

Iryna Polets

**CONSTRUCTING THE IDEAL OF NOBLE YOUTH:  
CHRÉTIEN DE TROYES AND HIS INFLUENCES ON  
THIRTEENTH CENTURY EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE**

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2008

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Iryna Polets

(Ukraine)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU

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External Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Iryna Polets**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 26 May 2008

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Signature

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## Introduction

Interest in medieval childhood and youth awakened by the work of Philippe Ariès<sup>1</sup> led to a breakthrough in social history. Although his study evoked ardent debate,<sup>2</sup> it also opened up new perspectives in historical scholarship.

Within the language of signs of the Middle Ages one finds the image of youth represented in a variety of media: as ideal figures in diverse images, as meaningful decoration on objects of material culture, or as brave and illustrious knights in literary texts. The image of youth could also have negative connotations – it could provoke feelings of alarm and social instability. Such an image of contraries had its own influence on society and led to a number of different discourses.

Adolescents had to be educated. Especially with regard to aristocratic youths, a special didactic literary genre, the Mirrors of Princes, was developed in order to create an image of the decent young prince or nobleman bound to become knight, lord or ruler.<sup>3</sup> These are texts that were ordered by noble patrons and created by authors, mainly from a clerical environment, conveying images and educational techniques which were to be followed within aristocratic families.

Other sources deal intensively with matters of childhood, youth, and education, but when speaking about conduct, manners, and values, it is courtly romances where this information flourished, with illustrative examples, represented

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<sup>1</sup> Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> See Colin Haywood, *A History of Childhood. Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, (Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2001), 19-31. (hereafter: Haywood, *A History of Childhood*); see also Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Les enfants au Moyen Âge, Ve-XVe siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), 73: “Contrairement à ce qu’avait affirmé Philippe Ariès, les hommes du Moyen Âge n’ont pas perdu le sens de l’éducation.”

<sup>3</sup> Concerning Mirrors of Princes see, especially, Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann 1953, reprint 1992), which is still important for today’s research; *Le savoir du prince du Moyen Âge aux lumières*, ed. Ran Halevi (Paris: Fayard, 2002); for educational sources concentrating on the education of noble ladies see: Alice A. Hench, *De la littérature didactique du Moyen Âge s’adressant spécialement aux femmes* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1975).



by famous heroes. Literary and historical scholarship has recently dealt quite often with the study of romances for their educational value; one only need mention the research by such authors as Christiane Marchello-Nizia,<sup>4</sup> James A. Schultz,<sup>5</sup> or Natalie Koble,<sup>6</sup> whose work inspired me in writing this research.

Although fictional constructions, courtly romances still portray the values which were intended for the ideal vision of courtly society and which were models to be followed. Chrétien de Troyes (died c. 1190),<sup>7</sup> often seen as “the first master of French romance,”<sup>8</sup> constructed such images and ideals in his works, trying to influence his audience and taking on the role of the teacher. Among the ideas represented in Chrétien’s romances one finds educational values which are, in particular, depicted in the last of his works – *The Story of the Grail* (c.1180-1191).<sup>9</sup> This romance, left unfinished by the author, seems to have had a reasonable influence on the literature of the thirteenth century, since his ideas were picked up by a number of authors, who offered their own continuation and version of *The Story of the Grail*. Among the famous examples one finds the Welsh romance *Peredur*,<sup>10</sup> Robert de Baron’s *Joseph of Arimathea*,<sup>11</sup> and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*.<sup>12</sup> The continuation of the

<sup>4</sup> Christiane Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry;” in *A History of Young People in the West*, ed. Naish Camille, 1 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 120-173 (hereafter: Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry”).

<sup>5</sup> James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100-1350* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Natalie Koble, *Jeunesse et genèse du royaume Arthurien. Les suites Romanesque du Merlin en prose* (Paris: Paradigme, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> For the most recent and complete work on the author refer to: *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Joan Tasker Grimbert (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995), 106 (hereafter: Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*).

<sup>9</sup> For the French edition of the romance see: Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval, ou le conte du grail*, ed. first name Poirion (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1997). French and English citations in this text were taken from: Chrétien de Troyes. *The Story of the Grail (Li contes del graal), or Perceval*, ed. Rupert T. Pickens (New York : Garland Publishing, 1990) (hereafter: Chrétien de Troyes line numbers of the verses are cited in the parentheses).

<sup>10</sup> *Peredur son of Evrawc* (c.1060-1200) was a Welsh romance influenced by *The Story of the Grail*. For an edition of this romance refer to: *Peredur: the son of Evrawc*, ed. Lady Charlotte Guest (Paddington: ReadHowYouWant, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> For an edition of the romance see: Robert de Baron, *Joseph of Arimathea—a Romance of the Grail*, ed. William A. Nifze (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1990).

story testifies that the themes developed by Chrétien de Troyes interested other authors from different regions, probably due to the material he used. More interesting, however, is the fact that these authors shared similar thoughts on chivalric values as those the poet wanted to show as an example to be followed by his patrons – noblemen of aristocratic society.

One of the scholars whose work really appeals to me in writing this research, C. Stephen Jaeger, has stressed the influence of the poet on his patron. He emphasizes that “patrons did not make courtly romance, courtly romance made patrons.”<sup>13</sup> Another interesting point he makes is that “the literary work broke through the esthetic encapsulation within which literary historians have tended to view courtly literature,” thus, “courtly literature favored the social acceptance of courtly values.”<sup>14</sup> These statements agree with the notion that courtly romance was a device created by the courtly poet in order to influence his patron and audience, transmit courtly values, and create an accepted image of the noble. Therefore, the romances may be seen as sources in order to trace these values.

Maurice Keen stated in his study on *Chivalry*<sup>15</sup> that romances help to decipher and define elusive ethical implications. The authors of the romances emphasized certain qualities,

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<sup>12</sup>For the recent German edition of the romance see: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Wilhelm Stapel (Munich: Langen Müller, 2005). For my research I have also used the English translation of the romance: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Arthur Thomas Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980). (hereafter: *Parzival*). For the German references of the same text I have used the following critical edition of the romance: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Albert Leitzman (Halle: Veb Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1955). German citations will be given with numbers of verses in parentheses. For other references see also: Hugh Sacker, *An Introduction to Wolfram's Parzival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). (hereafter: Sacker, *An Introduction to Wolfram's Parzival*). For a further important recent publication on the romance see: G. Ronald Murphy, *Gemstone of Paradise. The Holy Grail in Wolfram's Parzival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> C. Stephen Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers: Intellectuals and Society in the Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 46. (hereafter: Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 306.

<sup>15</sup>Maurice Hugh Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2 (hereafter: Keen, *Chivalry*).

which they clearly regarded as the classic virtues of good knighthood: *prouesse*, *loyauté*, *largesse* (generosity), *courtoisie*, *franchise* (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth with virtue). The association of these qualities in chivalry is already established in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, and from his time on to the end of the Middle Ages their combination remains the stereotype of chivalrous distinction.<sup>16</sup>

These courtly virtues were adopted by authors from different regions. This shows that the poet not only influenced his own society, but his works had an impact on the cultural aspects of different courtly circles. For example, Joachim Bumke in his *Courtly Culture*<sup>17</sup> emphasized the importance of French courtly ideals as adopted by German noble society:

The audience must have taken a keen interest in literary compositions in the French style, and this interest was certainly not limited only to the stories, but extended equally to the descriptions of social life that figure so prominently in this literature.<sup>18</sup>

He reflected on this fact even further, stating that “The courtly poets worked mostly from French models, and they took over many details in their description of social life from their French sources, apparently because the noble audience in Germany was particularly interested in this aspect.”<sup>19</sup>

One of the most important topics depicted by Chrétien in his *The Story of the Gail* is the educational aspect of bringing up noble children in courtly society, which will be the core of this research project. Indeed, along with the image of courtly manners, the author presents passages where the reader finds instructions for young noblemen bound to become knights, and instructions for young noble ladies. From these passages one can construct an image of a noble education which was seen as appropriate for this social stratum. Speaking about adopting these educational values

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture. Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, tr. T. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). (hereafter: Bumke, *Courtly Culture*).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 13.

by German courtly poets, Bumke sees a peculiar difficulty in dealing with the transmission of these ideas, since sometimes it is hard to define whether the German authors merely depicted the French courtly situation, or referred to aspects relevant for their audience. Bumke gives an example:

when a poet talked about the literary and higher education of knightly hero, he must have known as well as his audience that princes with a literary education were very rare in Germany, whereas in France the education of a prince in the twelfth century already frequently included training in the higher studies.<sup>20</sup>

Richard Barber has claimed that “kighthood becomes inextricably bound up with the ideals of chivalry after the mid-thirteenth century, and the later manuals on it belong to the ethic of chivalrous behavior.”<sup>21</sup> By the “later manuals” he means various educational sources – the *Mirrors for Princes* of the thirteenth century and other treatises dealing with the image of the noble prince as an ideal figure. According to this point of view, one can also claim that the ideas described by Chrétien were taken over even by the authors of such educational treatises, who mainly came from clerical environments.

Taking into consideration these general statements on courtly literature and its influence, here I research whether these statements may also be seen as valid for some specific examples. My main emphasis is on Chrétien’s *The Story of the Grail* and the educational values which the author depicted in this romance in the context of bringing up noble children. In order to contextualize these excerpts, which concern educational concepts, I will approach them comparatively and put them in a framework of other sources. Since Chrétien’s influence on later authors of different genres is acknowledged, I intend to compare the relevance of Chrétien’s educational statements to those in the German variant of the romance – *Parzival* (1215), written

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<sup>20</sup> Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 14.

by one of the most famous authors of the thirteenth century – Wolfram von Eschenbach (c.1170-1220). I will also introduce three French educational treatises of the thirteenth century and analyze them comparatively. Their authors came from different backgrounds. Two of the didactic works which I will discuss concerning the question to what extent they adopted the ideas of Chrétien are *L'enseignement des princes* (c.1280) and *Le chastoiment des dames* (1250), written by Robert of Blois (1250-1300), himself a member of courtly society<sup>22</sup> Two other clerical authors that I will use for my comparative approach are Vincent of Beauvais (c.1194-1264; *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, c.1247-1250)<sup>23</sup> and Giles of Rome (1247-1316; *De regimine principum*, c.1280).<sup>24</sup> In their educational treatises they also dealt with the image of the ideal ruler, prince, and noble. It seems worthwhile to check whether the courtly values of Chrétien's romance are still present in their vision of the ideal noble youth.

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<sup>21</sup> Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, 46.

<sup>22</sup> On the historical figure and works of Robert from Blois see: Susan Udry, "Robert de Blois and Geoffroy de la Tour Landry on Feminine Beauty: Two Late Medieval French Conduct Books for Women," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 19 (2002): 90-102. For my research I have used the critical editions of the two didactic poems by Robert of Blois: John Howard Fox, *Robert de Blois. Son œuvre didactique et narrative. Etude linguistique et litteraire suivie d'une édition critique avec commentaire et glossaire de l'enseignement des princes et du chastoiment des dames* (Paris: l'University of London Publication Fund, 1958). (hereafter: Robert of Blois; line numbers of the verses are cited in the parentheses).

<sup>23</sup> In this research I am using the following edition of *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. Arpad Steiner (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1938) (hereafter: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*). On the life of Vincent of Beauvais and his educational ideals see: Adam Fijałkowski, *Puer eruditus. Idee Educacyjne Wincentego z Beauvais (ok. 1194 - 1264) (Educational Ideals of Vincent from Beauvais)* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2001) (hereafter Fijałkowski, *Puer eruditus*). Concerning Vincent's treatise on female education see idem, "The Education of Woman in the Work of Vincent of Beauvais, OP (†1264)," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 27 (2000): 515-526; Fijałkowski, "Wincenty z Beauvais OP (ok. 1194-1264) o wychowaniu" ("Vincent of Beauvais OP (c.1194-1264) on Education"), *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 38 (1997): 11-26; Rosemary Barton Tobin, "Vincent of Beauvais on the Education of Women," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35.3 (1974): 485-89; Paulette L'Hermite-Leclercq, "L'image de la femme dans le *De eruditione filiorum nobilium de Vincent de Beauvais*," *Culture et Civilisations Médiévales* 31 (2000):243 (hereafter L'Hermite-Leclercq, "L'image de la femme").

<sup>24</sup> On the life and work of Giles of Rome see: Charles F. Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum. Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 – c.1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) (hereafter Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*); in this research I am using the following edition of *De regimine principum*: Giles of Rome [Egidio Colonna], *De regimine principum libri III* (Rome, 1556; facsimile reprint: Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968) (hereafter: Giles of Rome).

From the methodological point of view one faces some difficulties in tracing “reality” in the sources. When one speaks about a romance, one should mention that it is a sphere of ideas that should be explored. Literature can open up some constructed values shared by the noble society of the time, but the question still remains whether these ideals were reflected in life. The aim of this research is not to establish the ultimate truth or reconstruct reality, but to find a connection between social culture and courtly literature from the comparative perspective of educating noble boys and girls. Thus, to establish this connection, there is a need to put the evidence found in courtly literature into the framework of didactic literature. Although one might think that such representatives as Vincent of Beauvais and Giles of Rome were trying to create a more pious image which would differ from the ones the reader could find in romances for noble entertainment,<sup>25</sup> I see it necessary to establish the connection between these types of sources in order to evaluate their relevance for the period of the twelfth and thirteenth century. This attempted contextualization can refute or confirm this connection. This comparison may also give an answer about the extent to which the ideals of courtly romances influenced the widely spread thirteenth-century educational treatises.

However, my research will not give a panoramic overview of the educational ideas prevailing in certain types of literature of the twelfth and thirteenth century. Such works already exist.<sup>26</sup> Rather, the aim is to put the *The Story of the Grail* into the framework of other sources in order to reveal the reflection and continuity of educational ideals, and to discover whether they were common in the respective

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<sup>25</sup>See: Fijałkowski, *Puer eruditus*, 19; L’Hermite-Leclercq, “L’image de la femme,” 243.

<sup>26</sup> See: A. Hentsch, *De la littérature didactique du Moyen Âge. s’adressant spécialement aux femmes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975); Susanne Barth, *Jungfrauenzucht. Literaturwissenschaftliche und pädagogische Studien zur Mädchenerziehungsliteratur zwischen 1200 und 1600* (Vienna: M&P; Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1993); Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1992). (hereafter: Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*).

periods and influential on moderating the behavior of nobles. This is an approach that has not been applied until now.

The complexity of my research project makes it possible to use a methodology which is usually applied for cultural studies, social anthropology, and comparative literature analysis. In these respects, I benefit from writings on the history of childhood by Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt,<sup>27</sup> and Colin Haywood, who presented his arguments against the view of Philippe Ariès<sup>28</sup> concerning the relevance of childhood in the Middle Ages.<sup>29</sup> The study on medieval childhood by Shulamith Shahar,<sup>30</sup> has offered a broad overview on the topic of children's education. On questions of comparative literature, works by Erich Auerbach<sup>31</sup> and Ernst Robert Curtius,<sup>32</sup> were useful, as were the studies by John Cadden,<sup>33</sup> Pauline Stafford, and Anneke Mulder-Bakker<sup>34</sup> on questions of gender. I would also like to note especially the articles and the book by Adam Fijałkowski,<sup>35</sup> whose analysis and overview of the literature connected to the writing of Vincent of Beauvais gave me a good perspective on Vincent's treatises and views of education.

Elements of comparative analysis, close reading, and interpretation are of primary significance. The close reading method will help to identify the peculiarities of the sources, whether the authors stressed the ideas they depicted and why these ideas were important for them. Comparative analysis will help to find parallels among

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<sup>27</sup> Giovanni Levi, Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage. A History of the Young People in the West," in *A History of Young People in the West* ed. Naish Camille, 1, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris:Plon, 1960).

<sup>29</sup> See also note 2.

<sup>30</sup> Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>31</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. W. L. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) (hereafter Auerbach, *Mimesis*).

<sup>32</sup> Ernst Rober Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. W. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973) (hereafter Curtius, *European Literature*).

<sup>33</sup> Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Differences in the Middle Ages. Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). (hereafter Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Differences*).

<sup>34</sup> Pauline Stafford, Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). (hereafter: Stafford, Mulder-Bakker, *Gendering the Middle Ages*).

the sources: whether the ideals described by the author of the romance were also relevant for authors who wrote educational treatises.

My work is divided into three chapters. The aim of the first chapter is to establish the position of the poet at the court where he worked and to model the possible authority for which these particular works were written. In this chapter I also discuss the need and concept of noble education and the figure of the appropriate teacher who was responsible for it. The second chapter will open up the ideas which the court poets transmitted concerning the education of noble boys on their way to becoming knights. As the authors devoted some attention to the young ladies' upbringing as well, the third chapter is dedicated to this question.

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<sup>35</sup> Fijałkowski, *Puer eruditus*.



## Chapter I: The Notion of Enculturation – A Step Towards Social Change<sup>36</sup>

Clerics taught and corrected the ways of laymen. They put forward ideal models of behavior for imitation, and that means they were free to create ideals of behavior. They used letters, histories, “Fürstenspiegel”, their own behavior, to do it. And some especially clever clerics invented a new form: courtly romance.<sup>37</sup>

In this quote C. Stephen Jaeger stresses the importance of courtly enculturation through romances. Such an idea corresponds to the main idea of this chapter and opens up the specific problem which will be discussed here: the relationship of the courtly poet, coming from a clerical environment, and his patron, and, furthermore, the new ideas constructed in order to influence and moderate noble society from within. The key figure is the courtly writer himself. According to Jacques Le Goff, “this cleric was the descendant of a unique lineage in the medieval West: that of the intellectuals, whose occupation was to think and share their thoughts.”<sup>38</sup> In this research, Chrétien de Troyes represents the figure of the “clever cleric” who incorporated new educational and moral ideals in his romance *The Story of the Grail*. Deriving from the lands of northern France, the didactic elements of courtly literature then found their way into the texts of other authors in the next century. In order to trace the relevance of Chrétien’s educational ideas, other authors will be introduced:

- Wolfram von Eschenbach and Robert of Blois as representatives of courtly society and followers of Chrétien;
- Giles of Rome and Vincent of Beauvais (Dominican friar) as the clerical representatives of ideals of noble upbringing and creators of didactic literature.

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<sup>36</sup> Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*, 287 – 309.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Medieval West* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 1.

It is worthwhile showing and comparing the attitudes that these authors expressed in their writings which were connected to educational factors and the means of achieving educational ideals. The latter were mainly dependent on teachers, who represented the parent figures of the aristocratic children.

### **Authors and their audience**

One of the northern French poets often called *trouvères*, Chrétien de Troyes stands at the beginnings of courtly literature.<sup>39</sup> The information about him is rather scarce. The city of Troyes, situated on the Seine River in the northeastern part of modern France is acknowledged as the place of his origin. At first associated with the court of Henry II, the second husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine,<sup>40</sup> he continued his work at the court of Eleanor's daughter, Marie of Champagne, where he found a new patron, Marie's cousin, Philip of Flanders, to whom the poet dedicated *The Story of the Grail*.

Unlike the troubadours, who expressed themselves in emotional lyrics, and the authors of the *chansons de geste*, who depicted fierce combat and powerful warriors, Chrétien de Troyes created a new world, where mythical elements of Celtic legends were combined with new ideas of chivalry.<sup>41</sup> He thus invented the world of King Arthur, where young knights were advancing new noble ideals. A kind of dream world was created, shared among the author and his audience.<sup>42</sup> The author, audience, and their heroes were positioned in the same culture and social construction: the chivalric ideal. The world of Arthurian heroes, where certain events and questions

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<sup>39</sup> See: Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Pickens, *Chrétien de Troyes. The Story of the Grail*, xi-xxiv. On the account of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her court refer to: *Eleanor of Aquitaine. Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (Houndmills: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2002) (hereafter *Eleanor of Aquitaine*).

<sup>41</sup> Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, 106. On the chivalric ideas of Chrétien de Troyes see also: Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave & Noble Chivalry & Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 105-109. (hereafter Bouchard, *Strong of Body*).

<sup>42</sup> Jean Flori, *Chevaliers et chevalerie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998), 235.

remained unanswered, proved to inspire the imagination of the noble audience. The courtly ideals which the romance incorporated became easy to convey. Even more, this literature established and strengthened the importance of the society of nobles.<sup>43</sup> Those who started to share and perceive these values taken from courtly literature began to associate themselves with a special community of the chosen, who received the right to show their status through noble conduct in following and sharing courtly values.<sup>44</sup>

The variety of material used in the romances shows the knowledge and skill of the author himself. The knowledge which he possessed would only be accessible to someone who came from clerical circles. This, as Jaeger emphasizes, is a good reason to think that Chrétien de Troyes was a cleric and not a knight or a layman.<sup>45</sup> Although the meeting place of knight and cleric was a royal or princely court where both served the lord, such figures as Chrétien de Troyes had a higher status than an ordinary knight.<sup>46</sup> Being properly educated, he could fulfill the role of counselor and advisor for his patron. The patrons would commission their poets to create romances, which also happened in the case of *The Story of the Grail*. The inner setting of the court, the manners and adventures represented would have been most appealing to the nobles. But one should not stress that the only function of the romances was to entertain and that the poet would write only the things which would please his patron. Unlike mere jongleurs,<sup>47</sup> who were singing to earn money, such poets as Chrétien wanted to make sure that their work would last.<sup>48</sup> Although Chrétien was hired as a courtly poet, being an educated man he had decent authority within the social circle he belonged to.

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<sup>43</sup> See Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 131-133.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*, 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-58.

<sup>47</sup> See Le Goff, *Intellectuals*, 25.

Therefore, he could expect that his writings would have an influence on those for whom they were written. Jaeger emphasizes that

The poets spoke to their potential readers/listeners, not as supplicants, not as hired scribes, and not as prince-pleasers, but as teachers, as men responsible for the moral and social improvement of the laity.<sup>49</sup>

In this case, Chrétien de Troyes took on himself the role of a teacher who conveyed educational values to his noble audience. The audience for which Chrétien composed his romances is a complex topic. Richard Barber claims that Chrétien was a poet at the time when knighthood became chivalry.<sup>50</sup> To a certain extent this statement seems too strong, as if one perceives that such authors as Chrétien influenced the process of social change due to which knighthood acquired chivalric ideals and was shaped as the privilege of the social group of nobles with its own culture. On the other hand, this is literature – a fictional creation, but it can still reflect recognizable values of reality. The value of the text lies in the ideas which the author reflected and his purpose in writing. Soon, these ideas were picked up by the audience as a new fashionable tendency of the time. Richard Barber stresses the fact that the poet constructed his works for a new audience: “the ‘young king’ (Henry’s eldest son) Richard Coeur de Lion, William Marshal, Philip of Flanders and the landless younger sons who formed their entourage, the so called *iuvenes* or young men.”<sup>51</sup> Indeed, from the first instance it seems as if the romances were created only for the young ones so they would be inspired by the prowess and valor of the main characters. Following the plot of *The Story of the Grail*, one finds that all the main deeds were assigned to

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<sup>48</sup> See M.-L. Ollier, “The Author in the Text: The Prologues of Chrétien de Troyes,” *Yale French Studies* 51, *Approaches to Medieval Romance* (1974): 26-41.

<sup>49</sup> Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*, 53.

<sup>50</sup> “*Chevalier* – denotes a man of aristocratic standing and probably of noble ancestry, who is capable, if called upon, of equipping himself with the war horse and the arms of a heavy cavalryman, and who has been through certain rituals that make him what he is – who has been ‘dubbed’ to knighthood.” The definition is taken from: Keen, *Chivalry*, 1-2. See also: *Knighthood in the Medieval Literature*, ed. W. H. Jackson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1981).

young characters. Again and again images and types of young knights emerge which acquire certain psychological and physical characteristics; they act according to certain patterns. The adventures of Perceval entertained noble audiences, showing the example of how an aristocratic youth was supposed to behave in order to enter the world of knights through the act of dubbing,<sup>52</sup> after a required educational process. M. Keen agrees with previous researchers of knighthood and chivalry that the authors and redactors of medieval romance were enthusiastic in explaining that the stories of their heroes presented a model of true chivalry.<sup>53</sup> He writes:

From a very early stage we find the romantic authors habitually associating together certain qualities which they clearly regarded as the classic virtues of good knighthood...The association of these qualities in chivalry is already established in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, and from his time on to the end of the middle ages their combination remains the stereotype of chivalrous distinction.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the romances of Chrétien inspired new courtly ideals that also appeared in the following thirteenth century. Among the authors who continued the transmission of the ideals and stereotypes introduced by Chrétien, one finds the German knight and poet – Wolfram von Eschenbach (c.1170-1220) -- coming from the lands that correspond to present-day Bavaria. Most likely he served a number of patrons, among them Landgrave Hermann I of Thuringia.<sup>55</sup>

When one compares the educational passages from Chretien's *The Story of the Grail* to corresponding passages of Wolfram's German variant *Parzival*, the reader notices that the German author expanded the passages and changed them in the order of representation as well as in the stresses on some values. One can infer that the

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<sup>51</sup> Barber. *The Knight and Chivalry*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> "Delivery of arms, which is what dubbing seems originally to mean, is commonly associated, in the early 'pre-chivalric' texts, with one or other of two occasions, with coming of age or with entry into a war band." The definition is taken from: Keen, *Chivalry*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

peculiarity of his own audience made him create this alteration in the text. Another interesting aspect which the reader notices in Wolfram's version is his stronger attention to the female audience. The passages where he appeals to the noble ladies' audience emphasizes their importance in the writing process and also shows rightly that courtly authors were concerned in offering models for noble ladies to the same extent as they did for knights. A good example of such an appeal is the passage in the first book of *Parzival*: "Feigned friendship leads to the fire of hell, it destroys man's nobility like hail... These manifold bad distinctions do not all relate to men. I shall set the marks as the challenge to women."<sup>56</sup> Throughout the romance, one finds more such references to a female audience,<sup>57</sup> which shows their influence on the author and his wish to entertain and satisfy the literary needs of German noble ladies as well as men.<sup>58</sup>

The educational ideals of Chrétien were also picked up by Robert of Blois in his didactic work *Ensoigement des Princes*.<sup>59</sup> For him, as for other poets, one finds scarce biographical data, if any at all. What is known is that he was associated with the court of Guillaume of Poix, who became the Duke of Picardy in 1260. There is a view that the writing Robert of Blois, for instance one of his romances, *Beausdous*, was influenced by Chrétien's *Perceval*.<sup>60</sup> Inspired by didactic elements within the literature of his time, Robert created two didactic poems: *Ensoigement des Princes*

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<sup>55</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival* ed. Hatto, 15. Valsch geselleclîcher muot/ ist zem hellefiure guot./und ist hôher werdekeit ein hagel./.../Dise manger slahte underbint/ iedoch niht gar von manne sint./für diu wîp stôze ich disiu zil. (book I. 1: 17-25).

<sup>57</sup> Concerning the poet's audience, listeners, and literary performance generally, see: Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: the Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000); Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984).

<sup>58</sup> On women's influence on the composition of texts see: Joan M. Ferrante, *The Glory of Her Sex: Women's Role in the composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Robert of Blois, *Ensoigement des Princes et D'autres Genz Communemant*. See also note 18.

<sup>60</sup> See J. H. Fox, *Robert de Blois. Son œuvre didactique et narrative*, 22.

and *Chastoiment des Dames*,<sup>61</sup> where he gave a separate image of the noble lady and her behaviour.

Along with the literature, which partly provided entertainment and escape from reality, there was another type of writing which constructed its own model of the youth of noble birth: educational treatises. Although the model of the noble proposed by the courtly poet may at first seem radically different from the one proposed by the authors of didactic literature, it is worthwhile establishing a connection in order to trace similarities and dissimilarities in the image of the ideal of youth that they proposed. Vincent of Beauvais (c.1194-1264) is one of the authors consulted in this research.<sup>62</sup> Although Vincent entered the Dominican order in early age, he spent most of his career in the Cistercian monastery of Royaumont. He conducted services on behalf of the French King Louis IX, on whose order he composed one of his educational treatises – *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* (c.1247-1250). Although educational treatises existed before,<sup>63</sup> the works of Vincent derive, on the one hand, from the intellectual inheritance of antiquity and, on the other hand, from ideals introduced by courtly poets.

An author of didactic literature enumerates the discipline and virtues which young noble offspring should attain during his/her education. Even though it may seem that his educational program closely resembles the one designed for young men who were destined to become clerics, it was emphasized that this noble youth should lead an exemplary secular life and the knowledge attained would help to prepare

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<sup>61</sup> Robert of Blois, *Chastoiment des Dames*.

<sup>62</sup> See note 19.

<sup>63</sup> See: Dhuda, *Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son by Dhuoda*, ed. Carol Neel (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. K. S. Keath-Rohan (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993).

him/her for it.<sup>64</sup> Vincent produced a compilation of different source material obtaining references among others to the Bible, ancient and Arab writers. His treatise did not become as popular as another one written by Giles of Rome: *De regimine principum* (c.1280).

Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus, Egidio Colonna; c. 1247-1316),<sup>65</sup> Archbishop of Bourges and Prior General of the Augustinian Order, dedicated his work to Philip the Fair of France, designed as a book for the education of kings and princes. His religious career probably prevented Giles of becoming the personal tutor of Philip the Fair when he was young. The treatise contains important references concerning educational ideas for aristocrats and soon influenced noble society, even in the following centuries.<sup>66</sup> It can be seen as an important example of an educational treatise, offering models of political thought to maintain order in society, and, at the same time, “passage into the next life...[which] aided the faithful Christian on his or her journey towards everlasting bliss.”<sup>67</sup>

### **The need for education**

The figure of the young person in the Middle Ages is rather elusive. On the one hand, young people represented attraction and alarm<sup>68</sup> and the embodiment of unstable social reality, which needed to be controlled and moderated. On the other hand, the representation of youth had a symbolic meaning. Saints in churches<sup>69</sup> were represented as beautiful young people of noble descent. Adolescents were the active

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<sup>64</sup> See: Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde and Ingrid Kasten, “Erziehung und Bildung in mittelalterlicher Literatur,” *Der Deutschunterricht* 1 (2003): 3 (hereafter Brinker-von der Heyde, Kasten, “Erziehung und Bildung in mittelalterlicher Literatur”).

<sup>65</sup> First name Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum. Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 – c.1525* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>66</sup> On the popularity of the treatise and its owners throughout the Middle Ages see: Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum*, 16-17, 146-147.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>68</sup> Levi, Schmitt, “Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage”, 2.

<sup>69</sup> See Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry,” 120.



figures in courtly romances, known for their chivalrous adventures. To this complexity the fact had to be added that young nobles were regarded as future rulers, the leaders of society.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, to fulfill the role of just rulers they had to be properly educated from an early age. That is why before starting their adventures as knights, youth had to acquire proper education and skills which would give them the chance to enter the society of adult nobles and take leading positions within it.

“Educators identified childhood as the period in life when people were most receptive to teaching and hence stressed the importance of providing good examples for the young to follow.”<sup>71</sup> Different patterns of a child’s upbringing were adopted according to the gender of the child. The education of a noble boy would begin in the household of an important relative. In most cases, the maternal uncle assumed responsibility for instructing the young man in the profession of arms by making him a squire.<sup>72</sup> Serving in such a way the boy would learn practical knowledge and skills in using weapons and would learn the basics of courtly ethics, serving his master at court.<sup>73</sup> Later, when young men were between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two, after having completed the required training, they were dubbed knights by their masters.<sup>74</sup>

Noble daughters would be given as wives to the lord’s vassals; this measure would help spread and confirm the lord’s power and influence. Although they were then sent away from the castle to reside in homes of their own, they remained tied to

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<sup>70</sup> See: Helmut Brall-Tuchel, Alexandra Haussmann, “Erziehung und Selbstverwirklichung im höfischen Roman. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Abstammung,” *Der Deutschunterricht* 1 (2003): 18-28 (hereafter Brall-Tuchel, Haussmann, “Erziehung und Selbstverwirklichung”).

<sup>71</sup> Haywood, *A History of Childhood*, 35.

<sup>72</sup> Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry,” 138.

<sup>73</sup> On ethical values in upbringing see: Daniela Romagnoli, *La ville et la cour. Des bonnes at des mauvaises manières* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 25-34.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

it, bound to return from time to time, and to send their descendants to return to the lord's household.<sup>75</sup>

Therefore, the daughter of a noble lord had to undergo special teaching which would help her to become a decent wife in the future or accommodate her to a different way of life in a religious community. The education, as such, would take place at the court of a rich relative or in a convent.<sup>76</sup> Convents were a good alternative in a case when a girl had an insufficient dowry<sup>77</sup> at her disposal.

The upbringing at court incorporated several obligations and tasks that noble girls were expected to fulfill in order to become familiar with occupations which they would need in the future. From early childhood girls were taught practical duties around the manor and charity enterprises organized by the lady of the household. Along with these practical skills there were sets of ethical rules with which the noble girl had to be familiar with as well.<sup>78</sup>

The authors of didactic literature stressed that childhood was to be seen as a state of imperfection. Therefore, they suggested that young ones needed to be moving on their way toward perfection – growing up and attaining skills and studies. For Giles of Rome, the imperfect state of the boy was part of a natural process: “Nature evolves from what is less accomplished to what is perfect, so that first comes a boy, who is by nature less accomplished than a man who is perfect.”<sup>79</sup> This boy proceeds

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<sup>75</sup> Philippe Ariès and George Duby, *A History of Private Life. Revelations of the Medieval World*. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 66.

<sup>76</sup> See Barth, *Jungfrauenzucht*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> A good example of the aristocratic way of upbringing is given by Miriam Shadis and Constance Hoffman Berman, “A Taste of the Feast: Reconsidering Eleanor of Aquitaine’s Female Descendants,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 192-193. They deal with the marriage of the twelve-year-old Blanche of Castile and the future king of France, Louis VIII, who was fourteen years old at that time (1200). The authors assume that in the first year of marriage “the young couple studied, played, and were instructed together in the arts of rulership.

<sup>79</sup> *Natura enim semper ex imperfecto ad perfectum procedit; vt prius est quis naturaliter imperfectus est puer, quam perfectus est vir.* Giles of Rome I, II, II: *Quis sit ordo dicendorum*, 4. I thank Cristian-Nicolae Gaspar for helping me with the Latin text.

toward perfection with the assistance of teaching and learning. At the end of the required program of education designed by Giles, noble youths would be skilled enough in knowledge and ethical ways of behavior to enter the society of adults and to meet the obligations which their social circle imposed on the new member.

For Vincent of Beauvais, to educate was to put out of the state of ignorance.<sup>80</sup> Deprived of an ignorant state, adolescents could be cleaned of imperfection. Vincent also warns about the factors which could easily lead the young ones astray from the path toward acquiring knowledge. Among these, he enumerates bad company, weak education, or too harsh and strict methods of education.<sup>81</sup> In general, one can feel that the treatise offered by Vincent urged noble parents to take charge of the education of their children, appealing that all educational techniques should be conducted with reason in order to give right guidance for the child. Like Giles of Rome, Vincent was convinced that after following certain educational patterns youth can adopt their role within the society of adults and perform the required obligations.

Robert of Blois alike saw an aim of his didactic poem as instructing young aristocrats in order to avoid future hardships for them. He does not speak of their imperfections but proceeds straight to his educational guidance, which already meant that the youth had to master certain rules in order to enter the social group of mature noble men. In his poem *Ensoigement des Princes* he stresses the importance for young nobles to serve the interests of aristocratic circles, to protect church institutions, and help the weak, which would bring genuine honour to the one who performed such services.

Unlike the authors of didactic literature who stressed the importance of education within their works, the courtly poets Chrétien and Wolfram did not reflect

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<sup>80</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

as much on the need for education. Still, one should remember that these authors became teachers themselves, even when they did not emphasize that fact. The main hero of the *Story of the Grail* and *Parzival* had his own way of becoming a knight and his own lessons to be remembered. In order to achieve insight into the educational values presented by Chrétien and Wolfram in their romances, one needs to familiarize oneself with the plot.

### **The romances' way to knighthood and nobility**

In *The Story of the Grail* the reader sees the educational values connected with the upbringing and formation of the main hero, Perceval, into knighthood.<sup>82</sup> Jacques Le Goff emphasizes that the story “recounts Perceval’s adventures in the course of an initiation that is also an education.”<sup>83</sup>

At first, Perceval was raised by his mother in the forest, keeping him away from knighthood, which had caused the death of her elder sons and husband in the past. Nevertheless, he meets knights coming from the court of King Arthur, who give him information about the Order of Chivalry.<sup>84</sup> Inspired by a vision of beautiful mounted warriors in armor the youth decides to become a knight himself. His mother, in distress, informs him that he comes from a high noble lineage, therefore, it was in his destiny to become a knight. The emphasis on noble lineage is not accidental in this type of literature. Since the courtly romance fashioned the ways of noble society, it

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<sup>82</sup> On the subject of Perceval’s education refer to: Madeleine Pelner Cosman, *The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance* (Chapel Hill, 1965-1966), 49-100; Rupert T. Pickens, “*Le Conte du Graal* (Perceval),” in *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, ed. Douglas Kelly, The Edward C. Armstrong Monographs on Medieval Literature 3 (Lexington, KY: publisher, 1985), 252-279; David Hoggan, “Le Pêché de Perceval. Pour “authenticité de l’épisode de l’ermite dans le *Conte du Graal* de Chrétien de Troyes,” *Romania* 93 (1972), 60-76, 244-275.

<sup>83</sup> Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, 164.

<sup>84</sup> Order of Chivalry (*Ordre de Chevalerie*) -- under this term “We perceive the existence of the certain group of noble warriors, who are being knighted by the King Arthur.” Marcello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry,” 130.

was necessary to stress the aristocratic descent of the main characters.<sup>85</sup> It becomes clear that prowess and the ability to be a good knight are regarded as something closely connected to aristocratic blood, which opens up the theory of *norreture*.<sup>86</sup> According to this theory, no matter at what age the young noble was determined to enter the society of noble knights his true nature would assist in pursuing this goal. Therefore, despite the long isolation from the aristocratic world, Perceval wanted to live as a member of noble society and this inclination was in his blood. Such a concept was also mentioned in the German version of the romance, *Parzival*. The outward appearance of the boy proves him to be of noble origin. A good example is the meeting with knights in the forest, one of whom says: “‘I should think that you are of noble stock.’ The knights looked him up and down, and indeed he bore the marks of God’s own handiwork.”<sup>87</sup> Another example is when the author explains why nobles first regarded Parzival as a villain: “‘The Waleis, I must tell you, share the same distinction as we Bavarians, but are even denser than Bavarian folk, though stout men with their weapons. Whoever is born in either land will blossom into a prodigy of tact and courtesy.’”<sup>88</sup> Since nobility was a matter of lineage and patronage, those born of noble blood were raised in a special way in order to meet society’s needs in the future.

Perceval’s mother, although in distress, offers to her son some primary teachings which are supposed to help him on his way to adulthood.<sup>89</sup> Being an uneducated simpleton, the boy misinterprets the teaching of his mother and makes his first mistakes, which are due to his ignorance of chivalrous ideals. Misinterpreting his mother’s advice on praying in chapels, he brings distress to a young lady; shows

<sup>85</sup> Also see: Brinker-von der Heyde, “Erziehung und Bildung in mittelalterlicher Literatur,” 3.

<sup>86</sup> See Haywood, *A History of Childhood*, 35.

<sup>87</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, 73. Ir mugt wol sîn von ritters art./von den helden er geschouwet wart: / Dô lac diu gotes kunst an im. (book III. 123:11-13).

disrespect to King Arthur, and violates some other rules of courtesy. These examples of failures have the function of being anti-types of the behavior to those that Perceval will perform as a noble and acknowledged knight in the future continuation of the plot. It is possible to draw some connections within *The Story of the Grail*. For example, the first mistake of Perceval was the distress he brought the lady from the tent. His first deed as a knight was to redeem another lady, Blancheflor, from a siege. One finds the same connections in the story of *Parzival*. The peculiarity of this romance lies in the way the author expands the entire story of Parzival's childhood.<sup>90</sup> Unlike Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach gives a broader account of his character's childhood. The author includes Parzival's birth, the details of his upbringing and forest games while a child. This determination of the German author of the thirteenth century to provide his text with an entire childhood narrative may reflect a tendency towards making the story complete.<sup>91</sup> This picture also helps to put a heavier emphasis on the difference of the still- uneducated boy/child, who fails to act in a proper way, and the knight, who has reached a state of perfection through proper education and conduct. Thus, through the contrasting examples of good and bad types of behavior and the duality (peculiarity)<sup>92</sup> of human nature, the poets show the importance of the educational values to be followed by knights.

Perceval's next teacher, Gornemant de Gohort, gives him similar teachings, one of which he still takes in the wrong way: Perceval exaggerates the value of silence when it comes to his turn to ask questions about the Grail castle. The question could

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 72.: "dirre toersche Wâleise/unsich wendet gâher reise."/ein prîs den wir Beier tragtn,/muoz ich von Wâleisen sagn:/die sint toerscher denne beiersch her,/unt doch bî manlîcher wer./swer in den zwein landen wirt,/gefuoge ein wunder an im birt. (book III. 121:5-12).

<sup>89</sup> A detailed description of the teaching will be analyzed in the next chapter.

<sup>90</sup> On account of Parzival's childhood see also: Anja Russ, *Kindheit und Adoleszenz in den deutschen Parzival-und Lancelot-Romanen* (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 2000), 28-36. (hereafter Russ, *Kindheit und Adoleszenz*).

<sup>91</sup> See: Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*. See note 5.

<sup>92</sup> See: Brall-Tuchel, Haussmann, "Erziehung und Selbstverwirklichung," 21.

have liberated his uncle from his painful existence. This example shows that education by itself was as important as the right perception of it, along with the responsibility one was supposed to carry concerning one's own actions. The example may also prove that, since Perceval found his way to knighthood at a relatively older age, it was clear that he had to fail at some tasks as the result of a lack of experience. It shows that the personal element in the courtly virtues and manners was not simply a gift of nature as part of *norreture*; one also sees the role of practice in the knight's mastering of skills and proving them through his quests and adventures.<sup>93</sup>

Careful instruction in courtly manners was needed for noble maidens just as for noble boys.<sup>94</sup> Matching the needs of courtly society, in which female audience played a role, Chrétien could not omit the passages dedicated to young noble ladies and the ways of their behavior. J. S. Jaeger mentions "that in some of the major romances, the primary underlying motive of the narrative – ethical education – coincides with the theme: the education of the knight or lady or both."<sup>95</sup> In this aspect, *The Story of the Grail* is no exception, one also finds examples concerning the upbringing of ladies. In the context of the episode where Gawain arrives at the court of King Tiebaut of Tintangel, the reader is told the story of two daughters of the king fighting with each other and having an argument on behalf of knights. With interference of the king-father and a tournament of the knights the argument is settled. As in the case of two types of Perceval's conduct (wrong before education and noble afterwards), this case connected to ladies' upbringing also offers two types of behavior, represented by each of the sisters. In *Parzival*, one does not find this scene of a female argument ending in a fight. Still, what is peculiar for this romance is the way Wolfram depicted the younger sister – as a really small child who still played

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<sup>93</sup> Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 134.

<sup>94</sup> See also Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*, 210.

with dolls. Therefore, one sees that the author tried to give the same “complete” image of childhood connected to the noble girl as he did in portraying the noble boy.

Since children of noble society were portrayed as imperfect, inclined to bad conduct, and insecure in their decisions, the question of their proper education became vital. Proper education could not possibly be exercised without a decent teacher, whose role is not omitted from the texts.

### **The role of the teacher**

At this point it is necessary to clarify some aspects connected to teachers and legitimate persons who were supposed to dub a knight and give him the necessary educational guidelines. Two kinds of teachers instructed Perceval. Although the values which they were trying to teach him were similar, the effect of the education was different.

C. Marchello- Nizia writes that “Dubbing marked a young man’s accession to a certain number of rights and empowered him ‘to act as an adult’.”<sup>96</sup> R. Barber has a similar opinion: “Knighting, from the twelfth century onwards, became the ceremony that marked the coming of age of the warrior and the completion of his military apprenticeship.”<sup>97</sup>

In complex social relationships the act of dubbing relied not only on the person who was supposed to be knighted, but also on the one who performed the action of giving appropriate teachings and guidance to the youth. In the *Story of the Grail* is an episode where Perceval’s mother is offering her son primary teaching along with some clothing, which probably marks Perceval’s dependence on her symbolically and emphasizes his immaturity and imperfection. The figure of the mother was seen as

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<sup>95</sup> Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*, 55.

<sup>96</sup> Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry,” 130.

<sup>97</sup> Barber, *The Knight And Chivalry*, 35.



inappropriate for dubbing the knight. This may also explain the mistakes that the boy makes at first. Real dubbing would then signify the breaking of the boundaries and the end of submission to the motherly order, thus his freedom.<sup>98</sup>

Although one can note the likeliness of the educational advices taught by the mother and those offered by Gornemant de Gohort, the latter are more valued, since Gohort is regarded as a legitimate teacher. He is the aristocratic lord, who holds possessions and has people serving him and many young knights who are subject to him. Gohort instructs Perceval in knightly mores, teaches him the art of war, and presents appropriate knightly attire to the youth,<sup>99</sup> which has to be worn by real noblemen.

The mother's teachings which one finds in *Parzival* are different. Lady Herzeloide declares that she will intentionally give the wrong teaching and clothes: "My child shall wear fool's clothing over his white skin. Then when he is roughly handled, he will surely come back to me."<sup>100</sup> Again one sees the emphasis on the state of childhood, in which Parzival begins his journey to the court of King Arthur. Probably Wolfram used this wording to emphasize the inappropriateness of a woman teaching a future knight.<sup>101</sup> As in the case of Perceval, his German counterpart received a proper education from Gornemanz de Gohort, whose figure has symbolic meaning. Rejected by the noble society at King's Arthur's court, Parzival is welcomed by Gohort. With fatherlike care he heals the wound<sup>102</sup> that Parzival had

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<sup>98</sup> See: Peggy McCracken, "The Poetics of Sacrifice: Allegory and Myth in the Grail Quest," *Yale French Studies*, 95 (1999):163. See also Debora B. Schwartz, "A la guise de Gales l'atorna": Maternal Influence in Chrétien's Conte du Graal," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), <http://www.illinoismedieval.org/ems/VOL12/schwartz.html> (last accessed 22.05.2008).

<sup>99</sup> The change of clothes is again rather symbolic. As soon as Percival gets rid of the clothes given him by his mother, he enters the world of adulthood and aristocratic knights.

<sup>100</sup> *Parzival*, 75.: "Tören kleider sol mîn kint/ ob sîme liechten lîbe tragn./ wirt er geroufet unt geslagn,/ sô kumt er mir her wider wol." (book III. 126:26-29).

<sup>101</sup> One should also take into consideration that Wolfram was aware that his audience was already familiar with the French version written by Chrétien.

<sup>102</sup> On the importance of Gohort's figure see: Sacker, *An Introduction to Wolfram's Parzival*, 36-37.

received in the fight with Ither. He instructs him in the art of combat and in ethical values. This is the first time that Parzival is accepted in noble society. Finally, Gohort, who has lost three of his sons, asks him to stay, but Parzival continues on his way.

The role of teacher was not omitted from the educational treatises, nor the opinion about the deficiency of women's teachings. In one of the chapters<sup>103</sup> of his *De regimine principum*, Giles of Rome states that women's advice is invalid.<sup>104</sup> Giles emphasizes that "in the same way as a child has an imperfect judgment lacking the perfection of an adult, a woman also has a weak judgment because she has a weak constitution of body and lacks the strength of the man."<sup>105</sup> The author explains that women are weak in body, and their souls are bound to exist in the latter. As women are prone to weakness, one should be aware not to take their advice for granted. Giles of Rome gives the example of an appropriate teacher for the noble youth in another chapter of his work.<sup>106</sup> In his opinion, boys require a teacher who "should always exhort them toward the best things."<sup>107</sup> According to Giles, the appropriate teacher should also be wise in his deeds and should be good in his life. Setting a personal example for the youth by his own life and skills, the teacher can guide his pupil towards perfection and the skills required for the future.

In his *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, Vincent of Beauvais gives a similar example of the teacher. In his opinion, the teacher for noble boys must be as eloquent in his studies as perfect in his proper behavior.<sup>108</sup> Vincent also emphasizes that he should set an example in his way of living. Not mentioning the warmth of the attitude

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<sup>103</sup> Giles of Rome, I, III, XXIII: *Quale sit consilium mulierum: & quale earum consilio non est vtendum simpliciter, sed in casu*, 169.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., *Nam sicut puer habet consilium imperfectum, quia deficit a perfectione viri: sic etiam femina habet inualidum consilium, quia habet complexionem inualidam, et deficit a valetudine viri*, 169.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., II, II, IX. *Qualis debeat esse magister, qui filiis nobilium, et maxime regum et principum est proponendus*, 189-190.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., *Sic et magister puerorum semper debet eos ad optima instigare*, 189.

<sup>108</sup> Refer to *De magistri electione*, in Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 8 – 13.

the teacher should have, Vincent stresses the importance of his scholarly knowledge and behavior.

The courtly poet, Robert of Blois, has his own vision of an appropriate teacher. Basically, he regards himself as the one giving advice to noble youths. In the last chapter of his poem, the author states that “I vividly recommend you / and for your good I have just said / ... / And you have to think how to keep that: / Learn to suffer.”<sup>109</sup> Here one sees that the poet as an experienced nobleman becomes the teacher himself, in a similar way as Chrétien and Wolfram had tried to instruct young aristocrats in the necessary values of proper life.

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<sup>109</sup> Robert of Blois: D'une chose molt vos chasti/ Et por grant bien toz le vos di,/.../Et vos pansez dou retenir:/ Apranés que sachiez sosfrir. (1237-1242). My translation into English.

## Chapter II: Perceval, or a Model of a Boy's Upbringing

As long as young noblemen were seen as the successors of power in the future, they had to undergo special service and education which would prepare them for the tasks to come. The main aim of this chapter is to reveal the most important educational principles Chrétien de Troyes incorporated in his *The Story of the Grail* and to compare them with the ones in the German version by Wolfram and in the didactic works by Robert of Blois, Giles of Rome, and Vincent of Beauvais.

When one looks upon the educational values inculcated in Perceval by his mother and Gornemanz de Gohort, it is, as already mentioned, hard not to notice their similarity. A closer analysis of the values and the order in which they appear may, however, reveal more insight into the importance of each educational aspect and its place within the whole “program” of aristocratic education.

When Perceval's mother was giving her son the necessary guidance, first of all she mentions the need to respect noble ladies and to help them if they are in hardship. Since these teachings were coming from a woman, who was not supposed to instruct somebody destined for knighthood, there is no need to question why this value appears first. The second piece of advice concerned the company of gentlemen whose advice her son was supposed to follow. Last but not least was the advice connected to piety. Actually, this third value in the context of the mother's teachings may be seen as the most important, since she starts to talk about devotion to God with the words: “Above all I want to beg you / To pray to our Lord / In chapel and church...”<sup>110</sup>

Gornemanz de Gohort presents his values in different order. First, he talks about the knight's mercy, which is supposed to be shown to the defeated. The next teaching concerns the prohibition of being excessive in conversation. These two

values, taught by a noble lord, show what was most valued within aristocratic society. Those who followed these values, were considered to be skilled men within their noble circle. The author of the courtly romance also did not omit the role of noble ladies and the respect that should be shown towards them, but the master talks about this aspect in third place. Again the reader notices that the element of piety is presented at the end of the teachings. A comparative approach shows that the authors discussed in this research attach a different importance to each of the values and put their own emphasis on each of them. Therefore, each of the values deserves to be examined separately.

**“...Et qu’an cest siegle terrien / Vos gart come son crestien.”<sup>111</sup>**

Authors like Chrétien, who were aware of the influence that their writings had on their audience, were careful in constructing images of noble youth. Chrétien presents a new image of the young noble man, who acts in accordance with Christian ideals and values. In this way knighthood for the poet reaches beyond the secular and social experience because it has a higher purpose ahead: “Chrétien treats both the physical and moral qualities of knighthood as though they could only find fulfillment in the spiritual end. Charity and faith supersede the thirst for glory, prowess and love as the ultimate goal.”<sup>112</sup>

Taking this quote from R. Barber, it is just to point out that for Chrétien the ideal of the Christian knight becomes even more important than all other knightly values, since with the help of religious values the adolescent was supposed to proceed on the path to knightly perfection. Among the values taught by Perceval’s mother, piety is mentioned last, but still emphasized as the most important:

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<sup>110</sup>Chrétien de Troyes: Sor tote rien vos vuel proier/Que an yglise et an mostier/Alez proier nostre Seignor (549-551).

<sup>111</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: “And keep you true Christian in this earthly life.” (1649-1650).

Above all I want to beg you/  
 To pray to our Lord/  
 In chapel and church/  
 To give your honor in this world/  
 And grant you so to act/  
 That you may come to a good end.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, one sees that even through the perception of a woman's character, the author showed that this value had an important position in noble society. Gournemanz de Gohort also stresses the importance of this aspect.<sup>114</sup> Coming as the last of the values, it is again referred to as the most important:

Go gladly to church/  
 And pray Him who made all/  
 To have mercy on your soul/  
 And keep you true Christian/  
 In this earthly life.<sup>115</sup>

This importance of piety for Perceval may be seen in contrast to Gawain. R. Barber analyses this particular difference between Gawain, as the perfect example of secular chivalry, and Perceval, in the following way:

Indeed Chrétien's attention is divided between Perceval and his secular foil, Gawain, the most peerless of knights in all things earthly, polish, courteous, fearless of danger. Perceval has those virtues too. ...From the very first, however, he has a religious aura, which is totally foreign to Gawain.<sup>116</sup>

Instructed to respect the Christian faith, Perceval is a knight whose model is to be followed. Despite the wrong intentions of Parzival's mother in Wolfram's version of the romance,<sup>117</sup> the piety element is not listed among her ill-intended teachings.

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<sup>112</sup> Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, 111.

<sup>113</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Sor tote rien vos vuel proier/ Que an yglise et an mostier/ Alez proier nostre Seignor/ Qu'en cest siècle vos doint enor/ Et si vos doint i contenir/ Qu'a bone fin puissiez venire. (549-554).

<sup>114</sup> See *ibid.*, (1619 - 1650).

<sup>115</sup> Volantiers alez aun mostier/ Proier Celui qui tot a fait/ Que de vostre ame merci ait/ Et qu'an cest siegle terrien/ Vos gart come son crestien." (1646-1650).

<sup>116</sup> Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, 111.

<sup>117</sup> See chapter I.

This fact can mean that the value of piety was again and indeed important for the author and acknowledged as the proper element to be followed by noble youths. The mother is telling to Parzival about God before his meeting with knights: “My son, I shall tell you, just as it is. He Who took on the shape in the likeness of Man is brighter than the sun. My child take this wise saying to heart: pray to Him when in need. His steadfast love never yet failed the world.”<sup>118</sup> In this passage one sees the attempt of a noble woman to educate her child in religious matters, in a way presenting her vision of religion which she wanted to pass to her offspring. If one takes into consideration that the lineage of Parzival’s mother connects him to the grail family, the religious teaching coming from her becomes of vital importance.

After his failure to be accepted at Arthur’s court, Parzival continues his journey, still like one who “knew nothing of fine manners, as is often the case with a stay-at-home.”<sup>119</sup> Finally he meets Prince Gurnemanz. His teachings are also religious in tone, but they refer more to service for others than to the importance of prayer:

compassionate needy, ward off their distress with kindness and generosity. Practice humility. A man of standing fallen on evil days has to wrestle with his pride – a bitter struggle this! You should be ready to help him. If you relieve such a man’s distress God’s blessing will seek you out.<sup>120</sup>

Service to those in need becomes the core of devotional values in Wolfram’s *Parzival*. This help is for an active way of pleasing God, which fits the image of the knight who serves justice and help with his sword. Before the dubbing scene, Wolfram gives an example of how Gurnemanz instructs Parzival practically in

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<sup>118</sup>Parzival, 72. “sun, ich sage dirz âne spot./er ist noch liechter denne der tac,/der antlitzes sich bewac/ nâch menschen antlitze./sun, merke eine witze,/und flêhe in umbe dîne nôt:/sîn triwe der werlde ie helfe bôt.” (book III. 119:18-24).

<sup>119</sup> Parzival, 83. “er kunde kurtôsîe niht,/als ungevarnem man geschiht.” (book III. 144:21-22).

<sup>120</sup> Parzival, 96. “gein des kumber sît z ewer/ mit milte und mit güete:/ vlîzet iuch diemüete./ der kumberhafte werde man/ wol mit schame ringen kan/ (daz ist ein unsüez arbeit):/ dem sult ir helfe sîn bereit./ swenner ir dem tuot kumbers buoz,/ sô nâhet iu der gotes gruoz.” (book III. 170-171:26-4).

religious rites: “Our simple warrior went to where Mass was sung to God and for his lordship. At the Mass the latter taught him something that would still increase one’s blessing today: to make his offering and cross himself and so punish the Devil.”<sup>121</sup>

This quote is peculiar in the entire text of the romance. The author shows that despite future obligations to participate in wars and battles, the knight should be familiar with the religious side of behavior, an integral part of courtly mores. In addition, this segment of text shows the procedure of dubbing, which would sometimes take place in a church. M. Keen writes that “The fact that so often knights were dubbed in church impressed on all minds that knighthood was a Christian calling, imposing broad obligations of Christian observance and morality, whether it was given in a church or not.”<sup>122</sup> Thus, the value of piety is to be seen as inseparable from the rest of chivalric values.<sup>123</sup>

For Robert of Blois the piety element is vitally importance as well, although it takes its own form in the didactic poem *The Education of Princes*. The author places his emphasis not on private devotion to God, but on the importance of the knights’ service towards the Church as a religious institution. For Robert it is also the first educational aspect and the most important one, since all the actions if a knight were supposed to be subject to the service of the Church:

Watch for justice not to be injured/  
So, you won’t loose Holy Church/  
If you want for your life to last/  
You should think of love towards the Holy Church.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 95. “Dô gienc der helt mit wizen kranc./ dâ man got und dem wirte sanc./ der wirt zer messe in lêrte/ daz noch die sælde mêrte,/ opfern unde segnen sich,/ und gein dem tiuvel kern gerich.” (book III. 169:15-20).

<sup>122</sup> Keen, *Chivalry*, 76.

<sup>123</sup> See also: Flori, *Chevaliers et chevalerie au Moyen Age*, 235-236.

<sup>124</sup> Robert of Blois: Gardez par faute de justice/ Que vos ne perdez Sainte Yglise./ Se vos volez en bien durer,/ Pansez de Sainte Yglise amer. (7-10).



Robert portrays the knight who serves God and His Church on earth with his sword. For him it is the proper way to reconcile the art of war with knightly honor in serving a higher purpose. He writes that there are two figures to secure the Church – clerics and knights:

Two decent men are given to guard her; /  
These were clerics and knights; Clerics in order to preach the laws /  
And to serve the Holy Church, /  
Knights – to guarantee/  
That no lie and abuse will be done to her. /  
And because of that they need to be wise/  
For the knights- it was ordered for them/  
To carry a sword.<sup>125</sup>

One sees the need of a wise, educated and experienced knight who is ready to serve as Christian warrior. Following the text of the poem, the author enumerates the parts of the knight's armor and shows their symbolism of Christian virtues. For example, the freshness of color of the knight's armor was supposed to signify his ardor in piety;<sup>126</sup> the helmet was the symbol of his loyalty towards the Lord and strength of his personal devotion;<sup>127</sup> his sword meant honesty and chastity in his deeds.<sup>128</sup>

The authors of educational treatises do not omit piety values from their works. In the educational treatise *De Regimine Principum*, chapter V: *Quod decet omnes ciues, & maxime reges & principes sic sollicitari circa regimen filiorum, vt ab ipsa infantia instruantur in fide*, Giles of Rome mentions the importance of raising noble sons in faith,<sup>129</sup> writing that “all citizens and most of all kings and princes should

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.:Dous bones gardes li dona;/ Ce furent cler et chevalier;/ Les clers por la loi ensoignier/ Et en Sainte Yglise servire,/ Les chevaliers por garantir/ C'on ne li feïst nul outrage./Et de ce doivent este saïge/ Touit chevalier, por quoi espee/ Lor fut a porter commandee. (34-42).

<sup>126</sup> See: Ibid., 111-118.

<sup>127</sup> See: Robert of Blis, (133-144).

<sup>128</sup> See; Ibid., (41-61).

<sup>129</sup> See: Giles of Rome, II, II.V. *Quod decet omnes ciues, & maxime reges & principes sic sollicitari circa regimen filiorum, v t ab ipsa infantia instruantur in fide*,177.

concern themselves with bringing up their sons in such a way as to instruct them in faith from early childhood.”<sup>130</sup> This point has a reason, since the author believes that proper upbringing of noble children, who would hold power in future, would secure the position of Christian religion. He continues:

But this should be even more of a concern of the kings and princes insofar as on their account of their ardent faith particularly great benefits can be won for the Christian religion just as, on the other hand, because of their tepid faith particularly great damages may also arrive for it.<sup>131</sup>

Vincent of Beauvais also writes about the religious element in upbringing. Although this treatise contains a large number of quotes from different sources,<sup>132</sup> it is still possible to grasp the general ideas which the author has connected to the aspect of piety. Vincent writes that the Christian religion impels parents to instruct their children in the commandments and orders of the Lord.<sup>133</sup> The attention of the reader is caught by the lines from the treatise where the author states the importance and advantages of the young ones serving God. Vincent affirms that the service of the young is pleasing to God, as it was for the pagan gods, because youths are beautiful, strong, and active.<sup>134</sup> This point of beauty shows the context of the image of a noble youth one finds in courtly literature: beauty as a God-given asset<sup>135</sup> for the noble offspring that distinguishes them from other people with less disguised lineage. Beauty was connected to the wholeness of the image of aristocratic youths, and

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: *Omnes ciues, et maxime reges et principes circa regimen filiorum sic sollicitari debent, vt ab ipsa infantia instruantur in fide.*

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.: *Debeat ergo omnes ciues sollicitari circa proprios filios, vtt ab infantia instruantur in hac fide: tanto tamen hoc magis decent reges et principes, quanto ex feruore fidei ipsorum potest maius bonum consequi religio Christiana, et ex eorum tepiditate potest ei maius periculum imminere, 179.*

<sup>132</sup> Quotes used in the text are taken from the Bible, works of the Church Fathers and ancient authors.

<sup>133</sup> See: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobelium*, 54.

<sup>134</sup> See: Ibid., 84.

<sup>135</sup> Sacker, *An Introduction to Wolfram's Parzival*, 32.

combined with nobility and manliness.<sup>136</sup> For courtly romances as a literary genre there was a need for beautiful heroes and heroines,<sup>137</sup> but from the example given by Vincent of Beauvais one sees that this idea of youth and beauty was also relevant there. It also leads to the discovery of the symbolic meaning of young characters in the texts. Perceval as the example of a beautiful, young, and noble boy was destined to take the quest of the grail and serve the lords, who were older. Going through his education, he was taught to pray to God, who would help him in reaching his goals and fulfilling his role. This fulfillment of the role of the young could also incorporate dangers and even death, which one was supposed to pay in the service to his lord. Such an idea corresponds to the notion of “sacrificing youth” introduced by C. Marchello-Nizia,<sup>138</sup> who states that the young ones were bound to serve and often their service would end in their death – the beautiful sacrifice given by youths for the advantage of noble society. Vincent of Beauvais also mentions that the first martyrs and saints were boys.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, one sees how this service of adolescents is reflected in the texts. It is also shown that these texts were not only written for the young, who were struggling on their way to a decent education, but also for those who had a leading role in society, whose obligation was to rule over the young knights.

Thus, the value of piety had different functions. Being part of a noble education, it had to moderate the actions of the young boys and help them to achieve their goal – to become knights. For each of the authors the devotional aspect had a different expression and character. For Chrétien it was important to stress personal devotional experience achieved through prayer. Wolfram, in turn, regarded the devotional aspect as service to others. Robert of Blois emphasized the necessity to

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<sup>136</sup> Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 180.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>138</sup> Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Chivalry,” 165.

<sup>139</sup> See: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobelium*, 85.

protect the institution of the Church and to serve the latter with one's own sword. The authors of educational treatises had similar ideas, stating that parents should instruct their children in faith from early childhood because much depended on the actions of nobles in the context of the protection of the Christian religion. Finally, it is possible to say that for all of the authors service to God was seen as a major educational value, although they expressed and saw it differently. The service of youth was considered as the most pleasing to God and their sacrifice was important for the entire community of nobles.

**“...Et gardez que vos ne soiez/ Trop parlanz ne trop noveliers”<sup>140</sup>**

Another educational value which one finds in these sources, is the prohibition against talkativeness. Surprisingly, this vice, normally ascribed to the female nature,<sup>141</sup> was critiqued in the educational passages of courtly romances and didactic literature meant for male adolescents. An uneducated boy was seen as a character lacking the perfection of adult men, thus, in didactic literature and literary passages, he would also show the vices relevant for the female gender. Being imperfect by his nature, a young boy was regarded as inclined to gossip and say indecent things. Unlike wise gentlemen, Perceval/Parzival is just uneducated and still needs to learn the main rules in order to become courteous. On restraint in speaking, *Gornemanz de Gohort* states:

And be careful not to be/ Too talkative or prone to gossip. /Anyone who is too talkative/ Soon discovers he's said something/ That brings him reproach; / And the wise man says and declares:/‘He who talks

<sup>140</sup>Chrétien de Troyes: And be careful not to be/ Too talkative or prone to gossip. (1628-1629).

<sup>141</sup> See: Gerhard Jaritz, “Gender, Gesprächsbarrieren und visueller Befund im späten Mittelalter,” in *Zwischen Babel und Pfingsten. Sprachdifferenzen und Gesprächsverständigung in der Vormoderne (8.-16.Jh.) (Entre Babel et Pentecôte. Différences linguistiques et communication orale avant la modernité (VIIIe-XVIe siècle)*, ed. Peter von Moos (Kassel: Lit, 2006), 665-686. (hereafter Jaritz, “Gender, Gesprächsbarrieren und visueller Befund im späten Mittelalter”).

too much commits a sin'./Therefore, young man, I forbid you/ To talk too much.<sup>142</sup>

In this passage words are represented as a tool which should just be applied in necessary cases in knightly society. Somebody accustomed to talking could easily say things without thinking thoroughly or things which could be acknowledged as inappropriate to say in public. Because of the lack of personal experience, Perceval misinterprets this advice and fails to save his uncle, the Fisher King of Grail castle, by not asking the question of what the grail was and for whom it appeared.

Wolfram von Eschenbach keeps the same advice in his romance. Gurnemants orders Parzival: "Do not ask many questions. Yet if someone has a mind to sift you with words, you should not hold back a considered answer that keeps straight to the point."<sup>143</sup> In this passage one sees that it was advisable to use as few words as possible in conversing with other nobles, especially in the case of a young person.

Like Chrétien and Wolfram, Robert of Blois also condemns the inclination to gossip as a vice like telling lies. He writes: "...from bad words, / watch yourself, because it is worthless..."<sup>144</sup> and that is because "One little bad thing/ Embitters big courtesy."<sup>145</sup> Therefore, excessive talkativeness, especially of a negative kind, violates the norms accepted as courteous that stand for good manners and education.

The importance of keeping silent was connected with the need to think things over before saying them. These issues of talkativeness and the need for reflection before saying something can be identified in the didactic treatises. In the context

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<sup>142</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Et gardez que vos ne soiez/ Trop parlanz ne trop noveliers:/ Nus ne peut ester trop parliers/ Que sovant tel chose ne die/ Qu'an il atort a vilenie;/Et li saiges dit et retret:/ 'Qui trop parole pechié fet.'/ Por ce, biau[s] frère, vos chasti/ De trop parler. (1628-1636).

<sup>143</sup> Parzival, 96. "irn sult niht vil gevrâgen:/ ouch sol iuch nicht betrâgen/ bedâhter gegenrede, diu gê/ reht als jenes vrâgen stê,/ der iuch wil mit worten sprehen." (book III. 171:17-21).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.: ...de villain dit/ Vos gardez, car trop vaut petit...(301-302).

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.: C'une petite vilonie/ Empire bien grand cortoisie (309-310).

where Giles of Rome describes the need to avoid corrupted company,<sup>146</sup> he points out the weaknesses connected to a boy's nature. These are:

- young people are too soft and malleable;
- they run after passions and are inclined to bad things;
- they enjoy company too much;
- they are likely to trust easily.<sup>147</sup>

Since they easily conform to bad company, Giles of Rome advises making sure that young aristocrats will escape the dangers of such corrupt company, which can have a bad influence. Giles sees the inclination to talkativeness as one of the biggest drawbacks of the young. To this he connects three faults that young people are most likely to reveal: "First, because they talk about lascivious things very easily. Second, because they lie quite readily. Third, because most of the time they say stupid things."<sup>148</sup> Because of all these drawbacks, the behavior of the young should be moderated, they should be reminded not to say inappropriate things and, what is even more important, they should be taught not to reply immediately when asked a question,<sup>149</sup> since they should get accustomed to thinking before answering.

For Vincent of Beauvais, youth should demonstrate three things: silence, obedience, and understanding. He regards silence as of vital importance.<sup>150</sup> Again one sees the stress upon silence as the opposite of excessive talkativeness. The author writes about this value as connected to the way a noble youth behaves during the lessons taught by his teacher. Thus, Vincent introduces a third condition:

<sup>146</sup> Giles of Rome, II, II, XIII, 194 – 195.

<sup>147</sup> Refer to: Giles of Rome, 194.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.: *Primo, quia de facili loquantur lasciuia. Secundo, quia de leui loquantur falsa. Tercio, quia vt plurimum loquuntur fatua*, 187.

<sup>149</sup> See: Giles of Rome, 187.

<sup>150</sup> Refer to: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 30.

understanding, which should teach the youth to analyze the things which he was taught before proceeding with own decisions and answers.

Courtly poets and the authors of didactic literature point out that excessive talkativeness is to be seen as one of the main vices typical of a young person. For Chrétien and Wolfram, talkativeness in young nobles is regarded as a disadvantageous vice and a sin. Robert of Blois warns young princes to watch the words they say, since excessive talkativeness of the bad sort could spoil their reputation as members of courtly society. Giles of Rome shows that young people can easily be touched by bad influence, inclined to gossip and telling lies, which they should be restrained from. As one way to avoid this vice, Giles proposes to teach them to reflect upon their own thoughts before saying them aloud. Vincent of Beauvais regards talkativeness as a distraction that keeps young people from following their teacher. Therefore, the main merit the author sees in silence is attention and obedience to the ones who teach. Silence would impel young boys to listen to the older members of society and the wisdom which the latter had attained with their age and experience.

**“...Biax filz, as prodomes parlez,/ Avoec les prodomes alez ...”<sup>151</sup>**

This quotation from *The Story of the Grail* represents advice, which Perceval's mother gave him. She stresses the importance of conversing with the members of one's own social circle. Since older knights followed ethical concepts and rules, she saw them as appropriate guides for her son. The advice given by lady Herzeloide shows some similarities: “If a wise grey-haired man offers to teach you good manners as he would well know how, do as he says with a will, do not fly into passion.”<sup>152</sup> Gray hair represents wisdom and power in the text. For Wolfram of Eschenbach,

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<sup>151</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Fair son, speak to gentlemen, / Keep company with gentlemen...(545-546).

gray-haired men are of great importance. In contrast, the author portrays Parzival as a silly child, who appeals to Prince Gurnemanz: “My mother asked me to seek advice of a man whose locks were grey.”<sup>153</sup> Wolfram also mentions other noble princes like Kyot of Katelangen and Manpfilyot, referring to them as noble ones who were grey-haired and handsome.<sup>154</sup> This type of noble man was regarded as decent example for imitation in deeds and behavior within the knightly circle.

Robert of Blois regarded noblemen as suitable advisors. In one of the chapters of his poem, where he writes about dangers of treason, Robert warns about the danger in putting trust in the wrong kind of people, to whom he firstly assigns servants, people of lower social rank and bad nature. This nature impels them to betray their noble master.<sup>155</sup> The second danger for Robert of Blois lies in bad company: “It is insane to love company/ of cunning people, because their corruption betrays...”<sup>156</sup> Finally, he concludes that “gentlemen respect gentleman,”<sup>157</sup> “And about princes, who trust an indecent man/ I would not say to be nobles.”<sup>158</sup> Therefore, the poet establishes a particular group of people whose advice should be taken into account by noble youth.

The authors of educational treatises do not omit the importance of the presence of noblemen in youth’s education. Giles of Rome does not omit the advice to listen to gentlemen. He states that the young ones should pay attention to those whose advice they are supposed to follow since they should listen to people who are

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<sup>152</sup> Parzival, 75. Op dich ein grâ wîse man/ zuht wil lêrn als er wol kan,/ dem soltu gerne volgen,/und wis im niht erbolgen. (Buch III. 127: 21-24).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 92. “Mich pat mîn muoter nemen rât/ ze dem der grâwe locke hât.” (book III. 162:29-30).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>155</sup> See: Robert of Blois, (673-693).

<sup>156</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Li fol aimment la compaignie/ Des fox, et li malvais se trait (714-715).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.:Li prodons ainme le proudome (717).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.:Princes qui malvais home croit, ne dites jai que proudons soit (719 - 720).



excellent and honest.<sup>159</sup> Vincent of Beauvais does not stress the importance of the nobleman in a youth's education to the same extent as the other authors. For him, the appropriate person whose advice the boy should follow is a chosen teacher.<sup>160</sup> In this way the educational views of Vincent closely resemble the monastic and clerical type of education.

Each of the authors constructs an image of man who should have influence on noble boys. For Chrétien de Troyes such figures are represented by wise and older noblemen, whose wisdom comes from their life experience. Robert of Blois also warns his listeners that only those of noble origin can properly instruct in the values of courtly society. Giles of Rome mentions a person who is excellent and honest, from which one can also conclude that this person should be of noble origin and possess valuable knowledge that he can teach the young aristocratic boy. Vincent of Beauvais, instead, is emphasizing the importance of the teacher who was chosen to educate youths. The presentations of the appropriate figure to be followed in education testify to the important role the authors saw in decent examples which were to be shown to noble boys.

**“...Se vos trovez ne pres ne loing/Dame qui d'aïe ait besoing,/ Ne pucele desconselliee,/La votre aïe aparelliee/ Lor soit...”<sup>161</sup>**

One of the educational aspects in both mothers' and Gohort's advice concerns noble maidens. As one of the important elements of courtly literature, neither Chrétien's nor his followers, who reflected upon a knight's education after his work, it could have omitted it. Still, it is worthwhile emphasizing that this aspect was courtly

<sup>159</sup> Giles of Rome, II, II, X, *Sic decet eos audire viros bonos et honestos*, 188.

<sup>160</sup> See: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 8-13.

<sup>161</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Should you encounter, near or far, / A lady in need of aid, /Or a maiden in distress,/Make yourself ready to aid. (515-518).

in its origin and the authors of the educational treatises did not devote much attention to it.

Perceval's mother presented the need to aid to a noble lady as the first educational value:

Should you encounter, near or far, /a lady in need of aid, / or a maiden in distress, / make yourself ready to aid / them, if they ask for your help, / for it is the most honorable thing to do./ He who fails to honor ladies / finds his own honor dead within./ Serve ladies and maidens/ and you'll be honored everywhere.<sup>162</sup>

In comparison to his mother's advice, the request by the noble master on the account of ladies was more modest and occupied the third position among the educational values taught to Perceval:

If you find a maiden or woman, /be she damsel or lady, / who is disconsolate in any way, / you would do right to console her/ if you know how to console her/ and are able to do so.<sup>163</sup>

In Wolfram's version of Parzival's adventures, the author dedicates even more attention to noble ladies,<sup>164</sup> but unlike the mother in *The Story of the Grail*, Parzival's mother is shown as a misleading figure:

Whenever you can win a lady's ring and greeting, take it – it will rid you of the dumps. Waste no time, but kiss her and embrace her. It will bring you good fortune and raise your spirits, granted she be chaste and good.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.: Se vos trevez ne pres ne loing/ Dame qui d'aïe ait besoing,/ Ne pucele desconselliee,/ La votre aïe aparelliee/ Lor soit, s'eles vos an requirement,/Car toutes enors doit ester I afierent./ Qui as dames enor ne porte,/La soe enors doit ester morte. (515-522).

<sup>163</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Et si vos pri,/ Se vos trevez pucele ou fame,/Ou soit dameisele ou soit dame,/Desconselliee d'aucune rien,/ Conselliez la, si feroiz bien,/ Se vos consellier la savez/ Et se le pooir en avez. (1636-1642).

<sup>164</sup> In *Parzival* one finds numerous passages where Wolfram appeals to noble ladies. One of the most illuminating examples appears at the end of chapter VI, when the author tells about quitting his story on behalf of one of them, although it is argued whether this statement is true – see: Sacker, *An Introduction to Wolfram's Parzival*, xvi.

<sup>165</sup> Parzival, 75. "Swâ du guotes wîbes vingerlîn/ mügest erwerben unt ir gruoz,/ daz nim: ez tuot dir kumbers buoz./ du solt zir kusse gâhen/ und ir lîp vast umbevâhen:/ daz gît gelücke und hôhen muot,/ op si kiusche ist unde guot."(book III. 127-127:26-2).

Queen Herzeloyde gives mischievous teachings because of blind love towards her son.<sup>166</sup> Still, since the reader is already prepared that this sort of educational view is wrong, he/she can perceive that the ones opposite to these were regarded as acceptable for the time.

Gurnemanz, representative of an order within the noble circle, speaks about noble ladies in a different manner:

Hold the ladies in high esteem: that heightens a young man's worth. Do not forsake their cause for a single day. These and such thoughts should inspire a man. If you care to lie to them you will be able to deceive many. But cunning prospers only for a while as against noble love...If you earn Love's disfavor you will surely be disgraced and suffer shame's endless torment. Take this lesson to heart, for I have more to say about women. Man and women are all one, like the sun that shone this morning and what we call 'day.' Neither can be parted from the other...<sup>167</sup>

Noble ladies in both romances have symbolic meaning.<sup>168</sup> They influence and signal the further development of the plot. Even in the case of Parzival, the first knight he meets, Meljahkanz, was going to rescue a noble lady kidnapped by an unworthy knight. This meeting initiated boy's wish to become a knight himself. Since courtly

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<sup>166</sup> In literature, the image of the emotional mother who was trying to keep her child by her side was not new. Barbara Rosenwein writes that "they were expected to be emotionally overthrown yet condemned for it." She argues that this image may derive from Jerome, who in his letter to Heliodorus urged him to abandon his family in the pursuit of an ascetic life. See: Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 149-150. Here, one sees Parzival, who is leaving his home to pursue knighthood, cause distress and the death of his mother, Herzeloyde. Ernst Robert Curtius argues for the continuity of images and devices in literary sources throughout centuries, therefore, from this point of view, it is possible to state that Chrétien and Wolfram had borrowed their image of mother in distress from earlier sources. Refer to: Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 380-401.

<sup>167</sup> Parzival, 96-97. "Des nement wîbes ougen war./ Sît manlîch und wol gemuot:/ daz ist ze werdem prîse guot./ und lât iu liep sîn diu wîp:/ daz tiwert junges mannes lîp./ gewenket nimmer tag an in:/ daz ist reht manlîcher sin./ welt ir in gerne liegen, ir muget ir vil betriegen:/ gein werder mine valscher list hât gein prîse kurze vrist./.../sô müezet ir gunêret sîn/ und immer dulten schemenden pîn./ dise lêre sult ir nâhe tragn:/ ich wil iu mêr von wîbes orden sagn./ man und wîp diu sint al ein:/ als diu sunn diu hiute schein./ und ouch der name der heizet tac." (book III. 172-173:6-3).

<sup>168</sup> See: Peggy McCracken, "The Poetics of Sacrifice: Allegory and Myth in the Grail Quest," *Yale French Studies*, 95 (1999): 152-168.

poets give accounts of the lives of noble boys and girls of aristocratic origin, one cannot underestimate their value for this type of literature.

Although it may seem that all the main characters are young people and this type of literature was written in order to educate a young audience, another view on this subject has been introduced by C. Marchello-Nizia.<sup>169</sup> She states that the lady was to secure the union between the powerful lord and the young knights who served him. In times when the young ones would be occupied in winning the attention of their mistress, they would have no time to rival their lord. The lady herself is mirroring the power which her husband possesses, that is why her figure is so alluring. Thus, she represents restraint which help to keep the needed order in the kingdom where her husband rules. They are mediators between the young warriors and their lords, who hold power and wage wars in their interest.

The noble lady is not absent from the didactic poems of Robert of Blois. Although, he does not give any specific teaching, he devotes a separate poem aimed to instruct young ladies in courteous manners. This poem will be discussed in the next chapter. Since educational treatises had a different function than romances, one does not find the explicit instruction to help noble ladies in need.

**“...Einz l'estuisse a merci venire...”<sup>170</sup>**

Another important virtue was noble mercy. In Chrétien, only Gohort is speaking of it like an experienced lord, since it is closely connected to the idea of chivalry and knighthood. He states:

Young man, remember/that if you are ever compelled/ to do combat  
with any knight, / I want to beg one thing of you: / if you get the upper

<sup>169</sup> Marchello-Nizia, “Courtly Culture,” 170-172.

<sup>170</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: ...you must grant him mercy... (1626).

hand/ and he can no longer defend himself/ or hold out against you, /  
you must grant him mercy/ rather than killing him outright.<sup>171</sup>

It is most unlikely that this value was reflected in the real life of medieval nobles, but since this literature was meant to educate the hot tempers of noble lords, it is worth devoting some attention to it.<sup>172</sup> In *The Story of the Grail*, Perceval, being still uneducated, kills the Red Knight in order to receive his armor. After hearing the proper instructions of Gohort, the young knight, like his counterpart, shows more respect for noble representatives and spares the lives of other defeated knights. Wolfram's hero, Parzival, commits the same mistake: he kills the Red knight, Ither. In the German romance this mistake is even more dramatic, since the author shows the mourning for this noblemen and regret for his death. For Wolfram mercy is of great importance. Continuing his teaching, Gurnemanz says: "Temper daring with mercy: show me you have followed my advice in this. When you have won a man's submission in battle, accept it and let him live, unless he has done you mortal wrong."<sup>173</sup> From this moment onwards, Parzival starts to spare the lives of the defeated. The sign of mercy he shows toward other knights brings him fame and adds to his noble prowess and manners. By such actions he starts to be spoken of as an outstanding figure. Since the value of mercy towards the defeated was regarded as a pure knightly value, this educational aspect does not appear in the other educational sources that are discussed here.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.: Et dist: "Biau[s] frère, or vos sovaingne,/ Se il avient qu'il vos covaingne/  
Combatre a aucun chevalier,/ Ice vos voel dire et proier:/ Se vos an venez au desus,/ Que  
vers vos ne se puisse plus/ Desfandre ne contretenir,/ Einz l'estuisse a merci venire,/ Qu'a  
esciant ne l'ociez.(1619-1627)

<sup>172</sup> The contrast between the habits of contemporary noble lords in real life to the virtues promoted by courtly poets is described by S. Jaeger, *Scholars and Courtiers*, 287-309; J. Bumke, *Courtly Culture. Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages* tr. T. Dunlap (Berkeley, : University of California Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>173</sup> Parzival, 96. "Lât derbärme bî der vrâvel sîn./ sus tuot mir rates volge schîn./ an swem  
ir strîtes sicherheit./bezalt, ern hab iu sölhiu leit/ getân diu herzen kumber wesn./ die  
nemt, und lâzet in genesn."(book III. 171:25-30).

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Mercy and the other aforementioned values were supposed to lead Perceval/Parcival out of a state of ignorance and silly immature childhood. The passages in this chapter show which aspects of education presented in *The Story of the Grail* were also common for different other literary works of didactic purpose. Such values as piety, the importance of self-restraint in conversation and listening proved to be common for each of the authors discussed, while the other aspects, such as helping noble ladies and sparing the life of a defeated noble adversary in a fight, may be recognized as unique examples only present in courtly literature.

### Chapter III: Girls' Behavior and Education

“...Enfes est, nice chose fole”<sup>174</sup>

In one passage from *The Story of the Grail* the reader witnesses a scene when King Tiebaut de Tinangel is excusing himself in front of the knight, saying that his daughter was young and not able to take mature decisions on her own:

The lord, who had taken his leave, / Heard what his daughter requested/ and said: “Daughter, who ordered you/ to come make your claim before knights?”/ And Gawain said: “My good sir, / Is she your daughter, then?” - / “Yes, but don’t pay any attention/ to what she says,” said the lord. / “She’s a child, a silly, foolish thing.”<sup>175</sup>

In the romance of Chrétien de Troyes there are a few passages that also offer a vivid picture of parent-child relationship in the upbringing of girls.

One encounters a “thing” who is a child, therefore somebody in the state of imperfection, who requires appropriate education in order to leave this state of foolishness. The peculiarity of the girl’s situation also lies in her gender, which increases the need for appropriate upbringing, since feminine nature was generally regarded as lacking the perfection of adult man.<sup>176</sup>

To some extent it is possible to compare the position of child and woman in medieval society. J. Cadden states that “Women are closer to children – incomplete humans;”<sup>177</sup> moreover, “In a world in which women’s economic right and legal standing were limited, the implicit comparison of women to children reinforced notions of their incapacity and dependency.” In the case of the little princess from

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<sup>174</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: She’s a child, a silly, foolish thing. (5324)

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.: Li prodom, qui ot prie congié,/ Ot ce que sa fille demande, Et dist: “Fille qui vos comande/ Venir clamer as chevaliers?”/ Et Gauvains dist: “Biax sire chiers,/ Este le vostre fille donques?” - Oïl, mes ne vos en c[h]aille onques,/ Fet li sires, de sa parole./ Enfes est, nice chose fole.” (5316 - 5324). Bold in the text was added by me to emphasize the main points relevant for this chapter.

<sup>176</sup> See Chapter I, 25.

*The Story of the Grail* one finds her portrayed as the child belonging to female gender which aggravated her situation. Thus, the little princess is introduced as the character that needs to be taught.

All education was planned so that the offspring would be prepared to enter society with the necessary skills and views, which in turn would be common for the social circle to which the parents belonged. The medieval noble family had different methods of upbringing up their daughters from those that they followed to raise their sons.<sup>178</sup> The position and social standing of the parents influenced the decision whether the daughters of the lord would marry in future or acquire the religious path.

Chrétien does not enumerate the values, which had to be taught to noble girls; neither does Wolfram von Eschenbach in his *Parzival*. Still, the images of the aristocratic ladies, which one can find there, portray appropriate and inappropriate behavior of them as perceived by the authors of the text. In order to give decent judgment to those segments from courtly romances, I would like to present the image of a well educated lady constructed by the authors of didactic literature at whose works we looked in the context of boys' upbringing.

In his didactic poem *Le Chastoiement des Dames* (c.1250), Robert of Blois enumerates vices, which have to be omitted and virtues to be mastered by the noble lady. The image of the noble girl balances between illustrious examples taken from courtly literature and the pious image constructed by Giles of Rome and Vincent of Beauvais.<sup>179</sup> For Robert of Blois the main importance is devoted to the noble lady's behavior. Properly taught, she must perform proper conduct while in church:<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Differences*, 18. See also: Mulder-Bakker, "Metamorphosis of Woman: Transmission of Knowledge and the Problems of Gender," in *Gendering the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Stafford, A. Mulder-Bakker, 112 – 135.

<sup>178</sup> On educational values thought to sons see Chapter II.

<sup>179</sup> See J. Fox, *Robert de Blois. Son Œuvre Didactique et Narrative*, 58.

<sup>180</sup> See: Robert de Blois, *Le Chastoiement Des Dames* (67-96; 393-436;437-452).



looking straight forward, keeping silence and not smiling. The importance of silence, which we have seen in the examples of boy's education,<sup>181</sup> was regarded as deal and vital<sup>182</sup> for female representatives within the society.

According to Robert of Blois, while walking on the streets, the noble lady should keep her pace,<sup>183</sup> look straight, but still be polite answering the greetings of nobles. Robert of Blois also mentions that the noble girl had the duty to distribute alms to the poor<sup>184</sup> on her way to church, which would show her proper conduct. The appearance of the lady must be pleasant and neat,<sup>185</sup> she has to be taught proper manners<sup>186</sup> at the table and master the moderation in her behavior while in noble society.

Robert of Blois also mentions that one of the courteous signs for the lady is to participate and to behave properly during readings of the Gospel: "When you hearing the Gospels, / you have to stand up/ and make the sign of the cross/ at the beginning and the end/."<sup>187</sup> Another advice is that those noble girls, who had a nice voice may perform singing, but there should be moderation kept in this occupation, since even "good singer often may be annoying"<sup>188</sup> for the public.

Although the values presented by Giles of Rome and Vincent of Beauvais may seem even stricter, there are still some points that correspond to those, which one sees in *Le Chastoiement des Dames*. Vincent of Beauvais also states that a suitable occupation for aristocratic girls is reading, as this could distract them from

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<sup>181</sup> Refer to Chapter II.

<sup>182</sup> See: Jaritz, "Gender, Gesprächsbarrieren und visueller Befund im späten Mittelalter," 665-686.

<sup>183</sup> Robert of Blois, (67 - 96).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., (84 - 96).

<sup>185</sup> Robert of Blois, (469-496).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., (497-537).

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.: "Quant l'avangile lire orrez,/ En estant dracier vos davez,/ Si vos soigniez cortoisement/ Après et au comancement." (415-418).

<sup>188</sup> "Beaux chanters ennue sovant." Ibid., (460).

sinful thoughts and gossip.<sup>189</sup> Quoting St. Jerome Vincent writes: “May your little daughter ignores the songs of this world, and not understands stupidities. May tender tongue adjust her to singing the psalms.”<sup>190</sup> In the same chapter the author again quotes St. Jerome saying that the singing of the psalms should be followed by prayer and manual work, which mainly consisted of making clothes for the poor.<sup>191</sup> Finally, Vincent of Beauvais suggests that girls should be instructed in the following virtues: chastity, purity of thought, humility, silence, maturity in behavior and deeds.<sup>192</sup> All these virtues were supposed to aid in the upbringing of the noble lady.

Giles of Rome in his *De regimine principum* also devotes attention to the noble ladies and stresses the need for their education. He writes: “Though, in general all men are inclined to bad things, so, to the bigger extant women, who are much deficient in using reason.”<sup>193</sup> Therefore, little noble girls must be properly educated.<sup>194</sup> In his opinion, rulers and other nobles were bound to involve their daughters in a decent occupation, which would keep them from the abundance of leisure. To avoid the latter, noble ladies should be engaged in reading,<sup>195</sup> which fits to their social status. Reading would exercise their mind and would keep them busy from wandering around.

**“Bele fille, fet li prodom ...”<sup>196</sup>**

Since the noble lady needed to be properly raised, one should name the figure in charge of her education. All the sources discussed in this research, lay responsibility for this task on the shoulders of her father, who sometimes was

<sup>189</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 176.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>193</sup> Giles of Rome, II, II, XIX, *Communiter enim quasi omnes viri proni sunt ad malum, et multo magis feminae: quia magis deficient à rationis usu*, 203.

<sup>194</sup> Giles of Rome, II, II, XIX, 203.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.: *Trahenda esset studio literarum*, 205.

advised to put aside his love towards his offspring in order to impose strict education.<sup>197</sup> In the courtly romances discussed in this research the father figure is of a great importance.<sup>198</sup> His position in the noble society and the position within the household he runs offer him life experience, from which he can draw his judgments. The father is seen as the one, who is able to bring back the balance and peace within his kingdom, which was shattered by the behavior of his children. He is the one who stands for the courtly rules of the world where he takes one of the major positions. The king, being in the highest level of courtly society, should be regarded as the model for proper behavior, followed by his offsprings and noble youths.<sup>199</sup>

In *The Story of the Grail* the reader finds an episode where two princesses, daughters of King Tiebaut de Tinangel, had an argument on behalf of knights. Finally, the father interferes and helps to settle the argument. The king sees that his little daughter behaved in appropriate way, contrary to the deeds of the elder one. Therefore, Chrétien presents the affection and care the king demonstrates for the little one and shows the trust and submission of the daughter in revealing her troubles:

The lord carried his daughter/  
Before him on his palfrey's neck/  
And asked her what had been/  
The cause of this quarrel;/  
And she told him the truth/  
From beginning to the end...<sup>200</sup>

The courtly poet portrays the image of the caring king-father, who asks for the details before making any judgment concerning his own children. One also finds the

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<sup>196</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Fair daughter," said the gentleman ... (5381)

<sup>197</sup> Jean Delumeau, Daniel Roche, *Histoire des pères et de la paternité* (Paris: Larousse, 2000), 57.

<sup>198</sup> On the importance of father figures in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes refer to: E. Norden, "The Figure of the Father in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes," *The South Central Bulletin* 38, No. 4 (1978): 155-157.

<sup>199</sup> On the impact of the wise king and nobles on the youths' education see Chapter II.

<sup>200</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Sa fille an reporte li sire/ Sor le col de son palefroi/ Et si li demande por coi/ Cele tançons estoit montee;/ Et ele li a bien contee/ La verité de chief an chief... (5352 – 5357).

feelings of the parent toward his own child in the same context of *The Story of the Grail*:

As they talked he carried her along/In his arms, happy to be /Holding and hugging her,/Until at last they came to his place.<sup>201</sup>

In the continuation of the story, the father instructs his child in the courtly rules and takes care for a new dress for his younger daughter to be made, so that she would be able to grant one of her sleeves to the chosen knight as a token of her admiration.<sup>202</sup>

An even more explicit account of “fatherness” towards daughters one finds in *Parzival*. One sees again two types of ladies’ behavior represented by two sisters: the older one, Obie, and the younger one, Obilot, who are the daughters of Duke Lyppaut. The latter talks about them to Gawan: “I have two daughters whom, since they are mine, I love.”<sup>203</sup>

Unlike the father from *The Story of the Grail*, Duke Lyppaut does not forbid his little daughter to talk to the knight and makes Gawan fight in her favor on the side of her father. Partly this can be out of the reason that Wolfram portrays Obilot to be really little, since the friend of hers, little Claudite, warns Obilot that she has nothing to give to Gawan as a token of her love except the dolls they have.<sup>204</sup> Receiving the news that Gawan decided to fight just because of little Obilot, the happy father exclaims: “O happy we, that our loves bore such fruit! The day you

<sup>201</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Ensi parlant, antrez ses braz/ L’an porte, et a mout grand solaz/ De ce que il l’acole et tient,/ Tant que devant son pales vient. (5395 - 5398).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.: “Fair daughter,” said the gentleman, “I order and permit you/ To send him out of courtesy/ Some sign of your affection,/ Either your sleeve or your wimple.” (5381 – 5386); And said: “My daughter, get up early/ Tomorrow and go/ To the knight before he stirs./ Give him this new sleeve as a token/ Of love and he’ll wear it/ When he goes to the tournament.” (5421 - 5426) // Bele fille, fet li prodom,/ Ge vos comant et abandon, Por ce qu’il sera par corteisie,/ Que vos acune druërie/ Li anvoiez, ou manche ou guimple.” (5381 – 5386); Si li dist: “Fille, or vos levez/ Demain matin, et si alez/ Au chevalier ainz qu’il se mauve./ Par amor caste manche neuve/ Li donroiz, si la portera/ Au tornoi quant il i ira”. (5421 - 5426).

<sup>203</sup> *Parzival*, 189. “Ich hân zwuo tohter die mir sint/ liep: wan si sint mîniu kint.” (book VII. 367:7-8).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 192.

were born was an auspicious one!”<sup>205</sup> And another time: “My heart is shouting of joy that God had given me this child to save me from vexation.”<sup>206</sup> Indeed, one sees little Obilot as the example of a noble lady to be followed. All her deeds bring benefit to her family and make people out of noble society praise her. Gawan reassures that “Obilot will grow up to be the flower of all womanly virtue.”<sup>207</sup> Even the author himself emphasizes the virtues of the little girl, who helped to settle the arguments between the knight and her own sister, saying that “It was God himself that spoke through her young mouth: her command was obeyed...”<sup>208</sup> In this context little Obilot represents the noble lady, which brings honor to her family.

Since the treatise of the Robert of Blois was dedicated to ladies, who were of the age to marry, one does not find the special role of the father, but an emphasis on the figure of the husband.<sup>209</sup> In the educational treatise of Vincent of Beauvais it is rather hard to find an account of warm parental feelings toward the children. Instead, he cites out of the Book of Sirach: “If you have daughters... do not show to them your smiling face”<sup>210</sup> – explicitly stating not to show too much tenderness while raising a daughter; the author he sees the main occupation of the father to guard her and keep her within his house. The image of the noble girl presented by Vincent of Beauvais and Giles of Rome find themselves in the modest girl, who is kept from the society by her parents. Giles of Rome states that it is better to raise girls timid

<sup>205</sup> Parzival, *ôwol der fruht diu an dir lac!/ dîn geburt was der sælden tac.* (Buch VII. 373:3-4).

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 193. “Mîn herze nâch freuden schrei,/ dô mich got dirre magt beriet/ und mich von ungemüete schiet.” (book VII. 374:10-12).

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 203. About the image of the child speaking the truth coming from God one can find some parallels referring to the statement of C. Haywood saying that the medieval conception of childhood sometimes emphasized the children’s innocence, which meant that they were able “to have celestial visions, denounce criminals and serve as intermediaries between Heaven and Earth.” See Haywood, *A History of Childhood*, 15.

<sup>209</sup> See Robert de Blois, *Le Chastoiement Des Dames* (121-144).

<sup>210</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium, Filie tibi sunt...et non ostendas hilarem faciem tuam ad illas*, 172.

towards the conversations of men and compares them to wild animals, which used to avoid the society of people.<sup>211</sup> Here it is again worthwhile to note that Vincent of Beauvais and Giles of Rome were coming out of Church environment. The former was an archbishop, who had entered the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine in his youth; the latter was a Dominican monk. Being outstanding figures and having a busy life within their orders will probably not have allowed them to have enough experience in witnessing the position of little ladies within the aristocratic family.<sup>212</sup> An illustrative example in this case is the advice of Vincent of Beauvais given to girls to follow the ideal of the Virgin Mary.<sup>213</sup>

**“...Vos vos an deüssiez bien tere...”<sup>214</sup>**

Silence was one of the principle virtues of girls, which was violated by the princesses from *The Story of the Grail*. First, the reader witnesses an argument of the two sisters:

But her sister, who was seated beside her, / Said that there was a more handsome knight./ Her elder sister became angry /And rose to strike her; / But the ladies pulled her away/ And restrained and stopped her/ From hitting her sister, /Which made her most upset.<sup>215</sup>

The older princess praises the knight Meliant de Liz, who was fighting for her, while the younger princess preferred Gawain. The elder princess gets rather annoyed by her younger sister and goes even farther in her fury:

<sup>211</sup> See Giles of Rome, II, II, XIX, 203.

<sup>212</sup> This thought was also expressed by P. L’Hermitte-Leclercq stating about Vincent of Beauvais: “Rien qui permette de sentir qu’il a nourri sa réflexion de l’observation de la société de son temps et non pas uniquement d’un savoir livresque.” See: P. L’Hermitte-Leclercq, “L’image de la femme dans le *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* de Vincent de Beauvais,”<sup>244</sup>.

<sup>213</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 174.

<sup>214</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: You’d do well to keep quiet...(5408)

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.: Et sa suer qui lez li seoit/ Li dist que plus bel I avoit,/ Et cele s’an est correciee,/ Si s’est por li ferir drechiee;/ Mes les dames arriers la traient,/ Si la retient et delaient/ Tant que cele ne l’adesa,/ Dont mout durement li pesa (4975 - 4982).

Her sister rushed upon her, /Enflamed with ire, and said hotly: “You brat! How could you /Be so impetuous /As to dare criticize/Anyone whom I had praised? /Let this blow teach you/**To keep silent**<sup>216</sup> in the future!”/Then she slapped her so hard /That her fingers left their stamp upon her face,/ And the ladies who were there/ Rebuked her strongly and pulled her away. (5006-5017).<sup>217</sup>

These passages illustrate a peculiar example of unrestrained fulfillment of anger that made one of the princesses forget her courtly manners; but first of all they introduce one of the main virtues, silence and restraint, which were abandoned by both daughters of the king. Following the plot of the romance, King Tiebaut de Tinangel asks her younger daughter for the cause of the argument and takes her aside afterwards, seeing that the knight chosen by his little daughter was worth to be praised and that his older daughter had gravely misbehaved. The older princess is portrayed violating the rules of behavior assigned to the lady of noble origin. She not only hits her little sister, but tries to spoil the reputation of Gawain and the good attitude of the father towards his smaller daughter by her blunt and unfair lies. As the result, the king takes charge and gives an appropriate lesson to her daughter, which one finds in the following passage:

And when the elder daughter saw him/ Coming holding her sister in his arms,/Her heart was filled with anger/And she said: “Sir, where has my sister been,/The Maiden with the Small Sleeves?/She knows lots of tricks and ruses,/For she’s practiced them a long while./Where did you bring her from just now?” - “And what do you wish to make of it?” he asked./“**You’d do well to keep quiet.**”<sup>218</sup>/She’s worth more than you,/Who pulled her tresses/And hit her, which makes me angry./You haven’t behaved in a courteous way.”/Then she was very discomfited/ Because her father had/Reprimanded and scolded her.<sup>219</sup> (5399 – 5415)

<sup>216</sup> Text in bold was added by me.

<sup>217</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Et cele maintenant li vient/ Et dis com anflamee et chaude: “Vos, grace, vos fustes si baude/ Que par votre male aventure/ Osastes nule creature/ Blasmer que j’eüsse loee!/ Et tenez or caste joeer,/ Si vos an gardez autre froiz!”/ Lors la fiert si que toz les doiz/ Li a enz el vis seelez,/ Et les dames qui sont delez/ L’an blasment mout et si li tolent (5006 - 5017).

<sup>218</sup> Text in bold was added by me.

<sup>219</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: Et quant l’autre levit venire/ Et celi devant lui tenir./ S’en ot grant ennui an son cuer, / Et dist: “Sire, don vient ma suer,/ La Pucele as Petites Manches?/ Ja set mout de torz et de ganches, / Mout s’I est ja tost aprestee./ Mes don’t l’avez vos

The king-father shows his wisdom and becomes the judge of the situation. He orders his daughter to keep silence and listen to his judgment. The king also points out to his older daughter that she had not behaved in courteous way, therefore emphasizing her fault in giving his reprehension.

Unlike Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach did not include the fight between sisters within his *Parzival*. In this romance, instead of the two princesses, the daughters of Duke Lyppaut are shown to have a verbal debate on behalf of Gawan, but there is no such expression of anger, which one finds from the segments sited above. Still, similarly to the heroine of Chrétien's romance, one sees the misconduct of the older daughter Obie, who tries to dishonor Gawan by her lies. Nevertheless, Wolfram tries to justify her, stating that love to the other knight had blinded her. Still, he acknowledges the falsity of her deeds: "Obie's lapses from ladylike behavior were now frequent. Her modest ways were interlaced with anger..."<sup>220</sup> Even the knight chosen by her concludes her inappropriate behavior saying: "She did not behave as a lady."<sup>221</sup>

Robert of Blois also mentions the necessity to moderate the speech and keep oneself from lying. Taken a middle position, he suggests that the noble lady should be neither too talkative nor too timid for conversation. As he puts it: "The excess in words signifies bad education,"<sup>222</sup> but, on the other hand, excessive shyness does not bring much pleasure. Robert of Blois argues that the lady, who was too reserved in greeting or talking to other noble person may seem badly educated: "The lady who

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aportee?"/ - Et vos, fet il, qu'an volez fere?/ Vos vos an deüddiez bien tere,/ Qu'ele valt miaz que vos ne fetes/ Qui ses traces li avez tretes/ Et batue, dont mout me poise:/ N'avez mie fet que cortoise."/ Lors fu cele mout desconfite/ Par son pere qui li ot dite/ Cest ranpone et cest afit. (5399 – 5415).

<sup>220</sup> *Parzival*, 189. "Von minn noch zornes vil geschicht:/ nune wîzetz Obîen niht./ nu hæret wie ir vater sprach..."(book VII. 366:1-3).

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 201. "Daz was unfrouwenlîch gelimpf" (book VII. 392:16).



does not respond, / when noblemen greet her/ And who keeps herself restrained, / Is regarded to be indecent and uneducated.”<sup>223</sup> Another vice of the lady Robert sees in her lies. He stresses that telling lies is condemned by the Church and by society. Therefore, Robert of Blois regards lies as destruction for the soul. The author opens up his chapter on lies saying: “One of the greatest vices is to lie; / We shouldn’t love nor serve/ To the lady which dresses in lies...”<sup>224</sup> He states very precisely that the lady which indulges in lies should be abandoned by the knight.

His own perception of the mentioned vices is presented by Vincent of Beauvais, criticizing the inclination in female nature to be talkative.<sup>225</sup> In his opinion, silence is one of the main virtues of girls.<sup>226</sup> Giles of Rome, in his turn, also praises silence and restraint as the best qualities of young girls. One of his chapters on girls’ education is dedicated entirely to their silence.<sup>227</sup> He opens three topics connected to this virtue. First, he states that women are prone to gossip. Then, criticizing “chatty” girls who present themselves with disrespectful familiarity, he contrasts them to those, who, from their early age, were taught to be silent. A silent girl is more respected in society, and men would tend to attract the attention of such a personality. The second point of Giles of Rome is that the one who is reserved in conversation tends to be thinking about the words he/she says.<sup>228</sup> For this reason girls should restrain themselves from unneeded talk. The last point of the author lies in his judgment that women, especially girls, are deficient in rational thinking. Passions take over their reason and that is why they are easily driven into disputes

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<sup>222</sup> Robert de Blois, *Le Chastoiement Des Dames* (15-16).

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, (343-346).

<sup>224</sup> Chrétien de Troyes: “Trop est grant vices de mentire;/ Nus ne doit amer ne server/ Dame qui par costume ment...” *Ibid.*, (541-543).

<sup>225</sup> See Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, 175.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Giles of Rome, II, II, XXI, 204 – 206.

<sup>228</sup> Similar passages were found concerning boys – see Chapter II.

and quarrels, and because of the lack of rational thinking they are not able to restrain themselves from them.

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One can identify two different types of images represented by the two sisters who antagonize each other in deeds and personal qualities. By giving such contrasts, authors like Chrétien seem to have been aware of the message they were trying to convey to their reader or listener: to distinguish good from evil and to praise good people for their good actions and virtues. Unlike the authors of educational treatises, who were often closely connected to the Church and had little experience of talking to little children, especially young girls, Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Robert of Blois had a chance to experience life in royal society and communicate with its members.

Both educational sources and literary romances can be regarded as producing and promoting certain images and virtues which should be followed in girls' education. The same relevance of contrasting images we saw connected to boys' behavior, when Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach opposed the image of Perceval/Parzival before and after his education. The distinct genres of sources showed that, on the one hand, the difference between courtly ideals in literary sources and religious ideals is important. On the other hand, both of them seem to follow similar viewpoints and aims. Altogether, both of them have to be seen as ideals on which any discourses concerning noble children's education were based. The variety of their textual representation can be seen out of their different function.

### **Conclusion: Values, transmissions, influences ...**

Courtly romances together with their entertaining purposes had also another important function: to educate and to moderate the ways of the audience for whom this type of literature was written. Compared to educational treatises, which were specially designed for the upbringing of the noble youths, romances fulfilled the same function but in different form, presenting the figures of young knights, whose positive qualities and deeds inspired the audience of the poet and made it to admire the prowess, deeds and actions of the main characters.

On the example of *The Story of the Grail* I have shown which educational ideals Chrétien de Troyes was trying to transmit through his work. One finds typological oppositions within the text, where positive-negative characters become the examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. According to the rules of courtly romance, one can trace the images connected to the upbringing of boys as well as of young ladies.

Since it has been as acknowledged that the writings of Chrétien de Troyes had generally influenced not only the further development of courtly literature in different regions of medieval Europe but also various other literary genres, I decided to compare the specific topic of youth and education in one of Chretien's romances with the treatment of the same topic in other pieces of medieval literature that were generally influenced by Chretien. The first work, which I have chosen for contextualizing Chrétien's ideals is *Parzival*, one of the most famous adaptations of the French romance written by German author Wolfram von Eschenbach. The segments of texts, which I compared, show that although Wolfram was trying to adjust his text to his own local audience, he still presented similar values, only slightly changing the accents and emphasis on them, which shows to which extent

the ideas described by Chrétien were relevant also for the noble audience of another area.

In order to find the relevance of the literary source and its ideas I put the text in the framework of other texts, in order to check the relevance of the values described by Chrétien de Troyes and to trace possible influences of Chrétien's romance on the other works of different authors. Since it has been generally acknowledged that Chrétien's work had its influences even on such other types of genres like didactic literature, I took some important examples of the latter to see whether this influence may also be seen in context with educational values. The texts which I used were written by such authors as Robert of Blois (*Ensoigement des Princes, Chastoiement des Dames*), Giles of Rome (*De regimine principum*) and Vincent of Beauvais (*De eruditione filiorum nobilium*).

In each of the texts one finds that the child is represented as imperfect and needs to be properly educated. Therefore, each of the authors proposes his own "educational program" in order to lead the noble youths out of the state of ignorance towards the perfection of noble adulthood. Among the described values one finds the piety element in upbringing as inseparable from noble education. All of the authors emphasize that this element is necessarily present among the values taught to the noble youths. Among the dangers of youth to be eliminated, the authors stress the importance of keeping silence for both noble boys and girls because excessive talkativeness could not contribute to the positive image of a noble person. The authors portray the figures, who were supposed to be in charge of this education, that is, the teachers often represented as wise older man from the noble class often embodied by the father figure bound to moderate the actions of the youth and to sustain the order within the described social circle. The texts also show that there

were values which were not necessarily shared by all of the discussed authors. Such values as mercy towards the defeated and assistance for noble ladies proved to be particularly represented within the courtly literature. The peculiarity of the sources and their authors also showed that such authors as Chrétien, Wolfram and Robert of Blois, who had a chance to witness noble life from within could easily construct the type of proper behavior for boys and girls and their activities, while Giles of Rome and Vincent of Beauvais, who had been successful in their religious career, most probably were not able to reveal the aforementioned aspects in the same way because of the differences of their experience in encountering the noble life from within. Therefore, their account on noble education may seem stricter and pious and less connected to actual noble quotidianity.

The sources that I used for my comparative analysis can only be seen as a rather small sample. Therefore, my study may just be seen as a starting point for this kind of comparison of specific aspects in various sources of different literary genre, for which influences and interdependences can be supposed. Further studies will have to use a larger amount of evidence and even add material from other source types. My small contribution just should have shown that it is worthwhile to compare different types of literary sources and to find out that their authors shared similar ideas described in their own way.

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