The Enfances of Perceval in the Prose Tristan

La biographie de Perceval le Gallois a été maintes fois étoffée et remaniée par les auteurs médiévaux, et c’est à juste titre que la critique moderne a consacré de nombreuses études au devenir du personnage. Dans ce contexte, le Tristan en prose est toutefois rarement pris en considération et n’a suscité que fort peu d’intérêt en tant que jalon dans le développement du héros. Notamment la version courte, qui présente les enfances de Perceval dans une forme différente de celle de ses sources, Le Conte du Graal de Chrétien et le Lancelot en prose, mérite un examen plus attentif. En fait cette version du Tristan combine pour la première fois les deux traditions antérieures, en présentant Perceval aussi bien comme un enfant naïf que comme un jeune homme sérieux, digne de devenir un héros du Graal. Elle représente ainsi une des dernières tentatives médiévales d’expérimenter avec les possibilités qu’offraient les traditions antérieures concernant le personnage. Tout en examinant en détail ces nouvelles enfances de Perceval, le but de cet article voudrait montrer leur importance pour la compréhension de la genèse des différentes proses arthuriennes.

Not since 1932 when Alfons Hilka published the text of the childhood and youth of Perceval as found in Ms. B.N.f.fr. 757 of the Prose Tristan, comparing it to the corresponding section of the Prose Lancelot, has the Tristan excited much interest among critics as a phase in the development of Perceval as an Arthurian character. Antoinette Saly does not mention it in her study of texts on «Les ‹Enfances Perceval›»2, Arthur Groos and Norris Lacy do not include it among the seemingly exhaustive list of medieval Perceval texts discussed in their introduction to Perceval/Parzival: a Casebook3, and Lacy did not mention it in his paper on Perceval given at Utrecht in the summer of 20054. The only criticism in over seventy years to be interested in the Perceval of the prose Tristan is a brief section of Fanni Bogdanow’s 1973 article entitled «The transformation of the role of Perceval in some thirteenth century prose romances»5.

Yet both forms of the Tristan, that is the short form and the various versions of the longer form6, present the enfances of Perceval. The short form, commonly

1 Hilka 1932.
2 Saly 1999.
5 Bogdanow 1973: 55-57.
6 Emmanuèle Baumgartner has identified 3 versions of the long form: Version II, exemplified by Ms. B.N.f.fr. 335-36, Version III containing interpolations from the Vulgate Cycle, which Ms. Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2542 certainly does, though it is not absolutely clear whether Baumgartner actually means to include it among the manuscripts of this version, and Version IV, a later version heavily interpolated from a variety of sources and found in Ms. B.N.f.fr. 99, Chantilly Musée Condé 645-6-7, St Petersburg Rossijskaya Nacional’naja Biblioteka Fr.F.V. XII.2. and New York, Pierpont Morgan 41. On these versions, cf. Baumgartner 1975: 53-62 and 67-76.

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known as Version I, will hitherto be referred to as the Tristan 1. It is exemplified by Ms. B.N.f.fr. 757 of which four out of the projected five volumes have been published by Champion under the direction of Philippe Ménard. The long versions, whether interpolated or not, will be referred to collectively as the Tristan 2. The long form is by far the more widespread. Only one of its versions has been edited, the one generally considered as the Vulgate, exemplified by Ms. Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 2542 which has been published by Droz, again under the direction of Philippe Ménard.

In the Tristan 2, the arrival of Perceval at court and his subsequent dubbing are narrated twice: in volume IV and again in volume VI of the Droz edition. The second of these is preceded by scenes of Perceval’s childhood. This whole section, however, is part of a long interpolation from the prose Lancelot that relates among other episodes the visits of Lancelot and Bohort to the Grail castle. Though the interpolation is to be found in a large number of the manuscripts, it by no means occurs in all. The only reference to the young Perceval that is common to all manuscripts of the Tristan 2 is exceedingly short, taking up hardly two pages of the edited text, and relates the arrival of Agloval at Arthur’s court, accompanied by Perceval whom he brings to be knighted. It includes only Agloval’s introduction of his brother to Arthur and his request, supported by Kay and the other knights, that Arthur make Perceval a knight. This Arthur does the following day, followed by feasting in his honour.

It is the Tristan 1 that should titillate Perceval fans and scholars. It presents in detail the childhood, knighting and departure of Perceval from Arthur’s court in a form that diverges significantly from the material of earlier romances. The framework of the episode is that of the corresponding section of the Lancelot: Agloval, in quest of Lancelot, arrives by chance at the house of his widowed mother who, out of grief, is raising her youngest son far from the world of chivalry that has killed her husband and two of her sons. He meets and admires Perceval, who accompanies him to Arthur’s court to become a knight. As in the Lancelot, their mother dies. Arthur dubs Perceval who during the subsequent feast is recognised by a hitherto mute damsel who is miraculously able to speak in order to address him as «serjant de Jesu Crist, vierge chevalier et net».

She seats him at the Round Table next to the Perillous Seat that will belong to the

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8 Menard (dir.) 1987-97.
10 It does not occur in the manuscripts of Version II as identified by Baumgartner and represented by Ms. B.N.f.fr. 335-36
11 Menard (dir.) 1987-97: 4/§140 l. 13-§142 l. 15.
Good Knight Galahad, and shortly thereafter, she dies. The episode ends with the departure of Perceval from court in quest of Lancelot, shamed by Kay and Mordred’s jibes that he prefers peace to war and that his shield has never seen a blow.

But the *Lancelot* is not the only intertext or «palimpsest», a term enlarged by Genette to include a literary text that has been overwritten and which Lacy uses to describe the intertextual relationship between Chrétien’s *Perceval* and the *Perlesvaus*. In the earliest of its Perceval scenes the *Tristan I* weaves back in material from Chrétien that the *Lancelot* laid aside. This is particularly interesting, as it shows the *Tristan I*’s concern for both completeness, i.e. to include all there is to tell about Perceval, and for correctness or *doxa*, i.e. to return to the early version that might well be the right one. Such a return to the material of the old familiar version in verse is not uncommon in Arthurian literature. For example, one later family of manuscripts of the prose *Lancelot* presents in place of the *Charrette* section a derhymed version of Chrétien’s *Le Chevalier de la charrette*, in order to incorporate certain elements that the Vulgate *Charrette* section did not contain. Of this, Annie Combes says that «Tout se passe … comme si les rédacteurs avaient choisi de «retourner» à Chrétien et de présenter une version plus fidèle au *Chevalier de la charrette*». Also, one later manuscript of the prose *Tristan*, Ms. *B.N.f.fr.* 103, has two instances of a return to the earlier verse versions of the Tristan legend. It includes the episode of Tristan’s combat with the dragon, not present in the prose versions, and, rather than presenting the death of Tristan in Cornwall at the hands of Mark, it situates his death in Brittany, caused by the jealousy of the second Iseut, in a form close to the versions of Béroul and the *Folie de Berne*.

At the moment of his appearance in the *Tristan I*, Perceval is Chrétien’s *nice*. Though greatly shortened, the scene in question is in many ways identical to the corresponding scene in Chrétien. In both cases, Perceval’s first encounter with a knight occurs while he is out alone throwing *javelots*, but instead of five knights, he sees only one, his brother Agloval. Here, too, bedazzled by the armour shining in the sun, he believes the knight to be an angel or even God and falls in prayer, a reaction which Agloval, like Chrétien’s chief knight, mistakes for fear. As in the earlier text, Perceval repeatedly cites his mother’s lessons: she has said that God and the angels are the most beautiful beings and she has told him to kneel and pray to God. Even the language of parts of this section is similar to that of Chrétien, though different enough to prevent the identification of a particular manuscript as source:

14 Lacy 2002: 98.
16 Combes 2001: 241. For more information on the version of the *Charrette* section of the *Lancelot* presented by this manuscript, cf. Combes 2001: 240-48 and Hult 2005
17 On the return to the verse version by this manuscript, cf. Baumgartner 1975: 77-83
Des gavelos que il avoit,
Aloit environ lui lanchant,
Une eure [arrière] et autre avant,
Une eure en bas et autre en haut,
(v. 96-99)\(^{18}\),

«Ne me dist pas ma mere fable
Qui me dist que li angle estoient
Les plus beles choses qui soient
Fors Diex qui est plus biax que tuit.»
(v. 142-45)

Perceval’s explanation that he was praying because he mistook Agloval for God provokes the comment «Tu n’es gaires plus sage qe beste» (§53, 2-3), echoing the comments of the other knights in Chrétien:

… Galois sont tot par nature
Plus fol que bestes en pasture. (v. 243-44).

Perceval’s questions of the knight are virtually identical in both texts: «N’iestes vos Diex?» (Chrétien, v. 174)/«Estez vous Diex ou angre?» (Tristan, §52, 33-34) and «Qui estes dont?» (Chrétien v. 175)/«qe estes vos dont?» (Tristan, §53, 5), and his reaction upon learning that the man is a knight is presented in similar terms:

«Ainc mais chevalier ne connui,
Fait li vallés, ne nul n’en vi
N’onoques mais parler n’en oï,
Mais vous estes plus biax que Diex
Ausy luisanz et ausi fais.»
(v. 176-81)

«Ja Diex ne m’aïst se oucuez mes vi chevalier ne parler n’en oï. Et puis qe chevalier sont si bel, je ne leroie por riens du monde, se je chevalier pooie ester, qe je ne le fusse, car chevalier est tote la plus belle chose qe je oucuez veïsse.» (§53, 6-10)

The Tristan continues, as does Chrétien, with Perceval’s interest in the knight’s armour. The knight’s explanation of the hauberk and Perceval’s reaction are the same, again couched in similar terms:

\(^{18}\) Busby (ed.) 1993.
\(^{19}\) Menard (dir.) 1997-2003, vol. 2.
The *Tristan* though has Perceval ask about only two pieces of armour before telling Agloval that the castle is the residence of his mother and that his name is Perceval. There is not, as in Chrétien, the comic *dialogue de sourds* where the knight repeats his question over and over and Perceval ignores him, fixated on every piece of armour in turn. It is by thus shortening the scene and restricting its comic force that the *Tristan* begins its move away from its source. After this point, it leaves Chrétien to model itself solely on the *Lancelot*.

Before further investigation of the originality of the *Tristan 1*, one important issue needs to be considered: the relationship between this version of the *Tristan* and the *Post-Vulgate Cycle*. There is, of course, no complete manuscript of this cycle, just numerous fragments and the Huth *Merlin* of which the text itself indicates that it is the first and a considerable part of the second sections of a tripartite work. Fanni Bogdanow has carried out the monumental task of piecing together the fragments of the third part which extends from the Grail Quest to the end of the Arthurian realm and which corresponds virtually word for word to the Portuguese translation of a French original published by Augusto Magne in 1944 as *A Demanda do Santo Graal*. The *Post-Vulgate* version of the *enfances* of Perceval form part of a long fragment that continues the narration of the Huth *Merlin*, and concerns the events of Lancelot’s madness and the subsequent quest for him by the other knights. It was edited by Bogdanow as «La Folie Lancelot». The fragment itself differs from corresponding sections of the *Lancelot* or the *Tristan 1*, yet the text of the *enfances*, from Agloval’s arrival at his mother’s to Perceval’s departure from Arthur’s court is identical to that of the corresponding section of *Tristan 1*. One must have a reasonable idea of which work has interpolated from the other, if one is to be able to conclude anything about the originality of the Tristanian *enfances* of Perceval.

Emmanuèle Baumgartner in her work *Le «Tristan en Prose». Essai d’interprétation d’un roman medieval*, believes that the fragment containing the *enfances* of

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21 *Magne* (ed.) 1944.
Perceval was interpolated from the *Post-Vulgate Cycle* and that the *Post-Vulgate* is the source of passages that resemble each other in both works. Bogdanow, however, has always claimed that the *Post-Vulgate* was written after the *Tristan 1*, from which it borrowed heavily. There are reasons for accepting the latter view, particularly for the part of the *Tristan 1* that contains this episode, based on the entire character of the *Post-Vulgate* which overall strives to resolve the incongruities of the texts of its predecessors, explaining the unexplained, answering the unanswered, clarifying the ambiguous, filling in blanks and removing discrepancies.

One such discrepancy directly involving the young Perceval that is not present in the *Post-Vulgate* is the eccentric scene of the three drops of blood in the snow presented in the *Tristan 1*. After leaving Arthur’s court in quest of adventure, Perceval, as in Chrétien, returns incognito near where Arthur and the court are in residence and is lost in reverie by the sight of the three drops of blood on the white background. The purpose of the scene is to give Perceval the opportunity to avenge himself against Kay and Mordred for calumniating him, but also to humiliate and wound Gauvain, who killed his father and brothers. Not only is there no real justification for Perceval’s presence near the court, not only does the scene present Perceval as vengeful, therefore less moral perhaps than one destined to be a Grail hero, but where in Chrétien the colours of the three drops of blood in the snow remind him of the complexion of his beloved Blanchefleur, in the *Tristan*, Perceval has no «amie». Yet in this scene he is reminded of the beauty of Helaine sans Per, his admirer in the Prose (Didot) *Perceval*. Nowhere else in the *Tristan* is there mention of Helaine nor of Perceval’s interest in a woman. The scene appears to have been just dropped into the text. If indeed the *Tristan 1* was used as a source for the *Post-Vulgate*, it would have been perfectly natural for the *Post-Vulgate* to have expurgated this scene just as it omits many other discrepancies that occur in its sources, in order to make its text a more unified, consistent whole.

No version of the prose *Tristan* that we possess is the original version of the prose text. Of that modern critics are quite certain. But what we cannot know is exactly what this original version contained. After having stated with regard to Löseth’s hypothesis of a common source for the episodes concerning the sons of King Pellinor in the *Tristan* and the the *Post-Vulgate* cycle (then known as the pseudo-Robert de Boron cycle), without attempting to justify her point of view, Baumgartner states that:

"le plus simple est sans doute de supposer que l’auteur de ce cycle (de ce fragment de cycle) les a inventées à partir des données du *Lancelot en prose* et que l’auteur de la version V.I. du *Tristan* les a à son tour insérées dans son récit."

23 **BAUMGARTNER 1975**: 44 and 65.  
24 **BAUMGARTNER 1975**: 41-52 and 60.  
26 **BAUMGARTNER 1975**: 42.
She later says that

Il est d’autre part évident que l’auteur de la *Queste* dite de Robert de Boron avait à sa disposition une version du *Tristan* puisqu’il fait état du séjour de Tristan et d’Iseut à la Joyeuse Garde, de l’invasion de Marc au royaume de Logres, de l’amour de Palamède pour Iseut etc.\(^{27}\)

thus avoiding confronting her readers with the enormous question as to whether scenes proper to the prose version of the Tristan, scenes that are either absent or that differ completely from the older verse tradition, could also have been invented by the *Post-Vulgate*, and thus giving the original form of the prose *Tristan* credit that it no doubt deserves. But according to her, the *Grail Quest* section of the *Tristan 2* interpolated from the *Post-Vulgate*. We can be reasonably certain that this last assertion is true, as Bogdanow, having changed her opinion, has illustrated this quite convincingly from a linguistic point of view\(^{28}\). But the pre-*Quest* parts of both *Tristans*, obviously written earlier than the sections narrating the *Pentecôte du Graal* and its aftermath, show no such linguistic evidence of borrowing. Indeed, Baumgartner’s justifications for her belief that the *Tristan* borrowed from the *Post-Vulgate* come for the most part from the part of the text subsequent to the voyage of the lovers to Logres\(^{29}\). Laying aside the hypothesis of Löseth, Bogdanow’s earlier stance and the ideas of Baumgartner, all of which concern the provenance of the motif of hatred between the sons of King Lot and King Pellinor, and none of which leads to a satisfying conclusion\(^{30}\), there is nothing to indicate that the part of the *Tristan 1* that includes the enfances of Perceval was in any way inspired by the *Post-Vulgate*.

If one limits one’s acceptance of the *Tristan’s* borrowings from the *Post-Vulgate* cycle to the latter part of the texts and particularly to that of the *Tristan 2*, what now can be said about the originality of the *Tristan 1*’s presentation of the young Perceval?

Though we cannot know for certain how the medieval audience responded to the text, given the great popularity of Chrétien’s *Perceval* and of the *Lancelot*, we can be reasonably sure that they knew the two main sources of this part of the *Tristan*, or at least knew the stories. As for the modern audience, repetition of the old familiar details would surely have lulled them into a sense of security, to be brutally jarred by variations that in no way responded to their expectations. The *Tristan 1*, by combining Perceval’s two traditional backgrounds, yet by innovative departures from the sources, comes up with a Perceval who is new and fresh. And the innovations are surprising and striking.

The foremost innovation of the *Tristan 1* is that, where earlier writers present Perceval variously as the *nice* or the serious\(^{31}\), here, by a combination of the two

\(^{27}\) Baumgartner 1975: 51.


\(^{29}\) Baumgartner 1975: 41-52.

\(^{30}\) Baumgartner 1975: 42-44.

\(^{31}\) For Perceval the *nice* cf. Chrétien’s *Le Conte du Graal*; for the serious Perceval cf. the prose (Didot) *Perceval*, the *Perlesvaus* and the *Lancelot*.
sources: Chrétien and the Lancelot, Perceval is both, and with a definite period of transition from one to the other. At his first contact with chivalry in the form of his brother Agloval, he is the naïve Perceval of the earliest scenes of Chrétien, a fact that the text justifies as follows:

por ce qe entre fames avoit esté norriz, et totes voies estoit il si fox et si nices qe cele mêismes qi entr’elles le tenoient ne se fesoient se rire non de totes les choses qe il fesoit. Et sanz faille, il ne fesoit oncquez sens, mes folie tout adés (§52, 49-53).

But his character undergoes a swift evolution after his first contact with chivalry. First comes a period of transition which I shall call Perceval the child, which shows him playing at being a knight by trying on his brother’s armour, then going off alone to attempt to reach Arthur’s court. But all signs of Perceval the nice as well as of Perceval the child disappear from the moment the two brothers set off together for court. Now Perceval is the serious young man as presented in the Lancelot. He undergoes no long initiation process as in Chrétien, but a short period of growing up from the comic figure into the perfect candidate for knighthood. Never before have the two Percevals been reconciled.

Agloval’s stay at his mother’s marks the entire period of transition between the Perceval of Chrétien and the serious Perceval of the Lancelot. While having his mother’s teachings as his sole source of knowledge, Perceval is the nice. In contact with his brother and his mother at the same time, that is two different worlds and two sources of knowledge, Perceval is transformed from the nice to the innocent child. The transition period begins with the excitement with which he tells his mother that a knight, the most beautiful thing in the world, will be staying with them, excitement that contrasts vividly with the mother’s immeasurable grief for fear of losing her beloved son to chivalry, grief on which the Tristan insists more than either source. We see Perceval’s child-like fascination with the armour as he tries on hauberk and helmet and wields the shield and sword every day. And after he has heard Agloval’s tales of Arthur’s court and Agloval has forbidden him to go to become a knight, as opposed to the Lancelot which presents a ruse on the part of the brothers to enable Agloval to take Perceval to court for dubbing, we see him sneaking off childishly for court, with Agloval having to go to fetch him. This has obvious repercussions for the guilt theme introduced by Chrétien and continued by the prose Perceval. In the Tristan 1, then, we have a psychological realism not present in the sources, a growing-up period after which Perceval will be ready for adulthood, which for him is knighthood.

Other differences between this section of the Tristan and the corresponding section of the Lancelot are Agloval’s attitude to his brother’s becoming a knight, and the reason for his mother’s death. Where Agloval in the Lancelot, as soon as he has seen his brother, expresses to his mother the intention to take Perceval to court, the Agloval of the Tristan is against the idea, in spite of having recognised Perceval’s physical attributes and the fact that he is of the optimum age to become a knight. It is Perce-
Elaine Polley

val who insists, in spite of Agloval’s attempts to dissuade him. Agloval’s concern is for the well-being of his mother and when Perceval runs away, Agloval acquiesces to her wish and brings the angry Perceval home. When the brothers leave for court together, it is because Agloval is unable to bear more of his mother’s grief. Perceval goes with him. Nowhere is there mention of complicity between the brothers.

This brings us to the circumstances of the mother’s death. Where in the Perceval and the Lancelot, Perceval causes her death by his heartless departure, in the Tristan, it is joy at seeing her beloved son return that causes her demise. The mother’s fragile emotional constitution is carefully built up to prepare for this from very beginning of the episode: having lost her husband and sons, she is «si triste et si dolente totes voies qu’elle oncvez ne se confortait» (§51, 7-8), to the point that she «vouixist bien chascun jor morir .C. foiz, se tant de foiz peüst morir» (§51, 13-14); she faints with joy upon learning Agloval’s identity, then begs him to give her back his dead brothers whom she laments piteously; and when Perceval leaves alone for court, she faints again, threatening to kill herself, beating her breast and scratching her face and acting like a woman demented until Agloval promises to bring him back. Her death upon seeing her son return is the final proof of her lack of emotional mesure:

Quant ce fu chose qe elle vit Perceval revenu devant le, elle s’escrie a haute voiz ainssi com fame tote desesperée: «Ha! Mort, haste toi de venir! Je ne quier plus vivre, puis qe je voi mon enfant devant moi!» Lors li cort les bras tenduz, et le baise plus de .C. foiz sanz dire mot et l’embrace parmi les flans et l’estraint si durement encontre son piz qu’elle se desront tote et li cuers li part el ventre, si chiet arriere tote enverse. (§60, 3-11).

The Tristan 1, by not putting the blame on Perceval for her death does not accord him the burden of guilt that Chrétien has Perceval carry, guilt that according to his uncle the hermit prevents him from asking the questions that will heal the Fisher king and by implication access the Grail. In the Lancelot, though his guilt in this respect is not of thematic significance, Perceval nonetheless is responsible for his mother’s death. The Tristan, then makes him an even more perfect candidate for a Grail hero than does the Lancelot.

Having added significantly to the scenes at the mother’s house, the Tristan 1 now removes a large section of the Lancelot story, taking Agloval and Perceval directly to court. By laying aside the episode concerning the killing of Agloval’s squire, it keeps Perceval at centre stage until he leaves court, thus making its Perceval episode an uninterrupted unit.

After the arrival of the brothers at court, the narration continues the framework of the Lancelot, but again adds to it. From the moment Perceval is noticed by Arthur, more emphasis is given to his qualities and especially to his lineage. This is evident in the king’s reaction upon learning Perceval’s identity:

«Or le face Diex prudome, fet li rois, car certes il est biax enfes, et bien resemble au haut lignage dont il est estréz, et plus a Lamorat qe a nul autre. Se il fesoit autant a loer de chevalerie comme fist ses freres, mult l’avroit Diez fet graciex.» (§60, 34-38);
and in the reaction of the barons during the knighting:

Et sachiéz qe, quant li baron de leanz qi son pere avoient connu et Lamorat autresi virent cestui si bel et si avenant com il estoit, il ne se porent tenir qe li plusors ne plorassent por la pitié qu’il avoient, car il avoient tant priséi de totes bonté et Lamorat et le roi Pellynor qu’il avoient grant duel de lor mort totes les foiz qu’i lor en souvenoit. Por se il ot il mainte lermé ploreé et des privéz et des estranges par leanz le jor qe Perceval fust fet chevalier. (§61, 3-11)

At the same time, the barons’ fond memories of Perceval’s brother Lamorat and father Pellinor introduces to the episode the theme of family vengeance, a theme particular to the Tristan and the Post-Vulgate cycle. The theme continues with Gaheriet’s opinion of Perceval’s ability to avenge the deaths of his father and brothers and with Gauvain’s anger at his words:

«Je vos di, fet Gaheriet, qe il ne puet faillir qe il ne soit preudome durement. Et, se Diex me conseult, je croi qe il sera de si grant bonté qe bien sera encore vengee par sa main solement la mort de son pere et de Lamorat et de Drian, qe nostre paranté – ne sai les qiex – ocistrent asséz desloialement, se vont disant aucunez genz. Il firent vilte et mauvestié, maldit soient il et honi, et si seront il encore, se Diex ples! Et certes, il deservirent bien quant il mistrent a mort Lamorat, qi estoit le meillor chevalier du monde et le plus loiax qe je oucvez trovasse». Quant misere Gauvain entent ceste parole, il mue tot d’ire et de mautalent ne ne respont mie tot ce qe il pense. Gaheriet ne s’en prent garde, ainz parole totes voies de Perceval et dit qe Diex le face si bon chevalier com il est bel: adont porroit il venger bien Lamorat de ses anne-mis et mettre a honte et a dolor toz celx qi desloialment l’ocistrent. (§61, 18-35)

and is emphasised in the epilogue to the episode of the three drops in the snow where, after a maiden announces to Arthur that Perceval was the knight who unhorsed Kay and Mordret and who wounded Gauvain, and after Arthur warns that Perceval will take vengeance on whoever killed his brothers, Gauvain, Agravain and Mordret decide to kill Perceval before he can do them any harm.

Apart from these differences, the feast after the dubbing, the miracle of speech accorded to the mute damsel who seats Perceval at the Round Table, the damsel’s death, the mockeries of Kay and Mordred repeated to Perceval by a fool and Perceval’s subsequent departure in search of Lancelot proceed without great change from the Vulgate text. There, of course, is no further trace of the return to Chrétien found exclusively in the earliest part of the enfances. The only other elements of great significance added by the Tristan are the appearance of Perceval’s name on his seat, the damsel’s emphasis on God’s according Perceval the seat next to the Perilous Seat because he is «digne d’estre un des plus souverainz chevaliers de la queste du Saint Graal» (§63, 23-24), and finally the knights’ advice to the king not to let Perceval depart from court before the Grail quest for fear he will die by misadventure. Upon Perceval’s departure from court, the Tristan 1 and the Lancelot diverge. Perceval’s childhood and youth are over; he is now the knight who will be second only to Galahad.

This brings us to the issues and questions raised by a close study of the Perceval of the Tristan:
The Perceval of the *Tristan 1*, in fusing the two previous traditions, has much to recommend it as the definitive Perceval. But this was not to be. Despite being taken over by the *Post-Vulgate*, it was rejected by the *Tristan 2* and no *enfances* of Perceval at all appear in the highly influential work of Malory. Why, one might ask.

Why the long interpolation of the *Lancelot* in the *Tristan 2*? Can we think that the text of the *Lancelot* was less well known than we imagine, that whoever added the long chunk of text, in many respects clumsily, thought that the audience needed it, not only for the visits of Lancelot and Bohort to the Grail castle, but also for the other material included, including a second *enfances* of Perceval? Is the interpolation proof that whoever produced the *Tristan 2* did not know the *Tristan 1* which conserved important aspects of the *Lancelot* while incorporating the traditional Perceval of Chrétien? Why is just a short factual account of Perceval’s arrival at court and dubbing common to all manuscripts of the *Tristan 2*? The *Tristan 2* contains many of the same features as the *Tristan 1*, most likely those of the original prose version of the Tristan story. If Perceval’s *enfances* actually appeared in this original version, why might the *Tristan 2* have rejected them? Might the *enfances*, beginning with Perceval’s *niceté* and moving to a transitional period of childish innocence before presenting the serious adult Perceval of the Grail Quest, detract in any way from the mystique of the perfect Perceval whose role as a Grail hero is a main emphasis of the *Tristan 2*? They certainly prepare Perceval for his destiny in a plausible manner, especially to the modern reader for whom transition (i.e. adolescence) is seen as a key phase of human development.

Michel Zink, in his article «Vieillesse de Perceval: l’ombre du temps» posits an interesting explanation for the non-existence of Perceval’s childhood in certain texts where the Grail Quest is accomplished: in his opinion, it is due to the difficulty of having to present Perceval in his old age after the Grail has been found. His hypothesis also includes a possible reason that romances presenting the youthful Perceval as the traditional *nice* do not bring the Grail Quest to its logical end:

Devant la difficulté de peindre la vieillesse immobile de cet enfant pressé les auteurs ont fait comme ils ont pu. Les uns ont renoncé à terminer l’histoire, d’autres ont dès le début dépouillé Perceval de sa jeunesse. D’autres ont cherché à entretenir le sentiment de l’écoulement du temps alors même que tout est accompli.

This certainly could hold true both for the *Tristan 1* which relates the *enfances* of Perceval without bringing the Grail Quest to a logical conclusion, and for the *Tristan 2* which presents no *enfances* and in most versions incorporates a full Grail Quest. But is the problem of making Perceval age after having presented him as the *nice* enough to justify not including the *enfances*, or, indeed, not concluding the

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33 Zink 1988: 285
Grail story? It seems unlikely in a work that wishes to tell all, by undertaking the enormous task of combining the Tristan and the Arthurian traditions.

Antoinette Saly has a different explanation for the absence of Perceval’s enfances in certain Grail texts. In speaking of the Prose (Didot) Perceval, which contains nothing of Perceval the nice, she states that «La christianisation definitive du Graal a provoqué la rupture avec le vieux mythe royal des Enfances sauvages»34. Yet this myth is incorporated in the Tristan I and repeated in the Post-Vulgate Cycle. Is the fact that the Tristan I does not correspond to her theory the reason that Saly does not include it among her Perceval texts? True, it contains no full Grail quest, but there are enough references in the text, not least the words of the mute damsel, to indicate that Perceval will be one of the Grail heroes. The Post-Vulgate, which contains the same material on the young Perceval, includes a full quest for a christianised Grail.

Is the lack of influence of the enfances of the Tristan I, despite surviving in numerous manuscripts, as well as in the Post-Vulgate, due to the fact that these works were just too long and too late to supplant Chrétien and the Lancelot as further sources for Perceval’s background? This episode of the Tristan I, written after the Conte du Graal and the Lancelot, is typical of a certain reaction to rewriting where the concern is to reconcile all previous traditions. It is also, like the examples cited earlier, typical of the type of rewriting that wanted to return to the doxa. Why did subsequent works not wish to continue to do likewise?

How, then, can we classify this version of the Tristan within the ensemble of Perceval texts? Lacy in his Utrecht paper «Perceval from North to south», contends that

in works after Chrétien and Perlesvaus … Perceval presented special problems for authors. That is, he was recognized as a prominent and appealing character, but a good many authors seem not to have known just what to do with him once Galahad assumed his role as chosen Grail hero35.

Yet the Tristan I does seem to know what to do with him. By fusing the two Perceval traditions, it resolves the question as to what happened to the Perceval of Chrétien, a question that must have worried the audience of the Lancelot and the Prose (Didot) Perceval. In a single text Perceval is both the naïve and unformed individual and the consummate knight … the purest man of all, save Galahad», as Groos and Lacy describe his two different careers, a combination of all he has been and will be throughout Arthurian literature36. The naïveté which these authors say has made Perceval «one of the most fascinating and potentially engaging of all Arthuriun creations» and which is present solely in texts where he is the Grail winner is here the prelude to the spiritually perfect Grail hero of the more "chris-

34 Saly 1999: 21
35 Lacy 2005: 49.
tianised» texts like the *Lancelot*, but with all flaws, moral or otherwise, expurgated.

The Perceval of the *Tristan 1* is certainly yet another example of what they call Perceval’s «constructability»\(^{37}\), another manifestation of what they term Perceval’s continuous ability to evolve, as opposed to other Arthurian characters set and restrained by convention\(^{38}\). It is a skilful marriage of the preceding Perceval traditions and it is highly unfortunate that, with the exception of the interpolation in the *Post-Vulgate*, it appears to have had no import as a source for further Perceval material.

Yet even if it is problematic, it cannot be neglected as one of a number of stages in the development of Perceval as a character, one that specifically attempts to reconcile conflicts of the past. It is the last medieval text to experiment with or even to explore the possibilities of Perceval’s background, something that neither the *Tristan 2* nor the work of Malory does. It is therefore a grave injustice not to study it in its own right, in spite of, but also, more interestingly, because of problems that such a study may flag up.

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\(^{38}\) Groos/Lacy (ed.) 2002: 30.
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