22ᵉ CONGRÈS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ INTERNATIONALE ARTHURIENNE, 22ⁿᵈ CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARTHURIAN SOCIETY
Rennes 2008

Actes   Proceedings

Réunis et publiés en ligne par
Denis Hüe, Anne Delamaire et Christine Ferlampin-Acher

IS MERLIN ALWAYS RIGHT?

Some months ago I was watching a BBC television programme from Glastonbury. The presenter, setting the local scene, said, "The Holy Grail came to the attention of King Arthur." That set me thinking: yes, we know it did – but where and when? How much is Arthur prepared for events at the beginning of the Vulgate *Queste*? In this paper I want to combine the question with a look at some points made by Richard Trachsler in Chapter Two of his book *Clôtures du cycle arthurien*.[1]

Chrétien's Perceval doesn't return to report on his quest, so Arthur lacks even the Hermit Uncle's limited explanation.[2] In the First Continuation, Gauvain is keen to tell Arthur about finding his son, not about his Grail visit.[3] Throughout the Prose *Lancelot*, various characters are given information, but not all report back to Court, and even they can be selective. Lancelot does tell Arthur about the Grail quest to come, the Good Knight, and the occupation of the Perilous Chair, details which are repeated by the hermit at the very end of the *Lancelot*.[4] However, nowhere do we hear anyone tell Arthur what the Grail is, and why he has found himself presiding over a Round Table with a Perilous Chair in the first place.

There is a controversial part of the Robert de Boron cycle, which has long suffered from the manner of its editorial presentation. This is the "link" passage leading from the *Merlin* into the text known as the Didot-

---

[1] Richard Trachsler, *Clôtures du cycle arthurien: Etude et textes*, Publications romanes et françaises 215 (Geneva: Droz, 1996), Ch. 2, "Perceval, Sire del Graal. Du *Conte du Graal* au *Perceval* en prose," 33–65.

[2] *Chrétien de Troyes: Le Roman de Perceval ou Le Conte du Graal*, ed. Keith Busby (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), vv. 6387–6431.

[3] William Roach, ed., *The Continuations of the Old French* Perceval *of Chrétien de Troyes. Volume I: The First Continuation. Redaction of Mss* T V D (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1949, repr. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1965), see Introduction, lx, summary of Episode 8, for the line numbers of the manuscripts in which the episode occurs.

[4] *Lancelot*, ed. Alexandre Micha, Vol. VI (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1980), CI, 3; CVIII, 16.

Perceval, or the *Perceval en prose*.[5] Could I suggest we call it the cyclic *Perceval*, to avoid confusion with the 1530 printed prose *Perceval*, and so that we can use the terms Didot (BnF, nouv. acq. fr. 4166, ex Didot) and Modena (Modena, Biblioteca Estense, E.39) strictly for the two cyclic manuscripts themselves, with their many differences? Here I must refute my own first publication, in which I claimed that the Robert de Boron cycle was the work of a single author.[6] I now believe that the three sections, *Joseph*, *Merlin*, and *Perceval*, were composed by three different people.[7]

The story told by the *Merlin* ends, in Alexandre Micha's edition, immediately after Arthur's coronation, with the statement that he held the kingdom for a long time in peace.[8] Knowledge of the legend would have indicated that this was hardly the case: in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace there are Saxons to be fought very soon,[9] and the *Merlin* author seems to be closing his own work in a way that invites continuation. Some scribes, when making additions, revised to indicate that all was certainly not peaceful: for example, Yale 227 (leading into the Vulgate *Merlin* Continuation) has "Et tient le roiaum[e] de logres mes ce ne fu mie longement em pes,"[10] while Didot changes more neutrally to "lonc tens mult amplez".[11] It was also,

---

[5] *The Didot* Perceval*: According to the Manuscripts of Modena and Paris*, ed.William Roach (Philadephia, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1941, repr. Geneva, Slatkine Reprints, 1977) (= *DP* hereafter). The "link" passage is included in Appendix A, 281–307, but begins during lines 235 (Modena) and *417* (Didot) on p. 301. It is also published in *Robert de Boron,* Merlin*: Roman du XIIIᵉ siècle*, ed. Alexandre Micha, Textes littéraires français (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1980), see Appendix, 293–303. Micha discusses arguments relating to whether the "link" passage belongs to the *Merlin* or the *Perceval* in his *Étude sur le <Merlin> de Robert de Boron: Roman du XIIIᵉ siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 19–24.

[6] Linda Gowans, "New Perspectives on the *Didot-Perceval*," *Arthurian Literature* 7 (1987): 1–22.

[7] Linda Gowans, "What did Robert de Boron really write?," *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P.J.C. Field*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler, Arthurian Studies 57 (Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2004), 15--28.

[8] *Robert de Boron,* Merlin, ed. Micha (see n. 5), §91, l. 58.

[9] *Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of* De gestis Britonum *[Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright, Arthurian Studies 69 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), see 192–201. *Wace's Roman de Brut, A History of the British: Text and Translation*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: Univ. of Exeter Press, 1999, revised edn. 2002), see 226–37.

[10] http://webtext.library.yale.edu/beinflat/pre1600.ms227.htm

[11] *DP*, 301. The scribe's amendment may not make the best sense, but it does seem to indicate an awareness that "en peis" was not necessarily fitting, even though the cyclic *Perceval* does not commence with rebellion and war.

presumably, desirable to rejoin the mainstream Arthurian legend by publicising Arthur's royal birth.[12]

It is hard to believe that the phrase "for a long time in peace" would originally have been instantly followed by an account of events later the same day, which is what happens in the "link" passage, and that is just one of the reasons why it seems unlikely to have been an ending to the *Merlin*, and is more probably the start of the cyclic *Perceval*. The manuscripts don't help, as neither Didot nor Modena has a paragraph break either at "amplez"/"en pais" (respectively) or at the division made by William Roach, which I shall discuss shortly.

The passage tells how Merlin joins Arthur and his barons at court, immediately announces Arthur's true parentage, and (in the spirit of the *Merlin*) leads Arthur to reaffirm Keu's appointment as seneschal. The barons tell Arthur that Merlin made the Round Table in his father's time, and they advise him to honour his father's prophet. Merlin calls a private meeting with Arthur, Keu, and Gauvain, and explains the connection between the Round Table and Joseph's Grail Table. He then reveals a prophecy about Arthur's destined rule of France and Rome, stressing that Arthur must first ensure the Round Table is exalted in the way he is about to tell him. Merlin then goes into more detail about the Grail, revealing that it had been brought by Christ to Joseph in prison. He explains how Moÿs had persuaded Joseph to allow him to occupy the vacant place at Joseph's table and what had happened as a result, and that the Grail is now in the West with the sick Fisher King, who cannot be healed until a knight of the Round Table has become the most renowned in the world and has asked the right questions, after which the enchantments of Britain will cease and the prophecy will be fulfilled. All will come to pass, providing Arthur plays his part.

Merlin, rejecting Arthur's plea to stay, returns to Northumberland, leaving Arthur thoughtful. Here Roach, followed by Bernard Cerquiglini,[13] makes his break between the *Merlin* and the *Perceval*, but it is an awkward one, and not only because Merlin's words have a close relationship with

---

[12] This is known from the start in the Prose *Lancelot*; see *Lancelot do Lac: The non-cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. Elspeth Kennedy, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), I: 3.

[13] *Le roman du Graal: Manuscrit de Modène, par Robert de Boron*, ed. Bernard Cerquiglini, 10/18, Bibliothèque médiévale (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1981), see 197.

what is to come, relevant to no other continuation. The passage that follows (quoted below) encapsulates Arthur's qualities and subsequent fame. It leads, especially closely in Modena, into the account of Alain le Gros' death and Perceval's arrival at court, so that Roach has to print the Modena passage twice, once in his appendix giving the link passage, and once at the very beginning of his edition of the *Perceval*. Here he (but not Cerquiglini, who presents the whole Modena manuscript in sequence) has actually removed "Et" from "Et saciés bien":

> Et saciés bien que onques rois ausi grant cort ne ausi grant feste ne fist comme fist Artus. Ne onques ne fu rois qui tant se fesist amer a ses barons com il fist; et il meïsmes estoit li plus biaus hom et li mieldres cevaliers que on seüst. Et por çou que il estoit si vaillans rois, et por les biaus dons que il dounoit, si estoit il si renoumés que on ne parloit par tot le mont se de lui non, si que toute li chevalerie repairoit a se cort por lui veïr et por son acointement. Ne on ne prisoit chevalerie que nus hom faisoit, se il n'eüst ançois esté un an de la maisnie Artu, et il n'eüst u mance u pegnon de ses armes; si que par tout le mont en parla on.

> (*DP*, Modena, 307, Appendix A, "link passage", and 139, opening of *Perceval* edition, deleting "Et" and beginning "Saciés.... The passage on p. 139 is printed in italics.)

Page 139 continues in roman:

Et en vinrent les noveles la u Alains li Gros conversoit ...

> Et sachiez que oncques rois ausi grant corz ne tint come fist Artus, ne il ne fust oncques rois qui tant se feïst amer a ses barons come il fist. Et il estoit li plus biaux hons et le meillors chevaliers de son cors que l'en seüst, et por ce qu'il estoit si vaillant rois et por son bele acointement et por son biaux paller et por les beaux dons que il donoit, fust il si renomez que home ne pallot par tot le munde fors solement del roi Artus. Si que tote chevalerie reperoit a sa cort por lui veoir et por son bel acointement. Et home ne prisot chevalerie que nus hons feïst et il n'eüst esté de meigniee au riche roi Artus a ce que il estoit partout de si haut pris et de si haut afaire que il estoit par tot le monde renomez.

> (*DP*, Didot, 307, Appenxdix A, "link passage".)

Page 139 opens the *Perceval* with:

> En cel tens estoit le fiz Alein le Gros, donc vos avez oï paller
> ça en arrieres, petit enfes ...

In addition, Merlin's statement to Arthur in the Modena "link" passage that the Grail has been taken to Ireland, is matched at a slightly later point in Didot by a heavenly voice giving this information to Perceval's father, after what Roach considered the *Perceval* proper has begun.[14]

As Trachsler has pointed out, in a discussion of how the *Queste* and *Mort Artu* sections of the cyclic *Perceval* are related, from the beginning of the "link" passage Merlin tackles the connection between Arthurian linear history and Grail history.[15] I believe that the way he does so has profound consequences for Arthur. I mentioned earlier that Merlin, having ensured that Arthur knows right from the start that the Grail prophecy will interact with his own destiny, adds a proviso, expressed most strongly in Modena but also present in Didot, and in both cases within the disputed "link." He stresses that great good will come to Arthur "se tu le fais ensi com je t'ai ensagnié" (Modena).[16] Arthur must obey Merlin to obtain the full benefit of the latter's plan for Grail achievement and Arthurian glory – but the king has heard more revelation than instruction. In particular, he isn't actually told that the Perilous Chair will one day be occupied, nor is he given any detailed guidance about it. Merlin merely, by citing the fate of Moÿs, strikes fear into the young newly-crowned king.

This situation needs to be considered in conjunction with an earlier passage, within the *Merlin*, before Arthur's birth. Merlin clearly states to Uther that the one who will occupy the vacant place at his newly-founded table should first occupy the one where the Grail is.[17] For example, in Micha's base manuscript BnF f. fr. 747:

> et covendra a celui qui doit acomplir cest leu acomplir avant
> celui dou vaissel dou graal. (*Merlin*, ed. Micha, §49, ll. 79–80.)

Didot is very similar:

---

[14] *DP*, 305–06, ll. 318–20 (Modena); 139, ll. *5–8* (Didot).

[15] *Clôtures du cycle arthurien*, 46.

[16] *DP*, 306, l. 332.

[17] The handling of the "vacant place" passage supplied one of Alexandre Micha's principal criteria for distinguishing his "alpha" and "beta" families of *Merlin* manuscripts: see his "Les Manuscrits du *Merlin* en prose de Robert de Boron," I and II, *Romania* 78 (1957): 78–94; 145–74 (II: 153). See also *Merlin*, ed. Micha, xxviii–xxxiv.

> et covendra que cil qui amplir doit le leu vuit acomplisse celui
> avant ou li vessel du graal seit. (fol. 69 r., col. b.)

while Modena revises to little effect, with the Grail retaining priority:

> Et covenra celui qui emplir le doit qu'il ait esté la u li Graaus
> sert. (*Le roman du Graal*, ed. Cerquiglini, 161.)

Notice the word "covendra." Rather than uttering a firm directive, Merlin is using an impersonal construction to set out the required sequence of events, and with hindsight we could see just the slightest hint of the seer covering his own reputation.

In the cyclic *Perceval* Merlin's desired order of events is indeed reversed, as Perceval, supported by his fellow-knights, persuades Arthur, very much against the king's better judgement, to allow him to sit in the vacant place soon after his arrival at Court, and before his Grail quest.[18] Arthur has done what he thought was his best to carry out Merlin's plan for the Round Table, by holding the greatest ever Pentecost feast[19] – but now he is promptly assailed by a voice from Heaven for disobeying Merlin's instructions. In other words, the fault is considered not Merlin's for providing inadequate guidance, but Arthur's, and the rebuke is put in the strongest possible terms:

> Rois Artus, tu as faite la plus grande mesprison que onques
> rois qui en Bretagne fust fesist, car tu as trespassé le
> commandement que Merlins t'avoit ensagnié.
>
> (*DP*, Modena, 150, ll. 198–200.)

> Rois Artus, tu as fait la plus grant mesprison que oncques mais
> hons feïst, ne qui fust fait en Bretaigne, que tu as trespassé le
> comendement que Mellins t'avoit einsingnié.
>
> (*DP*, Didot, 150, ll. *171–74*.)

Perceval, unlike Moÿs in the *Joseph*, isn't swallowed up; he is saved, the voice tells Arthur, by the goodness of his lineage.[20]

---

[18] *DP*, 148–50.
[19] *DP*, 141–42.
[20] *DP*, 150.

This development raises interesting questions. Did the *Perceval* author consider that, with the support of a foreordained hero who had already sat at the Grail table and become Grail guardian, Arthur's last battle would surely have had a different outcome? Did he then decide to reverse the sequence without realising the implications for the *Merlin*'s central character? On the other hand, was the *Merlin* author aware of the way that the *Perceval* would develop matters? Was he involved in the planning of a cycle that would inevitably lead to an account of Arthur's downfall, but one in which Mordred is unambiguously the king's nephew, and there is no Gauvain-Lancelot feud? Arthur's personal involvement in the unfolding of tales of incest, adultery, and revenge is not present in the Robert de Boron cycle, but we can see that there is indeed an uncomfortable sense that the king is partly the hapless architect of his own fate. It also appears that the failure to tell Arthur about the precise agenda Merlin had once revealed to Uther is likely to be conscious authorial strategy: Merlin's vagueness in the "link" passage means that Arthur doesn't deliberately set out to disobey him.

Merlin's original sequence presents a different problem once the *Merlin* becomes part of the Vulgate Cycle and contradicts the story of Galahad. Certain manuscripts change the *Merlin* reading to indicate that the knight who will sit in the vacant place will accomplish the Grail adventures, without specifying which should come first. For example, Bonn University Library manuscript S 526 has:

> Et il couvenra qu'il acomplisse les aventures del Saint Graal.[21]

All of these manuscripts have Vulgate material, and none of them is in the group that includes the cyclic Didot and Modena.[22]

In the Didot "link" passage, Merlin promises to return to Arthur, while Modena's revising tendency anticipates too much in indicating that he cannot,[23] for much later he does come back, once the Grail quest has been

---

[21] *Le Livre du Graal*, tome I. *Joseph d'Arimathie, Merlin, Les Premier Faits du roi Arthur*, éd. préparée par Daniel Poirion, publiée sous la direction de Philippe Walter, avec la collaboration d'Anne Berthelot, Robert Deschaux, Irène Freire-Nunez, Gérard Gros, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 476 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), see 697.

[22] See the references at n. 17 above.

[23] *DP*, 306.

achieved, to ensure that Arthur's court knows that Perceval is now lord of the Grail and has bid farewell to chivalry.[24]

Merlin, too, bids farewell to Arthur, and to prevent the knights doing the same, Keu (in Modena), or Keu and Gauvain (in Didot) remind Arthur of a prophecy by Merlin, who has never lied.[25] This is the one in the "link" passage.[26] Where in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, after the Roman challenge Hoel reminds Arthur of the Sibylline prophecy that three Britons would become rulers of Rome,[27] this time, when Arthur has only just been crowned, the Sibyl is replaced by Merlin, who in Didot however claims to be the third prophet, after queen Sibile and Solomon. According to Merlin, the prophecy had been made before Arthur's birth, and identified him as the third king in Britain who would become king of France and emperor of Rome. With prophesied apotheosis turning instead to tragedy, Trachsler, taking an overview of the trilogy, wonders, "est-ce que Merlin s'est trompé? est-ce que l'Histoire dément les paroles de l'infaillible devin?"[28]In other words, it may not have been a good idea to transfer to him a prophecy formerly associated with the long-ago Sibyl. I suggest that it was a necessary part of the author's plan; but in any event, the time has come to put matters to the test.

Arthur duly invades, conquers, and becomes king of France, with much ceremony. So far, so good. When the Roman challenge eventually occurs, Loth (rather than Hoel), like Keu and Gauvain before him, again recalls Merlin's prophecy. Modena keeps the Grail out of Loth's statement, but in Didot he says Merlin had indicated that "aprés l'ensenement dou Graal" Arthur would be "roi coroné de France et empereur de Rome."[29] It sounds promising – but Arthur is in trouble already, at the highest possible level, and Modena's painted room with its poignant warning from the Judgement of Paris[30] is scarcely needed. In both manuscripts, the Roman war concludes with the captured senators granting Rome to Arthur in exchange for their lives, but, as after three days Arthur prepares to go to

---

[24] *DP*, 243-44.
[25] *DP*, 244.
[26] DP, 303–04.
[27] *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (see n. 9), 218–219; *Wace* (see n. 9), 274–75. See also Julien Abed, "Sibylles en terres arthuriennes?," *Jeunesse et genèse* (see n. 36 below), 125–42, esp. 128 and refs. there cited.
[28] *Clôtures du cycle arthurien*, 47.
[29] *DP*, 261, ll. *1737–39* (Didot).
[30] *DP*, 258, cf. Trachsler, *Clôtures du cycle arthurien*, 49–50.

Rome, news comes of Mordred's treachery.[31] So, Arthur was indeed effectively lord of Rome for those three days. As Trachsler observes, the text is doing its best to bring him to his prophesied destiny, and this is the closest he has yet come.[32] In addition, Merlin's credibility is technically restored. Though the narrator warns his audience about Mordred,[33] Merlin says nothing to Arthur, and I believe this is intentional. It is noticeable that in both the *Queste* and the *Mort Artu* sections of the cyclic *Perceval*, Arthur receives a devastating blow just when he is apparently in tune with Merlin's plans: powerfully expressed divine anger when things go wrong after his splendid Pentecost gathering, and now Mordred's treachery just as Rome was within reach.

Despite the demands of the Arthurian story, however, one cannot help feeling that Merlin has a bit of a nerve to turn up right at the end to visit Blaise and Perceval (Blaise having gone first to break all the bad news).[34] It's not surprising that he arranges to retire into his *esplumoir*, nor that other *Merlin* continuators concur with the prose *Lancelot* in removing him at a much earlier stage.[35]

Both the Vulgate and the Post-Vulgate *Merlin* continuations have an early, though not immediate, announcement by Merlin of Arthur's parentage.[36] Neither of them needed an account of Perceval's Grail achievement, but the loss of the "link" passage which I believe originally occurred at the beginning of the cyclic *Perceval*, with information provided by Merlin to Arthur on his coronation day, bequeathed an enigmatic situation to the future cyclification process, leaving us unsure how, and how much, Arthur knows about what is in store for him. The excised material had motivated a specific version of his story which employed the heavenly

---

[31] *DP*, 272–73.

[32] *Clôtures du cycle arthurien*, 52.

[33] *DP*, 140, 265.

[34] *DP*, 277–78.

[35] Useful work on this topic has recently been produced by Adeline Leroy, "La fin de Merlin au Moyen Age: L'Esplumeoir et le tombeau," *L'Esplumeoir* 3 (Société Internationale des Amis de Merlin, 2004): 27–44; by Laurence Elisa Cousteix, "La fin de Merlin dans la littérature arthurienne: d'un crépuscule à l'autre," paper given at the 22nd International Arthurian Congress, Rennes, 2008; and in the volume edited by Koble (see n. 36 below).

[36] See, for example, *Le Livre du Graal*, I (n. 21 above), 776–81; *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, ed. Gilles Roussineau, 2 vols., Textes littéraires français (Geneva: Droz, 1996), I: 9–27. On the *Merlin* continuations generally, see Nathalie Koble, ed., *Jeunesse et genèse du royaume arthurien: Les Suites romanesque du Merlin en prose*, Medievalia (Orléans: Paradigme, 2007).

voice so prevalent in the *Joseph* part of the cycle,[37] but now used as something of a blunt instrument with which to batter Arthur on the direct authority of the Deity. The abandonment of this version in favour of one with incest and adultery could at least be said to have improved the psychological depth of the tragedy, but the cyclic *Perceval* does work, within its own parameters.

I realise that I am suggesting a one-time awareness of the *Perceval* rather wider than the manuscript survival might imply. In fact, there is some evidence for lost manuscripts, discarded along with the story they contained. A small part of the *Perceval* is incorporated into the Prose *Tristan*, both in manuscript BnF f. fr. 103[38] and in the early printed version;[39] a detail in the Modena account of Gauvain's death turns up in English Arthurian literature;[40] and the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Marucelliana, B.VI.24, a *Joseph* and *Merlin* studied by Fanni Bogdanow in 1996,[41] has an interesting mini-continuation to round off the story. After the "longuement en pais" statement it concludes with the following short passage (the gaps are unfortunately due to a hole in the manuscript):

> Mes puis revint Merlin et tesmoigne comment li rois Artus
> avoit esté fiz au roi Uterpandragon et a lla roine Yguerne entre
> lui [...] et puis par son conseill [...] la Table Reonde. Et li rois
> [...] sa bonté et par sa lar[gesse ...] sa chevalerie sormist desus
> [... chevale]rie dou siecle (f. 74a).[42]

Following Merlin's announcement, and the reference to the Round Table, the rest is hardly a reflection of the Vulgate *Merlin* continuation with its wars and strife, but it is not so distant from the Didot and Modena description of Arthur's qualities, generosity, personal chivalry and worldwide renown cited on p. 4 above.

---

[37] *Robert de Boron,* Joseph d'Arimathie*: A Critical Edition of the Verse and Prose Versions*, ed. Richard O'Gorman (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1995).

[38] The passage is published as Appendix B by Roach, *DP*, 309–13; see also his Introduction, 7–8.

[39] *Tristan 1489*, with Introductory note by C. E. Pickford (London: Scolar Press, 1978).

[40] See Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003) 54–55.

[41] Fanni Bogdanow, "Un manuscrit méconnu de la mise en prose du *Joseph-Merlin* de Robert de Boron (*Florence, B. Maruc.*, B.VI.24)," *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* 26 (1996): 205–45.

[42] Bogdanow, 239.

Fanni Bogdanow believes there has been contamination between manuscripts originally belonging to different groups, and that the scribe (or that of his exemplar) had access to at least two copies of the *Joseph* and *Merlin*.[43] A confused reference to one "Gautier Map de Munbelliart"[44] confirms that there was Vulgate material around, but what else could have been present?[45]

Like the *Merlin* this paper is open to continuation, but, similarly, it needs to reach its own conclusion. Is Merlin always right? Technically, by the careful use of the proviso that he is explaining what is *planned* to happen, he manages to be – but he does leave loose ends, to be stumbled over by an all too human King Arthur.

LINDA GOWANS
SUNDERLAND, ENGLAND

---

[43] Bogdanow, 238.

[44] Bogdanow, 240. The scribe, or his exemplar, has conflated Gautier de Montbelliart/Monbeliart of Robert de Boron's prose *Joseph* (O'Gorman's edition, 335 [see n. 37 above]) and Walter Map, to whom certain manuscripts attribute parts of the Vulgate Cycle.

[45] Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale manuscript 255, has blank space left after the end of the *Merlin* and before the *Lancelot* (six lines at the end of fol. 135e, following a conventional *Merlin* ending "lonc tens et en pes"; the whole column of 135f; and fol. 136r/v), insufficient for either of the *Merlin* continuations, and one wonders what, if anything, it was intended to contain – but there is also a blank (fol. 100v) between the *Estoire del Saint Graal* (which finishes on the penultimate line of fol. 100r) and the *Merlin*. A digitisation of the manuscript is online at: http://bbsia.cetm-celam.uhb.fr/