Translation and Réécriture in the Middle Ages: Rewriting Merlin in the French and Italian Vernacular Traditions

CAMPBELL, LAURA,JANE

Translation and *Réécriture* in the Middle Ages:

Rewriting Merlin in the French and Italian Vernacular Traditions

PhD
Laura Jane Campbell
Durham University, Department of French
Submission Date: October 2010

Translation and *Réécriture* in the Middle Ages: Rewriting Merlin in the French and Italian Vernacular Traditions

Laura Jane Campbell, Durham University

Abstract: This thesis will investigate the processes of translation and rewriting (*réécriture*) in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, through a study of the French and Italian Merlin corpus. In particular, it will focus upon the products of translation between vernacular languages, which, as a practice, displays a greater degree of heterogeneity than translations into the vernacular from Latin. Medieval translation will be studied through a comparative analysis of the story of Merlin's conception in Robert de Boron's *Merlin* and Paulino Pieri's *La Storia di Merlino,* in addition to an examination of the translation of Merlin's prophecies as recounted in the *Prophecies de Merlin*, the *Storia* and the *Vita di Merlino*. These instances of translation will be compared to and studied alongside the processes of intralingual *réécriture*. Rewriting within the French tradition will be investigated through an analysis of the interpretative transition from the Vulgate *Estoire de Merlin* to the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin;* in particular, the reinterpretations of Merlin's prophetic discourse and the character of Merlin's lover, Viviane, will be examined. The study will take as its methodological basis the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, particularly the concept of semiosis; this defines interpretation as an exchange of signs, through which meaning is transmitted and developed. In this way, the Merlin corpus will be regarded as a continuum of interpretation, through which the meaning of narratives is interpreted by other signs, thought patterns and extra-textual cultural discourses; more broadly, the whole medieval tradition of translation and *réécriture* will also be regarded as a part of this same continuum, displaying the same interpretative patterns.

.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been made possible due to a grant from the Durham Doctoral Fellowship scheme, which has not only supported me financially during its composition, but has also allowed me to undertake research trips abroad and to further my research by attending international conferences.

My greatest thanks must go to my supervisor, Professor Jane Taylor. Her experienced and supportive approach—and not to mention, her vast expertise—have been enormously beneficial, and I feel incredibly privileged to have been able to work under her direction. I am also very grateful to my second supervisor, Dr Stefano Cracolici, whose guidance was invaluable to my work on the Italian Merlin tradition. Thanks are also due to Dr Kathryn Banks, Dr Manolo Hijano and Professor Jan Clarke, for their roles in monitoring this thesis, and their useful comments; in particular, I would also like to thank Dr Dario Tessicini for his additional feedback, which was very gratefully received.

Some of the material which went into this thesis was first aired in the form of conference papers, and I would like to thank the members of the International Arthurian Society (British Branch) and the International Medieval Society of Paris, whose comments and advice were incredibly helpful. I am also grateful to the staff at the various sites of the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris for their assistance with the codicological aspects of this research.

On a personal level, I would like to thank my friends among the MLAC postgraduate community— past and present—, mum, dad and our Anthony for their unfailing solidarity, encouragement and support. And finally, I am enormously grateful to Sean, who has kept me fed, sane and smiling throughout.

Illustrations

1. Peirce's sign model 49

2. BNF fr 24394, f. 214R 227

3. BNF fr 24394, f. 218R 230

Contents

Abstract i

Acknowledgements ii

Illustrations iii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1:
Approaches to Studying Medieval Translation and *Réécriture* 16

Chapter 2:
The Translation of Merlin's Conception from The Prose Version
of Robert de Boron's *Merlin* to Paulino Pieri's *Storia di Merlino* 70

Chapter 3:
The Figure of Viviane in the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin* 105

Chapter 4:
Rewriting Prophetic Discourse in the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin* 144

Chapter 5:
The Translation of Italian Political Prophecies from the *Prophecies de Merlin* to the *Storia di Merlino* and the *Vita di Merlino* 180

Conclusion:
Merlin and the Semiotic Continuum 216

Appendix 225

Works Cited 236

Introduction

The birth of Merlin, as described in the prose version of Robert de Boron's *Merlin* (ca 1200), calls attention to the protagonist's supernatural origins. He is born entirely covered with hair, much to the horror of his mother and her nurses:

> Et quant les femes le [l'enfant] rechurent se n'i ot cele qui n'i eüst molt grant paour pour ce qu'il le virent plus pelu et plus grant poil avoir qu'eles n'avoient onques veü a nul enfant avoir. Si le moustrerent a la mere, et quant ele le vit si se seigna et dist : «Cis enfés me fait grant paour», et les autres femes dient : «Et nous meïsmes en avons nous tele paour que a grant painne le poons nous tenir. »[1]

Merlin, as the reader already knows, has been fathered by a devil with the intention of sending a demonic prophet to earth. The reader is also aware, however, that Merlin is not evil; knowing in advance of the devil's plans, God redeems Merlin and gives him a new, Christian purpose. Nevertheless, the child's strange hirsute appearance frightens even his mother, who subverts all expectations of motherly affection by making the sign of the cross in reaction to the first sight of her baby. The unnaturalness of the child thus produces an unnatural relationship between the child, his mother and his nurses, who are too afraid to offer the usual attentions accorded to a new-born.

The strangeness of Merlin's appearance at birth is also emphasised by Paulino Pieri, the author of a fourteenth-century Italian vernacular translation of Robert's text. Pieri's version offers a fuller description of Merlin at birth:

> [Merlino] fu molto brutto e laido, però ch'e' fu piloso a modo d'un bertuccione per lo volto e per le mani e per tutto. Fu la sua carne bruna e smorta, grosso nelle reni ch'e' parea zembuto alquanto; avea grossa la bocca e grandi e grossi gli occhi, e ' denti lunghi e radi e brutti.[2]

---

[1] *Le Livre du Graal*, *tome I: Josephe d'Arimathie-Merlin-Les premiers faits du roi Artus*, ed. by Philippe Walter et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), pp. 594-595.

[2] *Paulino Pieri*, *La Storia di Merlino. Edizione Critica a cura di Mauro Cursietti*, ed. by Mauro Cursietti (Rome: Zauli, 1997), p. 8; 'Merlin was very ugly and unpleasant, because he had hair on his face and hands and all over, just like a big ape. His skin was brown and dull; his lower back was so swollen that he looked like a hunchback. He had a large mouth, bulging eyes, and his teeth were long and sparse and ugly'. (All translations from the *Storia* and the *Vita* my own).

The translation provides a more immediate, more visual image; Merlin is not just hairy, but ugly ('brutto e laido'), with a large mouth, bulging eyes, and long, gaping teeth. The child's appearance is concretised through physical comparisons; he is said to resemble an ape-like creature (a 'bertuccione'),[3] and a hunchback ('zembuto'). Whereas the original French text concentrated upon the reactions caused by the peculiar child, the translation focuses entirely upon the details of his physical peculiarity.

This example of medieval translation has here been subjected only to the briefest analysis. Nevertheless, such an analysis raises a fundamental question as to the ontological status of Pieri's text: is this a translation? If translation involves semantic transfer between two languages, then this can be observed in our example; Pieri, like Robert, describes Merlin's appearance at birth, highlighting his unnatural and animal-like hairiness. This semantic content, however, undergoes substantial changes when transferred from source to target text. The translation fails to convey the perspective of Merlin's mother and his nurses, their fear and confusion at the child's appearance. Instead, the semantic content related to Merlin's physical features is elaborated upon, and his unnaturalness exaggerated; the description of the child even verges on the ridiculous, hinting at a comic tone which is absent in the source text. These alterations are not random, but clearly motivated by the content of the source. Has Pieri translated Robert's text, then, or has he rewritten it? How much reinterpretation must a translation be subjected to before we can call it an adaptation? Would Pieri have regarded his work as translation, or creative rewriting?

This thesis will not attempt to provide definitive answers to such questions, because there are no definitive answers. As Simon Gaunt states, all medieval texts 'trouble the boundaries that are erected around them', [4] and of course, translation and rewriting are no different. Medieval vernacular textuality, as many have acknowledged, is 'grounded in plurality';[5] from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, narratives, motifs and themes were

[3] From *bertuccia*, a barbary ape.
4 Simon Gaunt, *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2001), p. 73.
[5] E. Jane Burns, *Arthurian Fictions: Rereading the Vulgate Cycle* (Colombus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), p. 29.

constantly rewritten, recycled, updated and altered. Hans Robert Jauss defines this period as,

> [une] époque où le statut de l'auteur et de l'œuvre ne peut être saisi avec les concepts d'art autonome, où l'auteur n'était pas considéré comme l'unique créateur du texte et où celui-ci, inversement, n'était pas considéré comme une œuvre créée une fois pour toutes et immuable [...][6]

The medieval text, then, is unstable; narratives had no fixed form, but were ever subject to revision and recasting. Audiences preferred to hear well-known stories cleverly re-handled, rather than something original by modern standards; as Barbara Sargent-Baur recognises, 'in the Middle Ages a story written or recited anywhere, by anyone, was most likely to be at least a twice-told tale and to be retold in its turn'.[7] Translation and *réécriture*, therefore, played a vital role not only in the reinventive transmission of texts, but in the very fabric of medieval textuality itself— which relied upon this transmission for its existence. Rather than a parallel tradition of metatextual imitations, translation and *réécriture* were a fundamental condition of medieval literary culture; as Jeanette Beer has emphasised, 'translation never was, and should not now be, envisaged as a genre'.[8] But like any other medieval text, translations and *réécriture* 'trouble the boundaries' imposed upon them. As the above example demonstrated—albeit on a small scale— the line drawn between translation, rewriting and adaptation is a fine one. Interlingual translation ranges from the very close to the more interpretative; some translators even combine more than one source text, interpolate new material or alter the narrative structure. Translators often worked to meet the needs of their target audience, making whatever changes necessary to adapt the text to their readership.[9] The medieval source text was malleable, its meaning and expression retained only insofar as it conformed to the tastes and expectations of this

---

[6] Hans Robert Jauss, 'Littérature médiévale et l'expérience esthétique', *Poétique*, 31 (1977), 323-336 (p. 325).
[7] Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, 'Rewriting *Cligés*', in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honour of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. by Keith Busby, Logan E. Whalen and Bernard Guidot (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 577-588 (p. 577).
[8] Introduction to *Translation and the Transmission of Culture Between 1300 and 1600*, ed. by Jeanette M. A. Beer and Kenneth Lloyd-Jones (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1995), pp. vii-xii (p. xi).
[9] Jeanette M. A. Beer, 'Introduction' in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft* (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 1-7 (p. 2); Claude Buridant, '*Translatio Medievalis*: Théorie et pratique de la traduction médiévale', *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, 21 (1983), 81-136 (pp. 113-114).

new readership—or at least, those tastes and expectations as envisaged by the translator. In this way, much medieval translation practice mirrors the practice of intralingual rewriting, as both involve the same processes of reinterpretation and recasting. The presence of a linguistic boundary often made little difference to the actual activities involved; both translation and rewriting were equally re-creative when conditions of reception necessitated it.

If the boundary between translation and *réécriture* is problematic to delineate, then the literary object of this thesis—the figure of Merlin—is no less awkwardly defined. His supernatural status, whether good or evil, resists containment or definition; like medieval textuality itself, Merlin 'troubles the boundaries' erected around his literary manifestations. As the son of a mortal woman and a devil, conceived as the Antichrist, yet redeemed by God, Merlin resists moral categorisation. He can never be wholly good, nor wholly bad, and where authors place him in an authoritative position as a prophet or royal advisor, his presence cannot but harbour an element of moral ambiguity. Likewise, Merlin's omniscience resists the normal epistemological limits of fictional characters. Inheriting knowledge of all things past and present from his demonic father, Merlin is also accorded knowledge of the future by God. This omniscience troubles the linear chronology of the narrative, and, in the words of Anne Berthelot, ' [Merlin] s'avère terriblement bavard'.[10] Stephen Knight regards interpretations of Merlin's unlimited *savoir* as producing an inverse effect to the Foucauldian power/ knowledge nexus; omniscience does not bring Merlin power, but instead threatens to expose the limits of the powerful.[11] Merlin's omniscience, in some cases, even resists the boundaries imposed by the fictional text itself. In certain cases (particularly in the Italian tradition), Merlin's prophecies extend beyond the confines of the narrative and into external reality, predicting actual current events from within a fictional past. In this way, Merlin's potential to speak across the diegetic threshold can take on a polemical status; in the *Prophecies de Merlin*, one of the texts which will be studied in this thesis, Merlin delivers ideologically-charged prophecies

10 'Légende arthurienne et histoire contemporaine dans les *Prophesies de Merlin*' in *Die kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Italien und den anderen Ländern Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. by Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald : Reineke-Verlag, 1993) pp.15-24 (p. 15).
11 *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. xii.

concerning contemporary wars and politics in and around northern Italy in the late thirteenth century. Each different version of the Merlin story attempts to reconstruct and redefine these ambiguous relationships between Merlin and his fictional context, producing a character which shifts and mutates with every reinterpretation.

Both Merlin, then, and the interpretative practices which determine his transmission from text to text, are complex and heterogeneous objects of study. But the question goes well beyond the complications and the heterogeneity of Merlin. This thesis aims to provide a coherent methodology for the analysis of medieval translation and rewriting, which will be developed through an analysis of the Merlin corpus, but which will by no means be restricted to use on these particular texts. The intention is to produce a methodology which does not seek to impose artificial definitions and boundaries, but instead to accept and incorporate the fluidity of medieval textuality. Of course, any analysis must draw some sort of definitive boundary around a text; it would otherwise be impossible to isolate the structures and discourses which form the interpretative subtext. Nevertheless, this study will approach medieval textuality as a continuum of interpretation, which ranges from minor alterations to large-scale reinterpretations. Translation and rewriting will be regarded as different interpretative stages along this same continuum; though we must, for the sake of practicality, define and distinguish the two, the study itself will account for overlaps in theory and practice by taking a common methodological approach, flexible enough to be applied to both minor and major interpretations. By this logic, the distinction between the source text and the translated or rewritten version becomes equally artificial, belonging as they do to that same interpretative continuum. Again, practicality dictates that source text and target text be isolated as separate entities for analysis; however, the transition from one to the other will be regarded neither as a clean break, nor a mindless derivation, but as a dynamic development from one form of the narrative to another.

Such a methodology will be applied predominantly to translation of the Merlin narratives between vernacular languages (specifically, French and Italian) and intralingual rewriting in French —or *réécriture*, as it has been dubbed in recent years by Francophone

scholars. Gianfranco Folena has identified translation from one vernacular to another as a 'horizontal' translation relationship, as opposed to 'vertical' translation from Latin to vernacular.[12] It is this latter form of the practice which has so far attracted the most critical attention; the majority of recent medieval translation studies—most notably by Rita Copeland, Jeanette Beer, and Serge Lusignan— have focused upon vernacular renderings of Latin texts, emphasising the ways in which reception is demonstrated by this linguistic and cultural transition.[13] Where translation from Latin to vernaculars demonstrates a very definite social relationship between language, text, and audience, translation from one vernacular to another takes place between much less rigorous socio-cultural boundaries. In certain situations, of course, transfer between vernaculars may imply a cultural shift; in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, for example, French and English did have specific cultural applications. Nevertheless, because vernacular languages were not accorded the same status as Latin, the relationship between the source and target text was less clearly defined. We will see examples of the distinct relationship between Latin and the vernaculars in Chapter 1, which will explore some of the ways in which vernacular translators of Latin texts adapted the content to their non-clerical audience, positioning themselves as a cultural intermediary between Latin text and non-Latinate readers.

The main focus of this thesis, however, will be translation between French and Italian, and its relationship to the practice of intralingual rewriting. Few critics have examined in detail translation between medieval vernaculars, and those who have concentrate primarily upon English translations of Old French texts in the later Middle

---

[12] '«Volgarizzare» e «tradurre»: idea e terminologia della traduzione dal medio evo Italiano e Romanzo all'umanesimo Europeo', in *La traduzione. Saggi e studi: atti del Convegno di studi sulla traduzione* (Trieste: Edizione LINT, 1973), pp. 59-120 (p. 65); also Eric Jacobsen, 'Literary Translation in Context with Other Types of Textual Transformation', in *Pratiques de traduction au Moyen Age: Medieval translation practices: Papers from the Symposium at the University of Copenhagen, 25th and 26th of October, 2002*, ed. by Peter Andersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2004), pp. 6-22 (p. 13); Serge Lusignan, 'La topique de la *translatio studii* et les traductions françaises de textes savants au XIVe siècle', in *Traduction et traducteurs au moyen âge: Actes du colloque international du CNRS organisé à Paris, Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes les 26-28 mai 1986*, ed. by Geneviève Contamine (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1989), pp. 303-317 (p. 303).

[13] Jeanette M. A. Beer, *A Medieval Caesar* (Geneva: Droz, 1976); Caroline Boucher, 'De la subtilité en français: vulgarisation et savoir dans les traductions d'auctoritates des XIII- XIV siecles', in *The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Age: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 89-99; Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Serge Lusignan, 'La topique de la *translatio studii*'; Cesare Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento* (Turin : Unione Tipografico, 1964).

Ages.[14] Even at the time, few vernacular translators saw fit to comment upon their methods; however, as Beer warns, 'their lack of theoretical exposition must not be equated with a lack of theoretical principles'.[15] Though the Italian translations to be studied in this thesis display a variety of translation practices, such practices are evidently motivated by systematic reinterpretations which demonstrate a clear translation intention. These translations, both of which were composed in the fourteenth century, grew out of a linguistic situation in which the French and Italian vernaculars were considered as simply different forms of romance, as opposed to different languages in themselves:

> In un'epoca come il Duecento, in cui era ancora salda l'unità romanza, e in cui sopratutto gli scambi culturali e commerciali con la Francia rendevano poco netto il senso d'una frontiera, le due strutture linguistiche francese e italiana non erano sentite in opposizione; non si potrebbe quasi parlare, a rigore, di traduzioni.[16]

French romances, such as the French texts of our Merlin corpus,[17] enjoyed enormous popularity in Northern Italy during this period, and, in the early stages of their transmission, oral performers would often provide improvised translations to Italian audiences.[18] In the Veneto area—from which at least one of our Merlin texts derives—French literary culture was so prevalent that a number of authors in the thirteenth century wrote in French rather than in their own vernacular; the most famous examples being

---

[14] Alexandra Barratt, 'Dame Eleanor Hull: a Fifteenth-Century Translator', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 87-102; Catherine Batt, 'Malory's Questing Beast and the Implications of Author as Translator', in *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 143-167; J.D. Burnley, 'Late Medieval English Translation: Types and Reflections', in *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 37-53; Laura J. Campbell, 'Reinterpretation and Resignification: A Study of the English Translation of the *Roman de la Rose*', *Neophilologus*, 93 (2009), 325-338; Mary Hynes-Berry, 'Language and Meaning: Malory's Translation of the Grail Story', *Neophilologus*, 60 (2005), 309-319; Tim William Machan, 'Chaucer as Translator', in *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 55-67. See also for a study of translation from French to Dutch and German, Bart Besamusca, 'Rewriting the *Roman de Renart*: The Middle Dutch Beast Epic *Van den vos Renaert*'. in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition* ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) , pp. 387-404 and Alois Wolf, 'Rewriting Chansons de geste for a Middle High German public' in *The Medieval Opus*, pp. 369-386.

[15] Introduction to *Medieval Translators and their Craft*, p. 2; also Buridant, *Translatio Medievalis*, p. 95.

[16] Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento*, p. 22. 'In a period such as the thirteenth century, in which links between romance cultures were still strong , and in which cultural and commercial exchanges with France meant that there was little sense of a clear border, the linguistic structures of French and Italian were not regarded as two opposing systems. Exchange between the two was not regarded as translation, strictly speaking'. (my trans.)

[17] Daniela Delcorno Branca provides a list of Merlin romance manuscripts in French which are thought to have been copied in Italy in *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia: Studi di letteratura arturiana* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001), pp. 82-85.

[18] ibid.; Maria Luisa Meneghetti, *Il pubblico dei trovatori* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), p. 26.

Martino da Canale's *Estoires de Venise,* and Rustichello da Pisa's transcriptions in French of Marco Polo's travels. One of the texts to be studied in this thesis, the *Prophecies de Merlin*, grew out of this very literary culture, composed in French by an Italian author. Despite the linguistic hybridism which was common between French and Italian, we can observe in our Italian vernacular Merlin translations a distinct attempt to adapt the French Merlin material to a new audience. This new audience is not necessarily of a different social status to that of the source texts, but instead an audience with differing cultural expectations surrounding the figure of Merlin. As will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5, Merlin was adopted into Italian culture as a political prophet, rather than a romance character. In the Venetian *Prophecies de Merlin*, composed around 1279, Merlin recounts obscure prophecies which relate not to the world of Arthurian fiction, but to the political tensions in northern Italy. His prophecies, supposedly written in the distant past, actually describe things that have happened covering three centuries prior to the *Prophecies*' composition: in other words, Merlin is presented as a reliable prophet by having him prophesy events which have already happened. But these are more than simply verified prophecies: Merlin's words convey an ideological perspective on the events described, promoting an anti-imperial ideology which opposes support of the Holy Roman emperors, and their military campaigns in Italy. Chapter 5 will investigate the translation of these prophecies from the *Prophecies* to the Florentine *Storia de Merlino* (ca 1324), and the *Vita di Merlino* (ca 1379), examining how the ideological content of prophetic expression is treated by the Italian translators. This ideological role, which is imposed upon Merlin in his transition from French to Italian, also affects translations of romance material. In Chapter 2, we shall see how the *Storia di Merlino*, by the Florentine chronicler, Paulino Pieri, adapts the story of Merlin's conception by a devil from the prose version of Robert de Boron's *Merlin* (ca 1200), with a view to attenuating the moral ambiguity implied by this demonic parentage. This chapter will demonstrate how interlingual translation can parallel the activity of creative rewriting; the narrative of Merlin's conception is reinterpreted and recast in such a way as to portray Merlin and his mother in a more favourable light.

The fluid boundaries between translation and rewriting which we have identified

naturally evoke comparison with the practice of intralingual rewriting itself. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine examples of rewriting within the French Merlin tradition, concentrating specifically upon two thirteenth-century French sequels to Robert's *Merlin*, namely the Vulgate *Estoire de Merlin* and the Post-Vulgate *Suite du Merlin*. Though both texts were written within around a decade or so of each other (1215-1230 and 1235-1240, respectively), the *Estoire*, and its rewritten version, the *Suite*, both offer very different perspectives upon Arthurian history. Both texts document the early years of King Arthur's reign, in which Merlin acts as the king's advisor before falling victim to his lover and student in magic, Viviane. As a large work thought to be composed by a number of different authors, the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian prose romances, of which the *Estoire* is a part, contains a number of logical and ethical inconsistencies between its different component texts; the *Suite* author appears to have been motivated by a desire to impose a more coherent structure and overriding moral principle onto this narrative material.[19] As we have seen, this recasting of a pre-existing narrative—of which the *Suite* is an example—is a fundamental element of medieval literary culture, in which textuality itself relied on reinterpretation, reworking and rewriting. In recent years, studies of this practice of intralingual rewriting, or *réécriture*, as it has been dubbed by francophone scholars, have emphasised the importance of reinterpretation of texts and their reception into a new narrative framework.[20] Although *réécriture* less often involves the sort of socio-cultural transfer which is implicated in interlingual translation, the recasting of a well-known story demonstrates hermeneutic adaptation to a new underlying *concept*; a development of the basic narrative material in a different direction, in accordance with the *réécrivain'*s own interpretation of how it should be presented. In this way, the same characters, episodes,

---

[19] See Fanni Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail: a Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth Century Arthurian Prose Romance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966); Eugène Vinaver, *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale* (Paris: Nizet, 1970); see Chapter 3, p. 110.

[20] See Simon Gaunt, *Retelling the Tale*, Elspeth Kennedy, 'The Re-writing and Re-reading of a Text: the Evolution of the *Prose Lancelot*' in *The Changing Face of Arthurian Romance: Essays on Arthurian Prose Romances in Memory of Cedric E. Pickford*, ed. by Alison Adams et al. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), pp. 1-9; Donald Maddox, 'Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*' in *The Medieval Opus*, pp. 101-124 and 'Intratextual Rewriting in the *Roman de Tristan* of Béroul', in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honour of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. by Keith Busby, Logan E. Whalen and Bernard Guidot (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 389-402; Alberto Varvaro, 'Elaboration des textes et modalités du récit dans la littérature française médiévale', *Romania*, 119, 2001, 1-75

motifs and themes are constantly being injected with new meaning; each becomes a signifier, whose signified is repeatedly renewed with each new *réécriture*. This form of textual recreation to fit a new narrative concept is observable in the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, as we shall see in Chapter 3 in which the character of Merlin's lover, Viviane, will be examined in relation to each text's interpretation of Merlin and his role in the narrative. Like Merlin, Viviane is a highly problematic character: intelligent, independent, and disconcertingly masculinised, her relationship with Merlin is tightly bound up with the way in which each text conceives of gender relations and their relative moral values. Chapter 4 will study Merlin's diegetic prophecies which, unlike those of his Italian counterpart, only predict within the fictional boundaries of the text. As with Viviane, both the *Estoire* and the *Suite* reinterpret Merlin's prophetic discourse in accordance with their narrative framework. In both source and *réécriture*, man's power to create and change the course of his own future becomes a subject of contention in the face of Merlin's prophetic knowledge; the way in which each text presents the prophecies themselves thus plays a part in defining the relationship between language, time and humanity.

Intralingual *réécriture,* then, will be studied alongside translation, but not juxtaposed to it; the recreative activities involved in both will be identified by their resemblances, and not simply their contrasts. It is always tempting, with such comparative analyses, to focus upon what is 'different'; how does the translation 'differ' from its source? How do the practices of translation 'differ' from those of rewriting? How does a French interpretation of Merlin 'differ' from an Italian one? Making such distinctions imposes boundaries onto texts and textual production which are artificial and reductive; as has already been emphasised, medieval readers, authors and translators probably did not compose and consume texts with such strict categories in mind. Writing, rewriting, translation adaptation and *réécriture*, especially in vernacular literature, cannot be so easily distinguished from one another; an analytical approach to the inter- and intralingual rewriting, such as the one I propose, should more accurately regard translation and *réécriture* as part of the same interpretative continuum, rather than as separate activities. This thesis, then, will propose an analytical model which focuses on the *similarities*, as

much as the differences; it will regard interpretation as producing textual fluidity, not textual rupture.

In order to develop a methodological approach which accounts for both translation and rewriting, as well as the range of transmissional factors which play a part in the same interpretative continuum (manuscript transmission, the transition from manuscript to print, compilation, etc), this thesis will look to modern translation theories as an analytical framework. As yet, no overall model for studying medieval vernacular translations has been proposed; most critics have preferred to regard each case as idiosyncratic, focusing upon the particular techniques and interpretations revealed in each individual study. Practice has generally been considered more relevant than theory, and it is true that medieval translators acted upon the particular relationship between their source text and their audience, rather than working according to any overriding translation ethic. Nevertheless, theoretical precepts in medieval translation have been identified; Rita Copeland has examined translations from Latin to the vernacular from the perspective of scholastic grammatical and rhetorical practices, proposing that vernacular translations of erudite works involve the same techniques of exegesis and creative invention taught in the medieval schools. Though extremely convincing, this theory (which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 1) is very specific to the sort of cultural exchange taking place in this particular type of translation —that is, Latin to vernacular— and is less consistently evident in translation between vernaculars.

Stimulating methodological approaches have also been applied within the area of the *mise en prose*, that is, late medieval prose rewritings of twelfth and thirteenth-century verse narratives.[21] Interestingly for this study, the *mise en prose* blurs the boundaries between the translation of language (Old to Middle French) and the rewriting of its content; critics working in this field, therefore, have taken account of both translation

[21] See for example Catherine Gaullier Bougassas, 'Alexandre héros païen ou héros pré-chrétien? Deux stratégies opposées de réécriture à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Le moyen français*, 51-52-53 (2003), 305-326; Maureen Boulton, 'Jean Galopes, traducteur des *Meditationes Vitae Christi*', *Le moyen français*, 51-52-53 (2003), 91-102; Rosalind Brown-Grant, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages: Gender, Morality and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Maria Colombo Timelli, 'Le *Perceval* en prose de 1530: langage figuré et proverbes', *Le moyen français*, 60 (2007), 141-164; Catherine M. Jones, *Philippe de Vigneulles and the Art of Prose Translation* (Cambridge : D. S. Brewer, 2008) ; Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, 'Rewriting Cligés'; Jane H. M. Taylor, '"Hungrie Shadows": Pierre Sala and his Yvain', *Arthuriana*, 19 (2009), 7-19.

theory and *réécriture* practices. Studies of this nature have either concentrated upon the linguistic activity of *dérimage*, that is, the translation from verse into prose, [22] or the socio-cultural adaptation of an older medieval text for a later medieval/ Renaissance audience. In particular, Jane H. M. Taylor has proposed as an analytical perspective the idea of 'acculturation', 'a process whereby the socio-culturally unfamiliar is recast in familiar terms, so that the reader can understand systems and phenomena in a source text corresponding to his own ideologies, preconceptions and behaviour-patterns'.[23] As successful as these perspectives may be within the field of *mise en prose*, such analytical methods are best suited to the particular cultural and linguistic activities of late medieval prosification. Medieval translation and *réécriture* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries— the period covered by our Merlin corpus—may involve either linguistic transfer, socio-cultural adaptation, or both; but just as often, neither. The *Suite*'s rewriting of the *Estoire*, for instance, involves neither linguistic updating nor acculturation, appearing as it does in the very same socio-cultural milieu as its source. Like Copeland's framework, these methods are too specific to a particular type of translation to be adopted as a methodology for analysing translation and rewriting in our Merlin corpus.

In my own study of the English translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, I experimented with using a modern analytical model proposed by James S. Holmes, which involved 'mapping' the translation onto its source.[24] This involved, specifically, organising the differences between the source and target text into the separate categories of 'contextual information'—that is, linguistic adaptations—, intertextual information (or how each text relates to its literary environment) and socio-cultural information.[25] This methodology was not unsuccessful for the particular case-study in which it was applied; however, I believe this is partly due to the (unusually) close nature of the English translator's rendering. The model itself, and others like it, are too conceptually grounded in twentieth-century ideas

[22] See for instance, Chapter 4 of Catherine M. Jones' *Philippe de Vigneulles and the Art of Prose Translation*, in particular pp. 116-120.
[23] 'The Significance of the Insignificant: Reading Reception in the Burgundian *Erec* and *Cligès*', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 24 (1998), p. 183-97 (p. 183); see also Rebecca Dixon, 'The Wedding Reception: Ideological Challenge in the Prose *Cligès* (1454)', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 14 (2007), pp. 315-326.
[24] See Campbell, 'Reinterpretation and Resignification'.
[25] James S. Holmes, *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), p. 85.

of translation, such as accuracy, cultural transfer and mistranslation. Because the translation of the *Roman de la Rose* reflected, in many respects, modern practice, the inconsistencies between the analytical approach and the nature of medieval textuality were less apparent; however, such a model would prove reductive when applied to other, more interpretative types of medieval translation. Such models not only focus upon difference, but also break down those differences into categories, an approach which this thesis intends to avoid. On the other hand, models such as those proposed by Juliane House are orientated towards assessing the *quality* of a translation; as we have seen, medieval translations were not produced with the same source-orientated values as translations today.[26] Furthermore, this type of model is too inflexible to incorporate the more diverse practices of *réécriture* into the study of translation.

The approaches outlined above are, therefore, too rigid or too specific to be fully developed into an analytical framework which could be applied not just to the Merlin romances, but other instances of translation and *réécriture* from any period, and in and between any languages, across the Middle Ages. Though Copeland's rhetorical and exegetical theories, and Taylor's notion of acculturation, may certainly be incorporated into this study where appropriate, the framework used in this thesis needs to be more easily adaptable to a larger variety of practices. For this reason, we will turn to semiotic translation theories as our methodological basis. Semiotics— the study of signs and their interpretation— has been, in recent years, applied to translation theory, producing a new approach to the discipline which breaks down the source-orientated inflexibility of mainstream twentieth-century translation theories. As Susan Petrilli emphasises, 'to translate is not to decodify, nor to decipher, but to interpret';[27] semiotic translation theory, then, focuses upon how the translator has read and understood the signs of the source text, how their interpretation develops meaning rather than reproducing it. Furthermore,

---

[26] *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment* (Tuebingen: Narr Verlag, 1981). For other examples of modern analytical models which involve categorisation, see Alya'Al-Rubai'i, *Translation Criticism: A Model for Assessing the Translation of Narrative Fictional Texts* (Durham: Durham Modern Language Series, 2005); Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London: Longman, 1990); Katharina Reiss, *Translation Criticism: The Potential Limitations* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2000).

[27] 'Translation and Semiosis. Introduction' in *Translation*, *Translation*, ed. by Susan Petrilli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p. 17.

sign theory investigates the relationship between the signs of the text and their social surroundings, grounding interpretation in cultural perception. Because signs can have many different meanings within the same culture, semiotic analysis can still be applied to texts which, like the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin*, are not necessarily composed from different social or national perspectives. Also importantly for the study of medieval translation and *réécriture*, this emphasis on the connection between signs and culture breaks down the logical dichotomy between source and target text, in which one is regarded as the original, and the other as a copy, or metatext, of that original. From the perspective of semiotic translation theory, the translation is seen to be motivated not only by the source text signs, but also by the way those signs signify within wider discourses and cultural patterns of thought. The boundaries between the text, the translation, and their cultural surroundings, then, become ambiguous; semiotic theory allows us to study the medieval source and target texts as part of a wider continuum of interpretative sign exchanges. Because the source/target relationship is conceived as less rigid, then, our Merlin translations will not necessarily have to be studied in their entirety; sign theory will allow us to isolate more manageable objects of study—such as the translation of characters, of certain episodes, etc—and situate their reinterpretation within the extra-textual cultural discourses which may have influenced their reception.

In particular, this thesis will adopt translation theories based upon the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher and mathematician working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[28] Peirce developed a model of interpretation, called *semiosis*, in which a sign is understood by a mental accumulation of information regarding that sign, information which is drawn from the receiver's cultural knowledge. Semiosis follows not only the 'differences' that occur in reinterpretation, but grounds variant interpretations within a stable universe of discourse; that is to say, Peircean sign theory follows both the similarities and differences occurring in translation, without prioritising the latter. Because the sign exchange involved may either take place within the same signifying system, or pass between signifying systems— between languages, language and image, image and

[28] For an overview of Peirce's semiotics, see Floyd Merrell, *Peirce, Signs and Meaning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); this will also be discussed in more detail below, pp. 48-54.

sound— then Peircean sign-theory will allow us to analyse both translation proper, and intralingual *réécriture,* as part of the same interpretative activity, which, as we have observed, conforms to the fluidity of both practices in the Middle Ages. Chapter 1 will outline in more detail Peircean sign theories and their relations to translation and *réécriture*, which will lead to the formulation of an interpretative model; because this model will be based as much on medieval practice as on modern theory, Chapter 1 will necessarily be lengthier than our later case studies. Although Peircean sign theory is somewhat complex, and often introduces a difficult and specific terminology, I hope to demonstrate that such a terminology can be profoundly useful for the study of medieval translation and rewriting; not only within our Merlin corpus, but within medieval textuality as a whole.

Chapter 1:

Approaches to Studying Medieval Translation and *Réécriture*

Many critics, no defenders,
Translators have but two regrets:
When we hit, no one remembers,
When we miss, no one forgets.
(Anonymous).

This anonymous verse, which has become something of an internet catchphrase for modern translators, illustrates the qualitative and taxonomical attitudes which surround translation in contemporary culture. If a text is categorised as a translation, then we assess how faithful it is to the source; if it is an interlingual adaptation, we decide how clever or how imaginatively it has rewritten the source. If we are expecting a functional, literal translation, then any deviations will be denounced as faults. If we are expecting a modern version of Molière, or Greek mythology for children, then deviations will be granted as creative licence. Translations today are source-orientated, target-orientated, domesticating or foreignising.[1] With such distinctions come aesthetic expectations, which cause translations to fall into categories of 'good' or 'bad'. In the Middle Ages, the practice of translation was not bound by classifications such as 'close' or 'adaptational'; and without these categories, the translator's capability to 'hit' or 'miss' was less dictated by preconceived expectations. The translation was a product not necessarily of theory, but of the relationship between source, audience and context. Because this relationship may differ with each translation situation, a wide range of practices and translational attitudes has been documented from throughout the Middle

[1] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Ages; these were not necessarily dictated by time, place, or language, but by the circumstances of translation themselves.

The vernacular translations of the Merlin story, which will be the focus of this thesis, are equally varied in practice, and likewise representative of their different circumstances of composition. Translation between vernacular languages perhaps demonstrates the largest variety of translational attitudes; the French and Italian Merlin corpus alone ranges from literal renderings all the way up to more interpretative adaptations. These translation practices, as we will see, often overlap with the practice of *réécriture*, the creative rewriting of an existing text. It is for this reason that this chapter will attempt to outline an analytical approach which can be applied equally to both intralingual and interlingual rewriting. Although this approach will be founded primarily upon modern notions of language and translation (principally, semiotic theory), it will be informed and developed through a survey of the theories, activities and practices which may have provided an intellectual background for the vernacular translators and *réécrivains* of our Merlin texts.

Few medieval translators working between vernacular texts ever saw fit to comment upon their activity; for this reason, any major theoretical discourses on translation derive from Latin textual culture. These erudite discourses were by no means uniform, and translation of Latin sources in practice was as easily adapted to individual texts or circumstances as was translation between vernaculars. Moreover, many of these theories blur the boundaries between what we would characterise as translation and the more interpretative *réécriture*; translation, to theorists such as Cicero and Horace, *was* a form of rewriting, where the translator is actively encouraged to reinvent the source. Medieval translation theories, then, provide a history of rewriting as much as of translation proper. It would be unreasonable to claim that the translators and *réécrivains* of our French and Italian Merlin texts were familiar with one or more of these scholastic approaches; nevertheless, we cannot discount the possibility that they

made up, in some way, what Claude Buridant calls the translator's 'architectonique mentale'.[2] Such approaches derive primarily from the practice of rhetoric, which was fundamental to the pan-European educational curriculum throughout the 180 year period which separates the earliest and the latest texts of our corpus.[3] The principles outlined, then, will have contributed in some way to prevailing attitudes regarding translation among the educated, at various periods of time throughout the Middle Ages. In order to produce a methodology for analysing translation and *réécriture* in the vernacular Merlin corpus, therefore, this chapter will chart the major historical developments in the theory of translation and rewriting. It will follow the three major types of classical translation practice, which formed the basis of medieval discourses on translation: primarily, the rhetorical model, proposed by Cicero and Horace as a translation method, and later adopted by the medieval theorists of the *artes poetriae* as a form of rewriting; secondly, the exegetical model, in which vernacular translations of Latin works developed out of interpretative commentaries; and thirdly, the anti-interpretative model, proposed by Jerome for translations of the Bible, and also employed by some medieval translators of scientific and philosophical texts. Finally, we will explore the nature of translation between vernacular texts, the subject of this thesis, and the way in which various forms of learned discourse were absorbed into its practice. Upon this basis, a methodology will then be formulated for its analysis, using modern translation theory as a theoretical framework.

[2] '*Translatio Medievalis*', p. 117 ; see also Jeanette M. A. Beer's introduction to *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, p. 2.
[3] Roughly 1200 to 1379.

Rhetoric: *Nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator*.

The rhetorical model of translation made its way from ancient Rome to the Middle Ages via the teaching of rhetoric in the medieval educational system. It influenced not only medieval discourses on translation, but also the *artes poetriae*—the medieval Latin arts of verse composition, which constituted an erudite form of rewriting texts. In this way, the rhetorical model blurs the distinction between interlingual translation and rewriting, reflecting the practical parallels between the two practices in our Merlin corpus. As Rita Copeland argues in her *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*, the medieval practice of creatively rewriting a text (inter- or intralingually) derives ultimately from the teaching of Roman rhetorical composition, which came to theoretically encompass the practice of translating from Greek. Rhetoric was an art associated with the practical application of language, in which eloquence and creativity of composition were the ultimate goals. It was a technique originally used in the composition of legal arguments, in which the orator would attempt to persuade a judge through the quality of his discourse. The more interesting and original the argument, it was considered, the more likely it was that the judge would become sympathetic to their case; tedium and repetition, on the other hand, were to be avoided at all costs.[4] Rhetoric, then, was a receiver-orientated discourse. Arguments were interpreted and expressed with the aim of appealing to a specific audience or judge, and it is this audience-centred motivation which is inherited by both Roman, and later medieval thought on translation.[5]

Translation ideas which drew upon the practice of rhetoric were not merely concerned with the transfer of meaning signified by linguistic expression, but instead placed particular importance upon that linguistic expression itself. In rhetoric, the

[4] Frederick M. Rener, *Interpretatio: Language and Translation from Cicero to Tytler* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), p. 157.
[5] ibid. p. 236.

orator's use of language was fundamental to his success; not only does it create the appropriate persuasive appeal for his intended audience, but it also governs the way the arguments are received and interpreted by that audience. Hence, the rhetorical discourse shapes the meaning, rather than merely conveying it. [6] Cicero insists that the orator's use of language must be appropriately selected according to the circumstance, in order to achieve the desired results:

> Est autem quid deceat oratori uidendum non in sententiis solum sed etiam in uerbis. Non enim omnis fortuna, non omnis honos, non omnis auctoritas, non omnis aetas, nec vero locus aut tempus aut auditor omnis eodem aut uerborum genere tractandus est aut sententiarum, semperque in omni parte orationis ut uitae quid deceat est considerandum; quod et in re, de qua agitur, positum est, et in personis et eorum qui dicunt et eorum qui audiunt.[7]

Words, therefore, are as important as the arguments themselves:

> [...] etsi sine re nulla uis uerbi est, tamen eadem res saepe aut probatur aut reicitur alio atque alio elata uerbo.[8]

The orator's choice of expression, which allows him to shape the meaning of his arguments for a particular audience, is seen as a creative activity. *Inventio*, the creation of arguments, is followed by the organisation of arguments (*dispositio*), and then the expression of arguments according to a particular style (*elocutio*); Cicero describes the latter as 'clothing' arguments with words.[9] According to Rita Copeland, these two activities are not only innovative, but interpretative:

---

[6] ibid. p. 149-50.
[7] *Orator*, XXI: 71, ed. and trans. by Albert Yon in *L'orateur. Du meilleur genre d'orateurs* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), p. 25. For Cicero's writings on oratory, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 3-43.
[8] *Orator*, XXII: 72, *op. cit.* p.26.
[9] *De oratore*, 1, 31, 142, ed. and trans. by Edmond Courbaud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1927-1956), p. 52. Frederick M. Rener, p. 24.

> Invention applies a discursive apparatus, the available categories of argument, to the circumstances of particular actions. Invention does not mean creation *ex nihilo*. It is essentially a hermeneutical process, an interpretation or thinking out of how to suit the particular conditions of public speaking to the circumstances of the case of action to be argued.[10]

These fundamental principles of rhetoric, the creative interpretation of meaning and expression to adapt a speech to a particular audience, are applied by Cicero to the practice of translation. When describing his own translations of Greek Atticist speeches into Latin, he claims not to have followed the methods of the *interpres*—an interpreter, in the modern sense of the word — but instead, that of an orator:

> nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, uerbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. In quibus non uerbum pro uerbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne uerborum uimque seruaui. Non enim ea me annumerare lectori putaui oportere, sed tamquam appendere.[11]

Just as an orator expresses his arguments in such a way as to appeal to a particular listener, translation should interpret the text from the perspective of *Latinitas*, adapting its meaning specifically for a Roman audience ('ad nostram consuetudinem'). Word for word translation is thus to be avoided; the *sententiae* and *formae* of the Greek text are to be preserved, but only in so much as they can be adapted to a new form of language and cultural perception.[12] This implies that translation should mean much more than transferring the sense from one signifying code to another; recreating the expressive form of the text amounts to a recreation of its meaning, displacing the original Greek text with a reinterpreted, Latin version:

---

[10] Rita Copeland, 'The Fortunes of 'non verbum pro verbo': why Jerome is not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15-35 (p. 16).
[11] *De optimo genere oratorum*, 5. 14-15, ed. and trans. by Albert Yon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), p. 114.
[12] Folena '«Volgarizzare» e «tradurre»', p. 63.

> Rhetoric here is a coherent praxis in which eloquence conditions meaning and in which reason is internal to both thought and discourse. Thus translation, as a problematic of discourse, is necessarily bound up with the deepest questions of interpretation, signification and reception.[13]

This subjection of the language itself to a process of interpretation constitutes what Copeland calls 'resignification',[14] a term which we shall revisit when analysing our Merlin corpus. In Roman translation, Copeland characterises resignification as an act of cultural aggression, a 'paradigmatic pattern of transference, substitution, and ultimately displacement of the source'.[15] The aim of translation was to enrich Roman culture, rather than to pay deference to the superior literary heritage of the Greeks; Cicero envisaged, therefore, a form of translation which recreated the text *for* the Romans *as* Roman, supplanting the characteristics of Greek discourse with Latin ones. An additional dimension to the context of Roman translation is the fact that the translations themselves were not directed towards monolingual Latin speakers, who had no access to the original text. As noted by Susan Bassnett-Macguire, Cicero's intended audience would have been fellow educated Romans who, like him, would have been familiar with Greek and with the original speeches themselves. The purpose of the exercise was to create a new Latin version, rendered creatively different from the original by imposing upon it domestic rhetorical processes of composition.[16] The translator, therefore, casts themselves as both author and orator, reclaiming the text's meaning through reinterpretation. In this way, Roman translation theory situates meaning 'as something within rather than beyond discourse';[17] both the orator and the translator direct the signification of the text through linguistic expression, which itself is interpreted in order to hold the greatest appeal for a particular audience.

---

[13] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 37.
[14] Copeland, 'The Fortunes of 'non verbum pro verbo', p. 19.
[15] ibid. p. 17.
[16] Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, (London: Methuen Young, 1984; repr. London: Routledge, 2002), p. 49.
[17] Copeland, 'The Fortunes of 'non verbum pro verbo', p. 19.

Though the translation of oratorical speeches may seem barely relevant from the perspective of translation in the vernacular Merlin tradition, this rhetorical model was also to reach the Middle Ages in the context of literary translation and rewriting. Speaking of the translation of epic poetry from Greek into Latin, the poet Horace expresses a distaste for literal translation which is even more extreme than that of Cicero. Horace suggests that the translator recreate the source text's meaning through a complete overhaul of its structure and significance:[18]

> publica materies privati iuris erit, si non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem, nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres.[19]

The translator should begin their narrative at a point either prior to, or after the beginning of the source text; they should retell the story, leaving out anything they consider superfluous and focusing on different aspects of the text. In this sense, Horace identifies translation as a separation of what the twentieth century would call the *histoire*—the 'publica materies', or the story itself— from the *récit*: the way in which the narrative is recounted, its focus and significance. It is by adapting the *récit* that the translator produces a truly creative work, presenting their own interpretation of events rather than a simple imitation.

Horace's notion of avoiding the crimes of the *fidus interpres* would later provide a point of contact between medieval vernacular translation and *réécriture* when it was adopted, over eleven hundred years later, as a central precept of the scholastic *artes poetriae*. Moving, then, from classical to medieval authorities, we turn to the ways in which Roman rhetoric influenced the practice of translation and intralingual rewriting in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The art of rhetoric, which encompassed

---

[18] Kelly, 'The 'Fidus Interpres': Aid or Impediment to Medieval Translation and Translatio?', in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, MI: Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 47-58 (p. 48).

[19] *Ars Poetica*, 133-34. Henry Rushton Fairclough (ed.), *Horace*, *Satires*, *Epistles and Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 460.

notions of creative translation, was passed down through Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages as part of the scholastic curriculum for universities across western Europe. By the twelfth century, Cicero and Horace were still authoritative sources on rhetoric, which was studied as part of the Trivium. Their teachings on the rhetorical composition of speeches and poetry provided an influence for the development of the *artes poetriae* in the medieval universities, which were to 'define poetry as a second rhetoric'.[20] The *artes* represented a branch of rhetorical and grammatical study, adopting the Roman techniques designed for writing convincing arguments and adapting them to create a method of literary composition. Though originally intended for the practice of intralingual rewriting within the Latin tradition, the principles of the *artes poetriae* were not without influence on both translation and vernacular *réécriture*. The composition of an original work of poetry paralleled Horace's injunctions for the creation of an original translation; imposing a new and inspired perspective upon an existing material was regarded as the most inventive of exercises, and also the most difficult. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, author of several treatises on rhetorical composition, proposes that:

> Post praedicta est notandum quod difficile est materiam communem et usitatem convenienter et bene tractare. Et quanto difficilius, tanto laudabilius etsi bene tractare materiam talem, scilicet communem et usitatam, quam materiam aliam, scilicet novam et inusitatam.[21]

Horace's remarks on translation were reinterpreted by Geoffrey and his counterparts within the context of rewriting; the *artes*, then, provided a scholastic equivalent of the practical overlaps between vernacular translation and *réécriture* of the same period. Notably, this notion that real originality comes from reinterpreting an existing text can

---

[20] Pierre Yves Badel, 'Arts of Poetry' in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Barrie Dobson, Michael Lapidge, André Vauchez and Adrian Walford (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2000), p. 117.

[21] *Documentatum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, published in Edmond Faral, (ed.), *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1924), p. 309. For the influence of the *artes* on vernacular literature, see also Douglas Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Leiden : Brill, 1999), pp. 99-100.

be recognised in both Latin and vernacular tradition. In practice, vernacular literary texts generally constitute some form of rewriting and reinterpretation; even where no real source existed, the author invented one. A brief summary of the way in which the medieval *artes* combined rhetorical technique and poetry, therefore, may go some way towards understanding this vernacular tradition of *réécriture* in our Merlin texts. Though the practices of *réécriture* were much less formulaic than learned Latin rewrites, vernacular writing from the period covered by our Merlin corpus often displays evidence of these poetic techniques. In his *Poetria Nova* (ca. 1210),[22] Geoffrey outlines a range of methods for achieving stylistic and structural independence from the source, and adapting the narrative format to the writer's own vision of its signification. He dedicates much of the treatise to *amplificatio*, the technique of expanding parts of the narrative which are overlooked in other versions, by adding description (comparison, opposition), elaborating certain minor aspects of the story, by digression, by changing the focus of address (*apostrophe*) or by personifying abstractions (*prosopopeia*). Abbreviation, omitting parts of the text which are of less interest to the student's interpretation of the text's meaning, is also suggested. A near contemporary of Geoffrey's, Matthew of Vendôme, proposes the method of *permutatio*, the art of modifying the discourse using phraseology different to that of the original author.[23] In this way, the writer transforms the meaning of the narrative by altering its presentation and stylistic use of language; recreating the order of events, the story's emphasis, the descriptions and the type of abstract or metaphorical language amounts to a shift in the text's overall significance. Just as the orator creates a new meaning for his arguments by reworking existing topics—frequently-used rhetorical commonplaces, such as a protestation of modesty— the medieval scholastic poet is expected to use a series of

[22] Published in Ernest Gallo, *The Poetria Nova and its Source in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971). See also by the same author 'The *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf' in *Medieval Eloquence* ed. by James J. Murphy (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 68-84.
[23] See Kelly, 'The Fidus Interpres', p. 56 and Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 168.

poetic commonplaces in their recreation of an original text.[24] This rhetorical practice of rewriting great works of poetry inherits the hermeneutic character of rhetorical composition; following Cicero and Horace, the writer is expected to displace the original text by imposing their own creative interpretation of the meaning, using discourse itself to create a new signification. However, as Rita Copeland suggests, the interpretative character of the medieval *artes poetriae* had become heavily influenced by the practice of exegesis, which involved writing an interpretational commentary on the Scriptures or classical texts.[25] Though this practice itself developed out of the grammatical tradition, and eventually led to an alternative form of translation (see below), the central importance of exegetical reading within the medieval literary consciousness caused medieval rhetorical practice to become more interpretative in character. Recreating the text through a recreation of discourse was preceded by hermeneutic analysis, an extraction of the perceived *intentio auctoris* through which the scholar could produce their own signification for the material.[26] Therefore interpretation, whether in the form of an exegetical extraction of meaning, or an oratorical imposition of meaning, was a central feature of creative production in the *artes poetriae*.[27]

Grammar: *Enarratio poetarum*

Vernacular translation and *réécriture* between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries was necessary an interpretative practice. We have already touched upon the interpretative character of medieval translation ideas deriving from the discipline of

[24] On rhetorical topics, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1953), ch. 5; Douglas Kelly, ''Topical Invention in Medieval French Literature' in *Medieval Eloquence* ed. by J. J. Murphy (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 231-251.
[25] *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, ch. 6.
[26] ibid., p. 160; also Buridant, '*Translatio medievalis*', p. 120-121; Kelly, 'The Fidus Interpres', p. 52.
[27] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, pp. 158-178.

rhetoric, which was taught in medieval universities and which developed into artistic methods of poetic composition. However, a more explicitly interpretational translation practice would also become common in the Middle Ages, one which derived ultimately from the practice of academic commentary. This exegetical form of translation generally involved adapting erudite Latin texts for a non-Latinate audience, who would often require explanations, commentaries and added interpretation to be able to understand the concepts involved. Whilst rhetoric used interpretation to consciously reinvent the text, exegetical translation makes alterations to the discourse in the interests of clarity.

Exegetical translation derived ultimately from the grammatical practice of commentary, which, in ancient Rome, belonged to the discipline of grammar. Where rhetoric focused on the art of creating eloquent and effective discourse, grammar studied the basic principles of language and communication.[28] This involved descriptive analysis of the works of the great poets, the practice of *enarratio poetarum*, which was later absorbed into medieval culture in the form of Biblical exegesis, or commentary on the *auctoritates*.[29] The composition of a commentary on an existing text became a 'hermeneutical appropriation of the materials of the past', in which the exegete produces innovative readings of ancient texts, drawing out new interpretations within new, Christian contexts.[30] This included such re-contextualising readings as the interpretation of passages of the Old Testament within the framework of New Testament doctrines, or reading Virgil's fourth Eclogue as a messianic prediction of the birth of Christ. According to Rita Copeland, the practice of commentary developed from its Roman status as a simply descriptive exercise into a creative activity not unlike rhetoric, where writers sought to individualise their version by reassigning its meaning through a reinterpretation of its discourse. Medieval exegetes did not regard the text as having a solitary or rigid signification; 'rather, the text is the subject of continuous and

[28] Rener, *Interpretatio*, p. 15.
[29] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 12, 18; Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, p. 137.
[30] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 63.

changing interpretation according to the judgement of each generation of expositors'.[31] Though the principle of an interpretive commentary appears to rely on the notion of a stable, concealed meaning, which is drawn out and explained by the knowing exegete, in actual practice, commentary reconfigures the text's significance each time it is interpreted. The commentary rewrites the text in a parallel discourse (that of exegesis, be it marginal or interlinear glosses, or a separate text), which displaces the original meaning in favour of a new interpretation. In this way, exegesis reflects both the rhetorical precepts of Roman translation, and the quasi-exegetical rhetoric of the *artes poetriae*; the commentator creatively invents a new meaning for the text through a hermeneutic analysis, according the commentary a metatextual status which allows the original text to be read through the exegete's interpretation. Not only does the exegete's discourse produce a rhetorical reinvention of meaning, but the commentary also adapts the text for the understanding of a specific audience:

> Medieval exegesis replicates rhetoric's productive application to discourse: as the orator fitted a speech to the particular circumstances of persuasion, so in a certain sense the medieval exegete remodels the text for the particular circumstances of interpretation.[32]

Commentary provides an important precursor to medieval translation, because the interpretative activities of the exegete became integrated into vernacular translations of learned Latin texts. Though originally taking the form of intralingual rewriting—commenting upon Latin texts in Latin—commentary gradually led to an exegetical form of interlingual translation, which further exemplified the rhetorical performativity of adaptation for a specific audience. Throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, authoritative texts (such as the Bible, patristic writings, and classical poets) developed a Latin exegetical tradition, through which successive generations of readers would understand the text and produce their own interpretation. Around the

[31] ibid., p. 63.
[32] ibid., p. 63.

eighth century (in Germanic languages, and some two or three hundred years later in romance languages), exegetes began to start composing interlingual glosses in their own vernacular. When vernacular translations of the texts themselves began to emerge (roughly between the ninth and eleventh centuries), the translations often carried over the pre-existing exegetical material, either in the form of a paratextual commentary, or within the body of the text itself:[33] The practice of incorporating the translator's commentary, or commentaries from other exegetes can be observed in vernacular translations of erudite texts throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For example, Chaucer's fourteenth-century translation of Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* assimilates material from glosses by Trevet and Remigian into the main body of the English text.[34] As Eric Jacobsen highlights, vernacular translators often used glosses as 'an indispensable nutcracker for opening the text', using commentaries to elucidate their own interpretation as part of the translation process.[35] The boundaries between the text, the exegetical tradition and the translator's reading of the text could thus become imprecise in the transition from Latin to the vernacular:

> Façonné donc de cette rhétorique de l'amplificatio, qui lui est devenue mentalement consubstantielle, entraîné au commentaire permanent de l'interpretatio, le traducteur aura tendance à pratiquer spontanément l'exégèse comme on la pratique à propos de n'importe quel texte, et en particulier les textes sacrés, pour l'expliciter et en tirer le meilleur profit dans un but d'édification, ou d'instruction.[36]

This transition, however, also marked a particular cultural shift which went beyond the linguistic barrier between Latin and the vernaculars. The very existence of the translation itself implies a target audience who lack the ability to read Latin fluently,

---

[33] ibid., p. 87, 94; also Caroline Boucher, 'De la subtilité en français', p. 89.
[34] See Tim William Machan, 'Editorial Method and Medieval Translations: The Example of Chaucer's "Boece"', *Studies in Bibliography*, 41 (1988), 188-196, and 'Chaucer as Translator', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 55-67 (p. 62).
[35] 'Literary Translation in Context, p. 16; also Folena, '«Volgarizzare» e «tradurre»', p. 88.
[36] Buridant, *Translatio medievalis*, p. 121.

which, until the later Middle Ages at least, implied a non-clerical readership. These lay readers, though certainly not illiterate, would have lacked the epistemological insights afforded by a clerical education. Several translations of this type demonstrate an awareness of the particular needs of their audience, using both existing commentaries and their own interpretations to adapt the text in a manner which has been called, in French, 'vulgarisation', and in Italian, 'volgarizzamento'.[37] This interpretative adaptation for vernacular readers can be recognised as early as the ninth century in England, with, for example, King Alfred's translation of Boethius's *Consolatio* into Old English. Alfred can be seen to omit the more difficult material from the Latin source text, and replace it with a compilation of various commentaries.[38] Between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, around twelve different French translations of the *Consolatio* emerged, many of them including similar glosses; these were not only to be found in the manuscript margins, but also within the body of the translation. Several of the glosses are themselves translations from the William of Conches tradition; according to Glynnis Cropp:

> Cette tendance de la part des traducteurs est déterminée, semble-t-il, par leur volonté de représenter dans leur traduction le sens le plus complet possible non seulement de l'œuvre latine elle-même, mais aussi du commentaire sur l'œuvre, dont les lecteurs du texte latin ont pu profiter.[39]

These glosses are not only explicative, but often provide moralised interpretations of Boethius' text. The didactic overtones of the glosses, which are brought from the margins into the discourse of the translation itself, superimpose the translator's (or exegete's) reinterpretation onto the author's words; Boethius' text, therefore, becomes overlaid with (in this case) fourteenth-century Christian thought:

---

[37] Boucher, 'De la subtilité en français', pp. 89-94 ; Cesare Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento*.
[38] Rener, *Interpretatio*, p. 221.
[39] Glynnis M. Cropp (ed.) *Le livre de Boece de consolacion*, (Geneva: Droz, 2006), pp. 18-19.

> *Boece.* Quant celle compaignie fu si reprise, si ot honte et s'enclina devers terre, par vergoigne toute rouge, et yssi de l'uis yree.
> *GLOSE: Note cy que quant l'ome se repent de son pechié en sa conscience, le sang qui est amis de nature s'en va par dehors a la face et rougist de honte, et quant il se doubte d'aucune chose, le sang s'enfuit au cuer et ainsi l'omme demeure palles*.[40]

Jeun de Meun, the author of the *Roman de la Rose*, also contributes to the French Boethius tradition with his own translation. In his prologue, he emphasises the difficulty of adapting the text to a varied audience. [41] He first acknowledges that, though his patron, Philippe le Bel, knows Latin well enough to read the original, it is 'moult plus legier a entendre le françois'. He then goes on to excuse his deviations from the text, attributing them to the interests of clarity. Not only does he aim to make the text understandable for lay readers, but he also wishes to avoid an excess of Latinisms which would distort the text beyond recognition, even for clerical readers:

> Or pry je a tous ceulx qui ce livre verront, se il leur semble en aucuns lieux que je me soye trop esloingnié des paroles de l'aucteur ou que j'aye mis aucunes foiz plus de paroles que l'aucteur n'y met, ou aucune foiz moins, qu'ilz le me pardonnent. Car se je eusse espont mot a mot le latin par le françois, le livre en fust trop obscur aux gens lais, et les clers, mesmement les lettrez, ne peussent pas legierement entendre le latin par le françois.[42]

Jean aims not only to avoid word-for-word isomorphisms, which would confuse even the 'clers' and 'lettrez'; he also claims to be consciously reformulating the text's discourse with the aim of adapting it to a specific audience— not the *lettrez*, or even Philippe himself, but the 'gens lais'. Exegetical translations, then, can be seen to create a receiver-orientated discourse, which implicates the audience-centred motivations of

---

[40] *Le Livre de Boece de Consolacion*, ed. Cropp, p. 94.
[41] Glynnis M. Cropp, 'The Medieval French Tradition' in *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Translations of the Consolatio Philosophiae*, ed. by Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 243-266 (pp. 247-248). See also Buridant, *Translatio medievalis*, p. 111, for a fuller discussion of prologues in vernacular translation.
[42] *Le livre de Boece de consolacion*, ed. Cropp, p. 83.

rhetoric in the way that Copeland suggests. Interpretation, translation and rewriting all become confounded into the same activity; the extraction of meaning through exegesis is followed by a reconstitution of meaning through linguistic reconstruction, not only between two languages, but between two cultural discourses. The inclusion of explanatory material (in addition to omissions of difficult passages) develop the text's meaning in a new direction, rendering the translation not so much a vernacular equivalent as a vernacular elaboration. Like the orator, or the scholastic poet, the exegete appropriates the signification and replaces it with his own; despite his avowed intentions to clarify, or make available the text for a new audience, the translator implicitly supplants the source text writer as the author of meaning.[43]

Anti-interpretative Approaches: *quomodo intellexit ille qui scripsit?*

Alongside these rhetorical and exegetical models, there existed in the Middle Ages a parallel tradition of literal translation. The rhetorical and exegetical modes described above took a liberal approach to the discourse of the text; from a modern perspective, whereby translation types tend to fall into more defined categories, these practices would be more appropriately classified as adaptation rather than as translation proper. By consciously rewriting, or inserting passages of commentary, the meaning of the source text is not transferred, but augmented; back translation between source and target text is not possible, because the translation has *developed* its meaning in a new direction. However, vernacular translation covers a diverse range of practices, as our Merlin corpus demonstrates. Also represented during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (though it became much more common in the fifteenth century) was a notion of close, word-for-word translation, whereby the translator aimed to alter the source text discourse as little as possible.

[43] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 87.

In the Middle Ages, literal translation had its place in everyday multi-lingual situations; diplomatic and legal translations favoured isomorphic translation, which was rendered possible through equivalent forms of legal jargon in both Latin and the different vernaculars.[44] Whereas some vernacular translators of erudite Latin texts preferred the exegetical approach outlined above, others took care to avoid making any changes to the text at all. In cases where the translation involves scientific, medical and sometimes philosophical material, the translator could favour a literal translation in areas where no previous discourse on the subject existed in the target language. For example, vernacular medical or astronomical treatises translated from Latin or, more occasionally, from Arabic, tended to create vernacular terminology (if none already existed) through isomorphic translation of source language terms:

> Word-for-word translations from Latin to vernaculars and from Arabic into Latin appear to be relexified versions of Latin and Arabic linguistic structures, respectively. In extreme cases, translators even tried for morpheme-by-morpheme renderings.[45]

Implied in this literal adherence to the letter of the text is the idea that deviation from the source discourse leads to a distortion of meaning. Whereas medieval literary translators (and translators of some philosophical and theological texts) valued interpretative freedom as a method of improving upon the source, or adapting it for a particular audience, translators of texts with a practical application, such as medical treatises, aimed to minimise their own hermeneutic input as much as possible. Any restructuring of language in the form of explanations, modifications or 'vulgarisations' cannot but involve interpretation; in cases such as this, it was to be avoided. Earlier expositors of this viewpoint included Boethius (in the sixth century) and Duns Scotus

---

[44] Beer, introduction to *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, p. 3.

[45] Thomas F. Glick, 'Communication', in *Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine: an Encyclopedia*, ed. by Thomas Glick, Steven J. Livesey and Faith Wallis (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 135-139 (p. 136). See also *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*: Lys Ann Shore, 'A Case Study in Medieval Nonliterary Translation: Scientific Texts from Latin to French', pp. 297-328 and Beer's introduction, pp. 3-4.

Eriugena (later in the ninth century), who advocated word-for-word translations of philosophical and scientific texts. Though Boethius acknowledges the difficulty of reading an isomorphic Greek-to-Latin translation, he asserts that it is the only way to convey the meaning of the text unchanged.[46] In this way, Boethius has 'assigned a certain priority to discourse itself, recognizing it not only as a cognitive intermediary but also as a locus of intention and hence meaning'.[47]

According to Copeland, Boethius and Eriugena had derived this attitude from Jerome's comments upon the translation of the holy Scriptures in the fourth century AD.[48] This was a specific type of literal translation, which may not have impacted directly upon our Merlin corpus, but nevertheless reveals significant attitudes towards linguistic transfer. As Copeland explains,

> [...] in sacred contexts, the idea of divine speech as constitutive serves as the rationale for literal translation; for Jerome, the very order of the words in the Bible is a mystery, and the meaning of Scripture is not to be falsified by the linguistic liberties of a translator.[49]

The Scriptures, it was thought, should be tampered with as little as possible; interpretation here represents the corrupting influence of human languages upon the divine Word. Augustine expresses a similar position within the context of his deep anxiety about the fallibility of human languages. In comparison with the pure language used by God, in which there is no separation between a linguistic sign and its meaning, human languages are plagued by the uncertainty with which signs signify; the lack of one-to-one correspondence between words and their meanings, and the potential multiple meanings represented by one word, render interpretation itself defective.[50]

---

[46] Copeland, 'Nec verbum pro verbo', p. 29.
[47] ibid., p. 31; also *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 53.
[48] *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 53.
[49] 'Nec verbum pro verbo', pp. 31-32; also *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 49.
[50] *De doctrina christiana*, ed. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.25.37; Theresa Coletti, *Naming the Rose: Eco, Medieval Signs and Modern Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 22; Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 43.

Literal translation, therefore, is the least corrupting possibility for the transfer of sacred meaning between two imperfect languages:

> Hence the role of literal translation in Augustine's system (as well as that of Jerome) is that of recovering a kind of originary certitude which the human conventions of rhetoric have not vitiated or obscured.[51]

This form of word-for-word translation, in which the very letter of the text is considered sacred, obviously represents a very specialised case. Nevertheless, it expresses an attitude towards the source text which can be found reflected in medieval vernacular translation, and even within at least one of the Merlin texts which will be analysed in this thesis.[52] Translators who are reluctant to deviate from the letter of the source seem to be expressing a certain respect for the words of the source author (divine or not), subordinating their own interpretation of the text in an attempt to minimise loss of meaning.

A more common form of close translation found in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, corresponds to Jerome's comments regarding translation of non-sacred texts. Literal translation, says Jerome, is the most acceptable method of translating the Bible; nevertheless, it is not a practical way of exchanging information in other circumstances. The source text's meaning, for Jerome, is to be prioritised above all else; though it should not be obscured by over-interpretation or rhetorical eloquence, neither should it be rendered incomprehensible by a translation that is so close to the original so as to be meaningless in the target language.[53] In his prologue to the *Chronicle of Eusebius Caesura*, Jerome expresses the difficulty inherent in producing a faithful translation which is also clear and readable:

---

[51] Copeland, ibid., p. 44.
[52] See Chapter 5.
[53] ibid., p. 46, 50. Also Jacobsen, 'Literary Translation in Context', p. 9.

> difficile est enim, alienas lineas insequentem non alicubi excidere; arduum, ut quae in alia lingua bene dicta sunt, eundem decorem in translatione conservent. Significatum est aliquid unius verbi proprietate: non habeo meum quod id efferam, et dum quaero implere sententiam, longo ambitu vix brevis viae spatia consumo. Accedunt hyperbatorum anfractus,dissimilitudines casuum, varietates figurarum; ipsum postremo suum, et, ut ita dicam, vernaculum linguae genus. Si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonat; si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine, [vel] in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio recessisse.[54]

He advocates here a form of translation which, though not strictly literal, involves interpretation only in the interests of *perspicuitas*.[55] Words and phrases may be altered with the aim of clarifying the meaning, especially in places where a literal rendering would produce obscurity in the target language. In doing so, Jerome subjugates both the source and the target discourse to a supralinguistic level of meaning, which exists beyond the text, and may be retrieved in another language through a close reading of the original.[56] In his now famous Epistle 57, he describes the recovery of this meaning in terms which imply a mastery of the text's sense, which must be discovered and 'captured' by the translator: 'sed quasi captivos sensus in suam linguam victoris iure transposuit'.[57] Though later exegetical translation would also be concerned with recovering meaning, the fundamental difference between its principles and those of Jerome's sense-for-sense translation is the nature of the interpretive process involved. Unlike those of the later exegetes, Jerome's translations did not involve target-orientated interpretation—that is to say, interpretation and explication for the benefit of the reader. His interpretation was instead source-orientated, in that he aimed to extract the text's original meaning in order to inform its correct translation. Criticising a poor translation

---

[54] 57:5, *The Bodleian Manuscript of Jerome's Version of the Chronicle of Eusebius*, ed. by John Knight Fotheringham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 13.
[55] Rener, *Interpretatio*, p. 220.
[56] Copeland, 'Nec verbum pro verbo', p. 22.
[57] Ed. by Gerhardus Johannes Marinum Bartelink, *Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi (Epistula 57): Ein Kommentar von G. J. M Bartelink* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), p. 14.

he had read, in his Epistle 37 Jerome characterises the translator's error as one of interpretation:

> sed quid ad interpretem, cuius professio est non, quomodo ipse disertus appareat, sed quomodo eum, qui lecturus est, sic faciat intellegere, quomodo intellexit ille, qui scripsit?[58]

The meaning itself is not flexible and subject to constant re-evaluation, but fixed, and thus easily corruptible. Translation must therefore aim to render the sense created by the author, not recreated by the translator. Jerome's theories of sense-for-sense translation would provide an alternative translation model for medieval translators, one which, rather than prioritising the creative work of interpretation, aimed to suppress interpretation in favour of the perceived authorial meaning. This could be more or less faithfully reproduced by only altering the discourse in the interests of clarity, and never in the interests of virtuosity:

> What the Christian West receives, through Jerome, as classical authority for translation is in fact a counter-rhetorical model. The theoretical legacy of Jerome is to remove from translation the agonistic hermeneutic of rhetoric, and to substitute a hermeneutic of access through language to a communality of meaning.[59]

Though the corpus of texts which will be analysed in this thesis take, for the most part, a more interpretative approach to the source text, the translation of Merlin's prophecies from French to Italian demonstrates, as we shall see, a source-oriented approach which reflects Jerome's notion of sense-for-sense translation.

---

[58] ed. Isidorus Hilberg, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 3 v. (New York: Johnson, 1970, repr.1910-18), ep.37; See also Rener, *Interpretatio*, p. 220.
[59] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*, p. 52.

Inter-Vernacular Translation and *Réécriture*

The above survey is by no means exhaustive, but goes some way towards covering the basic theoretical and practical discourses which may have influenced translation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The distinction between rhetorical, exegetical and literal models of translation was not, in practice, quite as straightforward as such a survey may suggest; the apparently clear-cut division is perhaps another manifestation of the modern tendency to categorise types of translation. Nevertheless, such divisions are made here in the interests of clarity. Having, then, explored thought on translation from Latin to vernacular texts, we will now consider the subject of this thesis; that is, translation between vernacular languages and vernacular *réécriture* in the French and Italian Merlin corpus.

Translation between vernaculars failed to attract the same level of theoretical discourse as did translation from Latin. What we do know about vernacular-to-vernacular translation (or, as I will henceforth refer to it, inter-vernacular translation) can only be gleaned from the extant translations themselves, and from what information their authors reveal about their work. Prologues to vernacular translations appear less frequently than in translations from Latin, and little is said as to the actual methods used by the translator. Nevertheless, what these prologues do tend to have in common is a reverential backwards glance towards their source.[60] Translators' prologues tend to define their text in relation to the original. In his German translation of the Old French *Tristan* (ca 1200), Gottfried von Strassburg identifies Thomas's text as the most authoritative version of the narrative, and claims to have translated following his example:

[60]It is in this point that inter-vernacular translation prologues differ from those of intralingual rewrites; as Donald Maddox highlights, *réécrivains* of earlier written or oral narratives often presented their own text as the definitive version, asserting a forwards move away from earlier tradition; Donald Maddox, 'Intratextual Rewriting in the Roman de Tristan, p. 389.

> Als der [Thomas] von Tristande seit,
> die rihte und die wârheit
> begunde ich sêre suochen
> in beider hande buochen
> walschen und latînen
> und begunde mich des pînen
> daz ich in sîner rihte
> rihte dise tihte.[61]

The back reference to the French text, in this case, implies a respect for its authority as the definitive version, presupposing a faithful rendering of its meaning. To take a similar example from the Italian Merlin corpus, in Paulino Pieri's prologue to his fourteenth-century translation of the *Merlin en prose* and the *Prophecies de Merlin* (which will be examined in more detail in chapters 2 and 5), he claims to have faithfully transcribed the text in French, before attempting a similarly fastidious Italian translation:

> E io, Paulino Pieri, avendo questo libro asemprato in francesco il meglio che ho saputo e potuto, nella lingua toscana l'ho recato tutto per ordine, colle più belle parole che i' ho sapute, non mutando in niuno luogo l'effetto di niuna cosa.[62]

Pieri maintains that he has translated without making any changes to the source, which, as with Gottfried, characterises the translation as a derivative metatext in relation to its more authoritative original. In a later medieval example of French to English translation, William Caxton expresses a vernacular version of the *captatio benevolentiae*, a rhetorical topos in which the writer or speaker protests their modest ability to do justice

---

[61] 'I began to search assiduously both in Romance and Latin books for the true and authentic version of Tristan such as Thomas narrates, and I was at pains to direct the poem along the right path which he had shown' vv. 155-162, ed. by Wolfgang Spiewok (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989); translated by A. T. Hatto in *Gottfried von Strassburg: Tristan, with the 'Tristan' of Thomas* (London: Penguin, 1960), p. 43.

[62] 'And I, Paulino Pieri, having already copied this book in French as best I could, wrote it in the Tuscan language, using the best words at my disposal and in the correct order, without changing anything in any place'. *La Storia di Merlino*, ed. by Mauro Cursietti (Rome: Zauli, 1997), p. 4 (my trans.).

to the subject matter. In the prologue to his translation of the *Recueil des histoires de Troye* (*Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, ca 1475), Caxton more openly elevates the status of the source text, and in this case, the source idiom: 'the fayr langage of frenshe, whyche was in prose so well and compendiously sette and wreton'.[63] In comparison, he defines his own efforts to translate as that of a 'blynde bayard',[64] debasing his attempts to produce anything comparable to the original:

> [I] labouryde in the sayde translacion aftyr my simple and pour connyng, also nigh as y can folouing myn auctor.[65]

Caxton's reverential treatment of his source thus defines his own translation as a weak imitation, accepting that any alterations made are only for the worse. It seems customary, therefore, for vernacular translators to suppress their claims to authorship, negating the mediating function of translation and its reinventive capacities. The translation is presented as a faithful repository of the original text's meaning; like Jerome, the translators define their activity as source-oriented, replicating a pre-existing signification as opposed to authoring a new meaning for the material.

Based on prologue evidence, then, inter-vernacular translators claim to adhere to a Hieronymian position in relation to their sources, following Jerome's source-orientated approach to the original meaning. Examination of the translations themselves, though, reveals a striking absence of anything as source-orientated as Jerome would have liked. Inter-vernacular translation approaches instead tend to resemble the target-orientated, interpretive principles of rhetorical translation, manifested in the Middle Ages through the *artes poetriae*, and exegetical translation. Though close translations are not unrepresented, the majority of translations throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries impose a new interpretation on the

[63] Bruges: William Caxton and Colard Mansion, 1473 or 1474, National Library of Australia, 3442398 f. 4V
[64] ibid.
[65] ibid., f. 5.

source material, which counteracts the translator's claims of invisibility. Neither of these branches is rigorously adhered to in any one text; as Jeanette Beer emphasises, each individual translation shapes its source material in an idiosyncratic way, translation theory generally being subordinate to translation practice:

> But the activity of translation was necessarily more than "inventio", a given text being more tyrannical in its demands than a topos. Thus the precepts of any given treatise cannot be accepted holus-bolus as a translator's manual. Particularities of context could easily supersede precepts.[66]

Nevertheless, we can perceive elements of translation practice which reflect certain attitudes inherent in more erudite forms of translation. Douglas Kelly has argued that the *artes poetriae* found their way into vernacular writing particularly through the practice of *réécriture*, showing how French authors such as Chrétien de Troyes and Benoît de Sainte-Maure used rhetorical devices deriving from the Roman and medieval *artes* to rewrite material from earlier sources. By examining, in particular, the art of description as topical invention, Kelly demonstrates that 'vernacular adaptations conform to the traditional Latin scheme for imitation and rewriting, but with adaptations for contemporary vernacular audiences'.[67] This also provides a convincing argument for the presence of such rhetorical elements in interlingual translation. For example, we can regard Wolfram von Eschenbach's German version of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal* as an example of rhetorical reinvention of meaning—what we might call 'resignification' of the source. Though it is impossible to say whether Wolfram was aware of the poetic techniques suggested by Horace and contemporary twelfth-century rhetoricians, his reinterpretation of the order of events, of the emphasis of the narrative and of the meaning of the grail exemplifies certain principles reflected in the *artes poetriae*. Most notably, by beginning the story of Perceval at a prior point to the opening

[66] Introduction to *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, p. 5.
[67] Kelly, *The Conspiracy of Allusion*, p. 118.

of Chrétien's text—with an account of the adventures of the hero's father—Wolfram demonstrates a technique which reflects Horace's notion of reordering and restructuring the original narrative, to give the text new meaning and added dramatic effect. Likewise, Malory's translation of the Old French Vulgate cycle, though close to the sources in parts, takes an editorial approach to combining various source texts (of which are two texts to be analysed in this thesis, the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin*). As a result, he gives the translation a new significance which is more than the sum of its parts. On the other hand, some translations take an approach more reminiscent of the exegetical tradition of Latin-to-vernacular translation; for example, Malory's translation of the *Queste del Saint Graal* 'translates the basic information found in its source and usually closely reflects the original vocabulary, but compresses the language into a distinct style which transforms our perception of events'.[68] As Mary Hynes-Berry argues, Malory's translation style emphasises the human over the spiritual drama, reconstructing the text's discourse in order to impose a particular interpretative slant.[69] Even the English translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, though apparently extremely close to the source text, abridges it significantly, whilst also subtly reinterpreting aspects of the meaning in order to retain the poem's rhyming couplets.[70] More often, however, both an implicit exegetical technique and a more explicit rhetorical motive are at work in different parts of the same text; to take an example from Chapters 2 and 5 of this thesis, the *Storia di Merlino* combines reinterpretation in the form of explanation (Pieri's glossing of Merlin's obscure prophecies) with creative rewriting, such as Pieri's recreation of the story of Merlin's birth.

It may thus be argued that the type of inter-vernacular translation found in our Merlin corpus reflects, to a certain extent, the Latin tradition of translation and rewriting. The principles of Latin-to-vernacular translation, in addition to those of

[68] Hynes-Berry, 'Language and Meaning, p. 310.
[69] ibid., p. 318.
[70] See Campbell, 'Reinterpretation and Resignification'.

Latin intralingual rewriting, appear to have filtered down, to varying degrees, into the practice of inter-vernacular translation, most probably due to the role of exegesis and the *artes poetriae* in the educational curriculum which would have been followed by most people literate enough to compose vernacular texts. Nevertheless, the fluid boundaries between rhetorical and exegetical styles of reinterpretation render inter-vernacular translation a more amorphous practice, which also reflects the vernacular tradition of *réécriture*. Rewritten texts within the same language demonstrate similar selective applications of scholastic rhetoric and exegesis, effecting a Horatian reinterpretation of preexisting material which places the *remanieur* in an authorial position.[71] The boundaries between the practice of inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* become distorted when we consider both practices from the perspective of linguistic reformulation. Both translation and rewriting reconfigure meaning through a reinterpretation of discourse. Though some medieval writers may have striven after a 'transcendental signified'[72]— an extra-linguistic meaning which exists independently of its expression—, both translation and rewriting demonstrate that a reformulation of expression alters the meaning irreversibly. Exegetical translations produce a new signification for the text by the imposition of an explanatory idiom; difficult language must be disambiguated, obscure terms must pass through the translator's interpretive filter in order to be rendered clear. Rhetorical translation and rewriting in the *artes poetriae* actively use discourse as a reconstructive tool, seeking out new meanings through a series of methods which involve linguistic reconstruction. Inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* both use rewriting as a vehicle for a renewal of interpretation; like *réécriture*, the product of inter-vernacular translation represents not a meaning

[71] For the influence of scholastic rhetoric on vernacular composition, see Douglas Kelly, 'Topical Invention in Medieval French Literature' (pp. 231-250) and 'Topical Invention' and 'Translatio Studii: Translation, Adaptation and Allegory in Medieval French Literature', *Philological Quarterly*, 57 (1978), 287-310 (p. 290); also Donald Maddox, 'Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*', *The Medieval Opus*, pp. 101-124 (pp. 113-116).
[72] Derrida; see p. 46 below.

equivalent, but a meaning development, a synchronic progression from one signification to another.

Signification in medieval texts, then, is not fixed or stable, but subject to a constant process of interpretation. This is not only true of translation and *réécriture*, but also of the material conditions of its transmission. Consequently, this study must also outline and take into account the semantic shifts which occur through manuscript variation. Each time a text is rewritten in the same or another language, as we shall see, a new meaning is imposed through a reinterpretation of linguistic expression, conferring an authorial status on both the translator and the *réécrivain*. This continuous interpretation of texts is not only a condition of *réécriture* and translation, but of medieval textuality itself. The transmission of texts in a manuscript culture, which relied on copying by human beings, was constantly subject to human intervention. The fluidity and variation in vernacular languages, in addition to a cavalier attitude towards intellectual property, meant that scribes were not heavily concerned with creating an exact reproduction of their source text, some even taking it upon themselves to make modifications in the text in accordance with their own tastes or purposes.[73] Each time a text was copied, it underwent a restructuration on the level of discourse; in the majority of cases this involves no more than minor orthographical or syntactical variation, which has little influence on the text's content.[74] Nevertheless, it was not unknown for a scribe to actively place themselves in an authorial position, implementing more significant changes to the text in accordance with their own preferences, or perhaps at the

[73] On manuscript variation, see Keith Busby (ed.) *Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993) and *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante* (Paris: Seuil, 1989); Elspeth Kennedy, 'The Scribe as Editor' in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970), pp. 523-531; Rosenstein, Roy, 'Mouvance and the Editor as Scribe: *Trascrittore Tradittore*?', *Romantic Review*, 2 (1989), 157- 171; Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris : Edition du Seuil, 1972) and 'Intertextualité et mouvance', *Littérature*, 41 (1981), 8-16.
[74] Busby, *Codex and Context*, p. 67.

command of a patron.[75] Keith Busby calls these larger alterations *remaniements*; in practice, we can identify them as minor instances of *réécriture*.[76] According to Paul Zumthor (who has dubbed this characteristic of manuscript transmission '*mouvance*'), the medieval text is not a stable entity, but a *process*; each time a text is copied, the scribe has the opportunity to take control of its meaning, supplanting the author as the text's intellectual proprietor. In this way, each manuscript marks a stage in the text's history of interpretation:

> Plutôt qu'une essence, une production; plutôt qu'un sens accompli, une pratique constamment renouvelée de signification; plutôt qu'une structure, une phase dans un procès de structuration.[77]

From the perspective of discourse, scribal alterations which affect the text's meaning approximate the processes of translation and *réécriture*; in each case, it is the receiver (be it translator, *réécrivain* or copyist) who takes control of the text's signification by taking control of its linguistic expression. The meaning of a text is constantly in flux, redeveloped and redirected each time a reader actively decides to reinterpret it by modifying, rewriting or translating the text: 'L'oeuvre est fondamentalement mouvante'.[78] As a fundamental condition of medieval textuality, no study of translation or *réécriture* can ignore the importance of *mouvance*. This thesis, therefore, will attempt to propose an analytical approach which goes some way towards accounting for scribal variations within extant copies of the source and target texts.

Having analysed medieval authorities on translation and rewriting, in addition to surveying actual inter-vernacular translation practices, we will now regard the subject of this thesis from a different perspective; namely, that of modern translation

[75] Kennedy provides an example from a text of the prose *Lancelot* in Rouen MS 1054, where the scribe explains that he has omitted certain sections of the narrative, because his patron is most interested in the *Charette* episode; 'The Scribe as Editor', p. 524-525.
[76] *Codex and Context*, p. 70.
[77] *Essai de poétique médiévale*, p. 73.
[78] ibid., p. 73.

theory. Whereas Roman and medieval thought on translation was prescriptive, modern translation theories are descriptive, offering interpretative models which allow us to visualise the abstract translation process in a concrete manner. It is such a model which will be outlined as an approach to studying medieval translation and *réécriture.*

Approaches to the Analysis of Medieval Translation: Modern Translation Theory and The Peircean Sign

Speaking of translation, Jacques Derrida rejects the notion that meaning may be separable from its linguistic expression, and therefore, able to be rendered uncorrupted in any language:

> Dans les limites où elle est possible, où du moins *paraît* possible, la traduction pratique la différence entre signifié et signifiant. Mais, si cette différence n'est jamais pure, la traduction ne l'est pas davantage et, à la notion de traduction, il faudra substituer une notion de *transformation* : transformation réglée d'une langue par une autre, d'un texte par un autre. Nous n'aurons et n'avons en fait jamais eu affaire à quelque "transport" de signifiés purs que l'instrument —ou le "véhicule"—signifiant laisserait vierge et inentamé, d'une langue à l'autre, ou à l'intérieur d'une seule et même langue.[79]

For Derrida, any alteration in discourse constitutes an alteration in signification; he rejects the notion of a *signifié transcendental*, a stable (metaphysical, even) meaning which is completely separable from its linguistic form, and which therefore may be rendered in any language without alteration to its significance. This sudden leap from medieval exegesis and rhetoric to twentieth-century poststructuralist philosophy may seem disorientating, but Derrida's views on translation are certainly not irrelevant for this study. The above survey of medieval thought on translation, and its practical relations to inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture*, has revealed that the processes of

[79] 'Sémiologie et grammatologie: entretien avec Julia Kristeva', in *Positions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 27-50 (p. 31).

reinterpretation at work in inter- and intralingual rewriting are much more complex than a simple transfer of meaning from one form of expression to another. The meaning of the source text must be retained to a certain extent; how else would the translation be recognised as such? Nevertheless, this meaning takes on new significance through the translator's linguistic reformulation within a new context. Whether the source is amplified, contracted, emulated or imitated, as in rhetorical models, or explained more simply for a non-Latinate audience, as in exegetical models, the linguistic exchange gives the text a new status, developing meaning rather than reproducing it. In our thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Merlin translations, we can recognise a similar development of meaning which comes as a result of linguistic change; not simply change from one language to another, but a conscious reformulation of language to give the source text's meaning a new direction. The translations in our corpus parallel our examples of intralingual *réécriture*, which similarly use discourse to resignify elements of the source meaning.

Because inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* display such a complex process of linguistic reinterpretation, our methodological approach to analysing the French and Italian Merlin corpus must be both flexible and comprehensive enough to expose the variety of interpretative nuances in each case study. It is for this reason that the study will now look to modern translation theories to provide a conceptual basis for an analytical model. In particular, theories of translation grounded in semiotics—that is, the study of the relationship between linguistic signs and their cultural surroundings—account for a variety of reinterpretative processes, situating text reception within a wider context of cultural thought. Like Derrida, modern semiotic translation theory rejects the notion of meaning equivalence in the transfer between two linguistic codes. Regarding discourse as constitutive of culture and perception, translation is seen as a hermeneutic process which *develops* signification, rather than reproducing it verbatim; a

principle which reflects the consciously reinventive notions inherent in much medieval translation practice.

As its fundamental theoretical principle, this thesis will borrow from semiotics the concept of 'semiosis' as a model for interpretation. Semiosis, the notion that interpretation represents a chain of sign exchanges, is founded principally upon the sign theory developed by the nineteenth-century philosopher and mathematician, Charles Sanders Peirce, and has been integrated into translation theory by semiotics scholars such as Susan Petrilli, Dinda Gorlee, Augusto Ponzio, Ubaldo Stecconi and Umberto Eco (to name but a few). In opposition to Saussure's twofold model of the sign—which implies a symbiotic relationship between the signifier and its signified—, Peirce's sign is triadic. This additional, third dimension, offers a more complex and dynamic image of the interpretation process, in that it divides the notion of *signified* into two parts: the actual meaning of the sign—the *object*— and the *interpretant*, the way the sign is understood by the receiver. For translation theory, the notion of interpretant adds the complexity and depth lacking in a Saussurean sign system, in which the processes of signification can become over-simplified and give the impression that the relationship between the sign and its meaning is static. The interpretant, then, will be crucial for this study of inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and will be used to identify semiotic shifts within our Merlin corpus. Before demonstrating how Peircean theory may be used to analyse the French and Italian Merlin corpus, we will first explore the basic concepts behind Peirce's sign theory, and how it has been applied to translation studies.

Peirce's Sign Theory

As previously mentioned, Charles Sander Peirce's model of the sign is tripartite. It consists of a *representamen*, which is the sign itself (corresponding to Saussure's

signifier), an *object*, and an *interpretant* (which correspond to different dimensions of what Saussure called the signified):

> A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of that respresentamen.[80]

This sign model is often illustrated using the following diagram, which demonstrates the triadic relations between the sign (representamen), interpretant, and object:

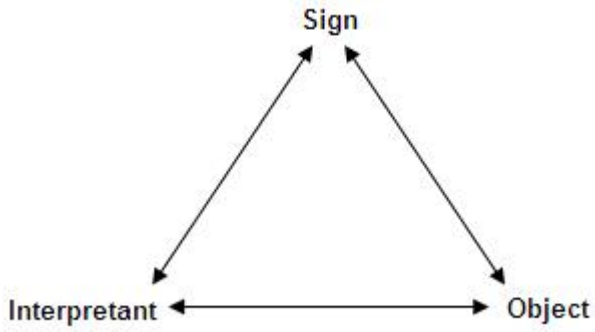


Fig. 1.

It is the interpretant which will provide the most significant theoretical component for our study of the Merlin corpus; nevertheless, the nature of the object and the representamen itself are still fundamental to the concept of semiosis, the basis of our methodology, and will be briefly summarised here. The object is not necessarily a physical thing, but rather, a set of properties pertaining to a thing, a concept, or an idea,

[80] *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 2. 228. See also Gorlee, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 51; Ubaldo Stecconi, 'A Map of Semiotics for Translation Studies', *Similarity and Difference in Translation*, ed. by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgeson Jr (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004; repr. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), pp. 163-168. Petrilli and Ponzio have proposed a connection between Peircean theory and medieval thought; though this is worth noting, it concerns Peirce's logic rather than his semiotics, and from that reason, does not really impact on our use of Peirce's sign theory as an analytical model; Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio, 'Peirce and Medieval Semiotics', in *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications, and Connections*, ed. by V.M.Colapietro and T. M. Olshewsky (The Hague: Mouton-Degruyter, 1996), pp. 351-364.

which allow it to be recognised and categorised. Umberto Eco describes the object as a 'structured and analytically organized content'; for example, though the sign 'dog' refers to an external reality that the sign 'unicorn' does not, their objects are the respective properties which people recognise as belonging to 'unicorn' or 'dog'.[81] In this way, the object represents the objective "reality" of a sign; an impartial acceptance by all members of a linguistic community that the sign 'unicorn' refers to a mythical animal which resembles a horse with a horn on its forehead. Peirce divides the object into two categories: the dynamic object, or the object in its general, extra-linguistic form (we might even say the physical object itself, if it exists), and the immediate object: the object as it exists virtually within the triadic sign relationship. [82]

Peirce also subdivides the sign—the representamen, or signifier—into three types, according to its relationship to the object. An iconic sign represents the object through some form of physical resemblance, such as a picture. An indexical sign demonstrates the object through some causal link; for example, smoke would be an indexical sign indicating a fire, its object. Finally a symbolic sign represents its object through nothing other than convention. Linguistic signs are the most common example of symbolic signs, in that the relationship of words to their objects is predominantly arbitrary.[83]

The final component of the sign—and for us, the most important— is the *interpretant*. If the object is the (actual or virtual) thing signified by the sign, then the

---

[81] 'Peirce's Notion of Interpretant', *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976), 1457-1472 (p. 1459).

[82] *Semiotic and Significs: the Correspondence between C. S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, ed. by Charles S. Hardwick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 83; see Gorlee, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 54, 176; Stecconi, in Gregor Goethals et al, 'Semiotranslation: Peircean Approaches to Translation', in *Translation, Translation*, ed. by Susan Petrilli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 253-268 (p. 259). Eco argues that the dynamic object itself can only ever be a series of signs; 'Peirce's Notion of Interpretant', p. 1463.

[83] *Collected Papers*, 2.228-30; 2. 304; also Gorlee, 'Wittgenstein, Translation and Semiotics', *Target*, 1 (1989), 69-94 (p. 79). Peirce relates these three types of sign to his three categories of knowledge, Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. Firstness involves unmediated sense perception and emotions: therefore recognising iconic signs is associated with this category (see the conclusion). Secondness involves knowledge based on experience of interaction with the real world. This includes the interpretation of indexical signs. Finally, the interpretation of symbolic signs is associated with Thirdness, as this type of knowledge relies on awareness of convention, or a general principle; *Collected Papers*, 2.274, Gorlee, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, pp. 50-51.

interpretant is the way in which the sign is understood by a receiver.[84] For example, if the object of a red traffic light is a red-coloured light bulb in a box suspended over a road, then the interpretant of that object is the idea that cars are being told to stop. As this example demonstrates, interpretants are very often related to their objects by convention; there is no natural relationship between the colour red and immobility. The interpretant, then, represents a dynamic meaning, one which may alter from receiver to receiver, rather than meaning that is universal or static. In this way, it accounts for the multiple interpretations which can be found in our Merlin corpus, where the same object (Merlin) is perceived and interpreted in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts.

The interpretant also provides the basis for Peirce's notion of the workings of interpretation itself; the process which brings someone to reach the interpretant 'stop' from the sign 'red light'. This process is characterised by a series of intermediary interpretations, which Peirce calls *semiosis*. In Peirce's sign philosophy, the meaning of a sign can only be another sign.[85] All thought and understanding takes place through an interaction between signs. The interpretant itself is not simply an idea associated with an object; it is itself a sign, albeit a psychological one, produced in the mind of the receiver in reaction to the original sign. This 'mental interpretant' sign, according to Peirce, can only be interpreted by another, different interpretant.[86] The first mental interpretant produced by the sign, therefore, becomes a representamen in a further triadic sign relation (in the mind of the receiver), which then produces another interpretant. This second interpretant develops the receiver's understanding of the original object in some way, yet in order to be interpreted, it itself must become a representamen in *another* sign relationship, one which reveals yet further information about the object:

---

[84] *Collected Papers*, 2.230.
[85] ibid. 8.332.
[86] ibid., 2.274.

> Anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*.[87]

Each new sign relation elucidates the receiver's knowledge about the object, gradually producing extra layers of information. We can envisage this process as a chain of interpretation, in which each sign is connected causally to a related sign, which then leads to another related sign, then another, *et cetera*:[88]

> Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series.[89]

The interpretant may be either a single sign, or a cluster of signs, or even an entire discourse. If we are to regard each of our Merlin texts as an interpretant of the Merlin story (composed of a cluster of signs), then the development from text to text may be equated with this process of semiosis. Eco develops the notion of semiosis to include the linguistic notions of denotation and connotation; a denotation is a first interpretant, which is interpreted by a connotation (a second interpretant), which produces further connotations, and so on.[90] The interpretant, according to Eco, can also be a rendering of a sign in a different semiotic system; for example, a sketch of a dog representing an interpretant of the word 'dog', a diagram illustrating an abstract principle (such as fig. 1. above, which demonstrates visually the concept of Peirce's sign), a translation of a word into another language, or into a different register within the same language. According to his version of Peircean semiotics, culture itself represents a chain of unlimited

---

[87] ibid., 2.303.
[88] ibid., 1.339, 2.303, also Gorlee, 'Wittgenstein, Translation and Semiotics', p. 77-78; *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 50.
[89] *Collected Papers*, 1.338.
[90] *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976 (p. 70).

semiosis; within every form of communication, and with any sort of social sign use, signs are constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted by other signs:

> [...] culture continuously translates signs into other signs, and definitions into other definitions, words into icons, icons into ostensive signs, ostensive signs into new definitions, new definitions into propositional functions, propositional functions into exemplifying sentences and so on; in this way it proposes to its members an uninterrupted chain of cultural units composing other cultural units, and thus translating and explaining them.[91]

Though semiosis in this collective sense can be seen as genuinely infinite—as long as human culture exists, it will continue to reinterpret its surroundings— Peirce's notion of an individual's interpretation of a sign does, in some sense, have its limits. When a receiver interprets a red traffic light as a sign, the process of semiosis may evoke an interpretive chain which follows connotations of the colour red, their knowledge of the Highway Code, or past experiences of driving; however, the receiver will arrive finally at the interpretant 'stop' out of what Peirce calls 'habit'. Habit is the way in which a certain community becomes accustomed to interpreting a certain sign, designating certain connotational interpretants as conventional; in this way, we may recognise various 'habits', or conventional interpretations, for the character of Merlin within our corpus. Habits, however, are by no means fixed, as the constant reinterpretation of Merlin's character will demonstrate. They are subject to modification based on experience; should someone find themselves in a hypothetical country where a red light indicates 'go', for instance, then their habit of interpreting the same object as 'stop' will be changed. This, in itself, also represents a continuation of semiosis.[92]

Peirce's analytical model, and particularly the notion of the interpretant, and its role in the process of unlimited semiosis, will therefore form the basis of our

---

[91] ibid. p. 71.

[92] *Collected Papers*, 4.77, 5.491; Gorlee, 'Wittgenstein, Translation and Semiotics', p. 83; Stecconi, 'A Map of Semiotics for Translation Studies', p. 166.

methodological approach to the Merlin texts. First, however, we will examine the ways in which Peirce's theory has been applied in recent times to translation studies, in order to further develop the connection between Peirce and medieval translation and *réécriture*.

Peirce's Semiotics and Translation Theory

The connection between Peirce's sign theory and medieval literature is one which is rarely made. If we are to use Peircean semiotics to form a new approach to medieval translation, then we must base this upon the reception of Pierce's model of interpretation within the semiotics of modern translation theory. In his writings, Peirce uses translation as an instance of synecdoche to describe the process of semiosis, portraying the interpretation of one sign by another in terms of translating:

> But a sign is not a sign unless it translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed. Thought requires achievement for its own development, and without this development it is nothing. Thought must live and grow in incessant new and higher translations, or it proves itself not to be genuine thought.[93]

Eco and Gorlee have argued against assuming that Peirce envisaged semiosis as a form of translation; it is simply employed as a *pars pro toto*, in order to illustrate the fact that semiosis, like translation, involves the interpretation of signs using other signs.[94] Nevertheless, translation can be seen as one of many forms of semiosis, leading various translation scholars to integrate Peircean semiotics into their translation theories.[95] This

[93] *Collected Papers*, 5.594.

[94] Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione* (Milan: Bompiani, 2003), p. 227; Gorlee, 'Wittgenstein, Translation and Semiotics', p. 27; *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 118.

[95] For a variety of approaches to translation using Peircean semiotics, see Gregor Goethals et al, 'Semiotranslation: Peircean Approaches to Translation'. Susan Petrilli has defined translation in terms of Peirce's iconic signs, arguing that, as Peirce's notion of epistemological Firstness includes feeling and unmediated creativity, a translation should resemble its source as a painting resembles its subject; see 'Translation and Semiosis. Introduction' and 'Translation,

perspective on translation will be useful for our analysis of the Merlin texts, in that it accounts for a range of interpretative practices. Rather than a conventional replacement of source language signs with their target language equivalent, translation is seen as a stage in the chain of semiosis itself; the translator interprets the source-language sign through a series of mental interpretants, which eventually leads them to an interpretant in the target language. Though the target language sign may represent a 'habit' (for example, we are in the *habit* of interpreting the English sign 'cat' with the French sign 'chat'), translation does not necessarily represent a transfer of invariant meaning between two static systems. As Gorlee has argued, the translator does not translate the source sign itself, but their own interpretant, which represents an epistemological development of the source sign.[96] Though the target sign may correspond to a habit, interpretation may take the sign beyond its habitual interpretants as is the case, for instance, with metaphorical language, or idiomatic phrases. Translating the phrase "curiosity killed the cat" into French would therefore require a more extended process of semiosis than the phrase "I have two cats", bypassing the translational 'habit' and producing more abstract interpretants. As we will see, various versions within our corpus bypass the 'habit' of interpreting Merlin, leading to more creative reevaluations. The translation, therefore, represents a 'final interpretant': the place at which the translator's process of interpretation ends.[97] This final interpretant is based not on conventional equivalence relationships, but the way in which the translator understands the sign within its current context, both textual and cultural. Translation, then, is as fluid and individualised as interpretation itself:

Iconicity and Dialogism', in *Signergy*, ed. by C. Jac Conradie, Ronél Johl, Marthinus Beukes, Olga Fischer and Christina Ljungberg (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), pp. 367-386.

[96] Gorlee, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, pp. 61, 83; also 'Meaningful Mouthfuls in Semiotranslation', in *Translation, Translation*, pp. 235-252 (p. 236).

[97] José Lambert and Clem Robyns, 'Translation' in *A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture / Ein Handbuch zu den zeichentheoretischen Grundlagen von Natur und Kultur*, ed. by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering and Thomas A. Seboek (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 3594-3614.

> This means that translation should not be seen as the second component of a static dichotomy, but as a step in the chain of interpretations, itself subject to interpretation.[98]

The translated sign, having been subjected to semiosis, does not render the meaning of the first sign completely intact; during the process of interpretation, it acquires additional 'baggage'— associated interpretants, connotations— or else loses aspects of meaning, such as interpretants associated with the source language sign but not the target language sign. In this way, translation marks a *progression* of meaning, rather than a transfer. Gorlee argues that the source and target texts are not to be viewed as binary opposites, between which meaning may be passed interchangeably, but that the source should be seen as a logical, as well as a chronological predecessor to the target text.[99] Because meaning is *developed* through semiosis, the notions of equivalence and back-translation become irrelevant; interpretants are produced through the linguistic signs themselves, not through a static, extra-linguistic meaning (Derrida's *signifié transcendental*). As Eco has suggested:

> In truth, the sign always *opens up* something new. No interpretant, in adjusting the sign interpreted, fails to change its borders to some degree.[100]

Ubaldo Stecconi has recently used the image of a wave to demonstrate the dynamic forward-motion inherent in this view of translation; he envisages the accumulation of interpretants through semiosis as a pulse of energy, which spreads from one wave particle to the text.[101] Medieval translation, as we have seen, generally demonstrates development rather than reproduction of meaning; this dynamic transfer of signs, then, corresponds to the linguistic and conceptual developments which are in evidence throughout the interpretative range presented by our Merlin corpus.

---

[98] ibid., p. 3602.
[99] *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 171, also Lambert and Robyns, 'Translation', p. 3602.
[100] *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 44.
[101] 'What Happens if We Think That Translating is a Wave?', *Translation Studies*, 3 (2010), pp. 47-60.

The notion that a translated sign represents a rendering of the translator's interpretant sign, and not the sign itself, is evidenced by the way in which every translation of a text will differ in some respect. According to Lambert and Robyns, each individual translator will stop at a different point in the interpretive chain, accounting for a diversity of interpretations deriving from the same semiotic unit.[102] Temporal or geographical distance is a major factor in the variation; the more unfamiliar a sign is to the target readership, the more interpretant signs must mediate between source and target sign. We may regard the entire history of a text and its translations, therefore, as an extended process of semiosis. Each translation represents a successive interpretant of the text, but not a *final* interpretant; as long as the text continues to be translated, new interpretants will reinterpret the text in a different way. Each time the translation itself is read, it will produce new interpretants in the mind of the reader which will differ from the interpretants produced by a reader of the the source text. In this way, translation-semiosis represents an open-ended process; every translated sign has the potential to be converted into a new interpretant, and so on.[103]

Peircean Semiotics and Medieval Translation/*Réécriture*

Having surveyed Peirce's sign theory and its relations to translation, we shall move towards outlining the role it will play in our analytical model. As we have just seen, in a Peircean theory of translation the meaning of signs is constantly shifting and developing. Each reception of a sign causes a synchronic progression of its signification; semiosis produces a development, not an equivalent. It has already been pointed out that the transmission of meaning via inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* conforms to this model. Medieval translation and *réécriture* function through a

[102] 'Translation', p. 3602.
[103] Gorlee, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*, p. 61; Lambert and Robyns, 'Translation', p. 3602; Thomas L. Short, 'What they Said in Amsterdam: Peirce's Semiotics Today', *Semiotica*, 60 (1986), 103-128 (p. 119).

reconfiguration of discourse; whether through the re-inventive rhetorical modes of the *ars poetriae*, or according to an exegetical motivation to elaborate a particular dimension of the text, the scribe/translator/*réécrivain* exerts a quasi-authorial control over the language and signification of the source—resignifying that source where necessary. In Peircean terms, we can regard this process (and even, any process of medieval text transmission) as semiosis. The translated or rewritten text represents an interpretant, a development of the source's meaning through a chain of denotations and connotations. The translator or *réécrivain* translates the source text according to their own interpretants, which supplant the author's signs as the meaning to be carried over. It will become evident, in the course of this thesis, that the Merlin translators and *réécrivain*s create a new version of the narrative according to their own interpretants of the source.

If we are to view medieval textuality—and, on a microcosmic level, the French and Italian Merlin corpus— as an extended chain of semiosis, where signs are continuously interpreted by other signs and producing interpretant signs themselves, then *mouvance*, translation and *réécriture* would all represent different stages along that chain. Small-scale *mouvance*—such as minor syntactical or lexical variations—corresponds to a short process of semiosis, where a minimum of interpretant signs mediate between the signs in the source manuscript and in the newly copied one. Larger *remaniements* represent a more extended process, where a longer series of interconnected interpretants develop the meaning in a further direction. Intralingual *réécriture*, on the other hand, embraces the process of semiosis as a means of recreating the text; the rhetorical precepts of Horace and the *artes poetriae* suggest methods of developing one's own interpretation of the material, which amounts to an extensive process of semiosic interpretation. By altering the structure, style and discourse of the narrative, the *réécrivain* exchanges the source text signs with their own interpretant signs, developed through semiotic interpretation. Translation demonstrates

an even further progression, but to varying degrees; though the final interpretant will inevitably be a target language sign, each interpretative route taken by a particular medieval translator will represent a different stage in the process. Literal translation actively suppresses the translator's interpretants, making the process as rapid as possible by choosing interpretant signs which are lexically closest to the original; this is evident, even today, in scientific and Scriptural translation. With exegetical and rhetorical translation, semiosis is allowed to run free. Adaptation for a particular audience involves interpreting both the text, and the most appropriate use of language; these two requirements are both covered by interpretative semiosis, which elaborates the meaning in a particular ideological or cultural direction.

In this way, the model of semiosis accounts for the heterogeneity of medieval inter-vernacular translation and rewriting practices—and that same heterogeneity, more specifically, within our Merlin texts. Because literal, rhetorical or exegetical methods were used selectively and according to the context—one single translation may contain either all three, aspects of some, or none at all—applying a rigid methodological division between the three would result in oversimplification. Translation as semiosis, however, resists any form of categorisation; the chain of semiosis is a continuous process, with each text-interpretant simply representing an intermediary stage. In this way, we can also regard each translation in itself as a separate semiotic chain, in which various types of translation practice intermingle and produce different interpretants at different points in the text. This not only allows for a variety of translation methods, but also for variety over temporal and geographical distance. Translations from France, Germany, or England, from the twelfth or the fifteenth century, can all be regarded as different stages of the semiosic progression of a text's history, their respective interpretants revealing as much about translation in their own place or time as about the text itself.

What will be most crucial for this discussion of the Merlin corpus is that semiosis also allows us to regard translation and *réécriture* not as distinct entities, but simply different stages of the same process. Each involves mediating between a source and target text through a series of interpretants, resting at a final interpretant either in the same, or another, language. Theoretically, this accounts for the fact that many translations are, in a sense, interlingual *réécritures*, taking the semiotic process much further than simply finding an approximate target language term. Because the two practices are neither distinct from each other, nor formalised entities in themselves, approaching both from the perspective of Peircean semiotics may help to elucidate each one in confrontation with the other.

As semiosis regards translation and rewriting as processes of development along an interpretative chain, it renders notions of equivalence redundant. The preceding survey of medieval translation and *réécriture* practices has demonstrated that few translators and *réécrivains* were interested in reproducing the source meaning verbatim.This study will regard each recreated text as an interpretant of the first, thereby accounting for the medieval practice of recreating signification through the reorganisation of discourse; as no two signs in any language produce exactly the same set of interpretants for every language user, discourse itself is the locus of semiotic meaning. Furthermore, as Lambert and Robyns have highlighted, using semiosis as a model for translation takes into account more than one source text, which is often the case with translations or rewritings which integrate commentary material or more than one version of a narrative; this is certainly the case for at least two of our Merlin texts (see chapter 5). Viewing the transition from original to translation as an interpretive progression breaks down the static source/target dichotomy, allowing for the interaction of more than two texts. Translation as a chain of semiosis absorbs numerous sources, which directly or indirectly, interact with interpretants along its interpretive progression:

> Indeed, since several interpretative chains can merge into one chain and one final interpretant, the original ceases to be the single starting point of the translation process: it becomes one "source" alongside others, such as genre models or culture-specific myths.[104]

In this way, the phenomenon of manuscript variation is also less disruptive to the analysis of translation and *réécriture* when viewed from the perspective of semiosis. *Mouvance*, whether significant or minor, is part of the same semiosic chain as translation and *réécriture*. If each text represents a chain of semiosis in itself, then the sum of manuscript variations can be seen as a physical trace of its interpretive progression across different examples of any one text. Analysis of the source and target texts, therefore, can take *mouvance* into account by regarding each variant as an intermediary interpretant. Where *mouvance*-interpretants make significant changes to the text's meaning, these can be used to inform an analysis of the translated or rewritten interpretants. Because semiosis is a cumulative process, gathering connoted interpretants as it progresses, each individual interpretation takes into account a myriad of shared cultural associations which all exist somewhere in the semiotic universe associated with that sign. Therefore, manuscript variations may be regarded as minor successive points in the text's interpretive history, perhaps elucidating the interpretive progression from source to target sign. Where *mouvance,* as well as other paratextual factors, can be seen to affect signification and text reception in our Merlin corpus, they will be taken into account as evidence of minor shifts in meaning within the receptive history of that text.

A Methodology for Analysing Medieval Inter-Vernacular Translation and *Réécriture*

[104] Translation', p. 3602.

The following paragraphs will outline the analytical model which will form the basis of this thesis; taking our survey of medieval translation and *réécriture*, Peircean sign theory and translation semiosis into account, this methodology will structure an analysis of the Merlin corpus. The aim of such a study will be, essentially, to follow the process of interpretation along the semiotic chain which leads from source to target text, documenting the way in which the target interpretant-text demonstrates a particular reception of the source material. Though interpretants develop a meaning through a chain of connotations, this chain is not random; each one represents a development of knowledge about the original object of the sign, which, though elaborated, remains the same throughout the semiotic process. Therefore, the target text as an interpretant will necessarily retain some invariant material from the source. It is the treatment of this invariant material, and its reception within a new interpretive context which will allow for a study of translation and *réécriture* as semiosis. Having already identified, then, the interpretant and the process of semiosis as key concepts for this methodology, we will now move to its final component: the invariant semantic core.

The Invariant Core

The idea that selective semantic material remains invariant in the transition between source and target text is common to all theories of translation; if there were no semantic identity between the source and target texts, then the product would be hardly recognisable as a translation at all. However, the traditional notion of equivalence suggests a dichotomous division between content and form, in which content remains invariant whilst the (linguistic) form is changed. As we have established, a view of translation as semiosis rejects both a binary opposition between source and target, and the concept of meaning equivalence; it would therefore be reductive to regard 'content' as an invariant category. More useful, in this case, would be to regard invariance in

terms of Anton Popovič's concept of the 'invariant core' in translation. This suggests that meaning, rather than being transferred whole to the target text, retains a certain semantic identity which does not necessarily correspond in its entirety to that of the source:

> The invariant core is represented by the stable, basic and constant semantic elements in the text. Their existence can be proved by an experimental semantic condensation. This core of standardized meanings makes a reader's or translator's (or another) concretization, i.e. transformations or variants, possible. These imply changes that do not modify the core of meaning but influence only the expressive form. [105]

Paul Samuel di Virgilio has developed this notion into the idea of an 'invariant topology', which erodes the form/content dichotomy.[106] The 'invariant topology' represents any stable transmission of semantic content, which may be a combination of meaning and expressive form; invariance in practice cannot include one to the exclusion of the other. For example, to translate the French term *limoger un ministre* with the English 'to sack a minister' alters certain aspects of both the form and the content, whilst still retaining an invariant core of meaning. On a semantic level, both imply that a minister has been fired for incompetence, and in terms of form, both phrases are common within a journalistic idiom, suggesting a particular context of usage. On the other hand, the French term expresses itself on a metaphorical level, whereas the English is literal; what cannot be translated are the historical connotations of the French phrase, which signifies through its reference to Limoges as having been the place where dismissed officers were sent during the First World War. Despite this semantic 'loss', however, there is an invariant core of form and content which effectively communicates the source author's intentions. The notion of an invariant core can be applied to a

[105] Anton Popovič, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1976), p. 11. See also Susan Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, p. 33; Jaroslav Špirk, 'Anton Popovič's Contribution to Translation Studies', *Target*, 21:1 (2009), 3-29 (p. 12).
[106] 'The Sense of a Beginning: The Dynamics of Context in Translation', *Meta*, 29 (1984), 115-127.

Peircean model of translation; each target text interpretant, through representing a progression of meaning away from the source, will still retain some semantic invariance related to the original object of the sign. Because semiosis produces interpretants deriving from both the form and content of the sign, the notion of invariant core takes both into account without necessitating a separation of the two expressive planes.

Popovič suggests that the invariant core can be identified through a process of 'semantic condensation'. Gideon Toury proposes a similar method for comparative analysis of source and target text, which involves identifying 'replacing and replaced segments'.[107] This method involves a heuristic study of the source text, in which semantic 'units' are recognised in the target text: units which can be identified as corresponding to certain semantic units in the source. From a study of this sort there will emerge a series of 'coupled segments', which, like Popovič's invariant core, retain some semantic stability, even though linguistic expression or aspects of meaning may be altered. Each case study in this thesis, therefore, will commence with a process of semantic condensation, in order to identify the invariant semantic core which has been transferred through the chain of semiosis between source and target text. Due to the heterogeneous nature of medieval translation and *réécriture* practice, this will be less formulaic than Toury suggests, relying instead on the textual context to dictate the exact procedure. Nevertheless, once invariance is ascertained, its semiotic development can be examined.

The Invariant Core and Semiosis

This study of translation and *réécriture* in the Merlin corpus will therefore integrate the notion of semantic invariance into Peirce's concept of semiosis, proceeding in the following manner. As previously mentioned, the transfer of invariant meaning through

[107] *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), p. 89.

a process of translation as semiosis *develops* this meaning in some way. Because medieval translation and *réécriture* use discourse as a method of reconstructing signification, any rendering of this invariant semantic core in a new linguistic and textual context will elaborate it to some extent, due to the accumulation of connotations gathered through the chain of semiosis. In other words, when an invariant core is identified through a process of semantic condensation, it must necessarily be extracted from its textual surroundings. It becomes an extra-linguistic, objective content which belongs to neither text. This is a necessary first stage in the proposed analysis. The second stage, therefore, involves studying the ways in which this invariant core signifies within the context of each text.

In order to achieve this, we may regard the invariant core as a triadic Peircean sign. For the translator, or *réécrivain*, this aspect of the text's meaning must have acted as a Peircean representamen (the signifier, we remember, in Saussurean terms), signifying an object (or concept). This will have produced, for the translator, an interpretant, leading to a process of semiosis of which the corresponding version of this invariant core in the target text represents a final interpretant. The object is still the same, yet the invariant semantic core will represent something slightly different in each text, in that it corresponds to a different set of interpretants. Semiosis such as this can take place on various semantic levels; the invariant core-sign may be found in the content of an individual word, or a sentence (as is the case with close translation), a motif, a character, or an episode (as is the case with inter- or intralingual *réécriture*). We may even consider the invariant semantic core of a whole text, or indeed of a whole tradition, as a sign with varying interpretants. To use as an example a large-scale reinterpretation such as this, we can regard the seme ‘prophecy’ as the invariant semantic core of 'Merlin' in translation between the French and Italian traditions. In both traditions, Merlin's prophetic gifts are attributed to him by the devil; he employs his talents, however, in the public interest. Though these aspects remain invariant, we can identify a

progression of the idea of prophecy along a chain of semiosis (represented by textual transmission and tradition, in this case), through which the Italian Merlin can be regarded as an *interpretant* of the French. Merlin's use of his prophetic gifts for the public benefit, in the French tradition, takes place in an entirely fictional context; in each French text, Merlin's prophecies are employed in the service of Arthur and his court. In the Italian tradition, the idea of using prophecy in a public sphere translates from a fictional to a real-world context, using contemporary Italian politics as the subject of Merlin's vaticinations. The development from a fictional Arthurian context to a real-world context can therefore be recognised as a semiotic chain of interpretation, in which Italy's political turmoil and literary taste in prophetic writings can be seen as intermediary interpretants.

The difference, therefore, between the invariant core as an extra-contextual piece of semantic information and the invariant core functioning as a triadic sign (related to both an object and an interpretant) is defined by the demands of a textual context. A sign gathering interpretants through semiosis reaches a final interpretant which in some way becomes influenced by the textual situation in which it finds itself; in this way, Merlin's association with prophecy becomes political in an Italian context, because prophecy as a literary form was already associated with political propaganda. The same phenomenon occurs on a smaller scale, when we consider signs such as words, phrases, motifs, etc. We can regard the tension between the invariant core as it appears both within and outside of context in terms of Jan Mukařovský 's theory of semantic dynamics.[108] In his article 'The Semantic Dynamics of Context', he makes the distinction between static and dynamic units on a lexical level. A word, existing independently of any context or utterance, represents a 'static' unit; it suggests at once all the possible meanings it could have in all possible contexts. The static unit is semantically 'open':

[108] 'The Semantic Dynamics of Context' in *On Poetic Language*, ed. by John Burband and Peter Steiner (Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press, 1976), pp. 50-60.

> The semantic staticness of a word lies in the fact that its meaning is given to us at once and entirely at the moment that it is pronounced.[109]

Conversely, when the same word is used in an utterance, it becomes a 'dynamic' unit. From the moment the word is heard/read, its meaning gradually emerges through a gradually emerging context. The context of the utterance narrows down the possible meanings of the unit; however, its sense does not become definitive until the utterance has ended, because as long as the utterance 'flows', its context is still open, subjecting the word to possible changes in meaning:

> The utterance is, therefore, a semantic stream which pulls individual words into its continuous flux, depriving them of a considerable part of their independence of reference and meaning', i.e., discounting redundant meanings in order to close in on the one which most fits the context.[110]

The unit is, therefore, dynamic; its meaning is not fixed, but potential, suggesting meanings which may be subject to alteration by additional contextual information. The static unit 'acquires an immediate relation to reality only in a context';[111] nevertheless, it still retains a reciprocal relationship to its dynamic forms, by bringing a range of associations and connotations (possible interpretants, we might say) to its use in context.[112] The context of a sign, therefore, is an essential component in its significance. As Mukařovský underlines:

> Not only is a word, in some cases a lexicalized (i.e. semantically arrested and perfectly unified) phrase word, a static unit, but even the smallest unit of content, i.e. a motif, can

[109],Ibid., p. 50.
[110] Ibid., p. 50.
[111] 'The Semantic Dynamics of Context'
[112] ibid., p. 51; see also Paul Samuel di Virgilio, 'The Sense of a Beginning', p.120.

> be a static unit. On the other hand, not only is an entire utterance a dynamic unit, but a sentence, a paragraph, etc., are dynamic units as well.[113]

In this way, larger semantic units (episodes, motifs, characters, etc) all have a potential set of meanings in their static form, which becomes actualised through use in a context. An invariant core of semantic content, therefore, can also function both statically and dynamically; when carried over to a target text, it is extracted from its source text context and placed in a new one; though elements of its semantic content may remain stable, its *semiotic* significance will be adapted to fit the reinterpreted context. It becomes a dynamic unit, expressing a number of potential interpretants. In reference to the above example, the invariant core 'prophecy', in its static, a-contextual sense, evokes a number of potential interpretants; Biblical prophets, classical oracles, contemporary figures associated with prophecy (such as Joachim di Fiore), false prophecy, political prophecy, etc, each one producing its own set of associated interpretants. When Merlin's prophecies are placed in a particular context, however—that of present day Italy—, then interpretants associated with both politics and eschatology are evoked, due to the popularity in fictional prophecy of such topics, as a form of literary expression popular at the time. Though these interpreted forms differ from the use of prophecy in the French Merlin tradition, 'prophecy' as an invariant semantic core can still be identified as a stable content, which is subject to contextual variation.

The next stage of the analytic method that I shall follow in this thesis, therefore, will involve studying instances of the invariant semantic content in context, identifying the way in which the concepts attached to the invariant core have progressed down the semiosic chain. We may, in certain cases, identify what I will call *contextual interpretants*: the semiotic adaptation which allows the content of the invariant core to be fitted to a new context.

---

[113] ibid., p. 51.

This thesis, then, will approach each case-study by first identifying an invariant core of meaning, and secondly, by regarding that invariant core as a triadic Peircean sign. This will allow us to identify the variant interpretants which have been produced through the process of interpretation. These interpretants may be simple or complex; they may evoke a single idea, or a whole network of ideas and discourses. The invariant material of the Merlin corpus will thus be studied as a product of its context; not just the context of the immediate text, but also the socio-cultural context which allows such interpretant connections to be forged. We shall follow Merlin through a number of places, times, discourses and thought-patterns, charting his progress through medieval textuality; and, more broadly, following the progress of medieval translation and *réécriture* itself.

Chapter 2:

The Translation of Merlin's Conception from The Prose Version of Robert de Boron's *Merlin* to Paulino Pieri's *Storia di Merlino*

Medieval translation, as we have established, is characterised by a development of signification through the reinterpretation of discourse. Source language signs are not rendered with a target language equivalent; instead, the translator reconfigures meaning through a process which we have associated with Peirce's semiosis, in which signs are interpreted and replaced by other signs, with each interpretant sign bringing an added dimension of clarity and connotation. Without any sense of responsibility to reproduce the source author's meaning, medieval translators then tend to rely heavily on their own interpretants, recreating the text's significance through the meanings and connotations accumulated through a chain of semiotic interpretation. The first case-study of this thesis will examine the products of such a process through an analysis of Paulino Pieri's translation of certain parts of the prose version of Robert de Boron's *Merlin*. Composed roughly a century later than the original French prose rendering, Pieri's translation into the Florentine vernacular provides a particularly lucid example of the combined processes of rewriting, editing and compilation which characterise medieval inter-vernacular translation. In particular, Pieri's version of the story of Merlin's birth demonstrates a process whereby an invariant core of meaning is developed and adapted to conform to the particular contextual interpretants of the translation as a whole, filtering the source text's signs through a series of culturally determined intermediary interpretants. The discourse of the prose *Merlin* is reconstructed rather than reproduced, consciously reinterpreted through a chain of associations identified with Merlin and his cultural status in northern Italy in the fourteenth century.

Before commencing an investigation of the translation itself, this chapter will begin by introducing both the source text and translation, the details of their composition and their relationship to each other. Robert de Boron's *Merlin* was originally composed in verse around 1200, as part of the author's Grail Trilogy. This series of narratives documents the origins of the grail, which is brought to Britain from the Holy Land at the time of Christ's passion (the *Estoire del Saint Graal*), through the birth and reign of Arthur, to the grail quest (the Didot *Perceval*). *Merlin*, the second instalment of the Trilogy, survives in only one verse fragment;[1] however, the full text has survived in a prose translation, dated at between 1205 and 1210. It is thought that Robert was not personally responsible for the prose version; nevertheless, the *Merlin en prose* is still generally acknowledged as deriving from his work. [2] This prose text later became assimilated into the Vulgate Cycle as part of the lengthy *Estoire de Merlin* (see Chapter 3), somewhere between 1215 and 1230. As part of the Cycle, the *Merlin* gained enormous popularity, surviving in over 50 manuscripts.[3]

The narrative begins with the birth of Merlin, who is conceived by a devil, yet saved by God through his mother's repentance. Endowed with prophetic and magical powers, Merlin shapes the course of Arthurian history by creating the Round Table, arranging the conception of Arthur, ensuring his coronation and preparing for the grail quest. In the *Estoire*—that is, the Vulgate Cycle continuation— Merlin would later become Arthur's royal advisor; in the *Merlin*, however, he spends most of his time in the forests of Northumberland, appearing sporadically and in different disguises to give advice to the kings of Britain. The trilogy itself is highly religious, and the *Merlin* is no

[1] Paris, BNF fr. 20047. For a study of the translation from verse to prose, see Alexandre Micha, *Étude sur le «Merlin» de Robert de Boron, roman du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), pp. 59-78.
[2] Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 48; Keith Busby, Rupert T. Pickens, and Andrea L. Williams, 'Perceval and the Grail: the Continuations, Robert de Boron and *Perlesvaus*', in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. by Glynn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 215-273.
[3] Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 48; for the list of manuscripts, see Alexandre Micha, 'Les manuscrits du «Merlin en prose» de R. de Boron' *Romania*, 78 (1957), 78-94 and 145-174; also by the same author, *Merlin: roman du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), pp. xiv-xix.

different; Paul Zumthor has called it 'une œuvre théologique, sous forme romanesque'.[4] As the *primum mobile* behind Arthur's reign, Merlin's redemption at birth provides a pivotal moment in the trilogy. The saved Antichrist represents not only God's power over the devil, but also ensures the moral legitimacy of Arthur and the Round Table; Merlin thus provides the link between secular Arthurian society and the religious Grail.[5] Many critics have recognised Robert's version of the story as the first to present Merlin as a Christian figure, whose powers derive directly from God, rather than the non-religious supernatural.[6] According to Stephen Knight, Robert's reinterpretation of Merlin creates 'a figure who can act as a major interpreter of God's plan for the world—so giving Merlin a new and extensive kind of knowledge and proximity to a far-reaching range of Christian power'.[7]

A portion of the *Merlin en prose* (up to the story of Vortigern's tower)[8] is translated and incorporated into the Florentine *Storia di Merlino*; this latter translation will be the subject of our first case-study. The *Storia* is the oldest Italian vernacular translation of the French Merlin material, and, though relatively obscure to modern readers, and even to modern scholarship, has been identified as one of the most comprehensive Arthurian texts in the Tuscan language (alongside the *Tavola Ritonda* and the *Tristano Riccardiano*).[9] It survives only in one fragmentary manuscript from the

---

[4] *Merlin le prophète : un thème de la littérature polémique, de l'historiographie et des romans* (Lausanne: Payot, 1943), p. 132.

[5] Christine Ferlampin-Acher, 'Le *Merlin* de Robert de Boron: Roman des origines et origines du roman', in *Fils sans père: études sur le Merlin de Robert de Boron*, ed. by Denis Hüe (Orléans: Paradigme, 2000), pp. 5-10 (pp. 7-8).

[6] In Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini*, Merlin's prophetic powers come as a result of madness; in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, they are attributed to a devil, but the truth of this is never confirmed. See Knight, *Power and Knowledge*, pp. 43-81.

[7] Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 50. For more perspectives upon the *Merlin en prose*, see Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Nelly Andrieux-Reix, *Le Merlin en prose: fondations du récit arthurien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001); Peter Ihring, 'Merlin und die literarische Sinnbildung. Zur erzählstrukturellen Funktion prophetischer Rede in der Artusdichtung zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance' in *Erzählstrukturen der Artusliteratur: Forschungsgeschichte und neue Ansätze*, ed. by Friedrich Wolfzeitel and Peter Ihring (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), pp. 47-65; Carol. E Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance,* (London: Garland, 1988).

[8] Covering roughly pages 571-649 in the Pleiade edition of *Merlin.*

[9] Daniela Delcorno Branca, *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia,* p. 89; also by the same author 'Appunti sui romanzi di Merlino in Italia fra Tre e Quattrocento', *Schede umanistiche*, 1 (1993), 5-30; Mauro Cursietti (ed.), *Paulino Pieri, La Storia di Merlino. Edizione Critica a cura di Mauro Cursietti* (Rome: Zauli, 1997), p. ix.

fifteenth century, which is mutilated at both the beginning and the end.[10] The translator names himself as Paulino Pieri, identified by Ireno Sanesi with a chronicler of the same name living in Florence during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[11] The *Storia* itself has been dated to between 1324 and 1330.[12]

If our translator was indeed Pieri the chronicler, then his translation of the Merlin material certainly reflects his interest in historical and political writing. Robert's *Merlin* is translated and placed as an introduction to the later French-language Italian text, the *Prophecies de Merlin*, written in Venice around 1279. The *Prophecies* (which will be studied in more detail in Chapter 5) represents a collection of highly politicised prophecies delivered by Merlin, concerning both Arthurian subjects, and also events from the recent history of northern Italy. The prophecies themselves take a polemical stance, speaking out in opposition to the Holy Roman emperors and their military campaigns on the Italian peninsula (during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries). Politically, the text can therefore be identified with a Guelf ideology, siding with supporters of the pope over the emperor.[13] Merlin in the *Prophecies* is not so much a religious figure, as in Robert's text, but instead a social crusader; alongside his political prophecies, he uses his omniscient powers to bring justice to ordinary people who are cheated by usurers, corrupt judges, and simonist clergymen. Pieri's translation reorganises and condenses the *Prophecies* material, but retains the notion of a political, moral Merlin; not moral in Robert's religious sense, but more concerned with social order and justice. The translation of the Robert de Boron material is imaginatively rendered; the story of Merlin's birth is heavily abbreviated, and can perhaps be regarded as scene-setting. The character of Merlin, his parentage and background are

[10] Codex pl LXXXIX, inf. 65 in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence; see Oriana Visani, 'I testi italiani dell'*Historia di Merlino*: prime osservazioni sulla tradizione', *Schede umanistiche*, 1 (1994), 17-62.
[11] Pieri the chronicler wrote *Cronica delle cose d'Italia dall'anno 1080 all'anno 1305*, last edited by A. F. Adami in Rome, 1755. Ireno Sanesi (ed.), *La Storia di Merlino di Paolino Pieri* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano di Arte grafiche, 1898), pp. xlvi-xlvi; also Edmund G. Gardner, *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature* (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), p. 191; Cursietti estimates that Pieri was born around 1270, *La Storia di Merlino*, p. xv.
[12] Cursietti, *La Storia di Merlino*, pp. xv-xvi.
[13] Cursietti, *La Storia di Merlino*, p. xv.

introduced, before the real business of his political prophecies is approached. In other parts, however, Pieri amplifies detail; for example, Robert's narration of the trial of Merlin's mother for having a child outside of marriage is told more fully, and the character of the town judge is given greater importance and more developed characterisation. Rather than living the life of the wild-man prophet, as does Robert's Merlin, Pieri's Merlin is legitimated by the Church; as a child, he prophesies from the town's cathedral, under the tutelage of the local Bishop. Such details give Pieri's translation a more naturalistic, even 'acculturated' tone; elements of Arthurian fantasy are minimised, whilst everyday institutions and occupations, which would have been familiar to his readers, are explored in more detail.[14]

This chapter will analyse the story of Merlin's conception, documenting the interpretative development from the French source to the Italian vernacular translation. Robert de Boron's version of this narrative represents an interpretant of the conception story in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. In Geoffrey's text, Merlin's mother is interrogated by Vortigern as to why Merlin has no father; she responds that her son was fathered by a mysterious man whose identity she did now know, but who would suddenly appear to her in her room and vanish into thin air. A wise man is consulted as to the credibility of the tale, and he identifies the young man as a possible incubus, a variety of devil which has the power to impregnate women:

> 'Luna subest soli distantque loco; locus ille
> Demonibus datus est, qui sumpta sepe virili
> Forma decipiunt fatuas gravidantque puellas
> Huius forte fuit pueri pater incubo talis.'[15]

[14] Jane H. M. Taylor, 'The Significance of the Insignificant'; see the introduction, p. 12.
[15] ll. 476-479; *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth V: The Gesta Regum Britannie*, ed. and trans. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), p. 142. Stephen Knight suggests that the identity of Merlin's father as a devil is left deliberately ambiguous by Geoffrey, because it is voiced by one of Vortigern's incompetent advisers. The 'wise man' who interprets the mother's story already has a proven track record for misinterpretation, by wrongly suggesting that mixing Merlin's blood with the foundations of Vortigern's tower will prevent it from collapsing. Therefore, his comments about Merlin's conception are without authority, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 25.

Robert de Boron amplifies and interprets this narrative through what Paul Zumthor calls 'un travail d'exégèse',[16] converting the story of the incubus into a didactic tale of diabolic persecution and sin. Angered by Christ's harrowing of Hell, Satan and his minions decide to counteract the power of Christian belief on earth, by sending their own prophet to preach against the teachings of the church. The child of course, will be Merlin, who is endowed with the devil's own knowledge of all things past and present, so that he may better deceive Christians into believing his words. Merlin, as we know, will actually be redeemed by his baptism, and redirected towards a Christian duty. Returning to the story of Merlin's conception, one of the devils claims he is already involved with a woman who, through her sins, has been acting as his accomplice. The woman is married to a rich man, who has three daughters and a young son. To begin with, the devil persecutes the woman's husband, killing his livestock, horses, and son. The woman then also hangs herself, at the devil's instigation. As a result, the man takes ill and dies. The devil then attacks the man's daughters, two of whom he succeeds in tempting to commit fornication. The eldest daughter is tried and executed for adultery, whereas the youngest becomes a prostitute. This leaves just one of the man's daughters, who resists the devil's attempts to make her sin by regularly confessing to her priest and mentor, Blaise. Nevertheless, when her prostitute sister returns home one day with a gang of men who beat her and accuse her of having an affair with Blaise, the girl is so distraught that she forgets to make the sign of the cross before she goes to bed, a method recommended by the priest for keeping the devil at bay during the night. This oversight allows the devil to sleep with her, conceiving Merlin.

Pieri's translation of this section of the story, though making significant alterations to the details, retains the basic outline of the narrative. His translation strategy here generally involves alternation between reduction and alteration, condensing certain parts (such as the devils' dialogue at the opening of the text) and altering details in other areas; in, for instance, the story of the mother's death, and the youngest sister's seduction (see below). Pieri also gives names to the characters, who, in

[16] *Merlin le Prophète,* p. 132.

the French text, are mostly anonymous, calling Merlin's mother Marinaia, the town judge, Messer Matteo, and Merlin's mother's servants, Liabella and Bersabè. These names, which belong more to contemporary Florence than to Arthurian fantasy, contribute to the more domestic feel of the translation, in which ordinary people are as important to the narrative as knights and kings.[17] Interpreting and reconstructing the text's discourse, therefore, Pieri retains the basic structure of the narrative of Merlin's conception as an invariant core of meaning. The same sequence of events is presented —that is, the persecution of Merlin's family by a devil, resulting in his mother's failure to make the sign of the cross and subsequent rape—, meaning that both source and translation can be semantically condensed to a common narrative framework, whereby each family member is individually targeted by the devil, leading to their death or moral disgrace. The meaning of this sequence of events, however, produces variant semiotic functions within each text. If we consider the invariant narrative structure as a sign, in the Peircean sense, Pieri's translation represents the product of a semiosic chain, which imports a variety of interpretants leading the signifying function of the story in a direction separate from that pursued by Robert de Boron. It is these variant interpretants, and the intermediary signs which produce them, that this chapter will attempt to uncover, in order to demonstrate the adaptive and receptive processes at work in medieval inter-vernacular translation.

Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, originally intended as part of his Grail trilogy, is written 'avec un perpétuel souci de moraliser'.[18] His version of Merlin's conception is no different, focusing heavily on sin, confession, and the devil's continuous assault upon human souls. Merlin's mother is innocent and virtuous, but the devil is only able to have sex with her once she has committed a sin. Her forgetting to make the sign of the cross does not simply represent neglect in performing a protective gesture; it is an outward symbol of an inner vice, a sinful wavering in her faith which may be characterised through the medieval notion of *desperatio*. In fact, her whole family story

[17] Only Merlin's grandfather, called Rosamor, is given a name which appears to be invented. It is highly unlikely that the name Bersabè (Bathsheba) is intended as a reference to the Biblical character, due to the relatively minor role she plays as Merlin's mother's midwife.
[18] Zumthor, *Merlin le Prophète*, p. 131.

represents a de-individualised network of sins, all of which centre around *desperatio* as an umbrella concept. This moral and existential despair, which causes the subject to lose all hope of salvation in this life and the next, is highly significant for Robert's interpretant of the story of Merlin's conception, which, as we will see, produces variant interpretants in Pieri's Italian translation.

Desperatio in the Middle Ages represented a sinful state, in which an individual loses hope in the possibility that God will pardon their sins, and therefore, fears that they will never be redeemed. This implies not only a lack of faith in God's capacity for mercy, one of the basic tenets of Christian faith, but also a belief that evil is more powerful than good, denying God's power to overcome the strength of sin, and therefore, the very basis for Christ's sacrifice.[19] Robert Grosseteste enumerates the following possible causes of *desperatio*:

> Desperant enim homines multis de causis diffidendo de posse Dei, cum scilicet opinantur Deum non posse tanta et tot peccata dimittere; alii, quod non sit tam misericors qui, etsi possit, non velit tanta dimittere; alii propter rigorem iustitiae Dei, qui ponunt ipsum ita rigidum esse in iustitia, quod nihil velit dimittere de poena debita. alii autem a se ipsis trahunt causam desperationis, quia quidam opinantur, quod non possint mereri veniam prae multitudine et magnitudine peccatorum et ita desperant.[20]

Thomas Aquinas and Gregory the Great also attribute the onset of despair to immoderate and excessive guilt, leading the subject to doubt whether their sins deserve to be pardoned.[21] An individual suffering from *desperatio* therefore feels themselves to be irrevocably alienated from God's compassion; according to Arieh Sachs:

---

[19] For example, Pseudo Augustine, *De vera et falsa poenitentia,* ed. J. P. Migne, PL 40, pp. 1116-1118; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, qu. 20, ed. Migne, vol. 3, p. 167; See also George Mora, 'Mental Disturbances and Unusual Mental States, and Their Interpretation during the Middle Ages', in *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology*, ed. by Edwin R. Wallace IV and John Gach (Springer: New York, 2008), pp. 199-226 (p. 220); Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), (vol. 2, pp. 376-377); Arieh Sachs, 'Religious Despair in Mediaeval Literature and Art', *Mediaeval Studies*, 26 (1964), 231-256 (p. 231); Susan Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18-59 (p. 20).

[20] *Deus est*, II, cap. A2, ed. by Siegfried Wenzel, 'Robert Grosseteste's Treatise on Confession, *Deus Est*', *Franciscan Studies*, 30 (1970), 218-293 (p. 260).

[21] Gregory, *Moralia in Job*, III, 21, PL XXV, 609-610; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplementum tertiae partis, qu. 4, art. 2, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 4, p. 929-930.

> The essence of religious despair is thus the personal experience of a contradiction between the deity and the finite spirit, an antagonism between the infinite and the finite will.[22]

Despair was considered particularly disturbing to the proper workings of confession. Even if an individual truly regrets their sin, a lack of real faith in God's mercy would mean that they are unable to receive it.[23] As a result, it represents 'a disruptor of the *spes* enacted ecclesiologically through the sacrament of Penance'.[24] *Desperatio*, then, is a blasphemous state, in which the very foundations of Christian belief—forgiveness and salvation— are rejected. For this reason, *desperatio* was considered to be a particular favourite of the Devil in his unending attempts to corrupt the souls of humanity. Just as the Devil first sinned in his rejection of God's authority, he now attempts to make man reject the mercy God has offered him, tempting him to defy his own role in the cosmos by discarding his faith in divine redemption.[25] In Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, the devils who plan to conceive Merlin as an Antichrist-prophet do so with the aim of counteracting the spread of religious belief on earth; they intend instead to disseminate 'nos sens et nos proeces et nos afaires'[26]. It is fitting, therefore, that the devil who persecutes Merlin's mother's family should operate through *desperatio*, the sin that goes to the very core of Christian doctrine and thus guarantees the sufferer a place in Hell.

Another reason for the belief that *desperatio* is a particularly serious vice is the assumption that it can lead to any number of other sins. If the individual despairs of their own salvation, then Christian moral guidelines lose all meaning. The dichotomy between virtue and vice is no longer relevant to an individual who does not believe in eternal rewards for a moral life; therefore, despair gives the subject no reason to avoid further sin.[27] Hence the identification of *desperatio* with a network of sins thought to be provoked by an initial feeling of religious despair. In particular, *desperatio* was thought

---

[22] Sachs, 'Religious Despair', p. 231.
[23] Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages,*, vol. 2, pp. 377-378.
[24] Britt Mize, 'Working with the Enemy: The Harmonizing Tradition and The New Utility of Judas Iscariot in Thirteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 1 (2010), 68-110 (p. 94).
[25] ibid., p. 232; Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God', 35.
[26] *Merlin*, p. 574.
[27] Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 379-380; Sachs, 'Religious Despair', p. 236.

to lead to both lust and *accidia*, a sin which, in the context of the Seven Deadly Sins, later became developed and incorporated into the idea of sloth; *accidia* was characterised by a sort of physical despair whereby the sinner begins to neglect their spiritual duties.[28] Worst of all, however, was the notion that *desperatio* was a possible cause for suicide. Though the connection between the two is rarely made in rationalist theology (indeed, why would anyone who is convinced they are going to Hell want to speed up the process?),[29] *desperatio* and suicide become associated through artistic tradition, beginning around the twelfth century, in which the act of self-murder became a tangible iconographic signifier for the abstract sin of *desperatio*.[30] Despair thus later came to be associated with the figure of Judas, who also began in the fourteenth century to be represented as a visual sign for the loss of all hope of forgiveness.[31] The use of suicide as an iconographic concretisation for despair perhaps also owes something to a popular conflation of the notion of religious despair (with which suicide would be logically incompatible) with a more realistic despair of one's own life, or of the world; Murray notes that the term *desperatio* was often used as a euphemism for suicide, referring to actual cases in which religious despair was unlikely to have been a motivation.[32] Finally, despair and anger also came to be closely associated; as we shall see, these two sins are particularly connected in Robert's version of the conception of Merlin. *Ira*, like *desperatio*, represents an immoderate and careless excess of emotion; both are opposed to *Patientia* in this sense, which, it has been suggested, has led to a transfer of characteristics between the two.[33] In Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, it is Ira who kills herself, thus strengthening the association through the intermediary iconography of suicide.[34]

---

[28] Mora, 'Mental Disturbances', p. 220.
[29] Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 379.
[30] Émile Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1908, repr. 1922), pp. 334-336 ; Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God', p. 56.
[31] Ron M. Brown, *The Art of Suicide* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 50; Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God', pp. 55-56.
[32] *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 382.
[33] Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God', p. 56.
[34] *Psychomachia*, ll. 145-154 ed. by H. J Thomas (London: Heineman, 1949-1953, repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 288; Sachs, 'Religious Despair', p. 239 ; Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God', p. 56.

It is a combination of these sins, *ira* and *desperatio,* which the devil provokes in the father of Merlin's mother in the French prose *Merlin*. The man's patience is tested by the devil's assault, in which he tries to 'engingnier' the father by inducing him to sin. His wife tells the devil that 'il se courecera se tu prens les soies choses', [35] identifying a moral weakness which may be exploited in his attachment to material possessions. The devil kills the man's livestock, and seeing that the man 'fu courecié pour si poi', he realises that 'il pooit grant damage faire'.[36] He then goes on to kill the man's ten horses, causing his anger to increase; saying 'une fole parole que sa grant ire li fist dire',[37] the man declares that he will give whatever else he has to the devil. Not only is this curse a product of his anger, or more properly, his lack of *patientia* in the face of misfortune, but also expresses the nihilistic sentiments associated with despair. The devil, of course, takes his words literally:

> Quant li diables sot qu'il avoit cel don fait, si en fu molt liés et molt li courut sus pour greignor damage faire, si qu'il ne laissa nisune de ses bestes.[38]

The father's misfortunes, therefore, are directly linked to his psychological state; the more excessive his anger, the more power the devil has to test his patience, knowing that 'se coreceroit, si l'avroit plus a sa volenté'.[39] Finally, the man's anger turns to despair, and he isolates himself from all company. Seeing this, the devil 'sot bien qu'il feroit de lui toute sa volenté';[40] he then goes on to kill the man's young son. This causes the man's emotional despair to turn to religious *desperatio*:

> Et quant li peres oï qu'il ot perdu son fil, si se desespera et meserra molt de sa creance.[41]

---

[35] *Merlin*, p. 575.
[36] ibid.
[37] *Merlin*, p. 576.
[38] *Merlin*, p. 576.
[39] ibid.
[40] ibid.
[41] ibid.

Next, the devil causes the man's wife, and his own collaborator, to hang herself. The man is so upset that he falls ill and dies. This story, in effect, provides an antithetical parallel to that of the Biblical figure of Job, who suffers a similar series of torments at the hands of the devil as a test of his faith.[42] In the book of Job, the devil also suggests to God that Job may become angry with Him if he loses his possessions:

> sed extende paululum manum tuam et tange cuncta quae possidet nisi in facie tua benedixerit tibi.[43]

Job also loses his children, and is afflicted by an illness, like the man in Robert's text. Nevertheless, where Job represents a model of *patientia* in the face of religious adversity, the father of Merlin's mother stands for those sins which are its opposites: *ira* and *desperatio*. His inability to detach himself from his worldly possessions is the initial vice which invites the devil to persecute him further.

The devil's next attack is directed towards the man's eldest daughter. He sends 'un baceler qui molt ouvroit a sa volenté'[44] to seduce the girl, then allows their relationship to be exposed. She is convicted of having sex outside of marriage, which, Robert tells us, was at the time punishable by death for any woman who was not a prostitute; she is tried and executed by being buried alive. Her sin—in this case, lust—also falls within the conceptual limits of *desperatio*, being one sin in particular which is thought to be provoked in a person despairing of their faith. As mentioned above, loss of faith implies disregard for the moral standards set by Christian teaching, leading to a hedonistic attitude; on the other hand, Thomas Aquinas would later argue that it is *luxuria* which leads to *desperatio*, causing the individual to become too attached to the pleasures of this life and care less about those of the next:

> Ad hoc autem quod bona spiritualia non sapiunt nobis quasi bona, vel non videantur nobis magna bona, praecipue perducimur per hoc quod affectus noster est infectus amore delectationum corporalium, inter quas praecipuae sunt delectationes venereae:

[42] Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 139.
[43] Job, 1:11.
[44] *Merlin*, p. 577.

> nam ex affectu harum delectationum contingit quod homo fastidit bona spiritualia, et non sperat ea quasi quaedam bona ardua. Et secundum hoc desperatio causatur ex luxuria.[45]

Despair and lust thus have a symbiotic relationship, both thought in some way to influence the other. Therefore, the eldest daughter's suffering is caused by the same vice as is her father's; an immoderate attachment to material possessions and love, which the devil exploits in his attempts to counteract the redemptive power of faith.

The deaths of the father and the eldest sister, as a result of diabolic persecution, provide an invariant semantic core in the comparison between the French original and the Italian translation. This stable narrative sequence, when considered as a Peircean sign, accumulates intermediary interpretants, through the process of translation, which influence Pieri's final interpretant of the invariant narrative structure. The sins associated with religious despair, which ultimately lead to the demise of the two family members, are suppressed in the Italian interpretant, giving the invariant narrative itself a different semiotic function within the translation. To begin with, Pieri abbreviates the narrative considerably. The father (now named Rosamor) is not targeted by the devil directly. Unlike in the French text, where each family member is persecuted separately and in sequence, the devil in the Italian version directs his efforts only towards Merlin's mother, here called Marinaia. The rest of the family are killed off in order to provoke despair in Marinaia; it is irrelevant whether they sin themselves. Marinaia is described as leading a 'buona vita',[46] and the devil chooses her to be Merlin's mother because she is 'gentile e di buona fama'.[47] She is acquainted with Blaise—here called Biagio— from the beginning:

> Ma ella era cristiana, e molto si consigliava e atenea al consiglio d'un buono e giusto uomo, lo quale avea nome Biagio.[48]

---

[45] *Summa theologica*, IIa IIae, qu. 20, art. 4, ed. Migne, vol. 3, p. 167.
[46] *Storia*, p. 6.
[47] *Storia*, p. 5; 'Noble, and with a good reputation' (all my trans.)
[48] *Storia*, pp. 5-6; 'But she was a Christian, and often sought and followed the advice of a good, just man called Biagio'.

When the devil attempts to 'farla adirare', using the same methods as did the devil in the French text to incite anger in the father, Marinaia responds with greater patience. When he kills the family's livestock, they are initially angered: 'per modo che'e' fece adirare il padre e lla madre e llei [Marinaia] medesima..'; however, Pieri qualifies this by adding, 'ma non tanto'. [49] Whereas the devil in the French original is only able to operate if he succeeds in angering the father, the devil in the Italian text increases his torments because he has *failed* to anger them ('Poiché questo non giovò...'). [50] In this way, the devil operates more like Satan in the story of Job, who amplifies his punishments as a result of Job's patient acceptance of his suffering. The devil's murder of the family's male child also produces an interpretant in the translation which redirects the narrative back towards its Biblical precedent; instead of one child, Rosamor has four grown up sons, something which more closely approximates Job's more numerous adult offspring. [51] As a result of all four sons dying, Rosamor commits suicide:

> E di questo ebe tanto dolore il padre che egli medesimo s'impiccò per la gola e così morì. [52]

Rosamor's suicide may represent an interpretant of the mother's death in the source text, as both involve hanging; on the other hand, it may represent an interpretant of the *desperatio* suffered by the father in the French text, where the popular iconographic connection between despair and suicide could provide an intermediary interpretant. Though Rosamor's death is clearly sinful—suicide being considered both a social and a religious evil— Pieri's interpretant develops its meaning away from the spiritual despair suffered by his French counterpart. Rosamor does not lose faith in God's salvation, but —much less seriously —despairs of his situation in this life, unlike the father in the source text who despairs of both life and religion. Pieri's interpretant of the father's

---

[49] *Storia*, p. 6; 'In such a way that he angered her father and mother, and Marinaia herself— but not very much'.
[50] *Storia*, p. 6; 'Because that didn't work'.
[51] Job 1: 18-19; Though the age of the sons is never confirmed, they are old enough to own livestock: p. 6: 'E prima percosse alle bestie di costoro, ciò è del padre e de' frategli...'; 'He [the devil] firstly attacked their livestock; that is, that of the father and the brothers'.
[52] *Storia*, p. 6 ; 'And he was so grieved by this that he hung himself by the neck, and so died'.

death, therefore, suppresses the sinful implications of religious *desperatio*, even though these are still present on a connotative level suggested by the iconographic connection between despair and suicide. The eldest daughter, executed for adultery in the French source, simply dies in the translation with no explanation, something which demonstrates a further suppression of the family's sins.[53]

Pieri's interpretant of the father and the eldest daughter's deaths, therefore, removes the moral/spiritual dimension of the French source text, focusing purely on the human drama caused by the devil's torments. Their situation is characterised by 'tante disaventure',[54] purely bad luck in comparison to the serious moral failings of the father and the daughter in Robert's text, who bring about their own ends by succumbing to the devil's temptations. Marinaia responds to these torments with Job-like patience; rather than isolating herself, as does the father in the source text, she does her best to benefit from the comfort provided by her family and Biagio:

> Di questo ebbe tanto dolore <Marinaia> [...] ma continuamente si confortava il meglio che poteva colla madre e colle sirocchie. E quello Biagio veniva molto spesso a lloro e confortavagli il meglio ch'e' sapea...[55]

Where the source text provides an antithesis to the Job story—with Merlin's mother's father representing an 'anti-Job'— the translation-interpretant redirects the narrative back towards an evocation of Job's exemplary patience. By removing the sinful associations of *desperatio* (or, in the case of Rosamor, deferring them to a connotative level), Pieri develops the signification of this invariant narrative sequence into an example of Marinaia's resistance to sin.

Pieri's suppression of the family's sins is confirmed by his interpretant of the death of the mother (Merlin's grandmother), whose demise also provides an invariant core of narrative, which is subject to varying interpretants in both the French and the

---

[53] *Storia*, p. 6: 'E così rimasono quelle III sorelle. E in poco tempo l'una si morì, e fu la maggiore di tempo' ; 'And so there were just these three sisters left. And after a short time, one of them died. And she was the eldest sister.'
[54] *Storia*, p. 6; 'So many mishaps'.
[55] *Storia*, p. 6; 'Marinaia was so distraught by all this [...] but nevertheless, continued to console herself as best she could with her mother and her sisters. And Biagio came to see them often, and comforted them as best he could.'

Italian versions. As we have seen, the mother is collaborating with the devil in the French source text; he describes her as 'une feme qui fait a devise quanques je voel',[56] finding her 'molt a sa volenté'.[57] It is she who advises the devil as to how to 'engingnier' her husband, thus setting in motion the tragic series of events with which the family is afflicted. As part of his persecution of her husband, the devil causes her to hang herself:

> Et a la feme par qui il avoit tout ce gaaingnié fist il monter sur une huge en son celer et si mist une corde a son planchier et le lacha entour son col. Et puis descendi et se pendi et estrangla, et fu illuec estranglee et trouvee le matin.[58]

Though the devil is apparently responsible for the mother's actions ('fist il monter..'), there is no question as to her guilt. According to Alexander Murray, suggestions of demonic possession, or the phrase *diabolo instigante*, were sometimes cited in medieval records of suicide as a way of attenuating the victim's responsibility for their own death, 'to excuse the act as that of someone not quite in charge of his own will'.[59] Nevertheless, Robert's portrayal of the mother precludes any such sympathy; her knowing readiness to comply with the devil removes any suggestions of innocence that might be implied. Moreover, the manner of her death reinforces connotations of *desperatio* through the iconographic associations discussed above, and may be therefore conceptually linked to the deaths of the father and the eldest daughter. As the devil's servant, her subversive defiance of Christian faith is as serious as the loss of hope inherent in *desperatio*.

Pieri's interpretant of the mother's death, however, goes as far as to reject any connotations of sin or responsibility on her part. Not only does she have no personal involvement with the devil, but her death is recast as a tragic accident. When a mysterious draught blows the curtains aside,

---

[56] *Merlin*, p. 574.
[57] *Merlin*, p. 575.
[58] *Merlin*, p. 576.
[59] Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 317.

> La madre di costoro, volendo quello riturare, perché era ad alti salì in su un trespolo, lo quale per operazione diabolica le si travolse sotto, e cadde in terra e percosse il collo in terra, in modo che di sùbito morì sanza potere parlare.[60]

Though she still dies by breaking her neck, the fact that her death is unintended develops the meaning away from connotations of *desperatio*; she is, instead, just an unfortunate victim. By removing the ethical dimension of the mother's suicide, Pieri provides an interpretant which leaves the mother's moral integrity intact. In the French text, Merlin's mother and her one remaining sister now begin to show signs of religious despair as a result of losing their entire family; they tell Blaise that 'nous quidons que Dix nous het, si nous sousfre cest tourment a avoir'.[61] Marinaia in the Italian text, however, provides a positive interpretant of her French counterpart, finding comfort in her faith rather than questioning it:

> Questa Marinaia tuttavia si racomandava a Jesu Cristo e spesso pigliava conforto con quello Biagio con cui ella si consigliava.[62]

Pieri's interpretant of the death of the mother, therefore, serves to exemplify Marinaia's moral strength rather than the family's moral weakness. By redirecting the devil's persecution away from a negative identification with Job, and back towards a positive one, the translation represents a resignification of this narrative sequence, using it to demonstrate instead Marinaia's resistance to the devil's torments.

The devil himself, as an integral component of the narrative, can also be regarded as a semantic invariant with differing semiotic functions in each text. In fact, each text's particular interpretant of the devil and his methods corresponds significantly to the portrayal of sin and temptation in both source and translation; a brief digression on the role of the devil, therefore, will help to elucidate the network of interpretants

---

[60] *Storia*, p. 6; Their mother wanted to draw the curtains, so she climbed onto a stool because they were high up. By diabolical operation, the stool fell from under her, and she fell violently to the ground, so much so that she broke her neck and died without being able to utter a word.
[61] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[62] *Storia*, p. 6.'Nevertheless, Marinaia still entrusted herself to Jesus Christ, and often drew comfort from Biagio, from whom she continued to seek advice.

through which Pieri has developed the meaning of the story of Merlin's conception. In each interpretant of the mother's death, we can perceive variant conceptions of the devil's *modus operandi*. In the French source text, the devil works on a mental level, operating through sin; the greater the characters' moral defects, the more power he has to tempt them. His controlling influence over the mother's suicide represents a form of mind control, amounting to a sort of diabolic possession, which could even be read metaphorically as representing a medieval conception of the psychological power of sin. Pieri's interpretant of the devil, however, is only able to operate externally. His power seems to have no relationship to the characters' moral status, and his attack on the mother amounts to no more than causing a stool to fall from underneath her feet. His actions are not only less threatening, but pose no danger to the fate of the character's soul; though tragic, the death of the mother in the Italian text does not suggest, as the French text does, an eternity in Hell.

Pieri's reduction of the power of diabolic activity can also be seen elsewhere in the translation; for example, later in the text, the suicide of a priest, exposed as being the illegitimate father of the town's judge, is attributed by Robert to psychological demonic influence:

> Et ensi [the priest] s'en ala pensant hors de la ville. Et vint a une aigue et dist que mix li venist que il se noiast que li juges le feïst morir de vilainne mort. Si le mena tant diables qui oeuvres il i avoit faites que il le fist saillir en l'aigue si se noiia.[63]

His death is motivated by the devil's influence over his mind and his actions; like the mother of the family, the devil appears to control his movements ('le fist saillir'). Pieri's translated interpretant of the same priest's death also reflects his own interpretant of the mother's; he once again recasts the suicide as a tragic accident, and this time, removes the devil completely. When the priest hears from his servant that the judge is coming to see him, he fears for his life and attempts to escape on the back of his mule:

---

[63] *Merlin*, pp. 607-608.

> E llo prete, sentendosi venire drieto quello donzello, temette più: ed e' studiandoso di toccare il muletto degli sproni, e l'muletto, rinculando, non andava, anzi si levò ritto e fecene cadere il prete in terra; e nel cadere gli rimase l'un piede nella staffa. E così appiccato, tanto lo tirò nel fiume insino nel mezzo dell'acqua: e quivi affogò.[64]

The accident is almost farcical, suppressing entirely the complex psychological dimension of the devil's operations. The devil, therefore, can also be regarded as a core-sign, producing and accumulating varying interpretants through the process of translation, in accordance with the portrayal of the conception of Merlin in each text. In the French, the devil is concrete and present, preying upon anyone who, like the members of Merlin's family, displays moral weakness.[65] In this way, his character corresponds somewhat to the reifying tendencies within moral and religious life from the twelfth century onward, where religious figures and mental abstractions took on more solid, conscious forms within popular thought.[66] Devils were part of 'medieval man's ontological universe',[67] taking on anthropomorphic bodies and believed to be able to perform magic in order to tempt man to sin.[68] Nowhere were devils more real than in homiletic literature, where *exempla* related various stories of diabolic temptation similar in form to Robert's version of the story of Merlin's conception. According to Joan Young Gregg, these depictions of devils— or even the Devil himself—as spiritual predators were taken literally by medieval audiences:

> Satan and his minions were actual beings belonging to an invisible netherworld, but capable of interacting with people in their daily lives in the visible world just as the Evangelists had described in the Gospels.[69]

---

[64] *Storia*, pp. 13-14; 'And the priest, hearing the boy coming up behind him, became ever more alarmed. He kicked the mule furiously with his spurs, but the mule recoiled and would not go. Instead, it reared up, causing the priest to fall onto the ground with one of his feet still caught in the stirrup. So with the priest still hanging onto the mule in this way, it pulled him right into the deep part of the river, and here he drowned.'

[65] Alexandre Micha, *Étude sur le Merlin de Robert de Boron* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), p. 80.

[66] Claude Bremond and Jacques Le Goff, *Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental, fasc.40 ; L'exemplum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), p. 28; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 161.

[67] Edelgard DuBruck, 'The Devil and Hell in Medieval Drama', *Romania*, 100 (1979), 165-179 (p. 165).

[68] Russell, *The Devil in the Middle Ages*, p. 181.

[69] Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 25.

In this way, Satan and his devils reached an almost Manichean level of reality in the minds of lay people, representing a powerful and independent force of evil.[70] Though devils were thought to be unable to subvert the laws of nature (something which can only rightly be done by God, as creator), they could, it was believed, manipulate natural laws in order to assault humanity with illness or misfortune.[71] Robert's devil, who mercilessly persecutes Merlin's family in the source text, represents an interpretant influenced by this popular conception of a tangible devil; his attempt to 'engingnier' his victims into losing their faith recalls the tone of cautionary tales and exempla, where sin and vice are portrayed as a psychological invitation to the Devil. The narrative itself includes some motifs which also appear in recorded exempla; for example, Caesarius of Heisterbach documents a sermon story in which a devil tests the faith of a man devoted to St Thomas, which, like the story of Merlin's grandfather, presents a medieval interpretant of the Book of Job; the demon's attempts to make the man hate his favourite saint are met with patience and increased devotion.[72] The literal-mindedness of Robert's demon, which takes the father at his word when he swears he will give what he has to the Devil, can also be seen in another of Caesarius' exempla; a woman becomes possessed by a similarly literal-minded devil after her husband angrily curses her, saying 'vade diabolo'.[73] In this way, the interpretant of the devil in the French source text draws on his popular representation as a present, conscious force of evil, embodying a projection of both personal and social anxieties which medieval consciousness preferred to externalise and isolate.[74] The story of Merlin's conception in Robert's text, therefore, can be read through the moralistic filter of homiletic literature, focusing on individual morality as a gauge of diabolic activity.

---

[70] Franco Mormando, *Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 93.
[71] Russell, *The Devil in the Middle Ages*, p. 161; Mormando, *Bernardino of Siena,* p. 94.
[72] *Dialogus miraculorum*, Dist. VII, cap. LIX; ed. by Joseph Strange (Cologne: J. M. Herberle, 1851), vol. 2, p. 131 ff.
[73] ibid, Dist. V, cap. XI, vol. 1, p. 291. As Russell highlights, the idea that the devil actually carries out threats or curses in his name derives from folkloric tradition. See *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. 77.
[74] Young Gregg, *Devils, Women and Jews*, p. 26.

Pieri's interpretant of the devil, however, is much weaker in comparison. Not only is he less effectual than Robert's devil in corrupting humanity through sin, but he also represents a more vague, more abstract presence. Whereas the devil in the French text actively orchestrates a series of temptations for the family—for example, sending a man to seduce the eldest sister, or forcing the mother to commit suicide—, the devil in the Italian text simply takes advantage of situations primarily motivated by human interactions. The mother standing on a high stool was simply a handy opportunity, and the devil apparently had no direct agency in the deaths of the father and the eldest daughter. Whereas the devil in the French text sends one of his collaborators, a prostitute, to corrupt the youngest daughter (see below), in the Italian version she is instead motivated by a young man who is paying her to convince the daughter to sleep with him.[75] The devil, again, simply seizes the opportunity, yet acts in the background to human affairs. Pieri's interpretant of the devil, therefore, is less tangible, his power to influence human behaviour being limited to the external, irrespective of the moral state of his victims; his workings are described in abstract terms such as 'tanto lavoro il dimonio che...', 'come lo dimonio le 'nsegnava'[76] or 'per operazione diabolica'.[77] This interpretant of the devil may reflect the ever-decreasing presence of Satan in theological thought, which, by the end of the thirteenth-century, had filtered down into more popular literature, leading to more comic, farcical portrayals in contrast to earlier traditions (of which Robert's text is a part).[78] Through the application of reason to theology, in addition to Neoplatonic modes of thought, scholastic theologians concluded that evil can have no independent existence. In *De casu diaboli* (1085-1090), Anselm of Canterbury argues that, though we talk about evil as if it exists, it cannot be anything more than the privation of good. Good, God and existence are all synonymous; anything that is not good can therefore have no existence.[79] The Devil,

[75] *Storia*, p. 6.
[76] *Storia*, p. 7; 'The devil laboured so much that...'; '...as the demon taught her'.
[77] *Storia*, p. 7; p. 6; 'By diabolical operation...'.
[78] Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. 161.
[79] *De casu diaboli*, 10-11, *Opera Omnia*, ed. by Francis Schmitt (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1984), pp. 247-251; also *Summa contra gentiles*, 3.7; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia, qu. 48, art. 2, ed. Migne, vol. 1,

therefore, is not an independent evil principle, but entirely dependent on good. His power is completely subordinate to God's, an idea which was reinforced with the introduction, by Anselm, of what is known as satisfaction theory. Prior to Anselm, it was standard doctrine that Christ's death was like a ransom paid to the devil, who, before then, had rights over humanity because of their sins—a notion known as ransom theory. However, Anselm's *Cur deus homo* introduced the idea that the crucifixion was instead a form of compensation paid to God, leaving the Devil entirely out of the transaction.[80] This conception of the Devil as negation, powerless and insubstantial compared to God, began to find expression in vernacular culture over time; by the end of the thirteenth century, the concrete, predatory demons of earlier texts began to gradually be replaced by less threatening, more farcical characters.[81] This was especially evident in drama, where, by the thirteenth century, the Devil becomes a comic figure who is always conquered by the power of good.[82] Dante's *Inferno*, a work which is both chronologically and geographically (as well as linguistically) close to the *Storia*, also expresses this waning cultural anxiety concerning Satan.[83] The demons of Malebolge are farcical and ridiculous; they are often more comic than threatening. Moreover, they are unable to restrict the movements of Dante and Virgil, because they have no power to oppose the divine will through which the protagonists are protected.[84] Satan himself is a passive, pathetic figure; immobilised in ice and constantly weeping, his inactivity represents 'a deliberate statement about his essential lack of being'.[85] Pieri's interpretant of the devil may also reflect this negated existence; he develops the significance of

---

pp. 1019-1020; art. 5: 'Malum...est privatio boni', p. 1032. Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. p. 163; Perry C. Mason, 'The Devil and St Anselm', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 9 (1978), 1-15.

[80] *Cur Deus homo*, I, ed. Schmitt, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1; Kevin E. Miller, 'Giving the Devil his Due: St Anselm on Justice and Satisfaction', *New Blackfriars*, 78 (2007), pp. 178-186; Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, pp. 172-178.

[81] Russell, *The Devil in the Middle Ages,* p. 161.

[82] Leo Spitzer, 'The Farcical Elements in *Inferno,* Cantos XXI-XXIII', *Modern Language Notes*, 59 (1944), 83-88 (p. 87).

[83] Cursietti has suggested various Dantesque influences on the *Storia*'s stylistic and ideological composition; *La Storia di Merlino*, pp. xvi-xvii. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Pieri's interpretant of the devil was directly inspired by Dante's, it would not be beyond reason to propose that both representations manifest a collective cultural perception regarding diabolic activity.

[84] Canto XXI, 79, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1991), p. 354; Spitzer, 'The farcical elements in *Inferno*', p. 87.

[85] Russell, *The Devil in the Middle Ages*, p. 225; *Inferno,* Canto XXXIV, ed. Petrocchi, pp. 583-598; also Sachs, 'Religious Despair', p. 232.

Robert's powerful devil into that of a vague malignant force, whose power never exceeds the strength of belief. The devil is unable to harm Marinaia as a result of her patience and resistance, emphasising the power of good over the insubstantiality of evil:

> il diavolo non avea forza contro a di lei perché vivea iustamente.[86]

In this way, Pieri's interpretant of the devil conforms to his resignification of the family's persecution; operating externally, opportunistically and completely subordinate to the powers of good, the devil has no influence over the internal morality or psychology of his victims. Evil and misfortune are primarily human affairs; the devil simply lingers in the background. The translated devil thus demonstrates the power of faith in contrast to Robert's devil, whose purpose is to demonstrate of the power of sin.

Pieri's reinterpretation of the devil, then, functions as another divergent interpretant of the invariant semantic core, that is, the narrative outline of Merlin's family's diabolical torments, which takes on the interpretative status of a sign in its transition from source to target text. With his suppression of the family's sins of *desperatio*, in addition to the reduction of the devil's power to operate through sin, Pieri's interpretant of the narrative raises questions of intention to sin and free will in comparison with the French source text. Though theological thought limited the power of devils in contrast to the principle of good, it was accepted that God granted the Devil powers to test humanity. Though he cannot force a person to sin, he can provide temptations which allow humanity to exercise their free will; moral choices are therefore entirely within the power of the individual.[87] In the source text, as we have seen, the sins of the family are instigated by the devil, but not caused directly. The father, the eldest daughter and the mother are all punished because they respond badly to the devil's torments by falling into *desperatio*; though the devil is powerful and concrete, his efficacy is entirely dependent upon a sinful inner state within his victims.

---

[86] *Storia*, p. 6: 'The devil had no power over her, because she lived a good life'.
[87] Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, I, 7, 2.19, ed. Schmitt, p. 57; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, qu. 80, ed. Migne, vol. 2 pp. 621-626 ; Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. 168.

Pieri's translation provides an interpretant in which free will choices are suppressed, along with the family's sins and the devil's psychological presence. The mother and the eldest daughter are killed without any necessary sin; only Marinaia must struggle against the temptation to give up her belief. The systematic development of meaning away from the complex moral issues raised in Robert's text is reflected in Pieri's interpretant of the temptation of the youngest sister, the next family member to succumb to temptation at the devil's instigation.

In the French source, Merlin's mother manages to resist the temptation to fall into despair after the deaths of her father, mother, brother and sister; she is attentive to the teachings of Blaise, who provides her with 'bones paroles' and 'bon conseil'.[88] When the devil sees this, he is concerned: 'si l'em pesa molt et ot paour que il ne les perdist. Si se pourpensa conment il les pourroit engingnier'.[89] He sends a woman who, like the girls' mother, acts as his servant; like the mother, she is described in the same puppet-like terms: 'Icele feme prist li anemis et l'envoia a la mainsnee'.[90] This woman attempts to convince the youngest daughter to become a prostitute, arguing on behalf of the devil that adhering to piety as her sister does is a waste of her youth and her body. The prostitute's reasoning provides a dialectic parallel to the teachings of Blaise, creating an inversion of his spiritual advice in order to promote lust and enjoyment of the temporal world—sins, which, as noted above, can be seen as a form of *desperatio*, a loss of moral relativity through a loss of faith. Blaise argues for striving after spiritual happiness:

> Se vous crées bien ce que je vous enseignerai et dirai, grans biens vous en venra...[91]

> Ne vous n'aurés ja si grant besoing ne si grant oeuvre a faire, se vous vous contenés a mon conseil, que je ne vous aïde a conseiller a l'aïde de Dieu, Nostre Seigneur.[92]

---

[88] *Merlin*, p. 579.
[89] ibid.
[90] *Merlin*, p. 579.
[91] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[92] *Merlin*, pp. 578-579.

The woman, mirroring Blaise's assertion that such contentment transcends all earthly needs, uses the same formula to argue the benefits of physical happiness:

> Nous avons tel joie quant nous somes en compaignie avoec la gent que nous amons que, se nous n'avions qu'une aumosne de pain, si serienmes nous plus a aise que vous n'estes se vous avés encore encore quanqu'il a en cest siecle.[93]

She advocates an easily gained, terrestrial well-being, as opposed to the 'molt grant painne' and 'grant cure'[94] invested by the girl's older sister into her moral welfare. The prostitute, therefore, is arguing in favour of *desperatio*. In Augustine's *De conflictu vitiorum et virtutum*, the personification of *Desperatio* also suggests that an individual, if they are not to receive reward or punishment either way, may as well enjoy their existence while they can:

> Desperatio dicit, Quae et quanta commisisti, quam gravia crimina, quam numerosa delicta, et pene in melius necdum vitam mutasti, necdum conversationem utiliter correxisti! [95]

Further parallels occur between the two discourses; Blaise offers himself to the girls as a spiritual partner— 'vous en venra et serés m'amie et ma fille en Dieu'—,[96] whereas the woman encourages her to seek sexual partners: 'que vaut dont joie de femme qui n'a home?'.[97] Moreover, both make themselves available for advice at any time; Blaise tells her, 'venés souvent a moi que je ne serai gaires loing de ci a estage',[98] whereas the woman offers, 'quant vos vouroiz, vos porroiz bien a moi paller'.[99] The arguments presented by the prostitute and by Blaise create an ideological dichotomy between God and the devil, masculine and feminine, hope and despair; the youngest daughter,

---

[93] *Merlin*, p. 580.
[94] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[95] XV, PL 40, p. 1098. See also Sachs, 'Religious Despair', p. 233.
[96] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[97] *Merlin*, p. 580.
[98] *Merlin*, p. 579.
[99] This line is omitted from the source manuscript used in the Pleiade edition (Bonn, Bibliothèque universitaire, S 526), and also from BNF fr 24394, Cambridge University Library, Add. 7071. It appears in the majority of examples, however, including Micha's base MS BNF 747 (ed. Micha, Geneva: Droz, 1979, p. 31).

therefore, is presented with a well-informed choice between following the path of virtue or that of sin. She has complete free will to choose between them, because, though the devil presents her with the opportunity to sin, he may play no part in forcing her decision.[100] Weighing up the two opposing arguments, she chooses to take the prostitute's advice:

> la damoisele pensa a ce que la feme li avoit dit et regarda la nuit quant ele ala couchier son biau cors et dist: «Voirement me dist voir la prodefeme qui disoit que je estoie perdue». Et au matin, si tost com ele se leva, ne mist ele mie en oubli ce que la feme li avoit dit quar li diables l'avoit esprise.[101]

Like her father, mother and older sister, her transgression is chosen and willed by her, albeit with the devil's instigation. She goes on to commit the very same 'mauvaises oeuvres'[102] that Blaise had warned her about.

Pieri's interpretant of this episode conforms to his resignification of the deaths of the father, mother and eldest sister. Firstly, he reduces the power of the devil (in accordance with his interpretant of diabolic activity) and increases the agency of the prostitute, here reconfigured as an old woman, a 'maladetta vecchia'.[103] Although the devil acts, as he had done previously, in the background ('lavorandovi il dimonio'),[104] the temptation of the youngest daughter is motivated primarily through human activity; as noted above, it is a young man who is in love with the girl who pays the old woman to win her affections on his behalf. It is not the old woman's aim, therefore, to introduce the girl to prostitution—it is simply a way for her to sleep with the young man without being convicted of adultery, as had happened to the eldest sister in the French text. By recasting the prostitute as *vecchia*, Pieri offers an interpretant of her role which corresponds functionally to the literary figure of the malignant old woman, who teaches young, innocent girls how to exploit men by capitalising on their female charms. Relying on the assumption that a woman's continued existence beyond her childbearing

[100] Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. 168; p. 180.
[101] *Merlin*, pp. 580-581.
[102] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[103] *Storia*, p. 6.
[104] *Storia*, p. 7.

purpose made her prone to immoral behaviour, old women in literature were associated with perverse sexuality, ugliness and miseducation of the young.[105] With famous crones such as Ovid's Dipsas and Jean de Meun's Vielle perhaps providing literary prototypes, Pieri's *vecchia* develops the invariant meaning of the prostitute—the devil's mouthpiece for preaching the benefits of transient happiness— through a series of intermediary interpretants, which conflate the prostitute's actions with the more common literary function of the *vielle*. This conventional interpretant reflects connotatively back upon the younger sister herself; if the prostitute becomes the old woman, then she must occupy the role of the naive girl in comparison, imposing a further dichotomy between the old woman's malignancy and the youngest daughter's innocence. Pieri takes this moral polarisation further by replacing the rational, informed choice of the girl in the source text with an emotional manipulation on the part of the old woman. Primarily, the youngest sister does not receive religious teachings from Blaise, who only instructs Marinaia. Instantly, she is deprived of one side of the argument. The vecchia gains her trust by feigning compassion for the misfortunes of her family;

> ...si venne più volte a costoro a piagnere co[n] lloro e a mostrarsi che volea loro gran bene e d'essere molto dolente del danno loro.[106]

> E tanto la venne lodando e dicendo di queste parole [...] che le cominciò a mostrare amore e a volere bene.[107]

---

[105] Alcuin Blamires, *Women Defamed and Women Defended: an Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 21; Jessica Cooke, 'Nice Young Girls and Wicked Old Witches: the "Rightful Age" of Women in Middle English Verse' in *The Court and Cultural Diversity: Selected Papers from the Eighth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society 1995*, ed. by Evelyn Mullaney and John Thompson (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1997) pp. 219-228; Jane H.M Taylor, *The Poetry of François Villon: Text and Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 86-113.

[106] *Storia*, p. 6; 'she came to visit them [the girls] many times, to mourn with them and show them great affection and grief for their sufferings'

[107] *Storia*, p.. 6-7; And she gave her so much praise and said such words that [the younger sister] became very fond of her'.

Using subjective language, the vecchia attempts to deceive the girl into sleeping with the young man, exploiting her emotional response by telling the youngest daughter that she is the cause of his great suffering:

> le disse di questo giovane e del gran bene ch'e' le volea e delle gran pene ch'e' sostenea per lei che pressoché non se ne moriva[108]

> non facci morire quel giovane[109]

The girl is finally deluded into believing that becoming a prostitute in order to sleep with the young man is a charitable act: 'Or tanto le disse la cattiva vecchia che la fece partire da benfare'.[110] Though she will later return to her sister a corrupted 'meretrice', her initial transgression seems to lack real motivation to sin. In his *Ethica*, Abelard argues that sinning 'per ignorantiam' does not merit condemnation, since it is not freely willed by the perpetrator. He goes as far as arguing, in fact, that Christ's crucifiers were innocent of sin, because they were not aware of the implications of their act.[111] True guilt comes from consent, in which the individual knowingly chooses to offend God:

> Hunc uero consensum proprie peccatum nominamus, hoc est, culpam animae qua dampnationem meretur, uel apud deum rea statuitur. Quid est enim iste consensus nisi Dei contemptus et offensa ipsius?[112]

In the French text, the youngest daughter is fully responsible for her sin; though tempted by the devil, her decision was well-informed and actively willed. Pieri suppresses the girl's intention to sin by increasing her naivety and decreasing her knowledge of the implications. Though her becoming a prostitute is part of the

---

[108] *Storia*, p. 7; 'she told her about this young man, and how much affection he had for her, and the great pain he was suffering on her behalf, so much so that he was almost dying'.
[109] ibid; 'Do not cause this young man to die'.
[110] ibid; 'The evil old woman said so much on the matter that she made the girl go out of charity [*benfare*: to do good]'.
[111] D. E. Luscombe *Peter Abelard's Ethics: An Edition with Introduction, English Translation and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 54.
[112] ed. Luscombe, p. 4. See also Tony Hunt, 'Abelardian Ethics and Béroul's *Tristan*', *Romania*, 98 (1977), 501:540.

invariant semantic core transferred from the French, meaning that she must, in some way, commit sexual transgression, Pieri's interpretant suppresses connotations of *desperatio* by altering her motivation. Whereas the girl in the source text sins out of a careless disregard for her spiritual well-being, connoting the hedonism of religious despair, the girl in the Italian text is motivated by charity, albeit severely misdirected. As with the other members of the family, the transition of the youngest sister's transgression from source to target text resignifies the narrative outline of the episode; by limiting the sinful implications of her actions as much as possible, Pieri produces an interpretant which reduces the family's susceptibility to *desperatio* and the devil.

The final member of the family to succumb to the devil's temptations in Robert's text is Merlin's mother, who, despite her moral resistance, falls into religious despair, a sinful state which allows the devil to have sex with her and conceive Merlin. Seeing the youngest daughter finally give in to despair, Blaise gives Merlin's mother four main instructions which centre around the retention of religious hope; firstly, faith in the Trinity and the redemption of sinners, the core beliefs which epitomise *spes* over *desperatio*:

> Dont ne crois tu el Pere et el Fil et el Saint Esperit, et que ces .III. vertus soit une meïsme chose en Dieu de la Trinité et que Nostres Sires vint en terre pour sauver les pecheors qui vauroient croire el bauptesme et es autres sacremens de Sainte Eglise [...] se tu le crois issi voirement con tu le dis, ja diables ne anemis ne nule mauvaise chose ne te porra grever.[113]

Secondly, he admonishes her against *ire*, a sin which, in her father, led to despair:

> Si te proi et requier sor toutes choses que tu te gardes de chaoir en grant ire, car est la chose ou li diables repaire plus volontiers que la ou grant ire est.[114]

Finally, he tells her to make the sign of the cross each time she wakes up and goes to sleep, and warns her never to sleep in the dark. These physical gestures represent

[113] *Merlin*, p. 582.
[114] *Merlin*, p. 583.

external signifiers of his previous instructions; the sign of the cross represents faith in the Trinity, a belief which requires *spes* in the eternal. Likewise, light is conventionally associated with belief, darkness with Godlessness; in the Neoplatonic schemes through which evil represents a privation of good, darkness is associated with nonexistence, and with the devil. Blaise's last instruction advocates confession to prevent the onset of *desperatio*; requiring as it does, hope in the possibility of God's mercy, penitence was regarded as the 'antidote to despair':[115]

> Et pour iceste chose te dois tu garder de tous mesfais et de tous les encombriers qui te venrront et de toutes les ires que tu auras. Ma douce amie chiere, si venés a moi et le me dites tout ensi com il t'avendra et te tend coupable a Nostre Seigneur.[116]

Despite Blaise's warnings, however, Merlin's mother becomes 'iree' when the devil sends her younger sister to her house with a group of men; they make accusations about her relationship with Blaise, and then attack her physically. When she is finally able to get away, she locks herself in her room, 'seule et bien courecie'.[117] Forgetting to make the sign of the cross or leave the lights on, she falls asleep in a state of *doel*:

> Et li ramentoit devant le doel de son pere et de sa mere et de son frere et de ses serors. Puis li menbre de cele qui l'a batue. Lors ploure quant il li menbre de toutes ces choses, si ot molt grant doel et molt grant ire en en cele dolour s'endormi.[118]

The cumulative syntax formed by the repetition of 'et de' conveys the build-up of emotion in the girl's mind, reflecting her increasing pain at the family's successive misfortunes; finally allowing it to accumulate, she has at last succumbed to the devil's torments. Her condition represents *desperatio* not only in her sadness, but also in her *ire* and failure to make the sign of the cross. *Ira*, as we have seen, is associated with *desperatio* through a shared set of characteristics within the symbolic tradition of *psychomachia* and iconography; as had happened with the girl's father, anger was also

[115] Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 378.
[116] *Merlin*, p. 583.
[117] *Merlin*, p. 585.
[118] ibid.

thought to provoke despair. Furthermore, the Old French terms *duel* and *ire* had some overlapping semantic properties, including sorrow and grief. [119] This close relation in meaning meant that the two were often collocated as a tautological pair, conveying a particularly violent form of emotional distress. [120] That Merlin's mother fails to make the sign of the cross, identified in the text as the outward gesture of internal belief, signifies that this anger and sadness have strayed into a religious *desperatio*. In the majority of manuscripts, she is described as being 'a orbetés',[121] a term which suggests doubt or ambiguity; this reinforces the implications of her sinful loss of faith. This wavering in both belief and its physical manifestation could also evoke the sin of *accidia*, closely related to *desperatio* and which would later be theoretically developed into the vice of sloth. *Accidia* is characterised by indifference, a loss of spiritual enthusiasm which leads an individual to abandon self-discipline and become lazy in their religious duties.[122] It is closely associated with *desperatio* in its implications of wavering belief:

> Accidia est ex confusione mentis nata tristitia, sive taedium, et amaritudo animi immoderata, qua iocunditas spiritalis exstinguitur, et quodam desperationis praecipitio mens in semetipsa subvertitur. Dicitur autem accidia, quasi acidia, eo quod opera spiritualia nobis acida reddat et insipida.[123]

Accidia, then, is a physical paralysis, resulting from spiritual dejection, which leads a sufferer to neglect their religious practice; in this way, *accidia* characterises the relationship between Merlin's mother's *desperatio* and her failure to make the sign of the cross. The devil now recognises that she is 'bien menee hors de la garde son maistre'; he considers her 'bien atornee', an adjective which is semantically related to the term 'atornement', the convention through which vassals transfer loyalty from one lord to another. The girl, in this sense, figuratively rejects God's protection in favour of the

[119] Tobler Lommatzsch, *Alt-Französisches Wörterbuch Ire*: *Zorn* (anger); *Kummer* (sorrow, or grief) (pp. 1440-1444).
e.g.: 'Onques mais nule joie n'oie/ Que si tost me tornast a ire', Jean Renart, *Le lai de l'ombre* (761)
[120] 'S'il savoit le grant duel et ire/ Et le domage et la grante perte/ Qu'ui cest jor nos est äoverte', Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés* (5828) ; 'La reïne an est antree/ De grant duel et d'ire enflamee', Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval,* 964.
[121] Omitted in MS Bonn, Bibliothèque universitaire, S 526 and BNF fr 24394.
[122] Mora, 'Mental Disturbances' p. 204; Sachs, 'Religious Despair', pp. 234-237; Snynder, 'The Left Hand of God', p. 44.
[123] Caesar of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, IV, 27, ed. Strange, p. 197.

devil, by despairing of God's mercy and, by extension, losing the basic hope which characterises Christian belief. It is in this sinful state that the devil is able to conceive Merlin.[124]

Robert's interpretant of the conception of Merlin, then, evokes *desperatio* through the correlation between external and internal manifestations of belief; the girl's failure to follow Blaise's instructions to make the sign of the cross and sleep with the lights on represents a failure to follow his spiritual instructions to believe in the Trinity and the redemption of sins. The Italian vernacular version of this scene retains these external signifiers of belief as an invariant semantic core; however, by failing to elucidate the moral significance behind them, Pieri's interpretant disrupts the metonymic *translatio* of meaning between the girl's belief and her ritual gestures. In this way, connotations of Marinaia's loss of faith are repressed. Biagio's advice to her in the translation is emotional rather than rational; whereas Blaise in the French version 'molt les aprent [...] bien et enseigne',[125] here, Biagio only 'la confortò'. His religious advice is similarly consolatory; he tells her to 'racomandassesi a Jesu Cristo', so that he may 'tti [*sic*.] aiuti e che ti consigli'.[126] He offers her no instructions regarding belief, faith in redemption, or the value of confession, all of which are central to the French text's evocation of *desperatio*. His advice instead concentrates upon the physical signs of belief which, in the French, are merely signifiers for genuine belief in the Trinity:

> Priegoti e comandoti che ogni sera, quando vai a lletto, che ttu ti gitti adosso e nel letto dell'acqua benedetta; e fa' che ttu non falli a segnarti nel nome del Padre e del Figliuolo e dello Spirito Santo amen, e e mai di notte non istare sanza lume.[127]

The signifiers of faith from the French text become, in the translation, integral signs; here it is the sign of the cross, the light and the holy water *per se* which will keep the

[124] The virgin birth of Merlin has been identified as a parody of the birth of Christ, thus fulfilling the devils' aim to create a man who can counteract Christ's authority on Earth—an Antichrist, to all intents and purposes. For other demonic parodies of Christ's birth, see Russell, *Lucifer in the Middle Ages*, p. 77.
[125] *Merlin*, p. 578.
[126] *Storia*, p. 7; 'Entrust yourself to Jesus Christ [...] so that he may help and advise you'.
[127] ibid; I ask that every night when you go to sleep, you sprinkle holy water over yourself and your bed; and you must not forget to cross yourself in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit amen, and never sleep at night without a light'.

devil at bay; the actions are not simply correlatives of inner belief. As the devil in the source text can only operate through sin, relying on the willed transgression of his victims in order to be able to persecute them further, then sin must be a necessary condition for the devil to be able to sleep with Merlin's mother. In the translation, however, no such connection has been made, meaning that Merlin's conception is not dependent on his mother's inner vice. Indeed, Pieri simplifies the complex ethical situation of the French text by inserting qualitative adjectives which provide a clear moral polarisation; Marinaia is described as the 'buona sirocchia',[128] as opposed to the 'sirocchia meretrice' and her disreputable associates, 'altre femine triste del corpo loro'.[129] Rather than beating her, the younger sister's friends taunt Marinaia with obscene gestures and even threaten her with rape. Marinaia locks herself in her room, 'molto dolente', and it is this that causes her to neglect her protective ritual:

> e così, sanze cena e sanza lume e sanza gittarsi acqua benedetta, s'adormentò.[130]

Unlike the French text, which identifies this moment as a culmination of grief over the successive tragic occurrences within her family, Pieri's interpretant focuses exclusively on these external gestures, even failing to mention the most significant, the sign of the cross. Marinaia's 'dolore' and 'malinconia', though bearing a potential semantic relation to a loss of faith, are used in a more generalised manner; by suppressing the specifically religious character of the girl's *duel*, Pieri develops the meaning of Marinaia's sadness into a more universal form of sorrow, encompassing the emotional and the psychological, as well as the religious. In this way, the Italian vernacular interpretant of Merlin's conception suppresses the moral dimensions of sin and culpability which are integral to the source text version. In the French text, Merlin's mother admits to Blaise that she has sinned; she tells him 'je ai pechié et bien saciés que j'ai esté engingnie

[128] *Storia*, p. 8.
[129] *Storia*, p. 7.
[130] ibid.; 'and so without dinner and without light and without holy water, she fell asleep'.

d'anemi',[131] attributing her failure to make the sign of the cross directly (or metonymically, we might say) to the 'grant ire et le doel qu'ele ot'.[132] Blaise acknowledges that she has 'fait molt grant pechié de l'obedience que je t'avoie conmandé et tu le trespassas'; he tells her to abandon 'toute luxure', and recommends she confesses.[133] It is through this confession, penitence and recognition of her fault that she overcomes her *desperatio*, exercising instead hope of forgiveness. Pieri represses further the spiritual aspects of the conception by omitting this need for confession and repentance; Biagio simply pities her, because he 'l'avea per buona e per diritta femina'.[134]

If the narrative outline of the family's persecution represents an invariant core of meaning, then the French source text and the Italian vernacular translation produce varying interpretants in accordance with the contextual framework of each text. In the French, the narrative provides a didactic interpretant of the notion (deriving from the *Historia Regum Britanniae*) that Merlin is conceived by the devil; Robert de Boron, whose Grail trilogy presents Arthurian material from a highly religious perspective, uses this as an excuse to explore the nature of the devil and his relationship to humanity through sin. Developing the significance of the devil's role through the intermediary interpretant of homiletic literature, Robert's family provides a didactic demonstration of the destructive power of sin, contextualising the narrative between the opposite poles of religious despair and hope in salvation. Merlin's redemption through his mother's confession likewise serves to demonstrate the efficacy of repentance; despite the moral corruption of his aunts and grandparents, he is a living example that God's mercy extends even as far as the devil's offspring. The translation of this invariant semantic core, however, produces interpretants which suppress the moral-religious elements of Robert's version. Though retaining the devil as agent of the family's downfall, Pieri shifts emphasis away from the relationship between external diabolical activity and internal moral corruption. In accordance with later medieval representations of Satan,

[131] *Merlin*, p. 586.
[132] *Merlin*, p. 587.
[133] ibid.
[134] *Storia*, p. 8; 'He thought she was a good and honest woman'.

the devil here conveys his theological status as nonexistence, with limited powers to use against Marinaia's virtue. The relationship between sin and the devil is not severed, but suppressed, so that the translation offers interpretants which favour an amoral reading of the family's downfall. In this way, they are simply afflicted with misfortune, which is set in motion by the devil, but not at his absolute command; becoming a signifier for 'bad luck', he is no longer a concrete, autonomous presence of evil, but a privation of good fortune.

This Peircean approach to translation analysis, then, has demonstrated the ways in which the invariant semantic core of narrative takes on a different semiotic function within the context of the translation; instead of an exploration of sin and redemption, the translated narrative demonstrates the emotional integrity of Merlin's mother in the face of misfortune. This secularisation of the French text's moral connotations corresponds to the contextual interpretants of the translation, and the way in which it presents Merlin as a cultural figure. It is not that Pieri's translation of Merlin's has no interest in religion or morals, quite the contrary in fact; however, the prophecies, which, as we have seen, he translates and adapts in the second half of his book, explore moral corruption from an institutional perspective, condemning simony and usury as social rather than personal evils. Nevertheless, since Pieri uses this narrative as a prelude to a translation of Merlin's political prophecies, it is unlikely that he would have wished to present his authoritative prophet as the product of the devil and a sinful family. By deemphasising the moral ambiguity of his family, the Italian interpretant suppresses the moral ambiguity of Merlin's heritage. As a spokesman for a particular ideological perspective, Merlin's character must be beyond question.

Chapter 3:

The Figure of Viviane in the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin*

Having analysed an example of medieval translation from the perspective of Peircean semiotics, this thesis will now turn to the parallel process of *réécriture*, the rewriting and reconceptualising of a common narrative within the same linguistic code. As we have seen with the reinterpretation of Merlin's conception from French into Italian, inter-vernacular translation develops new interpretants deriving from an invariant semantic core; this alters not only the linguistic expression of the source, but also the semiotic status of the narrative material carried over. *Réécriture*, on the other hand, represents a more extensive and deliberate process of interpretation. Conforming (consciously or unconsciously) to the exegetical and rhetorical principles of the *artes poetriae* (even if not necessarily employing the specific poetic techniques that it recommends), the practice of *réécriture* constitutes a writer's reinterpretation of an existing narrative in the same language. Through a reinterpretation of meaning, followed by a recreation of the story's discursive and logical structure, the *réécrivain* imposes a new signification upon the narrative material. In terms of Peirce's notion of semiosis, which was discussed in Chapter 1, the process of *réécriture* develops the signification of invariant cores of meaning further down the chain of related interpretants, interpolating associated discourses, meanings and even elements from other narratives between the original text and the *réécrivain*'s renewed version. *Reecriture*, like translation, comes to rest at a final interpretant which develops the meaning into a new context; though the process of semiosis does not involve producing interlingual interpretants, in this instance, rewriting parallels translation in its adaptation of meaning in association with a new textual and social framework. If the

rewritten text as a whole can be seen as an interpretant-sign in relation to the original narrative, then each segment of meaning carried over will become a dynamic unit, adapted to the rewritten text and defined by its contextual interpretants.

The following two chapters will analyse the semiotic processes of *réécriture* between the thirteenth-century French *Estoire de Merlin*, and its rewritten version, the *Suite du Merlin*. Whereas chapter 5 will return to the subject of prophecy as a literary motif, the present chapter will investigate the character of Viviane, Merlin's lover and eventual captor, and the ways in which she is interpreted within the context of each text. Both chapters will aim to demonstrate that *réécriture* parallels the process of translation through the 'lexicalisation' of units of meaning, in which parts of the narrative—such as, in this case, characterisation—acquire the semiotic status of a word, with the ability to act as either a static or a dynamic unit.[1] The character of Viviane is therefore subject to a process of semiotic interpretation not unlike that pertaining to a word or phrase in translation; though there will be an invariant core of stable semantic content, the final interpretant will represent a development of that meaning as an adaptation to the reinterpreted textual context.

In his *Livres dou Tresor*, Brunetto Latini recites the canonical list of strong or wise men famously deceived by women. There is 'David le prophete, ki por la beauté Bersabee fist meurtre et avoutire', 'Salemons, ses fils' who was induced by his wives to worship false idols, and Samson, who, due to a woman's betrayal, 'perdi puis la force et la vertu et la vie'. Within this survey of classical and Biblical victims of love, we may find our Arthurian prophet:

> De Troie comment fu destruite sevent uns et autres, et de maintes autres terres, et de haus princes qui sont destruit por amer folement. Neis Aristotles li tres sages philosophes et Merlins furent deceu par feme, selonc ce que les ystores nous racontent.[2]

[1] See Chapter 1, pp. 66-68.
[2] II 106, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, ed. by Francis J. Carmody (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), p. 290.

Brunetto Latini is not the most recent writer to have compared Merlin's tragic affair to the abuses suffered by Aristotle at the hands of Phyllis.[3] According to popular tradition, and recorded for instance in the twelfth-century *Lai d'Aristote*,[4] the great philosopher is tricked by the beautiful Phyllis into letting her ride him around like a horse, ironically ignoring his own warning to his student, Alexander, that love makes men as stupid as 'une beste en pré'.[5] The parallels with Merlin's end are obvious; like the philosopher, Merlin is exceptionally intelligent—the 'plus sages hom del monde', no less[6] —, though neither he nor Aristotle is wise enough to resist the charms of a woman. Viviane, the woman in question (whose name appears variously as Niviene, Niniane or Nimuë), appears in several medieval Merlin texts as his student in magic. Having fallen in love with her, Merlin agrees to teach her his supernatural arts in exchange for her affections. As a result, she becomes more powerful than her tutor, finally trapping Merlin forever, according to different versions, in a cave, a tomb, or a magic castle. As Bea Lundt has highlighted, however, the parallels between the Aristotle and Merlin stories are limited to the 'wise man in love' motif. Whereas Phyllis is a flat, two-dimensional character, defined purely by her sexuality, Viviane is a complex and multifaceted figure.[7] Clever and scheming, or virtuous and chaste, the complexity of her different characterisations attests to the ambiguity of her role in Merlin's destruction. Certainly, her portrayal in both the *Suite* and the *Estoire* raises intricate moral questions which neither text attempts to answer definitively.

In order to situate Viviane's role in each version of the story, it will again be necessary to outline some basic information about both texts. In the previous chapter, we have already touched upon the Vulgate Cycle, the vast compilation of prose

[3] Paul Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 237.
[4] Henri d'Andeli, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, ed. by A. Héron (Rouen: Imprimerie Léon GY, 1901).
[5] ibid., Line 167, ed. Héron p. 38. See also Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 23.
[6] *Estoire*, p. 461.
[7] *Melusine und Merlin im Mittelalter* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1990), p. 302; also Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 99.

romances into which Robert de Boron's *Merlin* became incorporated. The first text to be analysed in this chapter, the *Estoire de Merlin*, was composed as a sequel following on from the *Merlin en prose*, documenting the early years of Arthur's reign with Merlin as his advisor. Also known as the Lancelot-Grail Cycle, the Vulgate Cycle is thought to have been written between 1215 and 1230. Some pre-existing romances became absorbed into the Cycle, such as the first two books of Robert's Grail Trilogy and the *Lancelot do Lac;* in addition to this are some original *réécritures* of other Arthurian texts, providing new versions of the Grail quest and the downfall of Arthur's kingdom. The *Estoire* appears between Robert de Boron's *Estoire del Saint Graal* and the *Lancelot*, acting as a prequel to the latter. Though the Vulgate Cycle was apparently a 'medieval best-seller', [8] with an extensive surviving manuscript tradition, it is generally acknowledged that the compilation of different texts lacks conceptual unity, displaying a number of inconsistencies between narratives (such as the conflicting presentations of Merlin and Viviane in the *Estoire* and the *Lancelot*, which will be discussed below). For that reason, critics believe the Cycle to have been composed by a number of different authors.[9]

The Vulgate Cycle, according to Jane Burns, marks an important turning point in the history of vernacular romance, in that it is one of the first romances composed in prose.[10] During the twelfth century, verse and prose were separated generically between verse romances and lais on the one hand, and on the other, prose vernacular chronicles, commentaries, and translations from Latin. As a romance text in prose, the Vulgate Cycle represents not only a shift in medium, but also a shift in focus and tone; moving away from the exploits of individual knights, the Vulgate romances explore the

[8] Elspeth Kennedy (ed.), Rupert Pickens, Karen Pratt, Michelle Szkilnik, Andrea M. L. Williams, 'Lancelot with and without the Grail: The Pre-Cyclic Lancelot do Lac and the Lancelot-Grail or Vulgate Cycle' in *The Arthur of the French*, pp. 274-325 (p. 274).
[9] ibid. For the manuscript tradition of the Vulgate Cycle, see Roger Middleton, 'The Manuscripts', in *The Arthur of the French*, pp. 8-93 (pp. 37-84).
[10] 'Vulgate Cycle', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Chicago: St James Press, 1991), pp. 496-499 (p. 496).

fate of Arthur's whole kingdom from a pseudo-historical perspective.[11] The *Estoire de Merlin* is no exception, minimising the traditional courtly romance aesthetic in favour of military campaigns and crusader ethics. After his coronation as king of Logres, Arthur must subdue his rebellious barons whilst fighting off attempted invasions from both the Saxons and Rome. The King's eventual victories are orchestrated entirely by Merlin, now Arthur's chief advisor. Offering military tactics, advice regarding allegiances, and even deploying his magic to confuse enemies in battle, Merlin uses his omniscience to guide the course of history in Arthur's favour.[12] Nevertheless, Arthur loses Merlin's invaluable aid when the prophet falls in love with a young girl to whom he agrees to teach his supernatural knowledge; this girl, of course, is Viviane, who eventually uses Merlin's own magic to trap him permanently in a magic castle. Carol Harding has interpreted Merlin's downfall as representative of the eventual downfall of Arthur's kingdom. Just as Merlin's love for Viviane causes him to fall victim to his own human weakness, so Arthur's reign collapses owing to the flaws of its inhabitants; Arthur's over-ambitious territorial conquests, civil war caused by Mordred's usurpation of the throne, and Lancelot's affair with Guinevere all contribute to the end of Logres. In this way, 'the fate of Merlin mirrors the fate of Arthurian society which mirrors the fate of humanity as a whole'.[13]From this perspective, Viviane takes on a metonymic importance; her ability to exploit even Merlin's human frailty demonstrates that no individual or society is immune to temptation and failings.

Viviane's role in the *Estoire* will be examined in comparison with that in the *Suite du Merlin*, which offers a variant interpretant of Merlin's confinement by his lover. Also known as the Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*, the *Suite* is thought to be a closely contemporary *réécriture* of the Vulgate Cycle, composed some time between 1235 and

[11] ibid., p. 497.
[12] See Kennedy et al, 'Lancelot with and without the Grail', p. 293; Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, pp. 59-64.
[13] Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance*, p. 112.

1240.[14] The manuscript tradition of the *Suite* suggests that it never enjoyed the same popularity as the *Estoire*, surviving only partially and across various fragments. [15] Nevertheless, versions of the *Suite* can be found in Spanish and Portuguese translations (though these are also incomplete), implying at least some circulation of the text during the Middle Ages; most famously, parts of the *Suite* are translated by Malory and compiled into his English version of the Vulgate Cycle.[16] Fanni Bogdanow has recognised in the *Suite* an attempt to resolve the conceptual inconsistencies in the Vulgate Cycle, where secular military narratives (such as the *Estoire*), tales of courtly love (the story of Lancelot and Guinevere in the *Lancelot*) and ascetic religious themes (the *Queste del Saint Graal*) are combined, incongruously, into the same work:

> The Post-Vulgate author, who drew freely for his themes on the earlier romances, did not simply accumulate episodes, but sought to produce a compact and coherent Arthurian history in which the various events of Arthur's reign were more adequately motivated than in the versions at his disposal.[17]

This new version imposes an overriding, unified structure, bringing thematic and logical consistency to the Vulgate narratives.[18] Though the surviving fragments only preserve the story of Merlin, the thematic connection between the early years of Arthur's reign and the religious grail quest is evident from the beginning. Unlike the Vulgate Cycle, where Arthur's kingdom is doomed to collapse due to the inherent flaws in human nature, the *Suite* creates a narrative structure wherein individuals are presented with free choices. When they make the wrong choice, they are punished and

---

[14]Fanni Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail*, p. 12.
[15] MS BL Add. 38117 (known as the Huth manuscript), BNF fr. 112, Cambridge University Library, Add. 7071, in addition to two minor fragments in Imola and Bologna; Fanni Bogdanow, 'The Vulgate Cycle and Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*' in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 33-54 (pp. 36-37).
[16] Fanni Bogdanow and Richard Trachsler, 'Rewriting Prose Romance: The Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal* and Related Texts', in *the Arthur of the French*, pp. 342-393 (p. 342); Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 80.
[17] *The Romance of the Grail*, p. 21; also Bogdanow and Trachsler, 'Rewriting Prose Romance', p. 348; Eugène Vinaver, *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale*.
[18] Bogdanow and Trachsler, 'Rewriting Prose Romance', pp. 348-349.

the whole kingdom must suffer.[19] For instance, Arthur's adulterous affair with the wife of King Lot (unaware that she is his half sister) will engender Mordred, who will, much later, be responsible for the collapse of his kingdom. Likewise, a knight called Balain sets out on an ill-fated revenge mission against the brother of King Pellohan (the Post-Vulgate's version of the Fisher King). Ignoring warnings from Merlin that the quest will lead to his own demise and the ruin of a kingdom, Balain kills the brother and stabs the king with the mysterious *Lanche vengeresse*; this leads to the collapse of Pellohan's kingdom. Balain is later personally punished, by accidentally killing his own brother in battle and then dying himself. The narrative structure, is based on the moral decisions, which set in motion a chain of events:

> Arthur and the knights of his kingdom are doomed to commit, unintentionally, through mischance, sinful acts, which they and the whole country will subsequently have to expiate.[20]

This focus on individual morality therefore reorganises the more disparate narrative threads of the Vulgate Cycle; as Stephen Knight highlights, Balain's actions in the *Suite* look forward to the redemption of Pellohan's kingdom by the grail.[21] In the *Suite*, Merlin retains his omniscience, but not his absolute credibility; as with Balain, Merlin's warnings regarding disastrous future consequences resulting from present actions are often ignored.[22] Moreover, his relationship with Viviane—or Niviene, as she is called here— demonstrates that even he can make flawed moral choices.[23] In *Estoire*, Merlin is confined by Viviane to a magic castle so that she may see him whenever she likes; he is weakened, then, by excess of affection. The Merlin of the *Suite*, however, is more motivated by lust, for which Niviene, a more defensive and aggressive character than

[19] Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance*, pp. 127-129.
[20] Bogdanow and Trachsler, 'Rewriting Prose Romance', p. 350.
[21] *Knowledge and Power*, p. 75.
[22] Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance*, p. 136.
[23] Knight, *Knowledge and Power*, p. 77.

her earlier counterpart, magically traps him in a tomb. In this way, Merlin is punished for his sins just as Arthur and his kingdom are punished.

In order to investigate the reinterpretation of Viviane and Niviene (as we shall call each version of the character in the *Estoire* and the *Suite* respectively), we may consider her character—or at least, the content associated with the figure of Merlin's lover, given that a literary character is really no more than a 'coherent bundle of qualities'[24]— as a unit of meaning, which is carried over from the *Estoire* to the *Suite* through a chain of semiotic interpretations. Like a lexical item, the idea of 'Viviane/Niviene' functions in both a static and a dynamic state; that is to say, she evokes a wide range of associations, some of which are actualised when her character appears in a specific context. Viviane, or Niviene, then, functions in each text as a dynamic unit, bringing a series of latent interpretants to each literary appearance she makes. Her manifestations are numerous and varied; first appearing in the prose *Lancelot du Lac*, Viviane is born as a conflation of the woman who will destroy Merlin, and the Dame du Lac, the lady who will adopt and raise the orphaned Lancelot .[25] The contextual interpretant of this text determines that Viviane must be a positive character if she is to reflect well on her adopted son, the story's hero; as a result, she is portrayed as a clever and virtuous maternal figure. The Vulgate *Lancelot*, on the other hand, which follows the *Estoire* in the Vulgate Cycle, and which begins by recapping the story of Merlin and Viviane, portrays Merlin as a lecherous demon, with immoral designs on Niniane's virginity. With the intention of remaining chaste, she learns his magic in order to be able to outwit him, trapping him in a cave.[26] The later *Prophecies de Merlin* represents a complete subversion of this moral dichotomy: also conflating

---

[24] Wolfgang Müller, 'Interfigurality : Study on the Interdependence of Literary Figures' in *Intertextuality*, ed. by Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), pp. 101-119 (p. 107); see also Norris J. Lacy, 'Motif Transfer in Arthurian Literature' in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) pp. 157-168 (pp. 157-158).
[25] *Lancelot du Lac*, ed. François Mosès et al (Paris: Librarie Générale Française, 1991), pp. 90-99.
[26] Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, pp. 100-101.

Viviane/Niviene with her alter-ego, the Dame du Lac, the *Prophecies* portrays her as scheming and intelligent, tricking Merlin into teaching her magic and callously trapping him in a tomb. From the two opposite ends of the interpretative spectrum represented by Viviane/Niviene's characterisation in the Vulgate *Lancelot* and the *Prophesies*, we may begin to identify some different interpretants of Viviane as a static unit. She is always intelligent, though this intelligence may be used for good or evil. She is sometimes a mother figure. Virginity is also a constant interpretant of her character; even though the Dame du Lac in the *Prophesies* takes numerous lovers after her entombment of Merlin, she remains chaste until she may fulfill the prophecy that only a virgin may destroy Merlin.

Each time Viviane/Niviene appears in a text, her integration into a particular context creates a dynamic unit which draws upon these various static connotations. Within the contexts of the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, Viviane and Niviene's characterisations draw upon her virginity and intelligence, but not the maternal characteristics associated with her character in the *Lancelot*. Instead, the interpretants of Viviane/Niviene in the *Estoire* and the *Suite* are highly ambiguous; she avoids the reductive moral polarity of her representations in both the *Lancelot* and the *Prophesies*. In fact, a comparative semantic condensation of Viviane in the *Estoire* and Niviene in the *Suite*, reveals a common core of meaning which is nothing if not morally complex. In both texts, the relationship between Merlin and Viviane/Niviene produces a semantic invariance pertaining to both Viviane/Niviene and her effects upon Merlin. Gender provides a common interpretant; both texts portray Merlin and Viviane as a combination of male and female attributes, which combine and intermingle to form a complex set of power relations within their relationship. Viviane and Niviene, semantically condensed, display an invariant core of androgyny. In both the *Estoire*, as Viviane, and the *Suite*, as Niviene, she combines masculinised attributes with her natural femininity, both of which she exploits to her advantage. Merlin, on the other hand, undergoes a

psychological rupture. His persona is divided between types of behaviour identified with the masculine and the feminine, producing a dichotomous characterisation which is weak and alienated from itself. The invariant core of Viviane/Niviene's effect upon Merlin, therefore, is the concept of the divided self. Both these invariant cores of meaning, as this chapter will demonstrate, become Peircean signs, from which a process of semiosis develops a series of interpretants in relation to the target text context.

Androgyny, therefore, is an invariant semantic core of Viviane/Niviene's character, in her transition from the *Estoire* to the *Suite.* Her androgynous characteristics are by no means unique or controversial; as Roberta L. Kruger has emphasised, gender relations in courtly literature are often fluid and subject to examination. Narratives such as the *Roman de Silence*, the *Estoire*'s story of Grisandole and the courtly parody *Aucassin et Nicolette* consciously distort the boundaries between male and female social roles and identities:

> By describing men and women in terms that intersect and overlap, by reversing conventional roles, many courtly texts [...] create a space in which the adornments, gestures, discourses and desires that define courtly identities are fluid and ambiguous, rather than fixed according to binary sexual division.[27]

Such representations of sexual ambiguity simultaneously enforce and destabilise the traditional gender dichotomy, taking as they do for the basis of a gender subversion the accepted behaviours, activities and attributes apportioned to males and females, respectively. Each instance of this combination of masculine and feminine elements constitutes, in itself, an interpretant-sign demonstrating what the text perceives as the meaning of male and female; the elements selected for inversion and combination produce a form of interpretative commentary upon the expectations for each gender.

[27] Roberta L. Krueger, 'Questions of gender in Old French courtly romance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 132-149 (p. 145).

For example, the praise heaped upon cross-dressing female characters such as Silence and Grisandole[28] for their loyalty, strength and bravery represents a performative identification of a particular masculine ideal. Likewise, Aucassin's inactivity and pathetic displays of emotion underline a certain conception of the courtly female prototype. In both the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, the characters of Viviane and Niviene likewise combine masculine and feminine elements in such a way as to produce a particular interpretant for gender roles within each text. 'Androgyny'—or a combination of hand-picked attributes conforming to a certain gender perspective—here functions as an invariant core of meaning, producing varied interpretants in accordance with the context of each narrative.

Beginning with the *Estoire*, Viviane's character is defined as an androgynous figure through her use of both masculine rationality and feminine sensuality to dominate Merlin. As Anne Berthelot notes, magic in Arthurian literature is normally restricted to female practitioners. With the exceptions of Merlin and Eliavres, magic belongs predominantly to women associated with the *fée* figure: Morgue, Sybille, the Dame d'Avalon and a multitude of unnamed forest-dwelling *demoiseles*.[29] Already, therefore, Merlin's status as magician and teacher of magic suggests a flexible boundary between masculine and feminine knowledge. His education of Viviane, however, is couched in specifically masculine terms. The transfer of magical information is not mystical, or supernatural, but literate, and scientific, evoking a form of knowledge closely associated with medieval male education. Merlin agrees to teach Viviane 'autretant de merveilles que onques nule feme autre tant n'en sot', and she will write it all down because she knows 'assés de letres'. [30] Dictation is the primary method of communication; elsewhere, we are told that:

---

[28] See conclusion, pp. 224-231.
[29] 'Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake', *Arthuriana*, 10 (2000), 55-82 (p. 76).
[30] L' *Estoire de Merlin*, published in *Le livre du Graal*, vol. I, ed. by Daniel Poirion et al (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 1061.

> ele escrit les mots em parchemin tel com il li devisa, et ele en savoit moult bien venir a chief.[31]

Viviane's transcriptions of Merlin's dictations present her as a mirror-image of Blaise, Merlin's scribe, and a figure associated with clerical and ecclesiastical learning.[32] She is described as a 'bone clergiesse des .vii. ars'[33], evoking a scholastic environment and educational curriculum from which women were usually excluded, and elsewhere as 'cele qui bien estoit endouctrinee de la clergie'.[34] The term *clergie* has specifically masculine connotations, associated with the church and its patriarchal monopoly on knowledge; similarly, terms such as *sens* and *maistrie* suggest an intellectualised form of scholarship.[35] The magic acquired by Viviane, therefore, is scripted; it evokes the higher spheres of learning from which even educated medieval women were excluded.[36] As Jennifer E. Looper argues, Viviane uses this masculinised knowledge to maintain a position of independence and superiority with regard to Merlin, escaping the patriarchal authority of both him and her parents.[37] She learns first how to make her father fall asleep 'Pour ce, fait ele, que toutes les fois que je vauroie parler a vous que je endormiroie mon pere',[38] then coerces Merlin into teaching her '.iii. nons' which, when she has them written on her groin, prevent any man from sleeping with her. This spell constitutes 'the link between the control over sexuality and writing—and the feminine appropriation of both'.[39] Viviane then uses this scientific magic to influence Merlin's relations with her. She retains the upper hand in the relationship by protecting her

---

[31] *Estoire*, p. 1062-1063.
[32] Jennifer E. Looper, '*L'Estoire de Merlin* and The Mirage of the Patrilineage', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 63-85 (p. 82).
[33] *Estoire*, p. 1630.
[34] *Estoire*, p. 1560.
[35] ibid.
[36] Krueger, 'Questions of gender', p. 113.
[37] 'The Mirage of Patrilineage', p. 81.
[38] *Estoire*, p. 1223.
[39] 'The Mirage of Patrilineage', p. 81.

virginity, using a magic pillow to block anything she might perceive as a sexual advance:

> quant ele savoit qu'il auoit volonté de jesir o li ele avoit enchanté et conjuré un oreillier que ele li metoit entre ses bras. Et lors s'endormoit Merlins.[40]

In this way, Viviane's masculine knowledge gives her an element of personal control and independence not normally afforded to women. Her education associates her with rationality, the intellect, a specifically masculine mental capacity which negates, to a certain extent, her female status.

This rational learning, in medieval physiological and theological thought, is a characteristic particularly associated with the male mind. In patristic discussions of gender, the opposition between male and female was equated with the dichotomy between the soul and the body, with man representing the rational and immortal aspects of the human being, and woman, the material and contingent. Though both sexes were regarded as endowed with the capacity for reason, the woman was thought to lack the ability to allow her reason to govern her bodily impulses, or appetites. Male rationality was associated with truth and spirituality, prevented from reaching true knowledge by the corporeality of human condition, identified with the female.[41] For Augustine, this justifies the subordinate role of women in relation to men, meaning that women must be controlled as the rational mind controls the appetite:

> et quemadmodum in eius anima aliud est quod consulendo dominatur, aliud quod subditur ut obtemperet, sic viro factam esse etiam corporaliter feminam, quae haberet quidem in mente rationalis intellegentiae parem naturam, sexu tamen corporis ita masculino sexui subiceretur, quemadmodum subicitur appetitus actionis ad concipiendam de ratione mentis recte agendi sollertiam.[42]

---

[40] *Estoire*, p. 1560.
[41] R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 26.
[42] *Confessiones*, XIII. 32; published by James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

The woman, therefore, is equated with the senses, the body and sexuality:

> For the fathers of the church, the seductive power of the flesh could only be exemplified by the power of women over men because it was the female sex that was identified with the sexualised body while the male was identified with the spirit and reason.[43]

Though, in the *Estoire,* Viviane learns to control Merlin using her rational, masculine learning, her behaviour towards him does not exclude a more recognisable form of female seduction. In addition to her use of male learning to magically influence Merlin's behaviour, her requests are often accompanied by sensual gestures and sexually suggestive promises. For example, when she asks him to teach her how to create a magic castle, she 'mist li bras au col', promising him 'joie et deduit' if he does as she requests.[44] At one point, they even 'jurent ensamble en un lit'.[45] In this way, Viviane often employs suggestive physical contact in order to ensure Merlin's acquiescence or use her magic on him:

> la pucele le mist couchier en son giron et le traïst tant a li et une fois et autre que Merlins l'amoit a merveilles.[46]

> Si s'asisent en l'onbre, et Merlins mist son chief en giron a la damoisele. Et ele li conmenche a tastonner tant qu'il s'endormi.[47]

Both these examples demonstrate the same physical position, with Merlin resting his head on Viviane's lap. Not only does this tableau suggest physical intimacy, but it also

---

[43] Susan L. Smith, *The Power of Woman: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 25.
[44] *Estoire*, p. 1631.
[45] *Estoire*, p. 1560.
[46] *Estoire*, p. 1224.
[47] *Estoire*, p. 1632.

reflects the position adopted by Samson and Delilah, in the moment when she famously cuts off his hair:

> at illa dormire eum fecit super genua sua et in sinu suo reclinare caput vocavitque tonsorem et rasit septem crines eius et coepit abicere eum et a se repellere statim enim ab eo fortitudo discessit.[48]

This instance, not unlike the moment when Viviane puts Merlin to sleep in order to trap him in her castle, represents a moment of male weakness, as both Merlin and Samson are seduced by feminine sensuality into losing their characteristic strength or intelligence. Delilah in the Middle Ages was frequently cited within the canonical list of misogynistic exempla that we outlined at the beginning of this chapter, demonstrating women's ability to override man's rational control over himself when confronted with his natural impulses.[49] Just as Augustine externalised the internal relationship between the soul and the body onto a pattern of male control over the female, Viviane and Delilah can be seen as a projection of the innate anxiety over the distraction of man's reason by his own senses.[50] In this way, we can regard Viviane in the *Estoire* as an androgynous figure, using both male, rational education, and female sensuality in her relationship with Merlin. Her male and female attributes relate to the role of the body and reason in misogynistic medieval discourse, which are separated and divided when metonymically applied to the proper power balance in the relationship between the sexes. Viviane, however, recombines these two forms of control in order to subvert this power balance entirely; by appropriating Merlin's own intellectual mastery and using it alongside suggestions of sexuality, she is able to confound even the wisest man in the world.

---

[48] Judges, 6: 19
[49] Smith, *The Power of Woman*, pp. 1-20.
[50] See Alcuin Blamires, *Women Defamed and Women Defended*, p. 3; Howard R.Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', *Representations*, 20 (1987), 1-24 (p. 17).

When Viviane in the *Estoire* is compared with her counterpart in the *Suite*, Niviene, we can recognise this androgyny as an invariant core of meaning. Niviene, as an interpretant-sign of Viviane, also displays characteristics associated with a combination of the male and the female; however, in accordance with the interpretative framework of the *Suite* (in which moral decisions dictate the narrative structure), the interpretants produced from the sign 'androgyny' take on a moral character, rather than a physiological one. Though in the *Estoire*, Viviane is not explicitly evil, she is nevertheless disconcerting; her refusal to conform to her feminine role, in addition to the power she holds over Merlin (even though that power is not harmful or abusive) make her an uncomfortable figure. Niviene, on the other hand, in the *Suite,* combines characteristics which are *morally* male and female, leading the semiosic chain of interpretants in an ethical direction. The following paragraphs will discuss Niviene's representation in the *Suite*, and its morally androgynous implications.

In the *Suite,* Niviene first appears at Arthur's court dressed 'en guise de veneresse':

> Et elle estoit viestue d'une roube verde assés courte et avoit pendu a son col un cor d'ivoire, et tenoit un arc a sa main et une saiete.[51]

The style of the dress, in addition to the horn, bow and arrows, immediately evokes classical images of the goddess Diana, an androgynous female figure who partakes in the masculine pursuit of hunting. She is a figure of 'starker selbstbewußter und unkonventioneller Weiblichkeit',[52] whose chastity represents a rejection of her femininity, through a refusal of the sexuality which defines the female in relation to the male. Diana's androgyny, however, also has a dark side; her killing of Actaeon in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* displays a masculine ruthlessness which is turned back upon men

[51] *La suite du roman de Merlin*, ed. by Gilles Roussineau (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2006), p.214.
[52] Lundt, *Melusine und Merlin*, p. 277.

themselves.[53] The goddess Diana indeed appears in person in the *Estoire* as a symbolic mother to Viviane;[54] as the godmother of Viviane's father, Dyonas (who is also associated with hunting and the forest), she foretells that he will have a daughter who will dominate the wisest man in the world. Though, as Bea Lundt points out, the pagan influence over Viviane's birth casts a moral shadow over her future actions,[55] her associations with Diana are limited. For Niviene in the *Suite*, however, Diana acts as an intermediary interpretant, bringing specifically androgynous associations which create an ambiguity surrounding her moral character.

For Maureen Fries, Diana often presents a prototype for the independent female virgin in Arthurian literature, whose lack of male attachment allows them to exercise heroism:

> In Arthurian romance, only women who are not married are capable of consistent heroism. These virgins escape male domination, and, for a time at least, actualize their title by acting the man. An ancient archetype influencing this model is that of the huntress goddess Artemis/Diana, whose very occupation implies freedom from women's usual social bonds—especially from the house, symbolic of women's role of keeper of the patriarchal flame. Thus such Arthurian women are frequently connected with both the forest and the moon.[56]

Like Diana, Niviene is extremely protective of her chastity in the *Suite*. Though in the *Estoire* Viviane does use magic to prevent Merlin from sleeping with her, her preservation of her virginity is merely a by-product of her use of magic to control him. Despite the sexual suggestiveness of Viviane's promises to Merlin, she retains a sensual power over him by withholding any gratification until he is trapped in the castle, at

---

[53] Diana turns Actaeon into a stag, when he accidentally sees her bathing in the forest. He is then hunted and killed by his own dogs; see Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, book III, ll. 138-252, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916, repr. 2004), pp. 134-142.
[54] Lundt, *Melusine und Merlin*, p. 278.
[55] ibid.
[56] 'Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition', in *Arthurian Women: a Casebook*, ed. by Thelma S. Fenster (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 59-76 (p. 66).

which point, it is implied, her chastity is no longer a concern.[57] Viviane's temporary chastity in the *Estoire*, however, is developed into a principal interpretant for the character of Niviene in the *Suite*, incorporating a number of discourses on the religious character of chastity, hunting and witchcraft. Niviene's relationship to Diana is played out in her love of hunting and protectiveness of her virginity. Both of these aspects allow her to transcend her female position, creating an androgynous blend of femininity and male autonomy. In the *Suite,* Niviene identifies herself strongly with the pagan goddess though her love of hunting:

> Riens ne porroit estre de Dyane qui ne me pleuust [*sic*] et que je ne veisse volontiers, car elle ama toute sa vie le deduit del bois autant que je faic ou plus.[58]

Hunting allows Niviene to be physically active, and emancipated from her family's surveillance; when her cousin attempts to force patriarchal authority upon her by returning her to 'ses amis et a ses parens',[59] he explains that,

> Mais tant li plaist la cacherie des forés et tant s'i delite que elle ne vaut onques avoir ne ami ne baron, ains s'en gabe quant on en parole a li.[60]

In medieval literature, hunting was highly symbolic with regard to love and sexuality; a plethora of different interpretations of the hunt exist in various genres and periods.[61] A woman hunting, in particular, generally conveyed metaphorical meanings rather than supposing to portray actual practice.[62] The most fitting interpretation of Niviene's hunting activities is that offered in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where hunting implies

---

[57] *Estoire*, p. 1632: 'Et ele tint molt bien couvent, car poi fu de jours ne de nuis que ele ne fust avoc lui'.
[58] *Suite*, p. 282.
[59] *Suite*, p. 255.
[60] *Suite*, p. 257.
[61] See Marcelle Thiébaux *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974).
[62] Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2003), p. 144.

chastity, the same resistance to sexuality proffered by characters such as Narcissus and Adonis.[63] Behind this metaphor lies the idea that the hunt should be so engaging and physically exhausting that it distracts a person from any thoughts of love; Ovid in fact recommends hunting as a way to forget about a loved one in *Remedia Amoris*.[64] For female hunters, such as Niviene and Diana, the chaste connotations of the hunt could imply a masculinisation; the very transcendence of the female body inherent in the concept of virginity:

> Hunting, on the other hand, could serve as a figure for the virtuous, manly life; "manly" in the sense of [...] *virtus*, which meant both "manliness" and "virtue".[65]

It is Niviene's chastity which causes her to both fear and hate Merlin; knowing that he 'baoit a son pucelage',[66] she begins to worry that he will rape her, thus depriving her of her connection to Diana, and hence her independence:

> Si en fu moult espoentee, car elle avoit paour que cil ne la honnesist par son enchantement ou que cil ne geust a li en son dormant.[67]

This leads her to plot Merlin's death:

> Elle connissoit bien que il ne baoit fors a son pucelage, si l'en haoit trop mortelment et porcachoit de canques elle pooit sa mort.[68]

---

[63] Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love*, p. 96.
[64] ibid., p. 98. Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*, 201-206, ed. E. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) p. 233:

> nunc leporem pronum catulo sectare sagaci,
> nunc tua frondosis retia tende iugis;
> aut pauidos terre uaria formidine ceruos,
> aut cadat aduersa cuspide fossus aper.
> nocte fatigatum somnus, non cura puellae,
> excipit et pingui membra quiete leuat.

[65] David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), p. 100.
[66] *Suite*, p. 288.
[67] *Suite*, p. 277.

This attachment to virginity, played out through the associations with Diana, creates a sense of moral ambiguity surrounding Niviene in the *Suite*, developed through her androgynous characteristics. On the one hand, her attachment to virginity renders Niviene 'morally' male. The church fathers extolled the elite status of virginity as a form of wholeness, which could counter-act the inherent imperfection perceived in the female physiology.[69] If the female was associated with materiality—the body and the senses in contrast to the immortal soul—, then virginity implied an opportunity to escape the contingency of the human body and embrace the eternal. Speaking about virginity, Ambrose writes:

> E coelo accersivit quod imitaretur in terris. Nec immerito vivendi sibi usum quaesivit e coelo, quae sponsum sibi invenit in coelo. Haec nubes, aera, angelos, sideraque transgrediens, Verbum Dei in ipso sinu Patris invenit, et tot hausit pectore. Nam quis tantum cum invenerit relinquat boni?[70]

Writers such as Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine extolled virginity as an immaculate state, a redemptive virtue which brings salvation from original sin.[71] For a woman, therefore, a rejection of all sexuality represents 'in some profound sense a denial of her femininity, since to transcend the body is to escape that which is gendered feminine'.[72] Theologically, it effects a reversal of the gender hierarchy, creating an equality in virtue which redeems inequality in creation. Virginity, in this way, amounts to a rejection of female nature.[73] In practice, it allowed women to a certain extent, to evade patriarchal control:

---

[68] *Suite*, p. 329.
[69] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 93; id., 'Medieval Misogyny', p. 15; Blamires, *Women Defamed*, p. 3.
[70] *De virginibus ad Marcellinam sororem Sua*, PL 16, 149, book III: 11, p. 192.
[71] Augustine, *De virginitate*, Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.12, Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate*.
[72] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 106.
[73] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 93; Smith, *The Power of Woman*, p. 25.

> Only so long as a woman was willing to renounce sexuality, that is, to remain unmarried if she was a virgin, and not to remarry if she was a widow, or even to renounce sexuality within marriage ("House Monasticism"), was she able to escape the tutelage of fathers and husbands, and indeed to become the equal of a man.[74]

Like her association with hunting, Niviene's chastity allows her to be emancipated from male family members and suitors; on an ethical level, however, it implies a desire to escape the earthly and the carnal, which, of course, is associated with the concept of femininity. As a follower of Diana, Niviene aspires to the highest Christian virtue, achieving a state of masculinity through her rejection of the body, sexuality and the feminine.

Nevertheless, Niviene's associations with Diana in the *Suite* could also be regarded from a different, darker perspective, as an association with a deity representative of a specifically female affront to Christianity. Though, as Marilynn Desmond highlights, women associated with Diana in the early fourteenth-century *Ovide Moralisé* are assimilated into a Christian value system and praised for their chastity, other medieval sources condemn Diana as a witch.[75] The pagan Goddess was associated with a form of female witchcraft, related to demonism, in which women claimed to have ridden out at night with the goddess, perverting any moral associations of the hunt towards a rejection of Christian law:

> As chief of a demon horde, Diana can now be associated with Satan and her followers with worshipers of Satan [...] Not only do women ride out with her, but they obey her as their lady (*domina*) as opposed to their true Lord, Jesus Christ (*dominus*).[76]

---

[74] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 93.
[75] 'The Goddess Diana and the Ethics of Reading in the *Ovide Moralisé*', in *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2007), pp. 61-75 (p. 71-72). See alsi Lundt, *Melusine und Merlin*, p. 278.
[76] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 80.

Diana is frequently associated with her counterpart Hecate, the goddess of magic.[77] Though Niviene's use of magic is directed at the preservation of her virginity, her disproportionate hate for Merlin, in addition to her eventual use of magic to cause his death, raises moral questions as to the merit she appears to gain through her chaste behaviour:

> Ne il n'estoit riens el monde que elle haïst si mortelment que elle faisoit Merlin pour chou que elle savoit bien que il baoit a son pucelage. Et se elle osast emprendre a lui occhirre ou par puison ou par autre chose, elle l'empresist hardiement.[78]

Whereas Diana's associations with chastity associate her with a masculinising virtue, her associations with witchcraft relate her to a particularly female form of insubordination, and worse, heresy. In this way, Niviene's identification with Diana overlays her androgyny with further moral connotations. The virtue of chastity negates her female status, denying the innate sinfulness of the female body and embracing the masculine soul in the best way possible for a woman. Nevertheless, her use of magic and her murderous intentions towards Merlin associate Niviene with Diana as a pagan witch, and with a demonic form of perversion among women where the hunt is tantamount to devil worship. In the Suite, then, Niviene's character evokes both the good and male and the sinful and female, creating an androgynous blend of gendered moral values from which emerges a profound ambiguity.

This invariant core of androgyny, which runs through the characterisation of both Viviane in the *Estoire* and Niviene in the *Suite*, produces separate contextual interpretants which represent a particular gender perspective. For Viviane in the *Estoire*, the combination of male intellect and female sensuality creates a form of androgyny which rests upon the gendered separation between the soul and the body. Masculinity

---

[77] Patrick Snyder, *Représentations de la femme et chasse aux sorcières, XIIIe-XVe siècle: lecture des enjeux théologiques et pastoraux* (Quebec: Fides, 2000), p. 20; Russell, *Witchcraft*, p. 48.
[78] *Suite*, p. 288.

is associated with the rational, femininity with the irrational; Viviane's character combines both of these to produce a form of androgyny which combines the rational with the sensual into a method of dominating Merlin. Niviene in the *Suite*, on the other hand, represents an androgyny founded upon a conception of the female as sinful. Through a chaste rejection of female sexuality, in her self-identification with Diana and love of hunting, Niviene appropriates a male virtue which transcends her female body. On the other hand, her use of magic to destroy Merlin connects her with Diana's status as a witch, associating her with a female cult of demon worship. Niviene's androgyny, therefore, corresponds to the *Suite*'s heightened focus on individual ethics; her character incorporates not only a mixture of masculinity and femininity, but also the moralised implications of masculinity and femininity within a Christian value system. As an interpretant-sign, Niviene moralises the intermingling of gender attributes inherent in Viviane's character, producing an ethically-inspired interpretant of Viviane's physiological androgyny.

The second invariant core of meaning in the transfer of Viviane's character from the *Estoire* to the *Suite* pertains to the effect on Merlin's persona as a result of their relationship. In both versions, Merlin is already defined as a dual personality; he is half-man, half-devil, conceived by a demon and redeemed by God. These two sides of his character rest in an uneasy unity, which begin to break apart during his relationship with Viviane/Niviene. Whereas the relationship in both texts allows Viviane and Niviene to become an amalgamation of masculine and feminine attributes, Merlin's persona follows an inverse trajectory, causing a rupture and eventual dissolution of his personality. It is this separation between the two sides of Merlin's character which constitutes the invariant semantic core; and as we will see, the interpretants of this core-sign in both texts correspond closely to their respective interpretants of Viviane/Niviene's androgyny.

In the *Estoire*, firstly, Merlin's relationship with Viviane causes an increasingly profound schism between his rational and irrational self. He will continue to be the 'plus sage home terrien'[79] in his dealings with Arthur and his court, infallible in both his prophetic authority and his military strategy. Nevertheless, away from male society and in the company of Viviane, his behaviour is progressively characterised as weak and foolish. Merlin's loss of self-control in confrontation with Viviane is first predicted by the goddess Diana, who promises Viviane's father that:

> il [Merlin] li ensaint la greignor partie de son sens par force d'yngremance en tel maniere qu'il soit si sougis a li, dés qu'il l'aura veüe, qu'il n'ait sor li pooir de faire riens encontre sa volonté. Et toutes les choses qu'ele li enquerra que il li ensaint.[80]

Using the language of control and subjection (*par force*, *sougis a li* and *n'ait sor li pooir*), Diana emphasises that Merlin will lose power over his own actions in his relations with Viviane. In opposition to the prophetic wisdom he continues to use at Arthur's court, Merlin in the *Estoire* does in fact display an excess of emotion over Viviane, which causes him to forfeit his masculine reason when he is around her. He is later frequently described in terms which imply a loss of rational control, contradicting his intellectual status as the 'plus sage home terrien'[81]:

> car il l'amoit si durement qu'a poi qu'il n'*esragoit*.[82]

> tant *s'i abandonna* et tant li aprist de ses afaires une fois et l'autre que il s'em pot tenir por *fol*.[83]

> Et il l'en dist tant et enseigna qu'il en fu puis tenu pour *fol* et est encore.[84]

---

[79] *Estoire*, p. 1055.
[80] *Estoire*, p. 1055-56.
[81] *Estoire*, p. 1055.
[82] *Estoire*, p. 1223.
[83] *Estoire*, p. 1560.
[84] *Estoire*, p. 1630; all my italics.

Though Merlin's powers of omniscience allow him to foresee the disastrous consequences of his love for Viviane, he is unwilling to act upon his knowledge and alter the course of his own future. When she requests that he teach her spells that he knows are destined to be used on himself, he responds with resignation:

> Et nonpourquant sot il bien son pensé, mais toutes voies li aprist il, et ce et autres choses.[85]

Merlin's powers themselves are not in any way weakened through his relationship with Viviane; nevertheless, he becomes unwilling to act upon his knowledge, continuing his attachment to her despite the disastrous consequences. This contradiction provokes a fragmentation in his persona, producing an emotionally objective, *sage* Merlin, alongside, and yet divided from, a subjective *fol* Merlin. In his own words, he echoes the language of Diana in his attestation of love for Viviane:

> Et je sui si souspris de vostre amour que *a force* me couvient faire vostre *volenté*.[86]

Viviane, therefore, instigates a displacement within Merlin's self, causing a schism which he acknowledges in his final conversation with Gauvain, whilst trapped in the magic castle:

> —conment puet ce a force avenir qui estiés *li plus sages hom del monde? —Mais li plus fols,* fait Merlins, car je savoie bien ce que avenir m'estoit, et je fui si fols que j'amai plus autrui que moi.[87]

[85] *Estoire*, p. 1224.
[86] *Estoire*, p. 1631.
[87] *Estoire*, p. 1652-53; my italics.

In the *Estoire*, then, this division between Merlin's rational and irrational self is not only spatial, but also sexual; the divide in his personality mirrors his movements between the public sphere of Arthur's court and the private sphere of Viviane's home. Though he retains his intellectual powers in the male-controlled court, in Viviane's domestic space he abandons himself to his emotions. In the presence of Viviane, then, Merlin becomes intellectually 'female', since, as we have seen, femininity is associated with the senses, in contrast to the rational mind. Just as the masculine side of Viviane's androgyny allows her to govern her feminine appetite in a way considered masculine, the irrational side of Merlin's personality represents a temporary inability of the reason to control the body: a condition associated with the female. When Merlin first makes Viviane's acquaintance, the reader has access to one of the few internal dialogues of the text:

> Et quant Merlins i vint et le [Viviane] vit si le remira molt ançois qu'il li deïst mot. Et dist en son cuer et pensa que molt seroit fols se il s'endormoit en son pechié que il em perdist son sens et son savoir pour le deduit a avoir d'une damoisele et lui honnir et Dieu perdre.[88]

As Bea Lundt argues, this dialogue characterises Merlin's precarious position between two worlds: the masculine, the intellectual and the Christian on the one hand, and on the other the feminine, the corporeal, and the diabolical.[89] The voice of his conscience, that part of him that worries about his soul and its relationship to God, makes one final protest before becoming entirely detached from his dealings with Viviane, circumstantially giving himself up to 'le deduit a avoir d'une damoisele'. In this way, the division of Merlin's persona into two separate mentalities corresponds to the nature of Viviane's androgyny; where she combines and controls both rational intellect and sensual female subjectivity, Merlin undergoes a schism between his rational and irrational personalities. This may be metaphorically extended to encompass a division

[88] *Estoire*, p. 1057.
[89] *Melusine und Merlin*, p. 280.

between his masculine and feminine sides, between the soul and the body, and, therefore, to a split between his human and diabolical heritages. If Merlin's soul has been saved by God, then his body and its appetites are still associated with the devil; though he never behaves dishonourably towards her, Merlin reverts in the presence of Viviane to his demonic side, associated with the senses, sexuality and the corporeal.

From this perspective, Viviane's confinement of Merlin in the *Estoire* to a magic castle can be regarded as a complete exclusion of his masculine rationality, and therefore, the logical conclusion of his psychological division. Whilst Merlin remains trapped inside the castle, Viviane may come and go as she pleases:

> Ne je puis issir ne nus n'i puet entrer fors sans plus cele qui ce m'a fait, qui me fait ici compaignie quant il li plaist. Et ele vient et s'en vait quant il li vient a plaisir et a volenté.[90]

The couple have undergone a complete role-reversal with regard to their original arrangements; where Viviane first represented the passive partner, confined to her father's home and patiently awaiting Merlin's visits, she is now active. It is she who controls their meetings and relations, whereas Merlin is now limited in his movements and restricted to the domestic sphere, associated with female space. In this way, the spatial/sexual circumstances of Merlin's personality split enforce upon him a permanently emasculated condition; no longer able to visit Arthur's court where he may still exercise his wisdom, Merlin is disconnected entirely from the rational side of his persona. He becomes the passive partner, associated with the social role of the female; we may even go so far as to compare his confinement to that of a *mal mariée*, a woman who is locked in a tower by an overly jealous husband. In keeping her lover confined to the private sphere, Viviane replicates this particularly male form of social

[90] *Estoire*, p. 1652.

violence, enforcing Merlin's passivity to the exclusion of his ability for self-determination.[91]

Passivity and activity, in the *Estoire*'s version of the Merlin and Viviane story, become intertwined with the dichotomy between the body and the soul (the irrational and the rational) which are combined in Viviane and dislocated in Merlin. Generalisations about masculine activity and feminine passivity in the Middle Ages derived from Aristotle's theories of gender roles in reproduction, in which the male performed the active role, providing the foetus' soul, with the woman passively providing material to be formed into shape by the man's sperm.[92] In this way, the distinction between male activity and female passivity in reproduction becomes identified with the female as matter—the body— and the male as the soul, producing as he does the rational parts of the child.[93] This biological postulate became a substructure for more general attitudes towards male and female social behaviour, and by the Middle Ages, was 'set down and perpetuated as universal and natural truth'.[94] Thomas Aquinas demonstrates the medieval perpetuation of the Aristotelian distinction between male activity and female passivity in generation:

> Animalibus vero perfectis competit virtus activa generationis secundum sexum masculinum, virtus vero passiva secundum sexum femininum.[95]

---

[91] Carolyne Larrington has instead interpreted Viviane's castle as a phallic symbol, associating it with masculine power rather than feminine space. If this reading is to be accepted, then the castle could be regarded as an androgynous combination of the male and the female, like Viviane herself. Nevertheless, the castle's associations with domesticity and closed 'female' spaces (see p. 36, below) define it more strongly as a feminine element. *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 104.

[92] *On the Generation of Animals*, I, XX (729a, 25-35); II, IV (738b, 20-25), ed. and trans. by A. L. Peck (London: Heinemann, 1943.

[93] Maryanne Cline Horowitz, 'Aristotle and Woman', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 9 (1976), 183-213 (pp. 195-196).

[94] ibid., pp. 183-84; Alcuin Blamires, *Women Defamed*, p. 2; Jacqueline Murray, 'Femininity and Masculinity' in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: an Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus, (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 284-287 (p. 284); Prudence R. S. M. Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC – AD 1250* (Montréal: Eden Press, 1985), p. 91.

[95] *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. I (Paris: Seu Petit-montrouge, 1859), p. 1376.

By suppressing Merlin's activity, the freedom which allows him to move between her home and the masculine world of the court, Viviane enforces the permanent repression of his rational mind. In forcing Merlin into a passive state, associated with the emotions and the senses, she is able to dominate him as the soul dominates the body. In this way, Merlin's confinement to the tower represents the final stage in the separation between his rational and irrational mentalities. By wholly excluding his rational personality, Viviane contributes to the dissolution of Merlin's persona, fragmenting the two sides of his personality to such an extent that, trapped in the castle, he is physically unable to reconcile himself to his former wisdom.

As an invariant core of meaning, this division within Merlin's personality is carried into the *Suite* in such as way as to reciprocate the moral ambiguity suggested by the character of Niviene in this latter text. The *Estoire*, by contrast, had equated the male-female dichotomy with the division between the body and soul; whilst Merlin undergoes an eventually permanent separation between these two mentalities, Viviane becomes a powerful figure by combining the two. The respective ethical connotations of rationality and sensuality, however, are latent; though the sinfulness of sexuality is inherent in the female and the body (associated with the devil, in Merlin's case), the author of the *Estoire* is relatively uncritical of any immoral implications in the behaviour of either Merlin or Viviane—if anything, Merlin's foolishness is more heavily condemned than his cupidity. Nevertheless, the moral implications of sexuality and its role within the ethical scheme of the *Suite* provide a contextual interpretant for the reinterpretation of Merlin's personality schism as an invariant semantic core. Whereas Merlin in the *Estoire* undergoes a division between his rational and irrational mentalities, the Merlin of the *Suite*, as we shall now see, suffers a schism between moral strength and moral weakness: between his conscience, and his desires.

In the *Estoire*, we only rarely have access to Merlin's thoughts; his inner debate over his meeting with Viviane is an isolated example of introspection. In the *Suite*,

however, psychological debate and internal monologue constitute a major interpretant of the original text. Throughout the narrative, the omniscient narrator provides access to the character's inner thoughts, exploring the moral issues surrounding their actions by externalising the reasoning of their inner monologue. Merlin and Niviene are no exception; it is only through exposure of Niviene's thoughts that we know of her plans to destroy Merlin, and the offence taken at his affections. For Merlin, falling in love with Niviene provokes inner turmoil; on the one hand, he determines to treat her with respect, refusing to do anything 'dont il cuidast que elle se deust courechier'.[96] He panders to her like an adoring courtly lover, declaring to her that:

> il n'est riens que je ne vous apresisse pour que je le seusse, car je n'aim riens fors vous ne ne porroie amer.[97]

Nevertheless, as his internal monologue demonstrates, Merlin struggles against his desire to sleep with Niviene

> Et por la grant amour qu'il avoit a li ne li osoit li requerre que elle fesist pour lui, car il ne l'osoit courechier. Et il pensoit toutes voies que il li averoit en auchune maniere, si qu'il en feroit outreement ses volontés.[98]

> Et Merlins amoit tant la Damoisele del Lac qu'il en moroit, ne il ne li osoit requerre que elle fesist pour lui por chou qu'il savoit bien que elle estoit encore pucelle. Et neporquant il ne baoit pas gramment avoec li estre qu'il ne la conneust carneument et qu'il en fesist tout chou que hom fait de feme.[99]

In both these examples of inner dialogue, Merlin expresses a mental dialectic which balances and juxtaposes his conflicting thoughts. He weighs the danger of upsetting Niviene against his own desires, clearly separating the two sides of the argument with

[96] *Suite*, p. 277.
[97] ibid.
[98] *Suite*, p. 288.
[99] *Suite*, p. 329.

the contrastive conjunctions 'toutes voies' and 'neporquant'. Whilst the negated form of the verb *oser* suggests timidity, and *requerre*, courtesy, the language used to describe his venereal intentions is forceful and even violent; 'il en feroit outreement ses volontés' and 'il li averoit en auchune maniere' imply a sexual aggression which is at odds with his polite consideration of Niviene's feelings. The division in Merlin's persona, therefore, is a moral one; he is torn between self-restraint and immoral desires, associated with his regard for his own soul and his demonic side. The two sides are separated out and juxtaposed through the exposition of Merlin's internal dialogue, creating a divided personality at odds with itself. In this way, the *Suite* develops the latent moral implications briefly expressed in the *Estoire*, as we have seen earlier, through Merlin's concern that he may 's'endormoit en son pechié' and 'Dieu perdre'. The ethical nature of Merlin's relationship with Niviene thus becomes a primary interpretant within the *Suite*'s reinterpretation of their story. Merlin's personality, divided between the influence of the rational soul and the sensual body, is developed into the context of the *Suite* through a resignification of the body/soul dichotomy within a moral scheme of good and bad. In this way, the morally dubious characterisation of Niviene, which rests on an androgynous mixture of male and female elements within a Christian ethical scheme, is reciprocated by Merlin's internal struggle between honourable love and sexuality in the *Suite*. Both he and Niviene are characterised by a mixture of gendered vices and virtues, which precludes any strict moral categorisation of either character as good or bad. Moral ambivalence, therefore, functions as a further interpretant in the reinterpretation of the *Estoire*'s Merlin and Viviane, whose associations with the masculine and the feminine become resignified within a system of religious ethics.

Where the confinement episode in the *Estoire* represents a complete dissolution of Merlin's already divided persona, the same moment in the *Suite* provides another moralised interpretant of the body/soul dichotomy. Merlin, in the *Suite*, is not trapped

in a magic castle, but more violently confined to a tomb. This tomb is found in 'la plus biele petite chambre que je [Merlin] sache',[100] a home carved into a rock by, according to Merlin's explanation, a certain Prince Anasten, who fled there with his *amie* as part of a self-imposed exile due to his father's disapproval of his choice of partner. On seeing that the pair had been buried in the same room, Niviene requests that she and Merlin sleep there that night; nevertheless, having put Merlin into an enchanted sleep, she has her *valets* place him in Anasten's tomb, and seals it herself with magic. This version in the *Suite* retains some invariant semantic content from the *Estoire*; primarily, the confinement of Merlin to female space. Not only is the tomb located in a makeshift domestic area, but the enclosed space it represents recalls the chaste female body; the 'huis de fer'[101] and the magically-sealed (and womb-like) tomb can be interpreted as a synecdoche for femininity in a general sense, which is often conveyed through confined spaces such as caves.[102] Niviene's trapping Merlin in a tomb perhaps suggests an ironic element of culpability; the connotations of virginity latent within the enclosed tomb develop the confinement motif away from the *Estoire* and back towards the *Lancelot*. As we have already seen, the *Lancelot* portrays its version of Viviane/Niviene as chaste and virtuous, only learning magic as a way to protect her virginity, and trapping Merlin in a cave in order to stop his sexual advances. In the *Lancelot*, then, Merlin's attempt to corrupt the uncorrupted female body is punished when he is ironically confined to an enclosed space representative of the very thing he has tried to defile. Though the *Lancelot* version of the narrative clearly provides an intermediary interpretant for Niviene trapping Merlin in the tomb, the *Suite* develops the respective moral positions of both Merlin and Niviene within the framework of Merlin's divided self and Niviene's androgynous characteristics. Though the cave story in the *Lancelot* presents a clear-cut

[100] *Suite*, p. 330.
[101] *Suite*, p. 333.
[102] Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image and Gender in Ovid's* Metamorphoses (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), p. 47; Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 104.

lesson, in which virginity overcomes and punishes lust, the moral ambivalence of both Merlin and Niviene in the *Suite* precludes any definitive apportioning of blame or sympathy. Instead, the *Suite* produces an interpretant of both the *Lancelot* cave story and Viviane's magic castle which develops the confinement motif through the optic of Merlin's morally divided persona.

The *Suite*'s narration of the events leading up the Merlin's entombment by Niviene demonstrates the ambivalence of this episode, offering different moral perspectives of Merlin's end. As both Carolyne Larrington and Lucy Paton highlight, Merlin's entombment in the *Suite* is preceded by various 'echoes' earlier in the narrative, which parallel his confinement.[103] These short narratives, which reflect, in certain logical respects, the main action of the plot, create a metaphorical structure not unlike that identified by Peter Ainsworth in Froissart's *Chroniques*:

> The reader becomes aware of potential echoes from one part of the text to another, and parallels or paradigms begin to suggest themselves, in their turn leading the reader back to a renewed search for other kinds of potential connections between the disparate elements of the narrative. In this way, the simple, cumulative 'metonymy' of a chronicle narration made up of contiguous elements gradually gives way to an inchoate metaphor, or at least to invited comparison.[104]

The stories of Dyane and Faunus, Anasten and his *amie*, and Merlin's encounter with a pair of enchanters in the forest all condense the complexities of the basic narrative of Merlin's entombment into a particular moral standpoint, which, though producing contradictory interpretations of Merlin's end, form a metonymic pattern of interpretants from a variety of ethical positions. As we will see, this intertwining of moral perspectives represents an externalised interpretant of Merlin's divided personality, caught between love for Niviene and immoral desire. The first of these such 'echoes' is

---

[103] *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 107; Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), pp. 235-238.

[104] 'Knife, Key, Bear and Book: Poisoned Metonymies and the Problem of *Translatio* in Froissart's Later *Chroniques*', *Medium Aevum*, 59 (1990), 91-113 (p. 94).

the story of Dyane and Faunus, told in the *Suite* by Merlin to Niviene as they come by the site of Dyane's former home. Dyane, who 'regna ou tans Vergille',[105] dedicates herself to hunting, yet unlike her Ovidian namesake, is quite the opposite of chaste. When she decides to leave her lover, Faunus, for a new one, Felix, she determines to be rid of Faunus by any means she can. Having been injured in a hunting accident, Faunus attempts to cure himself in a magic tomb which is filled with healing water; Dyane, however, 'qui ne se pensoit fors a mal et a dolour',[106] removes the water and tricks Faunus into allowing her to close the lid, so that she may fill the tomb with medicinal herbs. Instead, she fills it with boiling lead. Instead of rejoicing in the defeat of his rival, Felix punishes Diana's deception by cutting off her head. The connections with Merlin's own entombment are not only clear, but superimpose a particular ethical position onto Niviene's confinement of Merlin. Niviene is already identified with the figure of Diana, whose representation in the Middle Ages brings a moral ambivalence to her androgynous characteristics; here, however, there is no ambiguity surrounding Dyane, who is neither a virgin nor chaste. Both Merlin and Faunus leave their homes and their friends to be with their *amie*:

> Einsi fu Faunus aussi coume perdus, car il laissa son pere et ses amis et toutes autres compaignies pour l'amour de Dyane.[107]

> Et Merlin li conseille adont : «Aussi ai je fait, dame, que jou ai laissiet pour vostre compaignie le roi Artus et tous les haus houmes dou roiame de Logres dont jou estoie sires».[108]

In this way, they also mirror the actions of Anasten and his *amie*, who 'laissierent toute gent et le siecle pour mener lour goie et lour feste'.[109] Both Dyane and Niviene plot to

[105] *Suite*, p. 283.
[106] *Suite*, p. 285.
[107] *Suite*, p. 283-84.
[108] *Suite*, p. 332.
[109] ibid.

kill their lovers 'ou par puison, ou par autre chose'.[110] Finally, Niviene wishes to rebuild and inhabit Dyane's former home, seemingly oblivious to the moral connotations of identifying with such a figure. Through these parallels, the story of Dyane and Faunus creates a *mise en abime*, which projects a damning assessment of Niviene's role in Merlin's entombment. If Niviene is identified with Dyane, an embodiment of the medieval witch rather than the chaste goddess, then Merlin is associated with Faunus, the hapless victim of female cruelty.

Later in the *Suite*, however, Merlin and Niviene encounter two sorcerers in the forest; this short episode then provides a contrastive interpretation of Merlin's entombment. These two sorcerers have the power to cause any passing travellers to fall into an enchanted sleep, should they hear the sound of the enchanters' magic harps. This has allowed them to kill many men who have passed by (and who are buried in numerous graves around the forest), and also allowed them to rape any women in their victims' company. When Niviene and her attendants succumb to the sound of their harp-playing, Merlin destroys the sorcerers by using his own power to magically make them fall asleep; ironically mimicking their own crimes, he then buries them in two *fosses* intended for their future victims, recreating, once again, the confinement motif which foreshadows his own entombment. He fills the *fosses* with burning sulphur, declaring that the fire 'durra sans estaindre tant coume li rois Artus regnera'. Just as the Dyane and Faunus tale drew explicit parallels between Niviene and Dyane, this narrative proposes a series of connections between the enchanters and Merlin. The enchanters' use of magic to put women into an enchanted sleep in order to rape them reflects Niviene's fears (though they may be unfounded) that she will suffer the same abuse from Merlin:

[110] *Suite*, p. 285. Merlin also fears he may be attacked 'ou par puison, ou par autre chose'. Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 106.

> Si en fu moult espoentee, car elle avoit paour que cil ne la honnesist par son enchantement ou que cil ne geust a li en son dormant.[111]

There is irony, then, in the fact that Niviene will later destroy Merlin with an enchanted sleep, paralleling the irony of Merlin using the very same method to overcome the enchanters. Sleep, it seems, is an invariant core of meaning transferred to the *Suite* from the *Estoire*, where Viviane renders her male guardians unconscious in order to evade their control. In the *Suite*, however, the sign 'sleep' produces a darker interpretant, associated not only with the latent connotations of death, but also anxieties over sexual violence. The enchanted sleeps of both the enchanters and Merlin are described in similar terms, emphasising the sheer powerlessness in their loss of mental and physical capacities:

> Et cil furent tel atourné, erraument que Merlins aprocha d'eus, qu'il orent perdu lour *sens* et lour *memoire* et tout le pooir de lour membres, si que *uns enfes les peuust illuec occhirre s'il seuust et euust tant de forche*. Ne il ne pooient riens faire fors seoir et regarder Merlin, et a chascun estoit ja cheue la harpe.[112]

> ...et [Merlin] avoit perdu tout le *sens* et toute la *memoire* dont il avoit esté garnis...Et quant elle l'a ensi atourné que *se on li caupast la teste n'euust il pooir de soi remuer*...[113]

Furthermore, both Merlin and the sorcerers are described as 'anemis', evoking both Merlin's ontological status as a devil's son, whilst also associating the enchanters' nefarious activities with those of devils (in particular, those of Merlin's incubus father, who impregnated his mother whilst she slept).[114] While Niviene and her servants are in the harp players' enchanted sleep, they experience visions of Hell; this accentuates further the connection between the enchanters' crimes and Merlin's demonic side. These parallels, then, between Merlin and the enchanters, counteracts the metonymic

[111] *Suite*, p. 277.
[112] *Suite*, p. 294; my italics.
[113] *Suite*, p. 334; my italics.
[114] *Suite*, p. 294, p. 335. For Merlin's parentage, see Chapter 2.

connection between Merlin and Faunus, where the associations between Niviene and the evil Dyane placed Merlin in the role of the innocent victim. Merlin is here, in the Suite, associated with sexual predation, the use of magic for evil which deserves punishment. This metonymic parallel causes Merlin's own condemnation of the enchanters as 'malvaise escommuniie gent' who have earned their 'venganche'[115] to reflect back upon himself, casting a moral shadow over his secret desires to sleep with Niviene. In this way, the story of the enchanters suggests Merlin's culpability in causing his own end; his designs on Niviene's virginity are portrayed as unforgivable, and deserve to be punished in the same way as the predatory enchanters.

In addition to the story of Anasten and his *amie*, whose tale represents a utopic contrast to that of Merlin and Niviene, the *Suite*'s narratives of Dyane and the enchanters create a sort of dialectic texture, which explores the moral ambiguity surrounding Merlin's and Niviene's relations and Merlin's entombment. By presenting two opposed moral arguments—one in which Merlin is unjustly punished by an overly cruel woman, and one in which he is rightly punished for his desire to violate a virgin—the *Suite* externalises Merlin's moral division between conscience and desire. Just as his internal dialogue mediates between his love for Niviene and his wish to sleep with her, the *Suite*'s parallel stories of confinement explore both these sides of his persona by metonymically illustrating the relative moral arguments, using the external interaction of different characters as a synecdoche for Merlin's ethical introspection. In this way, the parallel narratives represent a manifestation of Merlin's divided subjectivity, the moralised schism between his body and soul. By providing intermediary interpretants of the confinement episode, the stories of Dyane and the enchanters demonstrate the unresolved ambivalence of Niviene's entombment of Merlin; no definitive moral interpretation is suggested, leaving the reader to consider the ethical implications themselves. Merlin's split personality in the *Suite*, then, as an

[115] *Suite*, p. 294-295.

invariant semantic core, develops a series of morally interrogative interpretants both psychologically (through Merlin's internal conflict) and externally (through the metonymic reflexivity created by these various narrative echoes of his confinement).

As an example of *réécriture*, the transfer of invariant meaning from the *Estoire* to the *Suite* demonstrates a parallelism with that of translation, despite its more extensive reconstruction of discourse and more deliberate resignification. The character of Viviane, and her role within each text, become core signs, dynamically importing static associations from her state as a cultural unit into a particular text, in the same way that a lexical item can have a range of potential meanings before it is used in context. The invariant semantic material of the Viviane story relates not only to the idea of 'Viviane' as a static unit, but also to a range of interrelated cultural discourses which surface as intermediary interpretants for her role in both the *Estoire* and the *Suite*. The medieval association of the male with a unity of essence, with rationality, the soul and the conscience—in Neoplatonist terms, the 'monad'[116]— provides an interpretative foundation for each text's portrayal of the disconcertingly masculinised Viviane, and her relationship with Merlin; as a unified amalgamation of both male and female, the invariant core of Viviane connotes strength and power. Merlin, on the other hand, becomes associated with a dyadic, separated form of being; he is disordered and chaotic, hence weak and vulnerable in relation to Viviane. As triadic Peircean signs, the invariant meaning of Viviane's androgynous gender combination and Merlin's psychological gender division incorporate various intermediary interpretants drawn from this cultural discourse; undergoing a process of semiosis, these meanings are developed into the particular interpretative context of each text. The *Estoire* produces a contextual interpretant in which the masculine is associated with the rational mind, the sort of emotionally detached service to male society displayed by Merlin throughout his dealings with Arthur's court. Viviane's combination of male rationality with its opposite

[116] Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p. 26.

within the same discourse, feminine sensuality, produces her androgynous nature, causing Merlin's sensual appetite to detach itself from his intellectual soul. It is ultimately his lack of rationality, his allowing his emotions to dominate his reason that is the cause of his downfall. The *Suite*, however, and by contrast, uses the body/soul dichotomy as an interpretant for the core-signs 'Viviane's androgyny' and 'Merlin's split personality'; it produces moral interpretants associated with the ethical implications of the body and soul divide. Within the context of the *Suite*, the body and its appetites are explicitly associated with sin, and the soul and rational mind with the conscience; Niviene's precarious balance between chaste moral masculinity and pagan femininity creates a form of spiritual androgyny, which counterbalances Merlin's moral separation between his conscience and his carnal intentions. The contextual interpretant for the *Suite*, therefore, is the question of sin and responsibility; Merlin and Niviene's respective roles in Merlin's entombment are explored from different moral perspectives, allowing the reader to reflect upon the nature of cruelty and blame. Through still analysis of *réécriture*-as-semiosis, Viviane's character reveals a stable complexity in both the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, which develops far beyond her single-faceted beginnings in the *Lancelot*. If Merlin, in both these texts, is an intricate and centrally important character, then Viviane's role in his downfall suggests that she must be equally intricate and important; she must somehow be wiser than the wisest man in the world.

Chapter 4:

Rewriting Prophetic Discourse in the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin*

In Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, a short narrative sequence derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* tells of one baron's cynicism towards Merlin's prophetic gifts. In order to prove the prophet wrong, the baron comes to Merlin on three occasions, each time in a different disguise, asking to know the cause of his death. When he receives a different answer each time, the baron believes that he has exposed Merlin as a fraud; he is told firstly that he will break his neck, secondly that he will be hanged, and thirdly that he will be drowned. A short time later, however, he is killed when he falls from his horse over a bridge. All three of Merlin's predictions come true, as he breaks his neck from the fall, drowns in the water, and is left hanging from the horse's reins. Despite having been proven a true prophet, Merlin's response to this event is far from triumphant. In an attempt to avoid a repeat occurrence of this interrogation, he vows only ever to speak of the future in obscure terms: ' je ne parleroie plus oiant le pueple se si oscurement non que il ne sauront que je dirai devant ce que il le verront'.[1] His prophecies are in future only to be understood once they become a reality.

This chapter will investigate how the notion of Merlin's *obscures paroles* has been developed through the process of intralingual *réécriture* to produce different interpretants in the two sequels to Robert's *Merlin*, the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin*. In the previous chapter, *réécriture* was seen to be a process whereby the character of Viviane became a lexicalised unit of meaning, retaining some invariant semantic material which produces varying interpretants within the different contexts of the *Estoire* and of the *Suite*. Likewise, the basic notion behind Merlin's obscure prophetic

[1] *Estoire*, p. 678.

discourse can also be seen to function as a Peircean sign, producing differing interpretants deriving from the same invariant object. In this case, the process of *réécriture*-semiosis develops an inherent problem central to the medieval concept of prophecy, and one which is exemplified by the narrative of the baron's death; namely, the predicaments which occur when human beings are confronted with knowledge from beyond their own epistemological parameters. Though it is obvious that a man cannot ordinarily know the time or manner of his own death, Merlin's response to the baron's interrogations raises the fundamental question as to whether or not, given the opportunity, he *should* be allowed to know. The limits of human knowledge are emphasised by the baron's inability to understand that the three separate outcomes proposed by Merlin will happen at once; he is unable to grasp the totality of time and meaning which is intrinsic to the idea of prophecy. It is this disparity between the limits of human knowledge and the unlimited signification of prophetic discourse which undergoes a process of interpretative semiosis, producing contrasting interpretants of Merlin's *obscures paroles* in accordance with the context of each text. The *réécriture* of Merlin's prophetic discourse, therefore, will be examined in relation to the way in which both the *Estoire* and the *Suite* reinterpret the epistemological gulf between Merlin and the other characters in each text, comparing the language of the prophecies, the way in which obscurity is created, and people's reactions to prophetic speech.

Like the figure of Viviane, the notion of Merlin's prophetic discourse signifies through the reciprocal tension between elements drawn from the idea of 'prophecy' as a static unit, and its functional status as a dynamic unit within a textual framework. That is to say, both the *Estoire* and the *Suite* draw upon the same contemporary ideas about prophecy, but produce differing interpretants of those ideas which correspond to each text's interpretative context. Merlin's association with prophecy derives ultimately from the *Prophetiae Merlini*, a series of obscure prophecies delivered by Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Disguised by obscure language, Geoffrey's Latin

version of the prophecies concerns not only the future of King Arthur's reign, but also encodes comments upon political events in Geoffrey's own time. Though this association between Merlin and political prophecy will be adopted in the Italian tradition (see Chapter 5), the interpretants produced by the idea of prophecy in both our French texts appear to derive from a philosophical perspective upon the temporal and linguistic paradoxes inherent in prophetic discourse. We shall begin our study, therefore with a few words about how the Middle Ages viewed prophetic knowledge and the temporal implications of its communication.

As Kathryn Karczewska suggests in her study of prophecy in the Vulgate cycle, revelation of the future represents a moment of direct contact between man and God.[2] This ensues through the coincidence of two systems of communication: the human, which can only experience the temporal and the material, and the sacred, which experiences the totality of time and meaning at once. Karczewska's proposition relies upon medieval theories regarding the nature of time and its relation to human languages, which, though not necessarily demonstrating direct influence upon the conception of prophecy in vernacular literature, are symptomatic of a general mindset, whereby prophetic discourse was characterised as a form of divinely inspired speech. Throughout the Middle Ages, there existed a theoretical distinction between time as it is experienced by the human mind, and sacred time. In Augustine's discussion of this distinction in Book XI of the *Confessiones*, God, it seems, was thought to exist in a time frame in which past, present and future were all one, and experienced simultaneously. Divine omniscience therefore would not differentiate between past, present and future knowledge.[3] Human beings, however, exist in a material world where time can only be experienced as an unfolding sequence; within this sequence, only the present is

---

[2] *Prophecy and the Quest for the Holy Grail: Critiquing Knowledge in the Vulgate Cycle* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998). For more on the role of prophecy in the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, see Carol. E. Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance*; Peter Ihring, 'Merlin und die literarische Sinnbildung'; Valerie M.Lagorio, 'The Apocalyptic Mode in the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Romances', *Philological Quarterly*, 57 (1978), 1-22.

[3] XI: 11; XI: 31, XVIII: 29, ed. James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 152-153; p. 164; p. 202.

accessible. The human mind can project itself backwards (through memory) and forwards (through expectation), but these perceptions of the past and future are only mental illusions which are also grounded in the present.[4] This distinction between earthly and eternal time also has repercussions upon Augustine's theories regarding human and divine languages. Within the material temporality of creation, language can only be communicated in a sequence; though meaning exists in the mind as a single entity—what we might today refer to as 'propositional content'— it can only be expressed in words that must be spoken one after another. Augustine uses the example of reciting a psalm from memory; though the psalm exists in its entirety in his mind, it must be fragmented and broken up into verses and syllables in order to be expressed over a period of time, with the lines already spoken becoming part of the past, and lines yet to be recited existing only in the potential future. In this way, human languages mirror the nature of human experience in the world, whereby only a fragment of language, time or consciousness can be perceived at any one moment:

> et quod in toto cantico, hoc in singulis particulis eius fit atque in singulis syllabis eius, hoc in actione longiore, cuius forte particula est illud canticum, hoc in tota vita hominis, cuius partes sunt omnes actiones hominis, hoc in toto saeculo filiorum hominum, cuius partes sunt omnes vitae hominum.[5]

As a result, language is divided into a system of signs which are combined in order to externalise ideas as they exist in the mind. Signs, however, are imperfect; not only is there an initial separation between the sign and the thing it represents, the multiplicity of signs and sign combinations render human languages complex and opaque. There is no unity between meaning and its expression: a thing may be expressed in several ways, yet several things may be expressed using the same signs. Both Augustine and

---

[4] *Confessions* XI: 18-20, pp. 156-157; See also Eugene Vance, *Mervelous Signals : Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 35-37.
[5] XI: 28, p. 163.

his medieval successors, such as Thomas Aquinas and Hugh of St Victor, contrast these multiple and contingent human languages with the eternal *Verbum* of God, a preverbal essence which exists beyond the material necessities of human language (the *verbum*). Where human languages express only fragmented parts of a speaker's knowledge, the divine Word contains God's universal knowledge as a whole:

> Verbum enim quod in nobis exprimitur per actualem considerationem, quasi exortum ex aliqua priorum consideratione, vel saltem cognitione habituali, non totum in se recipit quod est in eo a quo oritur: non enim quidquid habituali cognitione tenemus, hoc totum exprimit intellectus in unius verbi conceptione, sed aliquid eius. Similiter in consideratione unius conclusionis non exprimitur omne id quod erat virtutis in principiis. Sed in Deo, ad hoc quod verbum eius perfectum sit, oportet quod verbum eius exprimat quidquid continetur in eo ex quo exoritur; et praecipue cum Deus omnia uno intuitu videat, non divisim. Sic igitur oportet quod quidquid in scientia patris continetur, totum hoc per unum ipsius verbum exprimatur, et hoc modo quo in scientia continetur, ut sit verbum verum suo principio correspondens. [6]

Because the divine *Verbum* is not subject to the unfolding of time, meaning and its expression are unified. Theoretically speaking, meaning is communicated with absolute clarity because it is not mediated through contingent human signs. Regrettably for Augustine, the *Verbum* is inaccessible to human beings, who are bound to their inadequate earthly sign systems. God can only communicate with man through human language and time, and it follows therefore the true meaning behind His works will never be fully understood in this world.[7]

Returning to Karczewska's proposition, prophecy in the Vulgate Cycle is conceived as an intersection between human and divine sign systems because it constitutes the expression of sacred meaning (which exists outside of time) through temporal human language. Because the human mind can only exist in the present, and

---

[6] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, q. 4, art. 4, co., in *Sancti Thomae ad Aquino opera omnia*, ed. by Roberto Busa, vol. 22 (Rome: Leonine, 1970-1976); also Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.3, PL 176, 739-838.

[7] *Confessions*, 12. 26, p. 179; E. Jane Burns, *Arthurian Fictions*, p. 21; Theresa Coletti, *Naming the Rose: Eco, Medieval Signs and Modern Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 20-23.

can only know what has been gradually revealed through the unfolding of time, knowledge of the future belongs only to God's divine omniscience. True prophecy, therefore, represents 'a crack in the façade of logic and language'.[8] Prophecy, like God's knowledge, is preverbal and atemporal, expressing meanings which are beyond the materiality of human language and time. It is a revelation, according to Thomas Aquinas, of divine knowledge which would otherwise be inaccessible to human perception.[9] In Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, the prophet's powers of prediction are accorded to him by God, as part of His salvation of the devil's progeny.[10] Merlin's knowledge, like that of God, knows no temporal distinction between the past, present and future; it derives from a divine, eternal time frame beyond human perception. Both the *Estoire* and the *Suite* reiterate the sacred origins of Merlin's prophetic knowledge:

> Mais je feroie pechié se je destournoie ce que Nostre Sires m'a donné tant de sens et de discrecion com je ai pour aïdier a complir les aventures del Saint Graal.[11]

> Et tu k'en ses? fait li rois. Es tu dont si certains des choses qui sont a avenir? -- Oïl voir, fait Merlins, ceste grasce m'a Diex otroiie, la soie mierchi.[12]

When this sacred prophetic knowledge is expressed as a concrete utterance, its unity of time and meaning is at once broken. From this philosophical perspective, therefore, prophecy is characterised by a *fragmentation*. The divine temporal and significatory harmony from which knowledge of the future derives must disintegrate, if it is to be

---

[8] Karczewska, *Prophey and the Quest for the Holy Grail*, p. 7.

[9] *Summa Theologica*, IIa, IIae, q. 171, art. 1 and 3, ed. Migne, vol. III, pp. 1195-1200 ; see also Kate Cooper, '*Merlin Romancier*: Paternity, Prophecy and Poetics in the Huth Merlin', *Romantic Review*, 77 (1986), 1-24 (p. 6); R. W Southern, 'Presidential Address: Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 3: History as Prophecy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 22 (1972), 159-180 (p. 160).

[10] Et Nostres Sires qui tot connoist et set par la repentance de l'ame et par la bone reconnoissance et par lavement des confessions et par la bone repentance que il sot qui en son cuer estoit, et que par son gré et par sa volenté n'estoit avenu ce que avenu li estoit, et par la force del bauptesme dont il estoit lavés es fons vaut Nostres Sires que li pechiés de la mere ne li peüst nuire. Si li dona sens et pooir de savoir les choses qui estoient a avenir [..]; *Estoire* (Robert de Boron section), p.594 .

[11] *Estoire*, p. 1051.

[12] *Suite*, p. 14.

expressed through the temporally disjointed languages of material communication; even the temporal designation of prophetic speech as telling 'the future' brings such knowledge into a thought system in which the future is divided from the present and the past. Karczweska's theories of prophetic function in the Vulgate cycle outline the epistemological problems which occur when human beings are confronted with this divine knowledge. She defines prophetic discourse as 'Other than Other'; a system of communication which is beyond the temporality of human language and yet inherently confined to it. Prophetic discourse can only express the sacred—the Other— in human languages which are unable to accommodate it; therefore, the utterance of prophecy uses a language which is apart from any other— it is both other than human and other than divine.[13]

The prophetic discourse delivered by Merlin in the *Estoire* and the *Suite* can certainly be characterised as Other in a broad sense, given its symbolic obscurity and dysfunctional communicability. Nevertheless, both texts incorporate more fundamentally the concept of this fragmentation, drawn from the philosophico-linguistic perspectives of 'prophecy' as a static unit of meaning. Merlin's *obscures paroles* express, in both the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, the limits of human language and understanding in confrontation with the originary unity of Merlin's omniscience, producing interpretants of prophetic speech which correspond to the material divisions between past, present and future, and between signifier and signified, which govern human epistemology. Fragmentation, therefore, can be seen as an invariant semantic core of Merlin's prophetic discourse, which manifests itself in varying interpretants developed through the semiosic process of *réécriture*. This study, therefore, will investigate how fragmentation, as an invariant seme, is expressed in first the *Estoire,* and then the *Suite*, relating this, where possible, to the contextual interpretants of each text as a whole.

[13] *Prophecy and the Quest for the Holy Grail*, p. 8.

Estoire de Merlin

In the *Estoire*, the author distinguishes between the different functions and expressions of Merlin's prophetic knowledge. As Zumthor has already remarked, Merlin's use of prophecy to advise Arthur on his course of action and his battle tactics is communicated and understood clearly by the relevant parties, and plays a significant role in shaping the course of Arthurian history.[14] However, prophecies regarding events which will happen after Merlin's estrangement from Arthurian society—as a result of his incarceration by Viviane—are presented by Merlin as being beyond the reach of human control, and therefore cannot be revealed openly to those who may influence the course of the future. Merlin thus deliberately masks his prophecies with heavily symbolic language which is highly reminiscent of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetia Merlini*, obstructing any possibility of interpretation by Merlin's fictional interlocutors (though some medieval readers and listeners would have known the Vulgate narratives well enough to be able to identify the characters and episodes described). In this form of prophetic discourse, fragmentation occurs on a linguistic level to render Merlin's language incomprehensible to other characters in the text. Prophetic meaning—referring to the linguistic and temporal unity of Merlin's knowledge— is dislocated from its expression, producing interpretants of the concept 'fragmentation' which correspond to the theoretical disparity between human and divine language. Interpretants of this linguistic fragmentation are manifested in three ways: chronological fragmentation, semiotic fragmentation and the multiplication of signifiers.[15]

---

[14] Zumthor, *Merlin le Prophète*, p. 184.

[15] Though the overall methodology of this thesis rejects the Saussurean sign in favour of Peirce's tripartite sign model, this chapter will refer to signification within prophetic discourse using Saussurean terminology. This is because de Saussure's signifier-signified dichotomy more closely reflects medieval theories of symbolism, which also relied on a dyadic relationship between symbol and thing symbolised. See Vance, *Mervellous Signals*; Armand Strubel, '«*Allegoria in factis*» et «*Allegoria in verbis*»', *Poétique*, 23 (1975), 342-357; Johan Chydenius, 'La théorie du symbolisme médiéval', *Poétique*, 23 (1975), 322-341.

Chronological fragmentation

Human speech, as we have already seen, was regarded as a fractional form of communication in relation to the eternal *Verbum*; the signified, be it an object or idea, exists in separation from the sign by which it is represented. Prophetic speech, however, incurs a further fragmentation. The signifiers of prophetic discourse exist in the present, whereas the signifieds exist in the future, which is as yet beyond the scope of human knowledge. Signifier and signified are not unified until the event prophesied actually occurs, when both the sign and its meaning coincide in the present. This chronological separation between the reception of a sign and the revelation of its signification is evident in *Estoire* prophecies; when receivers of Merlin's prophecies ask whether he will clarify their meaning, he tells them, on numerous occasions, that the prophecy will only be understood at the moment that it comes to pass;

> Mais ne vous chaut de moi plus enquerre, car bien saurés encore que ce porra estre et vous meïsmes le vesrés a vos ex ains que vous muirés de mort.[16]

> Sire, fait li rois Bans, de celes oscures paroles que vous nous amentevés que nous ne savons que chou est le nous dirés vous? —Nenil, fait Merlins, mais de tant sace li rois Artus que tout ce avenra a son vivant.[17]

The characters are assured that they will understand, but only when the event ceases to belong to the future and becomes the present. Since the human mind can only accommodate the present, Merlin's use of obscure language conceptualises this inability to grasp knowledge from beyond the material sequence of time. On one occasion, Merlin even has Blaise write down parts of his prophecy as a series of letters, which he distributes in such a way that they will be found by the relevant actors at the appropriate moment:

[16] *Estoire*, p. 1051-1052.
[17] *Estoire*, p. 1069-1070.

> Et les letres que Blayse fist mist Merlins par tous les chemins ou les aventures estoient et ne pooient estre ostees se par ciaus non qui les acheviroient. Et par che furent li chevalier en uolonté d'errer.[18]

Once again, the prophecy is fragmented over a period of time- from its delivery, to its reception by those who find the letters, to its occurrence in time. Merlin's refusal to reveal the meaning of his prophecies until they come true thus manifests an interpretant of the fragmentation incurred when atemporal prophecies are translated into human epistemological time frame, where time is divided into past, present and future.

Semiotic fragmentation

Just as signifier and signified are divided across a period of time, so Merlin's use of esoteric symbolism also fragments the relationship between meaning and its expression. These are Merlin's 'obscures paroles' *proprement dites*; nothing is expressed as direct denotation, but is mediated by figurative language. According to R. W. Southern, the use of obscure language was regarded as a mark of truth in prophecy; the more arcane the symbolism, the more authenticity the prophecy gained.[19] Merlin's prophecies are primarily expressed through animal symbolism, a type of prophetic discourse which has its origins in Biblical prophecy (specifically Daniel's vision and St Paul's vision of the Apocalypse in Revelations).[20] However, it is Geoffrey's *Historia* which first associates the prophecies of Merlin with zoological symbols.[21] This use of animals to represent

[18] *Estoire*, p. 1450.
[19] *History as Prophecy*, p. 161.
[20] Daniel, 7; Revelations: cf. p. 156.f.
[21] Michael J. Curley, 'Animal Symbolism in the *Prophecies of Merlin*', in *Beasts and Birds in the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and its Legacy*, ed. by Willene B. Clark and Meredith T. McMunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 150-163 (p. 152); Karen R.Moranski,. 'The *Prophetiae Merlini*, Animal Symbolism and the Development of Political Prophecy in Late Medieval England and Scotland', *Arthuriana*, 8 (1998) 58-68 (p. 23); Southern, *History as Prophecy*, p. 164. See also Jean Blacker, 'The Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies of Merlin', *Arthuriana*, 15 (2005), 1-125.

human figures has particular semiotic implications; as Jan Ziolkowski notes, Geoffrey's animal symbols provide 'a form of commentary rather than true prophecy'.[22] The type of animal, its connotations, and its interaction with other figures within the symbolic network not only predicts the future, but interprets its significance. In the *Estoire*, Merlin's prophetic speech will use animal symbols to similar effect, providing a commentary upon future events, in addition to fragmenting the text semiotically as a hindrance to understanding. The relationship between signifier and signified is not one of equivalence, but instead one of similitude; language does not describe what a future event *is*, but what it *resembles*. For example, Merlin's prediction of his own death uses the following figures: he describes how the 'leus' (Viviane) will capture the 'lion saluage' (himself) with ' cercles qui ne seront de fer, ne de fust, ne dargent, ne dor, ne de plon' (the magic castle). His interlocutor, in this case his scribe, Blaise, is confused by the seemingly illogical situation that a she-wolf could be stronger than a lion;

> —Dieu merci, fait Blayses, qu'est ce que vous dites? Dont n'est lyons plus fors que leus et plus fait a redouter? —Vous dites voir, ce dist Merlins.
> —Ore me dites donc, fait Blayses, comment la loe aura donc pooir vers le lyon?[23]

Blaise's question highlights an important aspect of the signified event, in which Viviane, Merlin's pupil and logically his subordinate, manages to use his own magic to confine him permanently to a magic castle. In this way, the symbolism of the prophecy comments upon the incongruous circumstances by placing its signifiers- the stronger lion and the weaker she-wolf- in a similarly incongruous relationship. Though medieval theories of symbolism are diverse and often contradictory, similitude is a constant feature of the manner in which symbols were seen to signify. In many cases, the similarities between symbol and symbolised can have an explicative function; events of

[22] 'The Nature of Prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*', in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. by James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 151-162 (p. 158-159).
[23] *Estoire*, p. 1051.

the Old Testament were seen to demonstrate spiritual truths revealed in the New Testament through this relationship of similitude. In his study of medieval allegory, Armand Strubel cites the example of Abraham's two wives, the first of whom, a slave, was seen to represent the Jewish people who were "enslaved" to their old laws, whilst his other, free wife was interpreted to represent Christians liberated by the new religion.[24] Whether this symbolism was seen as directly orchestrated by God Himself, or simply a set of circumstances which may be used as a didactic metaphor, the symbolism does not designate, but describes. Merlin's prophecies, likewise, do not narrate the future directly, but through a metaphor which illustrates and comments.

A straightforward relationship of similitude and description, however, is a valid analysis of the prophecies only when they are viewed on an individual basis. When they are regarded as a corpus, Merlin's use of animal symbolism based on similitude between animal and character defies any system of coherent interpretation. Between one prophecy and the next, each symbolic relationship of similarity functions in differing ways. For example, the figure of the lion is used to represent not only different characters in different contexts, but also creates a relationship between that character and the lion symbol on different levels, ranging from a simply descriptive symbolism to a more profound allegorical meaning. As noted above, Merlin describes himself as the 'lion saluage', whilst elsewhere he describes Arthur as the 'lion couronné'.[25] Galehaut Sire des Îlles Lointaines, who will invade Arthur's kingdom in the following book of the cycle (*Lancelot en prose*), is represented by a lion without a crown in Queen Elaine's dream,[26] whereas the coming of another ' lyon as .II. messages' is also predicted.[27] In these cases, the lion symbolism functions descriptively; the strength and courage connoted by the lion works to depict Arthur and Galehaut as strong military leaders,

[24] Armand Strubel, '«*Allegoria in factis*» et «*Allegoria in verbis*»', p. 350; See also Johan Chydenius, 'La théorie du symbolisme médiéval'.
[25] *Estoire*, p. 1068.
[26] *Estoire*, pp. 1216-1219.
[27] *Estoire*, p. 1449.

whereas Merlin's self-description as a lion serves to illustrate the absurdity of his being overcome by a weaker being. In the second instance, the figure of the lion is not so much descriptive of Merlin himself, but rather of his role within this particular context. When applied to Galahad, however, the lion symbolism acquires a further typological meaning. Galahad's messianic function in the fourth book of the cycle, the *Queste del Saint Graal*, defines him as an Arthurian Christ figure, whose achievement of the Holy Grail quest and subsequent bodily ascension into Heaven serve to underline the incompatibility of earthly chivalry and spirituality. Merlin's prophecy, in which Galahad is represented as the 'grans lyons que toutes [*sic*] autres l'enclineront et par qui regart li chiex espartira',[28] emphasises his position as a Christ-like intermediary between Heaven and earth, and in doing so, recalls the lion as a symbol of Christ's messianic role as it is used in Genesis and Revelations.[29] In this way, the lion is used as both a profane symbol of military power and, elsewhere, as a sacred symbol of Christ. Descriptive symbolism is here employed in a way that is not hermeneutically coherent across prophecies; not all lions may be interpreted as military leaders, nor as typological messiahs. Symbols with conventional connotations are likewise used in such a way as to eschew a consistent interpretation of animal symbolism within the prophecies. For example, the dragon is used to symbolise Arthur in his fight against the giant of Mont St Michel,[30] and also the invading Galehaut.[31] In the former case, the dragon is the positive figure within the combat, and in the latter, it represents the opponent; neither, however, is associated with Satan, whose representation as a dragon in Revelations and in various saints' legends would make this the most obvious, and familiar, significance. Further to this, the two-headed dragons which appear in Flualis' dream to rip off his limbs and burn his city to the ground are interpreted by Merlin as the four Christian

[28] *Estoire*, p. 1051.
[29] Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5; see also Alva William Steffer, *Symbols of the Christian Faith* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), p. 15. cf. also the biblical image of the Devil as a roaring lion (1Peter 5:8).
[30] *Estoire*, p. 1575.
[31] *Estoire*, p. 1068.

kings, whose religious influence will wipe out pagan beliefs in Flualis's land.[32] Once again, the symbol 'dragon' may be interpreted as consistently neither good or bad.

Multiplication of signifiers

Fragmentation, then, manifests itself through the failure to support a universal system of interpretation between prophecies; by using differing types (and typologies) of similitude between symbol and symbolised, Merlin's prophecies become atomised into a series of individual, non-coherent signifying relationships. A further interpretant of this type of prophetic fragmentation can be identified in the lack of coherent equivalence between symbol and meaning. To describe the same character, often identifiable in more than one prophecy, there is no consistent use of a single signifier. As we have seen, both Arthur and Galehaut are described as a lion and a dragon in different prophetic contexts. Even the figure of the leopard, which is used on more than one occasion to symbolise Lancelot, is redeployed in other prophecies which could not logically support this interpretation. For example, when Arthur asks Merlin when he will next return to court, Merlin answers:

> Sire, fait Merlin, et je le vous dirai. Et puis si me metrai au chemin. Li lyons qui est fix del hourse et qui engenrés fu du lupart coura par le royalme de Logres [...][33]

The leopard here could not possibly be Lancelot, who at this point in time had only recently been conceived. Merlin does return during the planned invasion by Luces, the Roman emperor, who, it may be assumed, is represented by the lion in question. The leopard, therefore, must symbolise Luces' father. Lancelot's father, Ban, is also

[32] *Estoire*, pp. 1556-1559.
[33] *Estoire*, p. 1555.

represented by the leopard figure in a prophecy which could most likely be interpreted as relating to his exile at the hands of Claudas de la Deserte:

> Leonces, fait Merlins, il est voirs et la prophesie le dist que li serpens chacera le lupart hors de la forest sauvage et ancienne qui devant aura esté si fors et si fiers et si merveillous que toutes les bestes d'environ lui l'eclinoient et baissoient les testes envers terre.[34]

A consistent interpretation based on the equivalency leopard=Lancelot would therefore be flawed. Linguistic fragmentation thus occurs through the multiplication of possible signifieds for a single signifier. The inverse also occurs with the same fragmentary outcome; the same signifieds are represented in different prophecies using different signifiers. An example of the latter would be the story of Galehaut's invasion of Arthur's kingdom, which is prophesied three times using different symbols. On the first occasion, Merlin announces the future crisis to Ban and Bors, who are baffled as to its significance:

> se li grans lupars qui tant sera grans et fors ne le desfent une partie por l'amour qu'il aura a la serpente couronee et a qui toutes les bestes de la Bloie Bretaingne et del roiaume de Carmelide aclineront, et une partie par grant fierté et par proece. Mais encore n'est pas nés li grans lupars par coi cil grans lyons sera soustenus que li grans dragons n'aura nul pooir de lui chacier ne tant ne quant hors de sa conversacion [...] Et quant la bataille sera finee, el sejour que nous ferons en la terre, sera li grans lupars engenrés qui tant sera fiers et orguellous par qui crieme li grans dragons des Illes Lontainnes se traira ariere du grant lyon couroné de la Bloie Bretaingne qui point de mal ne li fera et si en aura bien le pooir, mais en la fin justicera li lupars qu'il le fera ajenoullier ausi com pour merci crier devant le lion couroné.[35]

The events are identifiable to a reader with knowledge of the ensuing narrative; the semi-conventional association between the leopard and Lancelot is here supported by the peacemaking role he will play between the two leaders, in addition to his love for

[34] *Estoire*, p. 1053.
[35] *Estoire*, p. 1069.

the 'serpente couronee', whom we may identify as Guinevere through her links to both Britain and Carmelide. Galehaut may be identified with the dragon by his title ‘des Illes Lontainnes', associating Arthur, therefore, with the ' grant lyon couroné de la Bloie Bretaingne'. The same episode is then re-prophesied in a dream had by Ban's wife, Elaine, on the night she conceives Lancelot. Galehaut is this time represented by an uncrowned lion, with 30 cubs underneath him, whereas Arthur is still figured by the crowned lion. Arthur is this time helped by 400 bulls, presumably figuring the Knights of the Round Table. Once again, peace comes as a result of the intervention of 'uns grans lupars, li plus orgueillous c'onques fust'.[36] Though the narrative is essentially the same, the dragon and his followers, described previously as ' serpenciaus',[37] become the uncrowned lion and his 'lionciaus',[38] which in each case represents Galehaut and the 30 kings over whom he will rule. When asked to interpret the dream, Merlin responds that he will do so, but 'del tout en tout nel vous doi je mie esclairier, car ne le voel pas faire'.[39] His explanation goes on to retell the same narrative in terms no less obscure than those of the dream, in which he substitutes the animal signifiers for generic royal titles. The uncrowned lion signifies 'un prince qui molt est riches hom d'avoir et d'amis qui conquerra par force .XXX. roiaumes', whilst the crowned lion is 'un roi molt poissant qui aura .XVIII. rois desous lui qui tout seront si home lige'. The 400 bulls are said to be '.IIII.C. chevaliers qui tout seront entrefiancié a aus entr'aïdier jusques la mort. Et tout seront home a celui roi'.[40] He announces the leopard's relationship of similitude to its signified, but does not disclose Lancelot's identity:

> Et li lupars senefie cel chevaliers car autresi com li lupars est orgueillous sor toutes autres bestes, autresi sera il li miudres qui a cel tans sera.[41]

[36] *Estoire*, p. 1218.
[37] *Estoire*, p. 1068.
[38] *Estoire*, p.1217.
[39] *Estoire*, p 1222.
[40] ibid.
[41] *Estoire*, p. 1223.

Merlin's discourse here fragments the relationship of equivalence between signifier and signified by multiplying the number of signifiers for a single signified. Each retelling of the prophecy thus obscures signification even further, increasing the number of potential symbolic relationships to the point where no direct equivalence is possible. In this sense, Merlin's prophetic discourse is fragmentary both in its use of symbolism and its failure to impose a coherent system of signification. Symbols fragment signification by acting as intermediaries between signifier and signified; they inform and describe, but they do not denote. The same symbols- the lion, the leopard, the dragon- are used multiple times to represent various characters, whilst the same character is represented in different prophecies using different symbols. Likewise, the relationship of similitude between symbol and symbolised changes from one prophecy to the next, ranging from a simple description of a characters' qualities or actions to more profound typological associations. The prophecies, when regarded as a whole, thus deny Merlin's listeners an opportunity to interpret according to a consistent hermeneutic system. The function and meaning of each symbol is purely context-specific; it signifies only on a localised basis, undergoing redefinition the next time it is used.

Like the chronological fragmentation between the reception of a sign and the understanding of meaning, the use of symbolism in Merlin's prophecies produces an interpretant of fragmentation which reflects the linguistic disparity between prophecy's divine, atemporal dimensions, and human sign systems. Prophecies, in which the totality of past, present and future are one, also imply a totality of signification; because such a discourse is beyond the limitations of earthly time, it must therefore exist beyond temporal human languages. When expressed in speech, the prophecy necessarily undergoes a fragmentation in the form of a divide between signifier and signified, and past, present or future. For medieval theologians, such a fragmentation was a fundamental condition of human epistemology, as human languages and cognition

would be unable to cope with divine truths in their totality. In his *Confessiones,* Augustine affirms that God may only communicate with man 'in signis et in temporibus et in diebus et in annis'[42] that are 'the necessary condition of mortal communication with divinity'.[43] The divine unity of meaning (the sacred *Verbum*), incomprehensible to the human mind, must be broken down into signs and symbols which make parts of sacred truth understandable, if, as in the case of Merlin's prophecies, only in retrospect. Merlin's prophetic discourse in the *Estoire* provides an interpretant of the seme of fragmentation within this transition; its use of symbolism as a linguistic intermediary parallels medieval allegorical reading of Scripture, which was considered to be a hermeneutic revelation of God's true meanings communicated through earthly sign systems. Like allegory, the symbolism of the prophecies represents the unknowable in a way that is fit for consumption by human beings who are confined to a temporal, material world, and thus for whom unmediated knowledge of the future would be problematic. As Karczewska notes, religious allegorical language causes a doubling of the signified; the allegory in human languages refers both to an unknowable sacred signified, and a 'mirror image' of that sacred signified in human signs.[44] Though Merlin's prophetic discourse may be said to function in a way that is allegorical, it is not an allegory in the sense of an extended network of metaphors. The lack of consistent equivalency between signifier and signified negates the classical formula *aliquid stat pro aliquo*, causing fragmentation not only within individual signs, but also between each prophecy. Fragmentation, then, functions on a linguistic level; the *translatio* of meaning between symbol and signified is disjointed, representing an interpretant of the linguistic disjuncture between divine signification and human languages. In this sense, the *Estoire*'s interpretant of Merlin's *obscures paroles* may be compared to the Saussurean concept of *langue* and *parole*; Merlin's complete,

[42] *Confessions*, XIII: 18; p. 193;
[43] Colletti, *Naming the Rose*, p. 22.
[44] *Prophecy and the Quest of the Holy Grail*, pp. 9-22.

unmediated knowledge of the future, present and past exists on the same mental plane as the *langue*, a subject's general knowledge of a language, its rules and its vocabulary. When the *langue* is spoken out loud, it becomes the *parole*— the contextual use of language as a concrete utterance. Prophetic speech, when expressed as *parole*, becomes subject to the material conditions of context, time and linguistic signification; it moves from an atemporal and acontextual prophetic *langue* to actual speech, in which the fragmentations of human sign communication are a necessity.

La Suite du Merlin

Having analysed the language of prophecy in the *Estoire*, then, we can define the epistemological gulf between Merlin and his interlocutors as a linguistic one. The knowledge expressed by Merlin is atemporal, signifying the past, present and future at once; because human languages can only express meanings one at a time and in a temporal sequence, this knowledge can only be communicated in a fragmented form. Both temporally and semiotically, Merlin's prophetic speech is thus incomprehensible to human beings who can only perceive meaning through language and time. This epistemological divide between prophet and listeners is therefore unbridgeable, because human beings cannot transcend their own linguistic and temporal condition. How, then, is this interpretative barrier portrayed in the *Suite*? Given that the *Suite* has thus far been seen to impose a moralised perspective on the acts and choices of the individual, how does this affect the presentation of Merlin's *obscures paroles*?

In order to analyse the process of *réécriture* between the *Estoire* and the *Suite du Merlin*, we can regard Merlin's prophetic discourse as a lexicalised unit of meaning, containing both invariant semantic material, and varying interpretants corresponding to the context of each text. The prophecies of the *Estoire*, as we have seen, are characterised by linguistic fragmentation: a disjuncture in signification, where signifier

and signified are mediated by an incoherent symbolism which disrupts the correspondence between meaning and its expression. In the *Suite*, however, Merlin's use of symbolic language is extremely limited; in fact, he expresses the significance of his prophecies quite openly. Nevertheless, Merlin's prophetic language is still regarded as *obscure*, because the prophecies themselves are received and delivered in a disconnected or illogical fashion. The characters of the *Suite* are unable to connect sign and signified correctly, because they are unable to connect various 'fragments' of prophecies which are delivered at different times and by Merlin in different disguises. In this way, fragmentation functions as an invariant core of meaning when the prophetic discourse of both texts is semantically condensed. In both the *Estoire* and the *Suite*, prophecies are indecipherable due to some sort of rupture, which prevents Merlin's interlocutors from connecting fragments of prophecies into a coherent whole. Whereas the disconnected prophetic fragments of the *Estoire* are purely linguistic, those of the *Suite* are extra-linguistic, based in the circumstances of delivery itself. In this way, the *Suite*'s interpretant of fragmentation as an invariant core of meaning removes Merlin's control over the interpretation of his prophecies (which he exercises in the *Estoire* with his use of esoteric language) and places responsibility instead with the characters involved, who receive all the prophetic information they need, but are themselves unable to connect the various parts.

This re-allocation of responsibility produces an interpretant of the seme 'fragmentation' in accordance with the contextual interpretants of the *Suite*, which heavily emphasises the importance of personal accountability. A major contextual interpretant affecting interpretants of prophetic discourse in both the *Estoire* and the *Suite* is each romance's notion of a predestined future. In the *Estoire*, the future is fixed; Merlin's predictions, the real significance of which is beyond the scope of human understanding, are also beyond the scope of human control. As a privileged interpreter of divine knowledge, Merlin denies information about the future to his powerless and

epistemologically-limited human listeners. The *Suite*, however, expresses flexibility as to the certainty of future events. In some prophecies, Merlin conveys to mankind an image of a static future, preordained by God:

> Ensi estuet que les choses aviegnent comme Nostre Sires le a ordonees...ne je voi chose qui destorner m'en puisse, fors Diex seulement.[45]

> Nus ne puet destorner que la volontés Nostre Signeur n'aviegne[46]

On the other hand, certain of his prophecies take the form of advice or admonition, implying the possibility of an equivocal outcome. Merlin speaks about the future on several occasions using the conditional conjunction *se* to express consequences which are dependent on certain actions:

> *Et se Gifflet ore moroit* en che point d'orendroit, che seroit damages trop grant, car *se il vit par aage, il sera aussi boins chevaliers* u li mieudres que chi n'est.[47]

> Je vos loc, fait Merlins, en droit conseil que vous retornés et que vous laissiés ceste queste. Car certes, *se vous a chief le menés, vous ferrés un caup* dont si grans duels averra el roiaume de Logres...[48]

These prophecies, which suggest a changeable future, give Merlin's discourse the functional status of a warning. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the *Suite du Merlin*, as an interpretant-sign of the *Estoire*, superimposes a redemptive scheme onto the narrative of Arthurian history; sins such as Pellinor's murder of Gauvain's father (which will later lead Gauvain to kill him in revenge), and the *Dolereus cop* —the maiming of the Fisher King committed by Balain— are punished during later episodes in the text, producing a causal narrative progression whereby characters write their own fate by their actions. Merlin's prophecies, then, correspond to this contextual

[45] *Suite*, p. 31-32
[46] *Suite*, p. 268.
[47] *Suite*, p. 31 ; my italics.
[48] *Suite*, p. 140.

interpretant by allowing the characters an opportunity to prevent their own downfall, should they be able to decipher the various fragments of prophecy he provides. This interpretant of the core-sign fragmentation functions in two ways throughout the *Suite*: primarily, through the fragmentation of a prophecy from Merlin's prophetic authority, and secondly, through a fragmentation in the delivery of a prophecy over time.

Fragmentation between the prophecy and Merlin's authority

In the *Estoire*, Merlin's prophetic authority is unquestionable. Though his words are too *obscures* to be understood, nobody doubts their veracity. However, the *Suite*'s extra-linguistic interpretant of fragmentation produces a rupture not between the prophetic signifier and signified, but within the relationship between Merlin's prophetic authority and the prophecy itself. Merlin appears several times in different disguises to deliver his prophecies, which are, in these cases, not heeded, because they lack the credibility associated with Merlin in his usual form. For example, when Merlin addresses the above warning to Balain, that he, Balain, will commit the *Dolereus cop* if he does not end his quest, Merlin, is ' desghisés en tel maniere qu'il estoit vestus d'une robe d'un conviers toute blanche'.[49] The prophet's anonymity lends no weight to his warning, and he is thus ignored. In another instance, Merlin appears to King Mark and Balain in the guise of a 'fort vilain' and begins to write a prophecy regarding a battle involving Tristan and Lancelot.[50] Rather than taking note of the prophecy, however, King Mark is simply amazed at the fact that the *vilain* can write:

> Et quant il a che fait, li rois, qui regarde l'euvre, s'esmerveille trop de chou que uns vilains si rudes puet che faire, se li demande qui il est.[51]

[49] *Suite*, p. 140
[50] *Suite*, p. 85: Et en chou qu'il se voloit partir, il avint que Merlins vint cele part en samblance d'un fort vilain et commencha a escrire au cief de la tombe lettres d'or qui disoient: «En ceste place assambleront a bataille li dui plus loial amant que a lour tans soient. Et sera cele bataille la plus mierveilleuse qui devant eus ait esté ne qui aprés cele soit sans mort d'oume.»
[51] *Suite*, p. 85.

On a separate occasion, Merlin appears to Arthur 'en samblance d'un enfant de .XIIII. ans'.[52] He proceeds to relate a prophetic dream had by Arthur the previous night, in addition to informing him that his father was king Uther and his former lover, the Queen of Orcanie, is his sister. Merlin predicts that the son they have conceived together will bring 'moult grant mal en terre'.[53] Arthur, however, refuses to believe the boy when he claims that Uther 'moult m'ama et moult fist por moi et je pour lui', based on the fact that he is far too young to have ever known Uther in person:

> —En non Dieu, fait li rois, ore te di je dont que d'ore en avant ne te querrai je mais de chose que tu me dies, car tu n'es mie de l'aage que tu peusses onques avoir veut mon pere se che fu Utherpandragons, pout coi il n pot onques riens faire pour toi ne tu pour lui. Et pour chou te requier jou que tu t'en ailles de chi, que aprés ceste mensonge si aperte que tu me veus faire acroire pour verité ne quier jou plus avoir la compaignie de toi.[54]

Merlin's disguise, then, lacks the credibility with which his prophecies would normally be received; without knowing the child's real identity, Arthur accuses him of being a devil. Likewise, when Merlin tells three *vilains* that they will be hanged from the oak they are in the process of cutting down, their reactions are far from trusting; Merlin explains that 'si en furent moult tormenté [*sic*] de la parole et me coururent sus, les cuignies en leurs mains, pour moi ochirre'.[55] Once again, Merlin's anonymity with respect to his interlocutors lends no weight to his words, causing the *vilains* to ignore his prophecy and thus reject an opportunity to change its outcome.

Though prophecy in each of these cases is delivered clearly (in contrast to Merlin's opaque words in the *Estoire*), the addressee of Merlin's prophetic discourse ignores his message due to the irrational inconsistencies surrounding the prophet's

[52] *Suite*, p. 7.
[53] *Suite*, p. 8.
[54] *Suite*, p. 10.
[55] *Suite*, p. 41

apparent identity. Arthur rejects the authority of the young boy, because his claimed acquaintance with Uther at such a young age contradicts temporal logic; similarly, Marc is less concerned with the words written by the *fort vilain* than by the social incompatibility between his low status and his literacy. To Balain and the three *vilains*, the words of a seemingly anonymous stranger have no claim to veracity. In this way, the prophecies not only impose a fragmentation between Merlin's discourse and his authority, but also appear as a fragmentation (or fracture) within the normal material conditions of this world. As Merlin communicates his divinely inspired knowledge — which, as we have seen, is pure, atemporal signification— within material creation, he disrupts the logical sequence of time and agency within the creation of future meaning. The fact that his disguises are seemingly illogical within the earthly systems of sequential time, earthly social systems and hierarchies of authority represent an interpretant of the fragmentation of prophetic discourse when translated from a realm of meaning where such materialities do not exist. The receivers of these prophecies are too concerned with the logical inconsistencies of the prophet's identity to heed his warnings; responsibility for interpretation, therefore, lies with them and their ability to look beyond mundane reality to receive a message which originates in the sacred. Though true prophecy was regarded as unquestionably a divine gift, it was acknowledged in the Middle Ages that God's bestowal of prophetic powers on an individual could often defy social or even religious logic; prophets did not have to be educated, virtuous or even Christian. Figures such as the Sibyl, Virgil and Merlin himself were all considered to be truly illuminated with the gift of prophecy, despite being pagans, or, in Merlin's case, fathered by a devil.[56] As Thomas Aquinas notes in his analysis of prophecy in the *Summa theologica*, the prophet's identity and intellectual capacity are irrelevant to the communication of the prophetic message; no matter who they may be, prophets are merely a mouthpiece for some divine Revelation:

[56] Southern, *History as Prophecy*, p. 160, p. 173; Ziolkowski, The Nature of Prophecy, p. 159.

> Principium autem eorum quae divino lumine prophetice manifestantur, est ipsa veritas prima, quam prophetae in seipsa non vident. Et ideo non oportet quod omnia prophetabilia cognoscant, sed quilibet eorum cognoscit ex eis aliqua, secundum specialem revelationem huius vel illius rei.[57]

The prophet's identity or apparent ability to understand their own words is therefore not important; it is the prophetic message, revealed by God through a prophet of His choosing, to which attention should be paid. The characters of the *Suite*, however, are unable to see beyond the conditions of earthly materiality. Their rejection of prophecy based on a non-authoritative identity is comparable to a lack of faith, causing them to refuse divine assistance through an inability to grasp the spiritual.

Fragmentation of the prophetic message

The dissolution of Merlin's prophetic authority, then, produces an interpretant of the seme 'fragmentation' which accentuates the *Suite*'s contextual emphasis on personal responsibility for one's own actions. Likewise, Merlin's disjointed delivery of prophecies over a period of time expresses the idea of fragmentation in such a way as to stress the characters' inability to epistemologically transcend their own material conditions. Several of Merlin's prophecies are revealed to the interested parties not at once, but as a series of smaller prophecies at different times and through different prophetic personas. These characters, however, are unable to connect the series of fragmented prophecies together as a comprehensive whole. In the example cited above, Merlin comes to Arthur in the shape of a young boy to inform him that the son he has engendered with his sister will bring great evil to his land. Having been dismissed as a demon, Merlin then immediately returns to Arthur disguised as an old man, whose

[57] II^a-IIae, q. 171 a. 4 co., ed. Migne, vol. III, p. 1201.

appearance is sufficiently credible to merit his attention; 'Li rois regarde le viel houme, se li fu avis qu'il estoit moult sages hom'.[58] The old man then interprets Arthur's dream:

> Sachiés que vous tornerés a dolour et a essil par un chevalier qui est engenrés, mais il n'est encore pas nés. Et tous chis roiaumes en sera destruis, et li preudomme et li boin chevalier dou roiame de Logres en seront detrenchiet et ochis, et li païs en remenra orphenins des boins chevaliers que tu i verras a ton tans.[59]

For the reader, the assertion that Arthur's kingdom will be destroyed 'par les oevres de chelui pecheor' is obviously connected to Merlin's previous prophecy that Arthur's illegitimate son will bring ' moult grant mal en terre'.[60] Nevertheless, Arthur is unable to connect the two separate items of information: that he has conceived an evil son with the Queen of Orcanie, and that a child who is conceived but not yet born will be the ruin of his kingdom. If fully understood, this would allow him to know that it is Queen of Orcanie's unborn son who will be the one to destroy Logres. Arthur's inability to make this connection rests on the fragmented delivery by two apparently distinct individuals, one of whom is credible and one of whom is not. As a result of Arthur's failure to identify Mordred from both halves of the prophecy, the king will try to prevent the future destruction of Logres by committing a Herod-style attempt on the lives of all recently-born male babies in his kingdom, leading him further into sin.

Arthur is later given further prophetic clues, which, if properly connected, would have allowed him to identify Mordred. In this case, Merlin prophesies Mordred's murder of his foster father and his brother, Sagremor. Firstly, he tells Sagremor's father that he will be killed by a child he has raised, in addition remarking obscurely that he, the father, has put the lion with the wolf:

---

[58] *Suite*, p. 12.
[59] ibid.
[60] *Suite*, p. 8.

> «Li rois Uriens se puet plus esgoïr de sa norreture que vous ne faites de la vostre, et esgoïra, car il verra sa norreture venir a bien et vous verrés que la vostre vous fera morir ains vos jours d'une glaive agüe et trenchant. Et li uns de ces .II. qui ore sont assamblé occhirra l'autre. Si pues bien dire que vous avés mis le leu avoec l'aigniel. Tout einsi esjoïra li uns en la mort de l'autre. Et chelui jour averra que la bataille morteus sera faite.[61]

The words of the prophecy are reported to Arthur, who orders them to be written down. Later, however, Merlin informs Arthur that his son who will destroy his kingdom will eventually kill his foster brother: 'Saichiés que li enfés dont je vous parole occhirra encore chelui meisme enfant avoeques cui il est norris. Ore esgardés quel norreture!'.[62] For the reader, who is aware of the whereabouts and identity of Arthur's son, the second prophecy provides a gloss to the obscure language of the first; the '.II. qui ore sont assamblé' are Sagremor and Mordred, the former representing the *aigniel* and the latter, the *leu*. Had Arthur been able to connect the two prophecies— one which tells of a foster child's murder of his brother, and another which tells of murder between two brothers, one of whom is fostered— he would have been able here too to recognise Mordred.

Another character who fails to connect various fragments which all relate to the same prophecy is Balain, the tragic 'chevalier as .ii. espees'. Despite prophetic warnings delivered by Merlin on two separate occasions, Balain commits the climactic *Dolereus cop* by attacking King Pellohan, the *Suite*'s version of the Fisher King, with the *Lanche Vencheresse*, causing the Fisher King's land to become a *terre gaste*. Merlin's first warning is delivered by him in his guise as the same *fort vilain* whose mysterious literacy baffled King Marc:

> Tu ne seras mie si lens, fait Merlins, comme tu fus chi quant tu ferras le Dolereus Cop par coi .III. roiame en seront a povreté et en essil .XXII. ans. Et saces que onques

[61] *Suite*, p. 128.
[62] *Suite*, p. 286.

> si dolereus ne si lais ne fu fais par un homme ne n'iert comme chis cops sera, car toutes dolours et toutes miseres en averront. [63]

Using language which recalls instances of Biblical disobedience, Merlin compares Balain to '*Evain* nostre mere', prophesying that Balain will ignore his advice, and break 'le *commandement* que nus ne doit trespasser et mehaigneras le plus preudomme viers Nostre Signeur qui orendroit soit el monde'.[64] Balain's response is nonchalant; he replies simply that he hopes God would not will such a thing. Merlin then redelivers the same prophecy with variation when he approaches Balain disguised as the man in white. He attempts to persuade Balain to abandon his quest:

> Car certes, se vous a chief le menés, vous ferrés un caup dont si grans duels averra el roiaume de Logres et si grans maleurtés que onques grignour pestilence par le cop de lespee qui fut n 'a gaires fais entre le roi Lambor et le roi Urlan qu'i averra par le cop de la Lanche Vencheresse.[65]

In this instance, he designates Logres as the kingdom that will suffer. He also informs Balain that this *cop* will lead to his, Balain's, death: ' 'Et tu meismes, qui feras si grant dolour avenir, se tu vais cele part ou tu bees aler, en morras a grant dolour'.[66] Balain, however, refuses the dishonour of abandoning his quest. Not only does Merlin's appearance in each case lack the authority of the credible prophet, but Balain fails to interpret this prophecy in conjunction with Merlin's earlier comparison between himself and Eve; he has already been told that he will commit his crime despite being admonished against it. Had he been able to connect the two prophecies, he would recognise Merlin's second prediction as one such warning. He is instead consumed with a single-minded determination to finish what he has begun: 'si siurrai jou ceste queste

---

[63] *Suite*, p. 86.
[64] ibid., my italics.
[65] *Suite*, p. 140.
[66] *Suite*, p. 141.

de tout mon pooir et la merrai a fin, ou soit ma mort ou soit ma vie'.[67] Finally, after having injured Pellohan and set in motion the destruction of his kingdom, Merlin sends Balain one final prophecy. Having agreed to travel to a castle on an island to fight an unknown knight, he is persuaded to exchange his shield so that his identity will also be unknown. As he disembarks from his boat, a *pucele* who announces that she is sent by Merlin tells him that he is wrong to change his shield, and that the misfortune which is about to befall him will be punishment for the *dolereus cop*. He is initially 'effraés' at the mention of Merlin's name, suddenly realising that 'Merlins li mande que chou est venjanche del meffait que il fist chiés le roi Pellehan'.[68] Although he is now able to connect the prophecies- that the *cop* will cause him to die 'a grant dolour', and that he will now be punished for Pellohan's injuries- he is still not entirely convinced of their veracity. Though accepting he may have to die, he is also sufficiently confident in his own abilities that he may still beat the other knight:

> Et neporquant ce le rasseure moult qu'il se sent sain et delivre et fort et legier et preu as armes, si pense bien que miex veult il metre tout pour tout et morir, se a morir couvient, que il fesist chose qui a couardise venist. Et d'autre part li redoune grant confort che que on li dist que il n'a garde fors d'un seul chevalier et il se sent a si preu et a si manier d'armes qu'il ne cuide pas qu'il ait un seul chevalier el monde qui dusques a outranche le peust mener ne dusques a mort qu'il ne refust aussi mal atornés ou pis qu'il ne seroit.[69]

Nevertheless, Balain is punished as Merlin predicts; both he and the other knight die of their injuries, but not before it is revealed that his opponent is his own brother, Balaan. In each prophecy, Balain is offered a piece of information which is explained by the following prophecy; firstly, that he will ignore a warning, a warning which is then provided by the second prophecy; secondly, that he will die because of the *cop*, and thirdly that he is about to be punished. The last prophecy, of course, which tells him he

[67] ibid.
[68] *Suite*, p. 183.
[69] *Suite*, p. 184.

is about to be punished, relates back to the second, which tells him he will die as a result of the *Doleureus cop*; this should, in theory, allow him to know that the punishment he will suffer on the island will be his own death. In this way, the signification of the prophecies as a whole is fragmented and postponed from one prophecy to another; the signified of Merlin's first prophecy (the warning) is realised in the second prophecy, whilst the final prophecy (Balain's, punishment) allows Balain to identify the time and place of his death, thus connecting the signs of the second prophecy with its meaning. Balain is, however, prevented from interpreting the prophecies as a whole through his preoccupation with material realities. The lack of authority behind Merlin's prophetic personas, his obsession with his own honour and reliance on his own skill provide obstructions to Balain's comprehension of Merlin's message.

Another character who is unable to connect various fragmented signifieds behind disjoined prophecies is King Pellinor. The reader is already aware of a prophecy regarding the time and place of his death, which are found by Balain written on a tombstone in a hermitage, something later acknowledged as the work of Merlin:

> «En cest chimentiere vengera Gavains le roi Loth son pere, car il trenchera le chief au roi Pellinor es premiers .X. ans qu'il avra recheu l'ordre de chevalerie».[70]

On a later occasion, Merlin re-prophecies Pellinor's death in a similarly fragmented fashion. When Pellinor returns to court with the head of a *pucele* who has been eaten by a lion as a result of his ignoring her pleas for help, he asks Merlin who she was. Merlin tells him he will only answer 'si obscurement que vous ne l'entenderés pas a ceste fois, et neporquant en brief terme l'entenderés vous', and that he will be able to know the

[70] *Suite*, p. 144.

girl's identity 'si vous estes sages'.[71] He reminds Pellinor of a prophecy that was delivered to him many years ago by a fool:

> «Rois, oste cele couroune de ton chief, car elle ne te siet pas bien. Et se tu ne l'ostes, li fiex del rois ochis le t'ostera, et ensi la perdras. Et se tu la pers, che ne sera grant mierveille, car par ta mauvaisté et par ta negligense en lairas tu ta char devourer a lions chelui an mesmes que tu seras mis en autrui subjection».[72]

The reader, with knowledge of the first prophecy, is able to identify the *fiex del rois ochis* as Gauvain, who, we have been told, will avenge Pellinor's killing of his father, Loth. Merlin tells him that the fool's prophecy has in part come true, in addition to reminding him of a mysterious disembodied voice that he heard on the day of his coronation:

> Rois Pellinor, tout aussi coume tu faudras a ta char te faurra ta chars, et che sera pour coi tu mourras plus tost.[73]

Merlin also relates back to him the final words that the girl spoke before Pellinor abandoned her:

> Ha! chevaliers mauvais et orgilleus, Diex vous doinst tant vivre que tu aies aussi grant mestier d'aide coume j'ai orendroit et que tu soies aussi esgarés coume je sui esgaree, et proiier puisses tu par besoigne ne n'aies gringnour secours que j'ai de toi![74]

In each of these separate prophecies, Pellinor is told that he will abandon his *char*, his kin/flesh, that they will be eaten by lions, and that he will also die due to neglect by his kin. Nevertheless, he is unable to deduce from this that the girl whom he abandoned, and who was eaten by lions, was in fact his own daughter: 'Mais que j'aie laissiet ma

[71] *Suite*, p. 265.
[72] *Suite*, p. 266.
[73] *Suite*, p. 268.
[74] *Suite*, p. 267.

char devourer a lions ne sai ge nient que che soit voirs encore'.[75] Nor does he realise that the girl's curse that he will also be abandoned to die will be realised by his son, Tor, despite his being told in one prophecy that he will suffer the same death, and in another that his own kin will fail him in the way he has failed it. Though he later explains the prophecy in full to Arthur, Merlin refuses to clarify his words for Pellinor, because ' je ne vous descouverroie en nule maniere les choses que li Haut Maistres a establies a sa volonté', [76] suggesting that this event is unchangeable because Pellinor is destined not to understand. Like the prophecies to Balain, each of these prophecies defers signification to the other; the signifiers delivered in a fragmented sequence are confirmed and connected with their signifiers in a different prophecy. The full story of Pellinor's death, the identity of the girl and the one who will be the cause of his death are all evident when the prophecies are regarded as a single significatory entity; however, Pellinor is unable to connect the disjointed signs and fails to interpret their meaning.

Interpretants of the seme 'fragmentation' in the prophecies of the *Suite*, then, come as a result of these extra-linguistic, contextual factors which can be seen to thematise the contrast between, on the one hand, the atemporal unity of meaning inherent in the unspoken prophecies, and on the other hand, their delivery in a temporal and material linguistic context. Whereas the *Estoire* produces an interpretant of this contrast as a fragmentation in the signification of discourse, the prophecies of the *Suite* are characterised by a fragmentation not within discourse, but between discourse and context. The Merlin of the *Suite* causes fragmentation in the delivery of his prophecies by detaching its message from the material logic of its situation; prophecies are delivered as fragments at different times and by different and unlikely prophets. The characters, then, are prevented from understanding the prophecies when delivered by a child, or a *vilain*, because logic dictates that such a person would have neither the

[75] *Suite*, p. 266.
[76] *Suite*, p. 268.

wisdom, nor the education, to speak authoritatively of the future. They are similarly unsuccessful at connecting disparate fragments of the same prophecy, thinking in a disjointed, earthly time frame which prevents them from interpreting the prophecies as a unified whole. In this way, the characters are prevented from gaining the overview by their preoccupation with the logic of temporal reality.

Both the *Suite* and the *Estoire*, then, produce varying interpretants of the invariant semantic core of fragmentation, pertaining to the contextual interpretants surrounding Merlin's prophetic discourse in each text. Through the distinction between fragmentation on the level of linguistic interpretation (as in the *Estoire*) and fragmentation between prophecy and the material conditions of reality (as in the *Suite*), both texts present different models of signification for prophetic discourse. By way of explanation, we can map both models onto Umberto Eco's 'labyrinth' theory of sign interpretation, which offers a handy metaphor for the distinction between Merlin's unlimited knowledge and the restricted scope of human epistemology. In his *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*,[77] Eco proposes the model of a net-shaped labyrinth to describe the way in which signs function within their linguistic context. Language, within the entire universe of human culture, is an infinite 'network of interpretants';[78] this resembles, he says, the pattern of a fishing-net, where all points are connected together in some way, either directly or indirectly via other points. Signs, Eco maintains, function like points on the net. When interpreting a sign, a person cannot see the entirety of the net (which would be a vast static unit of meaning, encompassing all the possible meanings of the sign within any human language, past or present); they can only see the point at which they are and the points immediately surrounding it (the potential meanings of that sign within that person's own linguistic knowledge and corresponding to the sign's present state as a dynamic unit in context). In this way,

[77] *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 81-84.
[78] ibid., p. 83.

signification is based not in equivalency, but on the fact that, in context, one sign may have several possible meanings; a receiver identifies a single meaning based on the sign's current linguistic situation. Merlin's knowledge, which reflects God's divine, atemporal omniscience, *is* the labyrinth in its entirety; the prophecies signify both the totality of time and the totality of signification. When he expresses the prophecies in temporal human languages, however, the signs used can only be interpreted by their human receivers according to their present context within the labyrinth. It thus functions as a 'myopic algorithm', in which the characters are blind to everything but the present situation of discourse.

In the *Estoire*, the labyrinth represents the inability of human beings to understand the totality of signification, confined as they are to their immediate and limited context of interpretation. Signs only signify within that present context; the dragon symbol signifies a given character in one prophecy, and someone else in another. Similarly, the symbolic relationship of similitude between Arthur and the dragon in one prophecy is different to that between Galehaut and the dragon in another. There is therefore no consistent equivalence between symbol and symbolised; human understanding of the prophecies is fragmented into a series of incoherent contexts, where no overview is possible. This not only reflects the contrast between fragmentary human languages and the pure meaning of the divine *Verbum*, but also safeguards the permissible limits of human knowledge. The linguistic divide between the atemporal signification of prophecy and temporal signs is unbridgeable; Merlin's *obscures paroles* only allow his interlocutors to know the future indirectly, without giving them any information which would allow them to alter it. It is Merlin, therefore, who defines their epistemological limits, repressing any control they would wish to exert over their own futures. In the *Suite*, on the other hand, Merlin offers several characters the extraordinary opportunity to know their own futures. They are prevented from doing so as a result of their inability to see beyond the material

conditions of Merlin's prophecies. Because the discourse seems illogical within the present context, Merlin's words are ignored; alternatively, prophecies delivered in fragments are uninterpretable as a whole, because the characters try to read each prophecy within its specific context. They are too preoccupied with earthly things— Balain with his honour, Arthur with his status as king, Pellinor with the nature of his death— to look beyond the present and connect the fragmentary parts of Merlin's message. Though Merlin offers them a glimpse of the labyrinth's overview, the characters are unable or unwilling to unite the various fragments of prophetic discourse beyond their immediate context. Responsibility for this interpretation lies with the characters themselves; it is their own faults which lead to the eventual destruction of Logres, despite Merlin's warnings.

Merlin's *obscures paroles*, therefore, can be seen to have developed in significance and function through the semiotic process of *réécriture* between the *Estoire* and the *Suite*; producing new interpretants from the philosophical aspects of "prophecy" as a static unit, the *Suite* moralises the role of prophecy just as it moralises its interpretant of Viviane. Retaining the concept of fragmentation as an invariant semantic core, the *réécriture* of Merlin's prophetic discourse develops a series of interpretants through the optic of the theoretical transition from immateriality to materiality implied by the medieval concept of prophecy. The material conditions of language prevent the characters of the *Estoire* from interpreting Merlin's *obscures paroles*, because the fragmentary nature of human signs prevents them from ever reaching their originary meaning. The limits of human epistemology are accentuated, and man's control over his own destiny is highly restricted. In the *Suite*, the materiality of the characters' concerns and judgments prevents them from accessing the totality of signification offered to them by Merlin; their perceptions are confined to the present situation, preventing them from connecting the fragments of meaning. It is not the epistemological limits set in place by creation which prevent their understanding, but their own narrow-minded

focus on the terrestrial. Whereas the characters of the *Estoire* are not permitted to gain an overview of the linguistic labyrinth, the characters of the *Suite* are offered the chance, but are too flawed to accept it. We might conclude, therefore, that the contextual interpretant of the *Suite*—that is, the text's ethical examination of individual sin and redemption—causes its interpretants of prophetic fragmentation to take on a didactic character. The *Estoire's* audience would have potentially seen the prophecies as a heuristic game, where attempts to interpret the prophecies based on foreknowledge of popular Arthurian stories could be made. The readers of the *Suite*, however, are accorded an insight into Merlin's overview of the prophecies and their meanings. They are therefore witness to the blindness of Arthur and his knights, whose failure to see beyond their temporal condition renders them unreceptive to divine assistance.

Chapter 5:

The Translation of Italian Political Prophecies from the *Prophecies de Merlin* to the *Storia di Merlino* and the *Vita di Merlino*

Thus far, this thesis has explored the products of medieval inter-vernacular translation and *réécriture* using the notion of Peircean semiosis to analyse interpretative developments between source and target text. The results for each have been more or less consistent— even systematic— and have shown evidence of clear shifts in meaning. We might say that, as examples of medieval inter- and intralingual rewriting, the interpretative processes demonstrated so far have been fairly typical in terms of thirteenth and fourteenth century practice. Nevertheless, no study of medieval translation should ignore the less typical examples of the practice; and likewise, no study of the Italian Merlin tradition could ignore Merlin's political prophecies. The previous chapter's analysis of prophetic discourse in the *Estoire* and the *Suite* disclosed a significatory gulf between the prophetic signified and its temporal signifier, which demonstrated the flawed humanity of the characters involved. Prophecies, then, in the French romance tradition, play an important role in developing the themes of the text, revealing the inability of Arthurian society to take control of its own future—whether through the inherent failings of humanity (as in the *Estoire*), or through a closed-minded lack of receptiveness to spiritual guidance (in the *Suite*). As we have already mentioned in earlier chapters, prophecies in the Italian Merlin tradition do not only signify within the diegetic universe; the Italian texts instead extend Merlin's words from out of the fictional text and into the contemporary reality of the reader. It is for this reason that a study of the prophecies represents a special case of translation. Interpretative developments do not only affect narrative or contextual interpretants, but also the polemical status of Merlin's words. The translator's interpretative decisions, then, represent a political or religious statement about their own society; the invariant core of meaning retained in translation, and the

interpretants produced will either confirm, enhance, or reject, the source author's opinions. This chapter will analyse the translation of Merlin's prophetic speech from the Franco-Italian *Prophecies de Merlin* to its two Italian vernacular translations, the *Storia di Merlino* and the *Vita di Merlino*. Through this, I will hope to demonstrate the linguistic and semiotic complexities of translating political prophecies, in which both discourse and meaning play a vital role in making a polemical statement. Whether the translator chooses to reinterpret discourse or avoid interpretation will affect further reception of the prophecy and its significance; in this chapter, therefore, we will analyse examples of both interpretative and non-interpretative practice. More specifically for our Merlin corpus, this study should go some way to revealing the translators' attitudes towards Merlin when considered as a prophetic *auctoritas*, rather than as a romance character. Finally, the fact that these vernacular texts occasionally demonstrate close, word-for-word translation will test the adaptability of our methodological approach, which has so far only been subjected to more liberal interpretations.

In the Italian vernacular Merlin tradition, Merlin's prophetic discourse— as shown in the *Prophecies*, the *Storia* and the *Vita*— is situated within a very specific socio-cultural climate, in which prophecy took on a particular expressive status. Before embarking upon the main analysis for this chapter, then, it will be necessary to offer a brief summary of the Italian prophetic tradition in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and how it has influenced the vernacular Merlin prophecies. Firstly, however, an introduction to our texts. The *Prophecies de Merlin* was written in French between 1272 and 1279, by an author calling himself 'Maistre Richart d'Irlande'.[1] Maistre Richart, it has been established, was not from Ireland at all; Lucy Paton has convincingly argued that the author of the *Prophecies* appears to be Venetian.[2] The text itself is divided between material deriving from Geoffrey of Monmouth and the French Arthurian tradition, and prophecies concerning events in and around the Italian peninsula in the eleventh, twelfth and

[1] Lucy Allen Paton, *Les Prophecies de Merlin*, 2 vol. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), vol. II, p. 3; Delcorno Branca, *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia*, p. 78 and 'Appunti sui romanzi di Merlino', p. 8.
[2] This based on various textual factors; the Guelf ideology expressed (see below), the form of currency used in the text, the concentration on events around and concerning Venice. Furthermore, the text remained popular in Venice; all of the *Vita* translators/scribes claim to be Venetian, and the text was printed in Venice over a period of about 50 years; ibid., vol. II, pp. 143-144.

thirteenth centuries. Some manuscripts contain longer versions which insert *réécritures* of romance material deriving from various texts of the French Arthurian tradition; in particular, Bodmer 116 interpolates long sections of original narrative, following the adventures of Arthurian characters such as Morgan, Gauvain and Perceval.[3] Most, however, are dominated by Merlin's prophecies; and it is the translation of these prophecies upon which this chapter will concentrate.

The text of the *Prophecies* itself takes the form of a narrative which documents the life and deeds of Merlin. His prophecies are integrated into that narrative in the form of interrogative dialogue between Merlin and his scribes, something which reflects, to a certain extent, the frequent conversations between Merlin and Blaise in the *Estoire*. The *Prophecies*, however, uses this dialogue more formulaically; prophecies are introduced by a question from the scribe ('Or me dit, Merlin, fet Maistre Antoine...'), and Merlin's response, invariably beginning with 'Je vueil que tu metes en escrit, ce dit Merlin, que...'.[4] In keeping with the French and Galfridian Merlin tradition (the latter certainly serving as a major influence), Merlin disguises future events using obscure symbols.[5] Some of these prophecies concern Arthurian subject matters; in particular, Lancelot, Guinevere, Galahad and the Grail quest are prophesied, even though these events do not feature in the *Prophecies* narrative. Nevertheless, a large proportion of Merlin's prophecies concerns events mainly taking place in and around Venice between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The author expresses a Guelf ideology; that is to say, he/she aligns him/herself politically with an anti-imperialist attitude. When the Holy Roman emperors, Frederick Barbarossa (1122-1190) and later his grandson, Frederick II (1194-1250), attempted to expand their imperial powers into Italy during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the city-states which opposed imperial rule allied themselves with the emperors' opponents, the papacy. The author of the *Prophecies* makes villains of the Holy Roman emperors,

---

[3] Anne Berthelot (ed.), *Les Prophecies de Merlin (Cod. Bodmer 116)* (Geneva: Bodmer, 1992). See introduction. See also Nathalie Koble, 'Un univers romanesque en expansion: les *Prophecies de Merlin* en prose du Pseudo-Richard d'Irlande' in *Moult obscures paroles: études sur la prophétie médiévale*, ed. by Richard Trachsler (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), pp.185-217 (p. 216). For the manuscript tradition of the *Prophecies*, see Paton, vol. I, pp. 2-47.

[4] Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 101.

[5] Donald L. Hoffman, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', in *Merlin: A Casebook*, ed. by Peter Goodrich and Raymond H. Thompson (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 186-196 (p. 186).

especially Frederick II (who remained a controversial figure throughout his life); in the *Prophecies*, Frederick is designated as the Antichrist.[6] Nevertheless, the papacy is not held up as an opposing ideal; Merlin is also an avid critic of corruption within the Church, condemning the simony and belligerence of the cardinals, or 'tireurs des cordes'. When not prophesying, Merlin is using his omniscience to expose institutional corruption and bring justice to oppressed citizens. Taking the form of the *conte de devinaille*, again from the Geoffrey of Monmouth tradition, various short narrative sections show Merlin coming to the aid of those in need;[7] for example, exposing the usurious activities of some money changers and forcing them to reimburse a defrauded merchant, and elsewhere, helping a woman who has been raped by a priest to obtain justice from a bishop who has tried to cover up the priest's crime. When three cardinals are sent from Rome to test Merlin's prophetic legitimacy, he exposes all three as simonists, demonstrating the greed and immorality of the papacy. Despite this moral and Christian authority, however, Merlin is not immune to temptation, and on several occasions, sleeps with young women who come to him to learn magic. One of his students is, of course, the Dame du Lac, who traps Merlin in a tomb in a more violent reinterpretation of the same episode in the *Suite*. From the tomb, however, he continues to prophesy as a disembodied voice.[8]

This chapter will analyse two Italian vernacular translations of the *Prophecies*, the *Storia di Merlino* and the *Vita di Merlino*. The *Storia* we have already encountered in Chapter 2, as a translation of the early sections of Robert de Boron's *Merlin*; here, however, we will focus upon Pieri's translation of prophetic material from the *Prophecies*. As we have seen, Pieri interpolates a translation of parts of the *Prophecies* into Robert de Boron's narrative, after Merlin has solved the problem of Vortigern's tower. Although Pieri mainly includes prophecies regarding contemporary Italian prophecies, he also translates one Arthurian prophecy and several of the *contes de devinaille*, most expansively, Merlin's encounter with the three cardinals from Rome.

---

[6] Paton, *Les Prophecies de Merlin*, vol. II, p.196; Mauro Cursietti, *La Storia di Merlino*, p. xv; Hoffman, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', p. 184; Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 97; 'Predicting History: Merlin's Prophecies in Italian XIIth-XVth Century Chronicles', in *The Medieval Chronicle III: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference*, ed. by Eric Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 92-100 (p. 97).

[7] On *contes de devinaille*, see Zumthor, p. 104.

[8] See Hoffman, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', p. 188.

The second Italian vernacular translation, the *Vita di Merlino*, follows Robert's narrative much more closely, translating the entirety of the French text up until Arthur's coronation; at this point, the translation of the *Prophecies* begins. Despite the translator's otherwise close rendering of the sources, he/she interpolates a book of original prophecies—which are dictated by Merlin to Blaise— into Robert's narrative.[9] These are the only prophecies which are not direct translations from the *Prophecies de Merlin*, and their content, which focuses much more on Lombardy than on Venice, leads Oriana Visani to conjecture that the author may originate from that area of Italy.[10] We know little else about the translator; one manuscript names the writer as 'Pietro Ducha, masser al fontigo de la farina a Rialto', whilst the other cites a 'Iachome de Zuane Barbier'. It is unclear from their comments, however, whether these names are those of the translators, or those of the scribes who copied the manuscript; both claimed to have 'written' the text ('scriver/schrito'), which leaves their exact roles in the tradition unclear.[11]

The *Vita* has survived in two fifteenth-century manuscripts and seven printed editions produced between 1480 and 1554.[12] Due to the absence of a modern edition, which brings together all the variant strands the text, this study will examine the translation as it appears in the original printed edition, produced by Luca Venitiano in Venice in 1480; incidentally, the first Arthurian text to be printed in Italy.[13] The colophon at the end of the book claims that the text was taken from a book owned by Pietro Delfino, which had been translated from French in 1379.[14] Whether the year of translation is accurate or not, the

---

[9] See Oriana Visani, 'I testi italiano dell'*Historia di Merlino'*, *Schede umanistiche*, 1 (1994), 17-62 (p. 33).
[10] 'I testi italiano dell'*Historia di Merlino'*, p. 38.
[11] Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Pal. 39: 'Schrito per mi Piero Ducha masser al fontigo de la farina a Rialto del 1402, adi 28 novembrio'. Visani's examination of the manuscript leads her to believe that the date has been changed from 1502 to 1402 in the seventeenth century, to augment the value of the item; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. 949: ' Et fo compido de scriver adi 15 novenbrio 1452. Et si llo scripto de mia propria man, mi Iachome de Zuane Barbier'; Visani, 'I testi italiano dell'*Historia di Merlino'*, pp. 21-22.
[12] For the manuscript and printed tradition of the *Vita*, see Visani, 'I testi italiano dell'*Historia di Merlino*'; also J. Ulrich, 'Eine neue Version der *Vita di Merlino*' *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 27 (1903), 173-185.
[13] Venice: Luca Venitiano, 1480; Edmund Gardner, *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature*, p. 191; Hoffman, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', p. 192. Although this study would greatly benefit from an examination of variants across the manuscript and printed tradition, consultation of the original documents in Italy has not been possible during the course of writing this thesis. I hope to be able to undertake such a research trip in the near future.
[14] 'Tracta è questa opera del libro authentico del magnifico Messer Pietro Delphino, fo del magnifico messer Zorzi, translatato de ligua francesse in lingua italica scripto nel anno del signore 1379, adi .20. nouembre in Venetia; e stampato del 1480, adi primo fevrano. Ducante Ioanne Mocenico. Pontifice vero Sixto papa iiii'.f. o2. The word 'fo' has often been taken to mean 'fatto', which lead Paton to believe that 'magnifico Messer Zorzi' was the Italian translator. Nevertheless, as Oriana Visani highlights, 'fo' is in fact a contraction of 'figlio'; Messer Zorzi, then, is mentioned as

name of the text's owner gives us some insight into the audience for the translation in the mid to late fifteenth century. Pietro Delfino was a theologian and abbott of a Camaldolese monastery on the island of Murano in the Venetian lagoon. He wrote a chronicle, which has since been lost, and a number of his letters were published in Venice in 1524. Bernard McGinn has highlighted correspondence between Delfino and members of a Venetian intellectual circle who were interested in reading and disseminating prophetic writings in the late fifteenth century, particularly those of Joachim of Fiore.[15] Though we can only speculate as to the intended audience for the original fourteenth-century translation, it is clear that, by the fifteenth century, the *Vita* had entered the intellectual prophetic tradition which was so prevalent in Italy from the thirteenth century onwards. That does not, of course, exclude the possibility of other, less educated readers; however, the mention of Delfino does suggest consumption by a group which McGinn describes as 'colti, letterati, anche se talora stravaganti, collocati ai livelli superiori dei loro tempi, sia sul piano politico che su quello intelletuale'.[16]

This intellectual prophetic tradition, which is closely linked to the ecclesiastical and political upheavals of medieval Italy, is essential to understanding these texts. Although this is not the place for a fully detailed survey of this complex prophetic tradition, an outline of its basic principles, and how it influenced the *Prophecies* and its translations, will be necessary to our understanding of the translations themselves. Though the conflicts which raged throughout the Italian peninsula changed and developed between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (such as ongoing wars between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperors, the papal schism between Rome and Avignon, the struggle for territorial supremacy between neighbouring city-states, and the consolidation of institutional powers within the cities themselves),[17] prophecy remained, in northern Italy at least, a popular literary outlet for political and religious dissatisfaction. Prophecies were circulated within educated circles, passed from hand to hand, and compiled into

---

Pietro Delfino's father; see Visani, 'I testi italiani dell'*Historia di Merlino*', p. 24; Paton, vol. 1, p.47.

[15] 'Circoli Giachimiti Veneziani (1450-1530)', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 7 (1986), 19-39 (pp. 21-23). 'Cultured, well-educated, although occasionally outlandish, implicated in the upper echelons of their society, both politically and intellectually'.

[16] ibid. p. 39.

[17] Isabella Lazzarini, *L'Italia degli Stati territoriali: Secoli XIII-XV* (Roma: Laterza, 2003).

anthologies; they were included in chronicles and even written in the margins of manuscripts.[18] Composed in both Latin and Italian vernaculars, these prophecies were written in response to current events, and back-dated to an earlier period in time by crediting with their composition a famous prophet from history. By attributing prophecies to the Sibyl, the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (who died in 1202), and, of course, Merlin, the writers of these fictional prophecies not only drew upon the authority of such prestigious names, but also guaranteed their literary credibility by describing recent happenings as if they had been predicted in the past.[19] These pseudo-Joachimite, or pseudo-Merlinesque prophecies were, then, not authentic prophecies at all; they were intended as political statements, in which the prophetic form added weight and credibility to their expression. This prophetic form, however, was derived from a parallel tradition of prophetic texts which genuinely intended to predict the future; written by astronomers and clerics (most famously, Joachim), these prophecies were circulated with as much popularity as the political pseudo-prophecies. Nevertheless, so-called genuine prophecies often underwent minor adjustments during the course of their dissemination over a period of time; such adjustments, which either altered the prophecy or inserted glosses, adapted vague and indeterminate prophetic language so that it may appear to have predicted a particular event, even something which took place many years after the prophecy was written. In this way, adapting the language of a genuine prophecy was barely different from composing a new one from scratch; either way, prophecy was used to put an ideological spin onto current happenings. As we will see, the *Prophecies de Merlin* replicated this polemical use of prophetic form, using Merlin's name to 'back-date' a prophecy (which was actually written *post eventum*) to an earlier period in time.

---

[18] McGinn, 'Circoli Giachimiti Veneziani', p. 39'; Roberto Rusconi, 'Les collections prophétiques en Italie à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début des temps modernes. Remarques à propos de divers manuscrits italiens conservés dans les bibliothèques de Paris', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 102 (1990), 481-511 (pp. 482-484).

[19] Ironically, Joachim's reputation as an authoritative prophet relied upon these pseudo-Joachimite texts, which were assumed to have been genuine, and, due to their *post eventum* composition, proven correct; his actual prophecies (which were not nearly as accurate) were not published until 1513; Mc Ginn, 'Circoli Giachimiti', pp. 31-32; Marjorie Reeves,*The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1969), pp. 534-540 and *Joachim de Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: S.P.C.K, 1976); see also Hoffman, 'Was Merlin a Ghibelline? Arthurian propaganda at the court of Frederick II' in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend. Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio*, ed. by Martin B. Shichtman and James B. Carley (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 113-128.; Paton, *Les Prophecies de Merlin*, vol. II, pp. 154-156.

The ideological force behind this use of prophecy is replicated by the *Prophecies* in two ways. Primarily, by the very nature of prophecy itself, which, by virtue of foreseeing an event, identifies this event as somehow important:

> It is not difficult to notice how in these *vaticinia* events are presented as being dictated by a supreme force, and foreseen by a prophet long before they happened. This structure aims to remove all moral doubts and possible suspicions, because a prophecy gives an event a mysterious and fatal reason.[20]

To take a concrete example of precisely this phenomenon: in Florence in the late 1370s a group of dissident Franciscans called the Fraticelli were responsible for distributing their own adaptations of prophecies by the French alchemist Jean de Roquetaillade (who died in 1366). Jean had warned of an imminent period of great chaos, which the Fraticelli reinterpreted by identifying such a chaos with the great papal schism, allowing them to present the division of the papacy as a sign of the forthcoming apocalypse.[21] A second major feature of this prophetic tradition is the use of symbolism to encode prophecy with ideological force. This technique is also adopted by the *Prophecies*, and carried over to the Italian vernacular translations (as we shall see, the transfer of symbolism is of particular importance to translation of prophecy). For instance, the *Prophecies* is particularly concerned with the coming of an Antichrist figure, called the 'Dragon de Babyloine', who has been identified by critics as the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II.[22] The imagery evoked by this sign superimposes onto this figure specific symbolic connections with the biblical city of Babylon, associated with impiety and pride, and also with the Antichrist, who is represented by a dragon in the book of Revelations;[23] this symbol thus reinforces the eschatological associations between the coming of the 'Dragon de Babyloine'and the

---

[20] Lahdensuu, 'Predicting History', p. 95; also Richard Kenneth Emmerson, 'The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic, and the Study of Medieval Literature', in *Poetic Prophecy in Western Literature*, ed. by Jan Wojcik and Raymond-Jean Frontain (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), pp. 40-54.
[21] Roberto Rusconi, *L'Attesa della fine: Crisi della società, profezia ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande scisma d'Occidente (1378-1417)* (Rome: Sede dell'Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 1979)p. 39.
[22] Paton, *Les Prophecies de Merlin*, vol. II, p. 62; Hoffman, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', p. 187. Paton and Hoffman both highlight that the identification of Frederick II as the Antichrist was common at the time among his opposers. A marginal note in MS Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Manoscritti francesi, XXIX reads: 'Ce est Antichrist'; see also Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 101.
[23]Revelations,20: 2; also the Seven-Headed Dragon, 12: 3-4; Paton, *Prophecies*, vol. II, p. 192 n1.

end of the world. Whether or not the Dragon is intended by the author to be Frederick II or any other ruler, the symbolic discourse surrounding this figure creates a network of ideological connotations which direct moral criticism towards abuses of power, corruption and opposition to the Church. In this way, the use and manipulation of esoteric symbolism creates a multi-layered prophetic allegory, in which contemporary society is presented through the ideological lens of an authoritative seer.

Given the importance of symbolic discourse within the Italian tradition of prophecy, the translation of prophecies must then prove problematic; if translation involves a reconstruction of discourse through the imposition of the translator's interpretant-signs, then how must this affect the relationship between prophetic symbolic expression and its political or ideological content? Prophecy, according to Edwin Ardener, 'links language, time and space'.[24] As a form of discourse, prophecy simultaneously discovers and defines the future, using language as an instrument of expansion through which to project future meanings onto present signs. Though Ardener was using the term 'prophecy' in a more general sense than simply as a prediction of future events, his identification of language as a catalyst for the creation of new time frames applies equally to the vaticinations of Biblical and medieval prophets. Although the prophecies attributed to Merlin in the *Prophecies de Merlin* are consciously fictional —that is, posing as a text written in the distant past which has accurately predicted recent events— their entertainment value (and ideological force) rests upon the fictive evocation of this prophetic signification, in which the future is apprehendable only through its linguistic expression. Because this linguistic expression is codified through the use of symbolic discourse, it takes on a particular hermeneutic status. The reader, from the privileged position of hindsight in respect to both the prophecy and the events described, provides the link between the (supposedly) prophetic language of the past and the present events signified; interpretation of the meaning behind the symbolic level thus confirms the fiction that Merlin's prophetic speech represents a linguistic conduit between future events and past signs. It is perhaps for this reason that the *Storia* and the *Vita* each displays a distinct attitude towards the words of Merlin's

[24] 'The Voice of Prophecy: Further Problems in the Analysis of Events', in *The Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays*, ed. by Malcolm Chapman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 134-154 (p. 135).

prophecies. The *Vita*, in which the translation of the prophecies themselves is sometimes as close as a lexeme-for-lexeme rendering, presents a more interpretative approach to other parts of the text; though still following the source quite closely, the translation demonstrates more freedom with details, ordering of events, insertions and omissions which is not exercised in the translation of Merlin's prophetic speech. The *Storia*, which does take a more exegetical approach to the prophecies themselves, also displays noticeable restraint in comparison with its reinterpretations of other non-prophetic episodes, for example, the story of Merlin's birth.[25] In this way, the prophecies themselves seem to be regarded by the translators as a metalinguistic form of expression, where the symbolic meaning which is encoded into the very words of Merlin's discourse is as present within the sign itself as it is within its object.

The codified nature of the symbolic language of the *Prophecies*, then, means that the symbolic content —that is, the actual events from Italian history described— is indeterminate. Although it may have been clear to some medieval readers that the 'Dragon de Babyloine' represents Frederick II, there is nothing in the text (other than symbolism and references to the 'Dragon's' life-story) which directly confirms this designation. The connection exists only through the reader's interpretation. In this sense, the *Prophecies de Merlin* constitutes what Umberto Eco defines as an 'open text'; a concept, which, as we will see, will provide a useful framework through which to examine the products of translation in the *Vita* and the *Storia*. In *The Role of the Reader*, Eco thus defines an open text:

> An 'open' text cannot be described as a communicative strategy if the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal texts) has not been envisaged at the moment of its generation *qua* text. An open text is a paramount instance of a syntactico-semiotico-pragmatic device whose foreseen interpretation is a part of its generative process.[26]

In an open text, then, the reader is expected to make some interpretative contribution to the reading process; they are not guided by the author towards a single interpretation, but instead expected to be able to read the text on various levels and decide upon which

[25] See chapter 2.
[26] *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1979), p. 3.

level(s) to read. Eco conceptualises this through the notion of the Model Reader, a hypothetical addressee of the text, who would be able to interpret as the author had intended the text to be interpreted.[27] In a 'closed text'. the Model Reader is only expected to interpret the text in a finite way, using a single interpretative code which elicits a finite response:

> They [closed texts] aim at pulling the reader along a predetermined path, carefully displaying their effects so as to arouse pity or fear, excitement or depression at the due place and at the right moment. Every step of the 'story' elicits just the expectation that its further course will satisfy. They seem to be structured according to an inflexible project.[28]

If the reader were to use a code not intended by the author, then the results produced, in a 'closed text', would be 'aberrant'; for example, interpreting a children's book as a religious allegory would be unlikely to produce satisfying results for a reader. The open text, on the other hand, creates a Model Reader who is expected to make interpretative decisions; because the text supports more than one reading, and may be interpreted according to more than one code, the Model Reader has a number of options as to how to read the text. These options, however, are not arbitrary, but encoded within the text by the author.[29] In the *Prophecies* and its translations, for instance, The 'Dragon de Babyloine' has been interpreted as Frederick II according to a code in which symbols are significant of recent real-world events, specifically regarding the Italian peninsula. As we have seen, however, the Biblical symbolism of the sign 'dragon' would allow the reader to interpret according to an eschatological code, designating the dragon as the Antichrist: a sign of the Apocalypse. A reader could also interpret the symbol 'Dragon' using both codes simultaneously, which would identify Frederick II (or perhaps a different contemporary leader, as the text itself never mentions Frederick by name) *as* the Antichrist. Even if the text anticipates a Model Reader who will read on many levels, the actual reader still has the option of interpreting the text literally (what Eco calls a 'naive' reader); however, an

---

[27] *Role of the Reader*, p. 7; also *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 9-10; *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 58-60.
[28] *Role of the Reader*, p. 8.
[29] *Role of the Reader*, p. 9.

author of texts such as the *Prophecies* (or indeed any medieval text which consciously presents itself as allegorical, such as the *Tournoiement d'Antéchrist* or the *Roman de la Rose*) expects a reader who will look beyond the symbolic expression— a 'critical' reader.[30] In this way, the symbolic connection is activated by the reader themselves, who decides between a number of interpretative options laid out for them by the author.[31] Semiosis is not only invited, but a necessary part of understanding the text, which relies on the reader's ability to arrive at different possible interpretant-signs in order to construct its meaning.

Nevertheless, in *The Limits of Interpretation*, Eco qualifies this notion by arguing that an open text does not justify the complete interpretative liberty of deconstructive reading; an open text is open to a number of interpretations, but not just *any* interpretations. Without arguing that meaning is fixed, or indeed, metaphysical, Eco does suggest that the text itself imposes limits upon the reader's interpretations. Open texts do contain 'certain structural devices that encourage and elicit interpretive choices'; nevertheless, these choices are restricted by the context of the text and by its literal expression:[32]

> Even the most radical deconstructionists accept the idea that there are interpretations which are blatantly unacceptable. This means that the interpreted text imposes some constraints upon its interpreters. The limits of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text (which does not mean the rights of its author [...]).[33]

Interpretation through semiosis, which involves a chain of sign exchanges accumulating information about the text-sign, does not take arbitrary directions, but is instead guided by the context; only those interpretants relevant to the 'universe of discourse' will be part of the process:[34]

> Thus many modern theories are unable to recognize that symbols are paradigmatically open to infinite meanings but syntagmatically, that is, textually, open only to the indefinite,

[30] *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 54-55.
[31] *Role of the Reader*, p. 39.
[32] *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 44.
[33] ibid., p. 51.
[34] ibid., p. 28.

> but by no means infinite, interpretations allowed by the context.[35]

Though the *Prophecies* suggests a number of ways of reading the sign 'Dragon de Babyloine', the text itself does limit possible interpretations; it would be anomalous, for instance, to suggest that the 'Dragon' could be read as a good or saintly figure, because the symbolic expression used is clearly negative. Nor would it be likely that the 'Dragon' would be read as a parodic comedy figure, as there is nothing in the text to suggest such a subtext. In this way, Eco's notion of textual limits within open texts emphasises the importance of the literal level, without which there could be no deeper meaning. Language may only create a discourse that is metaphorical, allegorical, symbolic, etc., because the literal meaning of the text is able to evoke such interpretant connections.[36] The signs 'dragon' and 'Babylon' must first be read and understood as whole signs on a literal level in order that they may produce the Biblical interpretants which allow a reader to then interpret their symbolic content— even if that content is designed to be deliberately ambiguous.[37] Symbolic prophetic texts, then, are encoded with a number of potential readings, but only those that are compatible with the literal meaning of the symbols employed; prophetic expression is as important as prophetic content, a textual condition with particular implications for transmission and translation.

The Italian prophetic tradition, as we have seen, involved the circulation, recomposition and reinterpretation of prophecies, provoking the continuous reinterpretation of prophetic discourse which approximates the process of semiosis; as prophetic signs are exchanged and replaced with other prophetic signs, their meanings develop and change to adapt to the changing external conditions which govern their interpretation. The effect of this continuous interpretation on both the Italian vernacular translations of the *Prophecies de Merlin*, and other circulated prophetic texts, is an increase in the interpretative limits imposed by the literal level of the text, which in turn reduces the texts 'openness'. These limits can be imposed in various ways: primarily, by indicating within the text, the interpretation to which the symbolism should point, as in the

[35] ibid., p. 21.
[36] *The Limits of Interpretation*, p. 36.
[37] ibid., p. 29.

Fraticelli's apocalyptic interpretation of Jean de Roquetaillade's period of great chaos. This narrowing may also appear on a paratextual level; as Roberto Rusconi highlights, it is unusual for texts in the Italian prophetic tradition not to contain marginal glosses, which attempt to identify the people and events hidden behind the obscure symbolism.[38] Marginal notes also frequently identify specific years in which an event will happen (such as in BNF Lat. 16397, a compilation of various prophetic texts, which includes marginal commentaries estimating that the Antichrist will be born in 1282).[39] The text becomes more 'closed' in this way, because later owners of the same manuscripts will have been given some literal indication as to how to interpret the prophetic symbolism. Another way in which the transmission of prophecies imposes increased interpretative limits is the continuing need to update prophetic material, given its connection to current events. Rusconi, for instance, also describes the case of an anonymous Florentine diarist, who translates into the Italian vernacular another of Jean de Roquetaillade's prophecies for inclusion in his journal. The original prophecy itself was written in the year 1356; however, the diarist's translation makes changes to the original prophecy so that it appears to predict events which did in fact take place in 1378; he then uses the prophecy to enhance his account of that year. By altering the years in which events are said to have happened, in addition to omitting certain details, the diarist selectively configures elements of the prophecy so that they may be said to predict the revolt of the Ciompi (a popular insurrection in Florence led by disenfranchised wool-merchants) and events surrounding the schism of the papacy between Rome and Avignon.[40] He even changes a prophecy which, in Jean de Roquetaillade's original, referred to 'Polonia', to 'Bologna', re-contextualising the prophecy geographically within the Italian peninsula. Though the diarist attaches the meaning of the prophecy to events which happened long after it had originally been written, this process of 'updating' attaches the prophetic discourse—which is vague and unspecific in the original— to a concrete event, to the exclusion of other

[38] 'Les collections prophétiques', pp. 486; 493-94.
[39] Sylvain Piron, 'Anciennes sibylles et nouveaux oracles. Remarques sur la diffusion des textes prophétiques en Occident, VIIe-XIVe siècles', in *L'Antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales : textes et représentations*, *VIe-XIVe siècle*, ed. by Stéphane Gioanni and Benoît Grévin (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2008), pp. 259-302 (pp. 264; 287).
[40] See Rusconi, *Attesa della fine*, pp. 17-20.

possible interpretations.[41] The narrowing of potential readings in the translation of this prophecy by the anonymous diarist is partly achieved by his contextualising of the event within the year 1378, thus restricting interpretation to the events of that year. In this way, the interpretative openness of prophecies also becomes limited through their inclusion in chronicles. For example, the chronicles of Salimbene di Adam, which document Italian history in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from a Guelf perspective not unlike that of the *Prophecies*, frequently insert prophetic material into descriptions of historical events. The prophecies included by Salimbene are generally taken from other prophetic texts in circulation, many of them pseudo-Joachite and pseudo-Merlinesque; the effect of juxtaposing the description of a historical event with a prophecy which has purported to predict the said event has the rhetorical effect of elevating that event's perceived importance, and confirming Salimbene's ideological interpretation.[42] For instance, Salimbene juxtaposes his account of the birth of Frederick II with a short prophetic text called the *Verba Merlini*, which is evidently a Latin precursor to the *Prophecies* and its translations. In the *Verba,* Merlin supposedly predicts Frederick's birth, in addition to other deeds of the Hohenstaufen emperors; like other texts in the Italian prophetic tradition, however, this prediction is veiled with obscure language, referring to the emperors only by their first initial:[43]

> Primus F. in pilis agnus, in villis leo, erit depopulator urbium. In iusto proposito terminabit inter corvum et cornicem. Vivet in H., qui occidet in portis Melatii. Secundus autem F. insperati et mirabilis ortus.[44]

Not only is Salimbene's version of the prophecy placed immediately after having an account of the birth of Frederick II, the chronicler also excludes any ambiguity as to the identity of the people indicated in the *Verba Merlini* by including their full names. The Fs are expanded the to 'Fridericus' and the H to 'Henrico', thus identifying the three figures

---

[41] *L'Attesa della fine*, pp. 37-39.
[42] Lahdensuu, 'Predicting History', pp. 95-96.
[43] For details of the *Verba Merlini* and its manuscript tradition, see Christian Jostmann, *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica: Papsttum und Prophetie im 13. Jahrhundert*.(Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), pp. 57-62 and 77-80.
[44] ed. by O. Holder-Egger, 'Italienische Prophetieen', *Neues Archiv*, 15 (1890), 175-177 (pp.174-177).

as Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, his son Henry VI, and his grandson, Frederick II, the same figure designated as the 'Dragon de Babyloine' in the *Prophecies*; the prophecy itself is even entitled by Salimbene 'Dicta Merlini de prima Friderico et secundo'.[45] Furthermore, Salimbene engages with the prophecy on an ideological level, stating, with reference to Frederick II's birth:

> Ideo dixit Merlinus quod secundus Fridericus *insperati et mirabilis ortus* esset futurus, vel quia mater iam multos annos habebat, vel certe quia filius fuit suppositivus et fraudulenter aquisitus.[46]

In this way, Salimbene not only uses the *Verba Merlini* as a confirmation of his own perspective on events, he also reduces the ambiguity of the symbolism by providing the readers of his chronicle with his own interpretation of its significance. In placing the prophecy within a particular historical context, in addition to explaining its meaning in his own terms, Salimbene 'closes off' the prophecy to any readings other than his own. In these and many more examples, the symbolic openness of any particular prophecy is limited by alterations to the literal level of the text; that is, the symbolic discourse. By placing the symbolism and its interpretation side by side, by implanting the prophecy in a specific historiographical context, or by omitting, removing or altering aspects of the prophetic symbolism so that it may conform to an interpretation more accurately, the interpretative scope of the prophecy is restricted. The 'open' text of the prophecy thus becomes more closed, anticipating a Model Reader who will read only according to the interpretation laid out by the writer.

As prophecies are transmitted, translated and re-transcribed, then, the reader's interpretation becomes less vital to the prophecy's creation of meaning, being instead replaced by the interpretants offered by a chronicler/writer/translator, which are manifested upon the literal level of the text and thus increasingly limiting. This trend is confirmed in the earliest translation of the *Prophecies*, Paulino Pieri's *Storia di Merlino*, yet

[45] *Cronica*, ed. by Ferdinando Bernini (Bari: Laterza e Figli), vol. I, p. 521.
[46] ibid., p. 520.

complicated by the later *Vita di Merlino*. As we will see, the distinction between symbolic content and its expression is an important one, especially with regard to the notion of the semiosis of invariant material during the translation process.

La Storia di Merlino

The *Storia*, though by no means a completely literal translation, follows its source much more closely in translations of Merlin's first-person prophetic discourse, in comparison with its more liberal *rimaneggiamenti* of sections of third-person narration. Despite the fact that the prophecies focus particularly upon Venice and the concerns of the Venetians, Pieri, presumably writing for a Florentine audience, rarely alters the prophetic content. On only one occasion, he substitutes 'desus li Pau' (the river Po in northern Italy) for 'ne' paesi di Toscana', thus displacing the prophecy geographically into more familiar territory. The prophecy itself speaks of conflicts taking place in a town called F., which Paton identifies as referring to Ferrara in the *Prophecies*; Cursietti suggests that by moving its location to Tuscany, Pieri resignifies F. as Florence, which experienced its own share internal conflicts in the later years of the thirteenth century.[47] Nevertheless, this alteration of prophetic content remains an isolated case. Most frequently, Pieri retains the meaning of the prophecy as an invariant core, yet alters the linguistic expression, which produces variant interpretants on the level of prophetic discourse. For example, Merlin predicts that the citizens of the town called F. will be particularly inclined to belligerence:

> —Je vueil que tu metes en escrit, fet Merlin, que il seront souventes fois semons de par l'apostoille, et li meismes les semondra, mes il ne voudront point la pes, tant lor embellira la guerre que a male fin les conduira des ames et des cors.[48]

Pieri translates :

> Sappi che molte volte fieno amoniti da parte dello appostolico di Roma e pregati che

[47] Paton, *Prophecies*, vol. I, pp. 72-73; vol. II, pp. 136-142; Cursietti, *Storia*, p. 94.
[48] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 73.

> faccino pace, ma non voranno fare niente, tanto parrà loro buona la guerra e di maggiore guadagno: per la qual cosa gli conducerà a mala fine dell'anima e del corpo.[49]

Pieri preserves the invariant semantic core of the original; that is, that the citizens of F. ignore papal requests for peace due to their inherent fractiousness. Nevertheless, his translation makes minor verbal additions to the passage; for example, the *Prophecies* consistently refers to the pope as 'l'apostoille', through a synecdochic association with St Peter. Though this symbolism would have been relatively conventional and transparent, Pieri here adds the suffix 'di Roma', bringing additional clarity of meaning to the expressive level of the symbolic discourse. It could also be conjectured that, given that the translation was composed during the Avignon papacy (1305-1377), the specification of a *Roman* pope could function as a historical recontextualisation, which would have dated the events described in the prophecy to some time before the turn of the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, the more literal evocation of the 'appostolico' as the pope has the effect of emphasising the townsfolks' resistance to papal intervention. Furthermore, by semantically splitting the general verb *embellir à quelqu'un* (to be attractive to someone) into two more specific semantic units ('parrà loro buona la guerra/ e di maggiore guadagno'), the translation amplifies the critical emphasis; by claiming that the citizens use war for their own gain, Pieri disambiguates the French verb using more specific verbal interpretants, which redirect the source's accusations of belligerence towards a criticism of the use of violence for selfish purposes. These reconfigurations of the prophecy's expressive discourse emphasise the critical tone of Merlin's words, giving more ideological force to his denunciation of the citizens of F. It may be said, then, that Pieri's translation produces an interpretant which focuses reading on a moral level of meaning.

This emphasis on moral criticism can also be seen in other verbal reconstitutions of the source-text's expression. The *Prophecies* is particularly reproachful of a 'felon saigneur', the ruler of the 'Marche Doloreuse', which is thought to represent the March of Treviso (a

[49] *Storia*, p. 49. 'Know that the apostle in Rome will caution them and beg them for peace many times, but they will not want to comply, because war will seem like such a good thing to them, and something that will bring them great benefits. This will lead them to a bad end, for both their bodies and their souls.'

medieval territory in the Veneto area).[50] Both medieval and modern readers have identified the 'felon saigneur' as Ezzelino III da Romano, ruler of Padua, Verona and Vicenza in the 1240s and 50's, and son in law to the Emperor Frederick II (the 'Dragon de Babyloine') who gained a tyrannical reputation, and whose defection from the Guelph to the Ghibelline side won him particular infamy in areas which actively resisted imperial rule (among them both Venice and Florence).[51] Of this 'felon saigneur', Merlin says:

> –Je vueil que tu metes en escrit, fet Merlin a mestre Antoinne, que sa mauvaise saignorie empirera toute Italie et maintes autres provinces.[52]
>
> E metti in iscritto che della sua superbia parlerà tutta Italia, ch'ognuno lo temerà e dotterà.[53]

Pieri's translation verbally reconfigures two invariant semantic units— 'mauvaise saignorie' and 'empirera toute Italie'—and replaces them with interpretants which exaggerate the effects of the *felon saigneur*'s tyranny; the term 'superbia' emphasises personal vice rather than bad leadership, whilst the translation of the objective *empirer* with an opinionative reaction (specifically fear) disambiguates to provide a more concrete example of how Italy has been affected by his rule. Moreover, the tautological combination of 'temerà' and 'dotterà' uses verbal *amplificatio* to place further emphasis on the *saigneur*'s cruelty. In this way, Pieri retains the invariant core of the source text's description of the tyrannical ruler, yet provides a linguistic interpretant of this core-meaning which heightens its critical tone.

Merlin's prophetic attack on 'false judges' provides a further instance of Pieri's expressive enhancement of the source text's ideological force. Speaking here of the legendary cities of Orbance and Anteris, which were swallowed up by the Great Flood on account of the inhabitants' sins, Merlin describes the fate of Anteris' corrupt judges, as a

---

[50] The March of Treviso was often called the 'Marca Amorosa' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, due to the courtly tastes of its inhabitants. The *Prophecies* ironically subverts this epithet in order to emphasise the cruelties of its ruler. See Paton, *Prophecies*, vol. II, p. 104. The *Vita* demonstrates that this interpretation was also current during the text's late medieval reception; see below.

[51] Paton, *Prophecies*, vol. II, pp. 104-142. Marginal gloss in Venice, Biblioteca Marciana XXIX reads 'Eccelino de Romano'. See also Zumthor, *Merlin le prophète*, p. 102.

[52] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 64.

[53] *Storia*, p. 45; 'And write down that his pride will be spoken of all over Italy, and everyone will be afraid and terrified of him'.

warning to those who 'donnent les faus jugemens':

> [...] car en lor jugement ne regard[oi]ent fors a lor avis, dont il donnoient faus jugement souvent et menu. Dont leurs ames estoient jugies en chescun mois de tel juge qui nule pitie n'en a, ainz lor est a cent doubles plus cruelz que il ne furent a ceus que il jugoient a tort selonc leur avis, et plus mauspiteus.
> –Dieux aide, ce dit mestre Antoinne, dont ne doit nul juge jugier selonc son avis?
> –Nenil certes, dit Merlin, et si vueil que tu metes en escrit et que tout le monde le sache, que mauvesement seront jugies les ames des juges qui donnent les faus jugemens.[54]

The source here plays on the rhetorical irony of the false judges being judged themselves by God, who will take no pity on them as they took no pity on others. This moral symbolism therefore also opens up an eschatological level of interpretation, evoking the connection between moral conduct and final judgement. Pieri's translation retains an invariant core of criticism against corrupt judges; nevertheless, he again reconfigures the source's prophetic expression, suppressing the eschatological irony in favour of an amplification of the judges' crimes:

> [...] che lo loro giudicio non aveano con ragione se non secondo colui che guidicava, a suo senno e a suo volere; e molte spesse volte guidicavano falsamente e non riguardavano a nulla piatade tra loro: onde l'anime di que' guidici ne sono in pene eternali».
> Disse maestro Antonio: «O non dèe l'uomo guidicare secondo il suo parere?»
> Sì disse Merlino-, a ragione, ma non per amistà né per pregio né per paura né per odio né per avere né per parentado né a ttorto, ché molto dispiace a Dio.[55]

Though the translation retains the idea of divine punishment ('pene eternali'), the translation shifts focus away from the judges' punishment by God and towards the crimes committed during their lifetimes. The rhetorical effect of the ironic judgement on judges is replaced in the translation with a copious description of their immoral behaviour, singling out and listing money, fear, friendship and nepotism as the selfish reasons for which they pervert the course of justice. In this way, the criticism of corrupt judges remains an

---

[54] *Prophecies*, vol. 1, p. 70.
[55] *Storia*, p. 47. "[...] that the only judgement which can be obtained from them [the judges] is according to what each judge thinks and wants; and often, they judge falsely without any regard to pity. For that reason, the souls of these judges are in eternal damnation". Master Antionio said "So should a judge not make judgements according to his own opinion?" "Yes", replied Merlin, "when this is reasonable, but not when it is on account of friendship, or prestige, or fear, or hate, or possessions, or family, or when it is wrong; because this is displeasing to God'.

invariant semantic core, but Pieri's expressive reinterpretation of this content produces an interpretant of the prophecy which redirects its focus away from divine justice and towards earthly injustice. This has the effect of prioritising a morally critical reading over an eschatological one, limiting the number of levels upon which the prophecy may be understood. Moreover, where the source prophecy projects this eschatological warning onto a future time frame ('mauvesement seront jugies les ames des juges'), the translation provides instead a description in the present tense ('molto dispiace a Dio'); this also serves to transform the prophecy from a warning about God's judgement into a moral commentary on the present.

In these examples, Pieri retains the prophetic content as an invariant semantic core; that is to say, the real-world significance behind the symbolism, in addition to the source-text's ideological perspective. However, the translation reinterprets the literal expression of that meaning in such a way as to intensify its ideological force. By exaggerating Merlin's critical language, using *amplificatio* and disambiguation, the translation produces verbal interpretants which prioritise a morally critical reading of the prophecies. In his translation of these particular prophecies, then, Pieri's interpretants reduce the openness of the symbolic discourse, limiting the number of levels upon which the reader is expected to interpret by emphasising the ideological significance over other readings. Like other prophetic texts of the Italian tradition, the transfer of prophecy from source to translation here renders Pieri's version a more closed text.

This transition from an open to a closed text can also be perceived in other translation strategies employed by Pieri. For example, the translation often replaces the esoteric symbolism of Merlin's discourse with its literal meaning. A common instance of this is Pieri's rendering of Merlin's formulaic phrase 'ains que la chose qui jadis nasqui en les parties de Jerusalem ait...ans', which basically translates as 'in the year XXXX'. Formulae such as this appear throughout the *Prophecies* as an imitation of prophetic 'style', giving the language an impression of obscurity without obstructing interpretation too heavily; the 'chose' to which he refers, of course, is the birth of Christ. Pieri chooses to replace instances of this metaphorical phrase with various literal versions of its meaning:

al tempo della Incarnazione di Cristo MCCLXVII.[56]

inanzi che corra il tempo di MCCLXXVII [...][57]

Al tempo de MCCXXX anni [...][58]

By replacing the metaphorical with the literal, Pieri retains an invariant core of meaning ('in the year...'), but produces an interpretant which identifies that meaning more clearly. Although the original French metaphor was not necessarily difficult to understand, it still required some interpretative effort on the part of the reader to draw out its literal meaning, making it an instance of open text. Again, Pieri's interpretants close the text by narrowing the metaphor's potential readings and thus its interpretative scope. Unlike the examples cited above, which focus interpretation in the direction of a moral reading, this example only draws attention to the literal meaning behind the metaphor. Nevertheless, as we shall now see, Pieri elsewhere uses clarification of metaphor *as a method of* focusing attention upon this moral significance. As with his literal translations of 'ains que la chose..', Pieri also translates a metaphor used throughout the *Prophecies*, 'tireurs des cordes', with its meaning as he understands it: 'cardinali'.[59] Paton proposes that the term derives from the phrase 'avere due/ molte corde al proprio arco', referring to the cardinal's use of power and connections to achieve their own aims.[60] Cursietti proposes, more convincingly, that the phrase may derive from the word 'tira' ('controversy'), a term often used by contemporary vernacular writers in reference to the infighting among the cardinals in Rome.[61] No matter what the origin of the metaphor, there is no doubt as to its polemical tone. The *Prophecies* consistently presents cardinals as belligerent, overly political, and greedy, a perspective which is shared by Pieri, and even exaggerated through his reinterpretation of the text's literal expression. On occasions, instead of simply replacing 'tireurs de cordes' with 'cardinali', he offers the latter as a gloss for the former:

[56] *Storia*, pp. 48-49; also p. 46; '1267 years after the birth of Christ'
[57] *Storia*, p. 52; 'Before 1277 years have passed'
[58] *Storia*, p. 47; 'At the year 1230'
[59] For example: *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 95: '.iii. des plus sages tireours de cordes...': *Storia*, p. 58: '.tre cardinali'.
[60] *Prophecies*, vol. II, p. 82-83; the phrase translates literally as 'to have many strings to ones bow'.
[61] *Storia*, p. xvii; Whatever the derivation intended by the author of the *Prophecies*, Cursietti's suggestion is more coherent with Pieri's medieval interpretation.

> ...tout ainssint vint li mesages de par l'apostoile en Galles pour l'evesque Tholomer qui esleus estoit .i. des tireurs de cordes[62]
>
> il vescovo Tolomeo fu eletto a tirare una delle corde, ciò è cardinale [...] E quando lo vescovo Tolomeo ebbe la novella ch'egli era fatto cardinale in corte di Roma [...] [63]

By juxtaposing the two levels of signification, the translation draws the reader's attention to the ideological connection between the symbolic language and its real-world meaning, highlighting the negative semantic markers of the metaphorical expression (the controversy and argumentative tendencies implied by the term 'tira') and linking them specifically to the term 'cardinale'. The translation then, produces an interpretant of the original symbol which plays upon the co-presence of the literal and the symbolic, accentuating the polemical symbolism whilst unambiguously attaching it to an object of criticism. Not only therefore is the reader guided towards an identification of 'tireurs des cordes' as cardinals, but they are also lead to an association of 'cardinals' with the derogatory associations of the metaphorical expression. This strategy can also be seen in the translation of another prophecy regarding 'tireurs des cordes'; in this case, Pieri juxtaposes the metaphorical and the literal by interpolating a gloss:

> Mestre, metes en escrit que li evesques de ceste ville a ja brisie son decre aussi comme sera brisiee la porte de mon [signeur] saint Pere quant il aura este ou siege que il aporta d'Anthioche .G.G.G.G.G.G.G. Et au nouviesme jour sera abbatue la porte a la terre. Et ce feront les tireeurs de cordes.[64]
>
> Maestro, metti in iscritto che lo vescovo di questa terra ha oggi rotto il decreto altressì come sarà rotta la porta di san Piero *apostolo di Roma*, quella che arrecò d'Antioccia. E quando fieno al seggio di Roma soti otto Ghirigori *-ciò è otto apostolici così nominati-* allo nono *Ghirigori* sarà quella porta abattuta a terra; e questo faranno i traditori delle corde- *ciò fieno i cardinali-, ché l'uno tirerà in qua e l'altro in là.*[65]

---

[62] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 87.
[63] *Storia*, p. 54; 'Bishop Tolomeo was elected to pull one of the cords in Rome; that is, to be a cardinal [...] And when Bishop Tolomeo heard the news that he had been made a cardinal in Rome [...]'
[64] *Prophecies*, CCXLIV
[65] *Storia*, p. 26; my italics. Master, write it down that today the bishop of this land has broken the decree just as the door which was brought back from Antioch by St Peter (the apostle in Rome) will be broken. And when there will have been eight Gregorys in the seat of Rome (that is, eight apostles with this name), then with the ninth Gregory, this door will be smashed to the ground. And this will be done by the traitors of the cords [word play on tiratori delle corde—pullers of the cords] (that is, the cardinals, because one pulls this way and the other pulls that way)'.

The prophecy speaks of quarrels between the ‘tireurs de cordes’—or cardinals, as in Pieri’s explanation— in association with pope Gregory IX (‘allo nono Ghirigori’). This invites the identification of this prophecy with the events surrounding the death of Gregory IX in 1241, where argumentative cardinals were unable to agree on a successor, leading to the first ever conclave. [66] Pieri's commentary clarifies again for the reader the ideological connection between the symbols and their literal meaning. Highlighting the papal context ('ciò è otto apostolici così nominati'), in addition to explaining cardinals' antagonism ('uno tirerà in qua e l'altro in là'), the translation draws attention to the fractious behaviour which has earned them the name 'tireurs des cordes', whilst at the same time excluding any other possible interpretation for this sign. Moreover, Pieri heightens the ideological force of the phrase by altering it, on this one occasion, to 'traditori delle corde', exploiting phonetic similarities in order to emphasise the polemical perspective of the prophecy. The symbolic breaking of St Peter's door then, is linked to the disastrous papal election after the death of Gregory IX, focusing critical attention on the cardinals’ refusal to cooperate with each other. Pieri's juxtaposition of symbolic expression and explicative gloss, then, constitutes a reconfiguration on the literal level of discourse, which imposes interpretative limits upon the content. In the source text, this prophecy relies solely on the connotations produced by the symbolic expression, leaving the reader to trace for themselves the metonymic relations through which the real event can be identified; the prophecy is therefore open, relying as it does on the reader's ability to select a level upon which to interpret. The translation, however, makes these metonymic relations explicit by juxtaposing symbol and commentary, limiting the number of interpretative options for the reader and highlighting the ideological nature of the relation between expression and content. Retaining the real-world event and its ideological expression as an invariant semantic core, Pieri's interpretants develop this core-meaning by replacing the source text's pure symbolism with an explanation of how the symbolism works.

Pieri's prophecies, then, are a more closed text in relation to their source; by altering the literal level of prophetic expression, the translation places increased limits on

[66] See Cursietti, ed. *Storia*, p. 82; Paton, *Prophecies*, vol. II, p. 166.

interpretation of its content. Although it is still possible to read the text on both an extra-diegetic level —as an encoded narrative of real-world events— as well as a moral commentary on those events, Pieri's expressive emphasis on Merlin's denunciation of political and ecclesiastical corruption directs the reader to focus upon the critical level of meaning. The more emphatic, loquacious style employed in the translation highlights the ideological aspects of both symbolic expression and its content; Pieri's hyperboles of critical language accentuate the moral tone, whilst his juxtapositions of symbolic and literal expression draw the reader's attention to the negative semantic markers which ideologically relate the symbols to their content. Though the meaning and tone of the prophecies remain invariant, the translation presents an interpretant which dictates more clearly the text's ideological direction, restricting its interpretative scope in a manner characteristic of rewritten and reinterpreted prophecies; in this way, the anti-imperial, Guelph sympathies of the source text become the translation's priority.

La Vita di Merlino

If Pieri's Florentine-vernacular translation reflects the norms of the Italian prophetic tradition, where prophetic texts become increasingly closed through rewriting and reinterpretation, the *Vita di Merlino* subverts this trend by producing a translation of the *Prophecies* which consciously leaves the translation as 'open' as its source. We have already studied Pieri's translation of the prophecies, which provided an example of the reinterpretation of prophetic discourse; the following paragraphs will examine, however, the way in which the translation of the *Vita* avoids altering the expressive layer of the text, producing variant interpretants only in the interests of clarity. The anonymous *Vita* translator, like Pieri, takes a more interpretative approach with third-person narrative material in comparison to the prophetic discourse itself; however, unlike Pieri, the *Vita* translator expresses a particular lexical reverence for Merlin's words, not just their meaning and tone. This is manifested in an isomorphic translation, which sometimes even replaces French lexemes with their Italian vernacular equivalent; this can be observed in

the following examples:

> au tens que la laine[67] sera trainee sus terre, seront li homme el servage des fames, et les fames mueront leur faces et leur couleurs.[68]
>
> Al tempo che la lana sera strasinata per terra, serano gli homeni in servitio de le femine; et le femine muterano le sue facie e il suo colore.[69]

> Puis avendra que il alumera, non pas par soi, mes par autrui efforz, et chacera l'autre fors du tout. Et lors prendra si grant orgueil que il cuidera jamais [ne li] vaille riens l'aide que il aura eu, et souventes fois cuidera que li feus soit du tout estaint.[70]
>
> Et poi advenira che ello se illuminera non gia per se, ma per altrui forzo, et caciera l'altro de fora del tuto. Et alhora lui prendera si grande orgoglio che giamai non credera che li vaglia l'aiuto elqual havera habuto spesse fiate. Et credera che il foco sia del tuto studato.[71]

Though this form of isomorphic translation is used frequently in the *Vita*, it is not universally applied. The translation does make changes to the expressive discourse; such changes, it seems, are made not only in the interests of avoiding cumbersome language, but also with the effect of increasing linguistic precision. For instance, this increased clarity can be recognised in the *Vita*'s translation of Merlin's prophecy regarding the above mentioned 'felon saigneur', Ezzelino da Romano. The Merlin of the *Prophecies* says:

> si sera si crueus de toute sa saignorie comme foudre. Li peres n'osera parler au fius ne le fius au pere ne l'un frere a l'autre, ne l'un homme a l'autre pour poeur de mort.[72]

The translator gives :

> sera si temuto come il fulgure *che soto la sua signoria* non ardira parlar el padre al figliolo, ne

[67] Paton's source manuscript reads 'lune', which appears to be an anomaly with regard to other variants ('lame', 'lane', lainne', laive', 'lamu');
[68] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 69.
[69] *Vita*, f. f6R; 'At the time when the wool is dragged along the ground, men will be in the power of women; and the women will change their faces and their colours'.
[70] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 72.
[71] *Vita*, f. f6V; 'And then it will happen that this one will ignite— not by himself, but by the strength of others— and will banish the other completely. And then he will become so proud that he will have little regard for the help he has often received. He will believe the fire to be totally extinguished.'
[72] *Prophecies*, p. vol. I, p. 63.

> el figliolo al padre ; ne el fratello al fratello, ne uno *vicino* al altro per paura di morte.[73]

Though this is a subtle alteration, by adding 'soto la sua signoria' to the idea that even family members are afraid to talk to one another, the translation evokes a more concrete connection between the corrupt leadership of Merlin's 'felon saigneur' and fear among his citizens. In the final sentence, the replacement of 'l'homme' with the more contextually-specific 'vicino' develops this idea of alienation between citizens; because the term 'vicino' (neighbour) semantically carries connotations of friendship, the impression of the enforced distance between them is made more immediate than with the more general 'homme'. These semantic alterations, then, create a subtle increase in the expressive precision of the prophecy. This added clarity can also be observed in the *Vita*'s translation of a different prophecy — the prophecy dealing with false judgement, which we analysed earlier from the *Storia*. Here, instead of substituting a more general term for one which is more specific to the context, the translation alters the grammatical construction, which changes the stress of the sentence:

> mauvesement seront jugies les ames des juges qui donnent les faus jugemens.[74]
>
> malvagiamente serano iudicate le anime de quelli iudici che iudicherano falsamente.[75]

In the replacement of 'des juges' with 'quelli iudici', the addition of the demonstrative pronoun renders the relative 'che' limitative; Merlin's statement, therefore, is more specifically targeted towards *only* those judges who judge falsely. That is not to say that the original sentence could be read as generalised or ambiguous; nevertheless, it is worth noting that such adjustments have the effect of an increase in linguistic clarity, rather than anything else.

Though these alterations in the *Vita* do not correspond to any extant manuscript of the *Prophecies*, it cannot be ruled out, of course, that such changes may represent a literal,

---

[73] *Vita*, f. f3V. My italics. 'He will be as feared as lightening, because under his rule, fathers will not dare talk to sons, nor sons to fathers; nor brother to brother, nor one neighbour to another, for fear of death'.
[74] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 70.
[75] *Vita*, f. f6R; 'The souls of those judges who judge falsely will be judged badly'.

lexeme-for-lexeme translation of a manuscript which has not survived. Whereas this appears to be a less likely explanation for variants appearing in Pieri's text, due to the more idiosyncratic nature of his translational practice, the close renderings found in the *Vita* make it difficult to distinguish between variants originating in the translation or those deriving from a source manuscript. However, whether the translator of the *Vita* is making subtle changes to the text's expression, or simply transcribing isomorphically, the fact remains that the invariant semantic material can be found on a verbal level. Unlike Pieri, who renders the same prophetic meaning with different verbal interpretants, the *Vita* translator (if it is he/she who is making the changes) retains the expression of the source text as much as possible. Almost every word is rendered individually with either the nearest Italian vernacular equivalent, or instead with a form of expression which makes the meaning clearer, but does not add to it. Each word translated carries an invariant semantic core which is also rendered in the translation. The semantic material of the verbal expression, then, remains practically stable, rendered by interpretants which diverge only slightly from the source text sign. The semiotic status of the prophetic symbolism therefore is unaffected; the translation remains open to interpretation on as many levels as its source.

Be that as it may, no two languages show exact semantic correspondence, and even between languages as closely related as Old French and northern Italian dialect, a translator is sometimes obliged to disambiguate. Analysing examples of disambiguation can reveal a great deal about the translator's interpretation of the text, and such disambiguations in the *Vita* confirm the translator's attempts to increase linguistic clarity without sacrificing the symbolic meaning of the prophecies. Take, for instance, the French term *esillier* which appears on a number of occasions in the *Prophecies.* It has a wide range of semantic markers; Tobler Lommaztsch lists among its possible uses 'Jemanden verbannen; Jemanden trennen, entzweien, veruneinigen' in addition to 'Jemandem übel zurichten, mißhandeln; Jemanden vernichten, töten'; the implications, of course, are unambiguously violent, ranging between exile, conflict, abuse, and murder. *Esillier* has no direct equivalent in Italian which encompasses the whole of this semantic range.

Therefore, on two occasions when this term appears in the *Prophecies*, the *Vita* offers differing translations of its meaning— the choice of which appears to be grounded in the context. In the following sentence, for example, *esillier* could refer either to the destruction of the towns or to the exile of its inhabitants; the semantic ambiguity could even connote both:

> Et seront au tens de lui ainssi comme essilliees toutes les villes, et abatues les tors et les murs.[76]

The *Vita* translator, however, chooses a verb which narrows the semantic range to simply imply violence and annihilation:

> Et al suo tempo sarano quasi como destructe le terre, et abatute le torre et li muri.[77]

Destructe ('destroyed') here seems to derive its semantic content from the following clause, which details the physical destruction of buildings. The translator's choice, therefore, disambiguates the more general French verb using context as a criterion; although the semantic range is more limited, one could argue that such precision adds clarity. The semantic core of the translation is the idea of destruction, which remains invariant in the transition from source to target text; however, the translator's interpretant focuses on this semantic material more precisely to the exclusion of other interpretants connoted by the source language sign. The same may be said of another instance in which the *Vita* translator renders *esillier* using an interpretant with a more narrow semantic range:

> [...] ains que li Dragon[s] viengne sera la terre toute essilliee et gastee et fondues les villes?[78]
>
> [...] avanti chel dragon vegna serano le terre apresso che consumate et afondate et arse?[79]

---

[76] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 64.
[77] *Vita*, f. f3V; 'In his time, the land will be practically destroyed; towers and walls will be pulled down'. It is unclear why the translator has substituted 'villes' with 'terre'; this could perhaps be a transliteration from a variant manuscript.
[78] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 72.
[79] *Vita*, f6V; 'Before the coming of the Dragon, will the places nearby be wasted and ruined and burned?'; 'avanti' corrected from 'ananti'.

Esilier here may again refer contextually to both destruction of the towns and the exile of their inhabitants; the breadth of this semantic range is also covered by the adjectives 'gastee', which implies an abandoned wasteland and 'fondues', which refers here to collapsed or ruined buildings. The Italian vernacular term *consumare* again retains the idea of destruction as a semantic core; however, its implications are of a more gradual, corrosive form of ruin,[80] which approximates to the semantic markers of the word 'gaster' (TL : etw. verderben, verbrauchen) more closely than the more sudden and dramatic 'fondre'. In this way, the translator's interpretant gives further precision through disambiguation, concentrating the invariant semantic core in such a way as to impose a subtle increase of detail. *Esillier*, however, is not the only term to be disambiguated in the interests of clarity. In the *Vita*'s rendering of a the prophecy of the 'felon saigneur', which we have discussed above in relation to Pieri, the term *teche* is also rendered with more semantic precision :

> Mes une bone teche aura il que il ne voudra avoir aveques lui ne larron ne murtrier.[81]
>
> Ma havera in se una bona menda chel non vora havere seco alcuno ladro ne homicida.[82]

The terms *teche* and *menda* overlap semantically to a certain extent; both denote a mark or a stain, and both connote, on a figurative level, a good or bad characteristic (TL : 'Eigenschaft, Charakter'). Nevertheless, the Italian vernacular term 'menda' has semantic markers which correspond more specifically to the context of discourse; the *Gran Dizionario* defines it as '2. ant. Risarcimento di un danno ; riparazione di un torto, di un offese o di una colpa'. The implication of *bone teche* in French is that it offers a small compensation for the crimes committed by the 'felon saigneur', mitigating Merlin's criticism by showing that he, the *saigneur,* has at least has one good practice. The fact that the *Vita* uses a term which encompasses the idea of reparation further focuses the overlapping semantic material, producing an interpretant which, again, is more suited to

[80] Salvatore Battaglia, *Gran Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Turin: Editrice Torinese, 2000), vol.,III, p. 620 'Logorare a poco a poco con l'uso, deteriorare, corrodere, guastare, sciupare, scernare, ridurre a nulla'
[81] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 63.
[82] *Vita*, f. f3V; 'But he will have one redeeming feature, in that he will have neither thieves nor murderers around him'.

the socio-political context.

The *Vita*'s translation of Merlin's prophecies, therefore, works entirely upon the literal level of discourse. Whether the translator is rendering the French text isomorphically, disambiguating for added clarity, or making small alterations to the stress and focus, the invariant semantic material passed between source and translation can generally be found on the level of each individual word. The interpretants offered by the translator tend to be the nearest Italian-vernacular equivalent, both etymologically and semantically; where interpretants are developed further along the chain of signs, such as in the above examples, the effect of this interpretative elaboration is generally restricted to that particular seme. In other words, alterations affect only one word at a time, and, because these alterations are few, their effects are limited. The prophetic meaning itself is unaffected, because the expressive level of the text—the symbolic prophecy—is more or less unchanged by the translation. If we are to view medieval translation practices, as we do in this study, as a semiotic continuum, ranging from small-scale manuscript variation all the way up to large-scale *réécriture*, then the very close, almost isomorphic translation found in the *Vita*'s rendering of Merlin's prophetic discourse would be only a step further along from the phenomenon of *mouvance*. Like manuscript variants, the changes accumulated in the translation are low-level linguistic reconfigurations, which make semantic alterations to the literal level of discourse without affecting too drastically the text's semiotic value. As a result, the *Vita* remains as 'open' as its source. Because Pieri's translation, by contrast, retains invariant semantic material on the level of symbolic content —that is, the real-world meaning and its ideological force—, his restructuring of the literal, expressive layer of the text imposes new limits on its further interpretation; the effect of translation was then to close the text, directing the reader more explicitly towards a particular understanding. However, because the *Vita* retains invariant semantic material on the literal level of discourse, with interpretants which develop meaning only slightly, the translation does not redirect interpretation in any way, or impose any further limits upon the interpretation of the symbolic expression. Like the *Prophecies*, the *Vita* is an open text, anticipating a Model Reader who is able to read and interpret the text on various

levels, without privileging any particular reading.

If the *Vita* fails to impose further interpretative limits on its rendering of the literal text of the prophecies, we may however regard it as a more closed version in its edited form; whilst interpretations are left open by the translation itself, the rubrication of the version we are analysing (the 1480 printed edition) offers, in some places, literal suggestions as to how to read the symbolism. In this edition, the text is divided into short chapters, each headed with a short intertitle. The majority of these rubrics simply draw their titles from the words of Merlin's expression, for example, 'Capitolo quarto, nel qual si trata de la grande mortalita e terremoto che sara general per tuto el mondo'.[83] Nevertheless, certain of these rubrics bypass Merlin's symbolic discourse, and provide the literal meaning behind the symbolism. For example, a passage which speaks of the *Marca Dolorosa* is rubricated as 'Capitolo .vii., nelqual si narra de la dolorosa Marca Trivisana'.[84] The reader, then, is immediately given an indication as to the meaning of the symbolic expression, which had been left hermeneutically open in the main body of the text. Likewise, the content behind the recurring symbol 'boni marinari' (in French, the 'bons mariniers'), is clearly explained in a rubric: 'Capitolo octavo, nelquale si trata de Venitiani: li quali se appellano boni marinari'.[85] There are no French manuscripts antecedent to this first printing of the *Vita* which contain any sort of rubric, and the only extant text of the French *Prophecies* to offer them is the later 1498 printed edition. Here, in this 1498 French edition, the rubrics do not offer any sort of clarification for the obscure language of the prophecies, reproducing the text's symbolic discourse verbatim (for example, 'De la Marche Dolereuse qui sera achaptee par roetes d'argent').[86]

The distinction between rubrics which adopt Merlin's symbolism and rubrics which explain its meaning does not seem to be particularly systematic. Nevertheless, the majority of these 'literal' rubrics do concern the Venetians, Venice, and its neighbouring cities:

> Capitolo .xii. de le prophetie de Merlino, dove si trata de Venitiani e Genovesi, che farano

[83] *Vita*, f. f3R; 'Chapter four, which tells of the great mortality and earthquakes which will happen around the world'.
[84] *Vita*, f. f3V; 'Chapter vii, which tells of the March of Treviso'.
[85] *Vita*, f. f4R ; 'Chapter viii which tells of the Venetians, who are known as the good sailors'.
[86] *Prophecies*, vol. I, p. 63.

> guerra isieme; e como Viena profondera.[87]
>
> Capitolo .xxiiii. de le prophetie de Merlino dove si trata de quelli che habiterano ne le insule e de quelli de Venetia che harano uno sancto principe che fara miracoli. [88]

This is not always the case, however; another rubric, for example, decodes the sign 'Dragon de Babyloine' on an eschatological level:

> Capitolo .xxviii. de le prophetie de Merlino dove si tracta como Brandizo sara preso .x. fiate avanti che Anticristo venga.[89]

Rubrics, of course, occupy a liminal space between the translation and the reader; they are part of the textual apparatus defined by Gérard Genette as the 'paratexte'. This is a 'zone indécise', which exists between the inside and the outside of the text, fundamentally separate from it, but capable of influencing the conditions of reception. The paratext may provide a commentary, or direct the reader towards a particular interpretation; it is thus 'une zone non seulement de transition, mais de *transaction*'.[90] Rubrics, or chapter divisions, and especially perhaps in manuscripts and incunabula, interact with the text from within this paratextual space, guiding the reader's interpretation of the textual expression from a quasi-authorial position:

> Insofar as the rubric addresses the reader directly, from outside the fictional world, it resembles a narrator's intervention; but since it is a voice from outside the narrative framework, it can be compared even more appropriately to a gloss. Rubrics differ from glosses in that they are most often placed between segments of text, in sequential arrangement, rather than existing in simultaneous juxtaposition with the text as does a marginal or interlinear gloss. But like a gloss, the rubrication surrounds and invades the text, interacting with it and yet remaining apart...[91]

---

[87] *Vita*, f. f5V. 'Chapter xii of the prophecies of Merlin, which tells of the Venetians and the Genoese, who will be at war with each other ; and how Vienna will fall'. Venice and Genoa are described in the text itself as V. and G.
[88] *Vita*, f. g2V; 'Chapter xxiiii of the prophecies of Merlin, which tells of the people who live on the islands and in Venice, who will have a saintly prince who will perform miracles'.
[89] *Vita*, f. g3R-g3V; 'Chapter xxiii of the prophecies of Merlin, which tells of how Brandizo will be taken ten times before the coming of the Antichrist'.
[90] *Seuils* (Paris: Édition s du Seuil, 1987), p. 8.
[91] Sylvia Huot, ' "Ci parle l'aucteur": the Rubrication of Voice and Authorship in *Roman de la Rose* Manuscripts', *SubStance*, 17(1988), 42-48 (p. 42). See also Keith Busby, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance', *French Studies*, 53 (1999), 129-141; Jane H. M. Taylor, '*Le Roman de la Dame a la Lycorne et du Biau Chevalier au Lion* : Text, Image, Rubric', *French Studies*, 51 (1997) 1-18.

Intertitles, such as the rubrics provided for the 1480 *Vita,* have a cataphoric function; they present the reader with an authorised interpretative direction in advance of their reading the prophecy.[92] Though the translation of the prophetic symbolism fails to impose interpretative limits upon the literal surface of the text, the edition's imposition of rubrics which literalise the implied content close the text that the *Vita* translator, it seems, had left open. Whilst the translated interpretants develop the meaning only on the level of discourse, this discourse is manipulated within a paratextual space; it reveals to the reader hidden meanings on one or more level(s) of the text's hermeneutic network. In this way, the juxtaposition of the open translation with its closed rubrics presents an interpretant of the *Prophecies* which closes the text in a manner not too dissimilar from Paulino Pieri's translation. Finding a literal interpretant of the content placed alongside its symbolic expression, the reader is offered more than just an unambiguous guide as to the meaning behind the obscure prophecy; being presented simultaneously with symbolic expression and symbolic content, the reader is less encumbered by uncertainty surrounding the meaning of the sign, and free to concentrate on the positive or negative semantic markers which connect the sign to its object. The ideological force of the prophecy is therefore more strongly articulated. The reader is given an indication as to how and what to read on both a historical and an ideological level, excluding aberrant interpretants and thus reducing the linguistic ambiguity left intact by the translator. It is unclear whether these rubrics were composed by the translator him- or herself, by a scribe, or instead introduced by the printer, Luca Venitiano, during the transition from manuscript to printed form; if the latter is the case (and this is perhaps the most likely explanation, given the tendency to insert subtitles and chapter divisions in early printed books), then the rubrics represent the tension between the relatively stable aspects of the text and its continually changeable paratext, which is adapted and modified to meet new conditions of reception.[93] We cannot rule out, however, the possibility that the translator may have been reluctant to alter Merlin's actual words out of respect for his prophetic authority, but allowed him- or herself interpretative freedom within the paratextual space. In any case, the 1480 edition of

[92] Genette, *Seuils*, p. 297.
[93] *Seuils*, pp. 407-408.

the *Vita* (as opposed to the text of the translation on its own) follows the characteristic transition from an open to a more closed text, reflecting the rewriting and reinterpretation of prophetic material in the Italian tradition.

Translation, then, within this prophetic tradition, appears to be motivated by a desire to impose meaning and purpose onto the course of ontology. History itself, especially one as violent and volatile as that hinted at in the *Prophecies*, may appear so chaotic as to be meaningless. The multiplicity of motivations, happenings, causes and effects can have no stable or constant significance; interpretation of history is as open as textual *jouissance*. Prophetic texts which are applied to past and present events, then, can be regarded as a desire to impose linguistic and cognitive limits onto the past, present and the future, bringing history into an organised system with a finite number of interpretations. History, then, becomes a text, controlled by its authors and interpreters — and translators. That these prophetic texts become increasingly closed throughout their continued reception and reinterpretation reflects the need for further limits and interpretative restrictions; the more distant from the reader the events and people described (temporally or geographically), the more codified they become. The past is then not accessible by its real essence, but by its manifestation as a text, which becomes reinterpreted and re-encoded with new limiting structures as time goes by. The translation practices of the translators of the *Storia* and the *Vita*, therefore, become increasingly closed as a result of changing conditions of reception. The *Storia* imposes limits on interpretation by reinterpreting the literal level of the text, retaining the symbolic content as an invariant semantic core, but using verbal interpretants which affect reception of that core-meaning on an ideological level. The translated text of the *Vita*, on the other hand, retains an invariant semantic core on the level of expression, introducing interpretants which have only a most minor effect upon the discourse itself, and thus leaving interpretation of the content open; the text of the *Vita* as presented in the 1480 printed edition, however, imposes further limits upon interpretation by introducing some disambiguating material into rubrics. The difference between the translation practices of the two translators can be perceived in their respective contextual interpretants; that is, the relationship between the

practice of translation (or *réécriture*) and what we may imagine to be the overall purpose of the text itself. Pieri's *Storia* is more self-consciously literary than the *Vita*; the prophecies comprise a relatively small part of the text, when compared to the narrative material about Merlin which Pieri has compiled, combined and re-elaborated. By heightening the ideological content through his manipulation of prophetic symbolism, Pieri draws attention to the way in which Merlin's speech is encoded and decoded, offering not only criticism of events and figures from history, but also a self-reflexive commentary on the prophetic speech itself. This contextual interpretant may also have been affected by the geographical and temporal distance between source text and translation, given that Pieri's audience was receiving the prophecies in Florence, around 35 years later than the time of the *Prophecies'* composition. Though the symbolism is not explicitly explained, presupposing an audience with at least a basic knowledge of the prophesied events, the elaboration of ideological discourse and self-conscious references to the workings of its symbolism perhaps acknowledges that some interpretative direction from the translator was required. The Florentine audience of the *Storia*, perhaps, was not ignorant of the events, but did need some guidance as to how to interpret them. The *Vita*, on the other hand, seems to take its contextual interpretants from the *Prophecies* itself, supposing an audience sufficiently versed in Venetian history to understand the text's heuristic code. Whereas Pieri's audience is directed to appreciate the cleverness of the prophetic discourse itself, the *Vita*'s audience is expected to concentrate upon the hermeneutic activity of linking symbol and symbolised. The moment when the rubrics are introduced marks a change in the conditions of reception, presupposing a need for more explicit elaboration. Whether this was in around 1379, during the composition of the translation, during the printing process 100 years later, or even some time in between, the movement from an open to a closed text is a recognition that the history adumbrated in the *Prophecies* is no longer at the forefront of its intended readers' historical consciousness.

Conclusion:
Merlin and the Semiotic Continuum

Roger Ellis has described medieval translation as 'an act not of continuity but of rupture'.[1] By undertaking an authorial role, the translator transforms the text, endowing it with a new significance, a new expression, a new Model Reader. Though by no means incorrect, this perspective can perhaps be misleading; defining any form of rewriting by focusing upon the differences between source and target text can have the effect of alienating the rewrite from its original, suggesting a clean break with its narrative history— a new text. This thesis has demonstrated, however, that changes which occur during the process of translation and *réécriture* do not occur *ex nihilo*; nor do they represent a complete rejection of the source text's meaning. Changes, instead, have been shown to be motivated in some way by the meaning of the source text (as the translator/ *réécrivain* understands it), growing out of the original in a different direction, in accordance with a new interpretation which derives ultimately from the source. In this way, translation and *réécriture* represent a *development* and a *redirection* of meaning, rather than rupture; the constant and stable elements which remain invariant throughout a narrative's transmission can tell us as much about its reception as those which are constantly reinterpreted.

The thesis has followed these stable elements —invariant semantic cores— through various versions of the story of Merlin, charting varying interpretants which alter the semiotic status of this invariant material. We have treated this invariant core as a sign, as defined by Peirce, and subject to a process of semiosis; the invariant core produces an interpretant for the translator/*réécrivain*, which must be interpreted by another interpretant, and then another. Each successive interpretant redirects the meaning by generating more information about certain aspects of the core-sign, whilst discarding other aspects less relevant to the new trajectory of interpretation. The meaning of this core-

[1] *The Medieval Translator,* p. 4.

sign is thus diverted along a different path, not recreated, causing the character of Merlin and the story of his life to gradually change and contort over time and distance. In this way, the texts analysed in this thesis represent a continuum of interpretation, ranging from the small- to the large-scale; this continuum can be characterised as a vast chain of semiosis incorporating a number of signs, discourses and interpreters. The translation of Merlin's prophecies in the *Prophecies de Merlin* by the anonymous author of the *Vita di Merlino* represents one end of the continuum, where interpretation is minutely controlled and minimised. As we have seen in chapter 5, invariant semantic material can be found in almost every word, producing interpretants only on the level of expression; as a result, the translator's interpretation of the underlying prophetic meaning is repressed. Paulino Pieri's Florentine version of the same text represents a more extended process of interpretation; the literal meaning of the prophecies is retained as a semantic invariant, producing different interpretants on the level of symbolic expression. These interpretants redirect the meaning of the prophecies by emphasising Merlin's criticism of the individuals involved; in this way, Pieri's version of the prophecies is mediated by a more extended process of sign exchange, allowing him to develop the expressive layer of text in accordance with his own interpretants. This latter translation of the prophecies, then, can be situated further along the interpretative continuum than the first. Chapter 2, however, has shown that Pieri's reaction to Robert de Boron's version of Merlin's conception demonstrates an even greater shift in meaning, placing his translation of this text at an even further point along the continuum. Taking the narrative framework as a semantic invariant, Pieri develops the story of the Merlin's mother's persecution by a devil from an exploration of her sin and redemption into a demonstration of her emotional integrity. Though Pieri represses the religious elements of Robert's text by imposing his own, less morally-charged interpretants, his resignification does not break with the source meaning, but instead diverts its trajectory. Merlin's status in Italy as a prophet represents an intermediary interpretant, which brings additional requirements to Pieri's presentation of the invariant narrative of Merlin's conception; namely, that any moral ambiguity surrounding the prophet must be minimised. It is at this point in the continuum that the boundaries between translation and *réécriture* begin to blur; Pieri's version of Robert's text

mirrors, to some extent, the processes of *réécriture* exemplified by the *Suite*'s reinterpretation of the *Estoire*. In comparison to the very close translations at the lower end of the continuum, the invariant core of meaning transferred in Pieri's interpretation of Merlin's conception is a relatively large seme, allowing greater interpretative freedom with a more extended process of semiosis.

Though the two examples of intralingual *réécriture* analysed in this thesis both display a greater degree of interpretation than the examples of interlingual translation — and therefore, are more towards the large-scale end of the interpretative continuum— this does not always have to be the case. Translation may impose even greater shifts of meaning than some intralingual *réécritures*; nevertheless, the two practices tend to meet and merge around the midway point of this hypothetical continuum. Comparing the reinterpretation of Viviane and her relationship with Merlin in the *Estoire de Merlin* and the *Suite du Merlin* reveals an invariant core which is vested in an even more substantial seme. The idea of androgyny, which becomes attached to both Merlin and Viviane, was identified in both the source and its rewritten version in Chapter 3. Though semantically invariant, this seme takes on a different semiotic status within the framework of each text, with the *Suite* redirecting the meaning of Viviane's combination of the masculine and the feminine in accordance with the text's moral focus on sin. Likewise, the reinterpretation of Merlin's prophetic discourse analysed in Chapter 4 represents an even broader invariant seme: the concept of fragmentation, which is manifested in both texts through the medieval notion of the materiality of human languages in comparison with the transcendental *Verbum*. This places the *réécriture* of the *Estoire* by the *Suite* at the far end of the continuum, because it represents a large-scale reinterpretation; that is, an extended process of semiosis, in which interpretation involves the exchange of numerous signs and discourses.

This continuum, which has been proposed as a model for understanding translation and *réécriture* in the French and Italian Merlin tradition, could also be used to represent medieval translation and *réécriture* in its entirety. The notion of a chain of semiosis is flexible enough to account for all types of rewriting, whether within or between languages, literal, exegetical or rhetorical. It may account for changing notions of translation over a

number of centuries, ranging from the vernacular academic commentary of the early Middle Ages to the more heterogeneous practices of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The problematic distinction between translation and *réécriture* becomes less important when regarded from this perspective; the continuum allows for fluidity in practice, accounting for examples where elements of both translation and *réécriture* are combined and incorporated. Translation and *réécriture*, as we have seen, can be regarded to some extent as parallel processes; both involve the transfer of invariant meaning, which is given a new semiotic status as an interpretant sign within its new context. Of course, the distinction between inter- and intralingual transfer cannot be ignored; cultural and linguistic boundaries do influence the nature of reinterpretation. Nevertheless, the differences between translation and *réécriture* reflect more clearly upon the content rather than the practice. A change of language may represent a new audience, with new interests and expectations (such as the attitude of Italian audiences towards Merlin) which may affect the way in which the content is manipulated; nevertheless, invariant cores of material and their interpretants will still be identifiable between source and target text.

It would be reductive to think of the interpretative continuum as a linear development from one version to the next, or moving directly from source to target text. Instead, it would be more appropriately characterised as a converging of many different chains of semiosis, which draw upon different sources and discourses. For example, Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* represents a *réécriture* at the large-scale end of the continuum. It is not a rewrite of a single text, but rather reinterprets a number of narratives and themes from the whole spectrum of French and Italian Arthurian and epic traditions; Boiardo produces an interpretant in this romance pastiche which illustrates for his noble patrons 'the fallacy of trying to live the chivalric ideal'.[2] Similarly, The Italian Merlin tradition may be said to draw equally on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* and the French romance tradition represented by the *Merlin*, the *Estoire* and the *Suite*; even in translations such as the *Storia* and the *Vita*, where a specific French source is identifiable, we cannot discount the possibility that the Latin Merlin tradition may provide some

[2] Elizabeth H. D. Mazzocco, 'An Italian Reaction to the French Prose Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Matteo Maria Boiardo and the Knights' Quest for Identity', in T*he Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Text and Transformations*, ed. by William W. Kibler (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 191-205 (p. 192).

interpretative direction (albeit implicitly), especially given, as we have seen in chapters 4 and 5, the political nature of Geoffrey's *Prophetia Merlini*. In this way, the idea of a continuum allows us to take account of a plurality of sources, which may provide an interpretative background to a translation or rewrite. The chains of semiosis are dynamic and fluid; the meaning of a text, theme or narrative is constantly being transferred and shifted. Every source text is not necessarily an original, but a reinterpretation of one or more texts, and these texts are already reinterpretations of other texts; each translation or rewritten version, therefore, inherits material not only from its immediate source, but from the whole tradition of which its source is a part. Medieval translation and *réécriture*, then, both redirects existing meanings and assimilate new ones.

The chain of semiosis not only absorbs earlier versions of the same narrative, but also accounts for the incorporation of discourses from outside the text. Because translations and rewrites are developed both by accumulating and discarding interpretants deriving from the source text signs, any additional information gathered about the sign can be seen to draw upon current ideas and patterns of thought. In this study of the Merlin tradition in French and Italian, we can identify recurring themes which tap into discourses external to the narrative— discourses which provide intermediary interpretants for the redirection of the source text's meaning. For example, morality is a constant preoccupation for writers when dealing with the Merlin story. Due to Merlin's position of authority (whether as a prophet or as advisor to Arthur), his diabolical parentage renders him ethically problematic. The *Merlin en prose* and the *Suite du Merlin* show a particular preoccupation with the spiritual status of Merlin's character. For Robert de Boron, as we saw in chapter 2, Merlin represents the ultimate redemption; despite being descended from a devil and a family of questionable moral fibre, he is saved by God and accorded the priest-like role of preparing for the Grail quest. In order to make his redemption so miraculous, the author draws upon the notion of *desperatio*, a heretical wavering of faith which can lead to sloth, adultery and suicide. The fact that Merlin's mother's repentance outweighs even this most serious of sins demonstrates the power of confession and absolution. The theme of morality, then, is developed by Robert through an interpretative engagement with discourses on sin and the devil's relationship to humanity.

Paulino Pieri's translation, conversely, would later attenuate this moral focus by diverting the meaning of the invariant narrative in accordance with later medieval representations of the devil as a less powerful figure. The *Suite* produces moralised interpretants of both Viviane and Merlin's prophecies, incorporating further religious discourses into its interpretation of the *Estoire*. Where the *Estoire* presents Viviane as an androgynous figure based on the gendered body/soul dichotomy, the *Suite* emphasises the moral connotations which the *Estoire* leaves implicit in this seme. In the *Suite,* Niviene's combination of male rationality and female sensuality is overlaid with interpretants deriving from religious discourses, bringing the significance of Niviene in line with the spiritual focus of the rewrite. The *Suite*'s version of the prophecies is similarly integrated into its overall context. Where the *Estoire* uses Merlin's prophetic discourse to demonstrate the limits of man's control over his own future, the *Suite* incorporates the invariant seme of fragmentation into the causal chain of events through which the narrative is constructed. By offering the characters a chance to alter their future, Merlin's prophetic discourse places moral responsibility on the individual for the consequences of their own actions. These moral questions thus find their expression through engagement between interpretants of the source text and extra-textual currents of thought, which become integrated into the target text, re-orientating its meaning.

Another recurrent theme which develops interpretants from beyond the text is the relationship between humanity and time. Merlin's ability to see the future is consistently problematic for the chronology of any text devoted to him/them, and each writer in our corpus treats it in different ways. The *Suite* and the *Estoire*, as we have seen, offer separate interpretants of Merlin’s prophetic knowledge which demonstrate the limits of human epistemology. Merlin's knowledge exists within the same atemporal time frame as God; for him, past, present and future are simultaneously cognisable. The transmission of this knowledge to Merlin’s human counterparts involves the attenuation of its totality by the material conditions of earthly language; hence they are unable to understand his *obscures paroles*. The Italian versions of Merlin’s prophecies, however, provide an interpretant of this atemporal omniscience which takes on an extra-diegetic significance. By manipulating the temporal and fictional boundaries of the text, the author of the *Prophecies* presents

Merlin as a prophet from the distant past, predicting events which will take place in the future from his (fictional) perspective. For the reader, these events belong to the very recent past. This not only creates a fiction of prophetic accuracy, but also blends past, present and future in such a way as to approximate the atemporal dimensions of prophetic knowledge; the future of which Merlin speaks is actually an account of history, presented as a prediction but, in reality, documenting the past. This prophetic anachronism is not only encoded into the text, but activated by the reader's engagement with it, inviting the reader to decode the future using hindsight. The fact that both Italian vernacular translations preserve this temporal interaction between text and reader suggests not only its entertainment value, but also its effectiveness in creating polemical discourse on contemporary history. It may be argued, then, that the invariant semantic core of Merlin's omniscience is that it tests the epistemological limits of the threshold between text and reader. The prevalent interpretant of this notion within the French tradition is that Merlin articulates, within the fictional space, an overview of the text that only the author and the reader can have. In the Italian texts, however, Merlin speaks from within the fictional text, and its fictional timeframe, about events in the recent history of the reader's own present.

These discourses on sin, morality, time and fiction have thus become absorbed into the Merlin story through its many interpretations, developing the invariant material attached to the figure of Merlin just as a chain of semiosis absorbs increasing layers of information with each successive interpretant. This thesis has attempted to prove that this chain of semiosis transcends linguistic boundaries, encompassing both intralingual and interlingual rewriting and their overlapping techniques. As such, its Peircean methodology demonstrates a flexibility which could justify its wider application not only to other similar corpora, but also to other types of texts, translation and rewriting. The identification of invariant semantic cores with differing interpretants may be applied to the analysis of practices such as intralingual *mise en prose*, scribal adaptations, and even, as we have seen in chapter 5, the composition of rubrics and chapter headings. Since the notion of semiosis accounts for changes in the text's socio-cultural environment, it could also be used to analyse post-medieval translation of medieval works, since more recent interpretants of a medieval text can still be considered as part of the ongoing interpretative

continuum. Of course, the methodology used in this thesis may require some development when applied to different genres, such as non-literary texts or lyric poetry. Different types of translation, such as medical or scientific, and translations with an explicit purpose, for example, renderings of didactic or legal texts, will all demonstrate distinctive attributes which perhaps this methodology, developed from the analysis of literary texts, will not be able to account for. Nevertheless, it could provide a theoretical basis from which to proceed, and a useful critical vocabulary. Like the notion of semiosis itself, the methodology is neither fixed nor finalised; its future development and improvement are anticipated.

The idea of semiosis allows us to regard translation, rewriting and reinterpretation as forming a part of the continuous sign exchange taking place throughout medieval society. In Chapter 1, we observed Umberto Eco's notion that culture itself represents a vast chain of semiosis, in which signs are constantly being reinterpreted with other signs— linguistic signs with other linguistic signs, iconic signs with linguistic signs, indexical with aural signs, and so on, *ad infinitum*.[3] Obviously, our access to such sign exchanges in the Middle Ages is limited, restricted primarily to the linguistic, visual, and occasionally, the aural (such as in musical notation, although incompletely). However, the notion of semiosis allows us to make the best of such limitations, revealing as it does the interpretant connections between such remaining signs, their changing trajectories, and their various expressions throughout different media and different periods of medieval culture. To impose notions of difference between these multiple signifying systems— narrative, poetry, theology, art, music, law, historiography, etc— is to neglect the conceptual stability between these forms of expression, the 'invariant semantic cores' which, as we have seen, reveal so much about the reception of ideas. Semiosis, then, could provide a nuanced perspective not only on translation, or on Merlin, but for a variety of medieval studies. We could even regard modern studies of medieval texts, conceived in this light, as a continuation of this semiotic process, providing, as they do, a twenty-first century perspective upon medieval culture; modern interpretants, perhaps, which draw as much upon our own modes of cultural thought as on our knowledge of medieval culture.

[3] *A Theory of Semiotics*, p. 71 ; Chapter 1, p. 53.

If this thesis provides an interpretant of the medieval vernacular Merlin texts, then it has also contributed to the development of their meaning along a semiotic chain of interpretants which stretches back over many centuries, great distances, and countless intermediary interpretants. Each chain of semiosis, however, must come to rest at a final logical interpretant; for the moment, interpretation will cease here.

Appendix

If Peircean semiotics has effectively demonstrated that translation and *réécriture* can be regarded as belonging the same interpretative continuum, then what are the limits of this continuum? Do they lie at the margins of linguistic expression, or beyond? To what extent can we regard non-scripted media—such as image, music or oral performance— as a parallel activity to rewriting within the same or another language? Since the objects of this study—that is, medieval rewriting and the figure of Merlin—have continually been shown to resist the limits imposed upon them by modern critics, then it will be a final gesture of this thesis to test the limits of its own methodological approach. If the chain of semiosis can encompass an exchange of both verbal and nonverbal signs, then to what extent can textual meaning be reproduced in images, for example? Can we regard manuscript illustration as a form of translation, within the same interpretative continuum as rewriting?

The Translation from Word to Image in Manuscript Illustration

As part of a larger interpretative continuum, we might say that each version of the Merlin story is characterised by the particular set of interpretants it produces in reaction to other versions. Each text, then, also represents a chain of semiosis in itself. Within this chain, we may identify not only linguistic interpretants, but also visual ones; each manuscript illustration constitutes a further interpretant of the narrative, depicting the text as the artist understands it.[1] Meyer Schapiro has even referred to the transition from

[1] Whether the artist had read the text themselves, or been instructed as to what to depict by a manuscript planner, the

text to image as a translation, suggesting an interpretative parallel between the two practices.[2] Image, in many respects, does parallel the semiotic function of language, providing sign-vehicles which evoke a particular series of interpretants. According to Suzanne Lewis, medieval images could be encoded with meaning in a similar way to language:

> In a culture based on semantic resemblances, images were understood to be decipherable hieroglyphs of meaning, erasing the distinction between what is seen and what is read.[3]

Within the scheme of Peircean semiotics, however, Peirce makes clear distinctions between the function of a linguistic sign and that of a visual one— what he calls an 'iconic sign'. Linguistic signs, Peirce states, belong to the category of the symbol, 'which represent their objects, independently alike of any resemblance or any real connection, because dispositions or factitious habits of their interpreters insure their being so understood'.[4] That is to say, the linguistic representamen (Peirce's term for the signifier) relates to its object purely on the basis of convention. The image, however, relates to its object by visually reproducing its physical characteristics.[5] This leads Peirce to conclude that the interpretation of an image is based not on foreknowledge of an established system of meaning (as is language) but on an immediate first impression— a type of perception which he categorises as a First:

---

basis for the image would ultimately derive from the language of the text.

[2] *Approaches to Semiotics : Words and Pictures* (Paris: Mouton, 1973), p. 9. See also by the same author *Late Antique, Early Christian and Medieval Art: Selected Papers* (New York: Braziller inc., 1979).

[3] *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

[4] A Sketch of Logical Critics', in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2 (1893-1913), ed. by the Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998) 2:460-461.

[5] 'An *Icon* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not'', A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic', in *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 2, 2:291.

> An *Icon* is a Representamen whose Representative Quality is a Firstness of it as a First. That is, a quality that it has *qua* thing renders it fit to be a representamen. Thus, anything is fit to be a *Substitute* for anything that it is like. [...] A Representamen by Firstness alone can only have a similar Object.[6]

The difference, then, between the interpretation of images and the interpretation of language essentially boils down to the difference between the abstract and the concrete. Because language signifies through convention (Peirce calls this 'Thirdness'), its relation to its object is arbitrary; it is thus sufficiently separated from the concrete rules of reality to be able express incorporeal concepts, thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc. Image, on the other hand, is bound to these concrete rules, because iconic signs are more closely determined by the characteristics of the objects they represent. If we are to talk about the 'translation' from word to image, therefore, the transition from abstract convention to concrete imitation is of fundamental importance. Like translation, illustration represents a development of meaning through the chain of semiosis; if this is the case, would it be possible to identify invariant semantic cores with variant interpretants, as has been done with linguistic forms of reinterpretation?

The story of Grisandole, a short deviation from the main plot of the *Estoire de Merlin*, provides themes which are of particular relevance to the problematic gulf between the abstraction of language and the concrete nature of image. It was clearly of great interest to medieval readers, given the large number of manuscripts which offer illustrations of its content.[7] Irène Fabry has already highlighted this narrative as one that offers a novel perspective upon manuscript illustration:

> L'image ne se contente pas d'illustrer, de répéter ou de synthétiser ce qui est dit, mais l'interprète et demande aussi à être analysée à la fois en elle-même et en relation avec le

[6] 'A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic', *The Essential Peirce*, 2:273.
[7] For a list of manuscripts which illustrate the story of Grisandole, in addition to a fuller treatment of other aspects of its illustration, see Irène Fabry, 'Conment Merlin se mua en guise de cerf' : écrire et représenter la métamorphose animale dans les manuscrits enluminés de la *Suite Vulgate* du *Merlin', Revue Textimage*, *Varia*, 2 (2010), 1-32.

texte qu'elle accompagne et dans lequel elle s'insère. [8]

In particular, the images found in the late thirteenth-century BNF fr. 24394 provide a lucid example of how this intriguing narrative is visually interpreted.

In the course of the *Estoire*, Merlin informs Arthur that he must leave for a while, then proceeds to travel to Rome. The Roman emperor, Julius Caesar, is troubled by a strange dream, in which he sees a sow with a golden crown on her head coupling with twelve young lions. The sow, the reader is told, represents Caesar's wife, the empress, whose twelve female servants are actually her young male lovers in disguise. Incidentally, the emperor's seneschal, Grisandole, is actually a woman called Avenable, who has been forced to adopt a male persona after being separated from her family and left without paternal protection. Merlin, as we have seen, comes to the emperor in the form of a stag, to inform him that the wild man in the forest can interpret his dream. It is Grisandole who manages to catch the wild man (who is, of course, also Merlin in another different disguise), and brings him to court; Merlin, proceeds to expose the empress's adultery, whilst also exposing Grisandole as a woman. The emperor rectifies the situation by having his wife executed and marrying Grisandole instead; she is now able to reassume her female dress and identity. Caesar also locates her lost family, and marries his own daughter to Grisandole's brother.

The story of Grisandole is interesting from the perspective of translation from text to image, in that its theme of disguise depends upon visual illusion. The narrative is structured through an inversion of the binary opposition between male and female, where external signifiers of gender cause Grisandole to be interpreted as male, and the

[8] 'Composition cyclique et programme d'illustrations. L'épisode de Grisandole dans le manuscrit enluminé de la *Suite*
Vulgate du *Merlin*, B. L. Add. 10292, in *Cycle et collection* ed. by Anne Besson, Vincent Ferré and Christophe Pradeau
(Paris L'Harmattan, Itinéraires et contacts de Cultures, 41, 2008), pp. 213-233 (p. 230).

servants to be accepted as female. The empress disguises her lovers by providing them with the signifiers of femininity, giving them potions to prevent their beards growing and dressing them in female attire:

> [ils] estoient vestu de grans roubes trainans, envolepees de guimples et lor cring estoient lonc et parcreu et trechie a manere de pucele. Si paroient tres bien a estre puceles et furent longement avoec l'empereis sans estre conneu.[9]

Their long dresses, wimples and absence of facial hair are all external signs which cause them to be interpreted by other characters in the text as female. Similarly, Grisandole is portrayed using lexically masculine signifiers :

> Et ele estoit grande et droite et menbrue. Si se demena en toutes les maneres k' escuier se demaine, sans vilonie. N'ainc ne fu ravisee por femme. Si remest avoec l'empereor et fu de molt grant proece, et se penoit de servir l'empereor sor tos homes.[10]

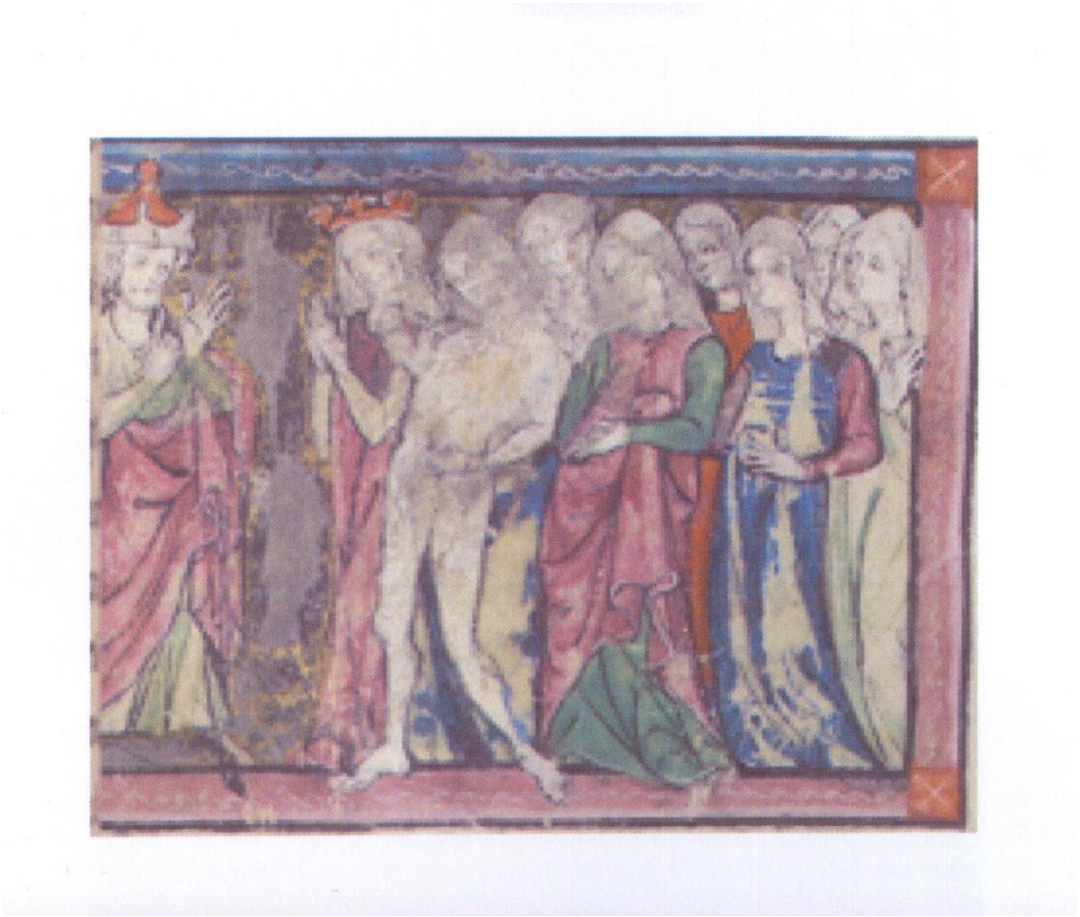
Terms such as *menbrue*, *droite* and *proesce* are external attributes specifically associated with the male physique and behaviour, which in turn causes Grisandole to be interpreted as male. The problematic situation arises and is allowed to continue because no one is able to interpret these false signifiers; the fact that the lovers ‘paroient tres bien a estre puceles’ mirrors the author’s assertion that Grisandole ‘n'ainc ne fu ravisee por femme’. The text, with its unlimited capacities for abstract description, is able to simultaneously communicate to the reader both the external appearance of these characters, and their true identities. Not only can text explain the histories of the persons involved, but it can also employ the female pronoun 'ele', in addition to feminine forms of the adjectives 'grande' and 'menbrue', to describe Grisandole. This syntagmatic contrast emphasises the co-presence of two levels of signification-- the

[9] BNF fr 24394 f. 214R.
[10] f. 214V.

external and male, and the internal and female.

If an image represents a concrete sign based on unmediated perception, then the illustration of such material must necessarily be troubled. If the narrative development rests upon the fact that no one can see beyond the visual exterior of the cross-dressed characters, then how can an image adequately portray an iconic interpretant of the text? The miniature which introduces the narrative on folio 214R depicts the climactic moment at which, having heard Merlin's condemnation of the empress, Caesar instructs Grisandole to undress one of the servants, revealing him to be a man (fig. 2).[11] The image here recreates the text's initial binary oppositions by clearly dividing the scene

Figure 2



[11] Figure 2 is unfortunately missing part of the left side of the frame due to a reproduction error; there is in fact another male figure standing to the emperor's right.

along gender lines, with the empress and her ladies on one side, and the emperor and a man whom we may, from his role in this scene, presume to represent Grisandole on the other. On a denotational level, the ladies possess the signifiers of female dress and physique, and the men are signified by their male dress and physique; though the reader knows these appearances to be false and inverted across both sides, the image reproduces the external level of signification- that of disguise. Though these aspects of the image provide a narrative background— a general evocation of the situation in the first part of the story—the action which takes place in the foreground provides a contrast in that it represents the moment of revelation that the servant is 'formé de tos membres autresi com li autre home sont'.[12] This moment in both text and image provides a deconstruction of illusory signification; in the text, Caesar is suddenly confronted with his own inability to correctly interpret both moral and gender signifiers attached to those around him: 'Et quant li empereres les voit si en ot si grant honte qu'il ne set qu'il doit dire'.[13] This moment of revelation is equally emphatic in the image; the boy stands naked in the centre of the picture, deprived of all external female signifiers. His position in the female side of the frame provides a contrast between his exposure and the still disguised men in women's costume behind him. In this way, the image uses this juxtaposition to *translate* the text's ability to signify on more than one level at a time; by simultaneously showing the surface level of signification, in which the transvestite exterior appears to denote true gender, and the hidden interior, where the man is deprived of all female signifiers, the image both constructs and deconstructs the illusions and disguises described in the text.

In the transition from text to image, we may identify this co-presence of both external disguise and internal reality as an invariant semantic core. Moreover, the image

[12] f. 216V.
[13] f. 216V.

can be seen to produce visual interpretants which serve to both develop and concretise the meaning of the text. For instance, the female side of the gender division is much more physically dominant than the male, crushing the two men into the corner of the frame. The fact that the empress and her 'ladies' are shown to be visually overpowering perhaps demonstrates the corruption of a situation which allows such gender inversions to persist; the imbalance in favour of the stronger female side may connote the prevalence of lust and adultery, which is associated throughout the narrative with the empress. It may also extend beyond the text to encompass interpretants from general medieval misogynistic commonplace, where femininity was associated with sensuality and the body. Physical position may also provide a further interpretant of this invariant core, the simultaneous expression of disguise and reality. The (supposedly) men and women in the picture are not only divided along gender lines, but also demonstrate a clearly gendered physical stance; the emperor and (cross-dressing female) Grisandole are straight and upright, whilst the empress and her (cross-dressing male) ladies are gracefully bent into a pose traditionally used for female figures in medieval art. Nevertheless, the naked boy in the centre of the scene confounds this traditional distinction. Though stripped naked and revealed to be male, he continues to adopt the same willowy female posture as the 'ladies' behind him. In this way, he represents visually the amalgamation of the male body and the female exterior, through his performative imitation of female behaviour.

Where this first image uses physical juxtaposition to reproduce invariant semantic material from the text—the co-presence of disguise and truth— the closing miniature of this narrative can be seen to translate textual meaning by creating a cyclical significatory dialogue with the image discussed above. On folio 218R (fig. 3) is depicted the wedding of Caesar and Grisandole, which, in the text, signifies the realignment between gender and external appearance. The empress and her ladies have been exposed and executed, and, upon Merlin's suggestion, the emperor takes Grisandole as

his new wife. Now able to revert to her female identity under the emperor's male protection, she is henceforth designated by her female name (Avenable), and described as 'une des plus beles puceles c'on trouast en nule tere'.[14] The problems of cross dressing and false identities are thus resolved, and gender signifiers are reorganised and rebalanced. The image reconstructs the same set of male/female binary oppositions as the first image, with the men standing on one side, the women on the other. However, the reader is now aware that the signifiers of male and female gender correspond directly to the characters indicated. The final image thus re-inverts the gender inversions of the first, depicting women who we know are women, and men who we know are men. In this way, the visual repetition of the binary gender positions from the

Figure 3

[14] f. 217V

first image reproduces the idea of a re-harmonisation; we may then identify this rebalance of gender roles as an invariant semantic core of the transition from word to image. The illustration also rebalances the two gender groupings, providing a more symmetrical view of the male/female divide. This repositioning, in reference to the overpowering female side of the previous image, provides a visual interpretant which concretises the text's new-found equilibrium in both moral and sexual terms. Just as the signifier-signified relationship is realigned in the text, the image re-harmonises the balance between external and internal signification which is shown to be inverted in the first image.

To some extent, the illustration of the text does provide a form of interpretation which parallels the translation or *réécriture* of a narrative. The transfer of an invariant semantic core can be identified; though, as with translation and rewriting, this core meaning takes on a new semiotic significance within its new context. Where the first image reproduces the text's juxtaposition of external disguise and internal reality, the second image replicates the rebalance of gender signifiers. However, the images produce visual interpretants of this semantic core which particularly accentuate the way in which gender is opposed, inverted and then re-harmonised, through the syntagmatic development from the first picture to the last. These interpretants are particularly characterised by the discrepancy between the abstraction of language and the plastic nature of image; in particular, the naked boy represents a concrete demonstration of gender performance in contrast to bodily nature. In this case, the interpretants provided by the image serve to place emphasis on these aspects of the text; it is not inconceivable, however, that other images in other manuscripts (of this or of other texts) might develop the meaning even further, incorporating additional interpretants and discourses into visual representation.

Regarding interpretation as a chain of semiosis, then, accounts not only for both interlingual translation and intralingual *réécriture*, but also for the expression of

meaning through different sign systems. Just as the translations and rewritten versions in our Merlin corpus drew upon extra-textual cultural ideas and discourses to develop meaning, the iconic sign presents such ideas visually, deriving, so to speak, from the artist's mental interpretant and use of recognisable visual signs to convey this interpretant. Since, as Peirce notes, symbolic and iconic signs relate to their objects in different ways, this methodology may need further adaptation if the *translation* between word and image were to be studied more extensively; nevertheless, the model has thus shown itself to be flexible enough to account for the variety of interpretative activities which we can perceive in surviving remnants of medieval culture. As with translation and *réécriture*, the transfer of meaning between word and image amounts to a redirection, not a rupture; the boundaries between the meaning of the text, the artist's interpretants and extra-textual cultural discourses are blurred, just as the source/ target text dichotomy becomes less rigid when studying translation and *réécriture* from a Peircean perspective. Semiosis, then, could also provide a flexible framework for understanding interpretations which go beyond the purely linguistic, taking into account a variety of media and their different capacities to express meaning.

Works Cited

Primary Texts:

Merlin: roman du XIIIe siècle, ed. by Alexandre Micha (Geneva: Droz, 1979).

Les Prophecies de Merlin (Cod. Bodmer 116), ed. by Anne Berthelot (Geneva: Bodmer, 1992).

Les Prophecies de Merlin, ed. by Lucy Allen Paton 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927)

La Storia di Merlino di Paolino Pieri, ed. by Ireno Sanesi (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano di Arte grafiche, 1898).

La Storia di Merlino, ed. by Mauro Cursietti (Roma: Zauli, 1997).

La Suite du Roman de Merlin, ed. by Gilles Roussineau (Geneva : Droz, 2006).

Le Livre du Graal: Joseph d'Arimithie, Merlin, Les premiers faits du roi Arthur, ed. by Anne Berthelot, Gérard Gros, Irene Freire-Nunes and Philippe Walter (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001).

Manuscripts:

Cambridge University Library, Add. 7071.

London. British Library, ms Add. 38117.

Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Codex pl LXXXIX, inf. 65.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr. 24394.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr. 20047.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms lat. 16397.

Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, ms Pal. 39.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. 949.

Venice, Biblioteca Marciana XXIX.

Incunabula:

Historia di Merlino [La Vita di Merlino] (Venice: Luca Venitiano, 1480).

William Caxton, *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, (Bruges: William Caxton and Colard Mansion, 1473 or 1474)

Dictionaries

Salvatore Battaglia, *Gran Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, 21 vols. (Turin: Editrice Torinese, 2000).

Godefroy, Frédéric, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du 9e au 15e siècle*, 10 vols. (Paris : Vieweg, 1881-1902).

Lommatzsch, Erhard and Tobler, Adolf, *Alt-Französisches Wörterbuch*, 12 vols. (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1952).

Secondary Sources:

Ainsworth, Peter, 'Knife, Key, Bear and Book: Poisoned Metonymies and the Problem of *Translatio* in Froissart's Later *Chroniques*', *Medium Aevum*, 59 (1990), 91-113.

Allen, Prudence R. S. M., *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC – AD 1250* (Montréal: Eden Press, 1985).

Almond, Richard, *Medieval Hunting* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2003).

Al-Rubai'i, Alya', *Translation Criticism: A Model for Assessing the Translation of Narrative Fictional Texts* (Durham: Durham Modern Language Series, 2005).

Ambrose, *De virginibus ad Marcellinam sororem Sua*, PL 16, 149.

Anselm of Canterbury, *Opera Omnia*, ed. by Francis Schmitt, 3 vols (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1984).

Ardener, Edwin, 'The Voice of Prophecy: Further Problems in the Analysis of Events', in *The Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays*, ed. by Malcolm Chapman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 134-154.

Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, ed. and trans. by A. L. Peck (London: Heinemann, 1943.

Astell, Anne, 'Translating Job as Female', in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 59-69.

Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

_____, *De vera et falsa poenitentia,* ed. J. P. Migne, PL 40, pp. 1116-1118.

Badel, Pierre Yves, 'Arts of Poetry' in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Barrie Dobson, Michael Lapidge, André Vauchez and Adrian Walford (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2000), p. 117.

Barratt, Alexandra, 'Dame Eleanor Hull: a Fifteenth-Century Translator', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 87-102.

Bassnett-McGuire, Susan, *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen Young, 1984; repr. London: Routledge, 2002).

Catherine Batt, 'Malory's Questing Beast and the Implications of Author as Translator', in *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 143-167.

Baumgartner, Emmanuèle and Andrieux-Reix, Nelly, *Le Merlin en prose: fondations du récit arthurien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001).

Beer, Jeanette M. A., *A Medieval Caesar* (Geneva: Droz, 1976).

_____, 'Introduction', in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft* (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), pp. 1-8.

_____, 'Introduction' in *Translation and the Transmission of Culture Between*

1300 and 1600, ed. by Jeanette M. A. Beer and Kenneth Lloyd-Jones (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1995), pp. vii-xii.

Berthelot, Anne, 'Légende arthurienne et histoire contemporaine dans les *Prophesies de Merlin*' in *Die kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Italien und den anderen Ländern Europas im Mittelalter,* ed. by Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald : Reineke-Verlag, 1993) pp.15-24.

_____, 'Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake', *Arthuriana*, 10 (2000), 55-82.

Besamusca, Bart, 'Rewriting the *Roman de Renart*: The Middle Dutch Beast Epic *Van den vos Renaert*'. in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition* ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 387-404.

Blacker, Jean (ed.), 'The Anglo-Norman Verse Prophecies of Merlin', *Arthuriana*, 15 (2005), 1-125.

Blamires, Alcuin, *Women Defamed and Women Defended: an Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

Bloch, R. Howard, 'Medieval Misogyny', *Representations*, 20 (1987), 1-24.

_____, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Bogdanow, Fanni, *The Romance of the Grail: a Study of the Structure and Genesis of a Thirteenth Century Arthurian Prose Romance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966).

_____ and Trachsler, Richard, 'Rewriting Prose Romance: The Post-Vulgate Roman du Graal and Related Texts', in *Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. by Glynn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006). pp. 342-393.

_____, 'The Vulgate Cycle and Post-Vulgate *Roman du Graal*' in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 33-54.

Boucher, Caroline, 'De la subtilité en francais: vulgarisation et savoir dans les traductions d'auctoritates des XIII- XIV siecles', in *The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Age: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden et al (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 89-99.

Bougassas, Catherine Gaullier, 'Alexandre héros païen ou héros pré-chrétien? Deux stratégies opposées de réécriture à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Le moyen français*, 51-52-53

(2003), 305-326.

Boulton, Maureen, 'Jean Galopes, traducteur des *Meditationes Vitae Christi*', *Le moyen français*, 51-52-53 (2003), 91-102.

Bremond, Claude and Le Goff, Jacques, *Typologie des sources du moyen age occidental, fasc.40 ; L'exemplum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982).

Brown, Ron M., *The Art of Suicide* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).

Brown-Grant, Rosalind, *French Romance of the Later Middle Ages: Gender, Morality and Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Brumble, David, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998).

Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, ed. by Francis J. Carmody (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948).

Buridant, Claude, '*Translatio Medievalis*: Théorie et pratique de la traduction médiévale', *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature*, 21 (1983), 81-136.

Burnley, J.D., 'Late Medieval English Translation: Types and Reflections', in *The Medieval Translator*, pp. 37-53.

Burns, E. Jane, *Arthurian Fictions: Rereading the Vulgate Cycle* (Colombus: Ohio State University Press, 1985).

_____, 'Vulgate Cycle', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Chicago: St James Press, 1991), pp. 496-499.

Busby, Keith (ed.), *Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993).

_____, 'Rubrics and the Reception of Romance', *French Studies*, 53 (1999), 129-141.

_____, *Codex and Context: Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002).

_____, Pickens, Rupert T., and Williams, Andrea L., 'Perceval and the Grail: the Continuations, Robert de Boron and *Perlesvaus*', in *The Arthur of the French,* pp. 215-273.

Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Joseph Strange, 2 vols (Cologne: J. M. Herberle, 1851).

Campbell, Laura J., 'Reinterpretation and Resignification: A Study of the English Translation of the *Roman de la Rose*', *Neophilologus*, 93 (2009), 325-338.

Cerquiglini, Bernard, *Éloge de la variante* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

Chydenius, Johan, 'La théorie du symbolisme médiéval', *Poétique*, 23 (1975), 322-341.

Cicero, *De oratore*, ed. and trans. by Edmond Courbaud (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1927-1956).

_____, *L'orateur. Du meilleur genre d'orateurs* ed. by Albert Yon (Paris: Les Belle Lettres, 1964).

_____, *De optimo genere oratorum*, ed. and trans. by Albert Yon (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964).

Coletti, Theresa, *Naming the Rose: Eco, Medieval Signs and Modern Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

Colombo Timelli, Maria, 'Le *Perceval* en prose de 1530: langage figuré et proverbes', *Le moyen français*, 60 (2007), 141-164.

Cooper, Kate, '*Merlin Romancier*: Paternity, Prophecy and Poetics in the Huth Merlin', *Romantic Review*, 77 (1986), 1-24.

Copeland, Rita, 'The Fortunes of 'non verbum pro verbo': why Jerome is not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15-35.

_____, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Cooke, Jessica, 'Nice Young Girls and Wicked Old Witches: the "Rightful Age" of Women in Middle English Verse' in *The Court and Cultural Diversity: Selected Papers from the Eighth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society 1995*, ed. by Evelyn Mullaney and John Thompson (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1997) pp. 219-228.

Cropp, Glynnis M., 'The Medieval French Tradition' in *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Translations of the Consolatio Philosophiae*, ed. by Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 243-266.

_____ (ed.), *Le livre de Boece de consolacion* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

Curley, Michael J., 'Animal Symbolism in the *Prophecies of Merlin*', in *Beasts and Birds in the Middle Ages: The Bestiary and its Legacy*, ed. by Willene B. Clark and Meredith T. McMunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 150-163.

Curtius, Ernst Robert, *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1953).

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia,* ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori).

Delcorno Branca, Daniela, 'Appunti sui romanzi di Merlino in Italia fra Tre e Quattrocento', *Schede umanistiche*, 1 (1993), 5-30.

_____, *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia: Studi di letteratura arturiana* (Ravenna: Longo, 2001).

Derrida, Jacques, 'Sémiologie et grammatologie: entretien avec Julia Kristeva', in *Positions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 27-50 (p. 31).

Desmond, Marilynn, 'The Goddess Diana and the Ethics of Reading in the *Ovide Moralisé*', in *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2007), pp. 61-75.

Dixon, Rebecca, 'The Wedding Reception: Ideological Challenge in the Prose *Cligès* (1454)', *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 14 (2007), pp. 315-326.

DuBruck, Edelgard, 'The Devil and Hell in Medieval Drama', *Romania*, 100 (1979), 165-179.

Eco, Umberto, 'Peirce's Notion of Interpretant', *Modern Language Notes*, 91 (1976).

_____, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

_____, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1979).

_____, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

_____, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

_____, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione* (Milan: Bompiani, 2003).

Emmerson, Richard Kenneth, 'The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic, and the Study of Medieval

Literature', in *Poetic Prophecy in Western Literature*, ed. by Jan Wojcik and Raymond-Jean Frontain (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), pp. 40-54.

Fabry, Irène, 'Composition cyclique et programme d'illustrations. L'épisode de Grisandole dans le manuscrit enluminé de la *Suite Vulgate* du *Merlin,* B. L. Add. 10292, in *Cycle et collection* ed. by Anne Besson, Vincent Ferré and Christophe Pradeau (Paris L'Harmattan, Itinéraires et contacts de Cultures, 41, 2008), pp. 213-233.

_____, 'Conment Merlin se mua en guise de cerf' : écrire et représenter la métamorphose animale dans les manuscrits enluminés de la *Suite Vulgate* du *Merlin', Revue Textimage*, *Varia*, 2 (2010), 1-32.

Fairclough, Henry Rushton (ed.), *Horace, Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

Faral, Edmond (ed.), *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1924).

Ferlampin-Acher, Christine, 'Le *Merlin* de Robert de Boron: Roman des origines et origines du roman', in *Fils sans père: études sur le Merlin de Robert de Boron*, ed. by Denis Hüe (Orléans: Paradigme, 2000), pp. 5-10.

Folena , Gianfranco, '«Volgarizzare» e «tradurre»: idea e terminologia della traduzione dal medio evo Italiano e Romanzo all'umanesimo Europeo', in *La traduzione. Saggi e stud:i Atti del Convegno di studi sulla traduzione* (Trieste: Edizione LINT, 1973), pp. 59-120.

Fries, Maureen, 'Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition', in *Arthurian Women: a Casebook*, ed. by Thelma S. Fenster (London: Routledge, 1996).

Gallo, Ernest, *The Poetria Nova and its Source in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

_____, 'The *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf' in *Medieval Eloquence* ed. by James J. Murphy (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 68-84.

Gardner, Edmund G., *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature* (London: J. M. Dent, 1930).

Gaunt, Simon, *Retelling the Tale: An Introduction to Medieval French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2001).

Genette, Gérard, *Seuils* (Paris: Édition s du Seuil, 1987).

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth V: The Gesta*

Regum Britannie, ed. and trans. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991).

Glick, Thomas F., 'Communication', in *Medieval Science, Technology and Medicine: an Encyclopedia*, ed. by Thomas Glick, Steven J. Livesey and Faith Wallis (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 135-139.

Gorlee, Dinda, 'Wittgenstein, Translation and Semiotics', *Target*, 1 (1989).

_____, *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation: With Special Reference to the Semiotics of Charles S. Peirce* (Amserdam: Rodopi, 1994).

_____, 'Meaningful Mouthfuls in Semiotranslation', in *Translation, Translation*, ed. by Susan Petrilli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003).

Gottfried von Strassburg, *Das Tristan-Epos Gottfrieds von Strassburg : mit der Fortsetzung des Ulrich von Türheim ; nach der Heidelberger Handschrift Cod. Pal. Germ. 360*, ed. by Wolfgang Spiewok (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989).

Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, III, 21, PL XXV, 609-610.

Harding, Carol. E, *Merlin and Legendary Romance,* (London: Garland, 1988).

Hatim, Basil and Mason, Ian, *Discourse and the Translator* (London: Longman, 1990).

Henri d'Andeli, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, ed. by A. Héron (Rouen: Imprimerie Léon GY, 1901).

Hoffman, Donald L., 'Was Merlin a Ghibelline? Arthurian propaganda at the court of Frederick II' in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend. Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio*, ed. by Martin B. Shichtman and James B. Carley (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 113-128.

_____, 'Merlin in Italian Literature', in *Merlin: A Casebook*, ed. by Peter Goodrich and Raymond H. Thompson (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 186-196.

Holder-Egger, O., 'Italienische Prophetieen', *Neues Archiv*, 15 (1890), 175-177.

Holmes, James S., *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988).

Horowitz, Maryanne Cline, 'Aristotle and Woman', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 9 (1976), 183-213.

House, Juliane, *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment* (Tuebingen: Narr Verlag, 1981).

Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.3, PL 176, 739-838.

Hunt, Tony, 'Abelardian Ethics and Béroul's *Tristan*', *Romania*, 98 (1977), 501:540.

Huot, Sylvia, '"Ci parle l'aucteur": the Rubrication of Voice and Authorship in *Roman de la Rose* Manuscripts', *SubStance*, 17(1988), 42-48.

Hynes-Berry, Mary, 'Language and Meaning: Malory's Translation of the Grail Story', *Neophilologus* 60 (2005), 309-319.

Ihring, Peter, 'Merlin und die literarische Sinnbildung. Zur erzählstrukturellen Funktion prophetischer Rede in der Artusdichtung zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance' in *Erzählstrukturen der Artusliteratur: Forschungsgeschichte und neue Ansätze*, ed. by Friedrich Wolfzeitel and Peter Ihring (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), pp. 47-65.

Jacobsen, Eric, 'Literary Translation in Context with Other Types of Textual Transformation', in *Pratiques de traduction au Moyen Age: Medieval translation practices: Papers from the Symposium at the University of Copenhagen, 25th and 26th of October, 2002,* ed. by Peter Andersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2004), pp. 6-22.

Jauss, Hans Robert, 'Littérature médiévale et l'expérience esthétique', *Poétique*, 31 (1977), 323-336.

Jerome, *The Bodleian Manuscript of Jerome's Version of the Chronicle of Eusebius,* ed. by John Knight Fotheringham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

_____, *Liber de Optimo Genere Interpretandi (Epistula 57): Ein Kommentar von G. J. M Bartelink* , ed. by Gerhardus Johannes Marinum Bartelink (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

Jones, Catherine M., *Philippe de Vigneulles and the Art of Prose Translation* (Cambridge : D. S. Brewer, 2008).

Jostmann, Christian, *Sibilla Erithea Babilonica: Papsttum und Prophetie im 13. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006).

Karczewska, Kathryn, *Prophecy and the Quest for the Holy Grail: Critiquing Knowledge in the Vulgate Cycle* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

Kelly, Douglas, 'Topical Invention in Medieval French Literature' in *Medieval Eloquence* ed. by J. J. Murphy (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 231-251.

_____,'Topical Invention' and 'Translatio Studii: Translation, Adaptation and Allegory in Medieval French Literature', *Philological Quarterly,* 57 (1978), 287-310.

_____, 'The 'Fidus Interpres': Aid or Impediment to Medieval Translation and Translatio?', in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, MI:, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 47-58.

_____, *The Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

Kennedy, Elspeth, 'The Scribe as Editor' in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970).

_____, 'The Re-writing and Re-reading of a Text: the Evolution of the *Prose Lancelot*' in *The Changing Face of Arthurian Romance: Essays on Arthurian Prose Romances in Memory of Cedric E. Pickford*, ed. by Alison Adams et al. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), pp. 1-9.

_____, (ed.) Pickens, Rupert, Pratt, Karen, Szkilnik, Michelle, Williams, Andrea M. L., 'Lancelot with and without the Grail: The Pre-Cyclic Lancelot do Lac and the Lancelot-Grail or Vulgate Cycle' in *The Arthur of the French*, pp. 274-325.

Knight, Stephen, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Koble, Nathalie, 'Un univers romanesque en expansion: les *Prophecies de Merlin* en prose du Pseudo-Richard d'Irlande' in *Moult obscures paroles: études sur la prophétie médiévale*, ed. by Richard Trachsler (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), pp.185-217.

Krueger, Roberta L., 'Questions of gender in Old French courtly romance', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 132-149.

Lacy, Norris J., 'Motif Transfer in Arthurian Literature' in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) pp. 157-168.

Lagorio, Valerie M., 'The Apocalyptic Mode in the Vulgate Cycle of Arthurian Romances', *Philological Quarterly*, 57 (1978), 1-22.

Lahdensuu, Laura, 'Predicting History: Merlin's Prophecies in Italian XIIth-XVth Century Chronicles', in *The Medieval Chronicle III: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference*, ed. by Eric Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 92-100.

Lambert, José and Robyns, Clem, 'Translation' in *A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture / Ein Handbuch zu den zeichentheoretischen Grundlagen von Natur und Kultur*, ed. by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering and Thomas A. Seboek (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).

Larrington, Carolyne, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

Lazzarini, Isabella, *L'Italia degli Stati territoriali: Secoli XIII-XV* (Roma: Laterza, 2003).

Lewis, Suzanne, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Looper, Jennifer E., '*L'Estoire de Merlin* and The Mirage of the Patrilineage', *Arthuriana*, 12 (2002), 63-85.

Lundt, Bea, *Melusine und Merlin im Mittelalter* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1990).

Luscombe, D. E., *Peter Abelard's Ethics: An Edition with Introduction, English Translation and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

Lusignan, Serge, 'La topique de la *translatio studii* et les traductions françaises de textes savants au XIVe siècle', in *Traduction et traducteurs au moyen âge: Actes du colloque international du CNRS organisé à Paris, Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes les 26-28 mai 1986*, ed. by Geneviève Contamine (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1989), pp. 303-317.

Machan, Tim William, 'Editorial Method and Medieval Translations: The Example of Chaucer's "Boece"', *Studies in Bibliography*, 41 (1988), 188-196.

_____, 'Chaucer as Translator', in *The Medieval Translator,* pp. 55-67.

Maddox, Donald, 'Inventing the Unknown: Rewriting in *Le Bel Inconnu*', in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting and Transmission in the French Tradition*, ed. by Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) pp. 101-124.

_____, 'Intratextual Rewriting in the Roman de Tristan of Béroul', in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honour of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. by Keith Busby, Logan E. Whalen and Bernard Guidot (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 389-402.

Mâle, Émile, *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1908, repr. 1922).

Mason, Perry C., 'The Devil and St Anselm', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 9 (1978), 1-15.

Mazzocco, Elizabeth H. D., 'An Italian Reaction to the French Prose Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Matteo Maria Boiardo and the Knights' Quest for Identity', in T*he Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Text and Transformations*, ed. by William W. Kibler (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp. 191-205.

McGinn, Bernard, 'Circoli Giachimiti Veneziani (1450-1530)', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 7 (1986), 19-39.

Meneghetti, Maria Luisa, *Il pubblico dei trovatori* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992).

Merrell, Floyd, *Peirce, Signs and Meaning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

Micha, Alexandre, 'Les manuscrits du «Merlin en prose» de R. de Boron' *Romania*, 78 (1957), 78-94 and 145-174.

_____, *Étude sur le «Merlin» de Robert de Boron, roman du XIIIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1980).

Middleton, Roger, 'The Manuscripts', in *The Arthur of the French*, pp. 8-93 (pp. 37-84).

Miller, Kevin E., 'Giving the Devil his Due: St Anselm on Justice and Satisfaction', *New Blackfriars*, 78 (2007), pp. 178-186.

Mize, Britt, 'Working with the Enemy: The Harmonizing Tradition and The New Utility of Judas Iscariot in Thirteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 1 (2010), 68-110.

Mora, George, 'Mental Disturbances and Unusual Mental States, and Their Interpretation during the Middle Ages', in *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology*, ed. by Edwin R. Wallace IV and John Gach (Springer: New York, 2008).

Moranski, Karen R., 'The *Prophetiae Merlini*, Animal Symbolism and the Development of Political Prophecy in Late Medieval England and Scotland', *Arthuriana*, 8 (1998) 58-68.

Mormando, Franco, *Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Mosès, François Kennedy Elspeth and Zink, Michel (eds.) *Lancelot du Lac* (Paris: Librarie Générale Française, 1991).

Mukařovský, Jan, 'The Semantic Dynamics of Context' in *On Poetic Language*, ed. by John Burband and Peter Steiner (Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press, 1976), pp. 50-60.

Müller, Wolfgang, 'Interfigurality: Study on the Interdependence of Literary Figures' in *Intertextuality,* ed. by Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), pp. 101-119.

Murphy, James J., *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974)

Murray, Alexander, *Suicide in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Murray, Jacqueline, 'Femininity and Masculinity' in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: an Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus, (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 284-287.

Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*, ed. E. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961).

_____, *Metamorphoses*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916, repr. 2004).

_____, *Remedia Amoris*, 201-206, ed. E. J. Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961).

Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960).

Paulino Pieri, *Cronica delle cose d'Italia dall'anno 1080 all'anno 1305* (Rome: A. F. Adami , 1755).

Peirce, Charles Sanders, *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933).

_____, *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between C. S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, ed. by Charles S. Hardwick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

_____, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2 (1893-1913), ed. by the Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Petrilli, Susan and Ponzio, Augusto, 'Peirce and Medieval Semiotics', in *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications, and Connections*, ed. by V.M.Colapietro and T. M. Olshewsky (The Hague: Mouton-Degruyter, 1996), pp. 351-364.

_____, 'Translation and Semiosis. Introduction' in *Translation, Translation*, ed. by Susan Petrilli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003).

_____, 'Translation, Iconicity and Dialogism', in *Signergy*, ed. by C. Jac Conradie, Ronél Johl, Marthinus Beukes, Olga Fischer and Christina Ljungberg (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010).

Piron, Sylvain, 'Anciennes sibylles et nouveaux oracles. Remarques sur la diffusion des textes prophétiques en Occident, VIIe-XIVe siècles', in *L'Antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales : textes et représentations, VIe-XIVe siècle*, ed. by Stéphane Gioanni and Benoît Grévin (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2008), pp. 259-302.

Popovič, Anton, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1976).

Reeves, Marjorie, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1969).

_____, *Joachim de Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: S.P.C.K, 1976).

Reiss, Katharina, *Translation Criticism: The Potential Limitations* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2000).

Rener, Frederick M., *Interpretatio: Language and Translation from Cicero to Tytler* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989).

Rosenstein, Roy, 'Mouvance and the Editor as Scribe: *Trascrittore Tradittore*?', *Romantic Review*, 2 (1989), 157- 171.

Rusconi, Roberto, *L'Attesa della fine: Crisi della società, profezia ed Apocalisse in Italia al tempo del grande scisma d'Occidente (1378-1417)* (Rome: Sede dell'Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 1979).

_____, 'Les collections prophétiques en Italie à la fin du Moyen Âge et au début des temps modernes. Remarques à propos de divers manuscrits italiens conservés dans les bibliothèques de Paris', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 102 (1990), 481-511.

Russell, Jeffrey Burton, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1972).

_____, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

Sachs, Arieh, 'Religious Despair in Mediaeval Literature and Art', *Mediaeval Studies*, 26 (1964), 231-256.

Salimbene di Adam, *Cronica*, ed. by Ferdinando Bernini (Bari: Laterza e Figli).

Salzman-Mitchell, Patricia B., *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005).

Sargent-Baur, Barbara N., 'Rewriting *Cligés*', in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honour of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. by Keith Busby, Logan E. Whalen and Bernard Guidot (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 577-588.

Schapiro, Meyer, *Approaches to Semiotics : Words and Pictures* (Paris: Mouton, 1973).

_____, *Late Antique, Early Christian and Medieval Art: Selected Papers* (New York: Braziller inc., 1979).

Cesare Segre, *Volgarizzamenti del Due e Trecento* (Turin : Unione Tipografico, 1964).

Short, Thomas L., 'What they Said in Amsterdam: Peirce's Semiotics Today', *Semiotica*, 60 (1986).

Smith, Susan L., *The Power of Woman: A Topos in Medieval Art and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

Snyder, Patrick, *Représentations de la femme et chasse aux sorcières, XIIIe-XVe siècle: lecture des enjeux théologiques et pastoraux* (Quebec: Fides, 2000).

Snyder, Susan, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 12 (1965), 18-59.

Solterer, Helen, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Southern, R. W., 'Presidential Address: Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing 3: History as Prophecy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 22 (1972), 159-180.

Špirk, Jaroslav, 'Anton Popovič's Contribution to Translation Studies', *Target*, 21:1 (2009), 3-29.

Spitzer, Leo, 'The Farcical Elements in *Inferno,* Cantos XXI-XXIII', *Modern Language Notes*, 59 (1944), 83-88.

Stecconi, Ubaldo, in Gregor Goethals et al, 'Semiotranslation: Peircean Approaches to Translation', in *Translation, Translation*, ed. by Susan Petrilli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003).

_____, 'A Map of Semiotics for Translation Studies', *Similarity and Difference in Translation*, ed. by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgeson Jr (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004; repr. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007).

Steffer, Alva William, *Symbols of the Christian Faith* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

Strubel, Armand, '«*Allegoria in factis*» et «*Allegoria in verbis*»', *Poétique*, 23 (1975), 342-357.

Taylor, Jane H.M., '*Le Roman de la Dame a la Lycorne et du Biau Chevalier au Lion* : Text, Image, Rubric', *French Studies*, 51 (1997) 1-18.

_____,'The Significance of the Insignificant: Reading Reception in the Burgundian *Erec* and *Cligès*', *Fifteenth-Century Studies,* 24 (1998), p. 183-97.

_____, *The Poetry of François Villon: Text and Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

_____, '"Hungrie Shadows": Pierre Sala and his Yvain', *Arthuriana*, 19 (2009), 7-19.

Thiébaux, Marcelle, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974).

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. by J. P. Migne, 6 vol. (Paris: Ambroise, 1841-1877).

_____, *Sancti Thomae ad Aquino opera omnia*, ed. by Roberto Busa, vol. 22 (Rome: Leonine, 1970-1976).

Thomas, H. J. (ed.), *Prudentius*, 2 vols (London: Heineman, 1949-1953, repr. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Toury, Gideon, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995).

Ulrich, J., 'Eine neue Version der *Vita di Merlino*' *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 27 (1903), 173-185.

Vance, Eugene, *Mervelous Signals : Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

Varvaro, Alberto, 'Elaboration des textes et modalités du récit dans la littérature française médiévale', *Romania*, 119, 2001, 1-75.

Venuti, Lawrence, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge,

1995).

Vinaver, Eugène, *A la recherche d'une poétique médiévale* (Paris: Nizet, 1970).

di Virgilio, Paul Samuel, 'The Sense of a Beginning: The Dynamics of Context in Translation', *Meta*, 29 (1984), 115-127.

Visani, Oriana, 'I testi italiani dell'*Historia di Merlino*: prime osservazioni sulla tradizione', *Schede umanistiche*, 1 (1994), 17-62.

Wenzel, Siegfried, 'Robert Grosseteste's Treatise on Confession, *Deus Est*', *Fransiscan Studies*, 30 (1970), 218-293.

Wolf, Alois, 'Rewriting Chansons de geste for a Middle High German public' in *The Medieval Opus*, pp. 369-386.

Young Gregg, Joan, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997).

Ziolkowski, Jan, 'The Nature of Prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*', in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. by James L. Kugel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 151-162.

Zumthor, Paul, *Merlin le prophète : un thème de la littérature polémique, de l'historiographie et des romans* (Lausanne: Payot, 1943)

_____, E*ssai de poétique médiévale* (Paris : Edition du Seuil, 1972).

_____, 'Intertextualité et mouvance', *Littérature*, 41 (1981), 8-16.