

Perceval's Lament
Medieval music around the myth of the Grail

[1] **Tannhäuser** (mid-13th century): Staeter dienst, der ist guot

Staeter dienst, der ist guot,
den man schoenen frowen tuot,
als miner han getan:
der muoz ich den salamander bringen.
Einez hat si mi geboten,
daz ich schicke ir abe den Roten
hin von Provenz in daz lant
ze Nüerenberc: so mac mir wol gelingen
Und die Tuonouwe über Rin,
füege ich daz, so tuot si, swes ich muote.
danc so habe diu frowe min,
sist geheizen guote.
Spriche ich ja, si sprichet nein
sus so hellen wir enein.
heia hei,
sist ze lange gewesen uz miner huote.

Mich froit noch baz ein lieber wan,
den ich von der schoenen han:
So der Miuseberc zerge
Sam der sne, so lonet mir diu reine.
Alles, des min herze gert,
des bin ich an ir gawert,
minen willen tuot si gar,
buwe ich ir ein hus von helfenbeine,
Swa si wil uf einen se,
so habe ich ir friuntschaft und ir hulde.,
bringe ich ir von Galile
her an alle schulde
einen berc, gefüege ich saz,
heia hei,
daz waere aller dienste ein übergulde.
Ja hiute und iemer ja...

Ein bounstan in Indian,
Groz, den wil si von mir han.
Minen willen tuot si gar,
seht, ob ich irz allez her gewinne.
Ich muoz gewinnen ir den gral,
des pflac her Parcival,
und den apfel, den Paris
gap dur minne Venus de gütinne,
Und der mantel, des besloz
gar di frowen, diu ist unwandelbaere,
dannoch wil si wunder groz,
daz ist mir worden swaere:
ir ist nach der arke we,
diu deslozzen hat NOe,

Tannhäuser (mid-13th century): It is good to render unfaltering service

It is good to render unfaltering service
to beautiful ladies —
as I have to mine.
To her I must bring the salamander.
Another thing she has bidden me do
is divert the Rhône
from Provence to Nuremberg
and the Danube across the Rhine —
then I can be successful with her;
if I bring that to pass, she'll do whatever I want.
My thanks to my lady,
who is called good.
If I say "yes", she says "no" —
that's how well we agree.
Heia hei!
She has been free of my protection and guidance for too long!

I rejoice even more in a cherished hope
the beautiful lady has given me:
when the Mäuseberg dissolves like snow,
then she, pure as she is, will reward me.
Everything my heart desires,
she will grant me.
She will do all I wish,
if I build her an ivory house
where she'd like one, floating on a lake;
then I'll enjoy her love and her favour.
If, undeservedly,
I bring here to her from Galilee
a mountain on which Adam once sat —
if I were to do that,
heia hei,
that would be a service to trump them all.
"Yes" today, and ever more: "yes" ...

She wants me to get her a large tree,
which grows in India.
You see, she'll do whatever I want,
if I obtain it for her.
And I must get her the Grail,
which was guarded by my lord Parsifal,
and the apple that Paris gave
to the goddess Venus as a love token,
and the cloak that could only be worn
by a faithful and constant woman.
In addition, she wants something absolutely amazing,
which makes my heart sink:
she longs for the ark
that sheltered Noah.

heia, hei
heia, hei
braehte ich die, wie liep ich danne waere!
Ja hiute und iemer ja...

Heia hei!
Were I to bring that, how lovesome I would be then!
"Yes" today, and ever more: "yes" ...

[2] **Wolfram von Eschenbach** (1170-1220): Wolframs goldener Ton (Instrumental)

[3] **Chrétien de Troyes** (1160-1190): D'amor, qui ma tolu a moi

D'amors, qui m'a tolu a moi
n'a soi ne me viaut retenir,
me plaing einsi qu'adés otroi
que de moi face son pleisir;
et si me repuis tenir
que ne m'an plaingne, et di por quoi,
car ciaus qui la traissent voi
sovant a lor joie venir,
et j'i fail par ma bone foi.

S'Amors por essaucier sa loi
viaut ses anemis convertir,
de ses anemis convertir,
de sans li vient, si con je croi,
qu'as suens ne puet ele faillir;
et je, qui ne me puis partir
de celi, vers cui me soplai,
mon cuer, qui suens est, li anvoi;
mes de neant la cuit servir
se ce li rant que je li doi.

Dame, de ce que vostre bon sui,
dites moi; se gre m'an savez?
Nenil, s'j'onques vos conui,
Ainz vos poise, quant vos m'avez.
Et ouis que vos ne me volez,
donc sui je vostre par enui;
mes se ja devez de nului
merci avoir, si me sofrez,
car je ne puis autrui.

Onques del bevrage ne bui,
don Tristans fu anpoisonez,
mes plus me fet amer que lui
fins cuers et bone volantez.
Bien ant doit estre miens li grez,
qu'ains de rien esforciez n'an fui,
fors de tant, que mes iauz an crui,
par cui sun an la voie antrez,
don ja n'istrai n'ains n'i recru.

[4] **Rigaut de Berbezilh** (1140-1162): Atressí com Persavaus el temps que vivia (Instrumental)

[5] Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220): Was sol ein Keyser one recht?

Was sol ein keyser one recht?
Ein babest on bar munge?
Was sol ein kung on milten müt?
Ein fürste one scham?

Was sol ein munt so reselecht
darynn ein falsche zunge,
die got auch mit geloben kan?
Sie macht gesunden lam!

Was sol eingraff, der keiner ern wil walten?
Was ein werder dintsman, der sich mit schanden neret?
Was sol ein ritter, der sin tage mit armut hie verzeret?

Sit man nu hazzet are muot.
so waer ich gerne riche,
daz man mich bi den hochgeborn
ein wenicone scham?

Got der zerteilet siniu guot
der welt vil ungeliche
daz maniger hiutean win an korn
ist armer danne vert

Ach got, daz welnt die richen niht besinnen
die mach uns daz ende guot durch dine namen dri!
Swaz vor eim jare guldin was, daz ist nu worden bli.

Swer nu wil wider machen golt,
daz worde ist zebli,
dem wil ich mine lere tuon
wolt er ez han für guot:

Der si gotes muoter holt
und forste an den frien,
gein sinen armen friunden sol
er tragen milten muot.

Ellenden gast sol er friuntlichen grüezen
durch ein got und ouch diu muoter sin und al diu welt im holt
swaz vor worden was ze bli, daz wir dann wider golt

[6] Anonymous English (c. 1270): Fowles in the frith

Fowles in the frith,
the fisshes in the flood,
and I mon waxe wood
much sorwe I walke with
for beste of boon and blood.

Anon.: What good is an emperor without legitimacy?

What good is an emperor without legitimacy,
a pope without compassion?
What good is a king without a generous disposition,
a prince with no sense of shame?

What good is a rosy-lipped mouth
if within is a lying tongue
which, moreover, cannot praise God?
It makes what is healthy dumb!

What good is a count who does not wish to command?
What good is a freeman who cannot maintain his honour for a single day?
What good an excellent servant who supports himself with vice?
What good is a knight living out his days here in poverty?

Since poverty is unpopular nowadays,
I would like to be rich,
so that the nobly born would receive me
without being ashamed.

God distributes his benefits
very unevenly,
so that many a man, without wine or wheat,
is poorer now than he was last year.

O God, the rich, who wish to get to heaven through virtue
and love of honour, don't want to recognise that.
Lord, in your triune name, bring us to a good end!
Whatever was made of gold a year ago has now turned to lead.

To anyone who wants to turn back into gold,
what has become leaden,
I would like to give some instruction,
if it please them:

Let them serve the mother of God
and disport themselves with freemen;
they should be generously disposed
towards their poor friends.

They should welcome strangers cordially
for the sake of the one God and his mother and all who are well-disposed towards him.
Whatever had previously become leaden would then become gold again.

[7] **Chrétien de Troyes** (1160-1190): Perceval's Lament (D'amor, qui ma tolu) (Instrumental)

[8] **Walter von der Vogelweide** (c. 1200): Under der linden (Instrumental)

[9] **Hildegard von Bingen** (1098-1179): Karitas habundat

Karitas habundat in omnia
de imis excellentissima
super sidera atque amantissima
in omnia quia summo regi
osculum pacis dedit.

[10] **Walter von der Vogelweide** (c. 1200): Palästinalied

Álrêrst lébe ich mir werde,
sît mîn sündic ouge siht
daz here lant und ouch die erde,
der man sô vil êren giht.
ez ist geschehen, des ich ie bat:
ích bin komen an die stat,
dâ got menschlichen trat.

Schoeniu lant, rîch unde hêre,
swaz ich der noch hân gesehen,
sô bist dûs ir aller êre.
waz ist wunders hie geschehen!
daz ein magt ein kint gebar,
hêre über áller engel schar,
wáz daz niht ein wunder gar?

Hie liez er sich reine toufen,
daz der mensche reine sî.
dô liez er sich hie verkoufen,
daz wir eigen wurden fri.
anders waeren wir verlorn.
wól dir, spér, kriuze únde dorn!
wê dir, heiden, dáz ist dir zorn!

Dô ér sich wolte über úns erbarmen,
dô leit er den grimmen tót,
ér vil rîch über úns vil armen,
daz wir komen úz der nôt.
daz in dô des niht verdrôz,
dást ein wunder alze grôz,
aller wunder úbergênôz.

[11] **Hildegard von Bingen** (1098-1179): Laus Trinitati

Laus trinitati que sonus et vita
ac creatrix omnium in vita ipsorum est
et que laus angelice turbe
Et mirus splendor archanum
que hominibus ignota sunt est

Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1200): Song of Palestine

For the very first time,
I am satisfied with my life,
since my sinful eyes have seen
the noble land and the soil
that is held in such great honour.
What I have always prayed for has come about:
I have reached the place,
where God walked the earth as a man.

Of all the beautiful, rich and noble lands
that I have seen up until now,
you are the most glorious.
What a miracle took place here!
That a maiden gave birth to a child,
who was lord of all the angelic hosts,
was that not wholly miraculous?

Here he, who was pure, underwent baptism,
so that mankind might be pure.
Then he allowed himself to be sold here,
so that we bondmen might be freed.
Otherwise we would have been lost.
Blessed be the spear, cross and crown of thorns!
Woe to you who are heathen — it is displeasing to you!

When he was moved to have mercy on us,
he, who was rich and exalted above us, who were very poor,
suffered the pain of death,
so that we might escape calamity.
That he was pleased to do that is a great miracle,
that exceeds all others.

et que in omnibus vita est.

[12] Anonymous French (13th century): La Ultime Estampie Royale. (Instrumental)

[13] Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220): Do man dem edelen syn getzeit

Do man dem edelem syn getzeit
Von durn gelant sluc
By daz wazzer of daz velt.
Da quam eyn kramer den ich hohen prise.
Syn schyrmetch was baldekyn.
Vur der vannen waz mac da ynne veylesyn.
Man sach da da nicht darunder saz der wise.
Her iach swer wise myt myr koufen wil
Hye ist veile eyn vremdez kunder.
Daz man myt ougen nye gesach,
Noch eymmer me gesicht der milde vurste sprach,
Wie gist duz myr ich koufiz durch eyn wunder.

Du wolueram von Eschenbach
Des edelen ritterschaft von Hennerberch ich sach
An dich geleit myt rosse, unde myt gewande
Of eyner groner wisen breyt
Ich tugenthafte Scriber truoc daz selbe kleit
Nu urage, ob ich vursten tugent ie irkande.
Der also gar were wandels vry, also der grabe reyne:
Da by so hat hie werden rat,
Herre unde lant von ym in grozen tugenden stat
Von Ostheym den getruwen muoz meyne.

[14] Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1200): Ich saz uf eime steine

Ich saz uf eime steine,
und dahte bein mit beine;
dar uf satz ich den ellenbogen;
ich hete in mine hant gesmogen
daz kinne und ein min wange.
do dâhte ich mir vil ange,
wie man zer werlte solte leben:
deheinen rât kond ich gegeben,
wie man driu dinc erwurbe,
der deheinez niht verdurbe.
diu zwei sint êre und varnde guot,
der ietwederz dem andern schaden tuot,
daz dritte ist gotes hulde,
der zweier übergulde.
die wolte ich gerne in einen schrîn.
jâ leider desn mac niht gesîn,
daz guot und wertlich êre
und gotes hulde mêre
zesamene in ein herze komen.
sîg unde wege sint in benomen:
untriuwe ist in der sâze,

Anon.: When the Landgrave of Thuringia's tent

When the Landgrave of Thuringia's tent
was pitched on the field by the river,
there came a trader whom I praise highly.
His protective awning was of Baghdad silk.
shot through with gold. What merchandise might be enclosed therein?
It was impossible to see — under it sat the man, who was nobody's fool.
He said: if any would trade with me, I have here for sale a strange beast,
such as no one has ever set eyes on,
nor ever will. The liberal prince said:
"On what terms will you let me have it? I'll buy it out of curiosity."

Anon. When, Wolfram von Eschenbach
When, Wolfram von Eschenbach,
I saw my lord of Henneberg
tourneying with you
on a broad, green meadow,
I, a virtuous scribe, wore the same adornment.
Now consider whether I ever encountered princely virtue
as unwavering as that of the noble count;
it has secured the welfare of all here;
lords and lands enjoy great honour because of him.
I am talking about my faithful lord of Ostheim.

Walther von der Vogelweide: I sat on a stone

I sat cross-legged
on a stone,
with my elbow supported on my leg:
and my chin and one cheek
resting on my hand.
Then I thought very deeply
about how one ought to live in the world.
I could give no counsel
as to how one might obtain three things,
without any of them being forfeit.
Two of them are social prestige and possessions,
which are at odds with each other,
the third is God's favour,
which is more valuable than the other two;
I would like to have that in a treasure chest!
Sadly, it can no longer be the case,
that wealth and social prestige
and God's favour
can come together in one heart.
They have been denied the paths and roads:
disloyalty lies in ambush,

gewalt vert ûf der strâze;
fride unde reht sint sêre wunt.
diu driu enhabent geleites niht,
diu zwei enwerden ê gesunt.

violence openly travels the road;
peace and justice lie sorely wounded.
Unless those two are restored,
the other three have no escort.

English translation by Susan Baxter