, sal coctum, petroleum et oleum commune. Fac bullire bene, et si quid imponitur in eo, accenditur, sive lignum sive ferrum, et non extinguitur nisi urina, aceto vel arena.

Greek fire is made in this way. Take sulphur, tartar, sarcocolla, pitch, boiled salt, petroleum,



and common oil. Boil them all together, and what is put into it and set on fire, whether wood or iron, is not extinguished except by urine, vinegar, or sand.<sup>20</sup>

This recipe, of course, is the same as that which appears in the Liber Ignium. In fact, there are several formulae which both works have in common, and the weight of opinion is that the author of De Mirabilibus Mundi took them from the Liber Ignium, rather than conversely, or else that the identical parts of both works came from a common source. Of the few extant manuscripts of De Mirabilibus Mundi, the earliest are thought to belong to the thirteenth century. It is uncertain whether Albertus Magnus is actually the author. But if he is, this work would have to have been composed some time before his death in 1280.<sup>21</sup>

The Liber Ignium is a short Latin document, less than ten pages in length, and contains about three dozen recipes, fourteen of which are for military incendiary mixtures. From the authorities named in it and some of the words used in it, Partington believes that it was an Arabic work, or that it was written in a place where Arabic was commonly used. He also thinks that Marcus Graecus was a purely imaginary person, the real author or authors of the final collection being Jewish or Spanish. The Liber Ignium was a very popular work, if one judges from the large number of manuscripts still

extant all over Europe. Although the oldest of these are dated at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, the work probably was known in Europe a few years earlier than that, especially if it was a source for parts of De Mirabilibus Mundi. However, it could not have existed too much before the middle of the thirteenth century because one recipe describes the purification of saltpeter, and four others including one for gunpowder call for this chemical. According to Partington, "There is no evidence of the use of saltpetre in incendiary compositions in the West before about 1250, the reason being that purified saltpetre was not known there before about 1225."<sup>22</sup>

When either the Liber Ignium or De Mirabilibus Mundi was introduced to England we do not know. There is the possibility that Roger Bacon (ca. 1214-1294) brought one or the other there. Some scholars think that portions of his works after 1250 reflect the influence of the Liber Ignium, although that point is debatable. If Bacon ever became acquainted with that work, or with De Mirabilibus Mundi for that matter, it may have been when he was in Paris in the 1240's. This was the same time that Albertus Magnus was in that great center of learning. In any case, Bacon returned to Oxford some time after 1251.<sup>23</sup>

Certainly the evidence linking the Liber Ignium or De Mirabilibus Mundi with our romancer is scanty. All we know is that the ridiculous recipe for Greek fire in De Ortu Walwanii contains a list of legitimate ingredients, and that these ingredients are practically identical to the ones which comprise the Greek fire recipes in the two scientific documents. Moreover, there seems to be no other extant formula for Greek fire which comes even close to matching this list of ingredients. If the author of De Ortu Walwanii did borrow from either the Liber Ignium or De Mirabilibus Mundi, the terminus a quo for the romance would have to be the middle of the thirteenth century, for neither work would have been available to him before then. My guess is that he would not have seen either document much before the fourteenth century. The evidence afforded by the recipe for Greek fire, then, tends to complement Loomis' argument that the terminus a quo for the Historia Meriadoci is 1277. If his and my theories possess any validity, it appears that neither romance could have been composed before the last half of the thirteenth century.

## CHAPTER I--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The only scholar to dispute the meaning of "R" was Paul Meyer who, in his review of Bruce's first edition of Historia Meriadoci, thought it meant "Rubrica." See Paul Meyer, "Periodiques," Romania, 34 (1905), 144. Bruce contended that if Meyer had seen the manuscripts, he would not have made that assertion. Moreover, Bruce pointed out that the earliest cataloguers of the Historia Meriadoci also regarded the "R" as the initial of the author of the romance (John Leland, the sixteenth century scholar, in the Collectanea, ed. Thomas Hearne, III, 25; W. E. Macray in the Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae, pt. 5, fasc. 1, Oxford, 1862, col. 501). See J. Douglas Bruce, ed. Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Walwani (Baltimore, 1913), pp. xv-xvi, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup>John Bale, Index Britanniae Scriptorum, ed. Reginald Lane Poole and Mary Bateson (Oxford, 1902), pp. 384-85.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Shove Morriss, "The Authorship of the De Ortu Waluani and the Historia Meriadoci," PMLA, 23 (1908), 599-620. Pio Rajna in "Per le Origini e la Storia Primitiva del Ciclo Brettone," Studi Medievali, Nuova Serie, 3 (1930), 247-54, also maintained that Robert of Torigni was the author of these romances.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce, ed., Historia, pp. x-xv.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. lxiv-lxv.

<sup>6</sup>E. Brugger, "Zu Historia Meriadoci und De Ortu Walwani," Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur, 46 (1923), 406-10, 434-39.

<sup>7</sup>William B. Mullen, "A Critical Study of the Historia Meriadoci," Diss. Columbia University 1951, pp. 6-18, 58-71.

<sup>8</sup>Roger S. Loomis, "The Latin Romances," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 474.

<sup>9</sup>According to Bruce, the romancer is indebted to Geoffrey's Historia for such things as the division of Britain given at the beginning of Historia Meriadoci; the story of Gawain's connection with Rome and the pope, the description of Caerleon, and the names of certain characters (e.g. Pope Sulpicius, Arthur's sister Anna, and Gormundus) in De Ortu Walwani. See Bruce, ed. Historia, pp. lv, lx, lxiv-lxv.

<sup>10</sup>H. L. D. Ward, Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, I (London, 1883), 374.

<sup>11</sup>Bruce, ed. Historia, p. xxiv, n. 2. Brugger, p. 436.

<sup>12</sup>Morriss, pp. 608-14, 644.

<sup>13</sup>Bruce, ed. Historia, pp. xvi-xxiv. According to Eugène Vinaver, the first version of the Prose Tristan was written between 1225 and 1235. See Eugène Vinaver, "The Prose Tristan," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 339.

<sup>14</sup>Rajna, "Per le Origini," pp. 238-54. Brugger, pp. 250-80.

<sup>15</sup>Mullen, pp. 72-82.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Meyer, "Les Enfances Gauvain; Fragments d'un Poème Perdu," Romania, 39 (1910), 18-19.

<sup>17</sup>Loomis, "The Latin Romances," pp. 473-74.

<sup>18</sup>This quotation from the Liber Ignium and the translation by J. R. Partington were taken from his A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder (Cambridge, England, 1960), p. 50.

<sup>19</sup>Partington, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>The quotation from De Mirabilibus Mundi and Partington's translation can be found in his work, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup>The information regarding De Mirabilibus Mundi I took from Partington, pp. 57-58, 81-86.

<sup>22</sup>The quotation is from Partington, p. 32. His discussion of the Liber Ignium occurs mostly on pp. 42-63.

<sup>23</sup>Partington's discussion of Bacon and Albertus Magnus occurs on pp. 64-69.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOURCES OF THE GAWAIN ENFANCES

There are only three extant romances, all of the thirteenth century, which contain a somewhat detailed account of Gawain's birth and early life: the French prose Perlesvaus,<sup>1</sup> the metrical Les Enfances Gauvain,<sup>2</sup> and the Latin prose De Ortu Walwanii.<sup>3</sup> J. Douglas Bruce argued convincingly that the Les Enfances Gauvain and De Ortu Walwanii are different enough so that the one probably was not the direct source for the other, but rather both were derived from the same immediate source: a lost French metrical romance. He also stated that the passage from Perlesvaus was very likely a rationalized account of Les Enfances Gauvain or of some variant version.<sup>4</sup> I agree that there once existed one or more French romances which gave rise to the Gawain enfances that we do have. The question of ultimate sources is another matter.

According to Bruce, the Gawain enfances, as well as the early life of Mordrec as found in the Huth Merlin (now commonly called the Suite du Merlin), were derived

ultimately from Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae and the legend of Pope Gregory. Geoffrey's Historia provided the facts that Gawain was the son of Loth of Norway and Arthur's sister, and that at a young age he was separated from his parents when he went to serve in the household of Pope Sulpicius who dubbed him a knight. The Gregory legend supplied the illegitimate birth of the hero, his exposure on the sea, his fosterage by a fisherman, and other incidental motifs found in one or more of the Gawain stories, such as a knight aiding the mother in getting rid of the child, the mother sending articles with the child for the purpose of his future identification, and a guardian giving his name to the hero.<sup>5</sup> Hendricus Sparnaay contended, however, that the Gregory legend was not popular until the last part of the twelfth century and therefore did not have time to influence the Gawain enfances. Besides, said Sparnaay, the Gregory story has motifs in common with secular romance, which indicates that the Gregory story was influenced by Arthurian romance, rather than vice versa.<sup>6</sup> Roger S. Loomis, also thinking that the legend of Pope Gregory arrived on the scene too late to influence the Gawain enfances, theorized that a Welsh bard combined the ultimate source of the Gregory legend--the Coptic tale of the grandson of King Armenios--with a nonextant, pagan Celtic enfance of Gwri (which he presumed gave



rise to the story of Gwri as we have it in the Mabinogion) to form another nonextant Gwri enfance; this nonextant Gwri enfance in turn gave rise to the Gawain enfances, the Gregory legend and other analogues, but not the Mor-drec enfances which were derived solely from Celtic lore.<sup>7</sup>

So far no one has proposed a theory of purely Celtic origins for the Gawain enfances, which would be a more normal development of Arthurian romance. However, I think it is very possible that such were the origins. Throughout the rest of this chapter I shall demonstrate how the major motifs could have been derived from Celtic tradition, namely from that body of lore surrounding the son of the Celtic sun god. I shall also attempt to provide answers to the objections which adherents to Loomis' or Bruce's theories might raise.

Gawain has often been regarded as some sort of a solar hero.<sup>8</sup> Primary evidence cited by scholars in support of this belief is the fact that in several romances his strength waxes and wanes as the day advances and declines. Perhaps the earliest example of this can be found in the First Continuation of Chrétien's Perceval, where Gawain's strength doubles at noon and lasts until evening when it declines.<sup>9</sup> In the Prose Lancelot Segurades gains in his fight with Gawain in the morning when the latter's strength decreases; but after midday when his strength and courage double, Gawain gets the

best of his foe.<sup>10</sup> A slightly different version occurs in the Suite du Merlin where in the fight with Morhous Gawain's strength doubles at noon and lasts until about 3 p.m. when it begins to decline.<sup>11</sup> The Mort Artu states that no matter how weary or badly wounded Gawain is as a result of the morning's fighting, he recovers his full strength and ability around midday.<sup>12</sup> Malory describes Gawain's strength as waxing in the morning and declining in the afternoon:

But sir Gawayne, fro hit was nine of the klok,  
wexed ever strengre and strengre, for by than hit  
cam to the howre of noone he had three tymes his  
myght encreased. And all this aspyed sir Marhaus  
and had grete wondir how his myght encreced. And  
so they wounded eyther other passyng sore. So whan  
hit was past noone, and whan it drewe toward  
evynsonge, sir Gawayns strength fyebled and woxe  
passyng faynte, that unnethe he myght dure no  
lenger, and sir Marhaus was than bygger and bygger.<sup>13</sup>

While there are variations, the motif is basically the same in the above examples and in other romances where it can be found. Since the motif occurs so frequently, it appears that it was not attached to Gawain by accident or by coincidence, but rather properly belongs to him.

Gawain's parentage also connects him with the sun. In the romances his father is always Loth. Loomis has pointed out that Loth was derived from the Welsh name Lloch which came ultimately from Lug, the Irish sun god. According to Loomis, Lug's son Cuchulainn, the hero of

the sagas of the Ulster cycle, also has solar characteristics (e.g. he could change himself into a crimson wheelball, and he had golden hair which he could withdraw into his head while a drop of blood stood at the root of each hair--a physiological description of the sun withdrawing its rays as it approaches the horizon and turning blood red) and is Gawain's counterpart in Irish mythology.<sup>14</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, Loomis believed that Gawain's prototype in Welsh literature was Gwri Gwallt-euryn, nicknamed Pryderi, the hero of the Mabinogion. Through a rather complicated theory, Loomis traced Gawain's name back to Gwri Gwallt-euryn, and Gwri's parentage, like Gawain's, back to Lug the Irish sun god. He also connected Gwri with Lug's son Cuchulainn on the bases that colts were born at the time of the birth of both heroes, both matured faster than normal doing unusual feats for their age, and both were remarkable for their golden hair. In fact, Gwri's sobriquet "Gwallt-euryn" means "golden hair."<sup>15</sup> In what serves to complement Loomis' observations, Thomas O'Rahilly identified Gwri's parents, Pwyll and Rhiannon, as the Welsh sun god and sun goddess. He noted that the name Pwyll means "wisdom," which is also the meaning of Mider and Conn, other names for the Irish sun god and a reflection of the idea that the sun god or chief god of the Celtic

otherworld was omniscient. Moreover, he pointed out that it is from the traditional association of the horse with Celtic solar deities that we find Rhiannon, clad in shining gold, riding a big white horse of surpassing fleetness, and a colt being born simultaneously with her son Gwri.<sup>16</sup> As for similarities between Gawain and Gwri, Loomis listed the following:

Gwri is characterized as "the most agreeable, the most comely, the best endowed with every good accomplishment of any one in the kingdom." Needless to say, Gauvain was a paragon of fine manners, good looks, and martial prowess. Both Gwri and Gauvain were born under circumstances which brought shame to their mothers; both were discovered as foundlings, swaddled in a rich cloth, and their gentle birth was recognized; both were baptized, one as Gwri Gwallt-euryn, the other as Gauvain or Walwanius; both, after a precocious boyhood in charge of foster parents, were given in charge to a prince or emperor; both after this ruler's decease, inherited his dominions.<sup>17</sup>

Actually the story of Gwri's birth and early life as we have it in the Mabinogion<sup>18</sup> is quite different in detail from that of Gawain. For example, Gwri was a legitimate child; his mother suffered shame and punishment because Gwri had disappeared shortly after he was born and she was accused of killing her son, whereas Gawain's mother was subject to shame because she bore him out of wedlock. And while Gwri suffered exposure of a sort by being separated from his mother and appearing suddenly in someone else's house as an orphan, Gawain was set adrift on the sea either by himself

(Les Enfances Gauvain) or in the charge of merchants (De Ortu Walwanii). However, as I mentioned above, Loomis felt that the Gawain enfances were derived not from the story of Gwri in the Mabinogion, but from a non-extant pagan story of Gwri which probably contained an incestuous birth and exposure formula. But according to Loomis, because this formula was found better arranged and motivated in the Coptic tale of the grandson of King Armenios, a Welsh bard remodeled the pagan story of Gwri almost entirely after this tale to form another non-extant Gwri enfances which was the source of the Gawain enfances as we now have them. That there originally was a pagan story of Gwri which contained an incestuous birth and exposure formula is evidenced, according to Loomis, by the fact that such a formula was attached to Mordrec in the Huth Merlin who like Gwri was born on May eve. And the story of Mordrec, Loomis believed, was probably unadulterated Celtic tradition, because it is basically pagan and there are two Celtic analogues to the story: the Irish tale of Fiacha Fer-Mara and the Welsh legend of Taliesin.<sup>19</sup>

However, if one looks more deeply into the Fiacha Fer-Mara, Taliesin, and Mordrec stories, he will find that they in fact also consist of the lore surrounding the son of the Celtic sun god and are therefore intimately connected with the Cuchulainn-Gwri-Gawain

tradition as well. The story of Fiacha Fer-Mara appears in "The Roll of the Kings" in Lebor Gabála Éirenn:

Oengus Tuirmech begat that Fíacha upon his own daughter in drunkenness, and put him in a boat of one hide upon the sea, out from Dún Aighech, with the trappings of a king's son--a purple robe with a golden fringe. Fisher-folk found him in Tráig Brenainn amid his treasures, and thence had he his name, Fíacha Fer-Mara: and his children took the kingship of Ireland and of Alba.<sup>20</sup>

Macalister and O'Rahilly believed that most of the names in this and other lists of mythological Irish kings are gods; in other words, the lists are genealogies of gods.<sup>21</sup> Oengus had several nicknames, the most popular of which was Macc ind Oc or In Macc Oc. And according to O'Rahilly, Oengus was a son of the Dagda, the god who presided over the síd 'otherworld' called Bruig na Boinne, and was ultimately the Dagda himself for the name Oengus was often used in place of the Dagda.<sup>22</sup> Now the chief god of the Irish otherworld was primarily the god of the sun, but he possessed other attributes since he was also in charge of several other spheres.<sup>23</sup> Returning to the story of Fiacha Fer-Mara, the son of Oengus, one cannot help but notice that the basic motifs which the Gawain enfances supposedly derived from the Armenios or Gregory legends, are all here and in organized form: the illegitimate birth of the hero, his exposure on the sea, the rich robe and other treasures sent with him,

and his rescue by fisher folk. Moreover, the fisher folk who found Fiacha gave him the sobriquet "Fer-Mara" which means "Man of the Sea," just as Gawain is called "Beau Fils" in Les Enfances Gauvain and "Boy Without a Name" in De Ortu Walwanii. The fact that Fiacha Fer-Mara is the son of a sun god may explain why the robe, which was sent with him when he was exposed on the sea, was purple or deep red with a golden fringe--the colors of the rising or setting sun. The cloak which was sent with the baby Gawain in De Ortu Walwanii was gold with inlaid gems, the color of the sparkling sun at its height.

Since the story of Fiacha Fer-Mara is part of the lore surrounding the son of the Irish sun god, one would also expect there to be a similar story of Cuchulainn, the son of Lug. While there apparently is no extant account of his being exposed on the sea and rescued and fostered by a fisherman, there is reason to believe that such a tale once existed. The story of Cuchulainn's birth that is available in Irish heroic literature goes as follows. King Conchobor, his unmarried sister Deichtine, and the warriors of Ulster hunt a flock of birds that have been eating all the vegetation of the country. Chasing the birds, the Ulstermen come to a house in the wilderness belonging to a man and his wife, and stay the night. There the men get drunk. Later that night Deichtine helps the lady of the house give birth to a

son, while outside the door a mare gives birth to two foals. (In one version, Deichtine and fifty maidens are the ones that ravage the country in the form of birds. They lead the men of Ulster to this house where, in human form again, Deichtine and the fifty maidens live with a man identified as Lug. That night when Conchobor asks to sleep with the lady of the house whom he does not realize is his sister, she begs to be excused because the pains of childbirth are upon her, and she delivers a little boy.) By morning the house, the strange lady and man have all disappeared; only the baby and the foals remain. Deichtine takes the baby home and rears him for a short time until he gets sick and dies. In her grief, Deichtine gets thirsty and takes a drink, and a tiny creature slips into her mouth with the liquid. That night Lug mac Ethnenn appears to her in her sleep, says that the boy which she fostered was his (in one version Lug says the child was himself reincarnated), that he was again planted in her womb and is to be called Setanta, and that the foals should be reared with the boy. When Deichtine grows heavy with the child, the people of Ulster, not knowing who the father is, say that her brother King Conchobor (Conchobor is her father in another version) made her pregnant at the house in the wilderness when he was drunk. Conchobor gives Deichtine in marriage to Sualdam mac Roich. Ashamed of already



being pregnant, she gets sick when she reaches her new husband's bed and has a miscarriage. However, she gets pregnant again and has a son whom she calls Setanta. The baby is given to others to raise and later is nicknamed Cuchulainn.<sup>24</sup> There are resemblances between this story and that of Fiacha Fer-Mara: an exposure of sorts for the first incarnation of Cuchulainn, the hint of an incestuous union the second time Cuchulainn is conceived, and the rearing of the child by others. These resemblances plus the resemblances between the Cuchulainn story and the stories of Taliesin and Mordrec, which I shall discuss next, make it seem possible that there once was a version where Cuchulainn was conceived incestuously and, rather than being the subject of a miscarriage, was exposed on the sea and rescued by a fisherman. Moreover, the story of Cuchulainn that we do have bears some resemblance to the rationalized version of the Gawain enfance in Perlesvaus, where the illegitimate child Gawain is taken by a nobleman to a distant country and entrusted to a worthy man to raise, rather than being put out to sea and rescued (Les Enfances Gauvain) or kidnapped (De Ortu Walwanii) and fostered by a fisherman.

The Welsh legend of Taliesin and the birth story of Mordrec in the Suite du Merlin help to knit together some of the apparently divergent motifs found in the enfances of Fiacha, Cuchulainn, Gwri and Gawain. In

the Welsh legend of Taliesin, the character Gwion incarnates himself by impregnating the lady Caridwen through her eating a grain of wheat into which he has transformed himself. (This is similar to Lug's incarnating himself when Deichtine swallows a tiny creature in her drink.) The wheat grows in her womb, and after nine months she gives birth to Gwion. Caridwen gets rid of her baby on April 29 by wrapping him in a leathern bag and casting him out to sea (just as Fiacha Fer-Mara is exposed in Lebor Gabála Érenn, and Gawain in Les Enfances Gauvain; Gawain is gotten rid of by being sent away on the sea in the company of merchants in De Ortu Walwanii). On May eve (when Gwri Gwallt-euryn of the Mabinogion is born and appears mysteriously as an orphan in a strange man's house) Gwion is discovered by a fisherman (just as Fiacha and Gawain are). When one of the fisherman's guards opens the bag and sees the baby, he exclaims "Taliesin," which means "Radiant Brow," and this name remains with the baby. (The radiant brow may be regarded as a solar characteristic, just as Cuchulainn's and Gwri's golden hair. Thus Taliesin is known by a sobriquet, as are Cuchulainn, Gwri, Fiacha and Gawain.) Taliesin is fostered by the fisherman (as Fiacha presumably is, and as Gawain actually is). Because as a boy he composes and sings songs extraordinarily well, he at the age of thirteen is taken to court at Christmas

time to sing, and there he triumphs over all the other bards.<sup>25</sup> (Notice the youthful precocity, a characteristic of Cuchulainn, Gwri and Gawain.)

The story of Gawain's half-brother Mordrec in the Suite du Merlin<sup>26</sup> has many motifs in common with the birth stories of Fiacha Fer-Mara, Cuchulainn, Gwri Gwallt-eurnyn, Taliesin, and Gawain. Mordrec is the product of an incestuous union (as is Fiacha, and as is suspected of Cuchulainn who, like Gawain, at least is conceived extramaritally). He is a May-day child (like Gwri and Taliesin). As a result of shipwreck, he is exposed alone on the sea and rescued by a fisherman (like Fiacha, Taliesin and Gawain). When Mordrec is found, he is wearing a rich garment (like Fiacha, Gwri and Gawain), and he has a fresh wound on his forehead, the scar of which remains visible throughout the rest of his life. (This, I believe, is analogous to Taliesin's radiant brow, and Gwri's and Cuchulainn's golden hair.) Finally, he is raised by foster parents (like Fiacha, Cuchulainn, Gwri, Taliesin and Gawain). I might also mention that, according to Loomis, the name Mordrec is derived ultimately from Mider, who is the son of Curoi, another name for the Irish sun god.<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy, too, that Mordrec's supposed father is Loth, whose name comes from the sun god Lug.

The above comparisons show that the tales of Fiacha Fer-Mara, Cuchulainn, Gwri Gwallt-eyryn, Taliesin, Mordrec and Gawain seem to have a great deal in common with one another, and that they seem to consist of that body of Celtic lore surrounding the son of the sun god. It is significant that the major motifs of the Gawain enfances--the illegitimate birth of the hero, his exposure on the sea, and his discovery and rearing by a fisherman--which Bruce and Loomis speculated were derived from, or influenced by, the Gregory or Armenios legends, can all be found in this body of Celtic lore in rather organized form, well motivated, and in the company of other motifs which the various Celtic tales I have discussed share with one another. (See Chart A on the next page for a summary comparison of motifs.) I believe that there was no need for the Gawain enfances to have been influenced by either the Gregory or Armenios legends, and therefore that the ultimate sources of the Gawain enfances were purely Celtic.

An adherent of the Loomis theory might object that the Christian elements in the Gawain stories are testimony of the influence of the Gregory or Armenios legends. After all, it was the lack of an "ecclesiastical smack" in the story of Mordrec that made Loomis decide that this tale owed nothing to the Coptic tale, but came entirely from Celtic tradition.<sup>28</sup> But what

CHART A.--Comparison of Motifs in the Birth Stories of Gawain, Mordrec, and Celtic Heroes

Cuchulainn	Fiacha	Gwri	Gawain	Taliesin	Mordrec
son of sun god Lug	son of sun god Oengus	son of Pwyll whose name means wisdom	son of Loth whose name is from Lug		supposed son of Loth
illegitimate reincarnated incest hinted	incestuous		illegitimate	reincarnated	incestuous
		born, found on May eve		found on May eve	born on May 1
colts born		colt born			
yellow hair, red trans- figuration		yellow hair	strength waxes and wanes	radiant brow	scar on brow
exposure of sorts	exposure on sea	mysterious exposure	exposure on sea	exposure on sea	exposure on sea
	purple and gold robe, treasures	silk mantle	gold robe with gems, letter, treasures		silk cloth, rich garb
taken in and reared by foster parents	rescued and presumably reared by foster fisherfolk	taken in and reared by foster parents	rescued or kidnapped, and reared by fisherman	rescued and reared by fisherman	rescued by fisherman, reared by knight
youthful precocity nickname	nickname	youthful precocity nickname	youthful precocity nickname	youthful precocity nickname	

are the Christian elements in the Gawain enfances? First of all, in Les Enfances Gauvain and in Perlesvaus, Gawain is baptized. It seems to me that any Christian redactor could have provided for the baptism of the hero. Gwri Gwallt-euryn, for example, also is baptized, and according to Loomis, the story of Gwri in the Mabinogion was derived from the pagan myth of Gwri without any influence from the Christian Armenios legend.<sup>29</sup> Mordrec, too, is baptized in the story that Loomis claims does not have an "ecclesiastical smack."<sup>30</sup> Secondly, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia, in Les Enfances Gauvain, and in Perlesvaus Gawain is taken to Rome where he is educated by the Pope and, in the first two works, dubbed a knight by him (in Perlesvaus there is no mention of Gawain's being dubbed a knight; and in De Ortu Walwanii Gawain is trained by the emperor rather than the pope, although the latter is present when Gawain is entrusted to the emperor). However, in the Gregory and Armenios legends the respective heroes never are trained or dubbed knights by the pope or patriarch; in fact the heroes do not even go to Rome or Constantinople until after they have been selected to be the new pope or patriarch. Conversely, Gawain is never chosen for a church position. Therefore, it seems highly unlikely that the Gregory or Armenios legends could have been the source for Gawain's training and dubbing. Where Geoffrey of Monmouth, the earliest

writer to send the young Gawain to the pope in Rome, got the idea to do so, I do not know. It seems very possible that he or a Christian source simply thought it appropriate that the greatest of Arthur's knights should have the high honor of being educated and knighted by the pope. The third Christian element is the sacrament of penance. In Les Enfances Gauvain the fisherman who had discovered and fostered Gawain for ten years becomes sick, and on the advice of his confessor goes to Rome to confess and do penance; in De Ortu Walwanii the fisherman who had kidnapped Gawain and fostered him for seven years in Gaul and five years in Rome, falls ill and on his death-bed confesses to the emperor and Pope Sulpicius the whole story about how he acquired his son and his ill-gotten wealth (I shall presume that the fisherman received the sacrament of penance here). Again, what is more natural for a Christian redactor to provide than the sacrament of penance for a man who thinks he is dying? I might point out that the foster father in the Gregory or Armenios legends never is said to receive this sacrament; the only personages who confess and/or do penance are the principals involved in incest. So actually the small amount of "ecclesiasticizing" in the Gawain enfances can hardly be demonstrated to have come from the Gregory or Armenios legends. Rather, it is of the kind that could have been supplied by any Christian author or redactor.

An adherent of the Loomis theory might also object that the story of the captivity of Galobrun in Perlesvaus,<sup>31</sup> which in some respects is identical to the captivities of Gregory and the grandson of Armenios, suggests the mingling of the Gregory-Armenios and Gwri legends. Loomis pointed out that while many of the motifs of this captivity came from the Welsh captivity of Gwair, one motif--the dragon swallowing the key and someone later recovering the key from the dragon in order to release the captive--is a commonplace of the hagiography derived from the East (where it is usually a fish that swallows the key rather than a dragon). Observing that this motif occurs in the Coptic tale of Armenios' grandson, where the hero has an infancy story similar to Gawain's, Loomis speculated that the Coptic tale was attached to the Gwri story by a Welsh bard at an early date. For not only was Gwair an alternate form of the name Gwri, but Gwri's epithet Gwallt-euryn was the ultimate source of both Gawain's and Galobrun's names.<sup>32</sup> However, as far as I know, in the romances there is no captivity of Gawain which includes the dragon (or fish) swallowing the key motif or which otherwise resembles the captivity of the grandson of King Armenios. And there is no romance which contains an infancy story of Galobrun. Since I have demonstrated that the basic motifs of the Gawain enfances could have come purely from Celtic tradition, there is little



or no reason to believe that the Armenios legend had to be attached to Gwri before the author of the Perlesvaus wrote his romance, even if we suppose that Loomis is correct in his derivation of names. I think that the author of the Perlesvaus, who may well have based the Galobrun captivity on the Gwair story, simply took the dragon swallowing the key motif from a similar captivity story of a non-Celtic saint, such as Gregory or the grandson of Armenios, which happened to contain this motif.

Finally, one might ask whether the Celtic tales which contain the basic motifs of the Gawain enfances antedate the diffusion of the Gregory or Armenios legends, and/or whether these tales were influenced by the legends. We know that the legend of Pope Gregory existed in written form in the twelfth century, for manuscripts of the French Vie du Pape Gregoire belong to that century and Hartmann von Aue wrote his Gregorius ca. 1190. Most scholars believe that the hero is not a historical pope,<sup>33</sup> but if Loomis is correct in his assumption that the hero is Pope Gregory the Great,<sup>34</sup> the legend conceivably could have been attached to him as early as his reign (590-604 A.D.). The Coptic tale of the grandson of King Armenios, which is regarded as the source of the Gregory legend, is believed to have existed about seven centuries before Hartmann wrote his Gregorius; in other words, by the end of the fifth century,<sup>35</sup> although we do not know

when this tale spread to Europe. On the other hand, the earliest manuscript containing the birth of Cuchulainn, the Lebor na hUidre belongs to the late eleventh or early twelfth century, while the language of this manuscript is dated to the eighth century, and some verse passages may be two centuries older.<sup>36</sup> The earliest manuscript of the Lebor Gabála Érenn which contains the story of Fiacha Fer-Mara, is dated ca. 1150, even though the stories in it are regarded as being of very ancient origin.<sup>37</sup> The Coptic legend of Armenios, then, and possibly the Gregory legend, existed early enough to have influenced the Celtic tales. However, we do not know when, if ever, during the Middle Ages these legends were known in the Celtic countries. There is no direct evidence that they were known there. I can find no authority who believes that the pagan Celtic tales in question were tainted in any way except by the Christian coloring provided by the scribes who recorded them. In fact, James Carney who has done much pioneer work in determining external elements in Irish saga stated explicitly that in his opinion the birth story of Cuchulainn is substantially Celtic historical lore.<sup>38</sup> And Roger Loomis believed that the tale of Fiacha Fer-Mara, as well as the somewhat later enfances of Taliesin and Gwri Gwallt-euryn (as we have it in the Mabinogion) and Mordrec in the Suite du Merlin are, except for any Christian coloring, unadulterated Celtic tradition.<sup>39</sup>

I think there is reason to believe, then, that the basic motifs of the Gawain enfances--the illegitimate birth of the hero, his exposure on the sea, and his rescue by a fisherman--as well as the other motifs which the Gawain enfances has in common with the Celtic tales mentioned in the preceding paragraph, were probably not derived from the Gregory or Armenios legends. In other words, except for the Christian elements which could have been supplied by any Christian writer, one need not look outside the pagan Celtic tradition--the lore surrounding the son of the sun god--for the sources of the Gawain enfances. It is appropriate that Gawain's story should have evolved from Celtic tradition, as did most of the rest of Arthurian romance, for he is the most celebrated of Arthur's knights. It is especially fitting that his story should have developed from the lore surrounding the son of the Celtic sun god, for this lore has given rise to so many of Gawain's adult adventures in De Ortu Walwarii and other romances. The next chapter is devoted in part to this very topic.

## CHAPTER II--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The High History of the Holy Grail, trans. Sebastian Evans (New York, 1903), pp. 271-72. The episode may be abstracted as follows. Gawain and Arthur go to mass in a chapel in a certain castle. The priest there tells them that Gawain was born and baptized in this castle, and that he was named Gawain after the lord of the castle. He says that his mother who had him by King Lot did not want it known that she delivered this child. So she set the baby in a fair coffer and asked the lord of the castle, Gawain, to take him away and leave him where he might die. Gawain took the child, placed a sealed letter in the front of the cradle saying that the baby was of royal lineage, included gold and silver so that he could be reared in great plenty, and spread a rich covering over the baby. He carried him away to a distant country and came upon a little home- stead where there dwelt a worthy man. Gawain delivered the child to the man and his wife, telling them that if they raised the child well, much good would come to them. When the child was grown, his foster parents took him to Rome to the Holy Father and showed him the sealed letter. The Holy Father, understanding that he was the son of a king, took him in. Later the younger Gawain was elected emperor of Rome, but he refused the position for fear that he would be reproached on account of his illegitimate birth. Then he departed and became one of the best knights in the world. The priest says that even now no one dares take possession of this castle for fear of Gawain. This castle now belongs to him, for when the elder Gawain died, he left it to Messire Gawain. The priest himself is guardian of it until such time as Gawain should return.

<sup>2</sup>The two extant fragments totaling 712 lines were edited by Paul Meyer in "Les Enfances Gauvain; Fragments d'un Poème Perdu," Romania, 39 (1910), 19-30. In the first fragment Arthur's sister Morcades finds herself pregnant by the young man Lot. She asks for and receives Arthur's permission to retire to the castle of Bel

Repaire, supposedly for a vacation, with Lot and a servant girl. Seven months later she secretly gives birth to a son, charges her servant girl to get rid of him, and sends along with the baby a rich silk cloth, a ring, a clasp, some gold coins, and a letter explaining the circumstances of the child's birth. As the girl carries the baby away, she meets her fiancé, Gauvain le Brun, and tells him the whole story. They take the baby to his house and have him baptized, with Gauvain giving it his own name. He writes in the letter which accompanies the child that the baby has been baptized and named Gauvain. He then puts the baby and its things in a cask and gives it to one of his servants, probably to set it adrift on the sea.

In the second fragment the infant has been found by a fisherman who takes him home and rears him, calling the boy "Beau Fils." He wants to teach him the fishing trade, but the latter has no desire to learn it. When the boy is ten years old, the fisherman falls ill and on the advice of his confessor goes to Rome to confess and do penance. Before he departs, he sees for the first time the letter which tells of the child's birth and which contains instructions that he is to made a knight and sent back home with the means of his identification. Having arrived in Rome, the fisherman gives the boy to the pope who has him educated and trained in knightly exercises. The fisherman gets well, goes back home to his wife and lives happily ever after. Meanwhile Gauvain's mother Morcades keeps her secret from Arthur. She goes to Ireland to see Arthur get married to princess Guinemar, the sister of the king of Ireland. Lot is there, too, but Lot and Morcades are careful not to be too familiar with each other so that no one's suspicion will be aroused. Guinemar and Morcades become good friends, and Morcades gives her servant girl in marriage to Gauvain le Brun. Back in Rome, the pope knights Gauvain on St. John's Day. The young knight is victorious at all the tourneys. Then the emperor dies, leaving no heir. Here the second fragment ends.

<sup>3</sup>In De Ortu Walwanii Gawain is conceived as a result of a secret love affair between Loth of Norway and Anna, daughter of Uther Pendragon and sister of Arthur. To preserve her reputation, Anna feigns sickness, retires to a private bedchamber, gives birth to her baby without anyone knowing it except her maid and Loth, and immediately commits the baby to some foreign merchants who are to take him overseas to their own country and raise him there. Along with the child Anna sends a case containing an abundance of gold and silver, expensive clothing including a gold cloak ornamented with

precious stones, a ring, and a letter which identifies the parents and the child's name, Gawain. The merchants set sail and land on the eighth day near the city of Narbonne in Gaul. They decide to go into the city, and entrust the ship and the baby to a boy. While they are gone, a fisherman named Viamundus and his wife happen upon the ship. Finding the boy asleep and thinking of the opportunity he has to become wealthy, the fisherman steals the baby and its case and other valuables from the ship. He and his wife rear the child but do not dare to make open use of the wealth he has stolen. When the child is seven years old, the fisherman takes his family to Rome. Pretending to be sprung from a noble Roman family and to be ruling over a certain part of Gaul, Viamundus goes to the emperor, who gives him a wealthy residence in Rome and other lands outside the city. Viamundus lives a wealthy and famous life, while his son who is called Boy Without a Name grows up with all the attributes of perfection. However, after five years in Rome, Viamundus falls ill. Thinking he is about to die, he calls the emperor and Pope Sulpicius, and confesses to them the whole story about how he had acquired his son and his wealth. Viamundus asks them to receive his son after his death and to educate him for knighthood, which the emperor consents to do. Viamundus then hands over the case containing the means of identification for the boy and asks them not to tell him who he is since the letter bids them not to. Rather, they should send Gawain back to his parents as soon as he reaches manhood. Viamundus dies and is given a noble burial. The emperor has Boy Without a Name educated at the imperial palace. At the end of three years, when the boy is fifteen years old, the emperor dubs him a knight. Because he wears a purple tunic over his arms, Gawain is called the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, which name he bears till the end of the romance. After several adventures Gawain returns to Arthur's court, finds out his real name and whose son he is, and is reunited with his parents who are now married.

<sup>4</sup>J. Douglas Bruce, ed., Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii (Baltimore, 1913), pp. xlvii-liv.

<sup>5</sup>Bruce, pp. xxxv-lv. The motifs which he said that Geoffrey supplied can be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore, 1966), pp. 221 and 223. Bruce used the fourteenth century Latin version of the Gregory legend found in the Gesta Romanorum, ed. Hermann Oesterley (Berlin, 1872), pp. 399-410. He believed that there existed in the twelfth century a Latin form of the legend



which was substantially identical with the one in the Gesta, and which was the source for the twelfth century Old French versions of the legend. The story in the Gesta runs as follows: The Emperor Marcus, who has only a son and a daughter, gets sick and dies. Tempted by the devil, the son one night rapes his sister who conceives a son. The two confess their sin and seek the advice of an old trusted knight who recommends that the father go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and that the mother place herself in the custody of the knight and his wife. As soon as the child is born, the mother wraps it in silk garments embroidered with gold, and puts him in a cask with a tablet that says the baby has not been baptized, some gold to provide for the boy's nurture, and some silver for his education. She gives the cask to a knight and tells him to put it out to sea. The father of the baby dies while on his pilgrimage, and his sister rules the land. When she refuses to marry a duke of Burgundy, the duke attacks her country and forces the queen to flee to a fortified city. The cask which holds the child floats across the sea until it reaches a monastery. The abbot discovers it, baptizes the baby with his own name Gregory, and entrusts him to a fisherman to raise. Young Gregory one day gets in a fight with the son of the fisherman and finds out that the fisherman and his wife are not his real father and mother. So Gregory goes to the abbot who tells him the real story of his birth as told in the letter. When Gregory says he wants to become a soldier, the abbot dubs him a knight and sends him on his way across the sea. A storm drives Gregory to the country of his mother, although they do not realize their relationship. After he defeats the troops of the duke of Burgundy and kills the duke himself, he marries the queen his mother. Later after the queen recognizes the tablet he is carrying and they discover their true relationship, Gregory dons the garments of a pilgrim and asks a fisherman where he might find a secluded place in order to do penance. The fisherman takes Gregory out to a huge rock in the middle of the sea which has chains at its base that could be opened only with certain keys. After locking Gregory in the chains and throwing the keys into the sea, the fisherman returns home. Gregory remains on the rock for seventeen years. One day the pope dies, at the moment of whose death a voice from heaven cries out that a man named Gregory should succeed him. Messengers are sent to all parts of the world in search of the new pope. They happen upon the cottage of the fisherman who reveals that the pilgrim he had chained to a rock in the sea was named Gregory. One of the fish the fisherman catches that day contains the keys to the chains. The men go out, free





Gregory, take him to Rome and make him pope. His mother comes to see the pope and rediscovers her son. She becomes an abbess of a monastery, and both mother and son live holy lives till they die.

<sup>6</sup>Hendricus Sparnaay, "Hartmann von Aue and his Successors," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 436. See also H. Sparnaay, Verschmelzung Legendarischer und Weltlicher Motive in der Poesie des Mittelalters (Groningen, 1922), pp. 44-45, 52-56.

<sup>7</sup>Roger S. Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance (New York, 1927), pp. 331-43. Loomis' source for the Coptic tale was E. Amélineau, Contes et Romans de l'Egypte Chrétienne (Paris, 1888), I, 174-89. The tale is very similar to the Gregory legend, as this summary indicates: After King Armenios dies, his son John becomes king. One night he gets drunk and rapes his sister. When he realizes she is pregnant by him, he goes into a monastery, and his sister rules the country as queen. As soon as the baby is born, she puts it in a cradle together with three tablets--one of gold, another of silver, and the third of ivory on which is inscribed the fact of his incestuous birth--and a letter saying that the gold tablet is to belong to the boy when he is grown up, and the silver one to the man who brings him up and educates him. The cradle is put in a river, and a fisherman finds it by the Monastery of Jacob the Shorn One, and takes it to the abbot. The abbot entrusts the boy and the silver tablet to the fisherman who raises him. After a few years the hero John, still a lad, learns in a quarrel with the children of the fisherman that he is not their brother. The fisherman sends John back to the abbot who gives him the gold and ivory tablets. The hero reads the latter one to his great mortification, but with the gold tablet buys a battle horse, armor and weapons. Taking with him the ivory tablet, he rides out and eventually comes to the city of his mother which is being besieged by soldiers. After taking prisoner the king who is attacking the city, John marries his mother. One day finding the ivory tablet, she realizes their relationship and informs her husband that he is her son. John grief-stricken and penitent goes away to the sea, meets a fisherman, exchanges clothing with him, and buys from him an iron chain. John fastens the chain to his own feet and throws the key into the sea. Then he has himself rowed to an island where he lives alone for many years eating only vegetables and doing penance. One day envoys seeking a holy man to be the new patriarch come to the fisherman and ask for food. In the first

fish which is caught a key is found which the fisherman recognizes as the one which John threw into the sea. The envoys travel to the island, release John and take him back home with them where he is consecrated a patriarch by twelve bishops. His mother comes to him to ask his prayers for the cure of a sickness she has. His prayers are efficacious. Recognizing her he tells her of his identity and clothes her in a religious habit. God works signs and wonders through them before they die in bliss.

<sup>8</sup>For a bibliography of those who regard Gawain as a solar hero see B. J. Whiting, "Gawain: His Reputation, His Courtesy and His Appearance in Chaucer's Squire's Tale," Mediaeval Studies, 9 (1947), 194 and 196.

<sup>9</sup>The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes, ed. William Roach (Philadelphia, 1949-1952), I, 331; II, 489-90; III, 404.

<sup>10</sup>The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication No. 74, III (Washington, 1910), 293.

<sup>11</sup>Merlin, Roman en Prose du XIIIe Siècle, ed. Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich (Paris, 1886), II, 239.

<sup>12</sup>La Mort le Roi Artu, Roman du XIIIe Siècle, ed. Jean Frappier (Paris, 1956), pp. 197-99.

<sup>13</sup>Sir Thomas Malory, Works, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1967), I, 161.

<sup>14</sup>Roger S. Loomis, Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes (New York, 1949), pp. 152-53.

<sup>15</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 149-52. According to Loomis Gwrvan Gwallt-avwyn, who was one of Arthur's warriors in Kulhwch and Olwen, was an alternate form of the name Gwri Gwallt-euryn, the hero of the Mabinogion. From Gwallt-avwyn came Galvagin, the earliest form of the name Gauvain. Loomis also pointed out that the name Gwri was often confused with Gweir, who in Kulhwch and Olwen is said to be the son of Llwh or Lloch, the Welsh spellings of Lug the Irish sun god.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas F. O'Rahilly, Early Irish History and Mythology (Dublin, 1946), pp. 293 and 318. One may ask how there can be several names for the Irish sun god, with the result that there seems to be more than one such god. O'Rahilly on p. 290 provided this explanation: "In pagan Ireland every district of importance tended to have its own *sid* or hill within which the Otherworld was believed to be located; nevertheless there was in Celtic belief but one Otherworld, despite the fact that so many different locations were assigned to it. In the same way the deities who presided over the different *sides* were ultimately the same everywhere, despite the variety of local names applied to them."

<sup>17</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup>The Mabinogion, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, Everyman's Library No. 97 (New York, 1949), pp. 17-24. The story may be summarized as follows: Pwyll, the Head of Annwn, and his wife Rhiannon have a son. The night the baby is born, six women come to watch the mother and her baby. But before midnight they all fall asleep. When they awaken at cockcrow, they find that the baby has mysteriously disappeared. Fearing punishment for their lack of vigilance, they kill some pups of a staghound bitch, smear the blood on the face and hands of Rhiannon, and lay the bones in front of her. When Rhiannon awakens, the women accuse her of killing her own son. Rhiannon protests, but to no avail. Her husband makes her do penance, which consists of sitting every day for seven years near a horse-block outside the gate of the city, telling all who come that she destroyed her son, and offering to carry guests on her back to the court.

At the time when the baby is born, Teyrnon Twryf Liant is the Lord of Gwent Is-Coed. He has a beautiful mare which foals on every May eve, but the colt always disappears before anyone sees it. This particular year Teyrnon resolves to learn what happens to the colt, and so he brings the mare into his house on May eve to watch it. At the beginning of the night the mare brings forth a beautiful colt, immediately after which Teyrnon sees a huge claw reach through the window and seize the colt by the mane. Teyrnon draws his sword and strikes off the arm of the monster at the elbow, so that a portion of the arm, together with the colt, remains inside the house with him. Thereupon he hears a tumult and a scream. He rushes outside to look around but can see nothing because of the darkness. Returning to his house, he sees at the door an infant in swaddling clothes, wrapped in a mantle of brocaded silk, which

indicates to Teyrnnon that the baby is of gentle birth. Teyrnnon and his wife have the baby baptized, naming him Gwri Golden-hair, because his hair is yellow as gold. They rear the boy who develops three times as fast as a normal child. When he is four years old, he is given the colt that was born the same night he was found. Meanwhile Teyrnnon hears about Rhiannon and her punishment. Realizing that the boy looks exactly like Pwyll, the Head of Annwn, and is therefore probably his son, Teyrnnon takes the boy to Pwyll's court and relates the story of the mare and the boy. Rhiannon and Pwyll recognize Gwri Golden-hair as their son. Rhiannon gives to Gwri the name Pryderi which means "care," because he is her deliverance from care. Pryderi is entrusted to another nobleman to raise, but Teyrnnon is rewarded and named foster father. When Pwyll dies, his son Pryderi becomes ruler in his father's place.

<sup>19</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, pp. 338-42.

<sup>20</sup>Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland, Part V, ed. and trans. R. A. Stewart Macalister, Irish Texts Society, XLIV (Dublin, 1956), 285.

<sup>21</sup>R. A. Stewart Macalister, Tara: A Pagan Sanctuary of Ancient Ireland (New York, 1931), pp. 98-124. O'Rahilly, pp. 260-61.

<sup>22</sup>O'Rahilly, p. 516.

<sup>23</sup>O'Rahilly, pp. 469-70. In this passage he pointed out that the tendency of scholars to departmentalize gods as having only one special function or activity explains why there has been so much confusion in labeling Celtic deities. Oengus apparently is one example. While O'Rahilly, Rhys and Wentz regarded him as the sun god, Macalister called him the god of thunder and lightning; Rees and Rees, the god of the day; others, the god of love or the god of agriculture. See W. Y. Evans Wentz, The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries (New York, 1911), pp. 416-17; R. A. S. Macalister, "Temair Breg: Remains and Traditions of Tara," Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C, 34 (1917-1919), 318-20; Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, Celtic Heritage (London, 1961), pp. 217-18; J. A. MacCulloch, "Celts," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings (New York, 1919), III, 284.

<sup>24</sup>The Táin, trans. Thomas Kinsella (Dublin, 1969), pp. 21-25, 270. Eleanor Hull, "Cuchulainn Cycle," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings (New York, 1919), IV, 353-57. Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover, Ancient Irish Tales (New York, 1936), pp. 134-36.

<sup>25</sup>The legend of Taliesin can be found in The Mabinogion, trans. Lady Charlotte Guest (New York, 1906), pp. 263-85.

<sup>26</sup>Merlin, Roman en Prose du XIIIe Siècle, ed. Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich (Paris, 1886), I, 147, 203-07. In this romance King Arthur has an affair with a lady whose identity he is not aware of, but who happens to be his sister and the wife of King Loth. As a consequence of the affair she conceives Mordrec. Merlin predicts to King Arthur that a child (i.e. Mordrec) would be born on the first of May in Logres who would cause the destruction of Arthur and his kingdom. When May comes around, Arthur remembers Merlin's prophecy and sends a proclamation throughout Logres that all children born on May first should be sent to him. All the parents of May-day children comply with the command, thinking that it will bring honor to them and their children. King Loth happily complies also. As soon as his wife bears her baby which he thinks he is the father of, he has him baptized with the name Mordrec. He then has the mother place him in a rich cradle, in the process of which Mordrec receives a gash on his forehead, the scar of which remains visible for the rest of his life. In spite of the wound, Loth puts the baby in a ship with a great company of knights and ladies and sends them off to Arthur's castle. On the way, however, a storm comes up and causes the ship to be wrecked on a rock. Everyone on board perishes except the baby who floats along on the sea in his cradle until a fisherman finds him. Seeing him wrapped in a silk cloth and wearing rich garments, he believes him to be of noble blood. He takes the baby to his lord, Nabor li Derrees, who cares for the wound and raises the boy with his son Sagremor. Nabor calls the orphan Mordrec since he found a letter in the cradle saying that was his name.

<sup>27</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 358.



<sup>30</sup>Merlin, I, 204.

<sup>31</sup>The High History of the Holy Grail, trans. Sebastian Evans (New York, 1903), pp. 361-66.

<sup>32</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, pp. 332-34.

<sup>33</sup>W. T. H. Jackson, Medieval Literature: A History and a Guide (New York, 1966), p. 128. See also Sparnaay, "Hartmann von Aue," p. 436.

<sup>34</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, pp. 331, 340-41.

<sup>35</sup>This is the date that Helen Adolf gives in her introduction to Hartmann von Aue, Gregorius, the Good Sinner, trans. Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York, 1966), p. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Thomas Kinsella, trans. The Táin (Dublin, 1969), p. 256 and plate facing p. 256.

<sup>37</sup>R. A. S. Macalister, ed. and trans., Lebor Gabála Éirenn, Part I, Irish Texts Society, XXXIV (Dublin, 1938), xi.

<sup>38</sup>James Carney, Studies in Irish Literature and History (Dublin, 1955), p. 277, n. 1.

<sup>39</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, pp. 339-41, 358.

### CHAPTER III

#### GAWAIN'S ADULT ADVENTURES: SOURCES AND ANALOGUES

After opening the romance with an account of Gawain's birth and early life, the author relates the hero's adventures on a barbarous isle, his naval battle with Buzafarnan, his three-day fight with Gormundus in Jerusalem, and his journey to Britain where he engages Arthur and Kay in a nocturnal combat at a ford, and rescues the mistress of the Castle of Maidens. In this chapter I shall discuss the sources and analogues of each of these adventures.

##### A. Adventures on the Barbarous Isle

As Gawain and 100 men are sailing for the Holy Land to deliver Jerusalem from the pagans, a storm comes up which drives them to an island of savage dwarfs who had been conquered and are now ruled by King Milocrates. A few of the Romans, led by Gawain, go to hunt in what happens to be the royal game sanctuary. They are discovered by the keepers who order them to lay down their



arms and ask by whose permission they are plundering the royal forest, the animals of which no one may kill except the king. Gawain replies that they need no permission and that they will not lay down their weapons "unless they be buried in your guts." Gawain then hurls a spear at the spokesman of the keepers. This starts a fight in which all the keepers are slain but one who flees to King Milocrates to report the news. The king collects his army and, after learning through spies more about the intruders, sends to his brother, the ruler of a neighboring land, for additional help. Prevented meanwhile by stormy seas from resuming their journey, the Romans send Gawain and another knight to infiltrate the enemy camp. As the two set out on their spying mission, they are confronted by a wild boar in the forest which Gawain slays by cutting off its head. Eventually they reach the city where Gawain meets the queen, the emperor's niece whom Milocrates had abducted from her husband, and plots with her about how to defeat the king. After her knight suggests the plan, she gives Gawain the king's sword and golden armor on which the safety of the kingdom depends, for fate had ordained that whoever first wears them besides the king would conquer him and despoil him of his royal crown. According to the plan, when Milocrates goes out with his army to meet the Romans, forty of Gawain's men emerge from

a vineyard near the palace where they had been hiding and set fire to the city. Milocrates loses all hope for victory when he sees Gawain on the battlefield wearing his enchanted sword and armor. But when the king's troops notice that the city behind them is in flames, they panic. Some head back to the city; others scatter. The Romans kill many of the retreating enemy troops. Milocrates regroups some of his men, but Gawain rides in and kills the king by cutting off his head. Thereupon the Romans put to flight the rest of the pagan army and march triumphantly into the city. After spending a few days there resting and looting the countryside, they send the queen, the emperor's niece, back to her lawful husband, and set sail again for Jerusalem.

J. D. Bruce thinks that the first part of the episode--the landing of the Roman expedition on the island, the hunting of Gawain and his men in a nearby forest, and their discovery by the inhabitants--shows the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae.<sup>1</sup> He points to two passages. The first is in Bk. I, Ch. xi, in which Brutus and his Trojans land on the island of Loegetia. He sends his men to scout the island for inhabitants. They find no one, but kill all sorts of wild animals in a forest and come upon an abandoned city with a temple of Diana.<sup>2</sup> The second passage occurs in the next three chapters of the same

book. Here Brutus' fleet has landed in Aquitaine, and his men under the leadership of Corineus go out to hunt in the woodland. Meanwhile Goffar the Pict, who is the king of Aquitaine, learns that a foreign people with a huge fleet have landed in his country, and sends messengers to ask them whether they bring peace or war. The messengers encounter the Trojans in the woodland and ask Corineus

by whose permission he had entered the King's forest to kill his animals, seeing that it had been decreed from ancient time that no one should hunt there without that ruler's order. Corineus answered them that permission was completely unnecessary. Then one of their number called Himbert rushed forward, drew his bow and aimed an arrow at him. Corineus dodged the arrow, charged at Himbert and broke his head in pieces with the bow which he was carrying. Thereupon the others fled, escaping with some difficulty from the hands of Corineus, and reported the death of their comrade to Goffar.

Goffar then collects a huge army so he can avenge the death of the messenger. Brutus puts his ships in a state of defense, and then sets out with his entire army to confront Goffar. There is a great battle in which Brutus' men break through the enemy ranks killing many and putting the rest to flight, including Goffar. The Trojans then sack the country, burn the cities, kill as many citizens as possible, and fill their ships with loot before leaving.<sup>3</sup>

Although the first passage from Geoffrey has men landing on an island not too far from Greece, and going to hunt in a forest, there is little else which it has in common with our romance. However, the latter passage is so markedly similar to much of what happens on the barbarous isle in De Ortu Walwanii that there can be little doubt that our author borrowed from it. But he makes the episode a little more colorful and dramatic by describing the inhabitants as savage dwarfs, by having Gawain rather than a keeper of the forest cast the first weapon, by describing the fight in greater detail, by allowing only one keeper to survive to report the news to the king, and by adding the enemy spies as well as the stormy weather which prevents the Romans from sailing away before a conflict with King Milocrates could take place. He also adds Gawain's spying mission. This he does, I think, to make the transition between the passage in Geoffrey and the rescue of the abducted niece of the emperor, which comes from elsewhere. The spying mission opens, by the way, with Gawain meeting a wild boar in the forest. It charges him, but he kills it by cutting off its head. Wild boars, of course, occur in romance and nonromance literature of the Western World. What our author's source may have been for the incident in De Ortu Walwanii, I could not determine. However, the incident, though

at first seeming to be a superfluous addition to the story, certainly is colorful and exciting in itself, and may have been intended to prefigure Gawain's killing of Milocrates.

The abduction and rescue of a lady is, of course, one of the stock Arthurian incidents. Witness, for example, how many romances contain the carrying off by force of Queen Guinevere, not to mention other ladies. But because of the magic sword and other motifs in Gawain's rescuing of the emperor's niece, Roger Loomis has been able to identify with some certainty its ultimate source: the Irish abduction story Aided Con Roi or The Violent Death of Curoi.<sup>4</sup> This saga goes as follows. The giant Curoi carries off Blathnat and her caldron for cows' milk from her lover Cuchulainn. Cuchulainn tries to stop him but is humiliatingly defeated in the attempt. Some time later as he is passing through Curoi's territory, he meets Blathnat who renews her pledge of love to him and asks him to bring his army on the following Samhain (Halloween or November 1) to rescue her; she would see to it that only a few of Curoi's men are on hand when Cuchulainn is ready to besiege the stronghold. The signal to attack would be her pouring cows' milk into the stream which flows through the woods where Cuchulainn and his army would be hiding. While Cuchulainn goes off to collect

his army, Blathnat persuades Curoi to build a splendid enclosure for his stronghold with all the large stones in Ireland, and Curoi sends away most of his men to collect them. Meanwhile Cuchulainn returns and when he sees the stream turn white from the milk, leads his army in attack. They set the fortress afire, the burning of which Curoi's men can see from afar. When they return, there is a great battle which lasts till the middle of spring. In the end Cuchulainn strikes off Curoi's head with the latter's own sword. Blathnat had given the hero this sword, the only weapon by which Curoi could be slain. Cuchulainn then takes Blathnat back to Ulster.<sup>5</sup>

While Gawain's rescuing of the emperor's niece differs from The Violent Death of Curoi in some details, the two stories have several basic motifs in common: (1) a gigantic warrior kidnapping a lady from her lover or husband (although Milocrates is not described as a giant, we can assume that he is at least of normal size for his armor is large enough for Gawain to wear, and thus he would be gigantic in relation to the savage dwarfs whom he conquered and rules); (2) the hero finding her in the abductor's stronghold and plotting her rescue with her; (3) the kidnapped lady helping in her own deliverance, particularly by providing the hero with the abductor's sword, the only weapon by which the abductor can be killed; (4) the hero's army hiding in a

woods or vineyard near the abductor's stronghold and then besieging it while the latter's army is away; (5) the burning of the stronghold, the sight of which brings back the enemy troops; (6) the large battle which ends with the hero beheading the abductor with the latter's magic sword; and (7) the lady's reunion with her lover or husband. (While in De Ortu Walwanii the hero is not the person from whom the lady was abducted, it is stated that she loves Gawain; however, they evidently do not consummate their love and she is sent back to her husband.) These essential similarities indicate that The Violent Death of Curoi is probably the ultimate source of Gawain's rescue of the emperor's niece in De Ortu Walwanii. What lends even more credence to this theory is the fact that the hero of The Violent Death of Curoi is Cuchulainn who is commonly regarded as Gawain's prototype in Irish lore. Conversely, since Cuchulainn is the hero, we can say that the episode in De Ortu Walwanii forms part of the tradition that properly belongs to Gawain.

Loomis regards both Curoi and Cuchulainn as solar deities and argues that the mythological basis of their fight over Blathnat (whose name means "Little Flower") which lasted from November 1 to the middle of spring is the annual conflict between the Old Sun and the New Sun, or "the story of the passing of the

flower-maiden from the possession of one sun-god to another's."<sup>6</sup> This significance, of course, is absent from De Ortu Walwanii. The only trace that may remain here would come from a consideration that Gawain, a descendant of the sun god tradition, fights successfully to rescue a girl from a man whose armor is golden, a possible solar color.

According to Loomis, The Violent Death of Curoi has left its imprint on several Arthurian abduction stories, including some of the ones involving Guinevere.<sup>7</sup> But there seems to be only one analogue which not only is very similar to the episode in De Ortu Walwanii, but agrees with the source in a great number of details. Occurring in the Vulgate Lancelot this analogue goes as follows. The gigantic Carado kidnaps Gawain and imprisons him in his stronghold, the Dolorous Tower. A damsel secretly comforts Gawain, especially by poisoning the vermin in the prison. The damsel is Carado's mistress whom he had abducted from her lover. Lancelot, Ywain, and Galeshin set out on their separate ways to rescue Gawain, and eventually after many adventures arrive at the Dolorous Tower at the same time. Galeshin sends his squire to reconnoiter. The squire learns that Carado has gone out with his knights to oppose Arthur's army who also had just arrived to rescue Gawain, and that Carado's mistress promises to help overcome Carado



in any way she can. Lancelot goes off to lend assistance to Arthur. Meanwhile Ywain tries to enter the main gate, and Galeshin the postern gate, the only two ways to gain entrance to the stronghold, but both are captured by guards and imprisoned. As Arthur's and Carado's forces are fighting, Lancelot attacks from the rear. Carado's men are routed, and Lancelot engages the huge knight in a single combat. The latter becomes wounded; he flees into the main gate of his stronghold with Lancelot going in right behind him. In the fight which continues inside, Lancelot breaks his own sword, but the damsel slips him another. Seeing it in Lancelot's hand, Carado knows his fate, for this is the one he had entrusted to the safekeeping of her whom he loved best, the only sword by which he could die. In the end Lancelot stabs Carado through the body and cuts off his head. Gawain and the other prisoners are freed. King Arthur invests the damsel with the Dolorous Tower which is renamed "La bele garde," and she is married that same evening to her lover Melians.<sup>8</sup>

Here again we have a gigantic man kidnapping a lady from her lover; a reconnaissance mission which includes a meeting with the lady and her promise to help; the hero entering the stronghold while the abductor's army is away; the lady handing over to the hero the abductor's sword, the only weapon by which the

latter knight can be killed; the beheading of the abductor with that sword; and the lady's reunion with her lover. Moreover, Loomis has noted that in the Livre d'Artus the knight Meliant de Lis was married to a certain Floree, and by inferring that the nameless damsel in the Vulgate Lancelot is the same lady, he connects her with Blathnat, "Little Flower," in The Violent Death of Curoi.<sup>9</sup> But the author of the Vulgate Lancelot has obviously glorified his title hero by transferring to him the role which properly belongs to Gawain, and has made the latter only a humble prisoner. Moreover, the whole focus of the episode is the rescue of Gawain; the deliverance of the damsel is almost a footnote. In De Ortu Walwanii the rescue of the emperor's niece seems somewhat incidental, too. Gawain and the Romans are trying to save themselves from the military threat of King Milocrates. But after Gawain learns of the captivity of the lady, the emphasis seems to be equally divided between her liberation and self-defense on the part of the Romans. On the other hand, while Cuchulainn in The Violent Death of Curoi also by accident discovers Blathnat in Curoi's stronghold, his sole purpose thereafter is to rescue her. The Vulgate Lancelot lacks other details, such as the captive damsel being in love with the hero, a face-to-face meeting between the hero and the lady to plot her rescue, and the burning of the

stronghold, which De Ortu Walwanii and The Violent Death of Curoi possess. Thus it appears that although De Ortu Walwanii was composed a half a century later than the Vulgate Lancelot (late thirteenth century versus early thirteenth century), it is much closer to the ultimate source than is the Lancelot for this episode.

What our author's immediate source was for the rescue of the captive damsel is unknown. Bruce thinks it may have been the same lost French romance which he believes supplied the birth and early life of Gawain.<sup>10</sup> In any case, the adventures on the barbarous isle are a blend of Brutus' landing in Aquitaine from Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia and Cuchulainn's rescuing of Blathnat from The Violent Death of Curoi. The most unusual thing is that these typical Arthurian adventures occur on an island in the Aegean Sea and in the context of a crusade mission. Other aspects of this mission I shall discuss next, while the setting I shall treat separately in the following chapter.

#### B. Gawain's Naval Battle with Buzafarnan

Having defeated Milocrates' army on the barbarous isle, Gawain and company set sail again for the Holy Land. But they complete only a day's journey before they meet the fleet of Buzafarnan, whom Milocrates had sent to attack the Romans from the rear while they

were still harbored on the island. However, a storm had driven the enemy ships out to sea, thus causing the strategy to fail, and now they are just returning. The two fleets position themselves and begin the battle. Gawain is getting the upper hand when the enemy resorts to the most dreaded of weapons--Greek fire. The narrative is interrupted by a lengthy recipe for Greek fire, which takes up nearly half of the space devoted to this episode. Finally there is a short account of how the Romans gain the victory.

Naval battles and alchemical formulae are rarities in Arthurian romance, not to mention a sea fight which occurs in the context of a journey to liberate the Holy Land, and a recipe for the ultimate in military weapons during the Middle Ages. These one would expect to find in a chronicle of the crusades rather than in a romance. Since I could not find a source for the author's description of the battle in De Ortu Walwanii, I shall give him credit for composing it himself. The recipe for Greek fire consists of both ridiculous and actual elements. Nowhere could I find a single source for the whole formula in our romance. The serious elements, as I explained in Chapter I, could well have come from Mark the Greek's Liber Ignium. The ridiculous elements, although all appropriate for their "fiery" qualities, apparently were inspired by classical

and medieval lore. See my footnotes to the translation for the background to each of these. But sources or no sources, it is owing to the author's originality, not only that he included in his romance all this non-Arthurian matter, but that he blended it so well with traditional Arthurian motifs--i.e. Gawain's rescuing of the abducted lady and his three-day joust with Gormundus which I shall discuss next.

### C. Gawain's Three-Day Fight with Gormundus in Jerusalem

After the naval battle Gawain and the Romans travel the rest of the way to the Holy Land without further incident. Final preparations are made for the joust between Gawain and Gormundus to decide the fate of Jerusalem. Then with the Christian army on one side of the arena, and the pagan army on the other, the two champions clash on foot, because no horse is strong enough to bear the gigantic Gormundus as a rider. They fight all day, but neither is victorious. At sundown they are separated to resume their fight on the next day. When dawn appears, they clash again and wound each other; at nightfall they are separated, but not before Gawain cuts to pieces Gormundus' shield and in the process breaks his own sword. That evening there is a dispute about whether the combatants should be allowed replacements for their broken arms, and the decision is in the

affirmative. On the third day Gawain drives his foe outside the fighting area, but encouraged by his people Gormundus comes back to knock Gawain off his feet with a blow. Then Gawain, fierce with rage, brings his sword down on the top of Gormundus' helmet and drives the blow all the way to the bottom of his chest. He withdraws his sword and cuts off the pagan champion's head, thus ending the contest and winning Jerusalem for the Christians.

Bruce thinks that this episode was suggested in part by a passage in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (Bk. IX, Ch. xi), where Arthur and the gigantic Frollo, like Gawain and Gormundus, engage in a single combat in order to avert a major war over a piece of territory. Bruce states that although the descriptions of the two combats differ in many details, "Certain features, after all, show plainly the influence of the earlier narrative on the later--namely, the fact that in each the author allows his hero at one stage of the contest to have the worst of it, and, again, the inclination of the host that look on to interfere in the duel."<sup>11</sup> I might also point out that Gawain kills Gormundus in the same way that Arthur slays Frollo: by bringing the sword down on the top of the foe's helmet and cleaving his head into two parts. Bruce also believes that the name of the Persian champion was adopted from the heathen Gormundus in Geoffrey's

Historia (Bk. XI, Chs. viii-x), the king of the Africans who conquered Ireland, promised to help Isembard capture Gaul, ravaged Britain, and gave Loegria to the Saxons.<sup>12</sup> Gormundus, of course, was a well-known pagan hero, as evidenced by the early twelfth century chanson de geste Gormont et Isembart. But it is possible that our author did take the name Gormundus from Geoffrey of Monmouth, since he borrowed several other things from his works. However, his making Gormundus gigantic in size may be the result of Frollo's being of immense stature, even though Frollo was not too large for his horse to bear him.

Other than the certain features which may have been inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the description of the joust appears to be our author's own composition. The fight is made to last for three days, probably in reminiscence of the traditional three-days' tournament, although none of the other characteristics of this tournament have been preserved, such as the champion wearing a different color of armor each day, his fighting on behalf of or for the hand of a lady, and so forth.<sup>13</sup> Gawain's fight with Gormundus differs from the stereotyped joust in that the opponents do not rush at each other on horseback knocking each other to the ground and splintering their lances, but rather start the combat on foot and with swords. More space is devoted to atmosphere--a grandiloquent description of the fighters

and their emotions and the strenuousness of the fight-- than to the progress of the fight itself. A further departure from the usual romance combat is the author's inclusion of references to classical mythology when he compares the fierce combat to that which the Lapithae engaged in, and the exchanging of blows to the hammering of the Cyclopes. But the greatest departure from Arthurian tradition is our author's making this joust take place in Jerusalem in the context of a crusade adventure, the winning of Jerusalem from the pagans.

D. The Queen's Taunt and the  
Combat at the Ford

Having defeated Gormundus in Jerusalem, Gawain returns to Rome and then proceeds to Britain to serve in King Arthur's army. On the night before he arrives in Caerleon where Arthur is then residing, Queen Gwendolen who is gifted in magic and prophecy taunts her husband in bed, telling him that a knight is in the neighborhood, on his way to the court, who will prove superior to him in valor and fortitude. She says also that the stranger the next day will send her a gold ring, three coins and two horses. Even though he knows that the queen is always right in her predictions, Arthur later that night secretly goes out with Kay to encounter the strange knight. They meet him at a ford and challenge him. Gawain, not knowing who his opponents



are, unhorses both of them in the stream and takes their horses. Saved by the darkness, Arthur returns home and when the queen asks him where he was and how he had become so wet, he tells her that he went out to stop a commotion in the courtyard and got wet in the rain. She replies that tomorrow the truth will be known. On the next day Gawain meets the queen's messenger and asks him to take her a gold ring, three gold coins, and the two horses he had won the night before. This the messenger does, and the queen leads the horses into the bedchamber where Arthur is still resting from the events of the night before. Recognizing his horses, Arthur is filled with shame.

It is quite common in romance literature for a boastful or self-complacent king or knight to be challenged by his lady on some point of pride--usually his superiority in arms or physical attractions--to become upset and set out to prove the truth of the disparaging remark. Loomis cites its occurrence in Erec by Chrétien de Troyes, Diu Crône, De Ortu Walwanii, Rigomer, Hunbaut, Gerbert's continuation of Le Conte del Graal, Arthur and Gorlagon, King Arthur and King Cornwall, the Dutch Lancelot, and L'Atre Périlleux. He observes that Gawain, or a character whose name was derived from his, plays a conspicuous part in all the boast episodes of the above-mentioned romances, except the one in

Gerbert's continuation of Le Conte del Graal, and concludes that Gawain was an indispensable figure in the formula of the boast. Furthermore, Loomis believes that the ultimate source of the motif is Celtic: the Irish tale, The Journeys of the Tuatha Luchra and the Death of Fergus, the preserved form of which is dated in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, but the tradition of which most likely goes back several centuries earlier.<sup>14</sup> This Irish tale consists of two parts. In the first part Iubdan, the king of the Lepra and Lepracan, holds a banquet at which he brags about the strength of his soldiery. Esirt, the king's chief poet bursts out laughing and declares that he knows of a province in Ireland, Ulster which is ruled by Fergus mac Leide, where any one man could surpass all four battalions of the Lepracan. Eventually King Iubdan goes to Emain Macha, the capital of Ulster, to see for himself whether what his poet said was true. After suffering great humiliations, he returns home. In the second part, Fergus the king of Ulster who has been disfigured by the monster of Loch Rudraige, has an argument with his queen. She taunts him about his ugliness and suggests that he avenge himself on the monster rather than fight with her. He goes to the loch and kills the monster, but in the process is mortally wounded himself.<sup>15</sup> In both parts of this Irish

tale, then, we find a king who is challenged on a matter of pride, goes out to determine the truth, and is undone, the same formula which occurs in De Ortu Walwanii. Moreover, in the one part we find a queen taunting her husband, and in the other a king taunted as to his superiority in arms. As for the other romances mentioned above, I refer the reader to the Loomis study which shows how the Irish tale accounts for the main features of the boast formula therein.<sup>16</sup>

The episode in De Ortu Walwanii has gone outside The Journeys of the Tuatha Luchra and the Death of Fergus and incorporated another Celtic tradition for the method of the king's humiliation, the combat at the ford. There seem to be only two extant romances in which the queen's taunt is combined with a nocturnal combat at the ford: De Ortu Walwanii and Heinrich von dem Türlin's Diu Crône. Comparing the two episodes, J. D. Bruce concludes that because of their close resemblances they probably are ultimately connected with one another.<sup>17</sup>

The combat in the ford is itself one of the stock incidents in Arthurian romance. According to Loomis, this motif comes from the Welsh tradition of the annual combat at the ford, as preserved at the beginning of Pwyll in the Mabinogion. With the help of supportive evidence from folklore and romance literature, Loomis interprets the defeat of Arawn (the

huntsman-king clad in gray and riding a gray horse) by Havgan (the king of Annwn whose name means "Summer White"), and a year later the defeat of Havgan by Pwyll fighting at the ford in place of Arawn, as the annual conflict between Winter and Summer.<sup>18</sup> If Pwyll is the Welsh sun god, as Thomas O'Rahilly identified him to be,<sup>19</sup> the episode in Pwyll might also be termed the annual conflict between the Old Sun and the New Sun. In any case, this meaning is not apparent in Gawain's encounter with Arthur and Kay at the ford in De Ortu Walwanii. What we have here is just an ordinary fight to confirm the queen's prediction that a knight was coming to Caerleon who would prove to be superior to Arthur in martial prowess.

Whereas the boast episodes in some of the other romances seem to be serious in nature--for example, Count Galoain's undoing after boasting about his knightly superiority in Chrétien's Erec<sup>20</sup> appears to have been meant to teach him (as well as the medieval courtly audience) a lesson in humility--the episode in De Ortu Walwanii seems to have been written purely to entertain. Several things contribute to a light tone. First, the queen taunts Arthur in bed, rather than in a more stately or public place. Second, the queen's name is Gwendoloena. As far as I know, this is the only romance where she is so named. Bruce thinks that her name was

taken from that of Merlin's wife in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Vita Merlini.<sup>21</sup> Roger Loomis speculates that it developed from the Breton Wenlowen, which had been substituted for the less euphonious Welsh Gwenhwyvar whence comes Guenievre or Guinevere.<sup>22</sup> However, it is difficult to believe that any person who wrote at so late a date (see Chapter I), who was so well acquainted with Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia (where Arthur's queen is "Guenhuvera"<sup>23</sup>) and so well versed in Arthurian tradition generally as our author obviously was, could have mistaken the name of the queen accidentally. Whatever his source or inspiration, I think our author intentionally gave her the wrong name for the sake of humor. Third, Queen Gwendolen is said to be skilled in magic and prophecy. She does in fact predict Arthur's discomfiture and the proof of it in De Ortu Walwanii. These are powers which one would expect to belong to someone like Morgain la Fée rather than to the queen. Gwendolen's having them seems to detract from her dignity as queen, with the effect again being humorous. Fourth, the bumbling Arthur knows that the queen is always right in her predictions, but yet goes out to test them. Then, after he is unhorsed in the combat at the ford and comes back to bed, he lies to the queen about how he got all wet. Fifth, the next day to prove that her husband was discomfited the night before, the queen leads Arthur's

and Kay's horses into the king's bedroom where he is still resting. It is not unusual in romance literature for a horse to be led or ridden into a hall (e.g. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight), but bringing horses into a bedroom is downright ridiculous. For these reasons the episode must have been written purely to entertain.

E. Gawain's Relief of the  
Castle of Maidens

Coming to Arthur's castle, Gawain asks to serve in the king's army. Arthur spurns his offer of service on the premise that he is an unproven knight. Exasperated, Gawain says he hopes Arthur would deem him worthy if he should accomplish something which Arthur and his whole army shall have failed in. This proposal pleases the king. Twelve days later a messenger arrives at Arthur's court announcing that the Castle of Maidens in the northern part of Britain is being besieged by a pagan king who is in love with the governess of the castle but who has been rejected by her. Arthur is reluctant to go to her aid because he had often contended with this king and each time met defeat, but he collects his army and goes anyway. Another messenger arrives with the news that the Castle of Maidens has been taken and the governess abducted. Arthur pursues the adversaries, but his whole army is repulsed, and Arthur is in the forefront of those fleeing. Taunting Arthur about retreating, Gawain

rides into the midst of the enemy forces, kills the pagan king with his spear, and rescues the lady. With the pagan king's head fixed on the staff of his banner, he rides triumphantly with the lady back to the hall where Arthur is moping over his misfortunes in war. There is great rejoicing and Arthur finally reveals to Gawain the latter's true identity.

The Castle of Women figures often in Arthurian romance. Sometimes as in Malory's Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones, it is the site of a tournament.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes, as in Chrétien's Le Conte del Graal, we find a description of the magnificent castle with its hundreds of windows and hundreds of ladies in rich attire (among whom are Gawain's grandmother and mother and sister), and several adventures such as the perilous bed episode where Gawain's courage is tested.<sup>25</sup> The author of De Ortu Walwanii follows only one tradition concerning the Castle of Women, that of its being besieged. He locates the castle in the north of Britain, in accordance with its generally being identified with Edinburgh from as early as 1142.<sup>26</sup> But there is no description of the castle; in fact, no one in the romance even goes to the castle itself. And the governness remains unnamed.

The relief of a lady whose castle is being besieged, whether or not it happens to be the Castle of Women, is of course a commonplace in Arthurian

literature. Helaine Newstead believes that the Irish tale Serglige Con Culainn or The Sickbed of Cuchulainn has influenced many such romance episodes and contributed the basic structural pattern of at least five of them: the story of Dame Lyones in Malory's Book of Gareth, the story of the Lady of Lothian in the thirteenth century French verse romance Fergus, the tale of Lady Lufamour the queen of Maidenland in the fourteenth century English rimed romance Sir Perceval of Galles, the final episode of De Ortu Walwani, and the story of the mistress of the Castle of Maidens in the thirteenth century verse romance Yder.<sup>27</sup>

The Sickbed of Cuchulainn as we have it in the Book of the Dun Cow is a compilation of several versions of the same story which go back to at least the ninth century. The following is a brief summary of those parts of the tale which concern us. The fairy woman Liban comes to Cuchulainn and informs him that her sister Fand is in love with him and that he can have her love if he will come to the island where Fand lives and fight for one day against the armies of three Irish chieftains who are besieging it. Cuchulainn refuses to fight that day on the excuse that he is too sick. Instead he sends his charioteer Loeg back with Liban to learn about this island. Loeg finds a rich palace containing 150 women on the same number of couches. He also meets the



beautiful Fand as well as Liban's husband Labraid who sends him back to report what he saw to Cuchulainn. Here the saga is interrupted by the story of the election of Lugain to the kingship of Ireland. When the original tale resumes, there seems to be a duplication of much of what has already taken place: Liban appearing to Cuchulainn with basically the same message as before, Cuchulainn refusing to do the woman's bidding and instead sending Loeg to find out about the island, and Loeg's report to Cuchulainn. In any case, when Loeg recommends that Cuchulainn carry out the requested mission, the hero finally goes. Singlehandedly he meets the enemy armies and slays two of their chieftains as well as several other men. This enables Labraid to finish the battle. Cuchulainn enjoys the love of Fand for a month and then bids her farewell, arranging a tryst with her in Ireland. When Cuchulainn's wife Emer finds out about the tryst, she tries to kill Fand. Cuchulainn protects Fand against Emer's jealousy, but Fand decides to leave Cuchulainn anyway. This causes the hero to become mad and wander through the mountains without food or drink and sleep every night in the open. Eventually the druids restore him to his senses by giving him a magic drink which makes him forget Fand. They also give Emer a drink so that she forgets her jealousy.<sup>28</sup>

This Irish tale, then, has Cuchulainn rescuing a lady whose land and castle full of women is being besieged by enemies. As for its influence on the five romances mentioned above, let me quote Helaine Newstead:

A simplified version of the plot of the Serglige, then, probably contributed the basic structural pattern: the summoning of aid, the failure of the first embassy, the hero's single-handed combat against the enemy hosts and his defeat of the hostile chiefs, the reward of the fay's love, the separation of the lovers, the hero's madness and wandering.<sup>29</sup>

Like most of the Arthurian stories, the five romance episodes discussed by Newstead have undergone certain changes and developments. But De Ortu Walwanii stands perhaps the furthest of the five from its source. In this romance there is the summoning of aid, but unlike The Sickbed of Cuchulainn and Malory's Book of Gareth where the messenger is the besieged lady's sister, the messenger is a male, as is evidenced by the phrase "misso nuncio," with no expressed kinship to the lady. Second, there is the failure of the first embassy, but unlike the Irish tale and Sir Perceval of Galles where Cuchulainn and King Arthur respectively decline because of illness, Arthur in De Ortu Walwanii does go to the lady's assistance, though reluctantly, and is put to flight. Third, while in all the stories we find the hero's successful single-handed combat against the besieged lady's enemies, the last three elements--the

reward of the lady's love, the separation of the lovers (which two are part of the Book of Gareth, Fergus, and Sir Perceval of Galles), and the hero's madness and wandering (which is found in the Book of Gareth and Fergus)--are all absent from De Ortu Walwanii.

Our romance also differs from its source and from its romance analogues in the great emphasis put on the mission as a proof of Gawain's valor. The rescuing of the governess of the Castle of Maidens is the something that Gawain is to succeed in where Arthur and his whole army shall have failed, as a proof of Gawain's worthiness to serve in Arthur's army. Perhaps the proof of valor aspect was implied in or was once present in the Irish source, since, as Helaine Newstead pointed out, in the romance analogues the liberating of the besieged lady is usually done by a young or obscure or relatively untried knight.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, perhaps it comes from a blending of The Sickbed of Cuchulainn with another tale, Bricriu's Feast, which Loomis cites as the source of Gawain's test of courage--his adventure on the perilous bed--when he visits the Castle of Ladies in Chrétien de Troyes' Le Conte del Graal.<sup>31</sup> In Bricriu's Feast Cuchulainn and two other warriors of Ulster go to Curoi's fortress to let Curoi determine which of them is the bravest and therefore the most worthy to receive the choicest portion of a feast prepared by Bricriu. When

they arrive, Curoi is gone; only his wife is present. Curoi, however, had left instructions for each of the heroes according to seniority to take his night watching the fortress until Curoi should return. The first two nights the two older heroes each take the watch, and each is hurled out of the fortress by an attacking giant. The third night Cuchulainn is the sentry. Three waves of attackers of nine men each besiege the stronghold. Cuchulainn not only kills all of them, but tears out the heart of a sea monster that springs toward the fortress, and finally makes an attacking giant submit to him. As a result when Curoi returns, he proclaims Cuchulainn the bravest of the heroes and accords him the champion's portion of the feast.<sup>32</sup> Thus Cuchulainn proves his valor by single-handedly defeating waves of attackers while guarding a fortress inhabited by a lady, a task which others had failed in. Gawain, too, proves his valor by single-handedly defeating the enemy army in order to rescue the captive mistress of the Castle of Maidens, a task which Arthur and his whole army had failed in. It seems very possible, then, that the final episode of De Ortu Walwanii is a blending of The Sickbed of Cuchulainn, which provides the structural pattern of the episode, and Cuchulainn's adventures in Bricriu's Feast, which provides the test of valor motif. Such a blending would explain why the second structural element

in Newstead's list takes the form, not of Arthur declining to help the lady because of illness, but of his going and being defeated.

It should be noted that the hero of The Sickbed of Cuchulainn and Bricriu's Feast is Gawain's prototype Cuchulainn. So in a sense the rescuing of the lady whose castle is being besieged is an adventure which properly belongs to Gawain. The same goes for Gawain's rescuing of the emperor's niece on the barbarous isle, which comes from Cuchulainn's rescuing of Blathnat in The Violent Death of Curoi. Moreover, since the birth and early life of Gawain as well as his combat at the ford come also from the Celtic sun god lore, the only adventures of Gawain in De Ortu Walwanii which apparently do not belong to the original tradition surrounding him are his naval battle with Buzafarnan and his three-day fight with Gormundus in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER III--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. Douglas Bruce, ed., Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii (Baltimore, 1913), pp. lxxi-lxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore, 1966), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 66-69. Quotation from p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Roger Sherman Loomis, "More Celtic Elements in Gawain and the Green Knight," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 42 (1943), 156-58. Roger Sherman Loomis, Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance (New York, 1927), pp. 12-23.

<sup>5</sup>The different versions of this tale in German translation can be found in Rudolf Thurneysen, "Die Sage von Curoi," Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie, 9 (1913), 189-234. See also R. Thurneysen, Die Irische Helden- und Königsage (Halle, 1921), pp. 432-44. An English translation of one version, although it lacks the magic sword motif, can be found in Ancient Irish Tales, ed. Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover (New York, 1936), pp. 328-32.

<sup>6</sup>Loomis, Celtic Myth, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup>Roger Sherman Loomis, Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes (New York, 1949), p. 204.

<sup>8</sup>The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication No. 74, IV (Washington, 1911), 88-139.

<sup>9</sup>Loomis, "More Celtic Elements," p. 157.

<sup>10</sup>Bruce, p. lxiii.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. lx-lxi. Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 223-25.

<sup>12</sup>Bruce, p. lx. Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 263-65. I might point out that Peter Rickard identifies Gormont or Gormundus with the historical Guthrum, the Norse leader who raided England in the 860's and 870's and who warred on Ethelred and his successor Alfred the Great. A later age identified Gormont's men with Saracens. See Peter Rickard, Britain in Medieval French Literature, 1100-1500 (Cambridge, Eng., 1956), pp. 59-60.

<sup>13</sup>For more on the three-days' tournament, see Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 253-60; and Jessie Weston, The Three Days' Tournament (London, 1902).

<sup>14</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 133-38.

<sup>15</sup>Ancient Irish Tales, pp. 471-87.

<sup>16</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 133-38.

<sup>17</sup>Bruce, pp. lvii-lviii.

<sup>18</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 132-33. The Mabinogion, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, Everyman's Library No. 97 (New York, 1949), pp. 3-9.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas F. O'Rahilly, Early Irish History and Mythology (Dublin, 1946), pp. 293 and 318.

<sup>20</sup>Chrétien de Troyes, Arthurian Romances, trans. W. W. Comfort, Everyman's Library No. 698 (New York, 1914), pp. 42-48.

<sup>21</sup>Bruce, p. lix.

<sup>22</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 196-97.

<sup>23</sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae, ed. Acton Griscom (New York, 1929), p. 445.





<sup>24</sup>Sir Thomas Malory, Works, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Oxford, 1967), II, 517-40.

<sup>25</sup>Chrestien de Troyes, The Story of the Grail, trans. Robert White Linker, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1952), pp. 149-86.

<sup>26</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 108-11.

<sup>27</sup>Helaine Newstead, "The Besieged Ladies in Arthurian Romance," PMLA, 63 (1948), 803-30.

<sup>28</sup>Serglige Con Culainn, ed. and trans. Myles Dillon (Columbus, Ohio, 1941). An English translation of the story appears also in Ancient Irish Tales, pp. 176-98.

<sup>29</sup>Newstead, p. 825.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 803, 807, 813.

<sup>31</sup>Loomis, Arthurian Tradition, pp. 443-44.

<sup>32</sup>Ancient Irish Tales, pp. 272-76.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINAL INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

An introduction to De Ortu Walwanii would be incomplete without a few comments about the characterization of Gawain, the setting, the form and style of the romance, and the author's purpose in writing it. In this chapter I am also including a note on my translation.

#### A. The Characterization of Gawain

The author of De Ortu Walwanii portrays Gawain for the most part as the ideal knight, but he places much more emphasis on the military than on other aspects of his life. Only when dealing with the hero's childhood does the author endow him with a fairly complete set of courtly attributes. At the beginning of the romance Anna gives birth to a little boy with a fine appearance ("eleganti forma," p. 55).<sup>1</sup> Investigating the merchants' ship, Viamundus notices the baby boy with the distinguished appearance ("prestanti forma," p. 56). After Gawain's foster parents had taken him to Rome, youths

clad in the praetexta and knights from the imperial court used to congregate at Viamundus' home on account of the charm of the little boy ("ob gratiam paruuli," p. 58). The author goes on to say that as the boy was growing in age, he was also growing in bravery of spirit and fitness of body ("animi uirtute et corporis habilitate," p. 58), and being an emulator of the man believed to be his father he was striving for discretion, courtesy and prowess ("industrie facie probitate," p. 58). Presumably largess and munificence ("largitate et munificencia," p. 57) could be added to this list since the author stressed these as qualities of the foster father a few sentences earlier. The author mentions that there flourished in Gawain certain innate virtues ("quedam ingenite uirtutes," p. 58) which caused people to like him, that he was endowed with a tall and well-formed stature, an elegant bearing, a handsome face, and enormous strength ("procera decentique statura, lepidogestu, pulchra facie, ingentique fortitudine," p. 58). On his deathbed Viamundus remarks to the emperor and the pope that Gawain is not about to degenerate from the nobility of his parents ("a parentum nobilitate non degeneraturum," p. 59). After Viamundus dies, the emperor takes Gawain, now twelve years old, and raises him at the palace. At the end of three years, his prowess requiring it ("sua probitate exigente," p. 59),

he is fitted out with arms and dubbed a knight by the emperor.

Up through his fifteenth year, then, Gawain has the makings of the ideal knight. A good looking baby, he now is a handsome lad with a well-formed stature and an elegant bearing. He has charm and popularity. He has great strength of body and bravery of spirit. He is striving for discretion, courtesy, prowess, and presumably largess and munificence. He is endowed with the nobility of his parents. These are all qualities which would be esteemed in a man in the age of chivalry. But some of Gawain's characteristics--certainly his youthful precocity, and perhaps his good looks, charm and martial prowess--are carry-overs from the tradition surrounding his prototypes in Celtic lore (see my discussion of Gwri Gwallt-euryn and Cuchulainn in Chapter II). It should be noted, too, that the description of Gawain's youthful character is simply that--a description. Until he participates in his first tournament, he says or does nothing. However, from that point on there is ample speech and action on his part to complement the enumeration of his traits, even those traits such as courtesy and largess which are not mentioned again after the opening pages.

Upon his being dubbed a knight, the emphasis is on Gawain the warrior rather than on Gawain the courtier.

Such emphasis is indicated not only by the adventures the author provides for him, but by the repeated mention of his valor, prowess, fortitude, strength and invincibility throughout the final seven-eighths of the romance. While my list is by no means exhaustive, below are several words for these qualities and the approximate frequency with which they appear with reference to Gawain.

Virtus 'valor, bravery'--twelve times; animus 'courage'--once; audacia 'boldness'--three times; audaciter 'boldly'--twice; probitas 'prowess'--nine times; probus 'doughty, gallant, brave'--four times; strenuus 'quick to act, strenuous'--twice; calliditas 'skill'--once; callidus 'skillful, shrewd'--twice; fortitudo 'courage, fortitude'--five times; fortis 'courageous, forceful'--twice; pertinacia 'pertinacity'--twice; vires 'strength, power, might'--nine times; robur 'strength'--once; valor 'strength, force'--twice; validus 'powerful'--once; consuetudo vincendi 'habit of conquering'--once; invincibilis 'invincible'--once, although five other times it is said that no one could withstand him or conquer him or endure an encounter with him. Of course, such frequent citing of these qualities tends to get somewhat boring for the reader. However, in the tournament on the day Gawain is knighted and in his numerous battles, he does demonstrate them. Moreover, the author shows that Gawain realizes how important

they are. For example, when our hero is collecting his thoughts in the inner chambers of Milocrates' palace, he thinks that if he should go back to the ships without having performed an act of prowess, he surely would be regarded as an inept and cowardly man (p. 66). Later when the enemies throw Greek fire on his ship, he reflects that he must act quickly for all things would be decided by this test of his bravery and might (p. 78). Of course, valor and prowess have been trademarks of Gawain in the chronicles and in most of the romances in which he plays a part. They also were trademarks of his prototypes in Celtic lore. Thus it is not surprising that there is a great deal of emphasis on these virtues in De Ortu Walwanii.

Other prominent traits of our hero are his discretion, prudence and caution. These would be equivalent to the sens 'wisdom' which he displays in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. As William Nitze pointed out, his sens was a turning point in the plots of Erec, Yvain and Perceval, and was a factor in later romances as well.<sup>2</sup> While the author of De Ortu Walwanii does not use sapientia 'wisdom' with reference to Gawain, he does state that Gawain and Odabel were chosen for the spying mission on the barbarous isle because they were recognized before the others as being prudent and cautious in doubtful situations ("in dubiis prouidi et cauti . . . pre

ceteris noscebantur," p. 64). Of course the hero demonstrates prudence and caution all through his spying mission, especially when he takes time out in the inner chambers of Milocrates' palace to consider what he should do, and when he sounds out Nabaor to make sure the latter is on his side before he enlists his help. Another word the author uses with reference to Gawain is industria, which I translated as "discretion" since this seems to be the meaning of the word in Nabaor's "discretion is the better part of valor" speech to Gawain in Milocrates' palace (p. 67). In the same speech Nabaor points out that Milocrates is too heavily guarded for Gawain to kill him in his sleep. Gawain then shows discretion when he lays aside his plan in favor of Nabaor's suggestion that he go see the queen, and later when he accepts the queen's and Nabaor's plan to overcome Milocrates. Just before the naval battle Gawain recognizes the standards on the masts of the enemy ships in the distance, not as birds of prey as the centurion suggests, but for what they are, and discreetly tells the centurion to have everyone get ready for battle. Finally, after King Arthur rudely rejects Gawain's offer of service, the latter though exasperated, diplomatically and wisely proposes a test of valor as a condition of his being accepted as a member of the king's army. Thus Gawain is in possession of the two qualities that traditionally

have been considered the essential make-up of heroes:  
sapientia et fortitudo 'wisdom and fortitude.'

Gawain displays other chivalric virtues, too, although to a lesser extent. His rescuing of the two ladies in distress I suppose could be termed acts of courtesy, as well as acts of courage. He avoids being discourteous by not making fun of the centurion for mistaking the standards on the masts of the enemy ships for birds of prey, or for calling those birds of prey kingfishers, which not only are not vultures, but are birds of good omen. He also refrains from discourteous remarks when Arthur rudely rejects his offer of service. Only twice might Gawain's manners be considered less than ideal--the times he taunts Arthur for retreating from battle and for having cowardly knights. However, the way Arthur behaves, he deserves every taunt he gets. On the other hand, Gawain acts not only courteously, but generously by sending gifts to Queen Gwendolen. His giving Nabaor a ring and purple cloak in memory of himself might also be considered largess, although I think it would be more properly labeled a bribe. Finally, Gawain on at least one occasion shows humility: when he admits to the queen on the barbarous isle that he doesn't think he has the power to save her, and asks her if she knows of a plan that would succeed.



As a fighter Gawain is prone to anger and vengeance. However, these are not permanent attitudes such as blacken his personality in some romances (e.g. the Prose Tristan or Malory's Morte Arthur),<sup>3</sup> but rather momentary feelings. He gets angry and vengeful only in the heat of battle, and then only after he has been wounded or is exceptionally hard pressed. In his clash with Milocrates, these emotions are coupled with fear--fear that his sight would be impaired by the blood flowing down from the laceration on his forehead. Such emotions, of course, would be natural for any man in Gawain's circumstances and thus tend to make him seem more human. The only time they lead him to what might be termed unnecessary brutality is when he gives Gormundus the final two blows. After he kills Gormundus by bringing his sword down on the top of his helmet and driving the weapon all the way to the bottom of his chest, he cuts off his opponent's head that has already been cleaved into two parts and kicks it away from himself. Of course, this had been a long, arduous fight. But if this brutality is out of character, it is because the author not only here but elsewhere delights in making his battle descriptions as vivid and gory as possible.

What might be surprising is that in our romance Gawain is not a lover. His reputation for being a ladies' man--one who rarely loses an opportunity to

make love to whatever damsel is available--had been established by Chrétien de Troyes and many other romancers long before De Ortu Walwanii was written.<sup>4</sup> In our romance he has two good occasions to make love: with the emperor's niece on the barbarous isle and with the queen of the Castle of Maidens. In fact, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, the Celtic sources of these two episodes call for an affair between the hero and the rescued lady. So do most of the romance analogues of the liberation of a besieged lady, including at least one other version of a knight rescuing the mistress of the Castle of Maidens.<sup>5</sup> Our author even says that the emperor's niece was in love with Gawain because of his appearance and stature and reputation for valor. However, the author never permits Gawain to have an affair, perhaps because he wanted to keep courtly love out of his story.

One disappointing aspect of the characterization of Gawain is the way the author has him act, or rather fail to act, at the end of the romance when he learns his identity and is reunited with his real parents. Here was a chance for some real melodrama. However, we never learn how Gawain feels. The author simply has the hero as well as his parents stand there silently, while Arthur steals the whole show. On the whole, however, the author does a fairly good job of developing his

hero's character. He uses all the techniques. Not only does he enumerate the hero's qualities, but throughout most of the romance has him speak and act in such a way as to demonstrate them. He also occasionally explains how Gawain thinks and feels, and has other characters express their opinions about the hero. Gawain comes out as the ideal knight. A handsome, strongly built young man, he is most renowned for his valor, prowess and invincibility. He is discreet, prudent and cautious, though prone to anger and vengeance in the heat of battle. His least stressed virtues are generosity and humility. The only outstanding departure from romance tradition is that in De Ortu Walwanii he is not a lover.

#### B. Setting

De Ortu Walwanii opens with the birth of Gawain in Britain. But immediately--on the second page of the romance--the setting shifts to Narbonne, France, where Gawain has been taken by merchants and is kidnapped by Viamundus. On the third page Gawain is conveyed to Rome. From there, after he is knighted, he sails across the Mediterranean Sea, lands on an island in the Aegean Sea, proceeds to Jerusalem, returns to Rome, and finally travels to King Arthur's court in Britain where the romance ends. It is unusual that a sizable portion of an Arthurian romance should take place outside of Britain or Brittany, but De Ortu Walwanii is not unique in this

respect. In the first two books of Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival, for example, Gahmuret, the hero's father, travels to Asia, Africa and parts of Europe before coming to King Arthur's territory; and at the end of the romance, in Book XVI, Feirefiz the hero's half brother journeys to the Orient. However, most of Parzival is set in the land of Arthur, whereas over three-fourths of De Ortu Walwanii takes place outside of that land.

The author does not give much description of Narbonne, except to say that there is a steep cliff two miles from the city under which the merchants land their ship. However, he depicts Rome in greater detail, giving it a combined classical and medieval flavor. When Viamundus arrives there with Gawain, the city is the home of the emperor. It is interesting to note that the last emperor to reside at Rome was Romulus Augustus who was deposed in 476 A.D. Beginning in that year Byzantine emperors at Constantinople ruled Rome until 800 A.D. when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor; thereafter Frankish and German kings held that title until the end of the empire in 1806. The Rome in De Ortu Walwanii also is in a state of destruction, having been devastated by the barbarians. Historically the most famous sacking of Rome was by Alaric and the Visigoths in 410 A.D. It was invaded by the Vandals under Genseric in 455 and by the Goths under Totila in 546. More

recently Rome was devastated, not by barbarians in the strict sense, but by the Normans led by Robert Guiscard in 1084. They were supporting Pope Gregory VII in a struggle against Emperor Henry IV over the problem of investiture. Because of the lack of more details, it is doubtful that our author had any specific invasion in mind, but was simply creating a setting for the arrival of Viamundus. The author goes on to say that Viamundus procured a great many slaves and took the entire retinue with him when he went to see the emperor. Slavery, of course, was at its height during classical Roman times; in the Middle Ages it was gradually being replaced by serfdom. The author also mentions that the emperor gave Viamundus a marvelous residence in front of the gates of his own palace, which residence once belonged to Scipio Africanus. According to Livy (Ab Urbe Condita XLIV.xvi.10), the house of Scipio Africanus (ca.236-183 B.C.) was located in the southern part of the Forum near merchants' shops and stalls (the Tabernae Veteres), and was purchased for the public by Tiberius Sempronius. This site was adjoining the Palatine Hill on which was constructed the Palatium, the imperial palace. One trouble with our author's account is that Scipio's house ceased to exist before the Palatium was ever built. According to the same passage in Livy, a public courthouse later known as the Basilica Sempronia was

erected on the site of the house in 170 B.C. On the other hand, the Palatium was not begun until the reign of the Emperor Augustus (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.). Thereafter, by the way, it was the residence of emperors and barbaric kings until about 526 A.D. when Theodoric the King of the Ostrogoths died.<sup>6</sup> The author of De Ortu Walwanii further states that youths clad in the praetexta used to come to visit the boy Gawain. This style of toga, which was worn in ancient Roman times by magistrates and by freeborn children until they reached the age of sixteen and assumed the adult toga, went out of fashion as ordinary dress at the beginning of the second century A.D., although it was retained as a ceremonial costume until about the fifth century.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the author mentions the circus as the site of knightly tournaments. There were a few circuses in and around Rome in ancient times, which were used primarily for chariot racing. The largest and most famous was the Circus Maximus, which was first constructed in the fourth century B.C., rebuilt in the time of Julius Caesar, and enlarged by succeeding emperors until it reached its greatest size under Constantine. The latest circus to have been built was the Circus Maxentius (309 A.D.) but it was not used after the sixth century.<sup>8</sup> Thus it appears that during the Middle Ages in Rome there was no circus as we know it, where equestrian contests

could have been held. The Roman setting in De Ortu Wawanii, then, is a blend of the classical and the medieval. The city has just been sacked by barbarians; it is still the home of the emperor. There are slaves, an unusual possession for a romance hero; there are youths clad in the praetexta. More local color is added by the mention of Scipio Africanus' house and the circus. On the other hand, there are knights and tournaments.

After Gawain is dubbed a knight, he sails across the Mediterranean Sea until he lands on the barbarous isle. Even though this island is located in the Aegean Sea, it turns out to be a typical Arthurian fairyland, and the author uses the common motif of the crossing of water as a signal of entry into it. On the island there are forests, dwarfish people, an abducted lady, a castle and a king with a magic sword and armor. Gawain's leaving this fairyland also is signalled by a crossing of water, but he finds himself again in the Aegean Sea about to take part in a non-Arthurian naval battle in which non-Arthurian Greek fire is used. After the battle he sails on to Jerusalem (which is not described), where he engages in a more or less typical Arthurian joust for a non-Arthurian cause--the liberation of the Holy Land from the pagans. Although historically there never was a duel in the strict sense for the possession of Jerusalem, one is reminded of the era of the crusades, and

particularly of the Christian occupation of that city from 1099 to 1187.

The setting then shifts across the sea to Rome, and then to Britain where we find the author's next geographical description:

Cui quo eo tempore rex Arturus degeret percunctanti responsum est, eum apud Carlegion urbem in Demecia perhendinare, quam pre ceteris ciuitatibus frequentare consueuerat, illa quippe memoribus consita, feris fecunda, opibus opulenta, pratorum uiriditate amena et irrigacione fluminum Osce scilicet et Sabrine decora gratissimum penes se habitandi locum prebe[bat]. Illic metropolis habebatur Demecie, illic legiones Romanorum hiemare solebant, illic rex Arturus festa celebrabat solemnna, diademate insigniebatur, uniuerse primorum Britannie ad eum conuentus coadunabantur. (p. 85)

Upon inquiring where King Arthur was residing at that time, he (Gawain) was answered that Arthur was staying in the City of Caerleon in Demetia, which he had been accustomed to frequent before the other cities. That territory to be sure, planted with groves, abounding in wild beasts, rich in resources, luxurious with the meadows' greenness, and scenic with the rivers' flowing--namely, the Usk and the Severn--offered in itself a most pleasant place to live. Situated at Caerleon was the metropolitan see of Demetia; there the legions of the Romans used to spend the winter; there King Arthur often celebrated solemn feasts and had been crowned with the diadem; and there assemblies of the barons of all of Britain were held in his presence.

Roger Loomis states, "The description of Caerleon (Hesperia, loc. cit., p. 85) is taken verbatim from Geoffrey (ed. Griscom, p. 291)."<sup>9</sup> The passage in the Historia Regum Britanniae to which Loomis refers is in Bk. III, Ch. x:



Inter ceteras composuit unam super oscera flumen prope sabrinum mare. quae multis temporibus kaerlusc appellata. metropolis demetie fuerat. Postquam autem romani uenerunt. prefato nomine deleto. uocata est urbs legionum. uocabulum trahens a romanis legionibus quae ibidem hiemare solebant.<sup>10</sup>

Among other cities, he (Belinus) built one on the River Usk near the Severn Sea, which for a long time was named Kaerusk and was the metropolitan see of Demetia. But after the Romans came, the above-mentioned name was dropped; it was then called the City of Legions, drawing its title from the Roman legions which used to spend the winter there.

In addition, J. D. Bruce notes, "In the description of Caerleon and its surroundings the author had in mind Geoffrey's Historia (Book IX, Chap. xii), where this city is also described."<sup>11</sup> In this section of the Historia Geoffrey says that Arthur decided to hold a plenary court on the feast of Whitsuntide at the City of Legions and place the crown of the kingdom on his head, that he summoned to this feast kings and other famous leaders from all over the world. Geoffrey goes on to say that since this city, located on the River Usk and not far from the Severn Sea, was in a most pleasant position, it was immensely suitable for such a ceremony. He also says that the territory was flanked by meadows and wooded groves. Between the two passages from Geoffrey's Historia, then, the author of De Ortu Walwanii could have found, and probably did find just about everything that he put into his description of Caerleon and the surrounding territory. One exception would be the town

of Usk which he mentions later in the same paragraph and which he says was six miles distant from the City of Legions (*"Usce oppidum, quod ab urbe vi miliariis distabat,"* p. 85). This is not to be confused with Kaerusk, the old name for the City of Legions. There actually was a town of Usk a few miles north-northeast of Caerleon.<sup>12</sup> Where the author got his idea to mention this town, I do not know. Probably from his general knowledge of the area.

Other than the ford near the City of Legions where Gawain engages Arthur and Kay in the nocturnal combat, the only mention of the geography of Britain occurs with reference to the queen of the Castle of Maidens. The author locates the castle in the northern part of Britain (*"in aquilonari parte Britannie,"* p. 89), in accordance with the tradition which from as early as 1147 identified this castle with Edinburgh.<sup>13</sup> The Castle of Maidens is not described, but the territory nearby is evidently quite rugged. From a steep, remote place (*"remoto et prerupto loco,"* p. 90) Gawain watches Arthur get repulsed by the pagan king who had abducted the queen. Then when Gawain enters the battle, he defeats the pagan army so badly that some of them, rather than being killed by his sword, commit suicide by throwing themselves headlong from steep cliffs, and others bury themselves in the

waves. Near this battle area is also a great landmark which the author describes in this way:

Non longe autem perampla et profunda distabat fouea, duarum prouinciarum terminos dirimens. Ideoque limes et diuisio illarum dicebatur finium, cuius angustus aditus et transitus non nisi unius admittebat ingressum. (p. 91)

However, not far away there was a very large and very deep ravine dividing the boundaries of the two countries. Its narrow access and passage-way admitted the entering of only one person, and for this reason was declared the limit and separation of those borders.

Whether the author had in mind an actual ravine in the northern part of Britain, I do not know. In any case, it functions as a typical boundary in Arthurian romance to separate the forces of good and evil.

### C. Form and Style

De Ortu Walwanii is a simple narrative consisting of a series of episodes in which Gawain is the central figure. The episodes follow one another in chronological order, and the events within the episodes are generally sequential. There is none of the "tapestry technique" characteristic of the thirteenth century French prose romances, in which often concurrent adventures are interwoven, broken off and taken up again after long intervals. The author of De Ortu Walwanii interrupts his story only a few times to give concurrent or past information. For example, after the emperor awards Gawain the don--the

privilege of taking the emperor's part in the first single combat which presents itself--the author inserts a passage giving the background to the war that almost takes place between the Christians and the pagans in Jerusalem, and which they decide to avert by a single combat. Or for example, when Gawain meets Nabaor in the inner chambers of Milocrates' palace, there is a flashback wherein the reader learns that Nabaor was one of the men whom Milocrates had earlier sent to spy on the Roman fleet, and that while captured by the Romans he was befriended by Gawain. Interruptions such as these generally are short and pertinent to the adventure at hand, and thus do not break up the continuity of the story. The only serious interruption in the narration is the long, three-page recipe for Greek fire, which can be justified only for its entertainment value.

J. D. Bruce sees De Ortu Walwanii as consisting of three divisions: (1) Gawain's birth and early life, (2) his journey to Jerusalem, and (3) his return to Britain.<sup>14</sup> Using these arbitrary divisions, let me say that the second division continues logically from the first on the basis of the don which the emperor grants the hero. The third division follows logically from the second, because Gawain always is in search of new adventures, and this time goes to Britain to find them. The third division also reverts back to the theme begun

in the first division: Gawain's unwitting quest for his identity. This quest, I think, gives some degree of unity to the whole romance. All through De Ortu Walwanii until the last page, Gawain goes under a nickname, which keeps the reader ever aware that he does not yet know his real name or his real parents.

The most obvious characteristic of the author's style is his florid rhetoric. This is evident, first of all, in the structure of the sentences. Almost all of them are complex (one independent plus one or more dependent clauses), or compound (two or more independent clauses) or compound-complex (two or more independent plus one or more dependent clauses). Rarely does there appear a simple sentence (one subject and one predicate), but when one does, it is generally effective rhetorically, particularly when used in direct address. For example, when Gawain in the single combat drives Gormundus out of the arena, the crowd shouts to their pagan champion:

Gormunde, regredere! Gormunde, regredere!  
quid agis? quo refugis, miles egregie? Fugare,  
non fugere, tibi hactenus moris exstitit!  
Regredere, pro dolor! regredere! ne in ultimo  
dedecus omnia ante bene gesta facinora obnubilet.  
Fuge hic locus non est! uinci aut uincere hic  
necessarium est! (p. 83)

Gormundus, go back! Gormundus, go back!  
What are you doing? Where are you fleeing, distinguished knight? To put to flight, not to take flight, has been your custom up to now! Go Back!

Oh sorrow! Go back! Lest in the end disgrace obscure all the deeds that you earlier performed so well. This is not the place for flight! To be conquered or to conquer is necessary here.

The author generally follows the classical practice of putting the verb at the end of the clause or sentence, although there are exceptions. Among the exceptions one peculiarity which, as Bruce pointed out,<sup>15</sup> can be found at least once on about two-thirds of the pages of the romance, is the author's practice of ending a sentence with a noun that is separated by a verb from the adjective or other words which qualify the noun. Every grammatical construction one can think of appears in the romance, including the supine which does not occur too often among medieval Latin writers. Ablative absolutes abound in the sentences. Occasionally, as Bruce also pointed out,<sup>16</sup> the author even inserts words from the main clause in the ablative absolute clauses. To put his complicated sentences together, the author employs a rash of coordinate conjunctions, particularly the copulative -que, which is used not only to connect elements within sentences, but also to make a transition in thought from the previous sentence. In addition, the author often begins his sentences with relative pronouns as well as the following transitional words: autem, igitur, jamque, enim, vero, itaque and tamen, to mention the ones most frequent in occurrence.

A second aspect of the author's style is his exceptionally large vocabulary which in many instances is poetic. For example, he uses the following words for "horse": equus, dextrarius, sonipes, cornipes. And these for ship: navis, ratis, linter, phaselus, carina, prora, puppis, chiula, liburna, myoparo.

The author's artistry is evident in his effective use of direct and indirect address. However, his descriptions, particularly of battles, are probably his strongest point, wherein he often uses figurative techniques. For example, he compares the flight of Milocrates' army from the Romans to a flock of sheep fleeing from the mouths of wolves; he compares the fight between Gawain and Gormundus to a clash between two wild boars. In epic fashion the author even likens the Gawain-Gormundus combat to the fight of the Lapithae with the Centaurs, and the exchange of blows to the Cyclopes' constant beating of their anvils with hammers. Moreover, one cannot help but notice the onomatopoeia in this battle description:

Nec mora, tonitrus belli intonuit, offensio  
 armorum perstrepuat, sonitus ictuum efferbuit et  
 ignita collisio terribiliter excaudit. . . .  
 Tinnitu horribili aer resultat et resonat, aereque  
 percusso montium concaua stridorem multiplicat.  
 (p. 83)

Without delay the thunder of war resounded, the clash of arms rang out, the thud of blows erupted loudly, and the fiery collision grew terribly hot. . . . The air reverberates and resounds with horrible ringing, and the hollows of the hills magnify the stridor of the percussion in the air.

Sometimes we find adages or proverbial statements:

Verum quia ad instar flamme amor quo magis  
tegitur, eo magis accenditur, indeque capit aug-  
mentum unde minui festinatur. . . . (p. 54)

But because, like a flame, the more love is  
covered up, the more it is kindled, and from then  
on takes its growth from that which hastens to  
diminish it. . . .

Oportunitas loci et temporis reddit latronem.  
(p. 56)

The opportunity of place and time makes the  
thief.

On the other hand, the author occasionally interjects  
unnecessary truisms: "Sed quoniam quod omnium latet  
noticiam difficile deprehenditur. . . ." (p. 56. "But  
because what escapes the notice of all is detected with  
difficulty. . . "). Or: "Mos quippe est quod in umbra  
constituti luci presentes clare aspiciant ipsique ab  
illis incircumspecti maneant." (p. 66. "For indeed  
it is customary that those situated in the shadows see  
clearly those present in the light, but themselves  
remain unseen by them.")

A statistical analysis of the idiosyncracies of  
the author's style remains to be done. Included in this  
analysis should be a study of the author's prose rhythm,  
particularly the rhythm of his sentence endings, where  
we generally find polysyllabic words. It remains to be  
determined who his model may have been and whether the  
rhythm is based on accent, as we would expect it to be  
in medieval times, or whether it is based on the quantity



of syllables (i.e. long and short), as was the practice in classical times. The reason one is led to suspect the latter kind of rhythm for sentence endings is that twice in De Ortu Walwanii the author breaks out in quantitative dactylic hexameter verse: once for three lines when Gawain begins the fight with the keepers of Milocrates' forest, and the second time for eight lines when the author describes the retreat of Milocrates' army.

In summary, then, the author's style is very ornate. In my opinion the rhetoric in places is a little too high-flown for the subject matter. However, the author was very proud of his style, as we can infer from the statement with which he closes De Ortu Walwanii:

. . . sicut discriminosius est bellum inire quam bellum referre sic operosius sit composito eloquencie stilo historiam exarare quam uulgari propalare sermone. (p. 93)

. . . just as it is more dangerous to engage in a war than to recount it, so it may be more difficult to compose a romance in a finished style of eloquence than to publish it in the vulgar tongue.

#### D. The Author's Purpose

In his closing statement which I quoted above, the author contrasts not merely the excellence of Latin composition with that in the vulgar tongue, but also a written work in a finished style of eloquence with a loose and extemporaneous oral recitation. The very nature of the author's style--his complicated sentence

structure and his immense vocabulary--indicates that he meant this romance to be read, not listened to, and that he meant it for a highly literate audience. Perhaps he wrote it as a rhetorical exercise.

Not only did he choose Gawain for a hero, but he chose to tell the traditional story of Gawain, as I pointed out in Chapters II and III. He makes Gawain the ideal knight, particularly the ideal warrior, but the tone of the romance all the way through indicates that he wanted to tell a story for the sake of a story, not to use the romance as a vehicle to teach the audience how an ideal knight should act. The entertainment quality is especially evident in the humor that shines through the romance, beginning when Gawain is on the barbarous isle, if not earlier. In Milocrates' palace Nabaor makes his antifeminist statement concerning the fickleness of women. Shortly thereafter the author labels as kingfishers the birds of prey which the centurion thinks he sees as a portent of a storm, whereas kingfishers not only are not vultures but are birds of good omen signifying calm seas. Then there is the recipe for Greek fire, a masterpiece of originality, but humorous not only in the nature of some of the ingredients, but in the instructions on how to obtain and prepare them for the mixture; moreover, there is the ridiculous idea of igniting the mixture in the cooking pot and of storing it aflame in the bags. Entertaining also is

the unbridled description of the fight between Gawain and Gormundus, where the author at times seems to get lost in his own rhetoric. Finally there is the humorous portrayal of King Arthur and Queen Gwendolen (see my discussion of the queen's taunt and the combat at the ford in Chapter III).

In short, the author's purpose was to tell the traditional story of Gawain in a very sophisticated prose style for the entertainment of educated readers.

#### E. A Note on the Translation

In translating De Ortu Walwanii I followed J. Douglas Bruce's second edition in Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii, Johns Hopkins University Press Series Hesperia, No. 2 (Baltimore, 1913). I have attempted to make my translation as literal as possible while still being readable. I have tried to preserve as best I could all aspects of the author's style: sentence structure, phraseology, emphasis, rich vocabulary, prose rhythm, and so forth. However, when one translates, he is forced to make changes with the result being that some of the flavor is lost from the original. Latin idioms, of course, had to be changed to English idioms. And while I translated some of the author's numerous ablative absolutes with the equivalent nominative absolutes in English, the majority I changed for the sake of a smooth reading to temporal or causal

dependent clauses, or to participial phrases in the active voice with the subject in agreement with the subject of the main clause. Because of the complicated Latin sentence structure, I occasionally found it necessary to use different punctuation than the text has or to divide a sentence into two or three English sentences. On the other hand, I preserved as much as possible the author's use of verb tenses, including his indiscriminate switch from the past to the present tense while narrating his story. Likewise, I retained most of his superabundant conjunctions, and tried where the sense allowed to translate each different Latin word by a different English word and still preserve the nuances of meaning. In spite of the changes that I made, I trust that enough of the author's style still shines through my translation to give the reader a taste of his artistry.

CHAPTER IV--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>All quotations and page numbers are from Bruce's second edition: Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii, Johns Hopkins University Press Series Hesperia, No. 2 (Baltimore, 1913).

<sup>2</sup>William A. Nitze, "The Character of Gauvain in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," Modern Philology, 50 (1953), 223-25.

<sup>3</sup>For Gawain's vindictiveness in romance literature, see B. J. Whiting, "Gawain: His Reputation, His Courtesy and His Appearance in Chaucer's Squire's Tale," Mediaeval Studies, 9 (1947), 204-15. See also Fanni Bogdanow, "The Character of Gauvain in the Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances," Medium Aevum, 27 (1958), 154-61.

<sup>4</sup>A good treatment of Gawain the lover can be found in B. J. Whiting, pp. 196-215, 226-29.

<sup>5</sup>Helaine Newstead, "The Besieged Ladies in Arthurian Romance," PMLA, 63 (1948), 803-30.

<sup>6</sup>See "Rome" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (London, 1970), XIX, 568-70.

<sup>7</sup>Mary G. Houston, Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration, 2nd ed. (London, 1947), pp. 87-92.

<sup>8</sup>"Circus," Encyclopaedia Britannica (London, 1970), V, 800. Ernest Nash, Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York, 1961), I, 232-38.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Loomis, "The Latin Romances," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 476 in continuation of note 6 from p. 475.

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae, ed. Acton Griscom (London, 1929), p. 291.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce, ed., Historia, p. lvi, n. 1. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe, Penguin Books (Baltimore, 1966), pp. 225-28. Or see Geoffrey's Historia, ed. Griscom, pp. 451-55.

<sup>12</sup> Two maps of the area from the years 1188 and 1200 show the town of Usk about ten miles north-northeast of Caerleon. These maps can be found in William Rees, An Historical Atlas of Wales from Early to Modern Times, 3rd ed. (London, 1967), Plates 37 and 38.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Loomis, Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes (New York, 1949), pp. 108-11.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce, ed. Historia, pp. lxiii-lxiv.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. x.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

DE ORTU WALWANII

## DE ORTU WALWANII

King Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur, had brought under his jurisdiction the kings of all the provinces bordering on Britain, and in making them payers of tribute, he detained in his court their sons, in part to serve as hostages, in part to be trained in the graces of courtly conduct and in military discipline. Being reared among them was Loth, the nephew of King Sichelinus of Norway, a young man wonderful to behold, endowed with strength of body and bravery of spirit. For these reasons he was held dearer than the rest of his peers both by King Uther and by his son Arthur, and continually was admitted to the privacy of the royal household itself. Now the king had a daughter called Anna,<sup>1</sup> of incomparable beauty, who stayed in an apartment with her mother the queen. When the above-named young man often played youthfully with her and rather secretly exchanged jesting words, they are seized by love, one for the other. Nevertheless, for a long time their mutual feelings are kept hidden from each other, both out of fear and out of modesty. But because, like a flame, the more love



s covered up, the more it is kindled,<sup>2</sup> and from then on  
akes its growth from that which hastens to diminish it,  
t last not able to contain in themselves the magnitude  
f their love, they disclose to each other what they  
ad conceived in their hearts. Therefore, fulfilling  
ach other's expressed wish, they give assent to pleasure,  
and immediately she began to increase in size having been  
ade pregnant. When the time of her delivery draws near,  
he lies down in a private chamber feigning sickness,  
aving only one handmaid cognizant of this thing. At  
ast the time had come when she should bring forth her  
oung, and she gave birth to a little boy with a fine  
pppearance. Now she had hired very wealthy men pursuing  
rade from lands beyond the sea, and had made the agree-  
ent with them under oath, that as soon as the baby  
ould come forth into the light of day, lest it be  
iscovered by anyone, they should take it away with them  
nto their own fatherland and diligently rear it all the  
ay to adulthood. Accordingly, without anyone knowing it,  
he merchants take the little baby when it is born, and  
long with it take an inestimable abundance of gold and  
ilver and expensive clothing which the mother had  
rought together for them. She also handed over a cloak  
f enormous value interwoven on all sides with precious  
tones set in gold, as well as a ring distinguished by  
n emerald stone which she had received from the king for



er keeping, and which he used to wear only on feast days. He also included a document signed with the king's seal, the text of which made known with certain evidence that the baby had been begotten by the nephew of the king of Norway and by Arthur's sister, that he had been named Hrafn by his mother and that on account of fear of the king he had been sent to foreign provinces. Employing a prudent plan, she was eager to furnish him with these things, namely the cloak and ring and document, for this reason, so that if he, by chance returning some time, should be rejected unrecognized by his parents, these things would provide a sign of certainty, and through their evidence he would come to the notice of his parents.

The merchants, therefore, taking up the little boy committed to their protection, go on board their ship, and giving the sails to the winds, they plough through the deep seas until at last on the eighth day they glide toward the shores of Gaul. Reaching the continent they put to land two miles from the city of Narbonne.<sup>3</sup> When they had landed there, wearied from the salt water and the surging of the sea, they all hurry to go on foot to the city--the boat having been left in the harbor--leaving behind only one boy to look after their possessions and the suckling lying in its cradle; certainly they had put to land under a steep cliff quite far from the city, and they trusted that no one would



approach the vessel in the meantime. But after they  
 had gone off, by chance a certain fisherman, Viamundus<sup>4</sup>  
 of that name, from a nearby village, a man poor in material  
 goods but honorable by birth and in character, was walk-  
 ing along the seashore with his spouse, as was his custom  
 every day, seeing if he could find any fish left on the  
 beach as a result of the receding of the tide, by the  
 means of which he gained a livelihood for himself. When  
 he noticed the anchored ship, he put other things aside  
 and hastily proceeded there. Going on board he found  
 no one except the boy who had been left to watch it and  
 he found him indeed sleeping. Now seeing the baby boy  
 with the distinguished appearance and the ship filled  
 with all its treasures without a guard, and considering  
 his own poverty which with fortune favoring him he  
 could relieve then and there--as it is said in the  
 proverb, the opportunity of place and time makes the  
 thief<sup>5</sup>--he snatched up whatever seemed to him to be of  
 greatest value of the gold and silver and the various  
 furnishings. Handing to his wife the infant as well as  
 the case standing near its head, in which were contained  
 the cloak and ring and document, he and his wife, laden  
 with riches, departed with haste to their home, with no  
 one observing the affair. Now the traders, after  
 returning a little later to the mooring place, discover  
 the harm done to them by the carrying off of their goods.



stricken with grief at the unexpected occurrence of this thing, and overwhelmed with the greatest sadness, they all began to sigh and weep, and they continued in their lamentation all day long, especially because of the abduction of the infant who, they well knew, had been entrusted to their guardian care. And soon they send capable messengers chosen for this task throughout the neighboring seacoast and countryside to diligently investigate the matter and to find out who had inflicted on them so great a loss. But because what escapes the notice of all is detected with difficulty, those who had been sent out, discovering nothing of certainty, returned rejected to the ship.

Now Viamundus, carrying away to his cottage the property stolen with the little infant, hid it; and with added care he reared him as a son because he lacked one of his own. Nevertheless he was afraid to bring forth into the open the wealth which he possessed in abundance--both because his poverty with which he was afflicted up to now was very well known, and because the investigation into the theft which he had committed was still being made--lest by the display of his riches the infamy of his perpetrated crime should become known. Now after seven years had passed, he decided to go to Rome, induced both by regret for his deed and because he did not doubt that he would be able to use his goods





reely there, considering that he would be in a strange region. Therefore when all the necessary things for the journey had been made ready and packed, he, accompanied by his wife and adopted son and family, set out on the journey with his entire fortune and in a short time arrived soundly and prosperously at the walls of Rome. Now after entering the city, he spent the entire day going through every part of it. He scrutinized the whole situation and shrewdly inquired into the state of the place, the customs of the citizens and the names of the senators and noblemen. Rome indeed at that time had been seized and overwhelmed by the violence of the barbarians, and had been left in almost utter destruction, the walls having been demolished, the buildings burned, citizens taken captive and dispersed or killed with various tortures.<sup>6</sup> But a new emperor had succeeded to the throne, who grieving over the ruin of the city was rebuilding what had been demolished, was reassembling the dispersed citizens, was ransoming those taken captive, making the greatest effort to bring the city back to its state of former prosperity. Perceiving these things and thinking that his venture would succeed for him according to his desire, Viamundus, a man of an astute disposition, delayed not at all, but fitted himself out in distinctive attire; he procured servants and as many slaves as possible from the neighboring towns, and great



uterments; and surrounded by the large crowd of attendants he proceeds through the middle of the city to the palace, becoming a spectacle for all both because of his splendid trappings and because of the multitude of his retinue; and coming to the emperor he is honorably received. Engaging at length in a conversation with him, C. Iulius Iulius said that he was descended from a most noble family of Romans and that while abiding in parts of Gaul he had the leadership of the people; but hearing about the devastation and the misfortune of the City of Rome, he hastened here to augment the resources of the citizens; and he humbly entreated the emperor to give him together with his household a place to live in the city. Now the emperor, appraising and concluding him to be of no mean family because of his venerable grey hair along with the elegance of his many possessions as well as the large number of his attendants, thanks him for coming to him, and assures him that he would present him with manifold public honors if he should abide in the city. And he gave him a marble residence of wondrous construction consisting of marvelous buildings in front of the gates of his own palace, which residence is averred to have once belonged to Scipio Africanus.<sup>7</sup> In addition, he bestowed upon him towns, vineyards and arable lands outside the city to help him pay for his expenses.



Therefore having received the favors of such great fortune beyond all expectation, Viamundus conducted himself so agreeably and so becomingly and nobly that he converted the emperor, the senate and the people to an admiration of him, and he drew the emotions of all to love him; and the celebrated story of his largess and munificence was spread throughout the whole city privately as well as publicly; in fact there was an assembly of the senators and noblemen of Rome every day at his home, and even youths clad in the praetexta<sup>8</sup> and a crowd of knights from the imperial court congregated there on account of the charm of the little boy, all whom Viamundus used to honor with various delights, sumptuous feasts and most lavish gifts. Meanwhile as the boy was growing in age, he was growing also in every of spirit and fitness of body, and being an imitator of the man who was believed to be his own father, was striving for discretion, courtesy and prowess. himself also frequented the palace and was regarded among the subjects as a familiar of the sovereign. Only there flourished in him certain innate virtues which he turned and attracted the minds of those giving him to a liking of him. He was, to be sure, endowed with a tall and well-formed stature, an elegant bearing, a handsome face, and enormous strength. And he had just reached his twelfth year of age when



Viamundus lay down in bed stricken with a serious illness. When Viamundus was growing more feeble and discerned that the end of life was imminent for him, through the chiefs of the state he most earnestly implored the emperor and Pope Sulpicius,<sup>9</sup> who at that time was presiding over the Apostolic See, to deign to come to him for a conference. Now not at all refusing the pleas of so great a man, whom they loved not a little on account of the nobility of his character, they with full affection came to him, taking the most distinguished men of the state along with them. When they arrived, Viamundus first rendered thanks owed for the favors they had bestowed on him; then calling them together in private he revealed the circumstances of his earlier life, how by the chance of such great riches he had attained his prominence and how he had found the boy whom he was rearing; and he revealed in sequence the course of his entire life. And he added, saying to the emperor: "I have resolved very often in my wavering mind to make this known to your highness, but always waiting for the opportune time I have put it off until the present. But now, since my intimate fate is pressing upon me, I am compelled to confess these things. Granted that what I request could be justly denied to a man of servile condition by the word of the entire world, yet I think that you, mindful of your friendship and familiarity of which you have





seemed me worthy, will not refuse me my petition. It is indeed on account of what I am about to ask that I have summoned you: this boy whom I have raised as a son and along with whom this entire abundance of things has befallen me, I ask that you promise to commit him to your majesty's protection, training him for the order of knighthood while he is still a youth. You should realize that he is truly the nephew of Arthur, the king of Britain"--for by now he had received the kingdom, his father having died<sup>10</sup>--"concerning whom the report of such great prowess flies everywhere; and I do not doubt that the boy is not about to degenerate from the nobility of his parents. Nevertheless I advise that this thing be kept secret from everyone and from the boy himself, and let not even his name be disclosed until he be recognized by his parents, since the document which bears witness to his lineage forbids this also. But when he will have blossomed into manhood, I pray let him be sent back with your letters and with the certain evidence of his parentage, which I regard as credible enough." And summoning the boy who up to this time had been called Boy Without a Name<sup>11</sup> since he was not known by the name he was assigned, Viamundus, embracing the emperor's feet, with a suppliant prayer and with the most earnest entreaties commended the boy to his protection. And bidding that the coffer be



brought forward which contained the testimonies given by the mother, Viamundus showed them to the emperor. When he had seen them, the emperor exalted the man with great praise for the generosity he had displayed with regard to the boy, then received the boy with open arms, promising that he would satisfy Viamundus' will in all things. And so Viamundus, having obtained in accordance with his wish what he had very earnestly striven after, dies happily, with the emperor sitting at his side; and with the very great lamentation of all he is buried amid the tombs of noble men. A monument of marvelous workmanship is constructed above him by the emperor.

Now after the decease of Viamundus, Boy Without Name is brought to the palace by the order of the sovereign, and counted among the boys belonging to the royal court. Indeed, after three years had passed--that is to say, in his fifteenth year of age--because his prowess required it, he is fitted out with arms by the emperor. Out of his kindness the emperor conferred knighthood on him and twenty other youths. Then Boy Without a Name went forth with the other newly made knights and Roman youths to the circus where the tournaments were accustomed to be held. With what great valor Boy Without a Name conducted himself that day! How strenuously he acted! The applause honoring him from all the bystanders at the circus was in testimony of it.



indeed in that spectacle no one could withstand him, no one could be proven equal to his strength, but whoever was in his way he threw down in the mutual encounter. For this reason, after the tourney was celebrated, he was adorned with the golden crown which the monarch had proposed for the victor, and with a procession attending him with praises, he is led into the presence of the emperor. Lauding him not a little for his singular prowess, the emperor gave him permission to demand the reward of any gift he might wish from him. But Boy without a Name said, "I desire that your munificence confer on me nothing else, O Emperor, save only that it grant me the first single combat which you must engage in against any of your enemies." The emperor nodded in approval and established him in the first order of knights. Now on the first day that he had been received into knighthood, he provided himself with a purple tunic, and drawing it over his armor as he was about to proceed to the aforementioned knightly contest, he called it his surcoat for his armor.<sup>12</sup> When he was asked by the knights why he had put it on over his armor--for never before had anyone, covered with armor, worn a tunic of this kind--he responded that he was employing the surcoat as an adornment for his armor. At which response the entire host shouted out to him: "The new knight with the surcoat for his armor! The new knight with the



surcoat for his armor!" And from then on this name remained with him: "The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor."<sup>13</sup> After being advanced with very high honor by the emperor, he always strove for higher honors for valor and prowess, and to him in every combat, in every contest, there were ascribed a famous name and singular courage.

While these things are taking place in Rome, it happens that a war arises between the king of the Persians and the Christians abiding in Jerusalem. The day predetermined for battle had come, and the battle arrays of both sides standing around in close formation with their tremendous forces of both cavalrymen and foot-soldiers provided a spectacle of terror for each other, and with their ranks separated they were drawing near step by step for the fight. Then with trumpets sounding, bowstrings stretched and spears raised, the captains were hastening to join in hand to hand combat, when men on both sides more mature in age and judgment considering that a conflict involving such a great multitude and such great power could not be without the greatest loss, proceed to the middle, prevent a first attack and arrange for legates to mutually negotiate a condition for peace. Now after holding negotiations for quite a long time, they at last collectively reached agreement in this, that one man should be chosen from each side for a duel,





and that to whomever the victory should fall, to that side should also go dominion over the things about which they were fighting. Nevertheless, because the Jerusalem-ites did not dare to accede to this without the consent of Caesar under whose sovereignty they lived, they asked that a truce be granted to them until they should send a legation to Caesar concerning this matter and learn his will; they swore by an oath that they were inclined in mind to this covenant if it should be agreed to by him. Therefore when the truce is arranged, they choose those who should discharge this mission, and putting all delay aside, they send off those chosen, instructing them that if they should ascertain that Caesar not at all refuses what they ask, they should also beseech him for a man capable of the proposed contest. The envoys, then, hastening their journey come to the emperor, and after being led into the senate pleaded their cause in a most eloquent way. Now the emperor, who had entered upon a council concerning the things reported, determined that their petition must be granted, but he was doubtful about whom he should send back with them. And while the discussion was being drawn out with various opinions, the matter is brought to the attention of the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor. He delayed not at all, but assuming boldness, rushed into the presence of the emperor, saying: "O Emperor, I bid you be mindful of



your munificence through which at my asking you graciously vouchsafed to me when chosen for knighthood that you would allow me the first single combat which would be necessary for you to enter upon against your enemies. Behold a war is being declared by the heathens not only against you and the Roman people, but also against the Christian faith. I pray your highness to grant me that which you have agreed to, so that I may both realize the fulfillment of your pledge and avenge the dignity of the Roman people and the practice of religion." Now although the emperor was extremely reluctant to send away from himself such a doughty knight and friend and to destine him to such great danger, nevertheless because his promise required this and because he did not know anyone more capable of such a task--especially since he knew that the strength and bravery of all his troops was to be measured by the courage of him who was to be sent, and that condemnation and shame awaited him if the champion should be defeated, but profit and glory if he should win--he decreed this to come to pass with a resolution of the senate.

And so the emperor arranges for him together with the legates to be well and properly fitted out and reinforced with arms--a hundred knights with one centurion being assigned to him over and above--in order that he might both proceed honorably and, if any adversity should befall him through such great expanses of lands and sea,



might escape it with their support. And with no delay, they enter upon their journey, and coming to the Adriatic Sea go on board ships. Now sailing with them were sixteen vessels, some of which merchants, others of which those hastening to the holy places, had assembled in their company on account of the fierceness of the pirates who were roaming through the compass of the sea. When these ships then are joined together, they leave port and are borne into the deep. After being tossed all about by violent waves for twenty-five days, during which time they could neither seek port nor steer a straight course because of storms rising up on all sides, and after being driven around in great winding routes, they put to land at a certain island belonging to a barbarous people. The inhabitants of this island were of such savageness that they spared no sex, no age; but they tormented with equal punishment guilty and innocent people coming from a foreign nation. For that reason they were sought out by no one pursuing trade, but were shunned by every people to whom the infamy of such great wickedness had become known, and they remained in the world as if situated outside it, segregated from the fellowship of all men. For they are said to eat, and immoderately so, the flesh of all beasts and birds, to be subject to pleasure to the extent indeed that neither fathers know their children nor do children know by whom



they were begotten. Their stature does not exceed the measure of three cubits,<sup>14</sup> and their lifetime extends to their fiftieth year. Rarely does anyone depart from life before his tenth year, nor does anyone who survives pass beyond his fiftieth year. Well supplied with clothing and food, accustomed to hardships, abounding in riches, they are known to be fecund in the propagation of offspring.

Indeed already the report had been spread abroad through all the territories of the pagans that a knight sent by the emperor was coming for the duel that had been arranged, and that no one could endure an encounter with him. For that reason they secretly sent word to all the neighboring islands under their jurisdiction in the Aegean Sea, which he was about to cross, to observe with a continuous watch the ports and shores, and, if by chance he should put to land, to destroy him, lest he be able to appear on the established day. Moreover, they stationed pirates in diverse places to be on the lookout over the wide expanses of the sea, so that if the Romans should escape unharmed from those watching their harbors, they would be intercepted unexpectedly by those who were constantly running to and fro through the sea.

Now at that time there reigned on that island a certain man called Milocrates,<sup>15</sup> an enemy of the Roman people, who upon seizing and abducting the emperor's





niece whom the emperor had given to the king of Illyria,<sup>16</sup> had taken possession of that island by force. When the plans for ambush had been made known to Milocrates as well as to others, he fortified with knights and guards the cities and towns--both those which lay on the sea and those near which he had ascertained were harbors suitable for landing--in order that on the one hand the former might attack the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor sailing by, or on the other hand the latter might suddenly assail the Romans putting to land.

Now the shores on which the Romans had landed were surrounded all about with woods, not too abundant however in wild animals, and because of their scarcity they were being preserved rather strictly and sedulously from the inhabitants and from outsiders coming in; the eating of the animals was lawful for no one to enjoy except the king and his nobles.

When the aforementioned centurion reached this island with his fleet, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, with a few men accompanying him, disembarked from the ship and went to the forest to hunt. After slaying six stags, he had begun to chase the seventh with hounds uncoupled, when behold a keeper of the woods stationed in the interior of the forest heard the barking of the hounds and the sounding of trumpets. He summons his companions, into whose charge together with him the



king had committed the forest for protection, and he bids them to take up arms. The twenty knights who were watching over it were set in different places, and without their permission it was unsafe for anyone to enter. At the command they take up arms and run to meet the hunters who had already taken game. They ask the Romans by whose permission they are plundering the royal woods, to enter which was not lawful for anyone even on a peaceful walk. The Romans are ordered to lay down their arms and, for the rashness which they had perpetrated, to go to the king to submit to his judgment. Against this the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor responded: "The one who gave us permission to come here also gave us permission to seize whatever things are necessary for us, and we will not lay down our weapons unless they be buried in your guts."

He had spoken and brandishing javelins with his powerful arm, showered hard iron into the swollen throat of the one threatening and harshly checked his ready speech.<sup>17</sup>

Now the wounded keeper of the woods let out a groan, but yet became more angry as a result of the pain itself, and with all his effort drew the missile out of his wound and sent it back toward the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, but it travelled astray away from the Knight and became infixed in an oak tree. With



no delay the others from both sides run together, and joining their hands in combat, at one moment they inflict blows on one another at close range; at another moment they contend at a distance by the hurling of spears. There were more men on the side of the Knight, but without armor; while the adversaries had the protection of all kinds of armor. But when he saw his own men yielding to the enemies, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor rushed with drawn sword upon their leader, struck him down to the ground, and grabbing the nosepiece of his helmet, dragged him over to his fellow Romans and deprived him of his life together with his armor. After putting on the armor and after encouraging his own troops, he assailed the enemies and alone slew thirteen men before the rest were put to flight. Then a band of knights pursues those fleeing through the remote parts of the forest, and they send straight to Tartarus all whom they are able to overtake. Only one man is left surviving this slaughter to bear the news of this great disaster. Concealing himself in the density of the bushes, he lay hidden until the enemy force breaking ranks ceased following after him. When the force withdrew, he very quickly got up, went to the king and reported to him what had happened.

Now King Milocrates at that time was staying in a nearby city which he had founded in a most delightful



place three miles from the sea. After learning about the coming of the enemies as well as the annihilation of his own knights, he at once sent out messengers to command the nobles of the entire province to come together as soon as possible with as large a force as they could avail themselves of. Now just as it had been commanded in regard to both time and place, they arrive with a collected multitude. Those arriving were encamped throughout the neighboring districts because the above-mentioned city was not able to contain them. But King Milocrates deliberated with their leaders as to what should be done.

Meanwhile the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, having utterly defeated the enemies, marches back to the ships, and the whole army, after being rewarded with the spoils taken, congratulates him for his victory. Now on the third day they tried to proceed on the journey that they had begun, but since high winds hindered them, they were forced to tarry in that place. Therefore the centurion, very much discouraged because of this, assembles the leaders of the military and seeks counsel from them concerning what should be done. For he affirmed that the king of that island and his nobles were now stirred up against them on account of the destruction of their own men, and that they had already conspired to go crush the Romans in vengeance for those slain unless the Romans had hurried too quickly to depart.





he centurion said, moreover, that with the wind driving them back, they could not sail away from there, nor could remaining in that place be safe, since neither did they have a sufficient number of knights to repel the multitude of the enemies, nor would their stores supply their necessities for so long a time. "Therefore it is necessary," he said, "that someone of us go to investigate the strengths and plans of the adversaries in order that, knowing those things which are being done by them, we may more advantageously provide for what we should do."

The words of the commander find favor, and two men from among all of them are chosen to carry out this business, one of whom was the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, and the other, called Odabel,<sup>18</sup> was a relative of the centurion; they were recognized before the others as being prudent and cautious in doubtful situations, and brave and quick to act in adverse situations. Covered with armor these men set out on their appointed journey and direct their course through the woods to the city. At the entrance of this forest an enormous wild boar runs toward them, its neck covered with bristles like little spears, its gaping jaws fortified with curved tusks. With flashes of fire bursting forth from its mouth and with foam flowing all over its shoulders, it charged in that sidelong



tack. Now after seeing the boar, the Knight with the surcoat for his armor jumped down from his noisy-footed steed, and brandishing his splendid hunting spear with his right hand he rushed on foot upon the boar before he had the opportunity of attacking him. The point of the spear that had been thrust into its forehead between the eyebrows, running through other parts, made its exit through the flank. And yet it did not immediately tumble to the ground, but seemed to have conceived a rage together with the wound it received so that, although its strength for the most part had run out from blood being lost, yet with as much strength as the boar was afforded, it assailed him with its tusk. But as soon as the Knight with the Surcoat for his armor caught the blow with his shield that he had placed opposite it, he with sword unsheathed cut off the head of the one raging at him and left the boar wallowing in its own blood. On his behalf his armor-bearer took the boar back to the centurion after it had been placed on a horse, and returning at a quickened pace he overtook the Knight at the gates of the city at midday.

Now after marching into the city they went to the palace, and mingling with the others they fared among the royal company as if they were part of it. For indeed the innumerable crowd tolerated them whose identity had not been found out; moreover, it turned



ut for their safety that they were not ignorant of the  
rt of speaking the language of that country. And so,  
andering in every direction throughout the city and its  
istricts, they investigated the quality and number of  
the military--both what was actually present and what  
they had heard was about to come; truly by no means had  
the entire army already come together. For indeed on  
the day before, King Milocrates had sent certain men to  
spy on the fleet of the Romans; and tracing their steps  
back to the town they had put him in great terror,  
attesting that they had found so great a multitude of  
armed men as his island of defenseless men had never  
contained. Actually, the spies had been captured by the  
centurion, who threatening them with death then and there,  
had forced them to promise by an oath to report such  
information. Moreover, in order that he might keep them  
quite faithful to him, he lavished on them very many  
gifts before he sent them back to their own people; for  
this reason King Milocrates was afraid to go attack the  
fleet except with a strong force. Now through legates  
he had summoned his brother, Buzafarnan<sup>19</sup> by name, who  
ruled neighboring kingdoms, to bring together for him  
in his such great need as many troops as he could as  
quickly as possible. While King Milocrates was awaiting  
his arrival, the business of war was delayed. Now on  
the very day that the Knight with the Surcoat for his



Armor had come to the city, King Milocrates by chance had called a meeting of his barons to inquire from them what should be done in the pressing circumstances. In this council it was decided by all that upon the arrival of his brother King Buzarfarnan, the army should be divided into two parts, one of which should approach the adversaries by sea, the other by land, so that no avenue of escape would be available. The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, however, sitting back unrecognized among them, was listening with intent ear to every single thing that was being said, was noting in his remembering mind the things that he heard.

And now Phoebus had set and King Milocrates was hastening to dinner. Conducting himself in his company is the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor; while the Knight's companions<sup>20</sup> wait outside for him, he steps into the palace and as the others are reclining at table, he with no one knowing it--certainly the rather late hour had diminished their vision, but no one thought any such thing could happen--steals into the chamber where the niece of the emperor, that is to say the queen whom King Milocrates as we mentioned above had kidnapped from her lawful husband, was sitting with only her female servants. Now he began to weigh carefully by himself what he should do, and to look forward with the careful eye of his mind to whatever misfortune could befall him.





er if, as he had proposed, lying hidden in the apartment  
 e should inflict death on the king asleep, he feared  
 at he himself would be caught and suffer the same pun-  
 shment. If, on the other hand, he should go back with  
 o act of prowess having been performed, he would be  
 regarded surely as an inept and cowardly man. While he  
 was pondering over these things by himself, a certain  
 knight named Nab[a]or<sup>21</sup>--one of those in fact whom the  
 king had recently sent to spy on the centurion's fleet--  
 was coming to the queen on orders of the king. The  
 Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor caught sight of  
 him but was not noticed by him; for indeed it is cus-  
 tomary that those situated in the shadows see clearly  
 those present in the light, but themselves remain unseen  
 by them. In any case, the Knight with the Surcoat for  
 his Armor had formed a lasting friendship with this man  
 while with the other spies he was being held captive by  
 the centurion, and the Knight had handed over to him  
 a ring together with a purple cloak in memory of himself.  
 After seeing Nabaor, therefore, the Knight takes courage  
 because of their friendship. Quietly calling him over  
 to himself he embraces Nabaor, makes known the reason  
 for his coming, and after mentioning in advance certain  
 ways by which he would undertake to reward him, asks  
 that his goodwill--when he perceives that Nabaor is  
 favorably inclined toward him, deceit being far



moved--become of help to him in perpetrating those things which he had planned to do.

Now Nabaor is very much surprised at his presence and when he had learned why the Knight had come, rejoiced that he had found the opportunity of repaying his generosity. Therefore, after leading the Knight into a private apartment, he said: "O my very dear friend! What you are endeavoring to do is greater than your ability and should not be attempted by your power alone. For indeed thirty strong men surround the king, ever guarding his repose, so that access to him cannot be had even by his familiars until the day dawns. Besides, I hope you realize that on most occasions it is necessary to use discretion rather than force, because even in the use of force what is desired is accomplished successfully many times through discretion, and without it never does one using force meet success in his undertaking. Now I am being your guide, go ahead with your design, but let me teach you in what way it may be set in motion. The queen is very much taken with love for you and she most ardently desires either to speak with you or to make your acquaintance through intermediaries. For she quite often has questioned me returning from my mission as a spy as to what appearance and stature you have; and answering that you are incomparable in both, I kindled her heart with love for you, so that she is



concerned more about your welfare than about the king's. Although there is no doubt that the queen of this land is raised up by King Milocrates to the greatest heights of honor and glory, yet because it has not escaped her mind that she had been seized from her nuptial bed according to the law of the robber, the dishonor of her captivity ever torments her, and she would prefer to live elsewhere as a free-woman with a poor man than to live here as a captive maintained with a whole array of material things. Moreover, hearing that you, who have been appointed by the emperor for the agreed-upon contest by reason of your innate and incomparable prowess, have put to land here, she is trying with all her effort, striving with all her might to be able to speak with you now. For indeed she hopes, if she can attract your notice, that through your valor and fortitude she may be freed from the bond of captivity and restored to her husband, to whom, it is known, she had been given with a dowry by the emperor. May you realize beyond a doubt that she will do her best with all discretion and ability, will attend to it with all sagacity to augment your power and strength and to bring it about to prevail against King Milocrates. Nevertheless, because the mind of woman is marked by fickleness and is bent toward any motions whatever of inconstancy more quickly than the wind, it must first be shrewdly tested



where her feelings lie. If she should discover that you are present, neither fear of the king nor disgrace to her good name would prevent her from conversing with you. Therefore I shall go to her to bear the mandates of the king to her, and carefully making mention of you among other things, I shall find out on what side her will is inclined. You, I pray, in the meantime wait here in hiding for the outcome of the matter."

So Nabaor went to the queen; as they engaged in various discussions, at last they had conversation concerning the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor. When Nabaor exalted him with great praise for the wondrous feats performed by him, the queen said: "O happy me! If only I were really able to lay down the complaint of my misery before so gallant a man! If not for any other reason, at least out of friendship for the emperor, whose niece I am and whose knight he himself is, he would snatch me away from the tyranny of Milocrates! Therefore, if I should find anyone faithful, I would like to send a messenger to the Knight to see if in any way the opportunity might be afforded us to get together and talk."

Now Nabaor, with whom she was speaking, was one of those whom together with her King Milocrates had committed to the bond of servitude. For this reason, she used to entrust to him quite safely the secrets of





her mind, so that he was aware of her private feelings. He answered her: "You can believe, O Queen, that there will be no impediment to your wishes if only your desire is such; nor will there be any need for a messenger; merely let deceit be lacking; simply let your will be in accordance with your words and he will be present here according to your wish whom up to now you seemingly have longed to see."

Now after she swore to this--that she wished it would happen more earnestly than she dared to profess--Nabaor led the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor into her presence and made known to her the reason for which he had come. Again, as was mentioned above, the Knight stood forth manly in stature, handsome in appearance, so that he converted to himself the favor of those beholding him by reason of their admiration of his handsomeness. Greeting him on entering the queen bade him sit down, and after gazing upon him intently for a long time, at length with tears pouring out, she uttered sighs from the bottom of her heart and revealed the troubles with which she was burdened, adding that he was able, if he were willing, to bring about for her a remedy for such great misfortunes. And he: "If the ability accompanied my willingness, certainly there would be no delay in the doing of your will. But it is evident that the king is superior to us in military number and strength, and



for this reason it is uncertain what the result of a war would be for us. Wherefore if you are aware of anything which could succeed in behalf of your wishes, which could conclude the desired business with a prosperous ending, make it known and you will not find me reluctant or slow to carry it out."

While the queen, keeping silent for a little while, was thinking what she might say to these things, Nabaor said: "It is not at all unknown to you, O Queen, that the king is gathering an army to fight against the Romans, during the assembling of which I see the greatest opportunity for carrying out a plan. For you will be able, if you put yourself in the Knight's great care, both to remove him together with his companions from the impending danger and to bring your desire to a happy fulfillment. Indeed the mind of the king, occupied with the business of war, will be very little concerned about other things. Therefore send word to the centurion through the Knight to dispatch hither on the next day forty men trained in arms secretly through the shaded parts of the forest, so that on the following day, as the king goes into battle against the centurion, the forty men may take possession of the city by your handing it over to them, which city kindled with fire would provide a horrible spectacle for the king and his men, as well as an incentive for victory for the Romans."



Indeed with many prayers she begs the Knight to go through with what was suggested. In addition, she presented to him the king's sword as well as his golden armor, for it had been ordained by fate that the king would be despoiled of his royal crown, conquered by him who should first wear them besides himself. Moreover, she heaped upon him copious gifts of gold and silver and gems of great value, and over and above pledged him her friendship. When these things were done, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor hastily returns to his companions, and leading them from the city he reached the centurion at daybreak; then, showing the gifts bestowed upon himself, he made known what he had done, seen and heard.

The centurion, exhilarated more than can be believed with the hope of victory, ordered that the knights be chosen who were to be sent to the queen. Now he placed his relative Odabel in command over those chosen and, after exhorting him to lead cautiously and prudently those entrusted to him, sent him forth. Going therefore, they arrived on the next day toward evening at the vineyard which was bordering on the royal palace. They were let into it by Nabaor according to the queen's order and lay hidden in it the whole night.

In the morning as it grows light, King Milocrates marches out of the city with his army to do battle with



the centurion. Now earlier he had sent a major part of his forces in a fleet, with his brother as leader, to assail the enemies from the rear, so that surrounded with warfare on both sides the Romans would yield to him more quickly. But because their plan was well known, the centurion had positioned his ships on the shore around the camp so that, if need be, they would also serve as a fortification for those fleeing back to them. He himself both leads the military out of the camp which had been set up in a secure place not far from the sea, and divides the knights into five units,<sup>22</sup> the middle one of which he himself commands. He was overtly marching over against the king, whom a battle-array of 15,000 armed men accompanied. But although the king was superior in number and strength of soldiery, yet he did not at all entertain the hope of victory, because of course his armor had been stolen on which he knew the protection of himself and his kingdom depended. When he, about to go into battle, asked for this armor and could by no means find it, all hope of success fell from his mind, nor did he discover that the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor had it until, as he was about to fight, he espied him dressed in it on the battlefield. Exceedingly terrified at the sight of this, he shuddered because reasoning truly he was extremely afraid of that which afterwards came to pass





for him. Yet he was not able to leave off from what had been begun since he saw that either to die laudably or to conquer bravely was necessary for his glory.

So the blasting of trumpets resounded on both sides, by which both boldness for spirits and a sign for attacking the enemies are wont to be united. And the company soldiers had already begun to clash when behold smoke rising up in the air from the city proclaimed by its own evidence what was happening there. For indeed as soon as the king hurrying for the fight marched out of the city, those who were waiting in ambush immediately had risen up, brought it under their power, and setting fire to it had kindled its suburbs. As the blaze reached greater heights, the destruction of the city was evident now indeed to the citizens stationed quite far away, especially when sparks driven by the south wind were flying before the faces of those fighting. The heart of the king, therefore, was very afraid in the presence of imminent disaster, and postponing the contest which had been begun, he hastened to go rescue the city.

You could discern far and wide that battle-lines were being broken, that hands were emptied of their weapons, and that men were bent on flight. They enter a thousand ways, yet there is not one way for two men; thus the enemies flee, just as sheep shun the mouths



of dogs. The other side pursues and presses upon those fleeing, and those whom they overtake they send to destruction equally. Part of the enemy is felled by jagged rocks, part falls down having been slain; the part which suffers neither fate experiences cruel bonds.<sup>23</sup>

Now the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, observing the wedge-formations of the enemies being suddenly broken up and put to flight, pursues them with his soldiery grouped closely together and advances into their midst with the greatest slaughter. Indeed not only had the blaze consuming the buildings of the city terrified the enemies, but also the flight itself upon which they had entered had rendered them completely ineffective in mind and hand. Scattered therefore over the slopes of the hills and through the remote parts of the forests, like a flock of sheep beset by the fury of wolves, they were heading for the city walls and without interruption were being slain by the swords of those chasing them. The knights, moreover, who had set fire to the outskirts of the city, were meeting those fleeing and were keeping them away from the walls; turning them back to the battlefield they forced them to fall back into the hands of those whom they were fleeing. A horrible massacre was being made from both sides, and the enemies were hampered by their own great number so that they were held incapable either of flight or of



their own defense. Without a protector they were thrown into confusion, like a defenseless crowd, and no one deigned to give his right hand to anyone asking for it.

However, at length when King Milocrates saw that he was surrounded on all sides by enemies, he reckoned that it would be an infamous thing for him if he should die without having performed an illustrious deed. Therefore he unites his scattered men into a wedge-formation and courageously assailing those pressing upon him, in the first encounter checks the assault of the adversaries and compels them to yield to him. Slaying as many of them as possible with his own right hand, he was putting the rest to flight, until the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, observing his fellow knights being badly torn, puts his horse to a gallop and rides to meet Milocrates. The king boldly takes on the one coming; when they clash, each is thrown down from his horse by the other. But the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, rising more quickly, rushes with drawn sword at the king now trying to get up, and he would have inflicted a lethal wound if the blow had not been brought to naught by a shield thrown in the way. Although no great injury resulted from the blow, nevertheless faintness came over Milocrates' brain so that after falling back he lay still for a moment like a man asleep. With sword eager to strike him a second time, the doughty

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young man, the nephew of King Arthur, rushes at him again, but a man on horseback threatening with mouth and hand assails the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor from the left. However, the Knight on foot and protected with a shield warded off his attacks from himself, and letting fly from a bowstring an arrow which by good fortune had been handed to him, neither shield nor steel hauberk prevented the arrow from piercing right through the saddlebow with its force and, having been received under the stomach, right through him who was threatening greater things.

After that man, then, had been laid prostrate, the Knight again sought out the king, but was taken on by him with greater boldness than he had expected. For indeed as the king was recovering his breath, shame and anger had furnished him strength, bringing back before the eyes of his mind the memory of his former dignity and prowess; and making him feel that he must by no means suffer punishment like some plebeian, this shame and anger had spurred him on to go avenge himself on his enemies, especially since no other hope for his deliverance was at hand than for himself to make an effort lest pleasant victory pass from himself to his enemies. Therefore he, striking first, assailed the approaching Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor and with his sword inflicted a wound on his forehead which





was unprotected by the helmet, and if the nosepiece below which projects from the helmet had not served as a guard, he would have caused death together with the wound. Now the injured Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor becomes violent in mind and, fearing that his sight would be impaired by the blood flowing down, attacks the king to exact punishment for the injury done by him, and bringing down his sword in a sidelong swipe he cuts off Milocrates' head together with his right arm. As the king dies, those who had stood firm by him slip away in flight, in which rested their only hope for safety. But the centurion, wishing to spare the multitude, commands that a signal be given with a trumpet to his knights not to pursue those fleeing, he knowing that, their leader having been overthrown, those who were subordinate would yield to himself without a battle. Then after collecting the spoils of the enemies, the Romans march into the city in a victory procession, and a triumphal arch is raised for them.<sup>24</sup> The queen, the niece of the emperor, coming out to meet them, leads them into the royal palace and with all diligence provides refreshment to them very fatigued from the war. She commands that burial be given to those killed, that medical care be given to the wounded, and she showed herself to be most munificent to all and remunerated all with deserved rewards.

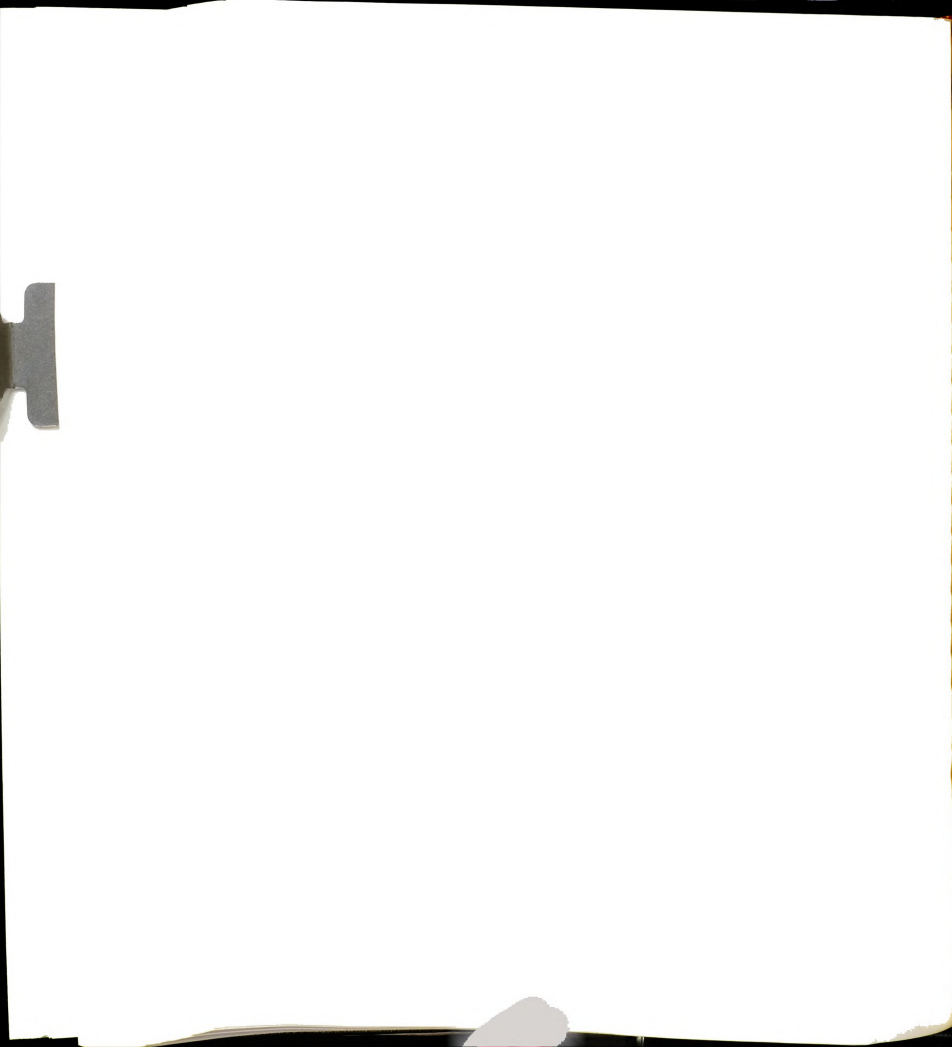
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Now the centurion, sojourning on this island for fifteen days, gave the country over to his army for plundering and consigned the nobles and magistrates to barred wagons because they had conspired with the enemy of the Roman people, and he punished the people with a heavy assessment of tribute. Then after leaving a part of the military there for safeguarding the island; and after sending the queen, the niece of the emperor, back in the company of chosen men to her lawful husband, the king of Illyria, from whom she had been seized by force; the centurion took two hundred knights of that province with him, and together with his companions climbed aboard the refitted ships to fulfill the mission which he had begun. When the centurion had completed a day's journey over the waves of the sea, behold King Milocrates' brother whose great power had remained intact met him with no very small fleet. He had been sent by King Milocrates, as was mentioned above, before the war was waged, and was to besiege the centurion's fleet, so that surrounded on both sides--both on land and on sea--refuge would be shut off for him. But coming to the armada--that is, to the supposed location of the centurion's ships--he had found neither ships nor army. To be sure, the centurion had reinforced his camp a little farther off--away from the sea--by positioning those vessels all around on the outside as a fortification for himself.



Now King Egesarius--for thus was the brother of King Milocrates called--thinking that the Romans had fled, turned his oarsmen around, and was conveyed back out into the deep sea, where he was tossed about for three days by violent waves. While he was trying to reseek a harbor, he was driven away to regions distant by a five days' journey as a result of storms raging on all sides. But now the wind blowing more gently, he was returning and in the middle of the sea encounters the fleet of the centurion.

Now by chance the centurion himself, with the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor at his side, was standing in the tower which had been erected as a bulwark on the stern. Scanning widely with his sight the expanses of the sea, at first he descried just the figures, built in the shape of a cock or some other thing, which are attached to the masts to determine which way the vessel is being driven by the wind. For indeed to whichever part of the world the weather's blowing is directed, they always stand opposite it with their front facing it. Therefore thinking that these standards flying on the masts, while they were being propelled now higher now lower by the driving breeze, are kingfishers, he calls the ship's pilot and says: "Listen, in my opinion a mighty tempest is threatening us. For indeed look how those birds flapping their



wings are directing their courses in circles through the air, as if prescient of future events they are foretasting their joys; they signify that our bodies are about to be food for their crop; indeed with a storm threatening, birds of this kind are accustomed to make frequent flights now in a flock now separately by circling around those rowing, and their motions are wont to portend future disaster."<sup>25</sup>

Now the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor standing beside him and recognizing the situation as it was, said: "Sir, your opinion is mistaken. For certainly they are not birds which you think you discern, but images affixed to the tops of masts. And you should realize beyond a doubt that the enemy fleet is approaching, the one sent to proceed against us a long time ago by the king subjugated by your forces. Perhaps indeed with some tempest driving them, they were forced to seek strange territory, which was the reason for their delay up to the present time. But now with the breeze favoring their wishes, they are returning. Command the knights, therefore, to take up arms lest our adversaries find us unprepared."

Therefore at the command of the centurion those who were on that ship arm themselves, and trumpeters give signals to the other vessels to do the same--for there were thirty: the fifteen, that is, which he had





brought there, and just as many from the subjugated island which he had added to the former. They are arranged to attack the enemies from the front, from the right and from the left, and also to surround them by lying in ambush as it were. Now five of the ships he had were furnished with rostra, in the first of which he himself was, and these ships he placed in the front in order to suddenly assault the advancing enemy galleys. Indeed pirates engaging in naval combat use this kind of ship most of all, whose strength is so immense that whatever vessel it rams, it splits the hull from top to bottom. For this reason they are rightly called "rostratae," because all the space projecting between the prow and the keel is covered with iron, having a ridge fortified in front with iron hooks all along the length of the prow, and on the top they bear iron heads fortified with crested rostra, like a cock's head. Bulwarks are also erected in which the strongest men are stationed in order to curb from above with rocks and arrows the assault of the antagonists. The transport ships, however, the centurion locates behind so that, if instructed, they could sail away from the soldiery and at least themselves escape the hands of the plunderers.

Therefore after all the vessels had been positioned as was expedient, and the anchors cast, they



awaited the arrival of the enemies. When the hostile fleet appeared, the sight gave credence to the words of the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, and proved him not to have been wrong in his expressed opinion. The enemies also divide their fleet into units, nor with less astuteness do they provide for every necessity for such a crisis. Now the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, seeing them approach all ready for war, commands that his ships be hastily set free by raising the anchors, and committing the sails to the winds, he also orders that the vessels be propelled with oars. With his soldiers positioned all along the rowers' banks and the decks, he is first to ram the galley on which the leader of the enemies was riding. Shattering its prow together with its keel, with his impetus he carried the tremendous blow all the way to the mast which was broken by the rostrum smashing into it and was forced to seek the waves in a whirl. Other vessels also are present as a support for the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, and they surround the battered ship and overwhelm those fighting back, although they were defending themselves strenuously. The Romans roll some of them into the billows, others they cut down with battle axes and swords. But the remaining they subdue with fetters. After the enemy commander has been killed while fighting manfully lest he fall alive



into the hands of his enemies, they snatch up the supplies and equipment and sink the skiff in the main.

Now after the overthrow of these men, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor advances more boldly against those remaining. But intercepted by their joined forces he is surrounded by them with a war cry; separated from his own forces he is vehemently attacked from every side. You could see the air darkened from the hurling of missiles, and the surface of the sea covered with a great number of them. A vast quantity of jagged rocks was launched from here and from there, whose crashing noise produced no less horror than danger. Those striving to do violence to the vessel of the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor bombard it with every kind of weapon, but because each one of its boards was covered with iron plates, none was broken by anyone's blows, and although he was being pressed by such great wedge-formations of the enemies, nevertheless he was performing no less deeds than he was suffering. When his foes understood his pertinacity, and that he preferred to die rather than be conquered, and that he neither could be brought under their power nor would yield safely to anyone pressing him, they threw fire--that is to say, Greek fire<sup>26</sup>--at his boat.

Now fire of this kind is made in various ways; but its power to accomplish the business to which it



is applied is greater and more persistent if it is prepared in this manner. Those who have skill in making it, first take a copper caldron and catch as many poisonous toads as they can crowd into it, and feed them in it for three months with the flesh of doves and with honey. After this time has been completed, they leave them unfed for two or three days, and then attach them to the teats of some beast productive in milk and offspring, whose milk they drink by sucking so long that ultra-sated they die. Now swollen with venomous fluid, the toads are put in a large vessel with a funeral pile set underneath. Added to them are chelydri--poisonous water snakes--which previously had been placed in a tomb where they had fed on a human cadaver for ten days. Also included is a venomous and deadly asp bearing three heads on its one neck, whose name escapes my mind, but a poisonous animal destroying anything it might strike with its incurable pestilence. For indeed at the venom's touch the earth is made barren of its grass and crops, water of its fish, trees of their fruit; and what is more to be wondered at: if the most minute drop should contaminate a tree, no matter how thick it may be, gnawing away at it in the manner of a cancer, it cuts it through the middle at the place where it is being eaten and spreads it out on the ground. It has been found that no remedy is effective against this scourge





so that it does not kill men and domestic animals immediately if it so much as touches the surface of the skin and penetrates therein. How great this asp's potency is can be seen especially from the flame shooting forth from its mouth, by which the forest which it inhabits is quite often set on fire when the asp itself is burning with great rage. Now from the slaver flowing from its three gaping jaws three herbs are produced; that is to say, one herb from the slaver of each jaw. The first of which, if anyone should use it for food or drink, he would be turned to madness, his mind having been changed; the second causes death for anyone savoring it with one taste; and the juice of the third infects with leprosy anyone who drinks it or anoints himself with it. Now when these plants have matured, the infamous monster feeds upon them if it can find them. Also, after it has been captured, it is fattened by their nourishment for the space of one week before it is used for the above-mentioned business.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the gallbladder and testicles of a werewolf are not absent from the recipe. This werewolf is of the kind that is begotten by the wind and the air, and whatever he touches, he takes onto himself the shape of the thing touched.<sup>28</sup> Now a ligure stone found in the furthest part of the world occupies not the least important place among the other things. It is thought to



come from the lynx's hardened urine<sup>29</sup> inasmuch as it is endowed with the same quality. Truly nothing hinders the eyesight of a lynx, so that even when standing on one side of a material object, he can see with true clarity what takes place on the other side.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the head, heart and liver of a crow that has lived for nine generations are added to increase the strength of these other ingredients.<sup>31</sup> Now by no means excluded from the above named items are sulphur, pitch and resin, oil, tartar<sup>32</sup> and bitumen, which quickly snatch up the heat of any flame applied to them and are slow to put it aside.

Therefore when these things have been collected in the order that I have mentioned, they are put into a very clean cooking pot made of copper. Having been arranged all the way to the mouth of the vessel, they are superfused with the blood of a red-haired man and of a dragon. Indeed in the blood of a red-haired man there is believed to be a fiery nature, since both the color of his hair and what especially is accustomed to flourish in a person of this kind--quickness of temper--clearly show this. Now a young man who has a red beard and a red head of hair, and who has pimples of the same color dotting his face, is led into a beautiful apartment and by the preparation of all kinds of feasts is delicately fattened for the space of one month. On



each day the hearth is kindled in front of him, and he is inebriated with wine to increase his blood, but is sedulously kept from feminine embraces. Now after the month has been completed, in the middle of the house on either side along the length of his body fiery coals are strewn, between which he, after being gorged with<sup>33</sup> food and drink, is exposed--his garments having been laid aside--and he is turned toward the fire on each side as if he were on a spit. Now having been made sufficiently warm, and with his veins now swelling over his entire body, he is bled; this is done by the muscle tissue of each arm being cut crosswise. Certainly in the meantime while he is losing blood, he takes morsels of bread dipped in wine to revive his mind, lest the desired fluid clot up as a result of his mind becoming enfeebled or rapt in a trance. The blood is allowed to flow out until faintness leading to death is about to drive his soul from his body. The blood of a dragon is first mixed through it, and the mixture is kept warm for a very long time; then it is poured over the other things, suffusing them all at the same time.

Now if it is asked how a dragon may be apprehended, first the strongest men are chosen to search out his cavern in which he hides. After finding it, they strew around its entrance sleep-inducing plants tinged with various spices. When the dragon comes out of the



opening in the earth and senses their fragrance, he devours them greedily and immediately is overcome with sleep. Then the men lying in ambush who have been hiding in a safe place not far away, surround and decapitate him. His blood is borne off by them together with the dragon stone which they pluck out of his shattered brain and which hence may be used for business of many sorts.<sup>34</sup>

Now the caldron in which these things are entrusted is three-footed, and its top part which has handles is fashioned with a narrow mouth and has a cover made out of copper. When the vessel is closed with the cover, both parts fit together so tightly that not even a slight amount of gaseous vapor may escape from it. All the ingredients, then, having been placed into it, fire immediately is set underneath, and it is brought to boil for seven continuous days and just as many nights. Pitch and naphtha are thrown into the flame in order that it might burn more intensely. In addition, there is a copper rod whose curved end is fashioned as a spigot, by which the small opening that appears in the peak of the vessel's cover is stopped up the first six days. But on the seventh day a flame is kindled in the cooking pot,<sup>35</sup> and an immense rumbling is heard inside, as if there were an earthquake; or if you were stationed at a distance from the pot, as if you were perceiving with your ear the roaring of the turbulent





sea. Now when the one tending the kindled flame perceives the well-known sign, he douses the spigot on the outside with the sharpest vinegar, which penetrating the spigot's thickness checks the impetus of the flame now trying to erupt.

Now as many copper bags are prepared as are needed, into which the fire may be removed; their pliable seams which are made out of wood and leather are so tightly put together that they are less likely to be penetrated by a breath of air than by the flame. But the bags are quite flexible, being composed more of leather than of copper, as you would imagine. After the flame has been restrained from its raging by the vinegar that was thrown on, the spigot is taken out, and the flexible tube projecting forward from a bag is placed to the opening of the caldron. By the drawing of air, the fire is emptied out of the cooking pot. Immediately, lest the fire come back out of the bag, the mouth of the tube is stopped up with a spigot. And thus the fire to be stored is drawn into the other bags. But a small amount is left in the cooking pot to which each day fuel is added by which the fire may be nourished. Moreover, there are small openings, like little windows, in the middle of the bags, through which the flame may be fed lest it become extinguished.<sup>36</sup> In this way Greek fire is prepared. If you ask how powerful it is, no engine



is so strong, no ship so large, but that if the fire is thrown onto them, it will penetrate every side, burning up all that stands in its way. Nor can it in any way be extinguished until the material which it is consuming ceases to exist. And what is more astounding, it even burns among the waves; and if it is mixed with common fire, always keeping itself in one mass it destroys the common fire as if it were wood.

Therefore, as was said above, when the enemies realized by experience that the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor was invincible by arms, one of them snatched up a bag in which the unpropitious fire was stored, and the spigot having been withdrawn from the tube, he by pressing down on one of the panels of the bag with his left hand, and by pushing up on another with his right hand, squeezed them together from both sides with effort, and ejecting the fire he penetrates the centurion's vessel with it--right through the middle--burning up four oarsmen. Without delay the whole ship is swept by flame, wherefore no small fear is stricken into those lying in wait for it; indeed hedged in on the inside by fire and on the outside by enemies, they did not know what they should do, nor was the opportunity of either defending or avenging themselves given to them. If they should choose to look to flight, it was not safe to commit themselves either



to the waves or to the adversaries. But nonetheless death was threateningly being extended to those remaining on the ship. Now the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, considering that unless he hastened to the rescue as quickly as possible, the situation would turn to irremediable disaster for himself, and considering that all things would be decided by this test of his bravery and might, regains his vigor and leaps armed into the very ship of those who were pressing him. Cutting down some of them and rolling others into the billows, he transfers to that ship his companions snatched away from the threefold misfortune; namely, the balls of flames, shipwreck on the waves, and the fury of the enemies. And inflamed with more violent anger, his own fleet having been brought together, he hurries forward to avenge himself, and after sinking ten pirate boats, he ravishes thirty others, now that the bravery of the enemies has been weakened.

At length when the naval battle had been brought to an end not without the greatest danger, the Romans proceed favorably on what was left of the journey, and arrive safely in Jerusalem by the appointed time. Having been received with the incredible welcome of all, they rather delightfully and rather indulgently with rest and leisure refreshed their limbs fatigued both from the laborious journey on land and on sea,



and from the manifold dangers of the trials and battles. In the meantime strong bands of soldiers are assembled, and a multitude of knights is sent to them by neighboring and foreign princes. The Romans themselves order that knights be recruited throughout the entire region, that cities and towns in key places be surrounded with solid walls and high towers, and be reinforced with the strongest men, with a complete stock of weapons, and with a supply of grain and food sufficient for a military campaign. Each day throughout the various shrines of saints public prayer was zealously made to God by all the people, and pious deeds of fasting and almsgiving were joined to the prayer, so that He might confer the desired triumph on those serving Him and so that defeat might await the adversaries.

Meanwhile the day that was fixed beforehand for the single combat had dawned, and after the wedge-formations of the innumerable army of each side--that is, of the armed Christians and the pagans--have been organized, the two champions covered with armor come forth into the middle to fight. On the one side is the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, whose boldness of spirit, publicized bravery, customary prowess, habit of conquering, and more just cause exhilarated his companions with the hope of triumph. Now the other, of the opposing faction, Gormundus<sup>37</sup> by name--his long limbs,





immense stature, truculent face, the large number of his wars, his fortitude estimated to be unique among all men, and the horrifying clanging of his armor seemed to promise that the trophy would fall to him. Now each man advanced on foot because, on account of his immoderate size, no horse was strong enough to bear Gormundus as a rider. Throwing their shields up before them and hostilely joining their right hands, they boldly contend against each other. With as much strength as is in store, and with as much power as anger supplies, the one assails the other with drawn sword. They redouble a thousand blows, and in a thousand ways and with reciprocal wounds, they by turns demand to be yielded to. They smite and are smitten; they drive forward and are driven back; and the wheel of Fortune revolves with varying chance between them. Whatever there may be of valor and fortitude, absolutely nothing is left behind, and the eyes of all remain fixed on them. It is not known who is quicker in striking or more courageous in suffering; such frequent strokes and such heavy blows were dealt out between them without interruption that it could hardly be discerned who gave or who received them. You could not determine which of the two was abler with his might, while the more they persisted in the fight, the more strongly they longed for the struggle. At times they intersperse their strokes with



smart gibes; at times they exasperate each other's minds with impudent taunts; at times out of breath they draw themselves back; then refreshed--a breath of air having been taken--they clash more sharply. Their strength having been renewed, they come together with more fervid violence; and their minds rage more furiously as if nothing had been done furiously by them before. You could see them standing their ground in contending against each other, just like two very ferocious wild boars in single conflict; now the boars assail each other with curved tusk in a sidelong blow, now their sides collide, now feet trample on feet; meanwhile smoking foam at one time besmears their gaping jaws, at another time glowing fire shoots forth.<sup>38</sup> If indeed the one man presses more vigorously, the other giving ground is driven further back; but if the other gets the upper hand, the one is forced to go backwards. This one endeavors to inflict a wound by lying in ambush, as it were. That one, if anything is exposed to the sharpness of his sword, eagerly cleaves it. However, each of the two with not unequal skill deludes and brings to naught the effort of the other. The clashing of arms resounds very far away, and the hardness of the armor blunts and dulls the sharp edges of the swords. Indeed from their collision flame quite frequently leapt forth, and because of the excessive



effort of the men, salty sweat ran down over all their bodies from their crown to their soles. It was uncertain to whom the victory would fall, since anyone would estimate the strength of the two to be equal. Thus with wondrous bravery and with wondrous prowess the battle was fought that day by each, and in the contest that lasted from the first hour of the day all the way to sunset, nothing happened by which either the one could be preferred to the other, or the palm branch ascribed to either. Therefore as it was growing toward evening, the men free from deep wounds are separated to fight again on the morrow and to begin the struggle anew.

Now as the dawn appears, the helmeted phalanxes assemble in twofold battle array and bring forth the combatants into the arena. There is a clash, there are war cries; each man strives for the violent death of the other. The fight is renewed with greater rivalry, because the more the one had experienced the mettle of the other, the more cautiously and forcefully he conducted himself against him, and it caused each of them shame to yield even a little to the other. It was established in the judgment of all that they were proven to be of equal strength. If you had happened to witness their conflict that day, you would have sworn that they had frolicked on the day before, and you would have been amazed with the greatest wonder how, against



such frequent thrusts and against such heavy blows, either the sharp edges of the swords were able to last without bluntness, or how the hardness of the armor was able to remain undamaged, or indeed how they themselves were able to continue for so long a time unexhausted and unwounded. To be sure, with such vigor and with such force swords were struck against helmets, were beaten against shields, that the air glittered from sparks flying forth; dashed together, steel repelled steel and sent it flying back against him by whom it was brandished. They stir the air with frequent breezes, setting lunges against lunges, thrusts against thrusts. With one mind they press on, they carry on a most bitter fight and display their ardor for fighting protracted battles. They stand chest to chest and at every step endeavor to attack and resist. The animosity of the one provokes the boldness of the other, and each man's pertinacity rendered more strenuous the tenor of the other's courage. Their mutual bravery provided fuel for their mutual strength, and the vigor of each increased after measuring itself against the other's.

Now most of the day was spent with both having equal fortune, until the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor shrewdly devised something: when he feigned that he was going to strike Gormundus on the left knee and when Gormundus as a result brought his bronze shield





down to that place, the Knight moving his right arm swiftly higher to the right thrust the point of his unexpected sword into him--in the middle of his unprotected mouth--and this blow knocked out four front teeth and broke the left side of his jaw. Nevertheless, the wound was not serious. What seemed to have been produced was rather an incitement to wrath than the stimulation of pain, so that the wounded man's strength increased with greater rage than the uninjured man's. So wrath having been conceived together with the inflicted wound, Gormundus conducts himself in the manner of a madman, but shouts nothing more: his strength must be spared. Then like a wild beast he charges toward the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, and raising his arm up high, he brought his sword down on the Knight's shield with such force that the inlaid arrangement of gems was broken to pieces and flew in all directions; the sword also tore away the boss and the top of the shield, and cut into the Knight's brow causing an outpouring of blood. More furious now also, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor takes him on; with fury on both sides, the battle is fought most furiously, and the matter approaches a turning point. The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, finding an opportunity, rushes with drawn sword against the unprotected side of his foe, but Gormundus skillfully



avoids the thrust. However, as the Knight's attempt is brought to naught, his sword is caught by Gormundus' shield that was thrown in the way, and is broken off at the hilt. Nor could the thickness or the hardness of bronze bear the immensity of the blow; yea, the bronze shield of Gormundus, having been cracked and split through the middle under the boss, flew into minute pieces. Immediately there arises an immense roar from the entire army, on the one hand from those who are grieving, and on the other hand from those who are scoffing. Indeed the greater danger belonged to the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, for whom there was nothing at all available by which he might either defend himself or drive his foe away from himself now that his sword was broken. On the other hand, although it had happened for Gormundus that his shield was shattered, yet he had a whole sword, with the hard double-edged blade of which he struck without interruption at his adversary's temples. However, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor skillfully extended his shield in every direction against his attacks, and if Phoebus by setting had not rather quickly put an end to the battle, the Knight without a doubt would have incurred the greatest injuries. Indeed a marker had been designated; and it was agreed that as soon as the shadow of the setting sun should reach it, the two



contenders had to be separated, every excuse or delay being put aside. Therefore when the shadow reaches the marker, they are parted, the pagans being unwilling and scarcely keeping themselves from rioting, and whatever of the single combat remained was put off until the next day.

The solar radiance had put to flight the shadows of the night, and after the hosts crowded together on the opposite sides, the champions protected by new arms truculently rush at each other. To be sure, a hateful and nearly fatal quarrel had arisen between the two armies as to whether a sword should be granted to the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, and a shield to Gormundus: whether to both or to neither, or indeed to one and not to the other. For a long time they disagreed on this matter and argued greatly, until at last they all reached this accord: that it would be fair that new weapons be allowed to both men, because neither could the one defend himself without a sword, nor could the other with a broken shield protect himself from hostile attack. Therefore, as was written above, when the bands of infantrymen and the troops of cavalrymen of both sides had drawn themselves up in battle-order and when the multitude of the other armed men had pressed closely together, the single combatants fitted with hauberks, crested with helmets, dreadful



to behold, head for the arena, enter upon the hazardous game of war, challenge each other to the fight, and with very powerful impetus rush forward and spring at each other. Without delay the thunder of war resounded, the clash of arms rang out, the thud of blows erupted loudly, and the fiery collision grew terribly hot. A very difficult sport, the battle is waged, and while they fight most wisely and persevere most resolutely, the air reverberates and resounds with horrible ringing, and the hollows of the hills magnify the stridor of the percussion in the air.

The horrendus nature of war! No rest was given to the tired men, no respite to them out of breath. They press on in every way; they do their best using every means so that one of them will either succumb or obtain the victory. Neither did the heat of the burning sun hamper them, nor did their continual toil or effort keep them from persisting ever more steadfastly and from striking each other by turns ever more insuperably. As they performed under arms, they were animated by boldness, invigorated by animosity. If you had been a bystander at the spectacle of these men, the fight of the Lapithae would have come to your mind.<sup>39</sup> As often as the Knight and Gormundus redoubled their blows, so often would you have imagined the anvils of the Cyclopes to have been beaten with their hammers.<sup>40</sup>





But when most of the day had passed, Gormundus began to grow hot both from the heat and from the assiduous harassment of his foe. The fight was pressed against him much more heavily, and the whole burden of the combat weighed him down. Therefore he was hiding behind his courage, but was moving more slowly and more feebly; backing up he was gradually giving ground to his assailant, nor was he with the same valor as before either defending himself or assaulting his foe. Noticing this, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor set upon him more vigorously and rendered his anxious spirit more anxious. Nor did he desist until he had driven him outside the limit of the circle by which they were bounded.

At this there is raised to the heavens roaring and groaning, yelling and wailing by his incredulous people, and in masses they sadly cried out to him: "Gormundus, go back! Gormundus, go back! What are you doing? Where are you fleeing, distinguished knight? To put to flight, not to take flight, has been your custom up to now! Go back! Oh sorrow! Go back! Lest in the end disgrace obscure all the deeds that you earlier performed so well. This is not the place for flight! To be conquered or to conquer is necessary here." At their voices Gormundus, overwhelmed by shame and recovering his breath a little and encouraged,



planted his feet more firmly and manfully drove back his harassing adversary. Brandishing his sword he delivered such a blow that he forced the Knight to fall down and seek the ground. The Knight's limbs were folded and his knee bent from the power of the blow, but yet his breastplate remained impenetrable. Then the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, exceedingly fierce in mind and provoked, got up; he completely shook with rage; he composed himself in his armor, shot forth his right arm and shouts: "This blow will end our game!" Bringing the double-edged blade of his sword down on the top of Gormundus' helmet, smashing, shattering and penetrating everything--Gormundus' armor now being hot and on that account not resistant--he drove the blow all the way to the bottom of his chest: not a desirable medicine for his stomach. Withdrawing the sword from the wound, he cut off the head that had been cleaved into two parts, and as the brain flowed out, the victor drove the head away from himself with his foot. Now that Gormundus had been overcome and cruelly slaughtered, the pagans with boundless sorrow prolonged their final lament and mourning over him. They would have taken up arms and rushed upon the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor out of revenge for Gormundus had they not been prevented by the laws hallowed among themselves.



Therefore, since their defender had been given up to a violent death, they surrendered themselves to Roman authority according to the established conditions of the covenant. After peace was affirmed and hostages given, and after a large amount of tribute was imposed, they went back disconcerted to their own lands. But the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, having illustriously and most victoriously received the trophy and having been honored by the nobles of Jerusalem with many gifts, in due time returned to Rome and was welcomed by the emperor and the senate with a triumphal procession. The emperor, decreeing him to be counted among the number of his familiars to the extent that the Knight had attained the first place, resolved to exalt him with very high honor and to present him with a deserved office.

When these things had thus taken place and since no one was presuming to take up arms against the Roman Empire, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, loathing peace and always desirous of warfare by which his valor and prowess might be exercised, eagerly began to inquire whether any region was disturbed by the tumults of war. As soon as the famous name of King Arthur of Britain--his uncle but not yet known to him--and his distinguished exploits which were now being broadcast throughout the entire world, had been reported to him, and because he esteemed lightly all that [had



been given] to him by the emperor, he time and again humbly entreated [the emperor to let him go to Britain].<sup>41</sup> Now although the emperor had already planned to promote him to a most honorable position and did not doubt that the departure of so great a man would be a loss to himself, nevertheless so that the Knight would be able to know from whom he received his origin, and confident that through the Knight he himself would gain possession of the kingdom of Britain which had broken away from the Romans a long time ago, he granted him what he asked. The emperor bestowed on him fine riches and precious gifts and handed over the case containing the evidence of his parentage which was to be delivered to King Arthur. He added his own rescript in which he bore witness that all the things which the document said were authentic and reliable. And he forbade the Knight to look into the coffer before he had come to King Arthur. He also sent orders to the rulers of Gaul, through whose territory the Knight was about to pass, to receive him honorably, be of service to him, furnish him with necessities, and lead him safely through their land all the way to the ocean. And so, farewell having been bidden, the Knight departed, leaving the emperor behind.

The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, then, with everyone taking his departure sadly, set out on his proposed journey, crossed the Alps, and after travelling





through Gaul, arrived safely in Britain. Upon inquiring where King Arthur was residing at that time, he was answered that Arthur was staying in the City of Caerleon in Demetia, which he had been accustomed to frequent before the other cities.<sup>42</sup> That territory to be sure, planted with groves, abounding in wild beasts, rich in resources, luxurious with the meadows' greenness, and scenic with the rivers' flowing--namely, the Usk and the Severn--offered in itself a most pleasant place to live. Situated at Caerleon was the metropolitan see of Demetia; there the legions of the Romans used to spend the winter; there King Arthur often celebrated solemn feasts and had been crowned with the diadem; and there assemblies of the barons of all of Britain were held in his presence. When he had learned where Arthur was staying, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor directed his course to that place; he intended to hasten there without leaving off from his journey either by day or by night. Now when he was proceeding on the night before he was to arrive in the City of Legions, a huge, unexpected storm with high winds and rain assailed him near the town of Usk, which was six miles distant from the city, and owing to its vehemence all of his companions either strayed from the road or were unable to follow him.



Now on that same night King Arthur was lying in bed with his wife Queen Gwendolen;<sup>43</sup> since sleep was loathsome to them because of the long duration of the night, they talked with each other about many things. Queen Gwendolen was truly the most beautiful of all women, but she was skilled in magic, so that many times she communicated the future by her divinations. Therefore among other bits of conversation with the king, she said: "My lord, you glory and extol yourself so much about your prowess; do you think there is no one equal to you in power?"

Arthur said: "That is right. Are you not of the same opinion?"

The queen: "Forsooth, at this very hour tonight a certain knight from Rome is coming through the walled town of Usk and is directing his course here; doubt not that he will prove superior to you in valor and fortitude. He is riding a noisy-footed steed to which no other can be compared in vigor, strength or beauty. His armor is impenetrable, and there is no one who can remain standing when his right arm strikes. Lest you think that I am uttering nonsense, you shall have a proof of the matter: I predict to you that he will send to me very early in the morning a golden ring and three coins<sup>44</sup> together with two horses."



Now Arthur, recalling that she has never been wrong in prophecies of the kind, determined to put the matter to a test, but without her knowing it. For it was his custom, as soon as he heard that some doughty man was coming, to go out and encounter him, so that the mutual skirmish might show who was the stronger.

Therefore a little later, the queen having fallen asleep, he got up; after arming himself he mounted his horn-footed destrier and rode off, having only Kay his seneschal as a companion for the way. He met the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor who had paused at a certain stream flooded from the rain storm. The Knight had been delayed near it for a short time<sup>45</sup> while looking for the crossing of a ford; indeed deceived by the hideous darkness of the night, he had thought that this was the channel of a deep river. Arthur, noticing him from the luster of his armor, shouts: "Where are you from, you who are wandering about this country in the silence of the night? Are you an exile, or a robber, or a spy?"

The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor replies: "I am in fact wandering since I do not know the way, but neither does the flight of an exile drive me on, nor does the plunder of a robber incite me, nor does the deceit of a spy make me hide."



Arthur: "You are depending on your eloquence; I am acquainted with your cunning; I know by experience that you are one of the three that I just mentioned. Therefore, unless you on your own accord lay aside your arms and surrender yourself to me as quickly as possible, you shall feel me punishing your villainy without delay."

And he: "It is the mark of a foolish and cowardly spirit to take flight before a war or to submit himself to the enemy before necessity requires it. Now if you are so desirous of my arms, I call you to witness their strength, you who are about to judge them by their hard blows on your ear."

And so in this way with the words between them breaking out into threats and taunts, Arthur, incited to wrath, set his horse to a run with his spurs so as to cross the brook at once and make a rush at him. But the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, meeting him with lance extended and lowered, struck him just as he was crossing and knocked him, his feet upturned, into the midst of the flowing water, and seized by the reins his noisy-footed destrier that had been carried over to him in the running. Key the Seneschal followed to avenge his lord, and giving his horse free rein, meets the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, but in the same manner he also on the first blow is thrown down on top of Arthur in one heap. Moreover, the Knight with





the Surcoat for his Armor drew Kay's horse to himself by using the point of his spear. However, the darkness of the night kept Arthur and Kay unharmed, and they who had come there on horseback returned home on foot with no little shame. Arthur then went back to bed. Queen Gwendolen asks him stiff with cold and completely drenched both from the rain and the water of the stream where he had tarried so long and how he had become so wet.

Arthur: "I heard a commotion outside in the courtyard like that of men fighting; going out to them I put a stop to it by making peace among them, and with the pouring rain falling heavily on me, I happened to get wet."

The queen: "Be it as you say; but tomorrow my messenger will make known where you went and what happened."

Meanwhile the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor, who neither crossed the rivulet nor was aware of with whom he had had the conflict, stopped at a certain nearby village and lodged there. But right at daybreak he set out for the City of Legions. Upon meeting a certain boy two miles from there, he asks him whose servant he is.

The boy says to him: "I am the queen's messenger, whose secret mandates it is my duty to carry out."

And to him the Knight says: "Will you do what I shall charge you with?"



The boy replies: "I am ready to do what may please you."

The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor says: "Take these two noisy-footed steeds and lead them forth to the queen on my behalf and ask her to graciously accept this sign of my prowess as a pledge of my friendship." Handing over also a golden ring together with three gold coins to be delivered to her, he divulged his name and made it known that he would follow him forthwith. Now the messenger carries out those things which were enjoined to him. He took the gold coins and led the horn-footed destriers away with him.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile Queen Gwendolen, inasmuch as she was prescient of the future, was standing in the top of a high tower looking out upon the road which led to the town of Usk. Seeing in the distance her messenger returning, leading two horses with their trappings, she understood the matter; she thereupon came down and met him just as he was entering the royal castle. To be sure, the boy conducts his business splendidly, speaks according to his mandate, hands over the things that had been sent, and announces that the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor will be there presently. The queen, smiling when she hears his name, accepts the gifts and expresses her thanks. Leading the horses into the bedchamber she makes them stand before the bed



of King Arthur who was still resting inasmuch as he had spent the whole night sleepless from his exertions. She says to him now awakened from his sleep; "My lord, lest with your official censure you accuse me of a falsehood, behold the ring and the gold coins which last night I promised would be delivered to me today. And besides, as predicted, the knight sent to me these two destriers which he said by messenger he had captured last night, their riders having been thrown down into the stream."

King Arthur, recognizing his horses, is filled with shame, seeing this made public which he was hoping would be kept a secret.

Then Arthur went out to an assembly of nobles whom he had summoned to a meeting for pressing reasons and had ordered to be present that day. While he was sitting with them in front of the castle under the shade of an ash tree, behold the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor enters the gates on horseback and advancing into the presence of King Arthur nearby, salutes him together with the queen and the body of knights sitting in conference. But Arthur, not ignorant of who he was, extended to him a grim face and rather indignantly answered his greeting. Nevertheless the king asks from where he had come, where he was going, and what he was seeking in these regions. The Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor replies that he is a Roman knight and that,



because he had heard that King Arthur, pressed by war, was in need of soldiery, he had come to proffer assistance to him and at the same time had brought mandates from the emperor. Then he produced the sealed case and presented the letter to the king. Now after accepting the missive, Arthur withdrew from the crowd and ordered it to be read to him. Understanding the testimony of its contents together with that of the document, as well as the evidence afforded of course by the cloak and the ring, he is greatly astonished, and with all his desire longed for it to be true. From his immense joy he could not believe this; namely, that the Knight was his nephew. He remained incredulous of this thing until, each of the Knight's parents having been summoned--King Loth of Norway and Queen Anna, who by chance had been ordered to come to Caerleon with the other leaders--he carefully investigated and sought out the truth of the matter from them. When they had seen the evidence, they confess that this is true and swear by an oath put to them that he is their son. Arthur is exhilarated with incredible joy that this man upheld with so many commendations by the emperor and exalted with honors for such great deeds of prowess, unexpectedly is connected to him by such a close relationship. Nevertheless King Arthur purposely determined that nothing be divulged to him then until the Knight had performed some remarkable feat in his presence.





Returning to the assembly, therefore, and calling the Knight before everyone, Arthur says: "My friend, I do not need your assistance at the present time; besides, I do not know at all which flourishes more in you: prowess or lack of skill. There exists for me a large enough force of knights of incomparable prowess, endowed with strength and valor; it is their wont to separate the unskilled and cowardly man from the doughty and the brave, to attempt to unnerve spirits from their accustomed boldness and prowess. Even without the military service of men like you, a very great number willingly serve me as knights among whom my Excellency thinks you should not be ranked or even rated unless you shall have deserved it first."

Exasperated now by his remarks, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor responded: "It has happened that I in desiring to serve you, have incurred from you a strong repulse and an unexpected injury, I who always formerly without entreating with many pleas nor attended by great riches, but only by volunteering was deemed worthy to render assistance to men more powerful than you. And I am certain that anyone I might serve would not find me inferior even when, if I should stretch my imagination to such an extent, I might find myself somewhat inferior. But yet, since the desire to engage in military service has brought me here and since, if I



should depart from here, it might be ascribed to cowardice and lack of skill, I hope you deem me worthy to be in the number of your military on this condition, if I alone should accomplish that which your whole army shall have failed in."

Arthur said: "I swear by my crown, if you should carry out that which you have stipulated, I not only shall ascribe you among them, but shall set you above all of them." The proposition pleased the king and all his barons, and so he retained the Knight in his presence on the aforementioned condition.

Twice six days had not passed when a serious matter compelled Arthur to set out on a military expedition. In the northern part of Britain there was a certain castle called the Castle of Maidens, presiding over which by the right of governance was a damsel distinguished and famous both for her beauty and for her nobility, and very closely united to Arthur by ties of friendship. A certain pagan king, captivated by her excellent character and the greatness of her beauty but disdained by her, was besieging her in the above-named castle. With his war machines indeed set up and his platforms erected and situated, he was threatening as if to break through and capture her. Inasmuch as she was not able to endure his continual incursions and daily assaults, she through a messenger calls on Arthur



for succor for herself. She averred that she was shut up in her tower since the outer wall had been occupied by the enemies, and that she would have to surrender to them without delay unless he brought assistance very quickly. Now Arthur, fearful of the danger [threatening]<sup>47</sup> her castle, immediately assembles, equips and draws up in order of battle the strength of his soldiery. After making the final preparations, he set out on his march to where he had been summoned, although he was constrained with the greatest dread. For oftentimes he had met and contended with the same king, but it was well known that Arthur was always repulsed and overcome. Now another messenger comes up at a rapid pace to Arthur who is proceeding to the siege, and he with hair falling down over his lacerated cheeks announces that the fortress indeed has been taken by assault, moreover that the damsel has been seized and abducted, and that she begs Arthur to show her the same kind of love in adversity with which he had cherished her in prosperity. Therefore Arthur pursues the adversaries loaded with spoils; he furiously attacks their rear guard which he thought would not be expecting it, but is taken on by them with evil foreboding; to be sure, the armed men, having been informed beforehand of his coming, had been marching in battle order, had placed the strongest men of the entire army



in the rear unit for defense; they could not easily be thrown into confusion by a sudden onslaught.

Therefore at the tumult the first phalanxes of the rear guard turn back and surrounding Arthur they press him in, assail and harass him from every side. The battle is waged most bitterly, and a bloody slaughter is inflicted on both sides, but Arthur who was in the very center of the enemies was vehemently pounded, was made anxious and became weakened; and if he had not very quickly hurried his flight by opening a way with swords, he would have been undone, slain with his entire army. He therefore committed his welfare to flight, reckoning it to be more sensible to escape unharmed by fleeing than to incur loss by pressing himself further.

Now at the outset of the battle the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor had withdrawn to a high, remote place to observe how his fellow knights would fare in the battle. When he found that they were slipping away in flight, he went to meet Arthur who was fleeing with the first ones, and taunting him with a smile he said, "O King, are you chasing stags or hares, you who are running so widely scattered through the byways?"

To him Arthur indignantly responded: "Now I have your prowess sufficiently tried, you who while the others were undertaking the fight, hid yourself in the





recesses of the woods." And without saying more he passed by with his adversaries pursuing him.

Now after smartly and facetiously gibing at each one of Arthur's knights coming his way, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor meeting the pursuing enemies rushed into their ranks. Penetrating through the middle of their compact and crowded wedge-formations like a winter storm, he wounded no one at all, unless fortune offered someone resisting him. When he saw the king's battle array, setting spurs under his horse, he immediately put the horn-footed destrier to a gallop in that direction, and brandishing his lance he unexpectedly thrust the shining iron up under the king's hollow breast. As the king sinks to the ground dying, the Knight seizes the damsel's horse by the reins and very quickly begins to return by the way he had come.

Now the troops that had been stationed around the pagan king--their lord who had been slain in their midst--with a war cry confusedly pursue the one departing, and with drawn swords set upon and assail him. He rushes into all of them and they all rush at him. Some hurl missiles at him from a distance, others with their double-edged swords smite at him without interruption, so that, like a deluge of rain, a mass of blows poured on him. But he, leaving man upon man decapitated, ever continued on his journey. Yet he was greatly hampered



because he had to defend not only himself, but also the damsel. However, not far away there was a very large and very deep ravine dividing the boundaries of the two countries. Its narrow access and passageway admitted the entering of only one person, and for this reason was declared the limit and separation of those borders. Therefore the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor hastily coming to this ravine, put the damsel inside its embankment for protection, enjoining her to wait for him there in the remote places while he went back. Again plunging himself right into the wedge-formations of the pursuing adversaries, he repelled, routed and scattered them, and roaring like a lion when its cubs have been lost, he raged against them with cruel slaughter. No one could bear his violence, nor did anyone, whom the heavy might of his right arm struck, go away unharmed. Wherever he turned, they fell away from him as if from the face of a tempest; sending them continually to ruin he massacred them without pity. Nor did he desist until all who had turned to flight--all of them--he handed over to destruction; while part of them threw themselves headlong from steep cliffs, part of their own free will buried themselves in the billows in front of them, and he himself tore to pieces the survivors with a slaughter.

So having gained the victory without injury to himself, the Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor cut



off the king's head which bore the diadem, and fixed it on the staff of his banner; holding it up high he went back with his damsel to King Arthur nearby. After triumphantly entering the hall where King Arthur was sitting sadly mourning over his misfortunes in war, he shouts: "Where are your renowned champions, O King, about whom you boasted so much as to say there was no one their equal in valor? Behold the head of the man whom with his entire army of knights I overwhelmed and destroyed single-handedly; alas, it is a shame that so many thousands of your fighters were so many times put to flight and rendered powerless by him. Now do you consider me worthy to be your knight?"

Arthur, recognizing the head of the king hateful to him above all men, and recognizing that his beloved damsel had been snatched from the hands of the enemies, rushed delighted into his embrace and answered: "Truly you are a knight to be deemed worthy, one to be wished for and to be accorded special honors. But because up to now we have been regarding almost as doubtful who you are who have come to us, make known more clearly, I bid you, what the land of your birth is, from whom you derive your origin, and what name you have been assigned."

And he: "Indeed the truth of the matter has it that I was begotten by a Roman senator in parts of Gaul,



was brought up in Rome, and was given the name 'Knight with the Surcoat for his Armor'."

Arthur: "You are quite mistaken; your opinion is lacking in truth, and you should know that you are wholly deceived in this belief."

The Knight: "How so?"

Arthur: "I shall show you," he says, "the line of your descent, the knowledge of which will be the reward for your effort."

Then with both of the Knight's parents present--namely, King Loth and Queen Anna of Norway--Arthur commands that the letters directed to him by the emperor be brought forward, and after being brought forward to be read aloud in the hearing of the multitude of the commoners and the nobles. When the letters had been read to all in attendance, incredible joy together with great astonishment is born in the minds of all, and they congratulated the happy parents for such a fine offspring. Then King Arthur looking at him with a cheerful countenance says, "My dearest young man, you must recognize that you are my nephew, the son of this my sister, and that for her to have brought forth such a fine son must be ascribed not to disgrace but to the greatest kindness of fortune." And he added: "In your boyhood, to be sure, you were called 'Boy Without a Name,' and from the beginning of knighthood to the present 'The Knight

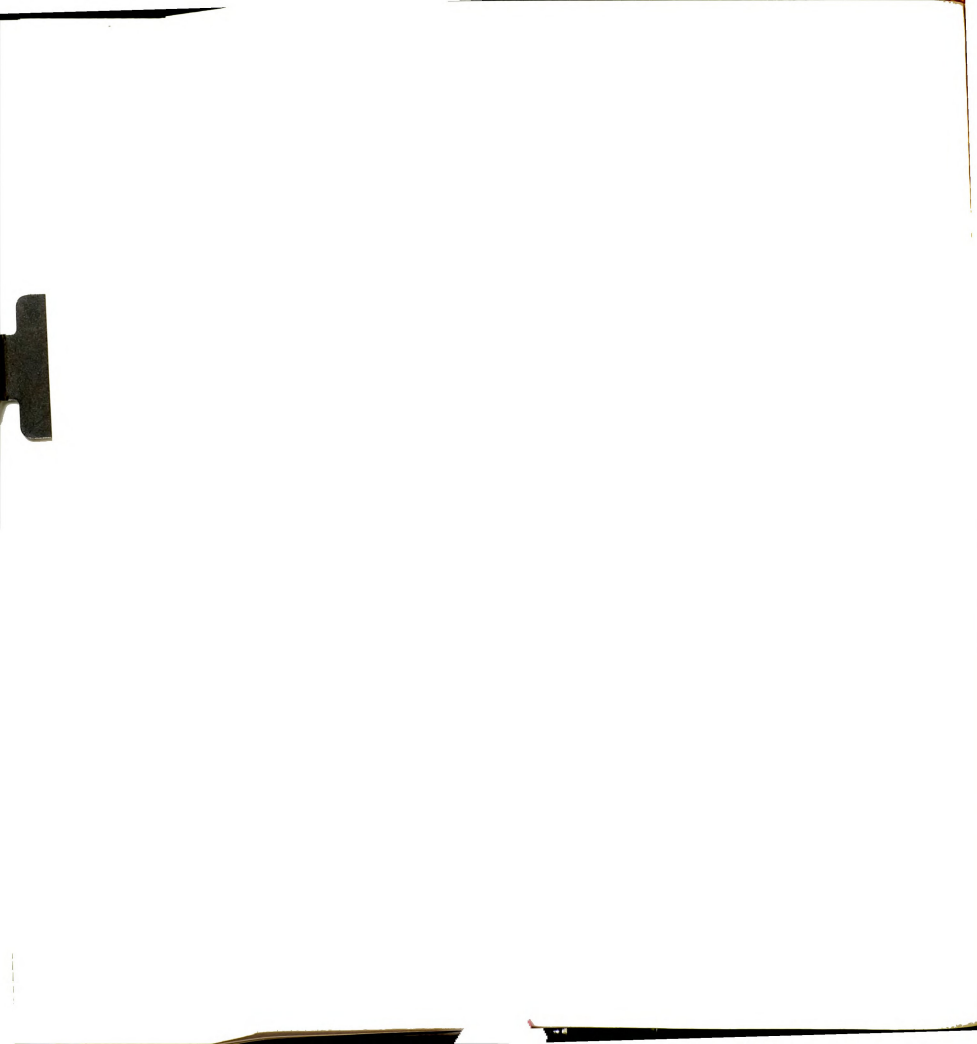




with the Surcoat for his Armor'; now you shall be addressed by your proper name 'Gawain.'"

As Arthur was saying these things, three or four times "Gawain, nephew of King Arthur" was repeated and proclaimed by the entire assembly. So from father to son, from uncle to recognized nephew,<sup>48</sup> the magnitude of joy is increased, both for the recoverer of a lost family and for his incomparable valor and fortitude.

Whoever wishes to know Gawain's other remarkable deeds of valor which follow, let him obtain this from an authority with a plea or a price, knowing that just as it is more dangerous to engage in a war than to recount it, so it may be more difficult to compose a romance in a finished style of eloquence than to publish it in the vulgar tongue.



DE ORTU WALWANII--NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The author follows Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace in giving the name Anna to Arthur's sister. In Les Enfances Gauvain, in the Vulgate Merlin and in the First Continuation of Perceval, she is called Morcades.

<sup>2</sup>For this adage the author may have been inspired by Ovid's Metamorphoses IV.64, where in telling about the love of Pyramus and Thisbe for each other which they had to keep hidden, Ovid uses this metaphor: "Quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis" (The more the fire is covered up, the more, having been covered, does it burn).

<sup>3</sup>Narbonne, located in the southern part of France on the Mediterranean Sea, was an important port city in the Middle Ages.

<sup>4</sup>Viamundus, which occurs nowhere else in Arthurian romance, appears to be a cue name; i.e. a name whose etymological interpretation gives the reader a metaphoric hint as to the nature of the character. The literal meaning of "Viamundus" is "the way of the world."

<sup>5</sup>This is a variation of the age-old proverb, "Occasio facit furem" (Opportunity makes the thief).

<sup>6</sup>Because of the lack of more details, it is doubtful that our author had any specific barbarian invasion in mind. With regard to the picture of Rome the author presents, see my discussion of the setting in Chapter IV.

<sup>7</sup>Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, also known as Scipio the Elder, lived from 236 to 183 B.C. and was one of the greatest Roman generals. By his military campaigns he gained possession of nearly all of Spain, defeated Hannibal at Carthage in 202 B.C. to end the Second Punic War, and established Roman power in Asia. Concerning his house, see the section on the setting of the romance in Chapter IV.



<sup>8</sup>The praetexta was a style of toga or outer garment worn in ancient Roman times by magistrates and by freeborn children until about the age of sixteen when they assumed the adult toga. White in color, the praetexta was distinguished by a purple border along its straight edge. Like other styles of the toga, it was usually made of wool, was semicircular in shape, had a length of about three times the wearer's height and a center width of slightly more than his height, and was draped elaborately around the body. At the beginning of the second century A.D. the toga went out of fashion as the ordinary dress of a Roman citizen, but was retained as a ceremonial costume until about the fifth century. See Mary G. Houston, Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration, 2nd ed. (London, 1947), pp. 87-92.

<sup>9</sup>Historically there has never been a Pope Sulpicius. The author probably derived the name ultimately from Geoffrey of Monmouth who mentions that Loth sent Gawain to serve in the household of Pope Sulpicius and that the pope dubbed Gawain a knight. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore, 1966), p. 223. Where Geoffrey obtained this name, no one knows. There was an ancient Roman gens named Sulpicius, some members of which were statesmen, jurists, orators and teachers. Robert Fletcher says that Pope Sulpicius is perhaps an historical personage--Pope Simplicius (A.D. 468-483). See his The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), p. 80. However, I tend to think that Sulpicius is a corruption of "Supplicius" etymologically meaning "one who prays," which would be an appropriate cue name for a pope.

<sup>10</sup>This seems to be a parenthetical remark by the author rather than part of the speech of Viamundus, even though the editor does not set it outside of the quotation.

<sup>11</sup>The Latin is "Puer sine nomine." Not only is it common for romance heroes to assume a nickname, but as Bruce points out, some of these heroes like Gawain in De Ortu Walwanii pass under nicknames out of necessity, until they finally learn their true names. Bruce cites the cases of Lancelot du Lac in the Vulgate Lancelot; Lanzelet in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Lanzelet; and Guinglain, the son of Gawain, whose nickname Le Bel Inconnu (The Fair Unknown) in the French romance of that title and in the English Libeaus Desconus resembles Gawain's in our romance. See J. D. Bruce, ed., Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Waluuanii (Baltimore, 1913), p. lv, n. 1.



Loomis observes that similar mystery surrounds the youthful Perceval in addition to Lancelot and Guinglain, and that the motif can be traced back to Irish legends of Finn and Lug. Roger S. Loomis, "The Latin Romances," in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), p. 476. We find a parallel also in Gawain's prototypes in Celtic lore. See my Chapter II.

<sup>12</sup> Knightly surcoats became popular about the twelfth century. The one which Gawain wears is of the kind that is put on by pulling it over the head, as is implied by the word superinducens. This style was evidently more popular than the one which fastened down the front. Although the garment is not described in our romance, in medieval England it was generally sleeveless, hung in loose folds to below the knee, was slit in front and behind almost to the crotch for convenience in the saddle, and was open from the shoulder to the hip on either side. Around the beginning of the fourteenth century it was cut short in front, level with the hips, and was often made to lace or button at the sides, while the hind-skirt retained its original length. The old school of thought held that the purpose of the surcoat was to protect the armored knight from the burning sun and from rain and cold, but now it is generally believed that it was worn for the same reason that Gawain wears it in our romance: for ornament. The knights generally had their coats of arms emblazoned on the surcoat. See Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe, A Short History of Costume and Armour Chiefly in England, 2 vols. (New York, 1931), I, 54-58.

<sup>13</sup> J. D. Bruce, ed., Historia, pp. xvii-xix, remarks that romance writers quite frequently attributed to their heroes the introduction of some well-known custom. He cites the following examples: (1) Lancelot in the Vulgate Lancelot is said to have been the first to wear a pennon on his helmet; (2) King Yder in the same romance is said to have been the first to carry a banner with his coat of arms and to put armor on horses; (3) in the Estoire del Saint Graal of the Vulgate cycle the institution of church treasures is ascribed to Joseph; (4) in the Huth Merlin the author claims that King Arthur instituted the "colee"--the blow on the neck with the flat side of the sword--as part of the ritual of making a squire a knight; (5) Queen Gloriande, according to the Prose Tristan, established burning as the punishment for women convicted of adultery. It is true that in the above examples the heroes are not nicknamed for the custom they introduced. On the other hand, we do find





in Arthurian romance heroes bearing nicknames for their distinctive apparel. For instance, Brewnor le Noyre is called La Cote Male Tayle in Malory, Bk. IX, Ch. I; just as Gawain is called Miles cum tunica armaturae in De Ortu Walwanii.

<sup>14</sup> A cubit is an ancient linear unit based on the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger and usually equal to about eighteen inches. Therefore the maximum height of the inhabitants of this island was about four and a half feet. I could not find a source for the description of this people. In tone and in certain details it resembles the descriptions of exotic tribes in such writers as Pliny and Solinus. For example, certain Ethiopian tribes are described in this way: among the Garamantes there is no marriage, and children do not know who their fathers are; the Locust-Eaters do not live beyond forty years; the Pamphagi will eat anything that grows and can be chewed; the Gamphasantes avoid intercourse with merchants and will have nothing to do with strangers. See Solinus, Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium XLII and XLIII; and Pliny, Historia Naturalis V.viii and VI.xxxv. The Trispithami and the Pygmies of India are but three spans, or twenty-seven inches, in height. See Pliny, VII.ii. On the other hand, the people in this romance bear some resemblance to dwarfs in Celtic tradition and who are diminutive in size but not as small as the Pygmies in Pliny, who often inhabit an island, live in luxury and have a king with infallible arms. See Vernon J. Harward, Jr., The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition (Leiden, 1958), pp. 19-20, 99-101.

<sup>15</sup> E. Brugger in "Zu Historia Meriadoci and De Ortu Walwanii," Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur, 46 (1923), 277, asserts that Milocrates is a Greek name of ultimate oriental origin. It does sound like a Greek name, but I wonder if it might be a cue name derived from Latin ([pu]milio 'dwarf' or miles 'soldier') and Greek (κρατέω 'rule') elements: "ruler of dwarfs" or "warlord."

<sup>16</sup> The country of Illyria was on the Adriatic Sea in the northwestern part of the Balkan peninsula, approximately where the modern country of Albania is located.

<sup>17</sup> This sentence in Bruce's edition appears as three lines of dactyllic hexameter verse, although in the manuscript it is written as prose.



<sup>18</sup> According to Bruce, ed. Historia, p. xxiv, Odabel appears to be originally an oriental name. However, since he is a Roman knight in this romance and not a resident of Milocrates' island, it seems strange that he should have an oriental name. Is it not possible that Odabel was derived from the Latin odi 'hate' and bellum 'war' and means "war hate"?

<sup>19</sup> Three sentences later his name is spelled Buzarfarnan, and in the episode of the sea battle he bears the name Egesarius. Bruce, ed. Historia, p. xxiii, believes that Buzarfarnan is originally an oriental name which reached our romancer through the opening pages of the Prose Tristan, where the name Nabuzardan (Naburzadan) appears. Brugger, pp. 277-78, agrees that it is an oriental name, but doubts that it is a corruption of Nabuzardan. On Egesarius, Bruce says, "H. Sachier, Literarisches Zentralblatt for 1898, col. 980, derives the name Egesarius . . . from the Eishere of the Monk of St. Gall (ninth century). Eishere was a giant who spitted his foes on a spear, like little birds." See James Douglas Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (1928; rpt. Gloucester, Mass., 1958), II, 33, n. 2. Brugger, p. 278, questions whether the alternate name was really intended, whether Egesarius was not actually the result of a bad manuscript. In any case, it seems possible to me that Buzarfarnan and Egesarius are both descriptive names coined from the Greek, the one coming from βοῦς 'shield' and φέρω 'bear' and meaning "shield bearer"; the other coming from εγείρω 'raise' and σπίσσα 'spear' and meaning "spear raiser."

<sup>20</sup> This is not an inconsistency, because along with Gawain and Odabel went the former's armor-bearer who took the dead boar back to the centurion; we can presume that Odabel had an armor bearer also.

<sup>21</sup> Here the manuscript reads "Nabor," whereas the other seven times the name occurs, it is spelled "Nabaor." Bruce, ed. Historia, p. xxiii, thinks the name was derived from the Prose Tristan. Bruce's footnote reads: "A variant of Nabon, name of a giant in the Tristan. See E. Löseth, pp. 48ff. Nabor, however, occurs in other romances, e.g. the Huth Merlin I 206 (Nabur) and the Estoire del Saint Graal (Sommer, I. 197ff.). In the latter he is a servant of Nascien."



<sup>22</sup>In ancient Roman times a turma 'troop, unit' consisted of thirty to thirty-two men. However this is not the case here, since the centurion had only one hundred men to begin with, forty of whom he had sent to the queen. So each of his units contains only about twelve men.

<sup>23</sup>This whole paragraph is printed in Bruce's edition as eight lines of dactyllic hexameter verse, although in the manuscript it is not set off as such.

<sup>24</sup>According to Charles-Picard, a triumphal arch is definitely of Roman origin and emerged at the end of the second century B.C. He describes it as "basically a monumental gateway consisting of two massive pylons linked by a semi-circular vault and crowned by an attic, a rectangular mass of masonry designed to carry statues. The arch is framed by two or more columns which are either engaged in the pylons or free-standing on projecting pedestals." Charles-Picard, Living Architecture: Roman (London, 1965), pp. 173-74.

<sup>25</sup>The author mentions that the centurion thinks these birds are kingfishers. I believe this was done for the sake of humor, for a kingfisher or halcyon was not known as a bird of prey or of ill omen. In fact, according to the bestiaries this infrequently seen bird was regarded as a favorable sign for navigation. For two weeks during the winter solstice the female is said to build its nest on the sea, or in sand at the water's edge, and hatch its eggs, during which time the winds cease to blow and the sea is calm. See Ovid, Metamorphoses XI.744-48; Pliny, Historia Naturalis X.xlvii; and Florence McCulloch, Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1960), p. 135.

<sup>26</sup>Although the use of incendiary mixtures of all kinds was well known in warfare from ancient times onwards, Greek fire in the strict sense was first used in 673 A.D. by the Byzantine Greeks against the Arabian fleet to save the city of Constantinople from attack. This weapon was to the Middle Ages what nuclear bombs are to modern times. Its composition was a state secret. However, the Muslims eventually learned the recipe and employed Greek fire against the crusaders at the end of the twelfth century. After the Third Crusade (1189-1192) the Venetians in Constantinople probably learned the composition of Greek fire, for thereafter it was used on both sides. A liquid or semi-liquid, the mixture



often was hurled in earthenware containers either by hand or by ballistae, and then ignited by torches or flaming arrows. Sometimes it was pumped at the target by a device known as a siphon. One of the reasons this fire was so effective was that it could burn on water. In fact, the common belief was that it could be extinguished only by vinegar, urine or sand. See J. R. Partington, A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder (Cambridge, England, 1960), pp. 1-90. The recipe in our romance is a humorous one, a product of our author's imagination, yet typical of some of the alchemical and hermetic formulae of ancient and medieval times. On the other hand, it does contain a list of ingredients found in a real recipe for Greek fire. For the significance of this list with regard to establishing a terminus a quo for the romance, see Chapter I.

27 I think the reason the name escaped the author's mind was that he created this animal. Nowhere in classical or medieval bestiaries, mythologies or folklore could I find a three-headed asp, much less one that can produce plants with its slaver. However, the author may have been inspired in part by Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of Hades, from whose foam sprang the poisonous aconite plant. See Ovid, Metamorphoses VII.413-19. But he may have got the idea for the particular effects of the plants--madness, leprosy and death--from the effects of asps' bites as described in the bestiaries: (1) the basilisk's venom could make people hydrophobic and mad, (2) the praester's venom could cause swelling, disfigurement, and eventual putrification, (3) other asps, such as the dipsas, hypnalis, haemorrhoids and seps, were said to cause death. Finally, the three-headed asp's ability to kill and burn is comparable to that of the basilisk, the king of serpents, which could destroy shrubs not only by its touch but also by its breath, could burn grass and burst rocks, and could kill a man by spilling only a drop of its poison on him. See Hugo of Saint Victor, De Bestiis et Aliis Rebus II.xxx and III.xli. See also Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum Sive Originum XII.iv.8 and 13-17; and Pliny, Historia Naturalis VIII.xxxiii.

28 This is not an ordinary werewolf, but a demon or devil. Not only was the wolf identified with the devil in medieval bestiaries, but it was commonly believed in the Middle Ages that devils could assume bodies made out of air and thus appear as anything they wished and could change their shapes at will. Often they appeared as wolves or werewolves. See J. A. MacCulloch, Medieval Faith and Fable (Boston, 1932),





pp. 58-74; and R. H. Robbins, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology (New York, 1959), pp. 132-33, 326-27. It is possible that our author got his idea to include the parts of a werewolf, as well as some of the other ingredients, from Medea's recipe for the potion that made Aeson young again. Her brew contained among other things the entrails of a werewolf, the skin of a chelydrus, and the eggs and head of a crow nine generations old--all of which animals figure in this recipe. See Ovid, Metamorphoses VII.262-74. But our author added the ability of the werewolf to change to any shape and, instead of the entrails, used the gallbladder and testicles, which are very appropriate organs for an incendiary mixture. All things being composed of the four elements--earth, air, fire and water--the sexual organs were thought to be dominated by fire. Likewise, the choler or yellow bile rising in the gallbladder was equated with fire and was considered to give off heat and dryness to the whole body. See Robert W. Ackerman, Backgrounds to Medieval English Literature (New York, 1966), pp. 122-23.

<sup>29</sup>"Ligurius" or "lyncurium" literally means "lynx urine." According to the bestiaries and lapidaries, the urine of the lynx is said to harden into this precious stone which can be found in India. Knowing that men look for this stone, the lynx covers his urine with dirt or sand, or else hides the stone in his throat, so that men cannot find it. Scholars identify the ligure stone with the carbuncle or jacinth or tourmaline stone. It probably is included in the recipe because of its brilliant flame color. See Pliny, Historia Naturalis VIII.lvii and XXXVII.xiii; Ovid, Metamorphoses XV.412-15; Anglo-Norman Lapidaries, ed. Paul Studer and Joan Evans (Paris, 1924), pp. 49, 80, 103, 135-36, 176, 247; and English Mediaeval Lapidaries, ed. Joan Evans and Mary Serjeantson, Early English Text Society, Original Series, No. 190 (London, 1933), pp. 24-25, 44-45, 97-98, 110-11.

<sup>30</sup>The medieval bestiaries make no mention of the proverbial keen eyesight of the lynx; Pliny, however, does so in Historia Naturalis XXVIII.xxxii.

<sup>31</sup>As I mentioned in the footnote for the werewolf, the eggs and head of a crow nine generations old were included in Medea's youth-giving potion for Aeson in Ovid, Metamorphoses VII.274. The crow is appropriate for this imaginative recipe for Greek fire because its ability to live for so long would give the fire sustaining power, and of course the crow traditionally was regarded as a bird of bad omen. See Pliny, Historia Naturalis X.xiv; Hugo of Saint Victor, De Bestiis et



Aliis Rebus III.xxxv; Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum XII.vii.44; and The Book of Beasts, trans. T. H. White (New York, 1954), p. 142. The head, heart and liver are the most important parts of an animal. The head contains the brain which is usually called the animal soul; the heart holds the vital soul, the principle underlying the senses; and the liver is the seat of the natural soul which furnishes nourishment to the whole body. See Robert W. Ackerman, Backgrounds to Medieval English Literature (New York, 1966), p. 116.

<sup>32</sup>The text reads "cartarum," but the spelling no doubt should be "tartarum." The items listed here--sulphur, pitch, resin, oil, tartar, and bitumen--are the only ingredients in this recipe which properly belong to a formula for Greek fire. In fact, they are practically identical to the ingredients which comprise the Greek fire recipes in the Liber Ignium attributed to Marcus Graecus, and De Mirabilibus Mundi attributed to Albertus Magnus. For more on this subject see Chapter I.

<sup>33</sup>The text reads "inpurgitatus." No dictionary lists the verb "inpurgitare," although I imagine it could be regarded as an intensive form of "purgitare": "to purge entirely." However, it seems more reasonable that at this point the red-haired man would be stuffed with food and drink for the purpose of "increasing" his blood. Therefore, I adopted Pio Rajna's suggested emendation: "ingurgitatus." See Pio Rajna, "Sono il De Ortu Walwanii e L'Historia Meriadoci Opera di un Medesimo Autore?" in Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis, ed. Roger S. Loomis (New York, 1927), p. 17.

<sup>34</sup>This method of apprehending a dragon can be found in Pliny, Historia Naturalis XXXVII.lvii; in Caius Julius Solinus, Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium XLII; and in Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum XVI.xiv.7. Another method specifies that enchanters sing the dragon to sleep; see Anglo-Norman Lapidaries, ed. Studer and Evans, p. 229. Pliny and Isidore say that unless the head of the animal is cut off while it is alive, the stone will not assume the form of a gem; Solinus says that the gem must be removed while the serpent is still breathing, for just as soon as the breath ceases, the jewel disintegrates. These are details which our author fails to mention. None of the above authorities specify any uses for the dragon stone other than decoration, which is perhaps why our author does not elaborate on



its uses. Some medieval lapidaries identify this jewel with the carbuncle. See Leo J. Henkin, "The Carbuncle in the Adder's Head," Modern Language Notes, 58 (1943), 34-39.

<sup>35</sup> To heat a mixture for real Greek fire so that some ingredients, e.g. the bitumen and the pitch, can be mixed more easily with the others is reasonable. However, to ignite the mixture as it is being prepared would of course be absurd.

<sup>36</sup> A mixture of real Greek fire, of course, would be stored in its liquid or semi-liquid form, and not in a burning form.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce, ed. *Historia*, p. lx, thinks the author is indebted to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Bk. XI, Ch. 8-10, for the name Gormundus.

<sup>38</sup> In the standard bestiaries a wild boar is not mentioned as having smoking foam and fire issuing from its mouth. Perhaps for the description of the boars here and the one which the Knight killed in Milocrates' forest, the author had in mind the wild boar sent by Diana to ravage the dominion of Oeneus. This one emitted boiling foam and fire from its mouth. See Ovid, Metamorphoses VIII.287-89.

<sup>39</sup> The Lapithae were a savage mountain race living near Olympus in Thessaly. At the marriage of Pirithous the king of the Lapithae and Hippodame, the Centaurs were among the guests. Eurytus, one of the Centaurs, became intoxicated at the feast and out of lust attempted to do violence to the bride. The other Centaurs following his example seized whatever girls suited their fancy, and the Lapithae came to the rescue. In the dreadful conflict which followed, many on both sides were slain, but the Lapithae came out victorious. See Ovid, Metamorphoses XII.210-535.

<sup>40</sup> The Cyclopes, the race of giants with the single eye in the middle of the forehead, had their workshop under Mount Etna, where they forged thunderbolts for Jupiter, arms and armor for famous heroes such as Aeneas, and other wonders such as the walls of Pluto. See Vergil, Aeneid VIII.416-53 and VI.630-31.



<sup>41</sup>J. D. Bruce, ed. Historia, p. 84, n. 5, says that some words appear to be lost, even though the manuscript shows no break here. I have supplied in brackets the sense of what I think may be missing.

<sup>42</sup>Demetia was a territory in southern Wales and western England occupied at one time apparently by a tribe called Demetae. Caerleon itself is located in southern Monmouthshire in southeast Wales. Bruce in Historia, p. lvi, n. 1 and Roger Loomis in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1959), p. 475 observe that our author took much of this description from Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (Bk. III, Ch. 10; and Bk. IX, Ch. 12). For a comparison of the two passages in Geoffrey with our author's description, see my discussion of the setting of the romance in Chapter IV.

<sup>43</sup>For a discussion of the name Gwendolen, see the section on the queen's taunt and the combat at the ford in Chapter III.

<sup>44</sup>The word which I translated as "coins" is "myriadas." This is the only place in the romance where the word occurs (Historia, ed. Bruce, p. 86). I arrived at the meaning through the synonym used elsewhere: "aureis" and "aureos" (p. 87) and "aurei" (p. 88). This synonym is evidently the word which Bruce interprets as "bridle bits" in his summary of the romance in Historia, p. lxxiv. "Bridle bit" is a meaning of aurea, but the word in the romance is the masculine aureus, one meaning of which is "gold coin." Three bridle bits would be an illogical gift not only because the Knight captures merely two horses, but because the author later remarks that the two horses sent to the queen have all their trappings (p. 88). I see three possible explanations for "myriadas": (1) If myriada means summa 'a sum of money' (see Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum), perhaps the word could have been used for individual coins; (2) there may have been a gold coin with the nickname myrias 'ten thousand piece,' although I could not verify this historically; (3) "myriadas" was a scribal or editor's error for minetas, an alternate spelling of monetas 'coins,' which through careless writing could have been interpreted as myriadas.

<sup>45</sup>The text reads "moram parum uerberat," but I have adopted the reading suggested by Pio Rajna: "moram parumper habuerat." See his "Sono il De Ortu," p. 17.

This would make a smoother transition in thought, and "habuerat" would parallel the pluperfect tense of the verb in the second half of the sentence. A literal translation of "moram parum uerberat": "he is complaining about (cursing) the delay a little."

<sup>46</sup>Evidently "anulum" ("ring") was inadvertently omitted from this sentence by the scribe.

<sup>47</sup>I agree with Bruce that one or more words is missing after "discrimini" (Historia, ed. Bruce, p. 90). The word "minanti" ("threatening") would clarify the sentence.

<sup>48</sup>The Latin reads "A patre igitur filio, ab auo nepote agnito," the second half of which would probably best be translated "from nephew to acknowledged uncle." However, I think the second part should have read "ab auo nepoti agnito," which is the interpretation I used in my translation. The latter reading would parallel the word arrangement of the first half, and the preposition would not be incoherently separated from its object.





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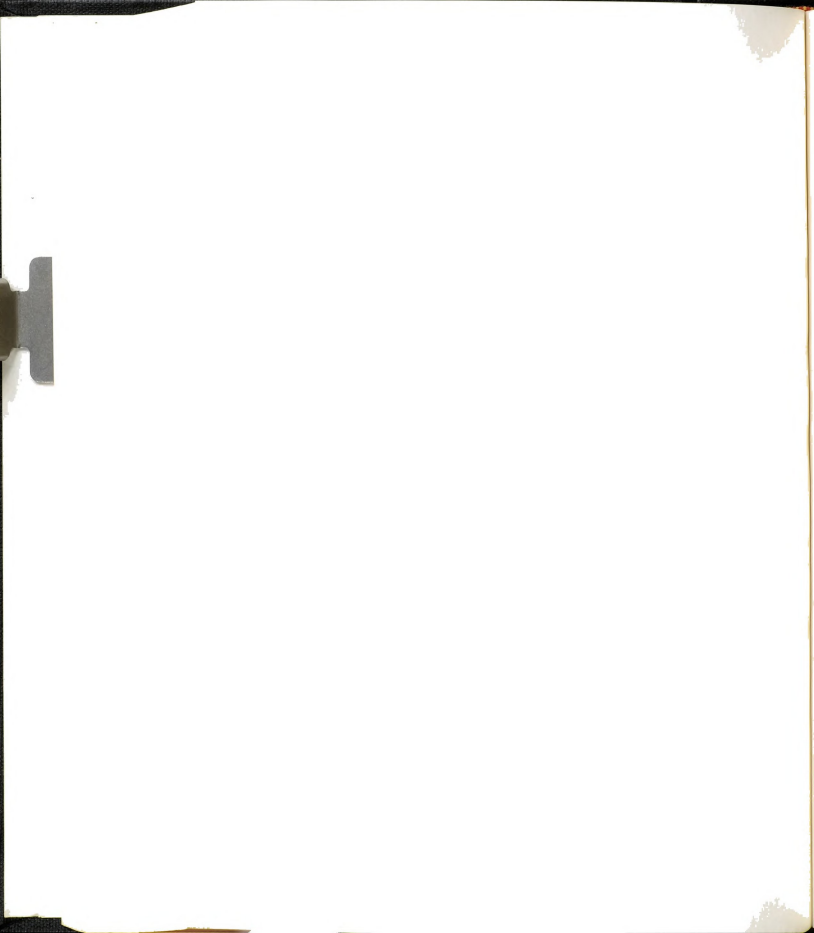
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