

Medieval Redemption for Modern Times: Representations of Sacrifice in *Perceval le Gallois* and *The Fisher King*

Tabitha Gerardot

Departmental Affiliation: Foreign Languages and Literatures
College of Arts and Sciences

Chretien de Troyes' medieval novel *Perceval ou le Conte du graal* tells the story of young Perceval's journey to knighthood and an understanding of selflessness and redemption. However, the tale was left unfinished, giving rise to numerous continuations, both medieval and modern. The film adaptations *Perceval le Gallois*, by French director Eric Rohmer, and *The Fisher King*, by Terry Gilliam, continue the rich tradition of Perceval with their own conclusions. While the films use different artistic styles and entirely different plots, they both solve the story with a tale of redemption. While Rohmer's adaptation is extremely faithful to the original text, he finishes the story with Perceval sacrificing himself in a reenactment of the Passion of Christ. Gilliam, however, presents a conclusion where the only solution to the fragmented and chaotic lives of the characters is love (both romantic and platonic). Ultimately, the conclusions to these adaptations suggest that their Perceval characters are in need of redemption through sacrifice. While it may seem strange to compare two 20th century films with a 12th century novel, the authors of these stories struggle with the same universal condition of unhappiness found in selfishness, thereby transcending their separation in time.

Information about the Author:

Tabitha Gerardot took a French senior seminar in which the students compared French films with their original works of literature. A French and Spanish major, she loved studying the French language in these pieces of art. Being a Christ College student as well, she found it meaningful to analyze connections and contrasts between cultures (she chose a French and an American cinematic adaptation) and points in time. That's why she chose these particular tales addressing the human condition.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Timothy Tomasik

Student Contact: tabitha.gerardot@valpo.edu