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## La Grande Force est le D'sir: Guillaume Apollinaire's Rewriting of Merlin's Mother and the Dame du Lac in L'Enchanteur Pourrissant

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*LA GRANDE FORCE EST LE DESIR: GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE'S REWRITING  
OF MERLIN'S MOTHER AND THE DAME DU LAC  
IN L'ENCHANTEUR POURRISSANT*

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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Doctor of Philosophy

In

The Department of French Studies

By

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*La grande force est le désir.*

Guillaume Apollinaire, *Ondes*

*Tout commence avec le mot, et l'aventure poétique est d'abord aventure du langage ... la communication langagière donne à vivre une réalité qui n'aurait jamais été vécue sans elle.*

Jean Burgos, *Pour une poétique de l'imaginaire*

*Il n'y a d'inconscient que chez l'être parlant.*

Jacques Lacan, *Télévision*

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes Guillaume Apollinaire's rewriting of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* as a commentary on writing. I consider Merlin's state in the tomb as an effect of his desire for the Dame du Lac and relate this to the poet's relationship to writing, which is the result of his desire for a unity of expression – to express what can be designated in the text, but not directly and completely communicated through language. There is always something missing from any writing, but the very absence of meaning influences poetic production by encouraging attempts to supply what is missing.

I elaborate the roles Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac play in the creation and destruction of Merlin's corporeality and relate these roles to the dynamics of desire and the poetic act. Merlin's mother's active, creative desire and the Dame du Lac's destruction of Merlin's signifier-flesh illustrate the effects of the feminine ineffable, a logical, linguistic concept that I formulate, on the act of (re) writing. The feminine ineffable corresponds to one aspect of the Lacanian theory of the feminine and is specific to the literary text. This reading of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* reveals the importance of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac to Apollinaire's text beyond mere representations of figures of the women in Apollinaire's life. Their actions symbolically define the limits of poetic expression.

This dissertation evaluates the episodes of Merlin's conception and entombment in *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* alongside those in the *Prophees de Merlin* and other key medieval works. It thereby offers a comparative analysis of Apollinaire's sources together with that of his text, which is not found in existing criticism. In addition to

reevaluating the traditional interpretation of these characters, this project revisits and offers a new reading of textual episodes, such as the Dame du Lac's blood writing, that is informed by both medieval literature and contemporary criticism. In this way, my reading of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* reflects Apollinaire's combination of medieval tradition and contemporary invention in his early twentieth-century rewriting of legend

# 1. INTRODUCTION – *LA GRANDE FORCE EST LE DESIR*

## 1.1 WHAT IS OLD IS NEW AGAIN

What do Disney films, Peter Jackson's cinematic masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, and a certain Las Vegas casino have in common? They all illustrate in one way or another our culture's apparent fascination with things medieval.<sup>1</sup> Hollywood has given us the Arthurian dramas *Excalibur* (1981), *First Knight* (1995), *King Arthur* (2004), and the made for television movie *Merlin* (1998). Peter Jackson's recent adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's popular *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy into a hugely successful series of films – *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King* (2001-2003) – revived interest in Tolkien's literature and sparked a new wave of readers (or of re-readers).<sup>2</sup> The wizard Gandalf resembles Merlin, King Arthur's Enchanter, and the setting is one of a medieval-inspired fantasy-world. Both Tolkien and his contemporary, C.S. Lewis, rewrote medieval themes through a Christian lens.<sup>3</sup> Lewis set his Space Trilogy in the twentieth century. In the

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<sup>1</sup> The lure of medieval themes in popular culture – for example, the prevalence of restaurants with a medieval-inspired atmosphere and even the *Excalibur* casino in Las Vegas – amounts to escapism, according to John M. Ganim in "The Myth of Medieval Romance" (Ganim, 148). Certain online fantasy role-playing games, another form of diversion in the twenty-first century, also represent an alternate reality inspired by an idea of the Middle Ages. Two examples are the games *EverQuest* (see eq.stratics.com) and *Ultima Online* (see uo.stratics.com or www.wo.com). Furthermore, there are social associations devoted to re-enactments of medieval fairs and warfare. Even the Internet illustrates the appeal of the Middle Ages; a search for *Merlin* uncovers sites ranging from academic to astrological to magical.

<sup>2</sup> Tolkien published *The Hobbit*, considered a prequel to his Trilogy, in 1937 and his *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy in 1954 and 1955.

<sup>3</sup> For both writers the aspect of faith in and adherence to the Christian religion revealed itself in their work. Lewis was also the author of theological treatises, such as *Christian Reflections* and *Mere Christianity* (Wood, "Conflict and Convergence on Fundamental Matters in C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien," 317-318). Christian faith, for Lewis, was an individual matter and his work reflected this – characters often face trials alone. His view of the role of faith in his writing, however, was one of evangelicalism – he used his work to spread Christianity. (Wood, 318-319). In Tolkien's work, on the other hand, questions of faith and religion find only indirect representation. For example, Wood relates the Nine Walkers of the Ring epic to Christ's disciples (320). It is also significant that the group travels and experiences trials together. This reflects Tolkien's view of faith as a common or communal experience (320). As we will discover, Apollinaire's twentieth-century rewriting of the medieval Enchanter Merlin also has a strong undercurrent of Christian faith, but in his rewriting, Christian images are all inverted and blasphemous representations.

third installment of the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (1943), Lewis brings the medieval Enchanter – and his tomb – into what he calls a *modern fairy tale*. The work of Tolkien and Lewis, both medieval scholars as well as popular authors, revived interest in the Middle Ages in the mid-twentieth century.

In other popular literature, witness the array of books by twentieth-century authors dealing with Merlin. Mary Stewart's series of books – *The Crystal Cave*, *The Hollow Hills*, *The Last Enchantment*, and *The Wicked Day* – all have Merlin as the protagonist. Marion Zimmer Bradley also included Merlin in her series of books about the women of Avalon, the mysterious island that is home to the Lady of the Lake (the Dame du Lac). These titles include *The Mists of Avalon*, *The Forest House*, *The Lady of Avalon*, *Priestess of Avalon*, and *Ancestors of Avalon*.

American and British popular cultures are not the only manifestations of this medieval influence. The French city of Provins holds a medieval festival each year and offers demonstrations of falconry and warfare in the Middle Ages on summer weekends. And, the medieval influence has its place in French cinema as well.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary French literature also reflects this trend; for instance, Michel Rio rewrote Merlin's story in his *Merlin* and *Morgane*. However, Rio's prophet and the wizened wizard in J.R.R. Tolkien's Ring trilogy have as a precursor a figure from the Middle Ages. It is not known whether or not the character Merlin is based on a person who actually lived, but the figure has become legendary in the sense of a story passed down by tradition.<sup>5</sup> Legend

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<sup>4</sup> The series of comedic films about a knight and his squire transported into the twentieth century includes the titles *Les Visiteurs* (1993), *Les Visiteurs 2* (1998), and *Les Visiteurs en Amérique* (2001). Merlin appears in the films *Kaamelott* (2005) and *Les Chevaliers de la table ronde* (1990) (<http://www.imdb.com>).

<sup>5</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists one definition of *legend* as “an unauthentic, or non-historical story, especially one handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical.”

has it that Merlin was born of a maiden and a demon, and thus has no earthly father. At an early age Merlin started to foretell future events and interpret signs, such as the celebrated fighting serpents of Vortigern's tower. Later on, he was instrumental in Arthur's conception by transforming Uther Pendragon into the likeness of the Duke Gorlois so that Uther could lay with Igerne, the Duke's wife. Arthur was born from this union. Merlin also played a large part in Arthur's upbringing and engendering in him all the qualities needed by the future king. In so doing, he earned the title of Kingmaker. When Arthur became king, Merlin was his most trusted counselor and magician, actually ruling the kingdom, by some accounts, from behind the scenes. His influence even went so far as to create the society of Knights of the Round Table and to inspire the Quest for the Holy Grail, both central to Arthurian legend. In such, Merlin's story is interwoven with stories of King Arthur and his noble knights in medieval literature.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Merlin, hopelessly and blindly in love with the Dame du Lac, fell prey to her charms – she entrapped him using the very spells he taught her. Merlin, as the tale goes, remains entombed to this day, a living soul whose body has long ago died. All of this makes up the legend of Merlin, as it has accumulated over the ages.

## 1.2 MERLIN

### 1.2.1 Merlin in Literature

Merlin – the very name conjures up myriad images: “Merlin the Enchanter,” “Merlin, the Prophet,” “Merlin, the Druid,” “Merlin, the son without a father,” “Merlin,

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<sup>6</sup> As we will discover, Apollinaire's rewriting of Merlin's tale, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, has Merlin's entombment as its main theme. Apollinaire does not include Merlin's interactions with Arthur's court in his version. Accordingly, the references to Merlin's influence on Arthur and his court are presented here only as background information to the history of the legendary character Merlin. They do not figure in the textual analysis.

the betrayed lover of the Dame du Lac"... All of these designations refer to Merlin, though none adequately describes him. Who, then, is this mysterious and complicated personage? Merlin is not just a legendary figure; he is also a literary character that has for over fifteen centuries now, provided material and inspiration for poets. Each retelling embellished the story until it took on the dimensions of legend. The character Merlin first made his literary appearance in Gildas' sixth-century *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*. This work tells the story of the Roman leader Ambrosius, a figure that in later texts became Merlin. Merlin's story was written and rewritten over the centuries that followed Gildas' chronicle. It was the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, that witnessed the proliferation of texts dealing with Merlin the Enchanter – the works of Geoffrey de Monmouth, Robert de Boron, the Arthurian Grail cycle, the *Prophesies de Merlin*, and the Arthurian Vulgate. But Merlin's popularity did not wane after this period. Among other works, Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century *Le Morte d'Arthur* continued the legend, and in the nineteenth century Edgar Quinet penned *Merlin l'Enchanteur*.<sup>7</sup> This was just one of the nineteenth-century works to reflect a medieval influence. William Wordsworth's *Romance of the Water Lilly* also tells of Merlin. These texts coincided with a revival of medieval critical studies. Stephen G. Nichols has remarked that the interest in medieval studies in the late nineteenth century had as its basis a certain striving for *modernité*, or new critical and literary approaches ("Modernism and the Politics of Medieval Studies," 26). The striving for new ways of thinking and approaching medieval studies and the revived interest in the field led to an onslaught of works by critics such as the father and son medievalists, Paulin and Gaston Paris. The very availability of these

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<sup>7</sup> Jean Burgos lists Quinet's text as one of the sources for Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, IX).



critical editions and studies in turn quite possibly had an influence on a young twentieth-century poet's choice to rewrite Merlin's story.<sup>8</sup> The twentieth century saw Merlin's continued literary appeal, with Guillaume Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. This version of the Enchanter's story, published in 1909, is a rewriting of the Merlin legend that had already been rewritten time and time again, but Apollinaire's text expands the legend developed by preceding rewritings with a significant amount of original material.

### 1.2.2 Merlin in This Study – His Existence as Influenced by Two Female Characters

This dissertation considers Apollinaire's twentieth-century rewriting of Merlin's tale, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* as the story of Merlin and his relationship with his mother, who remains unnamed and the Dame du Lac. From the first mention of these two characters in literature, they play a fundamental role in each text in which they appear – they influence the most crucial aspects of Merlin's existence. Merlin's mother brings the Enchanter to life, and the Dame du Lac restricts his physical existence. *Existence* refers to Merlin's nature as either physical or ethereal. His existence changes in Apollinaire's text, from one of human corporeality to one that is non-corporeal. The disparity between these two types of existence and the significance this difference has on Merlin's dichotomous makeup will become clear in our discussion of the ancient and medieval philosophical basis for Apollinaire's (re) representation of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac.

The corpus of criticism on Apollinaire's retelling of Merlin's tale in *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* generally concentrates on interpretations of biographical influences on the

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Jean Burgos cites Gaston Paris' 1887 *Romans en vers du Cycle de la Table Ronde* as inspiration for Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XVII). Another possible influence on Apollinaire's work are G. Paris' articles on the legend of the Juif Errant that appeared in tome VII of the *Encyclopédie des sciences religieuses* directed by M.F. Lichtenberger in 1880 and in the *Journal des Savants* in 1891 (Paris, Avant-Propos, *Légendes du Moyen Age*, II-III). Apollinaire rewrote this legend in his 1902 "Le Passant de Prague."

themes and characters, the text's reversal of the Christian religion, investigation of Apollinaire's sources, and the text's last chapter, *Onirocritique*, as illustrating Apollinaire's theory of new poetry. Studies of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* that take Merlin's engendering into account focus on the father's nature and Apollinaire's identification with Merlin, the *son without a father*, but consider his mother only in her resemblance to the poet's own mother. The Dame du Lac has, likewise, garnered little attention in Apollinaire criticism beyond her interpretation as reflecting the poet's amorous disappointments. Chapters four through six of this study discuss criticism on the representations of women in Apollinaire's work (chapter four) and critical studies of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac in both *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* and medieval literature (chapters five and six, respectively). We will see that what is missing in criticism of Apollinaire's rewriting of Merlin's tale is a study that places specific emphasis on the roles of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac. The originality of this study lies in its consideration of the influence they have on Apollinaire's portrayal of Merlin's corporeal being and how this in turn relates to the poetic act. Through a textual analysis of these characters' representations supported by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, this study will posit a model of what can be called the *feminine ineffable* and its effects on the desire of the author in the act of (re) writing. In this reading, Merlin's engendering represents that of the text and the effects these two characters have on Merlin's corporeality corresponds to the feminine ineffable's influence on the act of (re) writing.

Briefly, the feminine ineffable as this study defines it is one facet, or function of the Lacanian theory of the feminine.<sup>9</sup> The designation *feminine* in Lacanian terms does not specifically refer to women or to biological sex. Rather, it refers to the aspect of the (male or female) subject that is unconscious. As we will discover, Lacanian theory specifies that language creates the unconscious, so the Lacanian feminine is specific to the speaking subject – like the unconscious, it is created by the subject’s entrance into language. Thus, it does not prefigure language and is only partially representable linguistically. Consequently, the concept of the feminine can be logically determined, if not fully known or expressed. The feminine ineffable is one particular aspect of the Lacanian feminine. It is specific to the literary text and has to do with the influence of desire specifically on the poetic act, which is one manifestation of the subject’s desire for unity. Instead of a love object substituted for the primary desire for the mother, the poet desires a unity of expression – to say things that are unconscious and hence inexpressible in language.<sup>10</sup> The feminine ineffable, like the feminine can be logically determined. It is a logical, linguistic concept, unrelated to mystery. Furthermore, the feminine ineffable, unlike notions of the marvelous, the sublime, or questionable concepts such as the “eternal feminine” or “feminine mystique,” which relate women to mystery, does not have an existence that is distinct from language, even though words are not entirely sufficient to represent this concept.

Accordingly, the feminine ineffable is not related to the idea of biological female, but in *L’Enchanteur*, the actions of Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac, two female

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<sup>9</sup> Chapter two, “Theoretical Influences” discusses the Lacanian theory of the feminine and the concept of the feminine ineffable further.

<sup>10</sup> See also Alexandre Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality* for an analysis of the literary text as the place of desire’s manifestation.

characters, illustrate its function. The roles that they play and the functions that they perform are essential to our reading of these characters as an illustration of the feminine ineffable's cycle of influence in the text and are, in this respect, more significant than their biological sex.<sup>11</sup> Certainly Merlin's mother's biological sex is important to her role in engendering Merlin, but the results would be the same if *she* were the demon and *his father* were human – Merlin would be the product of human and demon and the reading of his corporeal nature would be the same. Similarly, Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac is based on a heterosexual model, but the character's function in entombing the Enchanter and the results of this act are what are of significance to this reading. The biological sex of these characters, then, is essential to the *story*, but unrelated to the

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<sup>11</sup> As an example of a text in which Apollinaire reverses the biological sex of his characters, consider *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, a play presented in 1917. Again, the biological sex of the characters is a vital element to the unfolding of the story, but is unrelated to the underlying commentary on writing. In this text, a husband and wife swap genders and the husband gives birth. According to the husband, since women were neglecting the role nature (biological sex) assigned to them, then it was up to men to reproduce:

Qu'il faut refaire des enfants à Zanzibar

La femme n'en fait plus Tant pis Que l'homme en fasse

Mais oui parfaitement je vous regarde en face

Et j'en ferai moi (Po, 896).

The husband fulfills his promise and gives birth to 40,049 children that very evening. Act II opens with numerous cradles and oversized writing instruments as decor: "un berceau est vide auprès d'une bouteille d'encre énorme, d'un pot à colle gigantesque, d'un porte-plume démesuré et d'une paire de ciseaux de bonne taille" (Po, 898). The presence of the writing instruments indicates a relationship between the husband's act of giving birth and the act of writing as well as between the text and the 40,049 infants. As the conclusion to this study demonstrates, in the last chapter of *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, *Onirocritique*, the narrator's profusion of poetry is a sexualized metaphor; he is able to create an abundance of poetry alone (see chapter seven, p. 258-259). In *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the husband reproduces without a partner:

... la nature

Me donnera sans femme une progéniture (Po, 898).

In both cases, reproduction without a partner is related to the act of writing; however, in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the husband gives birth as a man who has taken on the female gender. Biological sex is irrelevant to poetic production. The final lines of the text echo this assessment:

Aimez le blanc ou bien le noir

C'est bien plus drôle quand ça change (Po 913).

The references to Apollinaire's texts in this study follow standard documentation when using the Pléiade edition (see note 12 for an explanation of the choice of edition):

Pr I – *Œuvres en Prose I*

Pr II – *Œuvres en Prose II*

Po – *Œuvres en Poésie*.

reading of the feminine ineffable's influence on the act of (re) writing. This is a crucial distinction to make.

### 1.2.3 Merlin and Corporeality

Apollinaire, transcribing Merlin's entombment from the thirteenth-century prose *Lancelot*, emphasizes the mother's gift of corporeality, which his Dame du Lac revokes. Apollinaire describes Merlin's love for the Dame du Lac in the following terms: "Et lui, qui tant l'aimait que *mortel cœur* ainsi ne pourrait plus aimer" (Pr I, 8 [the emphasis is mine]).<sup>12</sup> The reference to a mortal heart implies a human element in the Enchanter's makeup. With regard to Merlin's entombment, Apollinaire explains, "[La Dame du Lac] le décevait ainsi parce qu'il était mortel; s'il eût été en tout un diable elle ne l'eût pu décevoir, car un diable ne peut dormir" (Pr I, 9). The Dame du Lac can deceive him because his mother had invested him with a mortal component. Demons cannot sleep, so if Merlin had been entirely of his father's nature, then the Dame du Lac would not have been able to entrap him. In the second chapter of his text, after the section borrowed from the medieval text, Apollinaire writes, "L'enchanteur mourut alors" (Pr I, 10). This identification of Merlin with his body also indicates a representation of corporeality.

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<sup>12</sup> The edition quoted is that of the Pléiade collection, edited by Michel Décaudin and published by Gallimard (Apollinaire. *L'Enchanteur pourrissant. Œuvres en prose complètes*. Textes établis, présentés et annotés par Michel Décaudin. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris: Gallimard, 1977). Another critical edition is the Balland-Lecat edition of Apollinaire's collected works, edited by Michel Décaudin (Apollinaire. *L'Enchanteur pourrissant. Œuvres complètes*. 4 volumes. Établie sous la direction de Michel Décaudin. Paris: Balland-Lecat, 1965-1966). Jean Burgos, a respected voice in Apollinaire criticism, also edited a well-regarded and useful critical edition of the text (Apollinaire. *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. Édition établie, présentée et annotée par Jean Burgos. Paris: Lettres Modernes, Minard, 1972). The Pléiade edition, along with the Balland-Lecat edition, is currently considered the definitive – or at least authoritative – reference. Due to this fact, because the Pléiade edition is easily accessible in most libraries, and for continuity and standardization of documentation, I chose to use the Pléiade edition. Hereafter I will refer to this text as *L'Enchanteur*.

Finally, later in the text, another character refers to Merlin as “homme” (Pr I, 61). Hence Merlin’s human flesh is an integral part of his makeup.

In this way, the representation of Merlin’s corporeality depends on the actions of his mother and the Dame du Lac. The term *corporeality* refers to bodily existence. The generally accepted definition for the word *corporeal*, or *corporel* in French, derived from the Latin *corporalis*, entails a relationship to the body (*Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*). For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of *corporeal* opposes the physical nature of the (mortal, material) body to the spirit. This stems from the ancient body/soul debates and the implications of this opposition will become clear in the discussion of these debates in chapter three. Other definitions of corporeality, in accord with the material nature of the body, include a sense of humanity.<sup>13</sup> *Corporeality* is made up of *corp* and *reality*. *Corp*, from the Latin *corpus* – body – is also related to the word *corpse*, which refers to a dead body, but which *Funk and Wagnalls* also defines as a living body.<sup>14</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* stresses the idea of having an objective, actual existence in its definition of *real*; the true physical nature of the body is essential to Merlin’s representation in *L’Enchanteur*. Merlin is of a dual nature, possessing both human and demonic components.

Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac facilitate and establish the limits of his physical existence in the text, thereby influencing his portrayal, but in order to analyze their impact on the text it is Merlin’s - the male character’s - existence that we must primarily consider. This is so because Merlin’s physical makeup is dependant on and a

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, *le Trésor de la langue française*, *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, and *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*.

<sup>14</sup> The idea of the dead body is pertinent to Merlin in Apollinaire’s text, since his body, portrayed as dead, is vitally important to his representation in the text.

result of their actions. His representation is a reflection of theirs, allowing the reader to “see” them more clearly through his image. The natures of Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac become clear in relation to their effect on Merlin’s corporeality. But just as Merlin’s physicality is defined by his mother and the Dame du Lac, their literary presence is defined relative to his. The influence and power Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac have become evident only in relation to Merlin. As a result, we cannot adequately speak of Merlin’s mother or the Dame du Lac without using Merlin as their mirror.

#### 1.2.4 Merlin and Desire

Desire in its different manifestations plays a large part in Apollinaire’s rewriting of Merlin’s story. First, as chapter five of this study demonstrates, Merlin’s mother’s desire has a great deal to do with the appearance of the demon that fathers Merlin and with the conception of a child. This illustrates the poet’s relationship to expression in the poetic act and, as such, represents the force that generates the text. Merlin’s desire also comes into play in his ultimate fate. His longing for the Dame du Lac blinds him to her true nature and leads to his undoing. Merlin’s predicament in the tomb – a speaking soul trapped in a rotting body – is the result. Because of its significance in the text, a study of *L’Enchanteur* should consider the role desire plays in the text and how that relates to Merlin’s situation with regard to his physical nature and the nature of his love. Such a study should also relate this role to Apollinaire’s theory of poetic creation and to the act of (re) writing. This study considers how Merlin’s longing for the Dame du Lac comes into play in the expression of the *éternités différentes de l’homme et de la femme* – the different destinies of men and women that are at the heart of their separation.

Accordingly, many of the representations of female characters that have been traditionally considered misogynistic do not just represent an inherent misogyny on the part of the author. They also illustrate the different destinies of men and women, as will become apparent in the analysis of Apollinaire's portrayal of the Dame du Lac in chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac." Finally, since Lacanian psychoanalysis considers human desire as a primary driving force, this study will use Lacanian psychoanalysis as an analytical tool. This analysis of the role of desire in the text is original and offers a reading of *L'Enchanteur* that goes beyond associating Merlin's entombment by the Dame du Lac with the poet's own disappointments in love.

#### 1.2.5 Apollinaire's Merlin and the Middle Ages

Apollinaire borrowed the scenes of Merlin's conception and (as mentioned) entombment from the medieval prose *Lancelot*, but it is not the only medieval text to influence his work. The early thirteenth-century *Prophesies de Merlin* also had an impact on the way he presented Merlin's story. Critical studies, notably Jean Burgos' edition of *L'Enchanteur*, have documented the precise textual instances in the medieval texts that (probably) influenced Apollinaire's text, but there remained a need for a study that analyzes both *L'Enchanteur* and its medieval predecessors together in the context of rewriting. Because of the many intertextual references in Apollinaire's writing and the fact that his text is a rewriting of texts that had also been rewritten, this study considers how *L'Enchanteur* and its medieval predecessors compare in their portrayals of the roles Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac play in Merlin's conception and entombment. This is a valid and unique approach especially considering Apollinaire's theory of new poetry



as investing existing material with imagination and invention to create something new, as the conclusion to this study demonstrates.

### 1.3 PRIMARY TEXTS

#### 1.3.1 Presentation of Texts

As a rewriting of the Merlin legend, Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur* takes Merlin's entombment by the Dame du Lac and its aftermath as a point of departure. The corresponding passages from the prose *Lancelot* will appear alongside those from *L'Enchanteur*.<sup>15</sup> These are the textual episodes that are key in determining the effect Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac have on Merlin's corporeal existence. The passages are almost identical in the medieval and twentieth-century texts, so for the purposes of this study it is not necessary to analyze them separately from Apollinaire's text. Apollinaire does, however, add to the Dame du Lac's role in Merlin's fate, as chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac" explores. Also, the prose *Lancelot*'s Dame du Lac differs in her character's basic portrayal from that in Apollinaire's version and in other similar versions.<sup>16</sup> For this reason also the prose *Lancelot* does not figure in the analysis of primary texts. The thirteenth-century *Propheesies de Merlin* also served as source material for Apollinaire. This text's portrayal

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<sup>15</sup> The edition I quote is the prose non-cyclic form, which, according to Elspeth Kennedy's introduction to her edition, existed independently of the larger Vulgate cycle in the early thirteenth century (v). The designation prose *Lancelot* is used to indicate the entire *Lancelot-Grail* cycle. The difference between this edition and the cycle is that this edition does not contain the *Queste del Saint Graal* or the *Mort Artu*. This version was included in the larger Vulgate cycle and, along with this, the ending was extended (Kennedy v). Neither of these adaptations have an effect on the passages of Merlin's conception and entombment. The manuscript from which this edition was undertaken, B.N.fr.768, is considered an exceptional manuscript (Kennedy, v). See chapter five of this study, p. 154 for details of editions that Apollinaire is believed to have consulted.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac" discusses this in more detail. See also Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, Anne Berthelot, "From Niniane to Nimue: demonizing the Lady of the Lake," and "Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake," Maureen Fries, "Female Heroes, Heroines and Counter-heroes," and Laurence Harf-Lancner, "Lancelot et la Dame du Lac."

of the Dame du Lac is closer to that of *L'Enchanteur* and earlier medieval works than the prose *Lancelot's* account. It also contains a detailed entombment scene. While the entombment scenes are similar, in both the prose *Lancelot* and the *Estoire de Merlin*, the text does not specify that Merlin's body immediately dies. In the *Prophesies*, however, as in Apollinaire's retelling, Merlin's body dies shortly after he enters the tomb. Because of these reasons, the *Prophesies* offers an excellent compliment and comparison to a reading of Apollinaire's version of Merlin's story. Moreover, it should be read as an important source for his rewriting. Indeed, many of the words and concepts Apollinaire used in his work find their origin in medieval texts. For example, the title of the text, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* seems to come from a line in the *Prophesies* where Merlin says "la char desor moi sera pourrie dedens anscois que uns mois soit passes" (95)<sup>17</sup> (the flesh above me will be decayed before a month has passed. [The translations are mine unless noted otherwise.]) (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 15, notes). Also, in *L'Enchanteur* Apollinaire mentions the hawthorn flower – *aubepine* - many times. This plant is traditionally near Merlin's tomb (Bates, 152). It is also a feature of the entombment scene in the *Estoire de Merlin*: "[Merlin and Viviane] trouuerent vn buisson bel & uert & haut dune aube espine qui estoit tous cargies de fleurs" (452). (Merlin and Viviane found a hawthorn bush that was pretty, green, and tall and that was full of flowers.) This study considers Apollinaire's text as a rewriting of this and earlier texts that relate Merlin's

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<sup>17</sup> The edition I use is Anne Berthelot's edition of the *Prophesies de Merlin* (Geneva: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1992) and hereafter refer to as the *Prophesies*. Although it contains almost identical material to other editions of the *Prophesies de Merlin*, this edition does contain a greater emphasis on the narrative of Merlin's story as well as a number of adventures dealing with supernatural phenomena that other editions do not. Because of these specific narrative traits, this edition best suits the purposes of this study. For more on the differences between the Berthelot edition and its predecessors, see Anne Berthelot's introduction, page 9-10. Jean Burgos offers a concise analysis of the *Prophesies'* influence on *L'Enchanteur* in the introduction to his edition of *L'Enchanteur*.

story and rely heavily on the *Prophesies* in order to compare medieval and twentieth-century representations of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac.

### 1.3.2 *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*

Apollinaire wrote *L'Enchanteur* between 1898 and 1904, publishing a first edition of the work in *Le Festin d'Aesop* in 1904.<sup>18</sup> This first version consisted of the central portion of the text – chapters two through six. For the 1909 publication, Apollinaire added the first chapter, detailing Merlin's conception and entombment, which he transcribed from the prose *Lancelot*, and the last chapter, *Onirocritique*, a poetic commentary on the act of writing. Apollinaire disregarded the medieval texts' Arthurian narratives and concerned his work primarily with Merlin's story. The emphasis Apollinaire's text places on Merlin's experience in the tomb is even more apparent when we consider that the chapter consisting of Merlin's conception and entombment were added five years after the first publication. Even before Apollinaire added these episodes, Merlin's entombment, his body's putrefaction, and his resulting transformation from a corporeal to an aerial nature were paramount in *L'Enchanteur*. Apollinaire's version of Merlin's story leaves out the Enchanter's activities beforehand that make up much of his adventures in most medieval texts and deals exclusively with the aftermath of the Dame du Lac's deception, which highlights the importance of female characters in the text.

*L'Enchanteur*, like the prose *Lancelot*, portrays Merlin's mother differently from any previous version. Here she displays an active, even creative, desire that is in contrast to the religious devotion she exhibits in most medieval versions. Both her devotion and desire are important to this reading of Merlin's conception, but even more crucial is her

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<sup>18</sup> See Jean Burgos' introduction to his edition for a detailed account of *L'Enchanteur*'s original publication information (LXIII-LXIV). See also Michel Décaudin's *Notice* in his edition (Pr I, 1070).

humanity. Merlin's mother passes this on to her son when she conceives him through relations with an incubus demon and it is what allows Merlin to enjoy a (human) corporeal existence. Because of his parentage, Merlin has both human and demonic aspects; he is sometimes more corporeal, sometimes more aerial, but always of this dual nature. Apollinaire's Dame du Lac, on the other hand, is an amalgamation of influences from her medieval predecessors. In *L'Enchanteur*, she resembles her precursors in aspects, such as her desire to entomb Merlin. At the same time, Apollinaire's Viviane also diverges from medieval representations, notably in the idea of an inevitable role his Dame plays with regard to the Enchanter. Although the medieval basis for the character is very strong and unmistakable, she is an entirely new creation on his part. He used the medieval characters as the foundation upon which to build his Dame du Lac and his text. This is not to say that she significantly deviates from her customary role as Merlin's betrayer, however. On the contrary, the Dame du Lac's need to fulfill her assigned role is paramount in *L'Enchanteur*: She betrays Merlin's love for her and entraps him, undoing the corporeality that his mother had passed on to him.

### 1.3.3 *Les Prophetes de Merlin*

Just as Apollinaire's Dame du Lac is an amalgamation of her medieval predecessors and new material, so too is his text. *L'Enchanteur*'s roots are in the medieval Merlin tradition. The Dame du Lac first appears in the thirteenth-century prose *Lancelot*, *Prophetes*, and the *Estoire de Merlin*. The *Prophetes* is traditionally considered to be the work of Maistre Richard d'Ireland at the command of Emperor Frederic II (Paton, *Prophetes*, 5). The exact year of composition is unknown, but Lucy Allen Paton dates the work during the reign of Frederic II, between 1212 and 1250

(*Prophesies*, 4). Versions of the *Prophesies* fall into two main groups, the manuscripts, which date from the thirteenth century, and the printed texts, which date from 1498.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly Apollinaire read the *Prophesies*, but the precise version to which he had access is unknown. It is very unlikely that he consulted the manuscript that Anne Berthelot used for her edition, the Bodmer manuscript 116, since it was in the hands of private collectors, who did not wish to divulge its contents at the time of his writing (Berthelot, 9). Additionally, it remained virtually unknown until its acquisition by Martin Bodmer in 1957 and its unearthing in the Bodmer Foundation's catalogue by Berthelot in 1983 (Berthelot, 9). It is certain that he did not read Lucy Allen Paton's edition before penning his version of Merlin's tale, since it was published in 1913, after the publication of *L'Enchanteur*. It is likewise doubtful that Apollinaire consulted the manuscript of the *Prophesies* that she used – MS 593 – since it was in the Bibliothèque Publique de Rennes at the time that he began his version of the tale while living in Stavelot, Belgium (Paton. *Notes*, 124).

Cedric E. Pickford also notes that Apollinaire could not possibly have read the Paton edition and makes a reference to Antoine Vérard's *Merlin* volume 3 published in Paris in 1498 as a possible source. He also mentions another text for which the Vérard edition is a precursor, the printed and bound version published by the widow of Jehan

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<sup>19</sup> There are thirteen known French manuscripts, twelve of which Lucy Allen Paton mentions as being in European libraries in her *Notes on Manuscripts of the Prophesies de Merlin* and one which at the time of Paton's writing was in the hands of private collectors and is now at the Bodmer Foundation. Paton offers the following list of French manuscripts and their placements at the time of her writing: two in the British Museum, MS 593 in the Bibliothèque Publique of Rennes, MSS 98, 350, and 15211 at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, MS 5229 in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, MS 644 in the Musée Condé at Chantilly, MS 388 in the Stadtbibliothek of Berne, MS XXIX in the Biblioteca di San Marco, one in the Vatican Library, and a fragment in the Bibliothèque de Treves. Paton also lists the first printed edition of the *Prophesies*, the 1498 Verard edition, the third volume of the *Romans de Merlin* as being at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paton. *Notes*, 124). At the present time, there are four printed texts dating from the first printing of 1498 to the sixteenth century at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Trepperel and Jehan Jehannot in approximately 1510 (“Guillaume Apollinaire et Merlin,” 251-252).<sup>20</sup> It is the third volume of an edition of the *Roman de Merlin* and is divided into 120 *feuillet*s. My own research indicates that this version is a likely choice. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France Insignia stamped on the interior of the book match those in the library’s catalogue that mark books acquired in approximately 1724, so the library acquired the text around this time. Accordingly, it was surely there in the early part of the twentieth century when Apollinaire would have been finding inspiration for his Enchanter’s story. He might have read this version during the time that he spent in Paris between 1899 and 1901, or even upon his return to the city in 1902.<sup>21</sup> Apollinaire spent much time cataloging the collection in the *Enfer* of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, a censored collection of erotic material. In 1913 he, along with his co-bibliographers, Fernand Fleuret and Louis Perceau, published the first complete catalog of its titles, *L’Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Icono-bio-bibliographie de tous les ouvrages composant cette célèbre collection*.<sup>22</sup> He would accordingly have had access to many manuscripts and rare editions, such as the Jehannot and Trepperel edition of the *Prophesies*. Although it would probably not have influenced his choice to rewrite the Enchanter’s tale, the text of the *Prophesies* certainly had an impact on his text, as we will discover when we discuss the texts in detail in later chapters.

However, more important than knowledge of the precise edition Apollinaire might have read is the fact that the various versions of the *Prophesies* are all very similar.

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<sup>20</sup> Pickford dates this edition of the *Prophesies* at 1510 in his introduction although the Bibliothèque Nationale de France’s catalogue lists the text as “s.d.” – without a known date of publication.

<sup>21</sup> Jean Burgos notes the influence of the *Prophesies* as manifesting itself in Apollinaire’s text in 1904 (*L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, 215).

<sup>22</sup> The complete reference is as follows: Apollinaire, Guillaume, Fernand Fleuret, and Louis Perceau. *L’Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Icono-bio-bibliographie de tous les ouvrages composant cette célèbre collection*. Paris: Mercure de France, MCMXIII.

The main differences outside of the emphasis placed on the narrative of Merlin's story and supernatural episodes in the Bodmer manuscript (and thus in the Berthelot edition, cited herein) are to be found in the order of episodes in the text. A close comparison of the Jehannot/Trepperel edition with Ann Berthelot's edition reinforces the assertion that the various versions of the *Prophecies* contain a large base of similar material, which is ordered differently from version to version.<sup>23</sup> These two texts, separated by more than two centuries, contain almost word-for-word retellings of some of the same episodes.

In much of the medieval tradition, there is a developing disassociation between the author and the work with the absence of a signature in many texts. There are many texts for which the identity of the author is either unknown or questionable and the *Prophecies* is an example of this. As mentioned above, the text is *attributed* to Maistre Richard d'Ireland and there are several versions of manuscripts of the *Prophecies de Merlin*. Furthermore, since books were hand-copied by scribes, the possibility of mistakes or even of intentional variations abounded. In *La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Age*, Roger Dragonetti explains variations between different hand-written manuscripts of the same text:

A part le fait que le scribe, tout comme le jongleur, peut (mais pas nécessairement) faire œuvre d'auteur, même en tant que copiste, le scribe ne laisse pas inchangé le texte qu'il transcrit, du seul fait que la transcription est livrée indéfiniment à la force transformationnelle de l'acte d'écriture. D'où il résulte qu'il peut y avoir autant de versions différentes de l'*original* qu'il y a de copies (48 [the emphasis is Dragonetti's]).

There are, therefore, varying degrees of rewriting: word-for-word copies of the original, mistakes by the scribe resulting in a new version, intentional digressions by the scribe,

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<sup>23</sup> See the appendix to this study for a comparison of episodes that are of interest to a study of Merlin's corporeality as influenced by his mother and the Dame du Lac in the Jehannot/Trepperel and Berthelot editions of the *Prophecies*.

and retellings of the same story. To this list, in *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition*, Douglas Kelly adds glossing and commentating – explaining the text – as seen in the margins of medieval manuscripts (5). As a result, the medieval text was in a state of shifting equilibrium between imitating and creating. The significance of this for the *Prophesies* is that the slight differences between the Berthelot edition (quoted herein), the Jehannot/Trepperel edition (that it is possible for Apollinaire to have consulted), and the other versions of the text are most likely variations between copies of an original text, with the discrepancies primarily attributable to scribal deviation.

#### 1.3.4 Other Medieval Texts

Although *L'Enchanteur* and the *Prophesies* are the primary focus of this study, since they are both rewritings of previous works, the representations of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac in key texts that precede them also warrant attention. Merlin's mother first appears in Nennius' ninth century *Historia Britonum*.<sup>24</sup> She does not know how she became pregnant, but the reader later learns that Merlin's father is undoubtedly an incubus demon. Even from this first depiction, the mother's humanity and corporeality are central to her representation. In the twelfth century, Geoffrey de Monmouth wrote a series of texts in which Merlin is among the characters. His *Prophetiae Merlini* (ca 1135), *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca 1138), which includes the earlier *Prophetiae* as part of the

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<sup>24</sup> According to Edmund Faral, The *Historia Britonum* is actually a composite of works dating from the ninth to the fourteenth century. The oldest of the texts believed to make up the *Historia Britonum* is the Chartres Manuscript 98, considered to be written in the ninth century. The second text, *Historia Britonum*, is generally attributed to Nennius, also in the ninth century. Faral lists several manuscripts dating from the ninth century up to the fourteenth century as common ancestors to the composite version. Many critics consider Nennius as the author of the consolidated text (Faral, Tome I, 56). Since this does not preclude the text of the *Historia Britonum* from being the result of a compilation of various texts originally written by various authors, this study will refer to the work as being written by Nennius in the ninth century.



text, and *Vita Merlini* (ca 1148) tell of Merlinus Ambrosius, who is also referred to as Merlinus. Geoffrey's version of Merlin's conception in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* introduces an element of religious devotion to the character of Merlin's mother. Regardless of this proclaimed piety and although her role in Merlin's conception is passive, she does seem to willingly engage in relations with a mysterious visitor. At the end of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century, Robert de Boron's *Merlin* (the second book of his Grail trilogy) presented his version of Merlin's conception. Merlin's mother is once again a pious maiden and plays a passive role in her seduction. However, in this text, even though she is effectively raped by a demon in her sleep, she is considered guilty of a sin, since she fails to take preventive measures. Her religious devotion nevertheless saves Merlin from the diabolical fate the host of demons ordains for him. Again her humanity and here, piety, are the cornerstones of her representation in the text. The early thirteenth-century *Estoire de Merlin* is a rewriting of Robert's *Merlin*, with the scene of Merlin's conception following Robert's version closely.

The thirteenth-century prose *Lancelot*, *Estoire de Merlin*, and *Prophecies* contain detailed accounts of how the Dame du Lac betrays and then entombs the Enchanter. The primary difference between the texts lies in Merlin's state immediately after he enters the tomb in the *Prophecies*, the shrub enclosure in the *Estoire de Merlin*, or the cave in the prose *Lancelot*. Only the text of the *Prophecies* specifies that he dies shortly after his confinement. The Dame du Lac's primary function with regard to Merlin in these texts is to entomb him and thereby to strip him of the corporeality that his mother bestows on him. The chapters dealing specifically with Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac

consider the versions of Merlin's conception in the texts mentioned and the *Prophesies* and *Estoire de Merlin*'s accounts of his entombment.

## 1.4 ORGANIZATION

### 1.4.1 Methodology

This study examines the episodes of Merlin's conception and entombment in *L'Enchanteur* and compares these scenes to medieval versions of the same episodes. The analysis of these passages will uncover the roles Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac play in his corporeal beginning and end. Lacanian psychoanalysis and the concept of the feminine ineffable explain the dynamics of ineffability and of desire in this text. Additionally, ancient and medieval philosophies concerning the body/soul dichotomy help us to differentiate Merlin's corporeal states, both at his conception and at/after his entombment from any existing theoretical framework. As mentioned, a precise understanding of Merlin's corporeal states clarifies the characters that influence those states – his mother and the Dame du Lac. Hence, the reading offered herein proposes Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac as those who set the limits of his corporeal existence. This reading relates their roles with regard to his corporeality to the idea of the feminine ineffable and then to the poetic act. Their actions metaphorically define the limits of the creative act and serve as both inspiration and limiting force for the poet.

### 1.4.2 Conceptual Organization

*L'Enchanteur* takes Merlin's entombment as a point of departure. The text is centered on Merlin's decaying body in the tomb. Merlin, in *L'Enchanteur*, is in a contradictory state. His body dies, but his soul continues speaking and interacting linguistically with characters around his tomb. Apollinaire writes: "Merlin sourit en son

âme et dit doucement: ‘Je suis mort!’” (Pr I, 11). Here is, on the one hand, a dead man who speaks and on the other, someone who has just been deceived by the one he loves most in the world who smiles. This short passage highlights all the ambiguity and contradiction that make Merlin the enigmatic persona that he is. Just as the passage centers on Merlin’s corporeal state and its connection to a female character (the Dame du Lac), so too does an understanding of the character Merlin. The following chapters, chapters two and three, consider the theoretical and philosophical influences that provide a basis for understanding the enigmatic representation of Merlin in *L’Enchanteur*. Chapter two begins with theories of the sublime and the marvelous. Although, as mentioned on page seven, these concepts do not share the feminine ineffable’s logical relationship to language, they do indicate something that escapes comprehensive expression in language. Theories of the linguistic sign explain the idea that there might be something that is at least partially outside of linguistic representation. This chapter also discusses the Lacanian notion of the feminine and the concept of the feminine ineffable as they relate to language and to the reading of the effect Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac have on his corporeal existence. Medieval and contemporary theories of rewriting and intertextuality also explain Apollinaire’s rewriting of Merlin’s story.

Chapter three traces the ancient and medieval philosophical ideas of the body and the soul. This will inform a reading of Merlin’s corporeality and clarify the functions his mother and the Dame du Lac have relative to his body. The chapter begins with Plato and continues through Aquinas. The body/soul debates influenced ancient and medieval philosophy; and even had an effect on Apollinaire’s twentieth-century rewriting of Merlin’s story.

Chapter four addresses the representation of women in Apollinaire's work to clarify his (re) portrayal of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac. It discusses the corpus of biographical criticism on Apollinaire and why this is pertinent to *L'Enchanteur*. Other trends in the way Apollinaire depicts women in his work, such as his use of female infidelity and misogynistic instances also clarify his rewriting of these characters. The theme of impossible love, a main premise of *L'Enchanteur*, permeates Apollinaire's writing and has received a good deal of critical attention.

Chapters five and six focus on the representations of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac respectively. The reading is organized by character, rather than by text, since it is important to establish the fact that Merlin's mother brings Merlin into corporeality before considering how the Dame du Lac alters Merlin's existence. Each chapter begins with Apollinaire's description of the character, moving backward to the medieval texts to uncover how preceding versions influence a reading of Apollinaire's work. Finally, chapter seven, the conclusion, further relates the readings of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac to the poetic act, incorporating Apollinaire's own theory of poetic creation as mixing the old with the new to create something original. Although critical attention toward Apollinaire's theory of new poetry has been strong, no studies to this date have considered the effect Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac have on Merlin's corporeal existence and how this functions as a metaphor for (re) writing. The conclusion addresses Apollinaire's work on poetic creation in the essays – *Les poètes d'aujourd'hui*, *L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*, and “La Démocratie sociale – La Loi de renaissance.” Critical studies on Apollinaire's theory of poetry also illuminate a reading of *L'Enchanteur* as a rewriting of medieval texts, but at the same time as a new creation

in and of itself. The final chapter in *L'Enchanteur, Onirocritique*, is a commentary on writing. It is a tribute to the imagination and creative power of the poet in the act of writing and illustrates Apollinaire's theory of new poetry.

### 1.5 APOLLINAIRE AND MEDIEVALISM

In *Fictions of Identity in Medieval France*, Donald Maddox expresses an idea of the tomb that pertains to Apollinaire's rewriting of Merlin's story. Maddox refers to the medieval significance of the tomb as a place "of disclosure and revelation" (115). Howard Bloch also relates the tomb to the transmission of truth and writing in Marie de France's "Yonec" in his *The Anonymous Marie de France* (108-109). He writes that the poet places the "voice in the tomb of writing" and that the *Lais* are a "monument to desire" and the "site of truth" (109). This relates to our reading of Merlin's state as a voice emanating from the tomb in *L'Enchanteur*. Apollinaire built his version of Merlin's tale around the Enchanter entombed by his desire. Furthermore, we will see that Merlin's tomb is also a place where a certain truth is revealed and that this truth is directly associated with the act of (re) writing. As a commentary on (re) writing, *L'Enchanteur* also illustrates Apollinaire's theory of poetic creation. The tomb is significant as representative of the past – past authors and past texts.<sup>25</sup> Apollinaire does not (entirely) bury the past, however, he erects a monument to it and leaves offerings of poetry, like the gifts from his three *Faux Roi Mages* and the procession of characters from myth and

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<sup>25</sup> For a reading of the literary work as a monument to past authors in Robert Desnos' poetry, see Adelaide Russo, "Le Tombeau de Robert ou la tradition encryptée." The inspiration to consider *L'Enchanteur* (and Merlin's tomb) as a funeral monument to the past came from this reading. Furthermore, the medieval *grimoire*, a book of magical instructions and conjuring is also related to both the idea of writing – the word *grimoire* comes from the Old French *grammaire*, a book of instructions on writing – and the tomb – the books contain instructions for summoning any number of spirits, both benevolent and evil. As we will see, in Apollinaire's version of Merlin's conception (as in the prose *Lancelot*), when the demon appears to Merlin's mother, he conforms to her desire. It is almost as if she had conjured her demon-lover following the instructions outlined in a *grimoire*.

legend that come to the place of Merlin's entombment. Apollinaire's theory of poetic creation involves investing existing material with imagination and invention. It is, in this way, similar to the medieval process of rewriting. His version of Merlin's tale is not his only work to have medieval influences. Among others are the poems "Merlin et la vieille femme" and "La Loreley" from *Alcools*, and *Le Bestiaire, ou cortège d'Orphée*, and the prose works "Arthur roi passé roi futur" and "Amour" from *Le Poète assassiné*, ...

As mentioned, Apollinaire's rewriting of the Enchanter's story came at the end of the late nineteenth-century's rethinking of medieval literature. It corresponded to what Stephen Nichols has considered the modernization of medievalism ("Modernism," 26). The abundance of critical works and new editions of medieval texts that Paulin Paris and his son, Gaston Paris proffered to the late nineteenth-century reading public allowed for a generalized base of knowledge of medieval literature and easy accessibility to these texts. This would explain the young Apollinaire's familiarity with Merlin's story even before he had access to Paris' libraries and the Bibliothèque Nationale's celebrated *Enfer*. But, the late nineteenth (and early twentieth) century is not the only time period to enjoy a revival of sorts in medieval studies. In their introduction to *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, Howard Bloch and Stephen Nichols discuss what they call a "New Medievalism" – a resurgence of interest in medieval studies in the late twentieth century (1).<sup>26</sup> As part of this renewed attention to medieval studies, they also note the increased use of contemporary critical approaches, such as psychoanalysis, to medieval texts, which, in their view, provides new insights into these texts. Along the same lines, almost a decade earlier, Alexandre Leupin listed a sampling of contemporary critics who analyze

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<sup>26</sup> They credit studies such as Alexandre Leupin's "The Middle Ages, the Other" with reviving interest in the field.

medieval texts using new and varied critical approaches in *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*. His list includes Michel Foucault's anthropology, semiology, Augustinian philosophy, and Lacanian psychoanalysis (1). Furthermore, as Bloch and Nichols note, revisiting medieval texts with a modern critical lens also works the other way – medieval literature has an effect on the theoretical models of those critics who analyze it (3). As an example, this study uses themes typical to medieval literature, such as writing in blood, to interpret Apollinaire's twentieth-century text. In the same way that using a contemporary critical approach such as psychoanalysis to read a medieval text brings a new interpretation to the medieval text, using critical models that are usually employed with regard to medieval texts sheds new light on more modern works. In this way the renewed attention to medieval literature has an effect on the contemporary approaches used to interpret both medieval and more recent texts. This is particularly true – or *should* be particularly true of Apollinaire's work due to the medieval influence in so many of his texts and considering his theory of poetic creation as infusing the past with imagination to create something new and sublime. Apollinaire's version of Merlin's story is a similar conglomeration – it brings the medieval into the twentieth century and makes it new.

Due to Apollinaire's affinity for taking (ideas, motifs) from the past and making them new, an understanding of his work necessitates something of a return to the past. This is why it is important to study the medieval texts that precede his work alongside his text. Given his intertextual borrowings and his use of tradition, it becomes necessary to consider the past influences – literary and theoretical – that have a bearing on our interpretation.

## 2. THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

### 2.1 DESIRE AND EXPRESSION

An analysis of *L'Enchanteur* leads to the conclusion that there is *something* behind the influence Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac have on Merlin's corporeal existence. The theories discussed in this chapter demonstrate that something which is at least partially ineffable both influences the creation of the text – of the ideas, words, and meaning that make it up – and limits the expression of these ideas, words and meaning. But how does something that cannot be expressed in its entirety mark the poetic act? Often, what the poet wishes to convey is something that escapes language. Merlin is, as Howard Bloch wrote, “the representation of that which cannot be said and of everything that can be said” (*Etymologies and Genealogies*, 2). Theories of the sublime, the marvelous, the linguistic sign, and the Lacanian psychoanalytic feminine clarify the desire to communicate something that cannot be articulated fully. So poetic limitations, then, are related to the poet's desire to express him/herself *fully*. Certainly there are concepts that may be communicated in language; meaning is partially representable. But there is also something that escapes representation and that is ineffable.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *ineffable* in terms of inexpressibility in language. The adjective *ineffable* is related to the Latin *ineffabilis* – what cannot be expressed. The Latin *effabilis*, meaning what cannot be spoken or described is derived from *effari*, which means to speak and to determine (*Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*). Essentially what cannot be represented in language is ineffable. This chapter considers theories of concepts that are partially non-representable in language. This clarifies a reading of the consequences Merlin's mother and the Dame du



Lac have on Merlin's corporeality as the effects of the feminine ineffable on the poetic act.

## 2.2 CRITICAL THEORIES OF THE SUBLIME AND THE MARVELOUS

Throughout literary history, the sublime – and the marvelous – have fascinated poets and philosophers. The following examples from theories of the sublime and the marvelous illustrate the paradox related to these concepts: entire works of literature and critical theory have been written about them from ancient times to the present, yet they remain difficult to define linguistically with precision. The multiple theories of the sublime and the marvelous offer interpretations of concepts that are essentially ineffable, yet no theory or definition is sufficient to explain this elusive *something* with precision. The theories discussed on the following pages are presented in order to demonstrate that even though the nature of what is ineffable changes in the different theories, the idea of something escaping complete and adequate linguistic representation remains a quandary for the poet. This is what is of concern to our interpretation of *L'Enchanteur*.

The problem of finding an adequate terminology for the nature of things goes back to the ancient philosopher Plato. He questioned the possibility of knowing things by the words chosen to designate them in his *Cratylus*: “if anyone could imitate this essential nature of each thing by means of letters and syllables, he would show what each thing really is, would he not?” (137). He answered this question in a way that partially prefigures modern linguistic theory – with the conclusion that the reality, or essential nature, of the thing is not always entirely evident in the name chosen to represent it:

[realities] are to be learned and sought for, not from names but much better through themselves than through names” (187).<sup>1</sup>

Longinus (also identified as the Pseudo-Longinus) speaks of ideas of greatness in his *On the Sublime*. The merit of the mind is of foremost importance in the evocation of the sublime, and so Longinus prescribes a conscious seeking of what he calls noble inspiration (14). The elevated language that is indicative of the sublime incites a certain transformation in the hearer/reader that goes beyond mere persuasion; the sublime influence is irresistible, even overpowering and ecstasy-inducing (2). Imagination, as a source for the language that is a sign of sublimity, holds a privileged position in this conception. Since the mind produces this elevated language, the sublime can be suggested in poetry and art. Finally, Longinus expressed a view of the sublime and what we will call rewriting that is similar to the one Apollinaire would present in his twentieth-century “La Démocratie sociale – La Loi de renaissance.” According to Longinus, the “imitation and emulation” of great poets of the past leads to the sublime through the *great genius* of departed poets’ souls (30).

Immanuel Kant’s conception of the sublime differs from that of his ancient predecessor in its relation to ideas of poetic creation. However, in his “Analytic of the Sublime,” Kant cites greatness as an element of sublimity, saying that it is only in and through our own minds and thoughts that we have knowledge of the sublime:

instead of the object, it is rather the cast of the mind in appreciating it that we have to estimate as *sublime*. ... true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging Subject, and not in the Object of nature that occasions this attitude by the estimate formed of it. ... in the contemplation of [objects of nature], without any regard to their form, the

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<sup>1</sup> Curtius writes that antique rhetoric would say that the name of a thing revealed its essence (*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 495). This quote from Plato’s *Cratylus* implies that while the name of the thing does tell something about its essence and is often a good indication of the nature of the thing, it is still better to study the thing itself to learn something of it than the name that has been assigned to it.

mind abandons itself to the imagination and to a reason ... and it feels itself elevated in its own estimate of itself (104-105 [the emphasis is Kant's]).

According to Kant, objects cannot possess the sublime, although their beauty can inspire an appreciation that is sublime; everything that leads to an appreciation of the faculties of imagination and the power of the mind can be called sublime (114). Apollinaire's definition of the sublime as a quality of art and literature that imagination brings out is close to this ("La Démocratie sociale – La Loi de renaissance"). Kant does note that the designation *sublime* is not an entirely accurate description for the feeling that our appreciation of the mind's abilities inspires, though. He associates true sublimity with God, as the creator of the universe and of man's faculties of mind (113-114). Accordingly, Kant associates the sublime only with nature; poetry for Kant, since it does not have an antecedent in nature, is aesthetic rather than sublime. Poetry, an aesthetic idea, entails imagination, linking language and spirit to ineffable ideas. It is:

a representation of the imagination, annexed to a given concept, upon which, in the free employment of imagination, such a multiplicity of partial representations are bound up, that no expression indicating a definite concept can be found for it – one which on that account allows a concept to be supplemented in thought by much that is indefinable in words, and the feeling of which quickens the cognitive faculties, and with language, as a mere thing of the letter, binds up the spirit (soul) also (179).

Even though poetry does not evoke the experience of the sublime, this passage illustrates its relationship to the same qualities of mind that lead to an appreciation of the sublime through the contemplation of natural objects.

There is an association of the idea of the sublime with abstract concepts, such as thought and aesthetic appreciation. Because it is not grounded in physical objects, it is not easy to specify. In *Mallarmé and the Sublime*, Louis Wirth Marvick writes of the sublime's "power to illuminate and confuse" (xii) as well as the "lack of a consistent

terminology of the sublime” (3). A definition of the sublime is lacking, but this is because the sublime is an experience of the mind and not of the body. As such it is harder to enumerate or verify empirically.

Inspired, perhaps, by his ancient predecessor, Michel Deguy, in “Le grand-dire: Pour contribuer à une relecture du Pseudo-Longin,” rewrote in the medieval sense of glossing the Pseudo-Longinus’ conception of *Peri Hupsous*.<sup>2</sup> Deguy translates *Peri Hupsous* as *la hauteur* and the *sublime*. Deguy demonstrates that the human psyche tends toward unity, and the sublime is implicated in this striving: “la psyché a désir d’être rapprochée de ce qui lui est ... à la hauteur ... les figures aident à ce rapprochement en faisant briller le *sublime* qui se nourrit de leur ‘technique’ ... Le ‘Soleil’ qu’elles ont contribué à faire briller peut alors, en éclairant, les maintenir dans l’ombre” (98 [the emphasis is Deguy’s]). This compares to language’s effects on the psyche and on linguistic representation (97). The sublime, according to this passage, both inspires and limits with respect to the psyche’s striving for unity. This study’s theoretical model of poetic creation is similar to the conception of the sublime as inspiration and limiting force for unity. Deguy expresses the relationship of the sublime to the idea of a totality – a totality of being and a totality of expression: “le sublime est le mouvement qui emporte la cohésion de tous les constituants dans la mimesis de l’unité donnée en modèle ou ‘Nature’ (90). The goal of art is an expression of the sublime (98). The paradox of language, according to Deguy, is such that it is through the words of a text that desire (for the sublime, for unity) is expressed, but this is done through the lack of words – the silence – in the text (99-100).

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<sup>2</sup> The author of *On the Sublime* is known as both Longinus and the Pseudo-Longinus, since his identity is not certain. Since Deguy refers to him as Pseudo-Longinus, so shall this section.

Similarly, the marvelous is a concept that is difficult to define with precision. In *The Merveilleux in Chrétien de Troyes' Romances*, Lucienne Carasso–Bulow relates the marvelous to the supernatural, saying that it is “characterized by elements that are rationally inexplicable to the laws of nature” (11). Carasso–Bulow also associates the marvelous with magic and the power of prophecy (16), all of which we see in Merlin’s division of body and spirit, his ability to adapt the appearance of his choosing, and his gift of prophecy. Daniel Poirion also links the marvelous to the supernatural in *Le Merveilleux dans la littérature française du Moyen Age*, specifically citing the divine and the demonic. Merlin, due to his double nature is, according to this assessment, an incarnation of the marvelous (98). Poirion also relates the marvels of the medieval text to the idea of signification, or meaning, that must be discovered (94-95). In this way, the marvelous functions in the text much like allegory – the references to the marvelous have a meaning other than what is at first apparent.

Douglas Biow’s explanation, although it does not include the supernatural, refers to marvels of the medieval text. It relates the marvelous to that which is “superfluous” and “transgresses” or “overflows” (Biow, 4). Biow also links the marvelous to the subject’s desire for a totality of self through the production of a desire for a totality of knowledge (5). In an analysis that is similar to Poirion’s conception of the marvelous as relating a hidden meaning, Biow adds that epic poets use marvels in such a way as to expose themselves as “masterful manipulators of signs.” In actuality these signs do not signify anything real, yet “deceptively enchant an audience” (4). They cannot, however, truly depict the marvelous.

For example, the scene of Merlin's conception in *L'Enchanteur* illustrates Apollinaire's use of the medieval concept of marvel to designate both the desire for a totality of knowledge and the lack of this totality. It also represents the otherworldly influence in Merlin's parentage: "lorsqu'elle enfanta, tout le peuple s'émerveilla parce que du père on ne savait rien et elle ne voulait pas le dire" (Pr I, 8). There is something "marvelous" about Merlin's conception, but there is also something else to which the people's marvel and wonder in this sentence alludes. They are in awe because they do not know the whole truth of the events of Merlin's conception. From this quote, one is led to believe that the awe-inspiring nature of Merlin's conception lies in his demon father, since it is his identity that the girl keeps secret, but that is just one aspect of it. There is something else that the scene of Merlin's conception evokes. This is where the primary focus of this study diverges from the idea of the marvelous as the supernatural. This *something else* is not marvelous or otherworldly, but like these concepts, is – at least partially – ineffable. However, it is associated with the feminine ineffable and its relation to logic and language rather than to mystery. Before discussing this further, though, it is necessary to situate ideas of inexpressibility within theories of linguistic representation.

None of the above-mentioned theories offers a concise, citable definition. Along the same lines, in *Le Degré Zéro de l'écriture*, Roland Barthes writes:

L'écriture ... est toujours enracinée dans un au-delà du langage, elle se développe comme un germe et non comme une ligne, elle manifeste une essence et menace d'un secret, elle est une contre-communication, elle intimide (32).

Essentially, there is something outside of language that drives the poet to write; although, as we have seen, this *something* is not readily *expressible* in language. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan notes the existence of something that is only partially representable in relation to

Jacques Lacan's theory of language in "Stealing Material," saying "there is something beyond the language we read that cannot be read within the words" (92). The theoretical context of this statement will become apparent in the following pages, when we consider theories of language, psychoanalysis, and rewriting.

### 2.3 SIGN THEORY

In the early twentieth century, Ferdinand de Saussure presented his theory of linguistics in which he explained the nature of the *sign*. The sign is a linguistic unit comprising a *signifier*, or the linguistic utterance used to designate a mental concept, and the *signified*, the mental concept being designated:

Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept [the signified] et une image acoustique [the signifier]. Cette dernière n'est pas le son matériel, chose purement physique, mais l'empreinte psychique de ce son, la représentation que nous en donne le témoignage de nos sens; elle est sensorielle, et s'il nous arrive de l'appeler 'matérielle', c'est seulement dans ce sens et par opposition à l'autre terme de l'association, le concept, généralement plus abstrait (*Cours de linguistique générale*, 98).

The sign, according to his theory, is arbitrary – there is no causal or inevitable relation between the signifier and the signified (100). In other words, the utterance chosen to designate an object has no innate connection with that particular object. Also, since the sign is arbitrary, so too are the units that comprise it. Both the signifier and the signified are arbitrary: there is no natural attachment of the signifier to the signified in reality (101). Although, once a given signifier becomes associated with a given signified, they are united in a sense in the sign:

Bien que le signifié et le signifiant soient, chacun pris à part, purement différentiels et négatifs, leur combinaison est un fait positif; c'est même la seule espèce de faits que comporte la langue, puisque le propre de l'institution linguistique est justement de maintenir le parallélisme entre ces deux ordres de différences (166-167).

The basis of language is the linear relationship of signifiers forming what Saussure calls a chain (103). Finally, it is the differences between signifiers that make up language, not innate linguistic matter (169). This relates to the arbitrary nature of the sign – there is no intrinsic linguistic matter, thus no inherent signifier.

Rewriting Saussure, Lacan theoretically formalized the linguistic sign and its arbitrary nature. In his interpretation, the signifier and the signified are distinct and separated by a bar that resists representation (*Ecrits I*, 254). He explained the bar in the sign: “La barre, c’est précisément le point où, dans tout usage du langage, il y a occasion à ce que se produise l’écrit. ... rien ne supporte des effets de l’inconscient sinon grâce à cette barre” (*Séminaire XX*, 35-36). Lacan’s theory of the sign is the theory of the interrelationship between the symbolic order (linguistic symbols, the *signifier*) and the imaginary order (fictitious representations, the *signified*) in the Real (meaning, unconscious, the *sign*) (Leupin, *Lacan Today*, 44, 47, 133). The Real is unconscious and aligned with truth and meaning (Leupin, 45). Part of the Real is veiled from linguistic representation.

The unconscious is a key part of Lacan’s linguistic theory. Language, in fact, creates the unconscious: “Il n’y a aucune réalité pré-discursive. Chaque réalité se fonde et se définit d’un discours” (*Séminaire XX*, 33). Lacan also writes, “Il n’y a d’inconscient que chez l’être parlant” (*Télévision*, 15) and “Je ne fonde pas cette idée de discours sur l’ex-sistence de l’inconscient. C’est l’inconscient que j’en situe, - de n’ex-sister qu’à un discours” (*Télévision*, 26). He writes existence as *ex-sistence* to emphasize the nature of the unconscious as not existing – as outside of existence – and only coming about through language. Language is what causes a split in the subject and what consequently



creates the unconscious. The division of the subject into conscious and unconscious aspects instituted by the acquisition of language also extends to masculine and feminine aspects. Lacan's statement about the nature of the bar between the signifier and the signified in the sign expresses this. In Lacan's psychoanalytic theory (which includes his theory of the sign) the feminine is unconscious. Just as there is only partial representation of the unconscious, the same is true of the part of the divided subject aligned with the feminine. Lacan writes, "Tout ce qui est écrit part du fait qu'il sera à jamais impossible d'écrire comme tel le rapport sexuel" (*Séminaire XX*, 35-36). When Lacan writes there is no sexual rapport, he refers to the impossibility of being fully satisfied (on the logical, mental level) in a love relationship. But it also implies that the feminine, or unconscious, part of the psyche escapes – at least partially – representation in language.<sup>3</sup>

Lacan also writes of the idea of a signifying chain: a chain of signifiers, with one referring to another *ad infinitum*:

il n'est aucune signification qui se soutienne sinon du renvoi à une autre signification: touchant à l'extrême la remarque qu'il n'y a pas de langue existante pour laquelle se pose la question de son insuffisance à couvrir le champ du signifié étant un effet de son existence de langue qu'elle y réponde à tous les besoins. (*Ecrits I*, 254).

Meaning is implied through the relationship of one signifier to another. Lacan explains that the signifying chain points to meaning, but that no single element in the chain is able to convey this meaning in its entirety, so that meaning is constantly slipping beneath the signifier (*Ecrits I*, 260). Meaning is slippery; part of it is always outside linguistic representation. However, at the end of the chain of signifiers is the *master signifier*,

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<sup>3</sup> In *Lacan Today*, Leupin explains *rapport sexuel*, or the English translation, *sexual rapport*, as "a logical relationship between two *signifiers*, "man" and "woman" (97). This study also adopts the designation *sexual rapport* to identify this non-existent logical relationship, to which it also refers as a relationship of *non-rapport*.

which cannot be spoken. This master signifier has the same linguistic function as the phallus:

Car le phallus est un signifiant, un signifiant dont la fonction, dans l'économie intrasubjective de l'analyse, soulève peut-être le voile de celle qu'il tenait dans les mystères. Car c'est le signifiant destiné à désigner dans leur ensemble les effets de signifié, en tant que le signifiant les conditionne par sa présence de signifiant" (*Ecrits II*, 5).<sup>4</sup>

Lacan also refers to the phallus as "the privileged signifier" (Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, 133). It is a signifier that performs its function only when veiled (Gallop, 154-155). That is to say that something on the order of the phallus, or Master Signifier, remains, at least partially, outside of linguistic representation. The phallic signifier is linked to desire (Gallop, 145). But, the subject, as symbolically castrated (by language), is unable to achieve her/his (primary) desire; Jane Gallop relates the symbolic castration of the subject and the resulting nature of desire as eternally unsatisfied to being deprived of the phallus in *Reading Lacan* (149). Since the unconscious and the feminine aspects of the psyche are what cannot be linguistically represented in their entirety, the phallus also has to do with Lacan's assertion that sexual rapport is impossible (Leupin, 91). The phallus *displaces* desire; through its metaphorical function, it gives the *illusion* of attaining what is desired (Leupin, 52). In the case of poetic expression, this would amount to communicating a totality of meaning, which, of course, is impossible in Lacan's theory.

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<sup>4</sup> The term *phallus* denotes the signifying, metaphorical function of a psychoanalytic concept, *not* the male sexual organ. This point has been the subject of much misreading and debate in critical studies, as Jane Gallop notes in *Reading Lacan*, p. 133-135. Indeed, as a signifier, the phallus is neutral (Gallop, [quoting Ellie Ragland Sullivan, "Jacques Lacan: Feminism and the Problem of Gender Identity," *Substance* 36, 1982, 10] 136).

## 2.4 PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE *FEMININE*

In traditional (Freudian and later Lacanian) psychoanalytic theory, the subject desires what s/he does not have – oneness with the (m) Other, sexual rapport, linguistic expression of the unconscious or the feminine. Since one desires what one does not have, we must suppose that the perception of lack, however displaced it may be, is linked to desire. Freud associated lack, or incompleteness, with the female sex. He wrote of femininity in two articles, “Female Sexuality” in 1931 and “Femininity” in 1933.<sup>5</sup> However, Freud’s theory was itself lacking in its understanding of the feminine.

Lacan, rewriting Freud, improved upon this theory, showing that the feminine does not constitute a lack, but rather a surplus which escapes language, be it spoken or written. In his *Séminaire XX*, he explains: “la femme n’est pas-toute, il y a toujours quelque chose qui chez elle échappe au discours” (34).<sup>6</sup> Taking as a point of departure the lack in relation to femininity – the *pas-toute* – Lacan reversed Freud’s theory, positioning this lack in language rather than in relation to biological sex. According to Lacan, whenever a subject enters language he or she is not whole, since the subject is divided

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<sup>5</sup> According to his theory as expressed in these articles, once perceived, the lack of a penis evokes in the little girl a feeling of inadequacy: “she acknowledges the fact of her castration, and with it, too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority” (“Female Sexuality,” 229). Additionally, according to Freud, this lack on the part of the female child results in the formation of a sub-par super-ego: “in these circumstances the formation of the super-ego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance” (“Femininity,” 160-161).

<sup>6</sup> The statement *la femme n’est pas-toute* exposes one of the fundamental objections some female and feminist readers have with Lacan’s theory. When Lacan writes that (the signifier) *la femme n’est pas-toute*, he means that women (as a signifier) is incomplete – *not whole*. At first glance, this would seem misogynistic. But Lacan inserts a hyphen between the *pas* and the *toute*, supplanting a simple negation, so within women there is something that is not not-whole. There is something, then, on the order of the feminine that is more than incomplete. As Alexandre Leupin explains, this idea of the feminine as *more* relates to Lacan’s theory of the feminine as escaping, at least in part, the phallic function of language and so linguistic representation. The signifier *La femme* as *pas-toute* should, in his opinion, be read as empowering to feminism (*Lacan Today*, 96). When we consider the feminine as one part of the psyche that is present in every subject, male or female, the argument that Lacan’s theory subverts women is irrelevant. The Lacanian theory of the feminine was briefly introduced in the Introduction to this study, p. seven.

(into conscious and unconscious, masculine and feminine aspects). Because of the bar in the sign, something is linguistically inaccessible, which translates in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to the unconscious (and the feminine). Lacan explains this:

lorsqu'un être parlant quelconque se range sous la bannière des femmes c'est à partir de ceci qu'il se fonde de n'être pas-tout, à se placer dans la fonction phallique. ... *La* femme, ça ne peut s'écrire qu'à barrer *La*. Il n'y a pas *La* femme, article défini pour désigner l'universel. Il n'y a pas *La* femme puisque ... de son essence, elle n'est pas toute (*Séminaire XX*, 68 [the emphasis is Lacan's]).

The definite article *La* must be barred when speaking of women because (the signifier) *Women* is not representative of (the signified) *all women*.<sup>7</sup> As a signifier, it is not all. In *Reading Lacan*, Gallop writes that the French *La* – which translates to a generalized representation of women – is a signifier that signifies nothing (140). So, *women* (as a signifier) is *not-whole*. It is important to remember that both men and women are divided subjects; that is to say that they both have masculine and feminine aspects to their psyches. So both men and women are subject to castration (Leupin 99). Indeed, as Gallop explains in *Reading Lacan*, Lacan's theory that everyone – male and female alike – is symbolically castrated by language “represents not a loss but a gain.” So her (or anyone's) attempt to overcome the “inadequacy” presented when entering the linguistic arena and when endeavoring to interpret linguistic expression is “both Lacanian and feminist” (20).

As it concerns this study, the idea of Lacan's theory of the signifier *La femme* as *pas-toute* relates to language and the poetic act rather than to biological sex, which is irrelevant. The signifier *la femme*, in this theory, may also be considered to be a symbolic

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<sup>7</sup> Leupin writes that *La femme* in the case where the definite article is barred should be translated as ~~women~~, also barred, in *Lacan Today*, p. xx. I agree, because the English definite article *the* in this case would imply a negation of a specific woman, rather than the possibility of speaking of all women (or symbolically of the feminine as a totality) in general terms.

representation of a totality of the feminine, but there is an idea of the *pas-toute* in relation to the feminine that is also associated with the bar in the linguistic sign. For example, in the first quote from Lacan, he wrote, “la femme n’est pas-toute” and “il y a toujours quelque chose chez elle qui échappe au discours” (*Séminaire XX*, 34). The feminine *pas-toute* is related to a lack in and insufficiency of *language*. The feminine, in this conception, is more than not-whole – it overflows linguistic representation. Impossible to articulate in its totality, the feminine in Lacan’s theory remains linked to the idea of lack in that it exposes the innate inability of language to express what cannot be said. Leupin writes of femininity as “not wholly representable” and so aligned with truth and the unconscious (*Lacan Today*, 96). Accordingly, Lacan’s statement *women are not-whole* could be rewritten as *the feminine is not-whol-ly* representable in language.

## 2.5 THE FEMININE INEFFABLE

The Lacanian theory of the feminine points to *something* that escapes in part language and representation. The feminine ineffable is one aspect of the Lacanian feminine to which I have given a name.<sup>8</sup> The term feminine *ineffable* indicates the ineffable aspect as a major factor. Additionally, the designation *feminine ineffable* denotes a relationship to the theory of the Lacanian feminine. This association marks the distinction of the feminine ineffable from other concepts that are also ineffable, such as the sublime or the marvelous. Like the feminine, the feminine ineffable exists only in the speaking subject and is, accordingly, related to language and not to mystery. The feminine ineffable – and the Lacanian feminine – in this respect can be considered logically, even though they cannot be expressed in their totality. Rather than seeking to

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<sup>8</sup> The feminine ineffable was briefly introduced in the Introduction, p. 7-8, along with a discussion of the irrelevance of biological sex to this concept.

overthrow the phallic nature of language and expression, the feminine ineffable, like the feminine, overflows them. It is *outside* of the system of the sign, outside the law of language, so not governed by those laws. Meaning is partially representable in Lacan's theory, so the feminine ineffable can be *designated*, but it relates to that part of meaning that escapes precise linguistic representation.

In relation to rewriting and the poet's desire for expression, is there something missing from the text, a lack that the writer hopes to complete with a newer version? Is there something that the author failed to transmit via writing? Or, is the lack in language itself? The answer is that the lack *is* in language; what is missing is a complete and adequate representation of ideas that are on the order of the feminine ineffable. Writing exposes, or *creates*, the perception of this lack. Fiction, necessarily using language as a vehicle of expression, creates a lack that poets subsequently desire to fill. The feminine ineffable is what drives the poet to write, what influences the creation of the text, but also what is related to the limitations of expression.

Although impossible to represent linguistically in its totality, the existence of the feminine ineffable cannot be denied. This study does not seek to impose meaning on what is not expressed in the language of the text, but rather to expose instances where the feminine ineffable influences poetic production and to question why linguistic communication breaks down at those points. Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac both form and limit Merlin's corporeal existence which, as we will discover, has an immediate effect on the words of the text and, in this way, correspond to the feminine ineffable and its cycle of inspiration in the text.

## 2.6 REWRITING AND INTERTEXTUALITY

### 2.6.1 Rewriting in Medieval Literature

The legend of Merlin has been written and rewritten countless times since its origins. Each telling (or writing) seems to share the same basic story to which it adds or subtracts material, producing a new version and contributing to the larger legend. One example is the possible ending to Robert de Boron's late twelfth/early thirteenth-century *Merlin* according to the Modène manuscript. In this account, the Dame du Lac does not imprison the Enchanter, but he goes off to reside with Blaise, his mother's confessor and his scribe: "Et si me covendra aler, quar je puis mie sovent demonstrer au peuple" (301).<sup>9</sup> (And it is necessary for me to go, because I can no longer show myself to people.) Robert's *Merlin* was rewritten as the Vulgate *Estoire de Merlin* in the early thirteenth century. In this text, Viviane imprisons Merlin in a fortress of air, using enchantments he taught her.<sup>10</sup> Other medieval texts – such as the *Prophecies* and the prose *Lancelot* – also share this story with some modifications, as we will see in chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac." Furthermore, other legends have been written and rewritten in a similar manner; for example, the story of King Arthur and his knights has seen numerous versions, including the romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the texts of the Vulgate.

One form of rewriting, translation, is a common literary topos in the Middle Ages. Many medieval writers, like Geoffrey de Monmouth, offer the disclaimer that they have merely translated an already-existing work in their prologues to avoid the sin of hubris in

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<sup>9</sup> This text figures in the appendix to Alexandre Micha's critical edition, the edition used in this study. It is offered as a *possible* ending.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac" p. 234-238 for a detailed description of the episode.

attempting to create something that would seem to mimic the divine act of creation. Geoffrey de Monmouth professes to have translated his *Prophetiae Merlini* (ca 1135), which tells of Merlin's prophecies and was later incorporated into his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca 1138): "Coegit me, Alexander Lincolliensis praesul, nobilitatis tuae dilectio prophetias Merlini de britannico in latinum transferre" (189). (Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, your nobility leads me to translate the *Prophecies of Merlin* from the British into Latin. [translation adapted from Thorpe]).

In the prologue to her *Lais*, Marie de France makes a reference to the medieval art of rewriting:

Pur ceo començai a penser  
 De aukune bone estoire faire  
 E de latin en romaunz traire;  
 Mais ne me fust guaires de pris:  
 Itant s'en sunt altre entremis.  
 Des lais pensai k'oï aveie; ...  
 Plusurs en ai oï conter,  
 Ne[s] voil laisser nē oblïer;  
 Rimez en ai e fait ditié ...  
 M'entremis des lais assembler,  
 Par rime faire e raconter (lines 28-33, 39-41, 47-48).

So I began to think  
 of some good work to make  
 and from Latin to Romance (French) to translate;  
 But this would not offer me much recompense:  
 so many others had already concerned themselves with this.  
 I though of lays I had heard; ...  
 Many have I heard told,  
 I would not see them neglected or forgotten;  
 I rhymed them and put them into verse, ...  
 I concerned myself with gathering together lays,  
 In order to retell them in rhyme.

Marie does not profess to translate her *Lais* as Geoffrey does his text, but to *retell* stories she has heard in a new – rhymed – form. Marie's retelling puts her in the position of



guardian of forgotten material, but also makes of her something of an intermediary between past authors and future readers (Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France*, 41). Apollinaire occupies a comparable position in his description of new poetry and his (re) creation of the medieval Enchanter. Furthermore, Marie writes that she wants to do something that had not already been done – her *Lais*, like Apollinaire’s work, are the result of tradition and invention. Marie professes to have gathered her material from stories she had heard and those she had read in the introduction to “Chevrefoil”:

Plusurs le me unt cunté e dit  
E jeo l’ai trové en escrit (lines 5-6).

Many have recounted and told [the story of *Chevrefoil*, the honeysuckle]  
to me  
And I have found it in writing.

As Ernst Robert Curtius explains, writing in the Middle Ages was more of an accumulation of authoritative texts and an assimilation of these existing works than creation (*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 326). The medieval author did not *create* in the sense of bringing something into being out of nothing, but rather invented in the sense of finding and rewriting existing material, although originality was a feature of these rewritings (Kelly, *The Medieval Opus: Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition* 5-6).

(Re) Writing in the Middle Ages is also explained by Heinrich Lausberg’s discussion of *amplificatio* in his *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: a Foundation for Literary Study*. *Amplificatio* (amplification) is the “graded enhancement” of existing material “by artistic means” (118). This process includes altering an existing argument or text by means of *incrementum*, a “gradual build up” in description (190). This relates to medieval rewriting as the addition of relatively small quantities of new material to an

existing source. Another method of *amplificatio*, *congeries*, also has to do with rewriting in the Middle Ages. This is similar to the medieval practice of writing under the guise of translation in order to lend authority to the text. Lausberg writes that “this process of amplification can be transferred to a *res certa* (a matter which no longer needs to be proved)” (195). *Congeries* entails what Lausberg terms “a broad amplification” involving the idea of expansion of existing material (193).

Medieval rewritings borrowed heavily and unabashedly from their predecessors. This is related to the absence of a signature in many texts as discussed in the Introduction, page seventeen, in that authorship, in the sense of originality or ownership of material, did not exist as it does today. Moreover, many authors of medieval texts are anonymous simply because authorship has to do with authority and when a previous author or patron was involved with the production of a text, that person’s name took precedence (Kelly, 7).

In fact, in medieval literature, references to previous works were often seen as a proof of the text’s authenticity or value. Lausberg’s definition of *auctoritas* explains this phenomenon. According to his definition, *auctoritas* is “the linguistic usage of recognized authors” (222-223). In a related explanation of *auctoritas*, he says that if the relationship between the reference and the point being argued is successful, “the persuasive force of the *auctoritas* will be very great, because of the universal validity of the wisdom” (202 [the emphasis is Lausberg’s]). This is in reference to lawsuits, but it also explains the concept of *auctoritas* as literary authority in medieval literature.

Lucy Allen Paton explains the medieval author’s use of references to preceding texts in the following quote:

Every mediaeval writer had his direct source to which he adhered pretty slavishly, but which he was especially in the habit of citing as an authority when he wished to depart from it. *Come li livres dist*, “as the book saith,” is a common signal that a statement made probably out of the writer’s own head is coming (Introduction to *Histories of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, xviii-xix).

According to this, claims to have gathered information from an existing (authoritative) source are a common ruse of the medieval writer and serve as a marker of invention. Paton’s explanation is similar to Lausberg’s definition of *auctoritas*, but instead of referring to an existing proverb, these claims fabricate an authority.

Thus the medieval text’s resultant state of shifting equilibrium between imitating and creating; the medieval author imitated his predecessors even while simultaneously creating something new. The text thereby entered into a filial relation with its predecessor, resembling it as a child resembles its parent – the same genetic base is there; however, some of the features appear different.<sup>11</sup> Each rewriting of a text, then, resembles the text upon which it is based, yet is also different in some ways, as the example from Robert’s *Merlin* and the *Estoire de Merlin* demonstrates. These texts are also part of a larger grouping of rewritten texts of the Merlin legend – Robert’s text builds upon the texts that precede it and later texts reproduce themes originating with these works. Although a linear development certainly cannot be implied in all rewritings of Merlin’s story in literature, there are varying degrees of similarity and difference between versions.

The theory of intertextuality compares the relationship between two or more texts. Intertextuality is both medieval and modern – medieval writers used intertextual references to lend authority to their work and borrowed material ranging from entire

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<sup>11</sup> Michèle Gally explored the notion of filial relationships with regard to the literary text in her seminar in medieval literature at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay/Saint-Cloud, 1998-2000.

textual episodes to what Norris J. Lacy calls *motifs*, or “the smallest narrative units (Lacy, “Motif Transfer in Arthurian Romance,” 157). As Lacy notes, intertextual references in medieval literature have to do with the fact that the medieval text was meant to be situated within a larger tradition (168). This recalls the concept of *auctoritas* in medieval literature, since intertextual references – references to another text or texts – bring something of the original text to the work in which they are found and necessarily takes into account what influence these relationships have on a reading of the text.

### 2.6.2 Rewriting in the Twentieth Century

As mentioned, intertextuality is also a phenomenon of modern literature. Apollinaire’s references to medieval works may be considered intertextual references. Related to intertextuality, the theory of influence traces the influence of one text upon another. This also relates to Apollinaire’s use of material from existing texts in his work. Contemporary critics such as Harold Bloom consider relationships of *influence* between texts. Whereas *intertextuality* involves a reference to another text or texts, *influence* implies a subtler interrelationship. Bloom writes: “It does happen that one poet influences another, or more precisely, that one poet’s poems influence the poems of another” (*The Anxiety of Influence*, 30). But, how does one poet influence another if this influence is not manifested in a specific textual reference? The poet’s works and ideas influence the works and ideas of those who read them, inciting either agreement or disagreement. For example, the various medieval versions of Merlin’s tale each offered something different to the young Apollinaire, which he either incorporated into his text in one way or another or discarded. This influence of a predecessor is not always viewed in a positive light, though. According to Bloom, authors often rebel against it, much as in Freud’s theory of

the Oedipal complex the son desires to overthrow the father and take his place: “Where the precursor was, there the ephebe shall be ... Every poet is a being caught up in a dialectical relationship (transference, repetition, error, communication) with another poet or poets” (*The Anxiety of Influence*, 91). Every poet enters into some sort of filial relationship with his predecessor(s). The relationship to the precursor is either positive or negative and is played out in the *ephebe*’s – the successor’s – work through the processes of transference, repetition, or error. Influence is inescapable; an author either accepts its place in his work and the role the earlier author played in influencing the new text, or resists it. Even in the latter case, the influence of the earlier author/text is present in the (new) author’s attempt to produce something new, different, and *better* (Bloom, 91). According to this theory, the influence of previous works is thus a necessary component of literary creation. Influence can also manifest itself in theories of reading. Stanley Fish takes influences *outside* of the text into account. In *Is There a text in this Class?* he writes that an understanding of the text is based on not just the words of the text, but also on “everything the reader brings with him” (46).

Julia Kristeva focuses on the play of the sign and meaning in her theory of rewriting. In “Pour une sémiologie des paragrammes,” she describes intertextual references in a manner that recalls the inter-references between signs in Lacan’s chain of signifiers:

Le texte littéraire s’insère dans l’ensemble des textes: il est une écriture-réplique (fonction ou négation d’un autre (des autres) texte (s)). ... Ainsi dans le paragramme d’un texte fonctionnent tous les textes de l’espace lu par l’écrivain. ... Le langage poétique apparaît comme un dialogue de textes: toute séquence se fait par rapport à une autre provenant d’un autre corpus, de sorte que toute séquence est doublement orientée: vers l’acte de la réminiscence (évocation d’une autre écriture) et vers l’acte de la sommation (la transformation de cette écriture). Le livre renvoie à d’autres livres et par les modes de

somation (*application* en termes mathématiques) et donne à ces livres une nouvelle façon d'être, élaborant ainsi sa propre signification. (58).

Poetic language is made up of a dialogue between texts, with one text referring to another ad infinitum. Like the signifier, each text takes its meaning from its relationship to other texts, but without this intertextual dialogue, the text would not exist. The act of writing consists of transforming pre-existing material. It is the act of transformation that makes a text new, or "original." Kristeva's theory relates to Apollinaire's model of new poetry on many levels. Apollinaire also situates the new text in a "dialogue" (to borrow Kristeva's term) with other texts and his theory of new poetry aims to transform the old material into something new and inventive, as chapter seven, the conclusion to this study, demonstrates. However, one difference between the theories of Apollinaire and Kristeva is the idea of a negation of other texts in rewriting. This does not exist in Apollinaire's theory – the poet uses the existing material or chooses not to use it, there is no implication of negating the pre-existing text. Kristeva's concept of giving the text new life and elaborating its signification through rewriting is similar to the idea of the feminine ineffable's cycle of influence. Furthermore, in Kristeva's model the transformation of existing material produces an original text; by the same process, the very production of something new brings about a transformation. The act of rewriting as much as the conscious transformation of sources creates something new, since each author brings something different to her/his rewriting.

Gérard Genette gives a concise definition of the idea of intertextuality: "une relation de coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes" (*Palimpsestes*, 8). There is a commonality shared by the texts, often taking the form of a citation, plagiat (non-declared "borrowing"), or allusion to another text or other texts. *Transtextualité*,

according to Genette, is “tout ce qui le met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d’autres textes” (7). Citing Michael Riffaterre, he states that the intertext is a *perception* by the reader of this relationship between one or more texts that either chronologically precede or follow the text in question.

In “La Mort de l’auteur,” Roland Barthes writes that the text is:

Un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n’est originelle: le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture. ... l’écrivain ne peut qu’imiter un geste toujours antérieur, jamais originel; son seul pouvoir est de mêler les écritures, de les contrarier les unes par les autres, de façon à ne jamais prendre appui sur l’une d’elles; voudrait-il *s’exprimer*, du moins devrait-il savoir que la ‘chose’ intérieure qu’il a la prétention de ‘traduire’, n’est elle-même qu’un dictionnaire tout composé, dont les mots ne peuvent s’expliquer qu’à travers d’autres mots, et ceci indéfiniment (15-16 [the emphasis is Barthes’]).

This passage not only describes the theory of intertextuality, but also makes reference to the concept of the chain of signifiers in Saussure’s and Lacan’s theories and to the power of the signifier to refer only to other signifiers, never entirely *stating* meaning. It may be inferred from this quotation that this very inability of the signifier to “translate” the “interior thing” that the author is trying to express is a reason for writing (and for rewriting).

Barthes’ theory encompasses factors other than those that are exclusively literary, as the above passage illustrates. In *S/Z*, he identifies the notion of the *Code*, which he defines as “une perspective de citations, un mirage de structures” (27). He continues,

Les unités qui en sont issues (celles que l’on inventorie) sont elles-mêmes, toujours, des sorties du texte, la marque, le jalon d’une digression virtuelle vers le reste d’un catalogue (l’*Enlèvement* renvoie à tous les enlèvements déjà écrits); elles sont autant d’éclats de ce quelque chose qui a toujours été *déjà* lu, vu, fait, vécu: le code est le sillon de ce *déjà*. Renvoyant à ce qui a été écrit, c’est-à-dire au Livre (de la culture, de la vie, de la vie comme culture), il fait du texte le prospectus de ce Livre (27-28 [the emphasis is Barthes’]).

The idea of rewriting according to Barthes' theory is not just the retelling of earlier versions of a story; all writing is rewriting in that it is the retelling of a cultural/linguistic/symbolic code. The question facing each writer, then, is how to express these qualities, how to write what is unwritable, how to put into words the meaning that slips between the signifier and the signified.

## 2.7 EXPRESSION AND MERLIN'S BODY

Theories about rewriting, intertextuality, and influence in medieval and twentieth-century literature provide the theoretical framework for a reading of Apollinaire's rewriting. His own theory of poetic creation, expressed in *Les poètes d'aujourd'hui*, *L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*, and "La Démocratie sociale – La Loi de renaissance," provides another key to reading his re-representation of the effects Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac have on Merlin and on the text. In these essays, Apollinaire considers the task of the poet to be adding imagination and invention to existing material in order to create something new. Through this process, the poetic or artistic creation may evoke something of the sublime; indeed, it is this desire to evoke the sublime that encourages artistic and poetic production.<sup>12</sup> Since Apollinaire found hints of the sublime in works of the past, we too should turn to the past to understand how Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac's relationship to Merlin's corporeality reflects the feminine ineffable's relationship to the poetic act and the text. To do this we have to go back to the ancient theories of Plato and Aristotle concerning the body and the soul. This enumeration will show us the points where Apollinaire's text interacts with these theories and also those instances where his text confronts them. Apollinaire's interpretation of Merlin's

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<sup>12</sup> The conclusion to this study discusses these essays in more detail.



corporeality is informed by this tradition, yet Apollinaire represents Merlin-in-the-tomb as existing in a state that does not conform entirely to any one theory concerning the body and/or the soul.

### 3. ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INFLUENCES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

##### 3.1.1 Merlin's Body

As stressed in the introduction to this study, Apollinaire's twentieth-century rewriting of the Merlin legends, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, recounts the story of Merlin's physical evolution - essentially how he is "formed" by his mother, who remains unnamed, and "unformed" by the Dame du Lac. In this way, Apollinaire's version is not so very different from its predecessors.<sup>1</sup> Again, the use of the term *corporeality* refers to the representation of the physical nature of Merlin's body. *Corporeality* has different connotations for different modes of thinking and different eras. For example, to the ancient Greeks and Romans, the reality of the body has a far different meaning than for Christian theologians because of changes in religious thought. Questions of what is real and of the body's relation to this *reality* take on a different sense when used by twentieth-century psychoanalytical theorists.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, corporeality relates to the theory of the linguistic sign, as presented by Saussure and re-presented by Lacan. The body represents something – the being, or essence, of which it is comprised, so in this way it is similar in function to the signifier. We "read" the body like we read a text; it reveals something

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<sup>1</sup> Rewriting in *L'Enchanteur* is a major theme in Apollinaire criticism. Critics such as Marie-Jeanne Durr, Jean Burgos, Michel Décaudin, Daniel Delbreil, Scott Bates, Margaret Davies, Susan Harrow, and Madeleine Boisson, among others have contributed a vast amount of work on the subject. Chapter four addresses more specifically particular points in Apollinaire criticism.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Jacques Lacan's conception of the *Real* entails a return to the imaginary original state of unity: "Mais le sujet, lui, est là pour s'y retrouver, là où c'était – j'anticipe – le réel" (*Séminaire XI*, 45). As the imaginary state of unity, however, the Real is not representable linguistically: "Quoi de là peut se dire, du savoir, qui ex-siste pour nous dans l'inconscient, mais qu'un discours seul articule, quoi peut se dire dont le réel nous vienne par ce discours?" (*Télévision*, 60). This psychoanalytic concept of the Real as an unspeakable and impossible return to an imaginary state of unity has implications for the reading of Merlin's corporeality as a metaphor for the feminine ineffable's effects on linguistic production proposed in this study.

about the person, to varying degrees of accuracy. Accordingly, the reading of corporeality this study advances in relation to Merlin and the main female characters in *L'Enchanteur* and its predecessors is multifaceted and made up of influences from ancient, medieval, and modern-day thought.

So many of the questions surrounding Merlin have to do with corporeality, from his conception to his entombment. Merlin inherits immortality and the ability to change his physical form from his father, while he inherits human sentiments and submission to the effects of time on his physical being from his mother (Debon, *Apollinaire en somme*, 57). Indeed, he inherits the (corporeal) nature of both his parents. Questions of the Enchanter's physical existence will become central to Apollinaire's version of Merlin's conception and entombment, but can be traced as well to Nennius' first telling of Merlin's engendering where we learn that Merlin is a child without a (human) father.<sup>3</sup> If Merlin's father did not have a proper body, then Merlin's own body is called into question. Merlin's father is traditionally a demon, a being without a human flesh and blood body.<sup>4</sup> So, in the pages that follow, it will be necessary to explore ancient ideas of divinity and the hierarchy of existence to understand both his and the Enchanter's

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter five, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother," p. 174 for a discussion of Nennius' text. The idea of a child conceived of a being without a proper, human body is a blasphemous reversal of the Immaculate Conception of Christ, one discussed with all its implications for reading in relation to religion and textual production in the chapters on textual analysis. For excellent criticism on this subject and Merlin's blasphemous mirroring of Christ in Apollinaire's work, see Scott Bates *Guillaume Apollinaire* and "L'Erotisme dans les premiers grands poèmes d'Apollinaire," Robert Couffignal, *L'inspiration biblique dans l'œuvre de Guillaume Apollinaire*, Jean Burgos's edition of *L'Enchanteur* and "Un poème prototype: *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*," Daniel Delbreil, "Remarques sur l'inspiration religieuse des 'Sept épées'" and *Apollinaire et ses récits*, Marie-Jeanne Durry, *Alcools*, and Anna Boschetti, *La Poésie partout*. Alexandre Leupin discusses this in relation to the medieval *Estoire de Merlin* in *Le Graal et la littérature*.

<sup>4</sup> In Apollinaire's text, Merlin's father is a demon, but earlier texts refer to the ancient *daemon*. Demons are similar to daemons, but with the addition of evil intent. Later pages in this chapter define and discuss the conceptions of the demon and the ancient daemon along with the implications for an interpretation of Merlin's corporeal existence.

natures. Since Merlin's father did not have a human body, he passed on this lack of flesh to his son, Merlin. So from his father, Merlin inherits a lack in terms of corporeality.<sup>5</sup> This, along with the influence of his mother and the Dame du Lac will come to play an integral role in Merlin's physical makeup. His father traditionally (with the exception of the prose *Lancelot* and Apollinaire's text, as we will discover) takes the initiative in visiting the Enchanter's mother, so it can be said that Merlin originates in and from his father's absence of physical being.

It is Merlin's mother who fills this lack in the text, passing her own corporeality to her son. The following passage from *L'Enchanteur* is a description of the maiden's encounter with the demon:

Il y eut jadis une demoiselle de grande beauté, fille d'un pauvre vavasseur. ... il arriva qu'un diable se présenta à la demoiselle en son lit, par la nuit obscure. Il commença à la prier tout doucement et lui promit qu'elle ne le verrait jamais. Et elle lui demanda qui il était: "Je suis, fait-il, un homme venu d'une terre étrangère et, de même que vous ne pourriez voir d'homme je ne pourrais voir de femme avec laquelle je couchasse." La demoiselle le tâta et sentit qu'il avait le corps très bien fait. Elle l'aima extrêmement, accomplit sa volonté et cela tout cela [sic] à sa mère et à autrui.

Quand elle eut mené cette vie l'espace d'un mois, elle devint grosse, et lorsqu'elle enfanta, tout le peuple s'émerveilla parce que du père on ne savait rien et elle ne voulait pas le dire. Cet enfant fut un fils et eut nom Merlin (Pr I, 7-8).<sup>6</sup>

Merlin's father *appears* to have a body – the girl feels of something that leads her to believe that her visitor *has a well-made body*. We will discover, however, that this is just a mask, an assumed form that hides his true, demonic nature.

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<sup>5</sup> This will have implications for a reading of the body-as-signifier in the text, as will become apparent in the discussions that follow of both Merlin's and his father's corporeal natures. Merlin's father's body, as a signifier, does not represent anything real; it only points to absence.

<sup>6</sup> As the discussion of Merlin's conception in this study's chapter on Merlin's mother demonstrates, Apollinaire's use of the verb *voir* is significant. See chapter five, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother," p. 162-165. Also see Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 106-107 for a discussion of the significance of sight and touch in the maiden's encounter with the demon in the medieval *Estoire de Lancelot* which also pertains to Apollinaire's description of how the maiden is able to perceive the demon.

The representation of the Dame du Lac, like that of Merlin's mother is fundamental to the Enchanter's corporeal existence and his demise in both Apollinaire's telling and the texts that precede it. It is she who, in burying his body, essentially ends his physical existence. In Apollinaire's account of Merlin's tale, the Dame du Lac reduces the Enchanter to a voice entombed in a rotting corpse:

La dame du lac avait laissé retomber la pierre, et voyant le sépulcre clos pour toujours, avait éclaté de rire. L'enchanteur mourut alors. Mais, comme il était immortel de nature et que sa mort provenait des incantations de la dame, l'âme de Merlin resta vivante en son cadavre (Pr I, 10).

In letting the stone fall on the tomb, closing it for eternity, the Dame du Lac takes complete control of Merlin's physical existence. She entombs him and this has a direct effect on his corporeality – his body dies as a result.<sup>7</sup>

The representations of these two female characters, along with Merlin's father, not only limit, but also define and create Merlin's existence. The body Merlin inherits from his mother signifies only part of his dual nature – his physical, human side. It does not denote his aerial, demonic nature. It is a signifier that only partially represents its meaning. So we will see that the desire Merlin's mother expresses at the Enchanter's conception is a reflection of the feminine ineffable's influence on poetic creation; through her desire she creates the signifier whose meaning is partially representable in language. When the Dame du Lac entombs Merlin, she destroys his body-as-signifier, but this reveals the truth about his dual nature that his body-as-signifier was unable to represent. The limits of linguistic expression with regard to the feminine ineffable – that part of

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<sup>7</sup> Merlin's state in the tomb also has implications for a reading of his body as a signifier in the text, as we will discover.

meaning that cannot be represented in language – point to the truth of Merlin’s existence, his dual nature, body and soul.

### 3.1.2 Merlin’s Body and Language

Ideas of the body, bodily existence, and questions of control of the body – both one’s own and that of others – take center stage in any discussion of Merlin’s conception and entombment, but this is particularly pertinent to a discussion of Apollinaire’s Merlin. The representation of Merlin’s body ties into the use of language in the text. Merlin becomes a speaking subject trapped in a rotting body and his physicality is severely limited. He exists, but in an altered state. He can no longer move about, he can only talk to those who might be nearby. He is even unable to see the world beyond his tomb. His whole existence becomes language – it is all that he has left to him. Language’s privileged position in the text has a twofold effect. It emphasizes Merlin’s place in the ancient body/soul dichotomy and it also relates to the text’s commentary on the act of writing. Because the character Merlin is severely restricted in what he can do, the author’s use of this character to tell his story is similarly constricted. There are limits to what Merlin is able to do, so the author has to work within these limits. This restricts the expressions the author has at his disposal to describe Merlin and his interactions with other characters. The author’s use of language – his ability to express himself – is delineated by Merlin’s physical limitations. In *The Anonymous Marie de France*, Bloch offers a reading of Marie’s *Lais* in which he relates the materiality of the body to the material nature of language; both are restrictive in the *Lais*. However, Merlin in the tomb

remains trapped by the vestiges of his corporeality. In this way, his body-signifier is directly tied to the restrictive nature of the language of the text.<sup>8</sup>

As an example, consider the scene in *L'Enchanteur* where Béhémouth incites the animals into a “game.” Béhémouth excludes himself as well as all hermaphrodites, since the object of the game is for the animals to see which will die first as a result of their copulation. Merlin, cut off from the action in the forest outside his tomb, laments not knowing the outcome:

Pour la première fois, je regrette d'être mort et illogique. Le jeu, bien qu'interrompu, doit avoir eu un résultat. Certainement, les animaux savent qui est mort le premier. Il est impossible qu'il n'y ait point de cadavre aux environs de mon tombeau (Pr I, 49).

Merlin cannot know what is happening outside of his tomb. He is blind to the events that occur beyond the realm of the tomb, since he is trapped there by the Dame du Lac's spell. Likewise, the reader does not know the results of the animals' “game.” Apollinaire uses Merlin-in-the-tomb as an expression of the limits his lack of a body places on his perception. So, the author, because of Merlin's own physical limitations, is (albeit voluntarily) limited in the way he transmits the information to the reader. This results in certain blindness on the reader's part as well, because we do not learn which animals have died first either until another character tells Merlin. For example, Merlin, in the tomb, has to wait until the *Telchins* pass and the Dame du Lac falls asleep to learn the outcome.<sup>9</sup>

#### L'ENCHANTEUR POURRISSANT

Voici un instant divin, je vais connaître le résultat du jeu. Qui est mort le premier ou le dernier? Mais il est nécessaire de dire: le premier.

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<sup>8</sup> Bloch also considers the tomb of the lover in “Yonéc” as the place of the revelation of truth. The association of the tomb and the idea of truth is one that will be significant in our analysis of the Dame du Lac's entombment of the Enchanter in chapter six, “Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac.”

<sup>9</sup> A *telchin* is an amphibious demon, according to Michel Décaudin's note to the text.

## LES TELCHINS

Ceux qui moururent étaient des êtres ailés (Pr I, 50).

The reader, too, is forced to wait until another character passes to learn that it was the winged creatures that died first.<sup>10</sup> This emphasizes what Merlin does not know and creates a sense of anticipation. By the time the result of the game is revealed, the reader is just as frustrated by the lack of information as the Enchanter seems to be. In this way, Merlin's corporeal limitations have an effect on both textual production and reading.

### 3.1.3 Merlin's Body-as-Signifier

Merlin's dead and decaying body is what the tomb physically confines. It permits us to "read" him as both imprisoned and as possessing the dichotomous nature man/demon. For example, "Or, l'enchanteur était étendu mort dans le sépulcre, mais son âme était vivante et la voix de son âme se fit entendre" (Pr I, 11). The text reveals that *Merlin* was lying dead in the tomb, so his dead body signifies his human component. His soul, on the other hand, was alive and its voice made itself heard – this attests to his immortal, aerial element. Merlin, however, is tied to his dead body, as the phrase "*l'enchanteur* était étendu mort" (the emphasis is mine) illustrates. He is not *entirely* spirit. His body's death (that leaves a trace) is what makes his dual nature known.

In *The Anonymous Marie de France*, Bloch associates the voice with the body in Marie's *Lais*. In "Laustic," the lady's act of speech – telling her husband that she stands at the window in order to listen to the nightingale's song – destroys her own "object of delight" – her husband has the nightingale killed, removing her reason for meeting the

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<sup>10</sup> In the tradition of Merlin's "esplumoir" as his place of entombment in the medieval texts, the "esplumoir" was associated with birds, an association that also extended to Merlin. See Bernard Cerquiglini, Robert de Boron. *Le Roman du Graal: Manuscrit de Modène*, (301) and Arthur C.L. Brown, "The Esplumoir and Viviane."



one she loves' gaze at the window (71). Furthermore, the bird's dead body represents its song; the bird's death signals the death of the lady's excuse to look at the object of her love (72). When the husband shows his wife the bird's dead body, he flings it at her and the bird's blood leaves a trace that can be read as writing. In this way, writing relates to the death of pleasure (72). The voice is a substitute for the physical presence of the desired object (73). In "Laustic," then, according to this interpretation, the voice is in opposition to writing, since it is only through the death of the voice that writing is produced. In *L'Enchanteur*, on the other hand, Merlin's voice becomes manifest after the death of his body, but it remains tied to the same vestiges of his corporeality that bind him to the tomb. Furthermore, as we will discover in chapter six, "Apollinaire rewriting the Dame du Lac," it is not necessary for Merlin's voice to die in order for the Dame du Lac to write the truth of his dual nature. However, this writing that is tied to his body's death is, as in Bloch's assessment of "Laustic," related to the death of pleasure, since the Dame du Lac "writes" as she runs away from Merlin's tomb. This symbolizes the definitive "death" of Merlin's hope for a union with her.

Critics often consider Merlin as a representation of the poet.<sup>11</sup> In *Apollinaire en 1908 la poétique de l'enchantement: une lecture d'Onirocritique*, Catherine Moore writes that the page constrains the poet, much as the tomb hampers Merlin, but that there are no restrictions to imagination and so the poet is able to overcome these limitations (15). She

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<sup>11</sup> The following studies offer readings of Merlin as the poet: Yves Vadé, *L'Enchantement Littéraire: Ecriture et magie de Chateaubriand à Rimbaud*, Marie-Jeanne Durry, *Alcools*, Scott Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, Jean Burgos, "Un poème prototype: *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*," "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire – pour une nouvelle lecture de *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*," and "Apollinaire et le recours au mythe," Philippe Renaud, *Lecture d'Apollinaire*, Catherine Moore, *Apollinaire en 1908 la poétique de l'enchantement: une lecture d'Onirocritique*, Madeleine Boisson, "La Figure mythique de Lou," Herbert Whittenberg, "L'Amour dans Le Bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée," and Anna Boschetti, *La poésie partout*. With regard to Merlin-the-poet in the medieval tradition, see Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, and Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*.

interprets Merlin's voice that emanates from the tomb and invokes the parade of mythical beings as a similar triumph over confinement (16). But, Merlin remains trapped in the tomb, incapable of action, and blind to the events in the forest, so he cannot be said to prevail over his physical limitations.

While poetic imagination and invention might seem limitless as the last chapter of *L'Enchanteur, Onirocritique*, demonstrates, language is not; it has certain inherent limits.<sup>12</sup> In other words, there remains something that is an aspect of the psyche, thus an aspect of imagination, that cannot be expressed in full linguistically. As Lacan theorized, the bar between the signifier and the signified in the figurative representation of the sign denotes the partial barring of meaning in language. Lacan writes, "ce que j'inscris comme effet du signifiant, ne répond nullement au signifié que cerne la linguistique, mais bel et bien au sujet" (*Ecrits I*, 11). The effect of the signifier, accordingly, has less to do with the thing being signified or the meaning of the sign than with the subject who uses the signifier. Furthermore, as Lacan explains, "[le Signe] démontre quelque impasse, - je dis bien: s'assure à se démontrer, - c'est là notre chance que nous en touchions le réel pur et simple, - comme ce qui empêche d'en dire *toute* la vérité" (*Télévision*, 53). The bar in the sign has to do with Lacan's theory of the *Real*. Like the truth in its entirety (and the feminine ineffable), something of the Real is outside the scope of linguistic representation. Once again, the Real is the return to the imaginary state of unity: "Mais le sujet, lui, est là pour s'y retrouver, là où c'était - j'anticipe - le réel" (*Séminaire XI*, 45).

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<sup>12</sup> See the Conclusion to this study for an analysis of *Onirocritique* and the role of invention in Apollinaire's theory of poetic creation.

There is something on the order of the Real, as there is on the order of the feminine, that is ineffable.

Lacan's theory of the sign explains Merlin's corporeality; the Enchanter's flesh is a signifier for Merlin's nature. But, the explanation of the sign illustrates how it can be a signifier that does not fully represent the meaning attached to it. As mentioned, Merlin's corporeal body denotes his physicality, but not his aerial component, both of which are fundamental to his existence. His body's death brings about the expression of his ethereal nature and its relationship to his decaying body in his soul's continued living and speaking from the tomb. This has something of the Real about it, but Merlin's true nature – human and demon – is only apparent when the Dame du Lac symbolically imposes limits on the signifier that is his body. The chapters on Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac explore in more detail the implications this has for a reading of the feminine ineffable's effects on poetic creation.

#### 3.1.4 Merlin's Body and the Act of Writing

Accordingly, Merlin's entombment is a poetic expression of the limits of language and the text. In the same way that Merlin's entombment has an effect on how the author presents information – for example, the outcome of the “game” to Merlin and to the reader – language restricts the poet's ability to express himself, since language itself has limits. As noted, the desire for expression is related to the feminine ineffable's influence on the poet both to produce the words of the text and, at the same time, to write words that do not *fully* express the meaning they veil.

Since Apollinaire's rewriting of the Merlin legend takes as a point of departure the medieval tellings, it is critical to understand medieval conceptions of the body and

religion. Moreover, theories concerning sexuality, and by extension the notion of and treatment of women, originate in ideas of the body.<sup>13</sup> It will be necessary, however, to trace the philosophical thought about the body and religion to its origins in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy in order to clarify *L'Enchanteur*'s position as a modern text that was influenced by concepts originating in ancient times.<sup>14</sup>

The ancient body/soul dichotomy explains the nature of Merlin's father's corporeality and its influence on that of Merlin. A comparison of this with philosophy after the Incarnation of Christ tells us why Merlin's corporeality is different from his father's, but the nature of Apollinaire's Merlin in the tomb does not conform precisely to ancient or modern philosophical theories on the body and the soul. This is why it is necessary to consider both ancient and modern theories with regard to his corporeal state. Merlin, entombed and rotting, yet still speaking, is caught in an indistinct physical/spiritual state – is he alive or dead, corporeal or ethereal? In Apollinaire's text, he is alive *and* dead, corporeal *and* ethereal. As we will see, there is no philosophical basis for a living soul trapped in and by a dead body. No one theory – the ancient conception of the body and soul, the ancient conception of the incubus daemon, the

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<sup>13</sup> For a small sampling of the criticism on women and sexuality in Apollinaire's work see studies by Michel Décaudin, Jean Burgos, Anne Clancier, Scott Bates, Claude Debon, Anna Boschetti, Daniel Delbreil, Léon Somville, Marie-Jeanne Durry, Pénélope Sacks Galey, Pierre Caizergues, Madeleine Boisson, Margaret Davies, Pierre Brunel, Jean-Pol Madou, and Françoise Dininman. In this study, chapter four presents a discussion of women in Apollinaire's work.

<sup>14</sup> *Modern* in the terms of this study implies post-Incarnation, following the theory Alexandre Leupin advances in *Fiction et Incarnation* of the Incarnation of Christ as effectuating a break in philosophical thought (in the Western Judeo-Christian world). Leupin discusses the Incarnation of Christ as an epistemological break – an event that produces homonyms – the meaning of the word *God* changed from designating a being without a body to one that was the locus of union of flesh and divine. (Leupin, 10). See also Leupin, *Lacan Today*, p. 109-111. This will have an effect on an analysis of pleasure associated with the body before and after the Incarnation and on an analysis of desire. By the same process of producing homonyms that Leupin advances, the object of desire changes (drastically) after the Incarnation, although desire itself as a motivating force for human existence remains constant.

Christianized incubus demon, or medieval Christian theology – provides a full explanation for Merlin's state in the tomb.

Since *L'Enchanteur* – and Merlin, for that matter – are amalgamations, this stands to reason. By tracing the development of theories of the body and the soul from their origins in ancient philosophy to the Incarnation of Christ and medieval theology and finally to modern psychoanalytic theory, it becomes easier to see precisely how Apollinaire borrowed ideas from a variety of theories of the past in order to create his Enchanter's state in the tomb. Merlin in *L'Enchanteur*, like Apollinaire's work in general, is in a space between tradition and invention that can only be classified as *Apollinarian*. Let us begin by looking at ancient beliefs about the nature of the body and the soul.

### 3.2 MERLIN AND ANCIENT CONCEPTIONS OF THE BODY

#### 3.2.1 Body and Soul

Merlin is unable to resist what medieval theologians call *luxuria*, or luxuriousness. In contrast to the (modern) sexual-based concept of pleasure that Merlin exhibits, the ancients did not consider the heterosexual sex act in and of itself a pleasure.<sup>15</sup> It was purely a biological function necessary for procreation (Milner, 91). So, in this view of the ancient model of pleasure, it is not related to sexuality. Pleasure was primarily material (bodily) and so related to the idea of incorporation – the pleasure of eating or drinking, for example (Milner, *Constats*, 77). It involved taking something that is other and incorporating it into the same (Milner, 87).

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<sup>15</sup> According to Jean-Claude Milner, sexual pleasure is a Judeo-Christian invention, based on the Resurrection of Christ's flesh. It substituted the idea of pleasure as usage for the ancient conception of pleasure as incorporation – eating or drinking (*Constats*, 115).

Plato's conception of necessary and unnecessary pleasures, although not related to the sexual pleasure to which Merlin is drawn, illustrates one aspect of the ancient distinction between the body and the soul. According to Plato, necessary pleasures are those that are beneficial to the health and strength of the organism; for example, the consumption of nutritious food (*Republic VIII*, 608). Unnecessary pleasures, on the other hand are related to desires "of which the presence does no good, and in some cases the reverse of good" and are "hurtful to the body, and *hurtful to the soul in the pursuit of wisdom and virtue*" (*Republic VIII*, 608 [the emphasis is mine]). Plato also perpetuates the idea of education in the control of the pursuit of unnecessary pleasures (*Republic VIII*, 608). For him, man should be able to control his desire, so the control of the pursuit of unnecessary pleasures is in this way tied to wisdom and the soul. So for Plato, those who indulge in unnecessary pleasure put more emphasis on this pursuit than on loftier concerns of the soul. In the *Phaedo*, he likens the soul's ultimate state of communion with pure truth and knowledge to leaving the body behind in death (223-237). Recourse to unnecessary physical pleasure burdens the soul and prevents the attainment of the soul's ultimate state: "as long as we have the body, and the soul is contaminated by such an evil, we shall never attain what we desire, that is, the truth" (230-231).

Like Plato, Cicero also favors the loftier concerns of the mind – which he personifies, such as Faith, Virtue, and Honor – over those that are merely bodily – such as Desire, Pleasure and Sexual gratification. Of the latter, he writes, "these are vicious and unnatural forces ... for these very vices rage too fiercely, and banish our natural

instincts” (*The Nature of the Gods*, II.61).<sup>16</sup> Again, undue attention to bodily wants and desires turns the soul away from its higher pursuits and prevents the soul’s attainment of its ultimate state. For Cicero, those who turn away from (bodily) vice are sometimes rewarded with a place in heaven and the status of divinity, “These men were duly regarded as gods because their souls survived to enjoy eternal life, for they were both outstandingly good and immortal” (II.62). So, those men that espouse higher virtues, turning their backs on vices that originate with the body and unnecessary pleasures, reach an exalted state. By attaining this state and being rewarded with divinity, they achieve the soul’s higher state – a separation from bodily concerns.

Where, then, do these ancient theories leave a twentieth-century rewriting of a medieval Enchanter that reverses the pervasive Christian religion of the works that influenced it? First, the conception of pleasure in *L’Enchanteur* is tied to sexuality and so in opposition to that in ancient philosophy. The pleasure associated with the heterosexual sex act that leads to Merlin’s conception is very real.<sup>17</sup> In a beautiful and temptingly ambiguous phrase, Apollinaire writes, “Et elle l’aima extrêmement, accomplit sa volonté” (Pr I, 8). There is a nuance of fulfilled desire related to sexuality in the phrase *Elle ...accomplit sa volonté*. This brings Merlin’s conception into the modern paradigm

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<sup>16</sup> Actually Cicero more than personifies these virtues – he deifies them, explaining thus: “In each case the impact of these concepts was so great that it could be controlled only by a god, and thus the concepts themselves gained the titles of gods (II, 61).

<sup>17</sup> In contrast, in the medieval texts, with the exception of the prose *Lancelot*, there is no mention of pleasure associated with the act of Merlin’s conception. This does not mean that the model of pleasure in these texts is related to the ancient model either, though; pleasure is otherwise associated with sexuality and is thus modern in the medieval texts as well as in *L’Enchanteur*.

of sexuality. Furthermore, the possessive pronoun *sa* is ambiguous – does it refer to the maiden’s desire, the demon’s desire, or both? Considering what we will discover about Merlin’s mother in later chapters, it more than likely is a reference to both; she fulfills both her and the demon’s *volonté*.

Secondly, the importance of Cicero’s and Plato’s theories to our reading of *L’Enchanteur* is that they illustrate the separation of body and soul in ancient philosophy. Although Merlin’s physical state in this text is not in accord with the ancient model of the body/soul dichotomy, the idea of a soul that is distinct from the body originated in ancient philosophical thought. Equally important, these early theoretical models of the soul demonstrate a desire to leave the concerns of the body behind and achieve the soul’s ultimate state, which was attainable through virtuous living – Cicero’s heroes of virtue attest to this. The difference in the conception of divinity ushered in by the Incarnation changed both the desired state – after the Incarnation, the soul’s striving is one for divine union – and the possibilities for realizing this state. Later sections of this chapter discuss the Incarnation and its implications for theology and philosophy, but first let us continue with an ancient philosopher whose theories had an impact on medieval thought.

### 3.2.2 Aristotle’s Dichotomies

Although Aristotle was considered a pagan by the medieval Church and his writing was not condoned, the Dominicans rewrote his work and incorporated his philosophy into Christian doctrine (Curtius, 55-56). Thomas Aquinas was significant among the medieval Christian theologians who contributed to the integration of Aristotle’s philosophy into the heart of Christian theology.<sup>18</sup> Certainly what the signifiers

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<sup>18</sup> The last section of this chapter deals with his work. See p. 110-114.



*divine* and *divine body* mean, along with other tenets of Aristotelian philosophy, changed in the adaptation of Aristotle's ancient ideas into medieval theology. In spite of this, the Middle Ages' revisiting of Aristotle's theory illustrates that certain ideas originating in antiquity, like the idea that the body and the soul together make up human existence have a bearing on more modern theoretical paradigms. There were certainly other, Christian, influences on Aquinas' thought, such as the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Gregory, and the Gospels of John and Paul (Evans, 203 and 207).

There remained debate over the assimilation of Aristotle's theories into Christian philosophy, however. Aquinas had his detractors, with a main focus of dispute being the state of Christ's body in the tomb – was there a separation of the divine and the corporeal at the moment of death? If so, what does this say for the Christian doctrine of Christ as divine and flesh? Aquinas held to his belief that the hypostatic union, or the consubstantiation of the word and the flesh did not cease at the moment of death (Evans, 209). This debate is not the subject of our study, however, so we will continue by considering Aristotle's theories.

For Aristotle, the soul cannot exist without the body. The body is involved with every action, from appetite to anger and from sensation to thinking and imagination (*On the Soul, Complete Works* vol. I, 642). Aristotle writes, "the soul *plus* the body constitutes the animal" (657). Aristotle's theory differs from Plato's in that, although he continues the body/soul dichotomy, he maintains that the body is necessary to the soul's functioning. His theory espouses and encompasses both poles of this dichotomy, illustrating how they are complementary in their opposition. Rather than merely weighing the soul down with its physical desires, Aristotle's conception of the body contributes to

the soul's functioning. According to his theory, it would be impossible to separate the soul from the body.

Even so, the idea of the body and the soul extends to a large-scale ordering of the universe for the ancients. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents a series of opposites that he attributes to the Pythagoreans.<sup>19</sup> In this ordering, Aristotle associates the concept of maleness with order, reason, and good, while he associates femaleness with chaos, formlessness, and bad. He does not include the notions of the body and soul; however further investigation into his theory will allow us to situate them within his series of oppositions. As discussed, for Aristotle, the *form*, which is similar to Plato's *soul*, is the *end*, or the essence of the thing. Aristotle equates the concepts of *good*, *end*, and *cause* (*Metaphysics*, III. 2. 22-27). Further sexualization of the body/soul dichotomy is evident in this relation. The *end* is similar to Plato's *soul* and is on the side of *good* and *male*. The soul thus becomes associated with ideas of goodness and masculinity. Aristotle's *matter* is similar to Plato's *body* and is aligned with the concepts of *bad* and *female*. There is an association in the ancient conceptions of the body (matter)/soul (form) dichotomy with those of female and male, the female being associated with the body and the male with the more esteemed soul.

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<sup>19</sup> The opposites are as follows:

Order	Chaos
Reason	Formlessness
Limit	Unlimited
Odd	Even
One	Plurality
Right	Left
Male	Female
Resting	Moving
Straight	Curved
Light	Darkness
Good	Bad
Square	Oblong ( <i>Metaphysics</i> I. 5 [cited in Jantzen, 31-32]).

The sexualization of these dichotomous concepts illustrates the fundamental difference between ancient and modern (post-Incarnation) philosophy – for the ancients, a certain unity was possible. In Aristotle’s theory, the soul and the body were united in the human organism. Furthermore, the ancients used man-made images to represent their gods and in this way established a relationship with the god through the use of the image. In the Judeo-Christian religion, this is strictly forbidden.<sup>20</sup> After the Incarnation of Christ, unity is not possible on the *human* level. Christ alone is the union of *human* and *divine*. In medieval Christian theology, as we will see, the only way for mankind to experience a state of (divine) unity is after the body’s death – after the *division* of the human organism into the (negated) body and the soul – and even then only through the intermediary of Christ.

In Aristotle’s list of dichotomous concepts, the association of the female with the body, *chaos*, *badness*, and *darkness* would come to influence medieval thought, with particular respect to religion and would permeate the literature of the time as well. The present-day critic of medieval literature, Howard Bloch, writes of the widely accepted topos of gender in the West and how it was influenced by medieval religious thought in his *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Women in medieval literature were typically perceived and portrayed as more bodily in nature. He offers the following series of dichotomies that are represented in the theories of the major medieval religious thinkers and in literature:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Leupin, *Phallophanies*, p. 18-20 and *Lacan Today*, 119.

<sup>21</sup> The authors he analyses include Philo, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine, John Scotus Eriugena, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Saint Bernard.

**Man**

intelligence  
**rational soul**

active  
**soul/spirit**  
**mind, form**  
 knowledge through reason  
 Christian

**Woman**

**body**  
 animal faculties  
 appetite  
**pleasure**  
 passive  
**flesh**  
**senses**  
 knowledge through senses  
 Pagan  
 (26-31, [the emphasis is mine]).

Women, in general, were thought to be more inclined to give in to the sensual pleasures of the body. They were the temptation that man must use his faculties of reason to resist. Resistance to the temptation posed by women would bring him closer to God, through the purity of his soul. Giving in to this temptation, however, would be sin, which separates man from God. Contrary to the ancient union of dichotomous concepts (body/soul, female/male), medieval philosophy tended toward separation. Although sexual pleasure was possible, it led to a distancing from God.

### 3.3 MERLIN AND ANCIENT CONCEPTIONS OF RELIGION

#### 3.3.1 Religion in *L'Enchanteur*

Questions of Merlin's existence find their answers in an examination of ancient and medieval religious beliefs as well as in theories of the body/soul dichotomy. These questions also play a decisive role in an examination of Merlin's corporeality in *L'Enchanteur*. In order to clarify the religious influences in the text, we should situate this discussion within present-day criticism on religion in Apollinaire's work. A few select examples will permit us to do this before we continue with the discussion of ancient influences. Religion plays a large part in this text even though, unlike the medieval versions of Merlin's tale, it is not assumed to represent the Christian religion.

Actually, what it represents in terms of religion is a reversal and overturning of Christianity and religious symbols. For example, Jean Burgos coined the term *bible à rebours* to indicate Apollinaire's reversal of Christian religious imagery (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXXIX). Among the most influential critics on the numerous religious images in Apollinaire's work, Robert Couffignal reads *L'Enchanteur* as a violent attack against the Christian religion and sees this as a result of the author's personal loss of faith (*Apollinaire*, 30). Couffignal, among others, has also likened Merlin to the Antichrist in his *Apollinaire* (30).<sup>22</sup>

Alongside this inverted Christianity, Apollinaire gives us images of ancient myth and philosophy, such as the sphinx, Pan the shepherd of the sphinx, and Empedocles. Judaism is also represented by Enoch. So Apollinaire borrows images from different religions and different traditions to make a text that adheres to no one particular philosophical discourse. In order to understand how ancient Greek and Roman religious beliefs influence a reading of Merlin's father and Merlin's own existence in *L'Enchanteur*, we will consider religious beliefs starting with ancient philosophers. Additionally, these same conceptions color a reading of the Incarnation's effect on our understanding of Merlin, so the second half of the chapter will continue working forward to medieval theologians.

### 3.3.2 The Ancient Daemon

As noted, Merlin's father is an incubus demon, an aerial being neither human nor divine, but encompassing attributes of both. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter five of this study "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother" will discuss religious themes in *L'Enchanteur*, including the tradition of Merlin as the Antichrist and other critics who have contributed to this interpretation, in greater detail.

demon as a supernatural being existing in a nature between that of gods and men in ancient Greek mythology. The definition also relates demons to inferior divinities and notes that the appellation *daemon* distinguishes the being defined as such from the sense of the demon as an evil spirit. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* discusses the etymological significance of the word *daimōn*, which is related to *daemon*. According to this definition, Homer's idea of a being that either aids or interferes, depending on the circumstances, in human lives persisted in the ancient conception of the *daimōn*. Gods, and even Olympic gods were referred to as *daimones*. The word *daimōn* came to be associated with the idea of Fate due to its propensity for involvement in mortals' lives. *Le Grand Robert* echoes this conception of the *daimōn* in its definition of *démon*, citing the supernatural aspect of the *démon* and its tendency to act as inspiration. This definition also mentions the division in Christian terminology of what was once considered benevolent or evil demons into angels and demons.

Plato wrote of the ancient idea of a daemon, which he also called a *god* with regard to the idea of Socrates' god – a spirit, or genius, that served as inspiration. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates' genius inspires him through dreams to write poetry and also to be courageous in the face of death (212-213 and 295). According to Socrates' discourse in the *Phaedo*, a genius is assigned to each individual as a guardian spirit, even guiding their soul into the next life after their body's death (371). Apuleius explained Plato's opinion of daemons in his *de Deo Socratis*, positioning daemons as intermediaries between men and gods in both physical position and corporeal attributes. They are "certain divine middle powers, situated in this interval of the air, between the highest ether and earth ... placed between the terrestrial and celestial inhabitants" (4). Their bodies "consist of that

most pure, liquid, and serene element of air, and on this account are not easily visible to the human eye, unless they exhibit an image of themselves by divine command. For no terrene solidity occupies in them the place of light” (6). Daemons are subject to human passions, but are immortal (7). Like Socrates’ genius, they serve as intermediaries between men and the gods, transmitting prayers and inspiration by the divine will (4).<sup>23</sup> The medieval philosophers Saint Augustine, in the fifth-century *City of God*, and Bernardus Silvestris in the twelfth-century *Cosmographia*, also wrote of the ancient intermediary spirits. Both writers positioned them as occupying a place (physically as well as spiritually) between the Gods and man. (Augustine, 259, Silvestris, 106). There are three levels of spirits in Silvestris’ account, the *guardians*, the *interpreters*, and the *renegade angels* (108). All three become involved in the lives of men, but the first two classes have a positive effect. They act like Socrates’ genius or Apuleius’ daemons to inspire or direct men (107). Silvestris’ last class of spirits, the renegade angels, exist closest to the earth and are hence more susceptible to human passions. They often function as emissaries of evil in the world, even at times assuming “the forms of the dead” (108). Like the ancient daemon, Silvestris’ spirits do not possess human corporeal bodies: “Since their bodies are virtually incorporeal ... the feeble perception of man is unable to apprehend them” (108). This is a point that is essential to Merlin’s representation – Merlin’s father did not have a corporeal body.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In *Phallophanies: le chair et le sacré* Alexandre Leupin discusses Plato’s conception of the daemon, or god, Love as an intermediary between the divine and man, thus influencing cosmic harmony (21). Also see Phil Mead’s “On the Daemon” for an historical discussion of the daemon/demon with regard to how it was perceived philosophically.

<sup>24</sup> The inspiration for the relationship of ancient gods’ lack of corporeality and subsequent use of a simulacrum to establish an association with mortals to the incubus demon and later Christian thought came from a reading of Alexandre Leupin’s *Phallophanies: le chair et le sacré*.

In the ancient conception of daemons, there is not an association with the satanic. This came later when the Christian theologian Lactantius wrote of demons in his fourth-century *Divine Institutes* (Leupin, *Phallophanies*, 21). Lactantius demonized the ancient daemon and the ancient gods (*Divine Institutes*, II.14-18). He refers to the gods of old as “false gods” (II.17) because “religion consists of divine things, and ... images lack religion, since there can be nothing heavenly in that which is made of earth” (II.18). Since the man-made image of the ancient god that men worshiped was simulated, it was of necessity false (II.18). Lactantius wrote centuries before the first mention of Merlin’s parentage by Nennius in the ninth century, so at the time the basis for Merlin’s engendering was established, there had already been much theological and philosophical thought about demons. Additionally, demons had for centuries been associated with the satanic.

### 3.3.3 Merlin’s Father

In approximately 1138, the medieval writer Geoffrey of Monmouth incorporated the medieval views of the demon into his version of Merlin’s conception when he offered an explanation for the mysterious visitor who is Merlin’s father:

In libris philosophorum nostrorum et in pluribus historiis repperi multos homines hujusmodi procreationem habuisse. Nam, ut Apulegius de deo Socratis perhibet, inter lunam et terram habitant spiritus, quos incubos daemones appellamus. Hi partim habent naturam hominis, partim vero angelorum et, cum volunt, assumunt sibi humanas figuras et cum mulieribus coeunt. Forsitan unus ex eis huic mulieri apparuit et juvenem istum in ipsa generavit (*Histoira Regum Britanniae*, Faral, Tome III, ch. 107, 188).

I have found in the books of our wise men and in many histories that many men have come into the world this way. As Apuleius bears witness in *Of Socrates’ god*, between the moon and the earth certain spirits that we call incubus daemons live. Their nature is partly that of men and partly that of angels, and they take the shape of men at will, and associate with mortal women. One of these appeared to this woman and fathered this child (translation adapted from Thorpe).



The passage describes the aerial nature of the incubus daemon and makes an intertextual reference to Apuleius' *de Deo Socratis*. Merlin's father was associated with the evil intent of the demon. Evil demons are set loose on the world, meddling in the lives of men to forward their own agenda by inflicting suffering on mankind. The host of evil demons' plot to destroy mankind is a fixture in most medieval versions of Merlin's conception.<sup>25</sup>

The *Propheies* presents it in the following manner: "li anemi ... s'asamblarent, et present conseil entriaus ke il poroient faire par quoi il peussent les hommes et les femmes decevoir; car jamais ne poroient recouvrer cou k'il avoient perdu" (38). (the enemy .. assembled and held counsel among themselves at this time to see what they could do to deceive men and women, because they could never recover what they had lost.) This is an example of the demon's disruptive and evil character, but the episode does result in the conception of Merlin, wherein opposing and contradictory natures – man and demon, flesh and spirit – are united. The idea of daemon as a force that united men with the gods shifted, with the attribution of evil qualities and motives, to one of division, as evil demons strive to destroy mankind. But, this effort at division produces a locus of union – Merlin – as indicated in the legend of Merlin's engendering.

### 3.3.4 Ancient Gods

Ancient gods were also called *daemons*; in the *Phaedo*, Socrates additionally identifies his genius as a god (*Phaedo*, 295). Plato seems to associate the daemon-as-intermediary with the gods and even uses the term *god* to designate the daemon (Taylor, 13, notes). The original conception of the daemon was a divine creature and ancient gods

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<sup>25</sup> It is not, however, included in *L'Enchanteur*, and this is probably due to the depiction of Merlin's mother in this text, as chapter five, "Apollinaire's Rewriting of Merlin's Mother" explains.

were also considered to be incorporeal. In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius, at the turn of the fifth century, describes the ancient idea of a deity as a “being that had no physical form ... subject neither to growth nor decay” (II.20). In ancient literary texts, poets speak of gods appearing to mortal women in a borrowed body. In this way they acted in the world of mortals. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Athena appears in Ithaca in the form of a friend of Odysseus’ family (I, 13). Ancient gods had to assume a physical body to interact with mortals, because otherwise, they were imperceptible due to their aerial form that could not be seen. The similarities to Merlin’s father’s visit are very real. In another example from the *Odyssey*, Homer writes “Sometimes gods make themselves like strangers from foreign lands, all sorts and conditions of men, and visit the cities of mankind to watch their doings and to see whether they are good or evil!” (XVII, 210). Garbed in their borrowed bodies, the gods were thought to influence and meddle in the lives of mortals. They often used these borrowed bodies to engage in sexual relations with mortals. Merlin’s father acts in much the same way when he visits the Enchanter’s mother in every version of the tale, as chapter five, “Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin’s Mother” demonstrates.

In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Jove (Jupiter) appears to a maiden in the woods in the form of the goddess Diana. While Diana’s form would not be *human*, the appearance Jove assumes is one that resembles the physical form attributed to Diana:

With that, he took Diana’s form and face, ...  
 He clasped her close and pressed upon her cheek  
 Kiss after kiss with more than maiden zest,  
 And what he was by evil deeds confessed.  
 The maiden fought as well a maiden might ...  
 But fought a losing battle, and anon  
 Leaving his latest conquest Jove was gone (Book II, 36-37).

Jove also assumes the physical form of a bull for another sexual exploit. The object of his lust in this instance is Europa:

Among the herd, transformed in voice and mien,  
Treading the sward, a comely bull was seen, ...  
And she, unweeting what that form could hide,  
Upon his back at last made bold to ride.  
Then sidling seaward, that four-footed cheat  
Came step by step where land and water meet;  
Then out to sea! (Book II, 48).

Unlike Homer's gods who walk about the city in human form, Jove does not choose a human body, but rather the accepted form of an immortal goddess and the body of a bull. However, it is important to note that he does not appear to the women with whom he intends to engage in sexual relations in his own divine form, nor does he go to them without a *physical body* he can use to his ends.

Jove shares the ancient daemon's propensity for passion and desire in his continued quest to engage in relations with women. In his appearances to mortal women, he acts much like Merlin's father, although without the Christianized element of evil intent. In these passages, Jove's exploits amount to instances of rape, which is similar to a superficial reading of Merlin's conception in most medieval texts. Further analysis reveals Merlin's mother's implication in the demon's visit, however, as chapter five, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother" explains. We will also see that Apollinaire's text is very different in its treatment of the maiden's part in this encounter.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Thomas Bullfinch revisited and rewrote these myths, among others, in his large-scale compilation and vulgarization of myth, *Bullfinch's Mythology*. If we adhere to contemporary theories of influence and intertextuality, all writing is rewriting to some degree. According to his own preface,

Bullfinch found the original versions too complex and time consuming for the average reader; his adaptation is meant to be a more accessible, more easily understood telling. Indeed, a concise, compact collection of examples of a god borrowing different forms to engage in sexual conduct with mortal women is to be found in his *Mythology*. The following passage is a transcription of the weaving contest between Arachne and Pallas (Minerva) from Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>26</sup> But Bullfinch also explains, or glosses, the passage as he transcribes it and leaves out some episodes, such as that of Asterië and the eagle, much like Apollinaire transcribes and makes slight changes to the scenes of Merlin's conception and entombment in the prose *Lancelot* in his rewriting. This passage describes the different guises Jupiter (Ovid's *Jove*) assumes in myth to interact with mortal women:

Arachne filled her web with subjects designedly chosen to exhibit the failings and errors of the gods. One scene represented Leda caressing the swan, under which form Jupiter had disguised himself; and another, Danaë, in the brazen tower in which her father had imprisoned her, but where the god effected his entrance in the form of a golden shower. Still another depicted Europa deceived by Jupiter under the disguise of a bull. Encouraged by the tameness of the animal Europa ventured to mount his back, whereupon Jupiter advanced into the sea and swam with her to Crete. You would have thought it was a real bull, so naturally was it wrought, and so natural the water in which it swam (109).

In the above quotation, Jupiter appears to mortal women in the guise of a swan, a golden shower, and a bull.

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<sup>26</sup> "Arachne shows the gods in various guise;  
And first the bull that cheats Eurpoa's eyes,  
So skillfully depicted, you would swear  
A living bull, a moving sea, was there.  
The girl herself was seen to watch dismayed  
The fast-receding shore, and call for aid,  
And draw her feet back, fearing to be caught  
By mounting waves – so well the weaver wrought.  
She made the eagle to Asterië cling,  
And Leda couch beneath the swan's white wing ...  
Jove ... came... As gold to Danaë ..." (Book VI, 119).

Merlin's father acts in a manner that is similar to Jove/Jupiter who adopts a physical form in order to appear to mortal women. He assumes the physical form of a man to engage in relations with Merlin's mother as is evident in the passage already examined from Apollinaire's version:

Il arriva qu'un diable se présenta à la demoiselle en son lit, par la nuit obscure. Il commença à la prier tout doucement et lui promit qu'elle ne le verrait jamais. Et elle lui demanda qui il était: 'je suis, fait-il, un homme venu d'une terre étrangère et, de même que vous ne pourriez voir d'homme, je ne pourrais voir de femme avec laquelle je couchasse.' La demoiselle le tâta et sentit qu'il avait le corps très bien fait (Pr I, 7-8).<sup>27</sup>

In this quotation, the demon does refer to himself as a man, but one who has come from a foreign land, one that is other, or different.<sup>28</sup> He also makes it clear that the maiden cannot see him. This is because the daemon/demon, like the ancient god, does not have a flesh and blood body, but takes on the *guise* of a man. His appearance in the form of a man is evident in the following sentences. Apollinaire writes that *la demoiselle le tâta et sentit qu'il avait le corps très bien fait*. His body feels like a man's body. Although it can be argued that this guise does not fool Merlin's mother, it is obvious that Merlin's father is not a flesh and blood man, but an incubus demon. His body, like Merlin's flesh, is a signifier. In this case, the demon's body is a signifier that does not entirely denote its signified; the body does not represent human flesh as it would appear, but rather it signifies the demon's lack of flesh.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This passage was presented on p. 55 to illustrate the corporeality Merlin's mother passes on to her son.

<sup>28</sup> In the passage from Homer quoted on p. 78, ancient gods also sometimes appear as strangers from "foreign lands."

<sup>29</sup> In *Le Graal et la littérature*, Leupin discusses the demon's body-as-simulacra in the Vulgate *Estoire de Lancelot* that hides the essential nothingness of his existence (107).

In the quotations from Ovid and Bullfinch, the forms that Jove/Jupiter assumes function as simulacra.<sup>30</sup> Merlin's father as well, in assuming the guise of a man, uses a *simulacrum* – the physical presence of a man that does not, however, possess human substance – to interact with the Enchanter's mother. In his own aerial form, he is incapable of this interaction, but by assuming human form, he is able to engage in sexual relations with Merlin's mother and produce a child. Merlin too wears a covering of flesh, but it corresponds to a dichotomous makeup, rather than merely masking a purely demonic existence. Apollinaire refers to Merlin as a *diable*, like his father, and says, “Il fut de la nature de son père, car il était décevant et déloyal et sut autant qu'un cœur pourrait savoir de perversité” (Pr I, 8). As an explanation for Merlin's state in the tomb, the following quotation, previously cited on page 57 bears repeating in order to emphasize Merlin's dichotomous constitution: “L'Enchanteur mourut alors. Mais, comme il était immortel de nature et que sa mort provenait des incantations de la dame, l'âme de Merlin resta vivante en son cadavre” (Pr I, 10). The problem with associating Merlin entirely with the nature of the demon is evident in this quotation; if Merlin were truly (and entirely) of his father's aerial nature, then he would not die, because he would not have a mortal body. So his flesh may be a facade, but it is one of which he cannot rid himself entirely. What is more, Apollinaire writes that Merlin is both human and demonic: “[La Dame du Lac] le décevait ainsi parce qu'il était mortel; mais s'il eût été en tout un diable elle ne l'eût pu décevoir, car un diable ne peut dormir” (Pr I, 9). He is the

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<sup>30</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *simulacre* as “1. An image (of a god, etc.) to which honour or worship is rendered. 2. An image, a material or mental representation of a person or thing.”

It defines *simulacrum*, which is etymologically related to simulacre, as “to make like, to simulate. 1. A material image, made as a representation of some deity, person, or thing. 2. Something having merely the form or appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its substance or proper qualities. B. A mere image, a specious imitation or likeness of something.”

locus of union of mortal and demon, sharing qualities of both at the same time. Merlin is at times corporeal, but in many versions of his story, such as the medieval *Prophecies*, he has the power to change his shape and appear in the guise of his choosing. So in this text, his corporeality is, in effect, a mask that he wears at his whim – until the Dame du Lac entombs him, at which time he is tied to it as he is in *L'Enchanteur*.

### 3.4 IN THE BEGINNING

#### 3.4.1 Desire and Stories of Creation

Desire – expressed in *L'Enchanteur* by Merlin's longing to be one with the Dame du Lac – is of particular interest to a study of Merlin. Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac is different from the ancient creation stories we will examine in that it is fundamentally unattainable. On the other hand, the ancient accounts of creation present desire as achievable. Desire in *L'Enchanteur* can be read on many levels. Its first manifestation is Merlin's longing that is so strong it alters his constitution and results in his physical demise. The Enchanter and Prophet who is privy to otherworldly knowledge is blind to the Dame du Lac's true intentions toward him. For example, Apollinaire explains how he loved her so much that he taught her the spells which allowed her to trick him and make him believe their relationship was something it was not: "Et lui, qui tant l'aimait que mortel cœur ainsi ne pourrait plus aimer, promit de lui apprendre tout ce qu'elle demanderait ... quand il la quittait, il pensait toujours avoir couché avec elle" (Pr I, 9). On another level is the desire for textual unity. Taken together, Merlin and the two main female characters, his mother and the Dame du Lac, form a symbiotic textual union. One cannot exist without the other, but together, Merlin's textual existence takes form. The last chapter of *L'Enchanteur*, *Onirocritique* expresses the desire for unity and poetic

expression, as the conclusion to this study, chapter seven, will illustrate. In a reading of Merlin as the poet, his desire for the Dame du Lac represents the poet's desire for a unity of expression.

The Enchanter himself embodies another manifestation of desire with relation to the text. Merlin represents the textual locus of union of the corporeal and the incorporeal, and human and divine knowledge. As such, he is both like the ancient daemon and a blasphemous reversal of the figure of the Christian Christ. This, along with his corporeal attributes and Apollinaire's reversal of the Christian religion in the text, informs a reading of his representation in the text, as we will discover. Merlin in *L'Enchanteur*, however, is not a representation of the ancient daemon or the Christianized demon; he is not entirely aerial, but tied to the remnants of his flesh. Apollinaire adhered to the theory of poetic creation he developed in *L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes* in creating him. Which is to say that Merlin is new precisely because Apollinaire borrowed material from the past and infused it with his imagination and invention to create something original. So the ancient ideas of body and soul along with those of the incubus daemon's aerial qualities identify the sources of Merlin's dual physical nature. At the same time, Merlin's disposition toward sexual pleasure, the unattainability of his desire, and his existence in the tomb indicate that he is not an ancient figure.

### 3.4.2 Desire in Ancient Creation Stories

In his *Symposium*, Plato writes, "every one who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and of which he is in want" (158). Desire reflected a longing for something that was missing. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, humanity, especially human sexuality, reflects the



ordering of the universe. The ordering principle for them is the relationship between four differing elements that together make up the cosmos. Empedocles appears to be one of the ancient thinkers who directly influenced Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur*, among other texts. Indeed, Empedocles is a character in *L'Enchanteur*. In an intertextual reference that reverses Empedocles' theory, the character Empedocles asks Merlin why he died: "Philosophe du tombeau, pourquoi es-tu mort et pourquoi tout le monde sait-il que tu es mort? (Pr I, 61). Merlin responds, "Je suis mort par amour" (Pr I, 61). Hence it is not just Christian religious images that Apollinaire reverses; he also inverts ancient theory. Merlin's response illustrates the unattainability of his desire for the Dame du Lac and reinforces its difference from the ancient model of unity as attainable. Empedocles' exposition of the creation of the universe and of mankind demonstrates the unity that was basic to ancient stories of creation.

Lionel Follet explains Empedocles' influence on Apollinaire's work in a series of articles appearing in *La Revue des Lettres Modernes*: "Apollinaire lecteur d'Empédocle" and "Encore Empédocle." Particularly pertinent to Apollinaire's work is Empedocles' ordering of the universe. He reduces existence to four basic elements, fire, water, earth, and air (Empedocles, 25/17.15). For him, the elements were in a constant state of change, coming together and then moving apart. The movement of the elements was reflected in the movement of men who similarly moved together, influenced by love, to become one and then moved apart (25/17.1-14). Follet further emphasizes that the elements, in Empedocles' conception, were directed in their movement by two opposing forces, Love and Hate ("Lecteur," 66). He explains that the elements were part of a universe that had no finite end since they were engaged in a cycle of convergence and divergence (66). For

Empedocles, the human race originated in the union of the opposing elements (74/71.2-4). On the level of the cosmos there was an innate striving for unity, even though there was an equal force towards separation.

The division of the cosmos in Empedocles' thought also extends to a division of the sexes. Empedocles associates female with cold and male with warm: "Some, which meet with cold, become women ... For the masculine type came to be in the warmer part of the earth, and because of this men are dark, and sturdier of limb and more shaggy" (71/65 and 72/67). In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius further explains the ancient sexualization and unification of the elements. He comments on the explanation of numbers in relation to the organization of the universe that Cicero offers in *Scipio's Dream* from the *De re publica* and on the theory of the elements that Plato presents in the *Timaeus*. According to Macrobius, in the ordering of the universe the ancients associated odd numbers with the masculine principle and even numbers with the feminine principle (VI.1). The odd and even numbers together make up the world (VI.2). This extends to the four elements, because the number four inexorably binds the (opposing) elements together (VI.24). Earth is dry and cold, while water is cold and moist (VI.26), so these elements are aligned with the female principle. On the other hand, air is moist and warm and fire is hot and dry (VI.26), so these elements are aligned with the masculine principle. The ancient unity in the universe also applied to the sexes.

In Empedocles' theory, love – or a union of the sexes – is not impossible. Since the elements united to form the cosmos, the two sexes were likewise believed to unite and there was the possibility of union between male and female. For Empedocles, it is in the nature of the elements and the sexes themselves to come together and become one: "from

the blending of water and earth and aither [air] and sun the forms and colours of [all the] mortals came to be ... fitted together by Aphrodite” (74/71.2-4). In this explanation of the origin of the universe and of mankind, there is a strong force towards unification behind creation.

In his *Symposium* Plato offers another myth of creation in Aristophanes’ discourse on love. This myth also gives evidence of a strong desire for completeness, but describes *human* creation rather than that of the cosmos:

The original human nature was not like the present, but different. ...the primeval man was round, his back and sides forming a circle; and he had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces ... He could walk upright as men now do now ... and he could also roll over and over at a great pace, turning on his four hands and four feet, eight in all, like tumblers going over and over with their legs in the air; this was when he wanted to run fast. ... Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great ... [Zeus] spoke and cut men in two ... After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one, they were on the point of dying from hunger and self-neglect ... And when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself, ... that pair are lost in amazement of love and friendship and intimacy ... these are the people who pass their whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire of one another. For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover’s intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell (143-147).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lacan comments on this myth: “je désigne l’identification de l’autre à l’Un. Je dis: l’Un mystique dont l’autre comique, à faire éminence dans le Banquet de Platon, Aristophane pour le nommer, nous donne le cru équivalent dans la bête-à-deux-dos dont il impute à Jupiter qui n’en peut mais, la bissection: c’est très vilain, j’ai déjà dit que ça ne se fait pas. On ne commet pas le Père réel dans de telles inconvenances. Reste que Freud y choit aussi: car ce qu’il impute à l’Eros, en tant qu’il l’oppose à Thanatos, comme principe de ‘la vie’, c’est d’unir, comme si, à part une brève coïtération, on avait jamais vu deux corps s’unir en un” (*Télévision*, 41). And: “La poursuite du complément, le mythe d’Aristophane noue l’image de façon pathétique, et leurrante, en articulant, que c’est l’autre, que c’est sa moitié sexuelle, que le vivant cherche dans l’amour. A cette représentation mythique du mystère de l’amour, l’expérience analytique substitue la recherche par le sujet, non du complément sexuel, mais de la part à jamais perdue de lui-même, qui est constituée de fait qu’il n’est qu’un vivant sexué, et qu’il n’est plus immortel” (*Séminaire XI*, 187). Lacan recognizes in the myth a way to explain what he considers the desire for a state of unity with the love object, but he finds the myth misleading in giving the impression that this unity might be possible through a sexual relationship. Furthermore, what the subject seeks is not a (sexual) compliment, but a part of him/herself that is unattainable and unconscious. This is the difference between ancient and post-Incarnation philosophy concerning desire – for the ancients unity was possible, but for the moderns, it is not possible.

In this account, mankind was originally a complete being, incorporating both the female and the male sexes. Aristophanes' discourse is more specific to mankind than Empedocles' theory and makes the drive to come together a desire that is specific to mankind. Since these spherical beings were considered by the gods to be too powerful in this original androgynous form, Jupiter divided them into male and female, so the idea of love is intertwined with that of division. The divided beings perpetually pursued the embrace of their other half, or opposite; this embrace was seen to restore lost unity and is a metaphor for the sex act (or the sex act is a metaphor for this embrace). However, the very desire for the other that drove the divided beings into each other's arms, lead to their destruction. Their longing was so strong and all consuming that they *died of hunger and weakness*.

### 3.4.3 Desire and Biblical Creation Stories

The biblical story of creation further emphasizes and brings the desire for unity to another level, that of the divine. It is also, however, ultimately a story of separation. There are two accounts of the creation of man in Genesis. According to the introduction to *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, there was no standard, authoritative text of Scripture before about AD 100 (xxxi). The standard text that is in current use is a form of the Hebrew text the *Masoretes*, but there were even variant forms of that text (xxxi). This is to say that the two versions of the creation story in Genesis are from different traditions (4, notes). The two accounts are not opposing, but one may be considered as more detailed than the other. There are also stylistic differences between the stories, supporting the theory that they are from different traditions (4, notes). The first is as follows, "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created

them” (Genesis 1:27). This verse implies that God originally created male and female at the same time and reveals that male and female together make up the whole of mankind.

The second creation story in Genesis is more detailed with regard to the creation of mankind:

the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. ...The Lord God said: ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.’ So the Lord God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air ... but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: ‘This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body (Genesis 2:7 and 2:18-24).

The first creation story has God creating male and female simultaneously, making up the whole of mankind in the divine image. In the second story, however, He created first male, and then, seeing that the male was lacking something, He created female to fill this void. The final sentence of the second creation story gives evidence of a divine will for the union (of male and female).

Moreover, man and woman resided in the Garden of Eden, or Paradise.<sup>32</sup> In this garden, they are depicted as being in the divine presence: “they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden ... The Lord God then called out to the man and asked him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8-9). However, something caused a separation of man and woman from the divine presence – they ate the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Life:

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<sup>32</sup> A note to the text of *The Catholic Study Bible* indicates that the word *eden* is a derivation of the Sumerian word meaning *fertile plain* and that a Hebrew word with a similar pronunciation means *delight*. Accordingly, the Garden of Eden may be interpreted as *the garden of delight* and *paradise* (5).

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it. ... [God said] 'You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!' The man replied, 'The woman whom you put here with me – she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.' ... Then the Lord said: 'See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever.' The Lord God therefore banished him from the garden of Eden (Genesis 3).

Traditionally, this passage is interpreted as the temptation posed by sin and the resultant separation from the divine presence. But, what if *the Fall* also represented something else, related to language? Such a reading would also involve a modern psychoanalytic rereading of the Fall as the symbolic division of the subject by language.

#### 3.4.4 Desire and Psychoanalysis

One of the “major themes” underlying many of the stories presented in the Bible is the absence of sexual rapport (Leupin, *Lacan Today*, 51). In the supplemental reading of the forbidden fruit, it is something that would cause a division of the human subject. Human language, marked by the ability to say one thing and mean another, is what separates it from animal code (Leupin, *Lacan Today*, 39). But, as mentioned, in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, language is also what creates the unconscious and what consequently divides the subject.<sup>33</sup> Another reading of the knowledge gained from eating the forbidden fruit in the story of the biblical Fall has to do with the subject’s entrance into language. Knowledge/sin causes separation – a symbolic castration – from the divine presence and this is represented in the division of the subject.

The Lacanian theory of the feminine and its relation to lack is not far from any of the stories of creation or from Merlin’s own desire, if we consider the feminine as what is

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter two, “Theoretical Influences,” p. 37-38.

missing, or what will provide (mythical) unity.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, Merlin believes that the Dame du Lac, in this respect a symbol for the feminine, represents what he is lacking and what will make him whole. This is denoted in psychoanalytic theory by the subject's longing for a symbolic return to an imaginary state of original unity (with the mother).

Merlin's desire for "union" with the Dame du Lac is his undoing. This desire is not only responsible for his entombment, but it is also the basis for Apollinaire's version of his story. Indeed, in the introduction to his edition of the text, Burgos writes of the prevailing theme of unrequited, but desired love in *L'Enchanteur* (XXXI). In a similar vein, Scott Bates writes that Merlin is buried by a "sterile ignorant love" (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 22) and Marie-Jeanne Durry cites the essential difference between men and women as the reason for Merlin's downfall (*Alcools* Tome II, 82). *L'Enchanteur's* main theme is sexual difference and its last words echo the separation between Merlin and the Dame du Lac: "Mais j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme" (Pr I, 77). Even after the Dame du Lac entombs him, Merlin remains true to the love he continues to believe they once shared. Merlin's lamentations illustrate this: "Les femmes ne connaissent pas l'amour, et l'homme, l'homme ne peut-il aimer cet amour incarné dans la femme?" (Pr I, 67). Like the theme of the different destinies of men and women, this quote illustrates the separation between Merlin and the Dame du Lac. The love Merlin has for the Dame du Lac is impossible, but very desired. In the single page of Merlin's last words to the Dame du Lac, he repeats the phrase "toi que j'aimais" six

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<sup>34</sup> Lacan also associates God with the unconscious and the idea of the divine with the Real: "*Dieu est inconscient*" (*Séminaire XI*, 58) and "*les dieux sont du champ du réel*" (*Séminaire XI*, 45).

times, reinforcing his love that is a desire for complete possession of the beloved over and over again.

Bloch's assessment of love in Marie de France's *Lais* helps to clarify Merlin's all encompassing love/desire for the Dame du Lac and its relation to linguistic expression. He writes that love, or a longing for a union, in the *Lais* represents a "desire for wholeness" (*The Anonymous Marie de France*, 52). Furthermore, this desire also relates to language and its threat to this desired wholeness (53). This assessment of the role language plays in the *Lais* is similar to the analysis of impossible love in *L'Enchanteur* this study offers. Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac represents a desire for wholeness on his part. His unsatisfied desire to possess the Dame du Lac signifies both the unattainability of desire for the subject and the feminine (ineffable) as escaping conscious knowledge and expression. As such, his unfulfilled desire also symbolizes the poet's (unsatisfied) desire to linguistically express the feminine ineffable. The Dame du Lac's negation of his body-as-signifier reveals the limitations of language, or, to borrow an expression from Bloch, *language as fatal*.

On another level, Merlin's tragic, even despairing devotion to the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* and his unfailing faithfulness even in the face of her betrayal recall the tenets of Courtly Love as Lewis describes them in *The Allegory of Love* (2-3, 34). According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, however, the reason for the unattainability of the woman in the Courtly Love tradition has to do with desire and the impossibility of achieving it. For Lacan, the longing for a (symbolic) return to an (imaginary) state of unity (with the mother) is the driving force behind human desire. With regard to the creation of the figure of the courtly lady by the poet, Lacan writes, "C'est une façon tout



à fait raffinée de suppléer à l'absence de rapport sexuel, en feignant que c'est nous qui y mettons obstacle" (*Séminaire XX*, 65). Furthermore, Lacan writes that love is futile: Lacan writes, "L'amour est impuissant, quoiqu'il soit réciproque, parce qu'il ignore qu'il n'est que le désir d'être Un, ce qui nous conduit à l'impossible d'établir la relation d'eux. La relation *d'eux* qui? – *deux* sexes (*Séminaire XX*, 12 [the emphasis is Lacan's]). The desire for fusion with a love-object is just as futile as returning to the imaginary state of unity or of linguistically expressing with precision a totality of meaning.

A Lacanian psychoanalytic interpretation of Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac explains it as an effort to (unconsciously) (re) create a perceived lost state of unity. For Lacan, love is but a fantasy (Leupin, *Lacan Today*, 98). In *L'Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac's actions represent the sexual difference that separates Merlin from his love. Merlin believes that his knowledge and power will permit his union with the Dame du Lac. In the *Prophesies*, Merlin believes that the tomb he builds will provide this desired union.<sup>35</sup> Apollinaire makes an intertextual reference to this image with his use of the tomb (rather than a prison of air or a cave) as Merlin's place of imprisonment. In both instances the Dame du Lac extends a promise of fulfillment of Merlin's desire – *tout ce qu'il lui plairait* – she holds the key, but Merlin believes that it is his actions in teaching her enchantments and creating the tomb that will actually result in his union with her. The Dame du Lac functions in the same manner as the psychoanalytic structure of the Law in this respect, since she promises fulfillment of Merlin's desire and makes this seem possible, but actually prevents it by enchanting and entombing him. In Lacanian

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<sup>35</sup> Even though the explanation for Merlin's voluntary entry into the tomb is not explicitly stated in Apollinaire's text, it is implied by intertextual reference to the medieval tradition. See chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac," p. 234-251.

psychoanalysis the Law is the structure that causes repression of the primary desire, but at the same time also provides hope of desire's fulfillment through the process of transference. So instead of consciously wanting to return to the imaginary state of unity, the subject falls in love. For our Enchanter, this love object is the Dame du Lac. Merlin is blinded to the Dame du Lac's impossibility of ever fulfilling his need for unity. This blindness is symbolic of a lack on his part; the powerful Enchanter who is privy to otherworldly knowledge is missing the faculty to see the Dame du Lac's true intentions. Something in his desire for her separates him from his usual faculties of knowledge. Merlin, like the psychoanalytic subject, is divided, not whole, incomplete. All subjects, male or female, are symbolically castrated. They are divided on the level of the psyche; Merlin wishing to be united with the Dame du Lac in life and in death is a symbolic representation of the divided psychoanalytic subject.

### 3.5 BLASPHEMOUS CONCEPTIONS

#### 3.5.1 Merlin's Origin and the Incarnation of Christ

Christian thinkers in the Middle Ages explored the implications of Christ's Incarnation in a *human* body on the nature of divinity rather than regarding the nature of the gods as separate and distinct from human corporeality. In *Fiction et Incarnation*, Leupin considers the Incarnation of Christ as a dividing point between ancient and medieval thought and civilization, calling it an *epistemological break*, an event that has an effect on all thought systems and that produces homonyms (10). In the case of the Incarnation, the idea of homonyms centers on the signifier *God*. The meaning of *God* shifted with the Incarnation of Christ from designating a spiritual being without a proper human body to designating a being that is at once spiritual and corporeal, at once divine

and human. Whereas ancient gods did not have real, flesh and blood bodies, Christ does. The idea of corporeality that marked the ancients' religious beliefs marks those of the moderns as well, albeit in a reversal of relationships of the divine to the body and of the idea of the Divine Body.

Bloch, in *Etymologies and Genealogies*, also mentions the Incarnation, but in relation to language, saying that the union of the Son and the Father in the Incarnation of Christ is identified with a union of the "signifier and the signified" (62). Eugene Vance echoes this assessment in *Mervelous Signals*, calling Christ the "unique and perfect sign" (x). Christ's body – his flesh – signifies his divinity, so it is a signifier that is able to represent the full meaning attached to it. Christ represents a union of opposing natures – human and divine, flesh and spirit. Whereas for the ancients, the ultimate state of unity involved a union of the same, the Incarnation of Christ implies a union of difference.<sup>36</sup> However, since the Christian Christ is a *perfect sign* wherein the signifier represents fully the meaning attached to it – Christ's divinity – then in this union, opposing natures become alike. In Christ, human and divine are unified and thus the same.

Christ is specifically positioned between man and God, a means for man to approach God. It is through Christ and through him alone that man might *come to the Father*, or achieve a sort of unity with God (John 14:5). In his *Confessions*, the medieval theologian Saint Augustine acknowledges that Christ's Incarnation – Christ's flesh and

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<sup>36</sup> Christ was Incarnated in a *human* body and then Resurrected – two *impossible* feats for the ancients. Because of this "passage de l'impossible au possible," another shift in thought became possible. The concept of Christ's flesh permitted the concept of pleasure to become associated with that of sexuality (Milner, *Constats*, 115). After the Incarnation, "le plaisir désormais ne soit pas fondé sur l'incorporation, mais sur l'usage. Etant fondé sur l'usage, il est fondé non sur le Même, mais sur l'Autre" (Milner, 115).

blood body – and his resulting position of mediator between man and God is divinely willed:

I make my prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ *your Son*, ‘the *man* of your right hand, the *Son of man* whom you have strengthened’ (Ps. 79:18) *to be mediator between yourself and us*. By him *you sought us when we were not seeking you* (Rom. 10:20). But you sought us *so that we should seek you*, your Word by whom you made all things including myself, your only Son by whom you have called to adoption the people who believe (Gal. 4:5), myself among them. I make my prayer to you through him ‘who sits at your right hand and *intercedes to you for us*’ (Rom. 8:34) (*Confessions*, book XI, ii [the emphasis is mine]).

Augustine also credits a divine will as a precursor to man’s desire for a union with God unlike the ancients, who did not credit their gods with any will to be united with man (other than sexual exploits, which are corporeal and transitory).

### 3.5.2 Merlin-as-Intermediary

The only other *union* of human and otherworldly, flesh and lack of flesh that we have seen is the Enchanter. Merlin too is the locus of the union of oppositions. These include human and demon and corporeal plenitude and corporeal lack. Ancient theory provides for an intermediary between the divine and man, but not for their *union*. Also, the ancient daemon and even Merlin’s father had to take on the form of a man in order to converse with mortal women. Merlin has his own form. However, Merlin’s union is not a conjunction. It does not make two opposing elements into the same, but rather, Merlin is the locus of the union of two differing natures.

Merlin’s prophetic abilities represent his capacity to know things that men do not. By having this faculty, Merlin, like the ancient daemon, serves as mediator of knowledge. Through his otherworldly knowledge, he links God (in the text) and man, forming a sort of chain of information and allowing access to the prophetic information he wishes to disclose. He prophesies and amazes those around him, particularly in the medieval

texts.<sup>37</sup> Like the ancient daemon, Merlin makes the *God's/gods'* will known to man – other characters and the reader – in the text.<sup>38</sup> In *L'Enchanteur*, the character Elie refers to Merlin as *Prophète*, *Poète*, and finally, *Homme*, while in the same exchange, Empédocle addresses him as *Philosophe du tombeau* (Pr I, 60-61). These designations underline Merlin's association with this knowledge. The word *homme* also reinforces Merlin's dichotomous constitution. Merlin brings together human flesh and spirit. He is both human and demon, but entirely neither.

Even – and especially – the Enchanter's conception illustrates his blasphemous similarity to Christ. We will examine Merlin's conception in *L'Enchanteur* and in medieval texts in chapter five, “Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother.” A brief overview of critical approaches to Merlin's conception in *L'Enchanteur* will situate Apollinaire's rewriting of the episode and reversal of the Incarnation with regard to medieval religion. Among the critics who note the similarities between Merlin and Christ, Burgos comments on the blasphemous mirroring of Christ's conception in the events of Merlin's conception, invoking Apollinaire's own expression, the *Noël funéraire*, to

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<sup>37</sup> As an example, consider the episode in the Berthelot edition of the *Prophesies* where Maistre Antoine goes to meet the three bishops and tells them what Merlin has told him about them, such as the fact that they were coming without notice, their names, and where they were from. Such things are very unusual to know without being told, which highlights Merlin's otherworldly knowledge. One of the bishops, Bertous, says: “mais d'une cose m'esmierveil mout: comment vous nous noumastes ensi que de riens n'en mentistes?” (58). (but I marvel greatly at one thing: how you could name us in such a way that you miss nothing?)

<sup>38</sup> *God/gods* are italicized here because, as will become apparent in the pages that follow, the prevalence of reversed religious imagery in *L'Enchanteur* raises questions related to Merlin's representation in this study. For example, what specifically does the signifier *God* represent and what do the references to religion really signify in the text? The medieval texts portray the religion as that of the Christian faith, but should this be taken at face value? These questions pertain more directly to the medieval versions of Merlin's story, but they may also be posed with regard to Apollinaire's reversal of religion. Chapter five, “Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother” explores these questions in relation to the Christian piety associated with Merlin's mother in most medieval representations of her character, arriving at the conclusion that references to religion have more to do with the creation of the text than with the Christian religion per se. In this reading, *God* refers to the creator of the text, the poet.

describe the scene (“Apollinaire et le recours au mythe,” 119). Robert Couffignal comments extensively on the similarities between the conception stories and Apollinaire’s reversal of traditional Christian symbols. He cites the substitution of a shadow for the star that guides his three False Magi, bringing salt, sulfur, and mercury to the tomb of the Enchanter (*L’Inspiration biblique dans l’oeuvre de Guillaume Apollinaire*, 119). The reversal, according to Couffignal, even extends to the Passion of Christ, which is comparable, he writes, to the suffering Merlin endures throughout the text (130). Scott Bates has also done much work on religious influences in Apollinaire’s work and his comments are pertinent to a study of Merlin’s corporeality. Bates cites the tradition where Apollinaire casts himself as Christ or the Antichrist (“L’Erotisme dans les premiers grands poèmes d’Apollinaire,” 92). In his *Guillaume Apollinaire*, Bates continues the argument that Apollinaire satirizes divine birth and resurrection in *L’Enchanteur*. He further associates Merlin with the concept of the Antichrist through a medieval Merlin prophecy, which predicts that at the end of the world, three descendents of the Christian Magi will come to the birthplace of the beast in darkness (22). Certainly, Merlin’s tomb is the place of transformation and, in a sense, rebirth; and Merlin’s conception is a blasphemous mirroring of the Immaculate Conception.

But, the representation of Merlin goes beyond his reversal of the Incarnation and his position as mediator. His state in the tomb is a function of desire – his and his mother’s, as we will discover. The character of Merlin is an enigma. He represents not only the union of opposing natures and the intermediary between them, but also a solitary figure seeking his complement. This is where his similarities with the Christian Christ end. Where the Dame du Lac is concerned, Merlin’s otherworldly faculties fail him. It is

these faculties that made him a sort of mediator of otherworldly knowledge. Merlin is reduced to a simple subject seeking a love object, the Dame du Lac. Rather than embodying a unifying force, our Enchanter is seeking unity. There is something in the powerful Enchanter, the seeming union of opposing natures, that desires the Other, represented by the Dame du Lac. This feminine presence destroys not only Merlin's corporeality, but also his representation as a sort of mediator in the text. Merlin's desire to be united with the Dame du Lac in life and after death drives his actions and thereby leads to his demise.

### 3.6 MERLIN AND MEDIEVAL CONCEPTIONS OF RELIGION

#### 3.6.1 Desire

The Incarnation also ushered in a change in theoretical models of desire. The ancient idea of the soul's striving for an ultimate state in opposition to the body involves a longing for something that is outside of human physical existence. This ultimate state implies a purity of soul that does not have physical manifestation, although it is attainable by strictly human means. After the Incarnation, which shattered ancient religious thought, Christian theology presents Christ as the locus of unity – the union of oppositions, such as spirit and flesh, and God and man – and the way to be one with the divine presence. Desire is reborn in a different manifestation in Christianity.<sup>39</sup> In the twentieth century, Lacan's psychoanalytic theory again changed the conception of desire, albeit less drastically. Lacan presents the subject's primary unconscious desire as that for a perceived lost state of unity – with the mother, and of the masculine and feminine,

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<sup>39</sup> Leupin would say that desire is rather *resurrected* through the death and Resurrection of Christ's divine-flesh – see *Fiction et Incarnation*, p. 15 for a discussion of Geoffroi de Vinsauf's *resurrection* of antique poetics in medieval literature.

conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche. Certainly, the object of desire changed with each different conception by a production of homonyms similar to that prompted by the Incarnation. All of these different models of desire in one way or another have an influence on our reading of Merlin's existence as shaped and unshaped by his mother and the Dame du Lac. With this in mind, this chapter's goal is to point out how theoretical models of desire and corporeality have been rewritten and reborn over time, much as the literary texts we are considering in this study.

### 3.6.2 Medieval Religion in the Text

The different versions of Merlin's story all contain many references to what appears to be the Christian religion. One reason for the importance of religion in the text is the significant role it played in medieval society. In *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Johan Huizinga explains how Christian religion permeated life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries:

Individual and social life, in all their manifestations, are imbued with the conceptions of faith. There is not an object nor an action, however trivial, that is not constantly correlated with Christ or salvation. All thinking tends to religious interpretation of individual things; there is an enormous unfolding of religion in daily life (151).

This would clarify the insistence on the Christian religion in the medieval texts and the seeming need for these works to associate the Enchanter with this religion, as chapter five, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother," explores. The influence of Christianity on medieval society and literature would also extend to Apollinaire's text, in which he makes intertextual references to Merlin in medieval legend and literature. But it does not explain his reversal of religious imagery in *L'Enchanteur*.

In *Feudal Society*, Marc Bloch relates the Church's increased power to the relative lack of religious education and knowledge amongst the common people in feudal



France. The common people, and even their rulers, credited religious leaders with the power of salvation, according to Bloch, resulting in an increasingly powerful Church (86-87). The role of the Church became one of a mediator between the people and God, negotiating the salvation of their souls, but also one of a ruler, proscribing instructions for living. In either and both roles, it, and those who comprised it, had a permeating influence on western thought and society from people's daily lives to art and literature.

This aspect of control associated with the Church may be a reason for Apollinaire's reversal of religion in his text. As Robert Couffignal explains throughout his *Apollinaire*, the poet revolted against the faith of his childhood and this revolt finds its expression throughout his writings. *L'Enchanteur* is an excellent example of this. Apollinaire's text, as a rewriting of the medieval texts, continues the tradition of religious imagery, but with an Apollinarian edge. He mixes ancient and medieval religious images, a mix that is appropriate to a text centered on the Enchanter's corporeal existence or lack thereof, since an understanding of Merlin's situation is to be gained from both ancient and medieval theories.

### 3.7 MEDIEVAL CONCEPTIONS OF GOD'S INEFFABILITY

#### 3.7.1 Desire and What is Ineffable

The poet is driven to express something – him/herself, emotions, experiences – linguistically; often what s/he desires to express is related to what is ineffable. So, the poet, necessarily using language as a means of communication, arrives at an impasse where the words of the text are inadequate to express his/her experience fully, much as Merlin's body only partially reveals the nature it represents. Medieval theories about God's ineffability are important to an understanding of the concept of something that

escapes full representation in language. As this relates to our reading of *L'Enchanteur*, this ineffable nature of the divine also explains the concept of the feminine ineffable as partially representable and partially unrepresentable in the language of the text. We will see that the post-Incarnation meaning of *God* is related to the psychoanalytic concepts of the feminine, the unconscious, and the Real. The reason for discussing medieval conceptions of God's ineffability is to demonstrate the philosophical basis for associating the ineffable nature of the divine with the feminine ineffable.

### 3.7.2 Saint Augustine's Vision – The Desire for Divine Union and the Truth about Language

The theological works of Saint Augustine, fifth-century Bishop of Hippo, show evidence of both ancient Greek and Roman and medieval religious influence. Augustine's vision at Ostia exemplifies the yearning for a spiritual union with God in an early Christian text. It attests to the existence of something outside the scope of linguistic representation, and associates this something with the divine.<sup>40</sup> In his vision, Augustine writes of the quest for divine unity, associating this state with the idea of truth:

Alone with each other, we talked very intimately. 'Forgetting the past and reaching forward to what lies ahead' (Phil. 3:13), we were searching together in the presence of the truth which is you yourself. We asked what quality of life the eternal life of the saints will have, a life which 'neither eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man' (I Cor. 2:9). But with the mouth of the heart wide open, we drank in the waters flowing from your spring on high, 'the spring of life' (Ps. 35:10) which is with you. Sprinkled with this dew to the limit of our capacity, our minds attempted in some degree to reflect on so great a reality. The conversation led us towards the conclusion that the pleasure of the bodily senses, however delightful in the radiant light of this physical world, is seen by comparison with the life of eternity to be not even worth considering. Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself. Step by step we climbed beyond all corporeal objects and the heaven itself, where sun, moon, and stars shed light on the earth. We ascended even further by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved up beyond them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance where you feed Israel

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<sup>40</sup> See also Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*.

eternally with truth for food. There life is the wisdom by which all creatures come into being, both things which were and which will be. But wisdom itself is not brought into being but is as it was and always will be. Furthermore, in this wisdom there is no past and future, only being, since it is eternal. For to exist in the past or in the future is no property of the eternal. And while we talked and panted after it, we touched it in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart. And we sighed and left behind us ‘the firstfruits of the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:23) bound to that higher world, as we returned to the noise of our human speech where a sentence has both a beginning and an ending. ... if all language and every sign and everything transitory is silent ... he alone would speak not through them but through himself. We would hear his word, not through the tongue of the flesh, nor through the voice of an angel, nor through the sound of thunder, nor through the obscurity of a symbolic utterance. Him who in these things we love we would hear in person without their mediation. That is how it was when at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things. ... So too eternal life is of the quality of that moment of understanding after which we sighed (*Confessions*, IX.x).

The ideas of truth, unity, and divinity are intertwined with questions of language. Throughout his vision, Augustine challenges and exposes an innate lack in language’s ability to represent the truth of God and of the quality of divine union. As Bloch specifies, words for Augustine can point to truth, but cannot directly express “knowledge of the nonmaterial realm” (*The Anonymous Marie de France*, 35). Augustine relates linguistic restriction to that imposed on man’s perception by the senses. For instance, he compares the “eternal life of the saints” to something beyond the human senses – beyond what can be seen, heard, or comprehended. Human speech, in this passage, amounts to “noise” and what marks the separation from Augustine’s experience of the divine presence. Finally, true communication with the divine is outside the mediation of language, flesh, or symbols. Like the experience of the divine presence, it implies an immediacy that the human senses interrupt.

Images of water indicate the presence of the divine. For example, Augustine extends the image of *the spring of life* to an allusion to divine knowledge. This spring is a sign of the divine presence: “which is with you.” Augustine uses these images to denote

the divine presence, which would otherwise be indescribable, but they also call to mind the desire for unity (of expression) through water's privileged position in literature and psychoanalytic theory. Images of water in literature evoke associations ranging from crossing over into another world, to the original elements of nature, and to the feminine and the unconscious.<sup>41</sup>

Augustine's vision communicates an overwhelming desire to go beyond the limits of the body and to apperceive what can only be called *divine jouissance*, the exquisite spiritual pleasure of divine knowledge and presence. For example, he writes of pleasure that he receives which not physical. However, for a lack of linguistic expression to directly convey his experience of God in words, he uses images of panting that bring to mind physical, or even sexual exertion: "And while we talked and panted after it, we touched it in some small degree by a moment of total concentration of the heart." In another example, Augustine writes of surpassing (physical) capacities and attaining divine wisdom. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, *jouissance* refers to an experience outside the scope of description in language that is particular to the idea of the feminine: "Il y a

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<sup>41</sup> For example, In medieval literature, when a character crosses a body of water, it is symbolic of that character's crossing over into another world. In the *Propheesies*, the Dame du Lac, after entombing Merlin, "trouva une nef mout bien apareillie pour passer en Gaulle la ou ele voloit aler. ... et furent arivet au port au tiers iour" (96) (found a vessel that was very well equipped to go to Gaulle where she wanted to go. ... and had arrived in port on the third day.) In Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac "sortait [du lac] quand elle voulait et y rentrait librement, joignant les pieds et se lançant dedans" (Pr I, 19). Also, the following passage marks the end of the text with *Onirocritique*: "La dame ne s'arrêta qu'au bord de son lac. Elle descendit lentement la pente que surbaigne l'onde silencieuse, et s'enfonçant sous les flots danseurs, gagna son beau palais dormant, plein de lueurs de gemmes, au fond du lac" (Pr I, 86). Additionally, the word for water in Old French, *eve*, invokes the name of the first woman in the Judeo-Christian religion, Eve. Variations include *ewe*, *aive*, *ieve*, and *iave*. The Latin *aqua* is the etymological precursor (*Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Larousse Dictionnaire de l'ancien français). The word *eve* (*ewe*) first appeared in a French text in 1080 in the *Chanson de Roland* (*Le Robert Dictionnaire historique*). Lacan's theory associates the feminine with what is non-linguistic and unconscious: "Il n'y a de femme qu'exclue par la nature des chose qui est la nature des mots" (*Séminaire XX*, 40). As previously discussed, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the feminine surpasses the linguistic function and so it is only partially representable linguistically. See chapter two, p. 39-41.

une jouissance, puisque nous nous en tenons à la jouissance, jouissance du corps, qui est ... au delà du phallus” (Lacan, *Séminaire XX*, 69). Since it is specific to the feminine, jouissance is a concept that can be considered logically and is, accordingly, unrelated to the ideas of mystery and marvel. However, the implied references to language in Augustine’s vision bring this concept to mind. Furthermore, this jouissance “ne s’y articule que de faits d’absence” (40). A lack of words, or silence in the text, indicates the possible presence of something on the order of *feminine jouissance*. The reference to this theory is intentional, because it entails a conception of pleasure that is indescribable, yet exquisite. Lacanian feminine jouissance explains Augustine’s desire to express his experience of the divine: there is something on the order of the feminine, of feminine jouissance, and of the divine that cannot be represented linguistically.<sup>42</sup> In this, the vision is a commentary on the limits of language.

Apollinaire’s text seems to mirror the quest for unity Augustine expresses in his vision, albeit in a reversal of sorts with regard to the nature of desire. While the vision presents Augustine as striving for the divine presence that is indescribable, *L’Enchanteur* positions its protagonist, Merlin, in a relationship of impossible love. Regardless of this reversal, there is a certain striving, a certain desire that is common to both Augustine’s vision and *L’Enchanteur*. Merlin loves the Dame du Lac “que mortel cœur ainsi ne pourrait plus aimer” (Pr I, 8), yet there remains *something* that separates him from her.

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<sup>42</sup> Recalling that Lacan associated both the concepts of the feminine and the truth with the Real, the following quote from his *Séminaire XX* further clarifies the association of the term jouissance with Augustine’s experience of the divine: “L’Autre comme lieu de la vérité, est la seule place, quoiqu’irréductible, que nous pouvons donner au terme de l’être divin, de Dieu pour l’appeler par son nom” (44). Lacan links the divine with the idea of truth, which we have already seen to be ineffable in its entirety.

This is the essential difference between the sexes, represented in the text by *les éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme*.

Both Merlin and the Dame du Lac acknowledge their separation. The Dame du Lac says,

Moi, qui ne suis pas une diablesse, qui ne suis pas même une enchanteresse, mais une incantation, j'ai repoussé tout amour d'homme ... Je suis comme toi et la diablesse ... Aucun homme ne peut nous aimer parce que toutes nous sommes d'un autre âge, trop ancien ou même à venir. Les hommes nous prennent toutes pour des fantômes ... Hélas! Comment saisir le fantôme (Pr I, 66-67).

This quotation expresses the dissimilarity that separates the Dame du Lac from Merlin and that extends to men and women in general. Men misunderstand women because of this difference and so love is not possible. A few pages later Merlin says, "La femme et l'homme ne se ressemblent pas et leurs enfants leur ressemblent" (Pr I, 71). This also attests to the difference that separates the sexes, making love impossible. Without a doubt, *L'Enchanteur's* presentation of Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac and his separation from her is not the same as the desire to express the experience of the divine presence that Augustine's vision communicates. However, it is the desire for unity and the expression of this unity in the vision that *L'Enchanteur's* theme of *les éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme* echoes. The difference between the sexes makes unity impossible. He continues lamenting their separation until the final lines of the last chapter before *Onirocritique*.

This relates to the feminine ineffable's effects on poetic production. The Dame du Lac's words – *Je suis une incantation, Je suis comme la diablesse, Les hommes nous prennent pour des fantômes* – associate her with the demonic, ethereal nature. As we have seen, this is the part of Merlin's makeup that his body does not effectively represent

until the Dame du Lac negates it. The Dame du Lac (and the limitations she imposes) is associated with the part of the feminine ineffable that cannot be represented in language as opposed to Merlin's mother, who represents the part of the feminine ineffable that can find its representation in the words of the text. Together both have an effect on linguistic production and the words of the text.

### 3.7.3 God is Ineffable

In Augustine's vision at Ostia we saw a sense of striving to express an experience of divine presence. The theories of Philo Judeas, John Scotus Eriugena, and the Pseudo-Dionysius explain the difficulty of fully representing God's essential divinity, which is ineffable. In his first-century treatise *The Creation of the World*, Philo Judeas writes:

No one, whether poet or historian, could ever give expression in an adequate manner to the beauty of his ideas respecting the creation of the world; for they surpass all the power of language, and amaze our hearing, being too great and venerable to be adapted to the senses of any created being (1).

Centuries before Augustine's vision, Philo explored the inability of language to describe the divine attributes adequately. In this passage, Philo associates language with man's ability to understand the world through the faculty of his senses. This ineffability of the divine nature remains even after the Incarnation of Christ, because, even though Christ embodied human flesh, God The Father remains outside the world, outside the scope of the human senses and perceptions.

This conception of God as ineffable came to influence medieval theology and literature. The inherent ineffability of the divine has its most elemental representation in the divine name, written in Scripture as YHWH. This combination of letters has traditionally been spoken as "Yahweh," the divine name, YHWH, being considered as "too sacred to be pronounced" (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, xiii). In the story of

Moses and the burning bush, as in Augustine's vision, the divine presence does not take physical form. However, it is represented by the bush that seems to burn with fire but is not consumed. Also, unlike Augustine's account of his divine experience, in this story God uses language to communicate to Moses. He tells him, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father ... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:5-6). God – the divine presence – does not name Himself. He identifies Himself as *the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob* and later, "I am who I am ..." (Exodus 14). Even though God speaks to Moses in language, the language Moses hears does not express his *essence*, represented linguistically by his name.

### 3.7.4 God is Unrepresentable

The reason that the language Moses hears does not communicate an adequate expression of God's essence is because it is filtered through *human* language and *human* senses. Not only is it impossible to find an adequate expression of God's essence, it is also not possible to know the divine – or the ineffable – through human perception, which includes language. God's *essence*, however, is a problematic notion. What is it? How can we know it? If language is inadequate to represent God, if no signifier can satisfactorily indicate the inherent meaning of the divine essence, then how are we to know what God's essence is? This is precisely the point I wish to make with regard to the impossibility of representing the divine, feminine *jouissance*, the feminine, and the feminine ineffable. We cannot have a sufficient linguistic representation of any of these concepts. What we can do is read the text to gather information about them. The text points to their ineffable



natures without actually *saying* them, as Augustine's vision describes his experience of divine presence.

In the mid-ninth century John Scotus Eriugena wrote in his *Periphyseon – on the Division of Nature*:

[God] Himself who alone truly has being, is the essence of all things, according to Dionysius the Areopagite, who says: 'The being of all things is Superbeing, Divinity.' Gregory the Theologian too affirms by many reasons that intellect or reason cannot grasp what any substance or essence is, whether it belongs to visible or to invisible creation. For just as God Himself, in Himself, beyond all creation is grasped by no intellect, so also is *ousia* considered in the innermost recesses of the creation made by Him and existing in Him, is incomprehensible (3).<sup>43</sup>

According to Eriugena, God cannot be fully comprehended by human intellect. The divine is beyond human understanding, outside the scope of human faculties of reason. Man, in the medieval conception of the divine, is essentially separated from God. The only recourse is through Christ-as-intermediary, but even this must be mediated by the medieval Church. Thus, whereas for the ancients, a divine link was possible through the use of a simulacre, for Judeo-Christian and later medieval theologians, the only way to divine unity is through a spiritual union through Christ.<sup>44</sup>

The obstacle to achieving this union by strictly human means stems from the innate ineffability of the divine to human sense and perception as well as to the nature of language. Yet the longing for knowledge of the divine is a driving force. The philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite, or the Pseudo-Dionysius, to whom Eriugena makes an

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<sup>43</sup> A reading of Leupin's *Phallophanies: le chair et le sacré* inspired the use of the medieval philosophers John Scotus Eriugena and the Pseudo-Dionysius to illustrate the ineffable nature of the Judeo-Christian God.

<sup>44</sup> In *Lacan Today*, Leupin explains that the Old Testament prohibits making an image of God (the second commandment – "You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God" [Exodus 20:4-5]). The New Testament, according to Leupin, specifically relates this to the idea of representing God in a sufficient way (119).

intertextual reference, relates God's indescribability to linguistic representation and ties it into the inability to express what is ineffable. The Pseudo-Dionysius writes, that God is "ineffable and unknowable in a far greater union than we can attain through our rational and intellectual powers and activities" (*Divine Names*, I.1.A). He adds:

it is irrational and foolish not to attend to the power of what is intended in discourse but to attend only to words. For this is not the mark of those who would attain to divine intellection but of those who would receive the barest echo of knowledge and who do not let the sounds that are without them beyond their ears. These latter persons do not come to know what such words signify and how it is necessary to clarify them through other equivalent and more evident statements. They cling to unintelligible letters, syllables, and words. These words do not pass over into the intellectual capacity of such persons but remain outside it around their lips where they simply buzz about" (*DN*, IV.11.C).

Those who attend only to the words of the text, neglecting the meaning to which those words allude miss the higher knowledge, which relates to divine knowledge. This association would lead to the belief that it is not in man's nature to understand the divine, a belief that would come to not only influence later religious thought, but also find its expression in modern psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious. The Pseudo-Dionysius's warning can also be read as a counsel to the reader not to take the words of the text at face value, but to search for the true meaning that they might mask.

Margaret Davies writes of what she calls Apollinaire's desire to have access to and express his most thickly veiled, even unconscious thoughts, his desire to "say all" ("Feinte" and "Figure." 81, 96). This relates to the desire for knowledge of the divine, since both the Lacanian unconscious and the divine are outside of conscious understanding or knowledge. Additionally, the idea that words – signifiers – not only do not represent ineffable concepts adequately, but can also mask the truth, clarifies Merlin's relationship to the Dame du Lac. Merlin does precisely what Pseudo-Dionysius warns against in the above reference by attending only to the Dame du Lac's outer appearance.

Driven by his desire and paying attention only to his perception of the Dame du Lac, Merlin misses an essential truth about her.<sup>45</sup> He believes she returns his love, but even more grave, he believes her promise: “La demoiselle lui promet de faire tout ce qu’il lui plairait, s’il lui enseignait auparavant une partie de son sens et de sa science” (Pr I, 8). Merlin misreads the Dame du Lac’s true nature by attending only to the apparent meaning of her words. Although this quotation does not illustrate divine knowledge hidden behind the meaning of its words, it does expose language’s ability to mislead and the possibility that signifiers in the text do not refer to what they at first appear to represent.

### 3.8 MEDIEVAL CONCEPTIONS OF DESIRE AND CORPOREALITY

The medieval theologian, Saint Thomas Aquinas’s theories illuminate further the association of the ineffable nature of the divine with the concept of desire and allow us to relate desire more emphatically to the idea of femininity. As mentioned, the theological writings of Aquinas serve as a sort of mediator, bringing ancient Aristotelian ideas into Christian thought and bridging the gap between the ancient and medieval worlds. Aquinas’ theory revisits the ancient body/soul debate, but within a Christianized philosophical discourse. For example, we have seen how his anti-dualistic ideas concerning the human soul influenced his firm belief in the hypostatic union of Christ’s body both before and after death.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> This interpretation of the Dame du Lac seems to be in opposition to her position as a representation of the feminine when we consider this representation in light of psychoanalytic theory. So, is she a representation of the feminine ineffable? Or, is she a representation of the signifier that masks the truth of this feminine ineffable? She is the feminine ineffable veiled by the signifier. This is precisely why we must consider ancient, medieval, and modern psychoanalytic theories of the ineffable and desire in an analysis of her influence on Merlin’s existence. Like Merlin, she is explained in part by multiple theories and fully by none.

<sup>46</sup> See p. 68 of this chapter.

On the human level, Aquinas wrote of man's innate desire for a union with the divine, represented by seeking God, in his *Summa Theologica*:

Though in himself supremely knowable, God surpasses the power of a limited intelligence by very excess of truth. ... since man's ultimate happiness consists in his highest activity, were he never able to see God, then either he could never reach his bliss or this would lie in something other than God, which is alien to Christian belief. Moreover, ... there is an inborn desire of knowing cause when effect is seen – this is the spring of wonder. If, therefore, the mind of rational creatures could never see the first cause of things this natural desire would be pointless (85-86).

For Aquinas, God is knowable, but to and by Himself. Man, limited by his faculties of understanding, cannot immediately see God. It is what Aquinas terms God's *excess of truth* that precludes man's ability to comprehend the divine.<sup>47</sup> Aquinas postulates that if it were impossible for man ever to achieve this divine union, then he would not be consumed with the desire for it. Since the desire for this specific end exists, then, according to Aquinas, the end also exists and is possible to achieve.

Since the Christian conception of truth is related to God, it follows that for Aquinas man begins to reach an understanding of God through his soul's reasoning. However, since the soul for Aquinas remains anchored in the body while a man is alive and since knowledge of the divine is obscured by human faculties of knowledge, it is only after the body's death that man may truly know God.<sup>48</sup> He writes, "The soul

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<sup>47</sup> This recalls the ideas of the feminine-as-surplus and the subject's desire for a perceived lost state of unity in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. But, for Aquinas, man still wants to achieve this union, which can be said for the psychoanalytic subject as well. In fact, it is the very absence of what is desired that leads to the wish to attain it for psychoanalytic theory.

<sup>48</sup> This point of Aquinas' theology recalls the Lacanian psychoanalytic idea of castration in and by language. Language has a castrating effect on the human subject, since when the subject enters language, the unconscious is created. Truth and the Real are aligned with the unconscious, so the lack of language reveals the truth. This is related to theories of the ineffable nature of the divine, as well, since God's essential nature is impossible to know or represent in/by the human faculties, one of which is language. As this concerns our reading of *L'Enchanteur*, the truth of Merlin's essential nature as revealed only when his body has died brings to mind (in another blasphemous reversal of sorts) Aquinas' assertion that man may only truly know God after the body's death.

continues to be when separated from the body by the failure of body we call death” (210).

It is in this state that man’s reason is capable of knowing God.

In order to attain divine knowledge and communion, according to Aquinas, man must strive toward purity of soul and body together with virtuous living. Aquinas writes:

At the beginning the soul of man was subject to God, and so flesh was subject to reason. Since the devil’s suggestion withdrew us from our obedience the flesh has become rebellious; we may wish a reasonable decency, but lust pushes us away (*Opusc. XXXV, de Duobus Praeceptis*, 326).

But, even though the flesh can be swayed by lust into sin, Aquinas continues to have faith in human reason and the ability of reason to overcome the temptations of the body:

the nobler a form the greater its domination over the matter, the less imprisoned it is in body, and the more its virtue and activity transcend bodily functions. The human soul is the last word in forms, exceeding bodily matter because its inward virtue and activity is free from matter (200).

For Aquinas, the human soul is capable of overcoming the temptation of sin and remaining virtuous. Throughout his work he writes of the soul of man; however, for Aquinas the word *man* is not synonymous with *humanity* (159). So, like other philosophers, when Aquinas cautions against the sins of the flesh, he is often cautioning against the temptation posed by women. In fact, he considers women second only to wine in (negative) influence:

Of factors that can change man, some are physiological and others psychological. The latter may be sensible or intelligible, and the former again may be practical or theoretical. Of the first, the strongest is wine; of the second, women; of the third, the power of the government; of the fourth, truth. They should be subordinate to one another in the reverse order (*Quodlibet*, 200).

A prevalent trend in medieval thought and literature to consider women as temptation reflects this view of women in Aquinas’ theology. In this sense, women pose a danger, leading men into sin and away from virtue. So Aquinas firmly links women with

corporeal temptation. In his philosophical writings he aligns man with the concepts of the soul, reason, form and God, while he associates woman with those of the flesh, temptation/lust, matter, and the sin that separates man from God. This has implications for reading the text of an Enchanter ensnared by a woman's "wiles." The Dame du Lac tempts Merlin considerably and she does cause his downfall. Indeed, in the medieval *Prophecies*, Merlin laments her deception: "tout homme ki se metront en subiection de femme seront ausi houni comme je suy" (95). (any man who puts himself at the mercy of a woman will be just as shamed as I am.) In this quotation, Merlin bemoans her deception, but also warns against women's wiles, since, in his view, women are deceitful and are not to be trusted. Apollinaire's text departs from this attitude toward women and reflects the inevitable separation of the sexes, as chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac" demonstrates.

In the *Prophecies*, Merlin compares the Dame du Lac's trickery and his resulting ruin to Adam's predicament in the Bible after he eats the forbidden fruit: "Adans fu crier de la main meismes nostre Seignor, et si ne se pot garder ke il ne fust engignies par cele femme" (95). (Adam was created by the very hand of our Lord and so he could not guard himself from being tricked by this woman.) In the corresponding biblical story, woman - Eve - first disobeys and then influences man - Adam - to follow her example.<sup>49</sup> So man is punished, being separated from union with God, after eating the fruit that the woman gave him. The biblical passage presents the woman as taking the (forbidden) fruit willingly and, knowing that it was forbidden, offering it to the man. Upon being questioned, the man replies that he ate the fruit because the woman gave it to him - was

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<sup>49</sup> See p. 88-89 of this chapter and chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac," p. 242.

he unaware of the fruit's origin? Did he not know that it was forbidden? In any case, the passage depicts the woman as knowingly and willingly taking the fruit and offering it to the man who, took it, trusting her to give him fruit that was acceptable to eat. In this way, she is seen to be the cause of his sin and his resultant banishment and separation from God. Merlin's complaints in the *Prophecies* reflect this betrayal of trust and the perceived inherent deceitfulness of women in causing men's downfall.

The conception of woman as inciting man into sin and thus away from God is a motivating factor in theologians' insistence on purity of body and spirit. In the fourth century, Saint Gregory of Nyssa extolled the virtues of virginity in his treatise *On Virginity*. He writes, "it is impossible to serve the bodily pleasure and, at the same time, to reap the enjoyment of God" (8). So again, bodily pleasure separates man from God. More specifically, sexual relations separate man from God. Although Saint Gregory preached the virtue of virginity for both men and women, women, as the object of male lust, are represented as temptation in medieval theology. Just as Eve tempted Adam to disobey God, women – in the theology and literature of the Middle Ages – tempt men into the sin that will be the cause of their separation from God.

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter ideas of corporeality and its relation to desire – the desire for unity, the desire for the divine, and the desire for a love object – have been the primary focus. When medieval Christian philosophy refers to the innate ineffability of the divine this is a theological notion. It does, however, relate to the concepts of the psychoanalytic feminine as something that partially exceeds language by its surplus of meaning and the sublime as something so wonderful/terrible that it too is only incompletely represented in language.

Especially in Deguy's interpretation of the Pseudo-Longinus' model of the sublime, it is something that has to do with the striving for unity – with the divine or within the human psyche. Lacan related the idea of meaning that is represented only to a certain extent to the impossibility of absolute knowledge or expression of the unconscious and the feminine once the subject enters into language. The purpose of this comparison is to illustrate the desire for something that is to a certain extent inaccessible and to relate this to the feminine ineffable's role in writing.

The demon's lack of flesh influences not just Merlin's own physical makeup, but also a reading of his mother's desire and its relation to the act of writing. Merlin's existence as part flesh, part incorporeal is also linked to the desire for poetic expression. His body, a signifier that only partly represents its signified, only points to his human component, but when the Dame du Lac removes it, Merlin's demonic nature becomes more apparent. Of course, language is limited in its expression and Merlin, in his desire and symbolic castration, also represents the poet, who is in a sense symbolically castrated, or entombed, by language's restrictions. Just as Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac define the limits of Merlin's corporeality, they also set the limits of the text and so represent the feminine ineffable's force on the poet and on the text. It is the relation to and his desire for the expression of this feminine ineffable that drive the poet to write, but also prevent him from expressing certain notions that are essentially non-linguistic.

Apollinaire's Merlin represents a unique rewriting of ancient, medieval, and modern ideas pertaining to corporeality that reflects his theory of poetic creation, which the conclusion to this study considers in detail. As Burgos writes, in Apollinaire's poetics, death is necessary to the creation of a new reality (*Apollinaire en somme*, 195).



Merlin's corporeal death brings about a new manifestation of his existence and exposes a certain grain of truth related to his desire. The theme of impossible love, so closely tied to Merlin's corporeal existence, is also intimately related to Apollinaire's representation of women in his work. It is the reason for Merlin's entombment and the driving force behind *L'Enchanteur*, but it is a theme that is carried out in many of Apollinaire's other works as well. The relation between Merlin and the Dame du Lac, the poet and expression of the elusive essence of the feminine ineffable, and even Apollinaire himself and the women who disappointed him is one of what Lacanian psychoanalysts would call essential non-rapport.

## 4. REPRESENTATIONS – WOMEN IN APOLLINAIRE’S WRITING

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Merlin’s predicament after his entombment in *L’Enchanteur pourrissant* is clarified by an understanding of the ancient and medieval philosophical basis of the body/soul dichotomy because the Enchanter, after his entombment, reverts to a spiritual existence, but at the same time, remains tied to his bodily remains. Since Merlin once possesses his own human body, he remains tied to it and cannot escape the confines of his tomb. The effects of the signifier that is his human flesh do not entirely leave him – they leave a trace, an impression on his essence. In 1986, Michel Décaudin wrote that *L’Enchanteur* is a work about Merlin’s entombment by Viviane’s evil deed and about his body that rots while his soul remains alive (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 74). An analysis of Merlin’s corporeality as influenced by his mother and the Dame du Lac corresponds to this synopsis, since Merlin’s entombment directly influences not only his bodily state, but also the story and text themselves. Still, the analysis presented herein diverges from Décaudin’s point of view by questioning the “evil” nature of Viviane, or the Dame du Lac’s actions. This analysis also calls attention to the essential contradiction in Merlin’s corporeal representation as neither entirely one of the body nor of the soul.

Décaudin aptly summed up the text as a work of a baroque complexity where all Apollinaire’s fantasies come to life: the impossibility of love, an obsession with the passing of time and the dream of eternity, a certain vision of the world, the quest for identity, and an exaltation of poetic creation (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 74). Indeed, all of these themes find their place in this enigmatic and complicated text. The first and last themes, those of the impossibility of love and the notion of poetic creation, are most pertinent to this study. The idea of impossible love is intimately related to the question of

Merlin's physical nature that forms the basis of this study. This is so because Merlin's (impossible) relationship with the Dame du Lac leads directly to his entombment and thus the loss of his corporeal existence. It becomes evident in the text through the use of the characters Merlin and the Dame du Lac and through the impossibility of a mutually satisfactory love between them. In order to clarify the representation of both the Dame du Lac and Merlin's mother, this chapter concentrates on critical approaches to representations of female characters in Apollinaire's work.

Critical studies of the representation of women in Apollinaire's writing abound, ranging from those focused on biographical criticism – how Apollinaire's interactions with women influenced his portrayal of female characters in his works – to studies of the role of desire in his texts. All of these approaches to the representation of women in Apollinaire's writings are valid and help to explain his work in one way or another. Critics have frequently considered these characters in light of the poet's life, notably in the character of Merlin's mother's resemblance to the poet's own mother and in similarities between the Dame du Lac's entombment of Merlin and Apollinaire's disappointments in love. Among these, we will consider studies by Michel Décaudin, Anne Clancier, Scott Bates, Claude Debon, Anna Boschetti, and Daniel Delbreil. Additionally, critical studies by Michel Décaudin, Jean Burgos, Scott Bates, Pierre Caizergues, Claude Debon, Madeleine Boisson, Margaret Davies, Françoise Dininman, and Marie-Jeanne Durry, among others, have linked the important theme of the impossibility of true enduring love to the poet's own amorous regret. The role of desire and the representation of misogynistic tendencies also have an important place in Apollinaire criticism. This chapter will consider studies by Raymond Jean, Yves Vadé,

Ignacio Velázquez, Susan Harrow, Anna Boschetti, and Pénélope Sacks Galey, among others to illuminate these themes. Certainly, as this brief listing demonstrates, the representation of women in Apollinaire's texts is a subject that has deservedly received much acclaimed critical attention in recent years.

For the purposes of organization, the existing criticism can be divided into two main categories. The first of these, biographical criticism explains the influence Apollinaire's life had on his representation of female characters. It divides into two main themes: 1) the influence Apollinaire's family structure and relationships had on his writing and 2) the influence his love life had on his work. Apollinaire's relationships with women, from his mother to his various loves, had much influence on how women are represented in his work. This is true of all of his writings, including, but not limited to *L'Enchanteur*. Our reading of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac stems from their representation in the text, but the studies in the following pages illuminate certain points of this representation. The reading this study will offer uses the existing biographical criticism as a starting point, but goes beyond considering female characters as representations of women in the poet's own life. The second category in our division of criticism looks at literary representations of what may be termed the terror and fascination with the idea of the feminine.<sup>1</sup> This fascination erodes into eroticized

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Pol Madou advanced the idea of simultaneous terror and fascination with feminine beauty in "Eros Solaire et figures du désir" (GA 17). He writes of the appeal the idea of the *blessure* of the female body had for Apollinaire – his writings contain many references to menstrual blood and symbolic wounding of the female body. This is linked to both the (transferred) desire for the mother's body (as castrated, as menstruating) and the desire for mastery and creative control. In this way, the wounded female body becomes eroticized and inspires both terror and fascination in the poet. The reading of the Dame du Lac's menstrual blood that chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac" offers is unrelated to any kind of wounding of the female body or any reading of menstrual blood in existing criticism on Apollinaire, however. See p. 230-234.

images of women and misogynistic tendencies, which are present in Apollinaire's rewriting of Merlin's tale, *L'Enchanteur*.

## 4.2 RELATIONSHIPS

### 4.2.1 The Mother – Critical Studies of the Influence Apollinaire's Relationship With His Mother Had on His Work

An understanding of Apollinaire's life, particularly his relationship with his mother, his absent father, and his troubled love affairs sheds light on a reading of his texts, and this is especially true of *L'Enchanteur*. Indeed, throughout his *Guillaume Apollinaire*, first published in 1967, Scott Bates remarks on how Apollinaire's life influenced his work. He writes of the Oedipal-like influence his life had on his writing: "How conscious Apollinaire became of what Freudians would now term the Oedipal import of his inheritance is evident in many passages in his writings" (26). Michel Décaudin also later wrote that all of the main themes of Apollinaire's life and personal myths find their representation in Merlin's story (Décaudin, *Présence d'Apollinaire*, 76). Bates also remarks that Apollinaire's major works, which include "Merlin et la vieille femme" and *L'Enchanteur*, come directly from the poet's own intimate experiences, mental as well as physical ("L'Erotisme," 86). These comments apply equally to the influence of Apollinaire's mother and to that of his love-interests.

Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac enter into a symbiotic relationship with Merlin in the text, so in a discussion of Merlin's corporeality such as this, it becomes impossible to speak of the Enchanter without considering the influence these female characters have and vice-versa. *L'Enchanteur*, like Apollinaire's other works, contains various intertextual references, including those to medieval texts, legend, ancient mythology and philosophy and even the poet's life. The questions we must ask include:

Are these references important to an understanding of the representation of female characters? How do critical studies that consider the influence of Apollinaire's mother on his work elucidate a reading of his texts? What is it about Apollinaire's upbringing that could influence him to (re) write a text about a medieval Enchanter, the son of a demon and a young girl, that is entombed alive by a sorceress and then remains trapped in his rotting body while his soul continues speaking? One readily evident response is that the young poet shares a family structure with the Enchanter. The similarities between his own life and the Enchanter's legendary existence provide answers to not only why this particular character would fascinate him, but also to questions concerning the use of certain textual episodes and motifs that are either not present or not emphasized in previous versions.

Wilhelm de Kostrowitzky was born in Italy to a young unmarried woman, Angélique de Kostrowitzky in late August 1874. The identity of his father is not specified, but he is believed to be Francesco Flugi d'Aspermont, the son of an illustrious Italian family (Décaudin, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 16). Both Apollinaire and Merlin are the sons of young unmarried women and mysterious strangers, so there is little wonder that the Enchanter held such interest for the young poet. Furthermore, both Angélique de Kostrowitzky and Merlin's mother in Apollinaire's text take control of their own sexuality, conceiving children from illegitimate unions.<sup>2</sup> Also, like Merlin's mother in most medieval versions of his tale, Apollinaire's mother, Angélique de Kostrowitzky, has

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<sup>2</sup> The text of the prose *Lancelot* includes the same aspect of the mother's control of her own sexuality: "La demoisele vint en aage de marier, mais an soi avoit une teche que ele disoit a son pere et a sa mere qu la mariassent il pas" (21) (The maiden became of marriageable age, but had a distinctive peculiarity about her that she told her father and mother that she would not marry.) The maiden goes on to conceive Merlin from her (extra-marital) union with a demon-lover that seems to correspond to her own desire, as chapter five, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother" demonstrates.

all the trappings of piety, having spent years in a convent school in Rome before being asked to leave because of her unruly nature (Décaudin, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 16).

Having a strong, often distant, mother, who may be considered sexually permissive, if not promiscuous, undoubtedly marked the poet's writing. Certainly the similarities between the Enchanter's and the poet's mothers cannot be ignored or brushed aside as mere coincidence. Like the text of *L'Enchanteur*, Apollinaire's relationship with his mother is ambiguous and contradictory. His work gives evidence of both the desire for maternal love and acceptance and that for a distancing from the mother figure. For example, the themes of fertility (and sterility) and of the only child are prevalent in his writing. The Mormon wives' fecundity in *La Femme assise* is an example of the fertility theme: "la fécondité de ses femmes augmentait l'activité de l'homme au fur et à mesure que grandissaient les besoins du ménage" (Pr I, 452). But then in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin's mother is an only child (Clancier, "Amour parental," 15).<sup>3</sup>

Anne Clancier links the similarities between the Enchanter's mother and Apollinaire's own mother to the theme of the only child in "Amour parental et amour filial dans l'œuvre de Guillaume Apollinaire." She proposes that Apollinaire experienced a sort of oedipal rivalry with his brother who was seen to succeed, while he was engaged in literary pursuits that his mother did not value (15). She suggests that perhaps the theme of the only child reflects an unconscious desire on the part of the poet to be the only beloved of his mother (15).

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<sup>3</sup> In the fact that she is an only child, Apollinaire's representation follows that of the prose *Lancelot*, but differs from that of Robert de Boron's *Merlin* and the Vulgate *L'Estoire de Merlin*, the other medieval texts that mention her family situation. In Robert's text and its later rewriting, she has sisters.

The images of incest (with the mother) that pepper Apollinaire's writing are also related to the theme of rivalry for the mother's affection. Scott Bates supports the idea of an oedipal theme in *L'Enchanteur* in his *Guillaume Apollinaire*, noting that the character Angélique shares not only her name with the poet's mother, but also her age (26). The character is depicted as forty while Apollinaire's mother was in her forties at the time of the writing. Bates relates the rape sequence in *L'Enchanteur* to a representation of Apollinaire's relationship with his mother in his article, "L'Erotisme dans les premiers grands poèmes d'Apollinaire" (87). Incest and violence are mixed in this enigmatic and troubling scene: "Ils violèrent tour à tour l'irréalité raisonnable, belle et formelle de la faussement vivante Angélique" (Pr I, 33). Sexually liberated ("La vivante n'est pas virginale" Pr I, 32), Angélique represents the antithesis to the theme of impossible love. She does experience love, even a love that heals: "Il était mourant, le jeune homme que je recueillis, un jour, que je guéris et qui m'aima comme je l'aimai" (Pr I, 31). We will continue the analysis of Angélique below, but at this point, her relationship to the poet's own mother is of interest. In this, she represents both sexual freedom and a higher form of love. Higher love is not like the (impossible) love between men and women, but akin to unconditional love, since it is a love that heals and is not encumbered by sexual difference. This passage, according to Bates in, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, "thus becomes a kind of incestuous episode in which the entombed (wombed) Merlin-Apollinaire is redeemed" (26). After the rape scene, Merlin says, "Mon âme est triste jusqu'à la mort à cause de ma Noël funéraire, cette nuit dramatique où une forme irréaliste, raisonnable et perdue a été damnée à ma place" (Pr I, 37). As Bates' quote above demonstrates, Angélique's rape saves Merlin on some level.



Bates' choice of *wombed* is an interesting word to describe Merlin's predicament after the Dame du Lac entombs him. After his entombment, Merlin is essentially in the same state as he was before his birth. He does not have a bodily existence to speak of, although his soul is not free. It is trapped in the tomb by a female character upon which it is utterly dependent. The tomb acts as a sort of substitute womb for Merlin, albeit one that, rather than giving life to the body, takes life away. Indeed, Merlin's existence is similar to an unborn child's – as mentioned, he is in a female space, dependent on a woman, but like the child, he is also undergoing a transformation and a sort of rebirth. Merlin's transformation, initiated by the Dame du Lac brings him into a new form of existence. In a reversal of birth, Merlin is reborn from a physical life in the world to a spiritual existence removed from physical interaction with the world. The progression from womb to tomb/womb is a spatial representation of Merlin's corporeal transformation.

It is in large part the strength and independence of Angélique de Kostrowitzky that lead to Apollinaire's desire for her affection and need for distance. This, coupled with the poet's failures in love, appear to have influenced what are seen as misogynistic tendencies in his writing. Anne Clancier notes this, writing that the theme of the phallic mother is, without a doubt, related to the poet's family structure ("Amour parental," 17). The phallic mother is a reference to the (imaginary) all-powerful state of the mother in psychoanalytic theory. Lacan writes: "la mère est primordialement toute-puissante ... tous les objets fantasmatiques primitifs se trouvent réunis dans l'immense contenant du corps maternel" (*Le Séminaire IV*, 185). However, if the mother retains this impression of all-powerfulness after the mirror stage (the stage where the child recognizes itself as a

distinct individual), this could produce a sense of helplessness in the child (Lacan, *Le Séminaire IV*, 185). This might explain some of Apollinaire's attachment to the maternal figure in his work. Additionally, the apparent misogyny in his work may have been a way to regain control over the seemingly all-powerful female body.

Julia Kristeva's Phallic Mother is also one whose physical body plays a vital role. Like Lacan's image of the (imaginary) *mère toute-puissante*, in *Polylogue*, Kristeva writes of an all-powerful mother figure. She relates her Phallic Mother to the phallus: she gives the illusion of access to the (imaginary) original state of unity (204-205). Kristeva's Phallic Mother is also the first other, and so the first object of desire. This leads to what she calls "incest of the son" and relates to the *jouissance* of the poet: "le mythe grec est crevé: un inceste non œdipien le remplace qui ouvre les yeux au sujet se nourrissant de sa mère (205). Her Phallic Mother is all-powerful, but also nurturing. However, Kristeva also refers to a conflict with the Phallic Mother, a comment that is pertinent to Apollinaire's work:

La guerre n'est pourtant jamais finie, et le poète aura toujours à se mesurer à la mère, à sa double face: rassurante-régénérante, d'une part, et castratrice-légiférante-socialisante, d'autre part ... Le discours d'un savoir agressif et musiqué s'ensuit, qui attaque la puissance phallique à chaque fois qu'il la voit se constituer sous les hospices de la mère; mais sans oublier de puiser la vérité que ce conflit a laissé échapper (206-207).

Apollinaire's writing vacillates between exhibiting men's undying and faithful love for women (i.e.: Merlin's love for the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur*) and what have been considered misogynistic and sadistic representations (i.e.: references to the mutilation of the female body, the rape of Angélique in *L'Enchanteur*, and the reference to the Dame du Lac's menstruation in *L'Enchanteur*). It would be logical to assume that a reaction to his own mother's seemingly all-powerful, "phallic" nature influenced this tendency in his

work. Kristeva writes, “Le ‘poète’ serait-il le sujet qui ne s’est pas banalement arrêté à la sortie de l’enfance en oubliant, mais sillonne son arrière-pays et, enfant anamnésique, retrouve sa mère phallique pour laisser trace de leur conflit dans la langue même? ... Toute ‘elle’ prend place désormais dans cette constellation” (209). By the same psychic process of transference the subject unconsciously uses to transfer desire for the (imaginary state of unity with the) mother to a more socially-acceptable love object, the poet/subject also transfers the simultaneous attraction to and conflict with the Phallic Mother to other women.

Both Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac exemplify aspects of the phallic mother related to power and authority, which the following chapters consider in greater detail. At this time, however, it is important to note the control they exert over their sexuality and Merlin’s existence. Merlin’s mother takes control of her own sexuality first by refusing her parents’ wishes for her to marry, second by enunciating the desire that actually creates her demon lover, and third by satiating her desire with this demon. The Dame du Lac controls both her own and Merlin’s sexual reality by tricking him into believing that he has enjoyed a sexual relationship with her.<sup>4</sup> The analysis of these women this study advances departs from the traditional critical studies in that it takes into account this aspect of control in their representations.

Critics have often linked the notion of equating feminine strength and negative qualities with what they consider Apollinaire’s mother’s overbearing nature. In their review of the poet’s correspondence with his brother and mother for *La Revue des Lettres*

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<sup>4</sup> “Merlin lui enseigne ce qu’elle demande et la demoiselle écrit les paroles qu’elle entend, dont elle se servait toutes les fois qu’il venait à elle. Et il s’endormait incontinent. De cette manière, elle le mena très longtemps et quand il la quittait, il pensait toujours avoir couché avec elle” (Pr I, 8-9).

*Modernes*, Gilbert Boudar and Michel Décaudin even go so far as to raise the question of abuse in the maternal-filial relationship (153). They underline the poet's seeming desire to escape his mother's overbearing influence and to find his own voice through writing (154-156). Claude Debon also notes this quest for personal identity apart from maternal authority in *Apollinaire en somme*, writing that Apollinaire's choice of a pseudonym reflects a desire to refuse father and mother in order to recreate himself (42). The poet needed to escape the confines of a "deuil impossible du père absent, l'image effrayante de la mère en putain" resulting in his creation of a sort of superman (Merlin): "n'ayant plus d'histoire, le poète va chercher dans les mythes et les légendes d'autres modèles" (55). Debon also notes that Apollinaire mixes the autobiographical character of his work with recourse to myth and legend, thus providing not only a distance from his own life, but also a form of escape (82). This becomes obvious in *L'Enchanteur* where Merlin's mother merges with the poet's and then with the character Angélique, blurring the borders of legend and autobiography.

Along the same lines, Anna Boschetti writes that in "Le Poète assassiné" mystery and the idea of the bastard become converted to signs of exceptional birth and destiny (43). The same theme of distinctiveness is present in *L'Enchanteur*, with the bastard (Merlin) becoming the superman of which Claude Debon writes. Apollinaire built upon the existing character to create a new legend in a new legendary forest. According to Debon and Boschetti's theories, his family structure and overbearing mother led to his interest in Merlin and to the desire to lose himself in the legend. They led him, in effect, to create a new world in which bastardy is a mark of distinction with Apollinaire/Merlin the author and creator of this world.

In Apollinaire's work feminine strength and virility are often linked to other, more negative qualities, with strong women being painted as aggressive, dangerous, and castrating, even neglecting their duties as mother (Clancier, "Amour parental," 9, 16). In *L'Enchanteur*, female characters are painted in a negative light. Even Merlin's mother is not the epitome of a virtuous young maiden, rather she is a sexually permissive woman who has intercourse with a demon and conceives an illegitimate child. While the portrayals of female characters may be considered misogynistic, it is more important to consider them in light of what they bring to the text. In this respect, the "negative" image of women in *L'Enchanteur* is related to the theme of impossible love.

Although the theme of the phallic mother is particularly strong in Apollinaire's work is well represented in critical studies, the phallic nature of Merlin's mother is rarely commented upon. Indeed, she does not garner much critical attention apart from her similarity to the poet's own mother. Although Clancier does mention her refusal, the issue of control of one's own sexuality does not come into play. Merlin's mother's creative desire in the scene of the Enchanter's conception is very powerful. This is true of Apollinaire's text and of the medieval prose *Lancelot* from which Apollinaire takes the passage. The analysis presented in this study is different from the existing critical approaches in its consideration of the roles Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac play in his corporeal existence and the relationship this has to the poetic act. The physical existence that Merlin inherits from his mother and that the Dame du Lac takes away forms the basis for Apollinaire's tale. In this, these characters are vital elements of the text. They are not just a means by which the Enchanter gains or loses physical being, or a reflection of the women in the poet's life.

#### 4.2.2 (Failed) Love - Critical Studies of the Influence Apollinaire's Relationships With Women Had on His Work

Even as Apollinaire's relationship with his mother had an impact on his writing, so did his relationships with other women over the years. Apollinaire's writing is marked by the theme of impossible love, which can be traced to his amorous disappointments. This is a theme that takes center stage in *L'Enchanteur*, with the vast majority of the text dealing with Merlin and the Dame du Lac *after* the initial action of his entombment. The entombment itself is the primary act of the work; the central factor contributing to the way the events of the poem play out. It is the pivotal point of the text, from which all else springs. It is not the main theme, however. The theme of the impossibility of true, enduring love permeates the text, resurfacing at key moments throughout, from the opening lines to the last words. Michel Décaudin, in the introduction to his edition of the text, writes of the theme of love that is desired but impossible to realize (XXXI). Likewise, Scott Bates proposes that Merlin is "buried underground by a sterile ignorant love" and that his death symbolizes "the living death of unrequited love" (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 22-23). In a similar vein, Léon Somville writes of "La Chanson du mal-aimé" that death sometimes signifies the loss of the love object and the treason of the unfaithful woman, an observation that can also explain the Dame du Lac's entombment of Merlin in *L'Enchanteur* (38). Claude Debon writes that *L'Enchanteur* is "le scénario déceptif de l'amour" (*Apollinaire en somme*, 63), with, on one side, magical powers while on the other, the degradation of the hero (57). This aptly sums up the ambiguity of the text and of Merlin's predicament in general. On the one hand we have the powerful Enchanter, privy to otherworldly knowledge and on the other, a victim of love.

Recalling Michel Décaudin's comment that all of the major events in Apollinaire's life found their way into his books (*Presence d'Apollinaire*, 76), it is not far to draw the conclusion that much of the representation of this theme of impossible love is directly related in one way or another to the poet's own failed relationships. The link between his rupture with Annie Playden in 1903 and the "Chanson du mal-aimé" is well known and often cited in critical studies (Décaudin, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 51). Pénélope Sacks Galey, like Décaudin, mentions that in many of Apollinaire's works, the story revolves around "les choses piquantes de l'amour" and the poet's identification with one of his characters ("Apollinaire ou l'échec de Faust," 191). Undoubtedly this describes the situation between Merlin and the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur*. Décaudin also proposes the idea that Apollinaire dreams his love more than he lives it and reproaches his beloved for not conforming more exactly to the image he made of her (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 62). This is certainly how Merlin relates to the Dame du Lac in most versions of his tale in which she plays a part. He creates a fantasy love object that does not conform to reality. As proof of this, consider his steadfast belief in her love for him. Merlin believes that the Dame du Lac shares his love both emotionally and physically: "quand il la quittait, il pensait toujours avoir couché avec elle" (Pr I, 9). Of course this is because she tricks him into believing exactly what she wants, but it is Merlin who creates a certain image of her in his mind and who believes this image to be a true representation.

In Apollinaire's writing, Pierre Caizergues notes, the figure of the woman often becomes more than a representation of an individual woman and takes on the trappings of myth; images of women become symbols of Love incarnate ("De la femme allemande à la fille-soldat," 28). As another example of the tendency to invest the figure of the

beloved with legendary qualities, Madeleine Boisson writes of what she calls the divinisation of the beloved. She cites letters to Lou in which Apollinaire compares her to “beautés célèbres du passé,” such as Hélène, Salomé, and Cleopatra (“La Figure mythique de Lou,” 220-221).

Pierre Caizergues also comments that the poet’s representation of women is often ambiguous. Indeed, the divinization of the beloved is a feature in Apollinaire’s writing, but so too are more negative representations of women and those of violence toward female characters. This is certainly related to the investing of the love object with the trappings of fantasy.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the poet/subject creates, in effect, a fantasy object in the place of a woman. For Apollinaire, Caizergues surmises, women are at the same time objects of desire and of rejection. Love and rejection are in this way linked. He attributes this ambiguity and the resulting conflictual and painful relationship between men and women to the innate differences between them (“De la femme allemande à la fille-soldat,” 27-28). This echoes the prevailing theme of *L’Enchanteur: les éternités différentes de l’homme et de la femme*. Merlin is separated from the Dame du Lac by this essential difference; their love is impossible. Pénélope Sacks Galey also comments on this projection of desires and fantasies on the other (194). *L’Enchanteur* is a perfect example of this tendency. Merlin invests the Dame du Lac with qualities she does not have, the most important of which is her (imaginary) love for him. He makes her into his fantasy love object, the incarnation of his desire. However, she is not who he believes her to be – she is not like him, although Merlin cannot see this essential truth about her. She

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<sup>5</sup> This is also related to the investing of the phallic mother, especially in Julia Kristeva’s conception, with an (imaginary) all-powerful nature and to the (unresolved) conflict with her seemingly all-powerful character that the poet expresses in his/her work (discussed on pages 112-113).



is other, different. Their love in this text is impossible because of *les éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme*. The abyss of sexual difference and what Lacanian psychoanalysis would refer to as the impossibility of fulfilling desire separate him from her. Merlin's love for the Dame du Lac is doomed from the start by its very impossibility.

This does not stop either him or Apollinaire, for that matter, from dreaming. Indeed, Lacanian psychoanalysis would say that the separation between Merlin and the Dame du Lac fuels his desire for her. As any subject faced with the reality that the beloved does not match the fantasy love object, the truth of this impossibility is overwhelming. As Michel Décaudin has expressed, the relationship with the real can only be conflictual or disastrous (*Apollinaire en somme*, 146). Apollinaire, in life and in his works, seemed to create a fantasy of his beloved. When the fantasy crumbled and he was left with the reality of what he saw as the impossibility of love, the poet tended to demonize the figure of the beloved. Madeleine Boisson notes this in relation to Lou, but it is a far-reaching trend in Apollinaire's writing ("La Figure mythique de Lou," 228). This recalls the theme of strong women being painted as evil and aggressive that Anne Clancier notes in "Amour parental." Critics have traditionally considered the Dame du Lac's actions as evil.<sup>6</sup> She entombs Merlin, killing his body, ending his corporeal existence, and trapping his soul in the tomb for all eternity. However, Merlin is a representation of the Antichrist. The Dame du Lac is "evil" in the text not because of her actions – entrapping the Antichrist would normally be considered a positive act – but because of her deception. Once again, Merlin's entombment in *L'Enchanteur* has more to

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the previously cited quotation from Décaudin about Viviane's "evil deed" (*Guillaume Apollinaire*, 74).

do with the theme of impossible love than with “evil” intentions on the Dame du Lac’s part.

Although the focus of this study remains Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac, there are other “dangerous” and “aggressive” female characters in *L’Enchanteur* that warrant attention. After Merlin’s entombment, a parade of “violent” and “aggressive” women enters the picture. We see Lilith, Adam’s first wife, who refused to submit to his authority. She is traditionally a symbol of menstruation, sterility, and lesbianism (Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 162-163). She arrives in the forest after the serpents, frogs, lizards and guivres.<sup>7</sup> The serpents announce her arrival, recalling her brief stay in the Garden of Eden and underlining her ignoble nature: “Qui donc ulule si lamentablement. Ce n’est pas un oiseau nocturne. La voix est plus qu’humaine ... Nous l’avons vue celle qui ulule, elle était dans le paradis terrestre en même temps que nous-mêmes” (Pr I, 23). Her cry is inhuman – she is like a howling animal. Apollinaire carries this image further, when another character, a priest likens her to an animal: “Lilith clame, comme un animal dans la plaine” (Pr I, 23). This paints a picture of a pathetic, lamentable creature, not a strong woman who refused to submit to her husband’s authority. Apollinaire also plays on the similarity in the sounds of the words *mer* and *mère*; his Lilith bemoans the loss of her children: “Mes enfants sont pour moi, première mère, mes enfants sont pour moi. Hélas! O fuite! O méchanceté des hiérarchies! O fuite! Hélas! J’ai oublié le nom des anges qui m’ont poursuivie. Hélas! Comme la mer rouge est lointaine!” (Pr I, 23). Lilith decries the cruelty of hierarchies – the unfairness of men’s domination over women, but what

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<sup>7</sup> Guivres are mythical beasts, one of which was turned into a princess by a kiss in the *Bel Inconnu* (Bates, *GA*, 160). In *L’Enchanteur*, they seek a kiss: “Nous voudrions le baiser sur nos lèvres que nous léchons pour les faire paraître plus rouges” (Pr I, 22).

Apollinaire portrays as peculiar is her rebellion against this structure rather than the structure itself. His depiction of her maternal role is ambiguous – it is not clear whether it is the loss of her children that she laments or the idea that the children of Eve – mankind – should have been hers. In any case, she is relieved of her suffering by the priest's prayers: "éloignez vos anges de cette mère, éloignez vos bons anges de cette mère, ô Seigneur, ô Seigneur, parce qu'elle est mère" (Pr I, 24). After this, Lilith leaves, presumably returning to her home in the Red Sea. This mirrors the Dame du Lac's final departure: "La dame ne s'arrêta qu'au bord de son lac. ... et s'enfonçant sous les flots danseurs, gagna son beau palais dormant, plein de lueurs de gemmes, au fond du lac" (Pr I, 72).

The next in the procession of aggressive women is *Urgande la Méconnue* – *sorcière sans balai*. Like the others in the parade in front of Merlin's tomb, she is looking for the Enchanter. She continues the religious reversal of Merlin's representation: "Certainement, parmi ce qu'il y a de plus rare au monde, on peut compter la merde de pape, mais un peu de celle de celui qui est mort me satisferait mieux" (Pr I, 29). She is not seeking the Enchanter's dead body, however, but a commodity even more rare (his *merde*). As she says, she has no wish to sleep with a dead body and what else can one do with a dead body other than sleep? This recalls both the sexual imagery that we will see is associated with the Dame du Lac sitting on the cold slab of Merlin's tomb and the scene of Merlin's entombment in the medieval *Prophecies*. In the medieval text, the Dame du Lac entices Merlin into the tomb by promising the eternal union of their remains:

Jou bee, fait ele, a estre avoec toi tout mon eage et quant iou serai trespassee de cest siecle ausi voel iou que mi os soient mis en cele tombe la. Et quant tu morras, iou te pri

tant com iou puis proier que tu te faces metre en ceste tombe avoec moi, dont m'ame en sera asses plus a aise (94). (I desire, she said, to be with you all my life and when I will have surpassed my time [here] I also want my bones put in this tomb. And when you die, I beg you as much as I can beg that you have yourself put in this tomb with me, so my soul will be more at ease.)

In the *Prophecies*, the Dame du Lac misleads Merlin with false promises. Urgande's words are quite possibly a reference to this deception, since Apollinaire borrowed other material from the *Prophecies*.

After Urgande, three women that Apollinaire calls "magiciennes" appear: Médée, who killed her own children, Dalila, who symbolically castrated her lover, rendering him helpless, and Hélène, whose mythical and dangerous beauty started a war. Médée and Dalila laud the Dame du Lac's actions in entombing Merlin. Médée says: "J'embrasserais volontiers celle qui a fait mourir l'enchanteur" (Pr I, 30). Dalila responds: "Nous aimions toutes deux, mais différemment. Tu aimais les hommes forts; moi je fus la femme forte. La dame qui enchantait l'enchanteur lui coupa sans doute la chevelure, suivant mon exemple" (Pr I, 30). They love by destroying. Rather than praising their strength, Apollinaire portrays them as ridiculous – jealous vindictive women whose only desire is to cause men's downfall. They argue over which one of them most offended her lover. Dalila says: "Marâtre, tu donnas la Toison à l'argonaute. Moi, je coupai la chevelure de mon amant" (Pr I, 30). Médée responds: "Chercheuse de poux, ne parle pas d'enchantelements. Un chevelu devient ridicule après avoir été tondu .. Et même tout fut vain à cause de toi. L'homme fut plus fort contre toi, contre toutes" (Pr I, 30). According to this representation, strength is equivalent to a desire to dominate men.

Hélène, however, expresses her desire to control men differently. Instead of overtly strong-arming men into doing what she wants, she uses her feminine wiles and trickery to control her lovers. She says:

Je l'avoue, lorsque j'aimai le berger troyen et qu'il m'aima, j'avais plus de quarante ans. Mais mon corps était beau et blanc ... J'étais belle comme aujourd'hui ... J'étais bien belle, car j'avais su conserver ma beauté en restant nue et en m'exerçant chaque jour à la lutte. Je savais aussi (car Polydamne me l'avait appris en Egypte) me servir des herbes pour en faire des fards et des philtres. Je suis belle et je repars toujours, prestige ou réalité, amante heureuse et féconde et jamais je n'ai tondu mes amants, ni tué mes enfants (Pr I, 31).

She is not as she appears to be – she hides the truth of her age and true self from her lovers and uses the mask of beauty that she assumes to get what she wants. Hélène is an example of dangerous feminine beauty that would inspire Jean-Pol Madou's phrase "terror and fascination with feminine beauty." Her body's whiteness recalls images of (virginal) purity. Also, whiteness corresponds to the poetic act in that it implies the blank page before the poet has written upon it. However, the beauty of her white body is not a true representation. The powders and potions she uses give her the illusion of beauty. By covering her body with these powders, she conceals its true nature with a mask. This mask is the appearance she wants to portray. This represents the idea that feminine beauty is misleading and cannot be trusted, much like the words of the text that should not be taken at face value in the Pseudo-Dionysius' theory.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, the Dame du Lac uses unguents and ointments to paint herself as younger and more beautiful than she truly is in the medieval *Prophecies*.<sup>9</sup> She uses the mask that she makes for herself to ensnare Merlin. Like the Dame du Lac, Hélène is an example of the woman whose

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<sup>8</sup> The Pseudo-Dionysius' theory of the dangers related to attending only to the words of the text without regard to what higher meaning they might have is discussed in chapter three, p. 108-110.

<sup>9</sup> See chapter six, "Apollinaire rewriting the Dame du Lac" p. 239-241.

beauty masks her true nature. Her feminine wiles and trickery are just as dangerous as Médée and Dalila's overt violence, if not more so, since they are veiled.

The next woman to appear is Angélique. As mentioned earlier, she is often read as a representation of Apollinaire's own (strong) mother. Angélique, however, speaks only of love and questions whether a woman could be capable of killing a man: "Il était mourant, le jeune homme que je recueillis, un jour, que je guéris et qui m'aima comme je l'aimai. J'avais quarante ans alors et j'étais plus belle que jamais. Non, non, il n'y a pas de raison pour qu'une femme tue un homme" (Pr I, 31). Her words echo those of Hélène – *she was forty, but more beautiful than ever* – bringing Hélène's false nature to the representation of Angélique. However, in Angélique, this is a reversed mirroring, since she represents a higher love, as seen in her love's healing powers and the fact that her lover returned her love – he loved her *the same way that she loved him*. This implies not only a reciprocal love, but one that is similar in nature. Angélique's love is the only example of love that can overcome the essential difference between men and women. She is not chaste – she admits: "Je ne suis pas vierge, mais reine, amante et bien nommée" (Pr I, 32). Apollinaire represents his Angélique as sexually liberated, happy, and loving. She says: "A la vérité, je suis vivante et amante heureuse" (Pr I, 32). She loves and seems to be in a state of fulfilled desire, as the expression *amante heureuse* would imply. A happy lover is one that is satisfied and fulfilled. But, it is perhaps her very fulfillment, the fact that she alone is able to experience the love that eludes all others, that leads to her death and damnation. Le Chœur Inouï des Hiérarchies Célestes says: "Elle a oublié tout ce qui est païen, magique et même naturel" (Pr I, 33). Angélique does not adhere to the rules of nature, so, in a scene reminiscent of the "game" instigated by Béhémouth where the

animals discover which ones will be the first to die as a result of their copulation, she must die. Immediately following their statement, Le Chœur Masculin brutally rapes Angélique, which leads to her death: “Ils violèrent tour à tour l’irréalité raisonnable, belle et formelle de la faussement vivante Angélique. La forêt profonde et obscure s’emplit de vieux cris de volupté. La vivante palpita longtemps et puis mourut d’être toujours blessée” (Pr I, 33).

After Angélique’s violent death, three fairies appear in the forest, Madoine, Lorie, and Hélior. Their conversation centers on trickery and falseness in love. Madoine says: “S’il a été trompé, c’est justice” (Pr I, 36). Coming just after the scene of Angélique’s rape, this sounds like something of a justification of the violence. Hélior says, “La dame n’a pas trompé l’enchanteur” (Pr I, 36). Are they speaking of the Dame du Lac or of Angélique? The ambiguity leads to either interpretation. In any case, their conversation serves to reinforce the idea of the deceptive nature of love.

Daniel Delbreil remarks that *L’Enchanteur* showcases an obsession with feminine infidelity and agonizing masculine fidelity (“Remarques sur l’inspiration religieuse,” 68). Similarly, Margaret Davies mentions the theme of the falseness of the woman and of love in “Chanson” although her observation applies to Merlin’s perception of the Dame du Lac in *L’Enchanteur* as well (“La Chanson du mal-aimé,” 10). Michel Décaudin also mentions this theme, noting that love is equated with frustration, while the (beloved) woman is represented as lying and futile (*Apollinaire en somme*, 144). Claude Debon even goes so far as to say that there does not exist a happy love in Apollinaire’s writing and that the figure of the woman, whatever her appearance may be, remains deceptive (*Apollinaire en somme*, 64-66). However, even though the theme of the Dame du Lac’s

trickery finds its way into the text, a spirit of essential difference and fate prevails. Just one of the ways in which this becomes evident in the text is in Merlin's attitude toward the Dame du Lac. In *L'Enchanteur*, it is less aggressively accusatory than sadly accepting of his fate.

One of Apollinaire's major disappointments in love was his relationship with Annie Playden. Certainly this influenced his work, especially the theme of impossible love. The loss of Annie as inspiration for *La Chanson du mal-aimé* has become an uncontested standard in critical circles. Timothy Mathews mentions Annie's influence in the preface to his *Reading Apollinaire*, citing it as a matter of "Apollinaire folklore" (x). This disappointment is also linked to *L'Enchanteur*, although most of the text – the original, central portion, first published in 1904 – was written before the poet even met Annie. Certain themes discussed earlier are already present in these chapters, such as the seemingly negative portrayal of female characters. The theme of impossible love between Merlin and the Dame du Lac also finds its place; however, it is more emphatic after the additions of the first and last chapters, which Apollinaire added in 1909, after the end of his relationship with Annie. Jean Burgos writes that *L'Enchanteur* becomes a "question désespérée d'amour" only after the poet's first failures in love ("Un poème prototype," 104).

Critics generally agree that much of Apollinaire's work emphasizes the notion of love that is desired, but impossible to realize. Jean Burgos writes of this theme in relation to Merlin and the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XXXI). Pierre Brunel, however has a less pessimistic opinion of the poem, citing the theme of spring as indicative of an atmosphere of rejuvenation, new beginnings, and renewed love



(“Apollinaire entre deux mondes,” 46). While springtime does signify renewal and new beginnings, these do not have to do with renewed love between Merlin and the Dame du Lac. The rebirth and renewal the theme of spring suggests has to do with Merlin’s existence. Although death would appear to be in contrast to spring’s traditional association with renewal, through his corporeal death Merlin enters a new level of existence that is neither life nor death. The Dame du Lac’s words in the following quote further relate spring to the inevitability of death: “Ainsi tout est juste dans l’univers: le vieil enchanteur décevant et déloyal est mort et quand je serai vieille, le printemps et la danse des petits flots me feront mourir” (Pr I, 11). Springtime brings about death in a natural progression that is a renewal in the sense of a changed existence.<sup>10</sup> In the same spirit of inevitability, the theme of spring also points to the death – or impossibility – of love, rather than implying a renewal of romance. It makes *les éternités différentes de l’homme et de la femme* even more poignant. For example, the last chapter of the poem before *Onirocritique* ends with the Enchanter imploring the Dame du Lac to remember their love and lamenting both her disinterest in this love and the reality of its impossibility: “O toi que j’aimais, te souviens-tu de notre amour?” (Pr I, 71). Merlin uses the past tense, indicating his belief that their love was at one time mutual. It also reveals that even he realizes that love no longer exists between them.

But, not only is their love doomed, there is also no hope of adequate communication between them:

A cet instant qui était celui où, défleuri, le printemps finissait, la dame du lac pâlit, se dressa, souleva avec une hâte audacieuse sa robe immaculée et s’éloigna de la tombe; mais la voix de l’enchanteur s’éleva plus forte en une question désespérée d’amour

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter six, “Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac” continues the discussion of the theme of spring with regard to the Dame du Lac’s role in the text in greater detail. In this discussion, spring signifies the cyclic nature of the feminine ineffable’s influence on the text. See p. 217-222.

survivant au trépas, une question qui voulait tant une réponse que la dame, à quelques pas du tombeau hésita ... Mais, soudain, la dame du lac s'élança, et ... courut longtemps, sans se retourner (Pr I, 71-72).

While Merlin desperately implores the Dame du Lac to respond to him, she turns and leaves, only hesitating at the sound of his voice before dashing off into the forest never to be seen again. Does she not hear him? Does she not care? Does she not understand his words? While this would seem to be a cruel and heartless act, rather than representing the “evil” and “deceitful” nature of women, it depicts essential sexual difference. The Dame du Lac cannot respond to Merlin’s *question désespérée d’amour* because it is a question that has no response. In this way, the impossibility of love in *L’Enchanteur* relates to the Lacanian bar in the sign and the impossibility of sexual rapport. There is something – the answer to Merlin’s question, the meaning of the sign, the feminine ineffable – that at least partially escapes linguistic representation.

#### 4.3 THE TERROR AND FASCINATION WITH FEMININE BEAUTY

##### 4.3.1 Desire

Jean-Pol Madou coined the phrase “terror and fascination with feminine beauty” (“Eros Solaire,” 51). It aptly describes the representation of women in Apollinaire’s writing. There is evidence of both fascination and terror in his depictions of female characters, as his use of both exalted female figures and representations of degradation show. This is closely related to the theme of desire in his works, with his images of fascination stemming from those of desire.

Ignacio Velázquez offers an interpretation of desire in Apollinaire’s writing in “La Projection du désir chez Apollinaire les ‘Poèmes secrets.’” His explanation of this

role incorporates the subject, the object, and the idea of difference (161-162).<sup>11</sup> He surmises that the subject experiences difference as a lack, for which the object would be responsible. This theory explains the way desire works to Merlin's downfall in *L'Enchanteur*. The subject is Merlin, and the object, the Dame du Lac. Merlin sees her as what will complete him. Also, since Merlin sees the Dame du Lac as this completing element, then she is what he perceives as missing and he holds her responsible for the lack he experiences as a longing to be with her. According to Velázquez, the subject/poet takes possession of the object through the act of writing (172). This relates to general existing criticism on the representation of women in Apollinaire's writing by implying that Apollinaire used his writing as a way to master or possess the elusive beloved woman that escaped him over and over.

Similarly, Françoise Dininman relates desire to difference. She interprets its role in Apollinaire's work as a union of opposites ("Les Sept épées," 95). Rather than psychoanalytic theory, however, she uses the concept of alchemy – the ancient and medieval "science" that had as its goal the transmutation of matter – to explain the role desire has in Apollinaire's text. The idea of using alchemy to explain the text of *L'Enchanteur* is appealing, since it is a text of oppositions, beginning and ending with the innate difference between men and women. It is at the same time, the expression of this difference and the locus of their union. Merlin's desire does perform a transformative function, leading him to his entombment and the loss of his corporeal existence. Although the love between Merlin and the Dame du Lac is neither satisfying nor

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<sup>11</sup> This is similar to the Lacanian theory of the Other and the subject's perception of the love object as what will fulfill the unconscious primary desire for unity.

successful, together they express the theme of impossible love and are, in this way, united in and by that shared experience in the text itself.

Yves Vadé also writes of the role of desire in Merlin's tale, saying that the belief in the all powerful nature of desire and the wish to transform this desire into a form that is capable of empowering gestures or symbolic formulas is at the base of all magic. An example of this is the textual transformation of a female figure into the imaginary woman and finally into the imaginary object of desire (*L'Enchantement Littéraire*, 112). In Vadé's view, writing is a way to recreate lost unity in and through the text (112). In *L'Enchanteur* this process is evident in the poetic construction of the first creative union, that of Merlin's mother and her demon lover, called into being by her own words to conform to her specifications. This first union is a textual and verbal fulfillment of desire, a desire formed and accomplished in the words of the text. The process of desire is also evident in the second textual union, that of Merlin and the Dame du Lac. Although these characters never experience unity in love, in the text Merlin and the Dame du Lac form a textual entity. Together, they represent a symbiotic unit that the poet uses to express the impossibility of love and the futility of desire. He accomplishes this through an exposition of their difference.

Desire as a driving force is closely related to the eroticization of the beloved. It is the creation of a fantasy, one that satisfies the poet's requirements, in one way or another, for a love-object. This poetic recourse to erotic images is at the same time the linguistic and textual creation of a fantasy love object and a way to take possession of this object. In Apollinaire's work the erotic often represents this longing for mastery. Raymond Jean

notes this, saying that eroticization is a linguistic possession of the beloved, a last recourse against the damaging effects of love (“L’ erotique d’ Apollinaire,” 144).

#### 4.3.2 Violence and Fragmentation

It is not far from desire to fantasy, from fantasy to the erotic, from the erotic to desire for possession, and finally from this desire for possession to violence. Susan Harrow notes the shift from desire to images of violence in “Iconoclasm and Desire in the Early Poems of Apollinaire.” She notes the displacement of desire from the woman as a whole to the fetishization of a body part (120). For example, in *Poème XXIV à Lou* Apollinaire laments the absence of correspondence from Lou saying,

Je baise tes cheveux mon unique trésor  
Et qui de ton amour furent le premier gage  
Ta voix mon souvenir s’éloigne ô son du cor (Po, 412).

Apollinaire praises parts of his beloved’s body, a reduction of the woman to the body part, which Harrow relates to a way for the subject/poet to retain control and possession of a part of the body, as he cannot do with the body as a whole (120). Harrow also cites representations of violence against this “female other” (120). This process is evidence, according to Harrow, of a desire to control the other, with a body part substituting for the whole body.

Anna Boschetti communicates what she considers the poet’s anxiety relating to castration and a loss of control to a fear of being mastered by others. Merlin’s entombment represents this fear for the poet (46). Merlin in the tomb is an example of total submission to the beloved. His entombment renders him utterly helpless physically. It also has a demoralizing effect on his spiritual existence as well, since he cannot know the events outside of his tomb. He is at the mercy of other characters for any information

from the outside world, since the only sense he has left is his sense of hearing. Merlin's helplessness is a direct result of his desire for the Dame du Lac. Further, his belief in and attempts at the appeasement of this desire are what permit her to gain control over him. So, in this sense, for Merlin, desire leads to submission.

The majority of Apollinaire's text is focused on the events of Merlin's entombment and this is, in all actuality, the text's *raison d'être*. Robert Baudry also notes the importance of the entombment to the text, saying that it forms the basis of the whole story ("Tradition," 37). This is certainly the case, considering the importance of the theme of sexual difference in the text. As mentioned above, the Dame du Lac's sudden departure at the end of the last chapter before *Onirocritique* illustrates this theme. In the notes to his edition of *L'Enchanteur*, Burgos associates her departure with the beginning of her menstrual cycle and the ideas of hopeless springtime and the futile sterility of beauty. In his assessment, it marks the end of the regeneration associated with springtime, and the end of love (175). It does mark the end of springtime, but even more than the *end* of love, it marks the *absolute repudiation* of love that is associated with the theme of sexual difference. When the Dame du Lac leaves, blood runs down her legs onto the forest floor: "la dame ... hésita tandis que coulait le long de ses jambes les larmes rouges de la perdition. Mais, soudain, la dame du lac s'élança, et, laissant derrière elle une traînée de sang ..." (Pr I, 71-72). There is, Burgos points out, an idea of shame associated with the Dame du Lac's sudden departure and with her blood (177, notes). Burgos relates this to the start of her menstrual cycle, which signals that she is no longer fertile. He considers the Dame du Lac as a representation of, at the same time, the object of the poet's love and hate. This scene, according to Burgos' interpretation, conveys the idea of

the poet's desire for vengeance (175-177, notes).<sup>12</sup> While it is uncontested that Apollinaire suffered disappointments in love which would lead to anger and a sense of resentment, a reading of the Dame du Lac's departure in regard to the theme of sexual difference points to a different conclusion.

The Dame du Lac's departure is a powerful scene that expresses the role she plays in Merlin's existence. This role is related to *les éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme* – she facilitates the expression of sexual difference in the text, since she entombs Merlin, illustrating the futility of his love.<sup>13</sup> The role of female characters as facilitators of this essential difference is not limited to *L'Enchanteur*, however. Merlin's desperate pleas for the Dame du Lac to return his love are echoed in Pablo Canouris' supplications at Elvire's window in *La Femme assise* (1918):

Tout le reste de la nuit [Elvire] entendit Pablo Canouris tambouriner aux volets du rez-de-chaussée en criant: 'Elbirre, écoute-moi oubrre-moi, jé te aime, jé te adore et si tu né m'obéis pas, jé té touerrai avec mon rébolber. ... Oubrré-moi, Elbirre! L'amourr c'est moi; l'amourr c'est la paix, et je souis l'amourr puisqué jé souis neuttre (Pr I, 478).<sup>14</sup>

In the same way that Merlin loves the Dame du Lac, Pablo loves Elvire and wants to be with her, but his words attest to a sense of betrayal. The idea that love is peace implies that love involves a union of the same, which is in direct opposition with the theme of sexual difference. While, in *La Femme assise*, Elvire practices a feminine Mormonism (much to Pablo's chagrin), there is no true sense of love: "Elle pensa que cette puissance de la femme s'exercerait fort bien si la femme s'adonnait désormais ouvertement à la polyandrie; et elle prit cinq amants ... Mais aucun de ses amants désormais n'occupait

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<sup>12</sup> Pénélope Sacks Galey notes what she considers to be Apollinaire's expression of the desire to dominate and its link to images of dehumanization and domination. She also relates this to the wish to project desires and fantasies onto the female other ("Apollinaire ou l'échec de Faust," 194, 196).

<sup>13</sup> See chapter six, "Apollinaire Rewriting the Dame du Lac," p. 225-226.

<sup>14</sup> Pablo Canouris represents Picasso in the text, which would explain the character's Spanish accent (note, p. 1347).

son cœur” (Pr I, 487). The multiplicity of her sexual partners does not equate to love. As in *L’Enchanteur* love escapes both the (faithful) man and the (unfaithful) woman.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

Critical studies help to clarify a reading of Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac in *L’Enchanteur* by exposing the basic aspects of their representation in the text. They elucidate Merlin’s fascination with the Dame du Lac and illustrate how such a fascination could lead to instances of misogyny and even violence. However, they do not explain these characters’ functions in the text. More needs to be said about them. Whereas traditional criticism views Merlin’s mother and the Dame du Lac as biographically influenced characters, as representations of women’s evil natures, or as examples of love’s impossibility, the reading of these two essential female characters in this study concentrates on their influence on Merlin’s existence. Merlin’s mother’s desire actually creates the events of Merlin’s conception, while the Dame du Lac, on the other hand, removes his corporeality when she entombs him. The following chapters point out the ways in which they both inspire and limit Merlin’s corporeality. Their roles in this regard relate to the cyclic nature of the feminine ineffable’s inspiration on the text.



## 5. APOLLINAIRE REWRITING MERLIN'S MOTHER

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Enchanter Merlin's mysterious conception as the son of a demon and a young maiden has become legendary. The basic details of his engendering have changed very little since the ninth century, when Nennius wrote of an exceptional child without a father and of the mother's enigmatic explanation as to how her child came into being.<sup>1</sup> This text establishes the tradition of Merlin's extraordinary origin upon which subsequent texts expand. Merlin's father is an incubus demon and his mother is a maiden who, in the vast majority of versions, is aligned with religion in the text: as legend goes, she has her son baptized, thus saving him from a demonic fate. In Geoffrey de Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, she is living in a community of nuns; in Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, she seeks the counsel of her confessor and exhibits all the outward signs of the faithful – making the sign of the cross, praying, etc. The text of the *Prophesies* describes her as a *mout boine damoisiele, et de sainte vie* – a most goodly maiden, of devout life. Certainly when the medieval texts portray Merlin's mother as pious, they mean to convey at least a surface sense of adherence to the Christian religion, but the idea of a “good woman” leading a “devout” life can also refer to chastity. In his treatise *On Virginity*, the early Christian theologian Saint Gregory of Nyssa associated virginity with a more noble state and a higher purpose than the baser bodily desires. He equated the virginal state with virtue and Godliness. For a maiden, then, Christian piety should comprise observance of Church doctrines and virginal purity.

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<sup>1</sup> “Nescio quomodo in utero meo conceptus est, sed unum scio quia virum non cognovi umquam; et juravit illis patrem non habere.” (I do not know how this child was conceived in my womb, but one thing I know is that I have not known a man and she swore that she did not know who the father of the child was.) Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, Faral, Tome I, 94.

In contrast to this apparent devoutness, Apollinaire's version of the tale follows that of the medieval prose *Lancelot* and portrays Merlin's mother as lustful and lascivious.<sup>2</sup> He thus chose the only medieval text that departs from the religious depiction of the mother to borrow for his version. Apollinaire's text adheres to the legend of Merlin's conception, being situated strongly within the medieval tradition: the basic components of a human maiden coupling with an incubus demon are present in every version of Merlin's conception, including Apollinaire's. Whereas Apollinaire's portrait of Merlin's mother differs from that in most of the medieval versions in her lack of religious devotion and in her active desire, it is his mother's humanity that is essential to her character and to Merlin in every text in which they are mentioned. Both her corporeality and her association with – or reversal of – religion are related to her humanity. Even in the medieval versions, where she is portrayed as pious, this is true; as the discussion of Aquinas illustrated, theology and literature in the Middle Ages related women to the (sins of) the flesh.<sup>3</sup>

Although *L'Enchanteur's* (and the prose *Lancelot's*) version of Merlin's mother is decidedly not pious, she still contributes her physical nature to her son's makeup. In most of the medieval texts, the mother's part is passive – she is either seduced or raped by a demon in her sleep. On the other hand, Apollinaire's text, like the medieval prose *Lancelot's* version of Merlin's conception, adds an aspect of active desire to the mother's role. Her desire replaces piety in his text.

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, her desire plays a vital role in Merlin's conception. See Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 80 for an account of how her active participation is contrary to the innocent image of the mother portrayed in most medieval versions of Merlin's conception, how this reveals her demonic nature, and how her nature in turn has an effect on the role of religion in the text. Furthermore, we will see that references to religion in the medieval texts represent the creative power of authorship (see p. 184-190 of this chapter). Apollinaire's reversal of the Christian religion and his replacement of the maiden's piety with active, lascivious desire serves to attribute authorial authority to her desire.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter three, p. 110-114.

Merlin's well-established otherworldly nature – his power to prophesy, knowledge that escapes comprehension, and shape-changing abilities – is rooted in and dependent on his otherworldly conception. Indeed, as the thirteenth century *Prophecies* explains, Merlin's origin is the reason that he has the powers he does:

Et li donna nostre Sires Ihesucris tel grasce por le saint baptesme que li avoit recheu, et por cou k'il ne vaut mie k'il fust de la partie a l'anemi, ke il sot de sa partie granment des coses ki avenir estoient. Et de par la partie a l'anemi il li fist savoir de celes ki avenues estoient. Ensi sot Mierlins par la grasce nostre Seignor grant partie des coses avenues et a venir (*Prophecies*, 38).

And our Lord Jesus Christ gave him such grace by the Holy Baptism he received [from Him], so that he should not be of the enemy, that he knew from our Lord of the things that were to come. And from the part belonging to the enemy, he knew of those things that had come to pass. Thus did Merlin, by the grace of our Lord, have knowledge of things past and things to come.<sup>4</sup>

Both of Merlin's parents contribute their natures to his dichotomous existence. From his father's otherworldly nature, Merlin gains knowledge of things that have come to pass, along with non-corporeal qualities. In addition to corporeality in this passage, his mother contributes piety to her son's makeup. As part man, Merlin is mortal. The gift of flesh that his mother bestows upon him is also the reason for his demise, as flesh can die. The physical body that she passes on to her son is what makes him *Merlin* – both man and demon – and what will eventually allow the Dame du Lac to entomb him.

Considering the magnitude of the contribution she makes to Merlin's physical existence and makeup, it is surprising that Merlin's mother has not received a great deal of critical attention. Critics generally agree with the portrayals that a first reading of the

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<sup>4</sup> The translation offered was altered significantly for the ease of reading. A literal translation of this quote is as follows: And our Lord Jesus Christ gave him such grace by the Holy Baptism he received [from him], and so that it was not worth that he be of the part of the enemy, that he knew greatly from this part of the things that were to come. And from the part belonging to the enemy, he made him know of those things that had come to pass. Thus did Merlin, by the grace of our Lord, have knowledge of things past and things to come.

medieval texts proffers: either *good and devout* as in the majority of medieval versions, or *wanton and luxurious*, as in the prose *Lancelot* and *L'Enchanteur*. According to Anne Berthelot, for example, Merlin's mother in Geoffrey de Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* is a good Christian who gives no indication that her lover is demonic and Merlin's conception is presented as virginal ("Onomastique," 8, 16). Charlotte A. T. Wulf also stresses the piety of Merlin's mother in medieval texts ("Merlin's Mother"). With regard to the character's depiction in versions of the *Lancelot*, however, critics such as Alexandre Leupin (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 80) and Anne Berthelot ("Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake," 65) comment on the reversal of her devout nature. In connection with *L'Enchanteur*, Scott Bates is among the critics who focus on her role as a maiden coupling with a demon. However, beyond this, criticism of Merlin's origin usually concentrates on his father's nature. What seems to be missing in the wealth of Merlin and Apollinaire criticism is a study that considers the role *she* plays in Merlin's corporeal existence and in textual production. Without a doubt, the investigation of Merlin's otherworldly qualities and privileged nature as both human and demonic leads to his demon father, but his mother's role in his makeup is just as important. Indeed, due to the aspect of desire that she enjoys in *L'Enchanteur* as in the prose *Lancelot*, her role is even greater than that of his father. As noted in the previous chapter, the abundance of biographical criticism about Apollinaire's relationship with his own mother sheds light on his portrayal of the Enchanter's mother. This has to do with the fact that aspects of Angélique de Kostrowitzky's strong nature unquestionably do find their way into the virile portrait her son paints of Merlin's mother. However, this criticism seems to contemplate only the resemblance between the poet's and the mythical Enchanter's mothers, while other aspects of this character's depiction, such as her human

corporeality and its importance to Merlin's representation, the control she exerts over her own sexuality, and the creative nature of her desire are even more vital to the text and to her portrayal as a virile female figure. To understand fully her role in the texts and how she influences, even creates, Merlin, we must look beyond the surface picture the texts paint of her and consider how her actions influence Merlin's existence.

In order to analyze her impact on the text, however, it is essential to consider *Merlin's* existence. This is because just as the representation of his mother defines Merlin's corporeal reality, his existence in turn provides meaning for her literary presence. The notion of a balance of complementary characters in a literary text that Julia Bolton Holloway advances in "Convents, Courts and Colleges" is pertinent to this analysis of Merlin's mother (189). Merlin and his mother form a symbiotic relationship; one character is incomplete without the reflection provided by the other, so that Merlin clarifies a reading of his mother and vice-versa. This interaction implies an *intratextual* relationship – an inter-relationship of characters within the text, much like the intertextual references between versions of the Merlin legend. Within the text itself there is interplay between characters. While this is true of all literary texts, it is especially pertinent to *L'Enchanteur* because of Merlin's mother's and the Dame du Lac's effects on Merlin's corporeal existence and its relationship to the theme of sexual difference.

The explanation the text gives about Merlin's nature reflects his mother's humanity and physical existence. For example, the fact that the Dame du Lac can only trick the Enchanter because he is part *human* reinforces his mother's own nature and the significance it has.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, his mother's mortal, physical existence, in most medieval

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<sup>5</sup> Apollinaire writes: "[La Dame du Lac] le déçavait ainsi parce qu'il était *mortel*; mais s'il eût été *en tout* un diable elle ne l'eût pu décevoir, car un diable ne peut dormir" (9 [the emphasis is mine]).

versions, piety, and in *L'Enchanteur*, desire, all have a direct bearing on Merlin's representation in every instance. The importance of the role Merlin's mother plays in his conception is only fully evident taken alongside his entombment.

In addition to Merlin's mother's role in his conception and the impact this role has on his existence in Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur*, this chapter also considers five medieval versions of the Enchanter's origin that establish the character of Merlin's mother. They are: Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, Geoffrey de Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Robert de Boron's *Merlin*, the *Estoire de Merlin*, and the *Prophesies de Merlin*.

## 5.2 L'ENCHANTEUR POURRISSANT – REWRITING THE CONCEPTION OF A LEGEND

### 5.2.1 Apollinaire's Use of the Prose *Lancelot* as Source Material – Why?

Merlin's mother in Apollinaire's 1909 rewriting of Merlin's story is both modeled after the poet's own mother and a centuries-old character from legend. In addition to the biographical influence for Apollinaire's fascination with Merlin, discussed in the preceding chapter, there is much evidence that the young poet read extensively and used the *Prophesies de Merlin*, among other medieval texts, as source material for his *L'Enchanteur*.<sup>6</sup> The question, then, is why he chose to incorporate a passage from the prose *Lancelot* – the only medieval text to depart from the traditional depiction of Merlin's mother – into the first chapter of his work. As possible reasons for this choice, Burgos offers Apollinaire's wish to avoid a direct biographical association and to give his own work the value of the medieval text. This would allow Apollinaire to present his own story under the guise of myth and to give himself the powers of the prophet-bard without

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<sup>6</sup> See Jean Burgos' introduction to his critical edition of *L'Enchanteur*, which offers a detailed analysis of the material Apollinaire gleaned from the *Prophesies*. Also, Burgos, "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire – pour une nouvelle lecture de *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*," p. 193. Additionally, see Philippe Renaud, *Lecture d'Apollinaire*, p. 248.

betraying himself (“Apollinaire et le recours au mythe,” 119).<sup>7</sup> While these are certainly possible reasons and why Apollinaire chose this particular version is a question that cannot be answered indisputably, the mother’s portrayal is a likely key to the young poet’s choice. Without doubt it is what sets this version apart from the others Apollinaire used as source-material with regard to the mother. Apollinaire chose the version in which Merlin’s mother’s role in Merlin’s conception is the most active and visibly influential. Although the second half of this chapter questions the nature of her religious devotion in more *traditional* medieval versions, in Apollinaire’s text, as in the prose *Lancelot*, there is no question of her active involvement in Merlin’s conception: she is wanton and luxurious rather than pious.<sup>8</sup>

The next question that comes to mind is why did Apollinaire incorporate the passage of Merlin’s conception (and entombment) directly from the prose *Lancelot* without rewriting? He altered and embellished the remainder of Merlin’s story, but left these scenes virtually intact. The borrowing is more than just an incorporation of one text into another – it is an intertextual reference to the medieval tradition.<sup>9</sup> It also emphasizes Apollinaire’s reversal of the Christian religion, since the prose *Lancelot* presents the mother as decidedly non-devout. By bringing the passage into his text as-is, Apollinaire brought the medieval legend and its atmosphere into his work, but without the religious implications another choice or a rewriting would have offered. However, more important than *why* Apollinaire chose the version that he did to incorporate into his text or how he

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Burgos, “Portrait de l’Enchanteur en costume d’Apollinaire,” p. 194-196.

<sup>8</sup> See Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 80 for a comment pertaining to the mother’s luxuriousness in the *Estoire de Merlin*, which corresponds to her depiction in *L’Enchanteur* and the prose *Lancelot*.

<sup>9</sup> In “Portrait de l’Enchanteur en costume d’Apollinaire,” Burgos writes that Apollinaire did not rewrite the passage because it would have interfered with his project of infusing his identity as Guillaume/Merlin in the text with the legendary qualities of the medieval text (194-195). However, this explanation is not entirely sufficient, since a close rewriting of the passage would have accomplished the same effect.

chose to incorporate it is the question of what this incorporation brings to his work. In *L'Enchanteur*, as in the prose *Lancelot*, active, creative desire replaces the medieval piety, but serves a similar textual function with regard to the poetic act.

### 5.2.2 Apollinaire's Use of the Prose *Lancelot* as Source Material – the Text

Both Décaudin and Burgos note that the probable edition used for this first chapter is that of Philippe le Noir, *Le Premier volume de Lancelot du lac nouvellement imprimé à Paris, suivi du second et du tiers volume* (Paris, 1533) (Décaudin, *Notice*, Pr I, 1068, Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 3). Cedric E. Pickford, however, cites the 1494 Vérard version located at the Bibliothèque Mazarine as the more probable source for Apollinaire because of similarities between that edition and *L'Enchanteur* ("Guillaume Apollinaire et Merlin," 255). For the purposes of this study, it is not necessary to specify the exact version Apollinaire consulted; the version used here is the prose *Lancelot* edited by Elspeth Kennedy, from the manuscript B.N.fr.768.<sup>10</sup> As the side-by-side quotations below demonstrate, Apollinaire's version of Merlin's conception is very similar to this edition:

<u><i>L'Enchanteur pourrissant</i></u>	<u><i>Prose Lancelot</i></u>
1 Il y eut jadis une demoiselle	Il fu voirs que en la maresche de la
2 de grande beauté, fille d'un	terre d'Escoce et d'Irlande ot jadis
3 pauvre vavasseur.	une damoisele, gentil fame de grant
4	biauté, et fu fille a un vavasor qui
5	n'estoit pas de grant richece. La
6 La demoiselle était	demoisele vint en aage de marier,
7 en âge de se marier, mais	mais an soi avoit une teche que ele
8 elle disait à son père et à sa	disoit a son pere et a sa mere que ne
9 mère qu'ils ne la mariassent	la mariassent il pas, que bien
10 pas et qu'elle était décidée	saüssient il de voir que ele n'avroit
11 à ne jamais voir d'homme,	ja en son lit home qe ele veïst des
12 car son cœur ne le pourrait	iauz, que ses cuers ne lo porroit
13 souffrir ni endurer. Le père	soffrir. En maintes manieres

<sup>10</sup> See note fifteen, page thirteen of this study for an explanation of my reasons for citing this edition.



14 et la mère essayèrent de la  
 15 faire revenir sur sa décision,  
 16 mais ils ne purent en aucune  
 17 manière. Elle leur dit que, si  
 18 on la forçait à voir un homme,  
 19 elle en mourrait aussitôt, ou  
 20 irait hors de son sens ; et sa  
 21 mère lui ayant demandé  
 22 privéement, comme mère, si  
 23 elle voulait toujours d'homme  
 24 s'abstenir, elle répondit que  
 25 non et que même, si elle pouvait  
 26 avoir compagnie d'un homme  
 27 qu'elle ne vît point, elle  
 28 l'aimerait extrêmement....  
 29 Au bout de quelque temps, le  
 30 père mourut et, après son  
 31 trépas, la mère supplia sa fille  
 32 de prendre un mari, mais  
 33 celle-ci ne voulut rien entendre.  
 34  
 35  
 36  
 37 Sur ces entrefaites, il arriva  
 38 qu'un diable se présenta à la  
 39 demoiselle en son lit, par la  
 40 nuit obscure. Il commença à  
 41 la prier tout doucement et lui  
 42 promit qu'elle ne le verrait  
 43 jamais. Et elle lui demanda  
 44 qui il était: 'Je suis, fait-il, un  
 45 homme venu d'une terre  
 46 étrangère et, de même que  
 47 vous ne pourriez voir  
 48 d'homme je ne pourrais voir  
 49 de femme avec laquelle je  
 50 couchasse.' La demoiselle  
 51 le tâta et sentit qu'il avait le  
 52 corps très bien fait.  
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l'essaierent entre lo pere et la mere  
 savoir s'il la porroient hors giter de  
 cest corage. Mais ne pot estre, car ele  
 lor dist que bien seüssient il que s'il  
 l'en efforçoient, ja si tost ne lo  
 verroit com ele morroit ou istroit de  
 san. Et sa  
 mere li demanda a consoil  
 priveement comme mere a sa fille se  
 ele se voudroit a tozjors d'ome tenir  
 et de toz charnex covines. Et ele dist  
 que nenil; se ele pooit avoir  
 compaignie d'ome que ele ne veüst, et  
 mout lo voudroit, car la volenté avoit  
 ele bien, mais li veoirs n'i pooit  
 estre. ... Après la mort son pere  
 semont mainte foiz la mere sa fille  
 de mari prendre. Mais ne pot estre,  
 car ele ne se voloit acorder a prendre  
 home que ele veüst, car tex estoit li  
 mehainz de ses iauz qu'ele ne porroit  
 soffrir lo veoir por nule rien, mais lo  
 sentir sanz lo veoir feroit ele  
 legierement. Après ce ne demora mie  
 grantmant que uns deiabes, de tel  
 maniere com ge vos ai dit, vint a la  
 damoisele en son lit par nuit obscure,  
 et la comança a prier mout durement,  
 et li promist que ja ne lo verroit nul  
 jor. Ele li demanda qui il estoit.  
 "Ge suis, fait il,  
 uns hom d'estranges terres, et por  
 ce que vos n'avez cure d'ome qe vos  
 puissiez veoir, por ce veig ge a vos,  
 car autresin ne porroie ge veoir nule  
 fame a cui ge geüsse." La damoisele  
 lo tasta, si senti que il avoit lo cors  
 mout gent et mout bien fait. Et  
 neporquant deiabes n'a ne cors ne  
 autres menbres que l'an puisse  
 manoir, car esperitex chose ne puet  
 estre manioee, et tuit deiabes sont  
 choses esperitex. Mais deiable  
 antrepanent a la foiee cors de l'air,  
 si qu'il senble a cels qui les voient  
 qu'il soient formé de char et d'os.  
 Qant cele santi lo deiable el cors et

61  
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 64 Elle l'aima extrêmement,  
 65 accomplit sa volonté et cela tout  
 66 cela[sic] à sa mère et à autrui.  
 67 Quand elle eut mené  
 68 cette vie l'espace d'un mois,  
 69 elle devint grosse, et  
 70 lorsqu'elle enfanta, tout  
 71 le peuple s'émerveilla parce  
 72 que du père on ne savait  
 73 rien et elle ne voulait pas  
 74 Le dire. Cet enfant fut un  
 75 fils et eut nom Merlin (Pr I, 7-8).  
 76  
 77

es braz et el viaire et an mainz autres  
 leus, si li fu avis, a ce qu'ele an pooit  
 savoir par sentir, que mout estoit  
 bien tailliez a estre biax, si l'aama et  
 fist outreement sa volenté. Et mout  
 lo cela bien et a sa mere et a autrui.  
 Qant ele ot ceste vie menee jusq'a  
 cinq mois, si angroissa, et qant vint  
 au droit terme que ele anfant,

si s'an merveilla toz li pueples, car  
 do pere ne fu il nule seüe, ne ele nel  
 vost dire. a nelui. Cil anfes fu uns  
 vallez, si ot non Mellins, car issi lo  
 commanda li deiables a la damoisele  
 ainz qu'il nasquist; mais il ne fu  
 onques baptiziez (21-23).

Prose Lancelot (translation)

There was long ago in the borderland of Scotland and Ireland a maiden, who was refined and of great beauty, and was the daughter of a vassal who was not of great wealth. The maiden became of marriageable age, but had a distinctive peculiarity about her that she told her father and mother that she would not marry, that her heart could not abide having a man in her bed that she might see with her eyes. In many ways her father and mother tried to see if they could get her to change her mind, but they could not, because she told them that she knew that if they forced her, rather she would die or go out of her mind. And her mother, in private, asked her, mother to daughter, if she wished forever to abstain from men and carnal pleasures. And she said no; if she could have the company of a man that she could not see, she would very much want that because she had the desire [to be with a man], but the sight [of him] could not be. After the death of her father the mother pleaded with her many times to take a husband. But she could not, because she did not want to take a husband that she could see, because such was the state of her eyes that she could not suffer to see him for anything, but to feel him without seeing him she would do without regret. Not long after this a demon, in such a manner as I have told you, came to the maiden in her bed by the dark of night, and started to beseech her most heartily, and promised that she would never see him on any day. She asked him who he was. 'I am, he said, a man from foreign lands, and since you have no care for a man that you can see, for this I come to you, because likewise I cannot see any woman with whom I take pleasure.' The maiden felt him and sensed that he had a noble and well-formed body. And, however, demons do not have bodies or other members that can be felt, since spiritual things cannot be sensed by touch, and all demons are spiritual beings. But demons sometimes fashion for themselves bodies of air so that it seems to those that see them that they are formed of flesh and bone. When she felt the demon's body and arms and face and many other places, she made up her mind to that which she could know by touch, that [he] was so well made as to be handsome, she loved him and accomplished his/her desire. And she hid it well from her mother and from others. When she had lived this life for five months, she became pregnant and when she came to term, she gave birth,

and all the people marveled because they had no knowledge of the father and she told no one of him. This child was a boy and had the name Merlin, because this is what the demon commanded her to name him when he was born; but he was never baptized.

Apollinaire's text is more of a translation into modern French rather than a rewriting of the prose *Lancelot*, or in Pickford's view, a *transcription* (255). However, Apollinaire does make some changes. Apollinaire omits the statement that Merlin was not baptized (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XCVII; lines 77-78 in the above quotation). *L'Enchanteur* does not specifically mention baptism at all in the episode of Merlin's conception and birth. However, unlike Merlin in the prose *Lancelot*, Apollinaire's Enchanter *is* baptized (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XCVII). Merlin says, "Pour moi je l'avoue, j'ai été baptisé" (Pr I, 60) and "je suis incirconcis et baptisé, et pourtant j'ai été à Jérusalem, mais par d'autres chemins que le chemin de la croix" (Pr I, 62). Although Merlin is baptized, he does not follow the usual path of Christianity, in another religious reversal. In "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire," Burgos writes that Merlin's baptism serves to make the overturning of Christian symbolism in the text even more of a revolt against the religion of Apollinaire's youth (195-196).

Additionally, in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin's mother becomes pregnant after one month of the demon's visits, while in the prose *Lancelot*, she conceives the Enchanter after five months (Burgos, "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire," 195, line 69). Apollinaire shortens the time it takes for the maiden to conceive, thereby reinforcing that the ultimate goal of the encounter was to produce a child.<sup>11</sup> That she conceives Merlin after only one month strengthens the link between her desire, the demon's appearance, and Merlin's conception. Finally, Apollinaire most obviously omits the

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<sup>11</sup> Burgos comments on Apollinaire's need for events to move at a faster pace ("Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire," 195).

explanation of the nature of the incubus demon (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XCVII; lines 52-55). Apollinaire also diverges from the medieval text in the number of times he uses the verb *voir*, as discussed below.

Even though Apollinaire deliberately omitted the medieval explanation of the incubus demon and Burgos contends that the details of demonology are unimportant to the tale (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, XCVII), it should be understood as an intertextual reference and an accepted fact of legend that Merlin's father is an incubus demon, with all that such a designation implies. Merlin's father's demonic nature is vital to Merlin's own existence in the text – it is only because of his non-corporeal composition that he conforms to Merlin's mother's desire, as discussed below. Moreover, the aerial nature that Merlin inherits from his father is an essential component of his dichotomous makeup and what allows him to continue to exist in the tomb after his body dies.

### 5.2.3 Rewriting the Immaculate Conception

As previously noted, Merlin's conception mirrors that of Christ. This phenomenon is not unique to Apollinaire's text (or the prose *Lancelot*) however; it has been a constant aspect of the tale since the first mention of Merlin's parentage by Nennius in the ninth century. Merlin's mother is a mirror of the mother of Christ and in both cases a child that is exceptional in the sense of *more than* human, is conceived through the union of a maiden with a mysterious non-human visitor. However, especially for Apollinaire's text, these events appear similar to Christ's conception, but are actually reverse images.<sup>12</sup> *L'Enchanteur's* portrayal of Merlin's conception is the most blatant in its religious reversal. It carries the theme through the entire text, rather than proclaiming

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<sup>12</sup> See Alexandre Leupin *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 106 for more on this reversal as it relates to a reversal of corporeality. See also Scott Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 22 for a description of *L'Enchanteur's* blasphemous satire of the Incarnation.

Merlin acceptable to religion in the text. Like the prose *Lancelot*, *L'Enchanteur* presents Merlin as entirely demonic; this is because of his mother's lack of religious inclination. Leupin writes that in the Vulgate *Estoire de Lancelot* she is not the innocent victim of preceding texts, but like the demon herself, luxurious with a desire to do evil, a comment that applies equally to *L'Enchanteur* (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 80). In the prose *Lancelot*, her desire and refusal of the traditional female role allow the demon the opportunity to visit her, implying a diabolical part in Merlin's conception (Berthelot, "Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake," 65). Indeed, in this text and in *L'Enchanteur*, rather than being chosen by God to bear His son, Merlin's mother virtually invites her demon-lover into her bed! This is dramatically different from her role in Merlin's conception in most of the medieval versions, where she is much more passive, as discussed below.

Apollinaire continues this religious reversal beyond Merlin's conception. Rather than the shepherds and Magi who come to worship the Christ child, Apollinaire invents a procession of druids, demons, fairies, ancient philosophers, characters from myth, and three False Magi who search for the rotting Enchanter's tomb, which is not in any of the medieval versions.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, a quest to find Merlin after his entombment in the medieval texts, a probable precursor to Apollinaire's mythical procession. For example, in the *Prophesies*, Merlin says, "sera encommenchie une queste ou il se metra dedens ceste forest por moi trouver plus de .m. chevalier" (96). (A quest will be undertaken where more than one thousand knights will come to this forest in order to find

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<sup>13</sup> Along with the three Magi and the shepherds who followed the star to the Christ child in the Bible, there are also those who search for him with a less benevolent intent – Herod, fearing a rival, gives orders to kill all male children of the corresponding age. Of course none of the parade of mythical characters that search for Merlin's tomb has the intention of killing him – his body had already died – but not all of his "visitors" come with kindly intent. For instance, the women that we considered in chapter four do not search for the Enchanter out of fondness or concern for him (see p. 133-136).

me.) In *L'Enchanteur*, this “quest” parodies the Nativity and [Christian] faith (Burgos, “Un poème prototype,” 104). As an example of this reversed nativity, among those searching for Merlin’s tomb are two druids:

‘Nous le cherchons aussi, car il connaissait notre science. ... Mais Lugu nous protège, le dieu terrible: voici son corbeau qui vole en croassant et cherche comme nous cherchons’ Or, le crépuscule était venu dans la forêt profonde et plus obscure. Un corbeau croassant, se posait, près de la dame immobile, sur la tombe de l’enchanteur (Pr I, 13).

The two druids prefigure the three False Magi, who appear later. They are guided, not by the star that guides the three Magi to Bethlehem in the Bible, not even by the shadow that guides the three False Magi to the forest, but by a crow. The crow belongs to and represents the Celtic divinity Lug (Décaudin, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 1079, notes). Furthermore, it appears to be the antithesis to the traditional Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit, the white dove. In addition to the druids, toads, serpents, fairies, sorceresses, prophets, and other mythical beings, three “Faux Rois Mages” are among those searching for Merlin’s tomb:

Autrefois nous regardions souvent les étoiles, et l’une que nous vîmes une nuit, discourant au milieu du ciel, nous mena, mages venus de trois royaumes différents, vers la même grotte, où de pieux bergers étaient déjà venus peu de jours avant le premier jour de cette ère. Depuis lors, prêtres d’Occident nous ne saurions plus nous laisser guider par l’étoile et pourtant des fils de dieux naissent encore pour mourir. Cette nuit, c’est la [sic] Noël funéraire et nous le savons bien, car si nous avons oublié la science des astres, nous avons appris celle de l’ombre, en Occident. Nous attendions depuis notre décollation cette nuit bienheureuse. Nous sommes venus dans la forêt profonde et obscure guidés par l’ombre (Pr I, 25-26).

Rather than the Christian Magi searching for the Christ child or the medieval knights questing to find Merlin, Apollinaire offers False Magi that look for Merlin’s tomb, guided by shadow. They bring, instead of gold, incense and myrrh, salt, sulfur, and mercury, the three metals, Burgos notes, that allow for a total (alchemical) transformation (*Apollinaire en somme*, 205). The lines – “Autrefois nous regardions souvent les étoiles,

et l'une que nous vîmes une nuit, discourant au milieu du ciel, nous mena, mages venus de trois royaumes différents, vers la même grotte, où de pieux bergers étaient déjà venus peu de jours avant le premier jour de cette ère" – recall the events of Christ's birth, but also point out that these circumstances are different. The original Magi are oriental, whereas Apollinaire's False Magi are Occidental. They are priests of the West – of early twentieth-century western thought and poetic creation – rather than the Eastern Magi of Christianity. Additionally, shadow takes the place of the brilliant star that guides the original Magi to Christ's tomb. The passage also underlines the fundamental difference between the conceptions of Christ and Merlin. Rather than "the light of the world" (John 1:9), Merlin is the shadow that guides the False Magi, the Antichrist.<sup>14</sup>

#### 5.2.4 The Ancient Body/Soul Dichotomy Revisited – Corporeality and Ethereal Existence

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Merlin's engendering is the stark contrast between the physical makeup of his parents. Merlin's mother's human corporeality is more important than her piety, or lack thereof, since it conditions Merlin's most essential aspect – his corporeal existence. The passage of Merlin's conception begins with a description of the maiden's beauty: "Il y eut jadis une demoiselle de grande beauté" (Pr I, 7).<sup>15</sup> The concept of the gaze opens this episode and becomes an elemental feature. In the opening lines, the accent on the maiden's beauty implicates the reader in the authorial gaze, and emphasizes her physical attributes and bodily presence. This insistence on the physical underlines the importance of Merlin's mother's corporeality and plays a crucial

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the tradition of Merlin as the Antichrist, see Jean Burgos' introduction to his edition of *L'Enchanteur*, Burgos, "Un poème prototype: *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*," 104, Scott Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 86, Bates, "L'Erotisme," 92, Robert Couffignal, *Apollinaire*, 30 and *L'Inspiration biblique*, 112, 130, 182, Marie Jeanne Durry, *Alcools*, vol I.

<sup>15</sup> This analysis corresponds primarily to *L'Enchanteur* and not the prose *Lancelot*, even though the passages are similar.

role in not only Merlin's conception, but also in his own existence throughout the text. As usual, Merlin's mother is not named in the passage, further underlining her association with the body, since the description of her concentrates on (physical) appearance.

She refuses her parents' wishes that she marry because, as she says, her heart would not endure seeing a man: "La demoiselle était en âge de se marier, mais elle disait à son père et à sa mère qu'ils ne la mariassent pas et qu'elle était décidée à ne jamais voir d'homme, car son cœur ne le pourrait souffrir ni endurer" (Pr I, 7). As noted above, Apollinaire decreases the number of repetitions of the verb *voir* by half. The reduction is not particularly note-worthy by itself, since Apollinaire also condenses other aspects of the passage. However, the number of times he does repeat the verb is significant – the number six is the biblical number of the beast and the Antichrist. This number of repetitions emphasizes the demonic nature of the demon-lover and that of his son, the Enchanter Merlin through its symbolism. Since, in the medieval conception of the incubus demon, demons cannot be seen, the repetition of the verb *voir* six times is particularly fitting. It not only recalls the symbolic number of the beast, thereby lending even more of a satanic air to the text, but it also underscores the nature of the demon in yet another reversal – Apollinaire uses the verb *voir* to emphasize the demon's *lack* of sight (and visibility) and, more importantly, lack of corporeality. At the same time, the repetition of the verb *voir* reinforces the significance of the gaze and, by extension, the importance of Merlin's mother's physical body. It is a paradoxical reinforcement, however, since the verb *voir* means to see and both the maiden and the demon use it to emphasize the act of not seeing, or a lack of sight. Indeed, *voir* is an active verb and it is used to indicate an active refusal to see. Just as Merlin himself is doubly inscribed – he is



both man and demon – even the events of his conception are doubly inscribed as well. His mother sees and refuses to see; she looks and sees nothing.

Seeing implies physical existence – something must be physically present to be seen – and not seeing implies physical lack – if it is not there it cannot be seen. Accordingly, the use of the verb *voir* tells the reader a great deal about Merlin's parentage. It first appears in relation to the maiden and her apparent refusal of a man: “elle était décidée à ne jamais **voir** d'homme... Elle leur dit que, si on la forçait à **voir** un homme, elle en mourrait aussitôt ou irait hors de son sens” (Pr I, 7 [the emphasis here and throughout this section are mine]). It is not a man she refuses, but a man that she can see. This becomes apparent a few lines later: “si elle pouvait avoir compagnie d'un homme qu'elle ne **vit** point, elle l'aimerait extrêmement” (Pr I, 7). Of course, a man that cannot be seen is no man, but an incubus demon.<sup>16</sup> Once again, in the medieval conception of the incubus demon, they are essentially non-corporeal beings that do not have physical bodies of their own, but either borrow one or appear in the form of their choosing to engage in relations with mortal women.<sup>17</sup>

Apollinaire's use of the verb *voir* and its implications in the text intertextually refer to this accepted explanation. The incubus demon can only be seen (or felt) when his true nature is cloaked in the guise of a man. True to the maiden's wishes, a mysterious visitor appears to her during the night and promises that she will never see him: “[le diable] lui promet qu'elle ne le **verrait** jamais” (Pr I, 7).<sup>18</sup> Additionally, if the fact that he

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<sup>16</sup> See also Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 106-108 for more about the demon's adoption of a simulacrum in the events of Merlin's conception in the *Estoire de Lancelot* and the implications the maiden's not being able to see her lover has for his corporeality.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter three, p. 72-75.

<sup>18</sup> Although in the passage on Merlin's conception in the prose *Lancelot*, the incubus demon can be seen when in the guise of a man, the use of the verb *voir* emphasizes his demonic nature by reminding the reader that this is only possible with the mask of human appearance.

cannot be seen were not enough to convince the reader that this visitor is not an actual flesh-and-blood man, he adds “Je suis, fait-il, un homme venu d’une terre étrangère” (Pr I, 7). His use of the word *homme* does not mean that he has a corporeal body, it is merely a signifier he chooses – either arbitrarily to designate a male presence or with the intention to mislead – to describe himself, one that does not point to corporeality. He is from a *foreign land* – he is different, other. He is not the same as Merlin’s mother; he is not human, but other-than-human.

Like the word *homme*, the “body” that Merlin’s mother feels is a signifier that does not signify a real body at all, but instead points to a lack of corporeality.<sup>19</sup> The demon’s body is a simulacrum. When the maiden touches the body and decides that it is a very fine body indeed, does she believe it is a *human* body? Does she correctly *read* the demon? Does she see through his guise of corporeality to the truth of his demonic nature? The text is not clear on this, but since the demon corresponds precisely to her requirements for a “man,” it is safe to assume that she does, indeed, read him correctly and that she got exactly what she wanted all along – a demon-lover.

In an enigmatic phrase, the demon says that he too cannot see his lover: “de même que vous ne pourriez **voir** d’homme je ne pourrais **voir** de femme avec laquelle je couchasse” (Pr I, 7-8). Does this imply that Merlin’s mother, like her lover, is a demon and not in possession of a proper body? There are specific references to her corporeality earlier in the passage that imply that she is, unlike the incubus demon, made up of flesh

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<sup>19</sup> “La demoiselle le tâta et sentit qu’il avait le corps très bien fait” (Pr I, 8). In *Le Graal et la littérature*, Leupin discusses the demon’s body-as-simulacrum in the *Estoire de Lancelot* as hiding the essential nothingness of his existence (107).

and blood.<sup>20</sup> Of course, these could all be illusions, much like the guise of a man that the demon takes on; however, this is not likely to be the case for two reasons. The first is that the maiden never actually sees the demon – she appreciates his well-formed body only through the sense of touch – but the description of her beauty implies that she can be seen. Certainly, she could have borrowed a body, like the incubus demon; however, this passage specifies that the demon cannot be seen. The demon’s comment that he cannot see a woman that he is with is more likely an expression of physical lack on *his* part than an obscure reference to a change in her traditional *human* nature. It could also symbolize a certain affinity for the demonic on her part.<sup>21</sup> However, having an affinity for the demonic does not make her an incubus demon herself – she can (and does) very well want to couple with a demon and still retain her humanity. Secondly, both Apollinaire’s text and the prose *Lancelot* situate themselves within the Merlin tradition. *L’Enchanteur* also includes intertextual references to the *Prophesies de Merlin*, which is far more traditional in its pious and (relatively) innocent representation of Merlin’s mother and also includes the host of demon’s plot to trick a *mortal woman*. Thus, Apollinaire’s text, although it digresses from the picture of Merlin’s mother as pious, does not digress so far as to strip her of her humanity. She is, in every version of Merlin’s conception, a human, corporeal, woman, and thus an important factor in Merlin’s depiction.

Since Merlin inherits the disposition of the incubus demon and his mythic shape-changing abilities from his father, he begins in the physical lack of the incubus demon. It

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<sup>20</sup> These include the emphasis on her physical qualities in the description of her beauty, the mention that she is the daughter of a poor vassal – thus the daughter of a *man*, and the demon’s explanation that he is from a place that is different than hers, implying that his lack of corporeality is different from her corporeal presence. After the encounter with the demon, she actually, physically, gives birth to a child.

<sup>21</sup> As Leupin advances, in the *Estoire de Lancelot*, Merlin’s mother is “tout comme les diables, une luxurieuse habitée par ce que le Moyen Age appelait la *malitia*: la volonté perverse et consciente de faire le mal” (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 80). See also Anne Berthelot, “Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake,” p. 65 for a reading of her role in Merlin’s conception as diabolical in nature.

is because the Enchanter can change his form in the medieval texts that Leupin writes that Merlin's body, like his father's, functions as a simulacrum in the *Estoire de Lancelot* (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 107-108). Merlin is part demon, so the part of him that derives from his father is of an ethereal nature. Like him, Merlin can change his form and appear in the guise of his choosing, adopting a simulacrum as he sees fit, but Merlin is also an enigmatic and contradictory character. He is, in a blasphemous mirroring of Christ, the mediator and locus of the union of spirit and flesh, and so not entirely non-corporeal in any text. Among other references to his physical body, as noted in the introduction, *L'Enchanteur* specifies his corporeality in the title, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, and in references to his dying and decaying flesh after his entombment. Of course if Merlin had borrowed a body, it would die and rot, but without his human component, the Dame du Lac would not be able to trap him. So, Merlin does possess a real flesh-and-blood body and is not exclusively of the nature of the incubus demon. Merlin's mother fills the physical lack of his demon father, so Merlin is a doubly inscribed being, both human and demon, son of a being without a proper body and incarnated through that of his mother.

#### 5.2.5 Silence and Truth

Just as Merlin's mother refuses her sense of sight in relation to her desire, she also does not explain the events of her son's conception and the identity of his father. Although Merlin's mother cannot or does not specify exactly the identity of her mysterious visitor in any version, in the medieval texts that present her as pious, she at least makes a good faith effort to describe him. In most medieval versions of Merlin's conception, his mother explains to the best of her ability the events of his conception (usually in front of a tribunal). However, even she does not know the entire truth of what happened to her in these texts. In *L'Enchanteur* (and the prose *Lancelot*), she does have

this knowledge, but, as we have seen, refuses to share it. Even the reader is not privy to the knowledge of how her desire creates her demon-lover. The only explanation the text offers, even by the omniscient narrator, is through the conversation of the girl and her mother.<sup>22</sup>

In *L'Enchanteur* (as well as in the prose *Lancelot*) she refuses to give any information at all about her child's father. Her silence corresponds to a refusal of linguistic communication. According to the text, the people were amazed with Merlin's birth because they knew nothing of his father. The only person who might be privy to this knowledge is Merlin's mother and she keeps it to herself. In a reversal of the medieval topic of discourse that veils the truth, her speech could clarify Merlin's genealogy. However, her silence, rather than anything she says, hides the identity of Merlin's father. The passage specifies "elle ne voulait pas le dire" (Pr I, 8). This implies that she was, in fact, capable of revealing the truth, but refused to do so. The truth of Merlin's conception remains hidden behind her silence, so that language does not reveal it. The reader, on the other hand, knows Merlin's genealogy through the omniscient narrator who discloses his father's nature.

Lacanian psychoanalytic theory explains that in silence lies truth, since truth cannot be said in its totality within the limits of language. Again, the bar in the sign is, according to Lacan, a negation, an impenetrable barrier and it is, hence, impossible to *say* or to have anything other than a partial representation of meaning. Similarly, truth in its

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<sup>22</sup> "et sa mère lui ayant demandé privément, comme mère, si elle voulait toujours d'homme s'abstenir, elle répondit que non et que même, si elle pouvait avoir compagnie d'un homme qu'elle ne vît point, elle l'aimerait extrêmement" (Pr I, 7). As with the fulfillment of desire in this passage, the direct object pronoun *l'* is ambiguous – does it refer to the idea of having a man that she cannot see, as *she would love that (to have the company of a man she cannot see) very much* or does it refer to the man himself, as *she would love him very much*? Again, it probably refers to both the idea and the man she cannot see.

totality is unconscious. However, truth reveals itself in the spaces in discourse. Silence in the text marks the desire to express something that cannot be said in full. Where there is silence, there is truth. As Lacan writes, the real, aligned with the notion of truth, is to be found in the impenetrability of the bar: “[le signe] démontre quelque impasse, - je dis bien: s’assure à se démontrer, - c’est là notre chance que nous en touchions le réel pur et simple, - comme ce qui empêche d’en dire *toute* la vérité” (Télévision, 53). The Real lies in what can only be expressed in part in language, so silence marks its presence in the text. Merlin’s mother’s silence can be read as evidence of an encounter with the real in Merlin’s conception.

#### 5.2.6 Desire and Feminine Strength

Merlin’s mother does speak and reveal information – but, only on her terms and only among women. It is only in a conversation with her mother that she reveals the entirety of her wishes with respect to a man. She reveals to her mother that she does indeed wish to have the company of a man – one that she could not see. Only the *sight* of a man hinders her: “si elle pouvait avoir compagnie d’un homme qu’elle ne vît point, elle l’aimerait extrêmement” (Pr I, 7). Some time after this conversation, her father dies, leaving her and her mother alone without a male presence. Even before his death his role is minimal. The only real purpose he serves is to die and leave his daughter in the (feminine) space she needs to fulfill her desire. The girl’s mother, however, is instrumental to the story. Like Merlin’s mother, she is the foundation upon which the text is built. The demon appears to the maiden only after she voices her desire to her mother.

The act of expressing this desire to her mother brings it out into the open of the feminine space. The maiden is essentially summoning, or calling the demon to her. She specifies what she wants in a lover – one she cannot see, an incubus – and her desire

takes form in the demon that comes to her. Her desire and its linguistic expression (to her mother) create its own fulfillment. The act of voicing her desire actually generates her demon-lover and she is hence the author of Merlin's creation. The demon arrives, exactly to her specifications: "[le diable] lui promit qu'elle ne le verrait jamais" (Pr I, 7). Like the biblical *Let there be light*, the enunciation of her desire creates what is desired. There is no question that she does fulfill her desire: "Elle l'aima extrêmement, accomplit sa volonté et cela tout cela à sa mère et à autrui [sic]" (Pr I, 8). As previously mentioned, the use of the possessive pronoun *sa* in this passage is ambiguous and could refer to the maiden's desire, the demon's desire, or both. Considering her statement to her mother in which she explained that she would like to have the company of a man she cannot see (si elle pouvait avoir compagnie d'un homme qu'elle ne vît point, elle l'aimerait extrêmement, Pr I, 7), it is likely that both she and the demon accomplish their desires. Of course, invoking demons is evidence of sorcery, so she too is diabolical in this. (Turberville, 107-108).

Her linguistic act creates first her demon-lover and then the child born from their union. She brings Merlin into being and into corporeal existence. Her actions also bring him into the text, which is evidence of her influence in and on the text. If the creative act is the enactment of a desire to express, then, with regard to Merlin and his textual existence, her desire represents the driving force behind textual creation. In a blasphemous usurping of the divine creative power, she speaks (but not *all*) and she creates.

What does it mean that Merlin's mother first creates through a *linguistic act* and then refuses to *tell* the truth of Merlin's conception? Jacqueline Cerquiglini explores the notions of truth and silence in « *Un Engin si subtil* » *Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture*

*au XIVe siècle* and makes observations that are pertinent to Merlin's mother's silence. Since language can be used to intentionally mislead, it cannot be trusted; only the silent, non-linguistic communication that stems from the Real rather than the symbolic is trustworthy. Silence is the refusal of the symbolic (words, signifiers) and evidence of the Real (186-191). Since the Real is ineffable, the only way it can be expressed is through the lack of words, or silence. The refusal of speech then becomes a refusal of discourse that can mislead. Merlin's mother's silence, which is related to the Real, is also related to the Lacanian concept of the feminine, since language also does not reveal the feminine in its entirety.<sup>23</sup> Her silence seems to belie her active, creative desire, but it actually upholds it. If her desire is creative and so related to the act of writing, then her silence is related to the feminine ineffable's influence on this act.

What does this mean for the poetic act? Merlin's mother's desire creates a demon-lover that conforms precisely to her specifications and the result of their union is Merlin, so her desire also creates Merlin. Merlin's body represents, at the same time, Merlin's dual nature, the text, and the poet himself. This seems to be a direct contradiction to a reading of his body as the signifier. How can one character be a symbol of both the poet and the words of the text? As mentioned earlier, Lacan's notion of double inscription explains how the same character can symbolize two seemingly discordant concepts: "nul élément signifiant, objet, relation, acte symptomatique, dans la névrose par exemple, ne peut être considéré comme ayant une portée univoque" (*Séminaire IV*, 289). Merlin's

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<sup>23</sup> Lacan explains, "L'Autre, dans mon langage, cela ne peut donc être que l'Autre sexe. Qu'en est-il de cet Autre? Qu'en est-il de sa position au regard de ce retour de quoi se réalise le rapport sexuel, à savoir une jouissance, que le discours analytique a précipitée comme fonction du phallus dont l'énigme reste entière, puisqu'elle ne s'y articule que de faits d'absence?" (*Séminaire XX*, 40). *Feminine jouissance*, then, is a different, or other jouissance. Lacan capitalizes the word *Other* to denote unknowable difference. Although when Lacan writes of the Other sex, he refers to women, l'Autre is simply what is different and unrepresentable in its entirety.



mother, through her desire, creates both Merlin's body-as-signifier and Merlin the poet-figure. His body is what allows us to *read* his existence – it is the *signifier* that denotes his nature. In this way, Merlin's body represents the fruit of the author's creative process. His mother's desire, as the force that introduces the signifier into the text, represents the feminine ineffable's influential effects on poetic creation. Her creation through speech – the act of voicing her desire to her mother – and her subsequent silence reinforce this reading. The feminine ineffable is only partially representable; Merlin's mother's creative speech is related to the part that can be expressed in language and her silence corresponds to the part that cannot. She creates Merlin-the-signifier through her speech – the part of the feminine ineffable that can be spoken, but his body only denotes his human, corporeal side. It is an incomplete signifier that points to partial meaning.

#### 5.2.7 Creative Contradictions

The events of Merlin's conception in *L'Enchanteur* appear to raise some contradictions. The first lies in the role of the mother's silence as representing an instance of the feminine ineffable's presence in the text. The fact that the narrator speaks of the events of Merlin's conception seems to contradict the above interpretation. If the narrator fully told of the events, then they would be explained in language and so they would not be ineffable. But, the narrator does not fully explain the role of Merlin's mother's desire in the creation of the demon-lover or in Merlin's conception, so there remains silence in the text with regard to these events. Also, the narration of the text specifies that there is a something missing in the discourse relating to Merlin's parentage in the phrase *she did not want to tell*. In his interpretation of the Pseudo-Longinus' treatise on the sublime, "Le grand-dire: Pour contribuer à une relecture du Pseudo-Longin," Michel Deguy relates the silence in the text to a desire for unity and for the sublime (99-100). Once again, the

sublime, while not equivalent to the feminine ineffable, is also beyond linguistic representation and related to the feminine ineffable in that the desire for poetic expression or invention is also a desire for the sublime in many theories, such as that of Apollinaire. *L'Enchanteur's* lack of a complete explanation of the role of Merlin's mother's desire in the creation of the text and in its influence on the act of writing is also a commentary on the poetic act.

Merlin's mother's linguistic creation and subsequent refusal of linguistic communication also appear to signify opposing psychoanalytic notions. First she speaks and creates through an utterance, implying submission to the phallic structure of language. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the *phallus* is the imaginary structure that ushers the subject into the symbolic order by the process of transference; it seems to permit the accomplishment of desire. Merlin's mother, since she creates the realization of her desire seems to possess the phallus. How can this be, since her desire also represents an instance of the feminine ineffable in the text?

Although Lacan rewrote Freud, making his theory more linguistically than biologically based, a basic tenet of Freud's theory of sexuality explains Merlin's mother's seeming contradictions. Freudian psychoanalysis offers an enigmatic and contradictory explanation of sexuality in his doctrine on sexuality. His first statement reveals that there is only one sexuality and it is phallic. This is to say that phallic sexuality is active and seeks the accomplishment of desire. The second affirms that we are all bisexual. This is a reference to the division of the subject into what Freud terms conscious and unconscious, which are aligned to masculine and feminine aspects. According to this doctrine, the human subject is divided. Here Freud presents a fundamental contradiction – the subject is both bisexual and marked with a specific (phallic) sexuality. This is better understood

and resolved by replacing Freud's biological references with Lacan's references to the symbolic. In this way, sexuality becomes symbolic, rather than biological or physical. The driving force is the desire for unity, rather than a physical sexual relationship. Lacan's concept of double inscription, mentioned earlier in this chapter with regard to Merlin's body-as-signifier, bears repeating in relation to Merlin's mother's function in the text. Merlin's mother, serving as a symbol in the text, denotes more than one signified at a time. She is both phallic and feminine – active, but not entirely submitted to language. She (actively) creates through her speech, yet her creative desire also symbolizes the feminine ineffable, or what is only partially expressed in language. She is also the powerful and creative phallic mother. Like Merlin, she is a contradictory character that is the locus of the union of oppositions.

### 5.3 LEGENDARY CONCEPTIONS –THE *PROPHESIES DE MERLIN* AND EARLIER MEDIEVAL TEXTS

Apollinaire's version of Merlin's conception, while differing dramatically from its medieval predecessors (other than the prose *Lancelot*) in the mother's role, does share the basic portrayal of a human maiden who conceives the Enchanter from an encounter with an incubus demon with them. Before turning to the *Prophecies de Merlin*, we will consider four other medieval texts that are essential to the development of the legend of Merlin's conception: Nennius' ninth-century *Historia Britonum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Robert de Boron's late twelfth/early thirteenth-century *Merlin*, and a rewriting of the *Merlin*, the early thirteenth-century *Estoire de Merlin*. These texts establish the mother's representation, of which there are certain constants that find their way into Apollinaire's rewriting.

In the ninth century Nennius introduced Merlin's mother in his *Historia Britonum* as a woman who is unable to identify the father of her son: "Nescio quomodo in utero meo conceptus est, sed unum scio quia virum non cognovi umquam;" et juravit illis patrem non habere" (Nennius, Faral, Tome I, 94). ("I do not know how this child was conceived in my womb, but one thing I know is that I have not known a man;" and she swore that she did not know who the father of the child was.) This is a polar opposite to what the reader finds in *L'Enchanteur*, where she not only knows precisely how she conceived her child, but also actually creates the events. Nennius' first picture of Merlin's mother is one of a woman who is innocent of any active desire, again the reverse of Apollinaire's. She is completely passive in the events of Merlin's conception, even to the point of being unaware that they have occurred. Her statement that she has not known a man is entirely true, since she has not had relations with a *man*, but with an incubus demon, albeit unbeknownst to her if we are to believe her account as we are doubtlessly meant to. Nennius introduces Merlin's mother as an entirely human, entirely innocent contributor to the Enchanter's existence.

In the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* continued the story of Merlin's birth begun in *Historia Britonum*. His mother is living with a community of nuns: she "in ecclesia sancti Petri in eadem urbe inter monachas degebat" (187). ([she] lived in Saint Peter's Church with the nuns.) The text does not say that she is a nun herself, but she is living in a religious community. Although Merlin is not fundamentally a Christian figure in this text, he is accepted into and by the Christian religion (Eckhardt, "The Figure of Merlin," 35). This is an assessment that sums up Merlin's relationship to the Christian religion in the majority of the medieval texts. In *L'Enchanteur* Apollinaire chose to digress from Geoffrey's and most other medieval

portrayals of the maiden's domestic situation and to liken his version of the character's home life to that in the prose *Lancelot*, however, where she is the only child of a vassal, living with her parents. The first time the demon appears in Geoffrey's text, she is in her rooms with her fellow maidens. Unlike the corresponding scene in Apollinaire's text, however, she has no active part in inciting the demon's manifestation. She is passive in that the demon chooses to visit her. Again, she knows no man that is the father of her son, but her description of the events leading up to his conception is more detailed than in the earlier text:

Vivit anima tua et vivit anima mea, domine mi rex, quia neminem agnovi, qui illum in me generavit. Unum autem scio quod, cum essem inter consocias meas in thalamis nostris, apparebat mihi quidam in specie pulcherrimi juvenis et saepissime, amplexens me strictis brachiis, deosculabatur; et cum aliquantulum mecum moram fecisset, subito evanescebat, ita ut nihil ex eo viderem. Multotiens quoque alloquebatur dum secreto sederem nec usquam comparebat; cumque me diu in hunc modum frequentasset, coivit mecum in specie hominis saepius atque gravidam in alvo deseruit. Sciat prudentia tua, domine mi, quod aliter virum non agnovi, qui juvenem istum genuerit (187).

By my living soul, my lord King, I did not have relations with any man to make me bear this child. I know only this: when I was with my fellow maidens in our chambers, someone appeared to me in the shape of a handsome young man and embraced me in his arms and kissed me. He stayed with me a short time, then suddenly vanished so that I could no longer see him. He often spoke to me when I was alone, but I never saw him. When he came to me in this way he would lay with me in human form and after a time, I conceived and bore a child. You must decide in your wisdom, my Lord, who was the father of this lad, for I know of no other man who is the father of this child. (translation adapted from Thorpe, 146).

Although Merlin's mother still does not take an entirely active role, she does remark a mysterious visitor (and submit to his advances). She is depicted as living in a religious community, so at least somewhat governed by the dictates of the religious life, but she nonetheless engages in decidedly un-chaste actions. She is at a minimum aware of the intruder and she knowingly and willingly accepts his visits and embraces. There is no indication in the text that she does not welcome his attentions. He returns on more than

one occasion, until she conceives. As in the corresponding episode in *L'Enchanteur*, she is conscious of the demon but never sees him. Does this imply that she knows that he is not human? She does say that she has had relations with no *man*. Is she aware of her visitor's demonic origin? The text is not clear on this, but the maiden's explanation would suggest otherwise. Geoffrey's text does not specify that Merlin is saved by his mother's piety, so her association with the Christian religion in the text is not as strong as in later medieval texts (with the exception of the prose *Lancelot*). A few lines after this passage, one of the king's advisors clarifies that the mysterious visitor is certainly an ancient incubus demon and explains its ethereal nature and habit of taking on the guise of a physical body in order to couple with mortal women.

At the end of the twelfth/beginning of the thirteenth century, Robert de Boron offered a version of Merlin's conception in his *Merlin*, the second book of his Grail trilogy. Merlin's mother, a pious maiden, does not play an active role in her seduction, but fails to take measures to prevent it and is guilty of a sin. Her piety and faith save Merlin from the diabolical fate the host of demons ordains for him. She falls asleep alone in her room, against the advice of her confessor and the demon that represents the host of demons' evil plot to deceive mankind comes to rape her in her sleep:

Cele fu en sa chambre toute seule et fu couchiee en son lit toute vestue, et plora durement et ot molt grant duel. Et quant deables la vit seule et correciee et a orbetés qu'ele ne vit goute, si en fu molt liez. ... [Cele] ot molt grant duel et en cele dolor s'endormi. Et quant deables vit qu'ele ot tout oublié quanque li prodom li ot commendé por la grant ire ou ele estoit, si en fu molt liez et dist: 'Or est ceste bien atornee et toute hors de la garde de son mestre. Or porroit en bien en li mestre nostre home.' Icist deables qui ot pooir de converser et de gesir a femme fu tost apareilliez et vient a li en dormant, si conçoit (38).

She was in her room all alone lying down in her bed fully clothed, and she wept and lamented most terribly, and was greatly grieved. And when the demon saw her alone and angered and blinded [by tears] so that she could see nothing, so he was joyful. ... [She] was greatly grieved and fell asleep anguished. And when the demon saw that she had forgotten everything the good man had commanded her because of the state of great

anger she was in, he was very joyful and said: 'Now is everything well arranged and all is outside of the protection of her master. Now we could easily put our man in her.' This demon who had the power to have relations with women and to lie with them, made himself ready and went to her while she was sleeping and she thus conceived (translation adapted from Bryant, 51).

When she awakens, she has the sentiment that something horrible has happened, so she immediately repents of her weakness:

Et quant il ot conceu, elle s'esveilla et en l'esveillier li souvint dou prodome, si se seinga et dist: 'Sainte Marie, que est ce qui m'est avenu?' ... Je doi bien estre esfraee, car ce m'est avenu qui onques n'avint s'a moi non; et je vieng a vos, que vos me conseilloyez, car vos m'avez dit que nus ne puet si grant pechie faire, se il en est confés et repentanz et il en face ce que li confessor li enseigneront, qui toz ne li soit pardonné. Sire, et je ai pechié, et bien sachiez que je ai esté engingniée par ennemi (38-40).

And when she had conceived, she awoke and upon awaking remembered the good man[’s advice], made the sign of the cross, and said: 'Saint Mary, what has happened to me?' ... I have good reason to be alarmed, because what has happened to me has never happened to a woman other than me; and I come to you, for you to counsel me, because you told me that none can sin so greatly, that if he is confessed and repentant and does what his confessor tells him to do, that all will not be pardoned. Sire, I have sinned, and I well know that I have been tricked by the enemy (translation adapted from Bryant, 51).

As in *L'Enchanteur*, there is a play on the verb to see – the demon sees the maiden and the state that she is in, but she does not see him, since he appears while she is sleeping.

Although the theme of an innocent girl at least somewhat aligned with the religious life seduced by a demon remains strong, Robert’s text, unlike its predecessors, both introduces a strong element of guilt into the maiden’s actions and portrays the encounter as a rape rather than a mutually consensual act. These seem to be mutually exclusive concepts, but the text specifies that she is guilty through neglect, as explored below. The demon couples with her while she is sleeping, so not only is Merlin’s mother unaware of what happens, but she is also entirely incapable of either consenting to or avoiding his advances. This picture is far from Apollinaire’s version of Merlin’s mother as the instigator of the encounter, Geoffrey’s maiden who does nothing to rebuke the demon’s

advances, and certainly Nennius' depiction of a seemingly virginal conception. In these other versions, Merlin's mother displays varying levels of active desire, but in Robert's text, her role is passive – the demon takes advantage of her defenselessness. How, then, does the element of guilt creep into her representation? She puts herself in a position of vulnerability to the demon. In going to her room and falling asleep alone, she is guilty of failing to protect herself. By forgetting his precautions to avoid anger and to make the sign of the cross before going to bed, she neglects her confessor's advice, and so by extension, neglects her faith. However, her guilt does serve a purpose. It causes her to go directly to her confessor and ask for absolution, an act which, coupled with Merlin's quick baptism, saves her son from being entirely a demonic instrument. She brings Merlin into corporeality and into the text, but she also brings him into acceptance by religion. Once accepted by religion, Merlin can become the doubly inscribed being that he is, part man, part demon, part acceptable to religion, part demonic. His mother's piety inscribes Merlin into the text as much as her humanity does in this version.

The early thirteenth-century *Estoire de Merlin*'s version of Merlin's conception follows closely that of its immediate predecessor, Robert's *Merlin*. As the following quotation shows, the passages of Merlin's conception are almost identical. The maiden's portrayal is likewise very similar – she is a pious girl who seeks and receives her confessor's counsel but forgets it in a fit of anger and leaves herself open to the demon's advances:

Si se feri en vne chambre toute seule & se coucha en son lit toute uestue si plora moult durement. & quant li diables la uit seule & bien courechie si en fu moult lies ... si commenche a plorer & a demener grant duel & grant ire & en cele dolor sendormi. Et quant le diables sot quele ot tout oublie ce que li preudoms li auoit dit. si dist ore est ceste bien menee hors de la garde son maistre. ore poroit on bien metre en lui no homme. Icisi diables auoit pooir de concevoir & de gisir o feme. Lors fu tous aparellies & iut o lui en son dormant carnelement si conchut (9).



She went in a room all alone and lay down in her bed fully dressed and cried most terribly. And when the demon saw her alone and most angered he was joyful ... She started to cry and exhibit great grief and great anger and in this affliction fell asleep. And when the demon knew that she had forgotten everything the good man had told her he said she has moved well outside of her teacher's protection. We could easily put our man in her. This demon had the power to have relations with women and to beget and to lie with women. He made himself ready and went to her and knew her carnally while she was sleeping and she conceived.

Again, the demon is a representative of the host of evil demons' plot to undo mankind.

As in Robert's text, the maiden's guilt lies in her negligence to protect herself from the demon. She forgets her confessor's warnings and falls asleep without taking any of the precautions he advised, such as the avoidance of anger. As a result, although she is an unwilling participant – the demon rapes her in her sleep as in Robert's version – she does assume some guilt for failing to protect herself. Her role in this text, as in Robert's telling, is passive and is in complete opposition to Apollinaire's active portrait. Whereas in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin's mother's desire actively creates her demon-lover and the events of Merlin's conception, here it is her passivity that leads to Merlin's conception.

As in Robert's *Merlin*, when the maiden wakes, she goes directly to her confessor:

& quant ce fu fait si sesuelle la damoisele. & en lesuellier quele fist li souint del preudome si se segna & dist. sainte marie dame que est ce que mest auenu. ... Sire fait elle il mest auenu ce que onques naint a feme se a moi non. si vieng a vous por ce que vous me conselleriez. Car vous maues dit que nus ne puet si grant pechie faire sil en est confes & repentans & il fait ce que li confessors li enioint quil ne li soit pardounes. Sire fait ele ie ai pechie & bien sachiez que iai este engignie danemi (9).

And when this was done the maiden sensed it and when she woke she remembered the good man['s advice] and made the sign of the cross and said, 'Saint Mary, Lady what has happened to me?' ... Sire, she said, something has happened to me that has never happened to a woman other than me. I come to you so that you can counsel me. Because you told me that none can sin so greatly that if he is confessed and repentant and does what his confessor tells him to do, that he will not be pardoned. Sire, she said, I have sinned and I well know that I have been tricked by the enemy.

Again she repents and this saves Merlin from being entirely demonic and inscribes him into the religion depicted in the text. Her most active deeds are first to forget her confessor's advice and second to go to her confessor and follow his advice to have her son baptized. Her role, however, is detailed – there is much more narration devoted to Merlin's conception and her role in it in the *Estoire de Merlin* and in the *Merlin* than in Nennius' *Historia Britonum* or even in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*. She is important to the unfolding of the story. In the medieval texts discussed to this point – the *Historia Britonum*, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the *Merlin*, and the *Estoire de Merlin* – there is an increasing narrative importance placed on her character's representation.

When we add the early thirteenth-century prose *Lancelot* to the list of medieval texts that contain narratives of Merlin's conception, it too supports the notion of a progression in her narrative importance. Merlin's mother departs from the passive, innocent maiden that earlier medieval texts – the *Historia Britonum*, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the *Merlin*, and the *Estoire de Merlin* – offer. Her role is both active and vital to the unfolding of the events of Merlin's conception – she is active, creative, even wanton and diabolical in her desire for the encounter with the demon, as mentioned in the discussion of Merlin's conception in *L'Enchanteur*.

The thirteenth-century *Prophecies de Merlin* does not attribute the narrative significance to Merlin's mother that she shares in its predecessors. In this text, she is barely mentioned. While, as noted earlier, critics widely accept the *Prophecies* as a source for *L'Enchanteur*, this text's presentation of the mother's role is very different from Apollinaire's. The influence the *Prophecies* had on *L'Enchanteur* is better distinguished in the sections of Apollinaire's text that take place after Merlin's conception. The Berthelot edition of the *Prophecies*, like *L'Enchanteur*, opens with a

description of Merlin's conception, following the basic premise of a maiden that conceives a child from a demon-lover. The text mentions the host of demons' plot to deceive men by engendering a demonic child:

Et quant Nostres Sires les ot racates si chierement com de son presieus sanc et de son precieus cors, li anemi en furent mout dolant et mout courouchiet, et s'asamblèrent, et prisent conseil entrius ke il poroient faire par quoi il peussent les hommes et les femmes decevoir; car jamais ne poroient recouvrer cou k'il avoient perdu. ... Cil anemis ki celui pooir avoit commença a repairier entour une mout boine damoisiele, et de sainte vie, et tant ala entour li ke il le mena a cou que ele fu enchainte, ... Tant porta li mere cele engenreure ki fu conchius par l'engin de l'anemi que il nasqui et fu baptisies, et ot non Mierlins (37-38).

And when our Lord had bought them so dearly with his precious blood and his precious body, the enemy was greatly grieved and angered, and assembled and held council amongst themselves at this time to see what they could do to deceive men and women, because they could never recover what they had lost. ... This enemy that had such power, began to visit a most goodly maiden of devout life and continued until she became pregnant, ... The mother carried the child that was conceived by the deception of the enemy until he was born and was baptized, and given the name Merlin.

This portrayal follows the traditional picture of Merlin's mother established by earlier texts. True to tradition, the *Prophecies* emphasizes the mother's piety and innocence and downplays her part in Merlin's conception, although the reader can assume that the demon visits her on more than one occasion, since he *began to visit her and continued until she became pregnant* (the emphasis is mine). As in Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, there is no indication that she resists her mysterious nocturnal visitor's advances even though she is portrayed as *a most goodly maiden of devout life*. The text does not specify whether or not the girl believes her visitor to be a man or if she realizes that he is an incubus demon. Since demons have specific (non) corporeal attributes – most apparently, the lack of a visible body – it would stand to reason that a medieval reader might question that she would indisputably accept the humanity of a mysterious visitor that comes to her only under the cover of darkness. This calls into question the

nature of her piety on more than one level. If she truly believes the father of her child to be a man, then her Christian piety on the level of chastity is questionable. On the other hand, if she has any suspicion that he might not be of this world, and the text portrays her as leading a devout life, then what do the references to her devotion signify? Let us continue with our discussion of religion in the *Prophecies* in the following pages in order to answer this question. Merlin's mother has her son baptized, which contributes to his acceptance into what the text proffers to be the Christian religion. Unlike previous versions, in which she explains her knowledge of how she conceives her son, in the *Prophecies* she does not speak. Her role is minimal and passive. The brief description of a pious maiden that conceives a child from a mysterious demon-lover is the only information the reader has about her.

Even though the *Prophecies* served as a source for Apollinaire's version of Merlin's tale, his work emphasizes strong and relatively dangerous female characters, like the Dame du Lac and the parade of sorceresses, legendary figures, and fairies. Accordingly, his version of Merlin's mother is strong and vital, lascivious and luxurious. The prose *Lancelot*'s depiction of this character suited his disposition much better in this respect than the passive, all-but-absent figure in the *Prophecies*. Also, the mother in *L'Enchanteur* has a diabolical air about her that, regardless of her questionable religious devotion (and chastity), she does not have in the *Prophecies*. Apollinaire's version of the mother needed to have something of the diabolical in her, as we have seen, to emphasize his text's reversal of the Christian religion.

#### 5.4 GUILT AND SEDUCTION

In the texts we have discussed, Merlin's mother is openly aligned with diabolical concepts only in the prose *Lancelot* and *L'Enchanteur*. However, she is not entirely

innocent in any version, since she either carries on with the demon in disregard of her virtue and religious devotion or forgets her confessor's advice, also symbolically forgetting her religious instruction. The maiden's guilt in Robert's *Merlin* is more pronounced than in other medieval versions. However, in Nennius' text the king questions her and in Geoffrey's, she is put on trial after Merlin's birth. There is an element of guilt associated with the events of Merlin's conception in these accounts as well. While Merlin's mother is acquitted of committing a crime in every version, she finds herself accused rather than the innocent victim of sexual assault. There is no accusation of rape in any version. Never does the maiden claim to have been raped. This is understandable where she cavorts with the demon for a length of time. However, why does she immediately repent of not taking precautions to prevent the incident instead of claiming rape in Robert's version? To a modern reader, this is puzzling – she is quite obviously raped – but medieval rape laws shed some light on the subject.

These laws dispel any claims of her complete innocence in the activities leading to Merlin's conception precisely because she does not claim to have been raped. Innocence implies the lack of an active role in initiating the encounter. Kathryn Gravdal quotes the thirteenth-century jurist, Philippe de Beaumanoir's definition of rape as "Forcing a woman is when one has carnal knowledge of a woman against the will of that woman and despite the fact that she does everything in her power to resist him" (*Ravishing Maidens*, 3). This is not a far-fetched definition, even to a modern reader; although the definition of doing *everything in her power to resist him* is subjective and proving rape in the Middle Ages was an all-together different matter. Gravdal describes a 1391 rape case where the accuser is fined more than the rapists who entered her home and attacked her because, as the court claims, she let them have carnal knowledge of her

(“The Poetics of Rape Law,” 213)! Early thirteenth-century Norman law requires that a woman cry out for help so that others can hear her for there to have been a crime Amt, *Women’s Lives in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook*, 56-57). Leaving questions of social injustice aside, a medieval reader would be familiar with this law and would question the nature of Merlin’s mother’s association with her visitor, even during her sleep. If she were raped, then why does she not at least make an effort to cry for help? Why is there no indication at all in any text that she attempts to thwart the demon? Again, the text offers no explanation for her lack of claims of offense. The fact that she does not claim to have been raped only adds to the assumption of her involvement and subsequent guilt.

### 5.5 TEXTUAL PIETY<sup>24</sup>

Implications that Merlin’s mother incurs guilt when he is conceived along with her seeming acceptance of the demon’s advances in Geoffrey’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Robert’s *Merlin*, the *Estoire de Merlin*, and the *Prophecies* call her traditional piety into question in these texts. If she does not, in any version, claim to have been raped, if the text does not give any indication that she tries to deter the demon, then is she truly the innocent victim she claims to be? Furthermore, is this any way for a supposedly *most goodly maiden of devout life* to behave? Beginning with the assertion of the mother’s piety and continuing to Merlin’s salvation by baptism and his apparent acceptance by the Christian Church, the medieval texts that this study considers, excluding the prose *Lancelot*, contain a strong current of the Christian religion.

The Pseudo-Dionysius’ warning not to accept words at face value, but to search for a deeper meaning (*DN*, IV.11.C) bears repeating. One reading of the religious

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<sup>24</sup> The designation *textual piety* refers to the references to religion and piety in the text – the religion and piety implied by these references in the text.

references in the texts would take at face value that the religion represented is what it appears to be – the Christian religion. However, the careful reader will look to what the religious signifiers symbolize. Merlin's mother's piety does not entirely correspond to the chaste and innocent virgin medieval religion praises in any version of his conception, since she does not claim to have been raped by the demon or make any effort to deter him. Even in Robert's *Merlin* and the *Estoire de Merlin*, she fails to take the necessary precautions that would prevent the demon's advances. In Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the *Prophecies*, she engages in a decidedly un-chaste affair, which is, first, not in keeping with the (female) virginal piety so praised by the medieval Christian Church, and second, questionable as to whether or not she actually believes her visitor to be a man. In Geoffrey's version, she comments that *someone appeared to her in the shape of a most handsome young man ... then suddenly vanished so that she could no longer see him, and that she never saw him*. Is the reader meant to believe that Merlin's mother is so naïve that she does not recognize the (non-corporeal) demonic nature of a mysterious visitor that takes on the form of a man and that she subsequently does not see? The passage detailing Merlin's conception in the *Prophecies* contains the same impasse. His mother is represented as devout, but her actions do not fit the description of what we would consider as pious in the terms of medieval Christianity, which is the religion the text professes to depict. In Robert's *Merlin*, as another example, before offering his advice (that the maiden forgets), Merlin's mother's confessor ascertains her piety with the following questions that are those posed during the celebration of Christian baptism:

Don ne croiz tu bien le Pere et le Fil et le Saint Esperit et que ces .III. vertuz sont une meisme chose en Dieu, et la Trinité, que Nostre Sire vint en terre por sauver les pecheors qui vouldroient croire baptesme et les autres comendemenz de Sainte Eglise et des ministres que il laissa en terre por enseingnier a croire son non? (33-34).

Do you believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and that these three virtues are one and the same in God, the Trinity, that Our Lord came to earth to save those who sin and who believe in Holy Baptism and the commandments of His Holy Church and His earthly ministers that he left on earth that they might teach others to believe in his name?

She makes the appropriate answers: “Tout ainsi com vos l’avez dit et je l’ai entendu, le croi je” (34). (Everything you have said and that I have heard do I believe.) She is appropriately *devout* and *religious*, but she soon forgets her confessor’s advice, which amounts to forgetting her faith.

The mother’s relation to religion is a constant in most of the medieval versions, but if her piety is questionable, then so too is her son’s. In the *Prophecies*, Merlin faces a jury of three bishops who test his faith with similar questions:

Mierlin, fait il, crois tu el Pere et el Fil et el Saint Esperit, et ke il soient tout une meisme chose? – Oil mout bien, ce dist Mierlins. – Crois tu el saint baptesme et el saint sacrement de sainte Eglyse, cou dist Grigoires, et ke Ihesu Crist venist en terre pour sauver les peceors et s’aombrast en la Virgene Marie et presist char huimaine? – Oil, voirement le croi iou, cou dist Mierlins. – Di moi Mierlin, fait Felix, crois tu qu’uns prouvoires pecieres puist douner penitance et sauver les autres peceors ki lor pechies lor auront regehis? – Oil, cou dist Mierlins, que li pecies de lui n’en fait nul destourbier. – Certes, fait Bertous, adont ies tu parfaitement en la creance Ihesu Crist (60).

Merlin, he said, do you believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that they are all three one and the same? – Yes, certainly, said Merlin. – Do you believe in Holy Baptism and the Holy Sacrament of the Holy Church? said Grigoires, and that Jesus Christ came to earth to save the sinners and was incarnated through the Virgin Mary and took human flesh? –Yes, truly I believe it, said Merlin. – Tell me Merlin, said Felix, do you believe that a sinning preacher might offer penitence and save the other sinners who will have confessed their sins from their own sins? –Yes said Merlin, that the sins do not trouble him. –Certainly, said Bertous you are perfectly in the belief of Jesus Christ.

These questions repeat the affirmations of the Apostles’ Creed and the Christian celebration of Baptism. Merlin gives the correct responses, thus earning for himself acceptance by the bishops who have come to try his faith. However, who are these bishops and what, precisely, do they represent? As three representatives of the Christian religion, one meaning of their symbolism brings to mind the Trinity – God the Father,



God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The text refers to them as *tyreors de cordes*, recalling the ancient idea of the three fates that spin the lives of men and infusing them with an air of ancient religion. This also indicates their role in the text as representatives of a force that determines and controls the actions of the characters. They marvel and are amazed by Merlin's powers of prophesy and shape-changing abilities: "mais d'une cose m'esmierveil mout: comment vous nous noumastes ensi que de riens n'en mentistes? (58) (but I marvel greatly at one thing: how you could name us in such a way that you miss nothing?) Merlin, through his link to otherworldly knowledge, knows of their visit before they arrive and is able to offer information known only to them. Also:

A l'endemain apries la messe s'en alerent tout trois avoec maistre Antoine en sa cambre, car le iour devant avoient semons maistre Antoine que Mierlin lor fesissent veoir. Et quant il furent dedens la cambre, maistre Antoine dist a l'evesque Bertoul ke il meismes fremast la cambre mout bien. Et quant il ot l'uis mout bien freme, si s'aparau erranment Mierlins entor aus. Et quant il le virent, si furent mout esbahi, et dist li uns a l'autre: 'Cou est chi une des grans mierveilles del monde.' (59).

The next day after mass they all three went with master Antoine to his room, since the day before master Antoine had told them that Merlin would make them see. And when he was inside the room, master Antoine said to the bishop Bertoul that he should close the room well. And when he had closed it well, Merlin appeared amongst them. And when they saw him, they were astonished and said one to another: 'This is one of the great marvels of the world.'

Merlin appears inside the locked room. To do this he must transform himself from a physical existence to one that is aerial, like that of the incubus demon, and then back to a physical existence inside the room. This proves his demonic inheritance and seems to contradict any true corporeality on his part. If he can appear inside a locked room, then he must have the ability to also assume the demonic aerial nature. Again, however, Merlin is an enigmatic and contradictory character. Later in the same text the Dame du Lac deceives him specifically because of his human component: "se merlin eust este extraiet de la lignee des ennemis celle femme ne leust peu auoir deceu mais il auoit chair et

dormoit & pource le decepuoit elle” (Jehannot and Trepperel, lxiii).<sup>25</sup> (If Merlin had been of the line of the enemies this woman would not have been able to deceive him, but he had flesh and slept and because of this she deceived him.) Of course, Merlin *is* of the line of the enemies, but he is not *entirely* demon. His corporeal component is what allows the Dame du Lac to entrap him. The power to prophesy and change one’s physical form are diabolical and true Christian bishops would be more inclined to burn Merlin as a heretic than to find him perfectly acceptable in the eyes of the Church, further emphasizing the questionable nature of the Christian religion in this text.

One character is a constant link to both religion and textual production throughout different versions. This character is Blaise, Merlin’s mother’s confessor in Robert’s *Merlin*. Blaise is later Merlin’s own confessor, who acts as a substitute father for the Enchanter by influencing his mother to have him baptized.<sup>26</sup> In this way, he actually has a hand in creating Merlin as he exists in the text. In the *Prophecies*, this representative of the Church is also at one time Merlin’s scribe, writing down the prophecies the Enchanter speaks: “Et mout mis Blaisces, li confiesseres a sa mere, en escrit grant partie de ses paroles” (38). (And Blaise, his mother’s confessor, put a great many of his words in writing.) In this way Blaise is also connected to writing. The words he wrote are

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<sup>25</sup> The passage is not included in the Berthelot edition, however it is similar to a comparable passage in the prose *Lancelot*: “Si lo decevoit issi par ce qu’il estoit mortex en une partie; mais se il fust de tot deiabes, ele ne l’an poïst decevoir, car diables ne puet dormir,” (23). (She only deceived him thus because he was part mortal; but if he had been entirely demon, she would not have been able to deceive him, because demons cannot sleep.) And in Apollinaire’s *L’Enchanteur* “Elle le décevait ainsi parce qu’il était mortel; mais s’il eût été en tout un diable elle ne l’eût pu décevoir, car un diable ne peut dormir,” (9). Since the corresponding passage is to be found in the Jehannot and Trepperel edition of the *Prophecies*, it can be safely assumed that Merlin in the *Prophecies* is both man and demon, both in possession of a corporeal body and of the incubus demon’s aerial qualities. Of course Apollinaire could have read these lines in the Jehannot and Trepperel edition of the *Prophecies* or another edition of that text to which he might have had access, and/or borrowed them from the prose *Lancelot*.

<sup>26</sup> Also see Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 213 for a detailed description of Blaise’s role as a substitute father for Merlin.

contained in a book of Merlin's prophecies.<sup>27</sup> The *Prophecies* includes an intertextual reference to this book in the description of Merlin's origin: "Ensi que on le puet trouver el livre que Blaisses fist, li confesserres a cele damoisele" (38). (As one can find it in the book that Blaise, the confessor of this maiden, wrote.) The author of the *Prophecies* makes a reference to a text within a text, since the *Prophecies* also tells of the production of Blaise's text in the quote above. Blaise, then is involved with both writing – the creation of the text – and religious guidance – the creation, so to speak, of that part of Merlin that is aligned with religion in the text. In this way, Blaise serves as a link between religion and textual production.

As mentioned above, the three bishops of the *Prophecies* also recall notions of a creative force through their appellation, *tyreors de cordes*. The reference to the ancient fates that spin the lives of men is also a reference to the role of the author in creating the text – both determine and direct the actions of men/characters. The bishops are representatives of religion in the *Prophecies* – they come to try Merlin's faith to see if he is "parfaitement en la creance Ihesu Crist" (60). They come to test Merlin, so, since the reader sympathizes with the Enchanter, they have a negative association. Although they do not invoke the reader's sympathy, they do serve a purpose in the text. They allow Merlin to demonstrate his otherworldly knowledge and ability to change his form. Their visit also emphasizes to the reader that Merlin is accepted by religion, since the bishops do find Merlin to be *perfectly in the belief of Jesus Christ*, and so perfectly inscribed into religion.

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<sup>27</sup> See Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, p. 213 for a more detailed description of the reference to this book.

But what does the depiction of religion in the text represent? As mentioned earlier, the mother's supposed piety in the *Prophesies* and in most medieval texts does not necessarily point to traditional medieval Christianity, as it seems to do at first glance. Both Blaise and the bishops that come to try Merlin's faith are related to religion and represent the creative power of authorship. The portrayal of what the text presents as the Christian religion actually has an inspired aspect to it, inciting a reading of the signifiers that point to religion in the text as the act of writing and the author as a divine figure. In this metaphor of (divine) poetic creation, the author usurps the creative power of God in much the same way that Apollinaire reverses Christianity and makes himself, as the poet, the "new messiah" – the God of the text.<sup>28</sup>

What does it mean that Apollinaire removed the aspect of Merlin's acceptance by the Christian religion in his text? Since religion in the text may be read as a divinisation of the poet, with the author in the place of the Judeo-Christian God, the representatives of religion – the maiden's confessor, the bishops, even the mother's piety – are actually metaphors for writing. For example, in the *Prophesies* and other medieval texts that depict Merlin's mother as pious, when the maiden baptizes her child and thereby inducts him into her religion, the baptism is a metaphor for the author's introduction of a concept (an idea, a theory, or even a character) into his text. The mother, as the one who has her son baptized, represents the desire that influences the author to write. Apollinaire replaces the aspect of religion in his text with his reversal of Christianity, starting with Merlin's mother's piety. Because of this lack of piety on her part, Merlin is not inscribed in the Christian religion. However, Merlin is inscribed in Apollinaire's poetic religion – the anti-religion, the religion of which the poet is the Creator.

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<sup>28</sup> For a reading of the poet as the "new messiah" in the text, see Robert Couffignal, *Apollinaire*, p. 93.

## 5.6 CONCLUSION – WRITING DESIRE

Apollinaire substitutes active desire for piety. Merlin's mother in *L'Enchanteur*, as in the *Prophesies* and other medieval texts, with the exception of the prose *Lancelot*, brings her child into the religion specific to poetic creation. Apollinaire's religion is an anti-religion, a demonic reversal of the Christian faith, wherein the mother's desire represents the creative power of the poetic act. Merlin's mother's active desire creates Merlin – it creates his corporeal body and his presence in the text. Merlin's body – sometimes more flesh than demonic, as when the Dame du Lac deceives him, sometimes more simulacrum than flesh, as when he changes his form – is the representation of his essential dichotomous existence. The fact that he can assume an aerial existence and that at the same time he can only be entrapped by the Dame du Lac because of his flesh is not a meaningless contradiction in the text, but a linguistic illustration of his nature as part man, part demon. Merlin's body is the signifier; it is the textual representation of the effects of his mother's desire and it represents these effects in and on the text, so his dichotomous nature also represents what can and cannot be said in the language of the text.

Merlin's mother's desire influences poetic creation – it influences the creation of the signifier and is the reason for Merlin's presence in the text. As such, Merlin's mother's desire is similar to the feminine ineffable's influence on the poet, since the poet is driven by a desire to express concepts that are often ineffable. In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the subject's desire originates in what is missing from its representation in the language of the Other:

C'est dans l'intervalle entre ces deux signifiants que gît le désir offert au repérage du sujet dans l'expérience du discours de l'autre, du premier Autre auquel il a affaire, mettons, pour l'illustrer, la mère en l'occasion. C'est en tant que son désir est au-delà ou

en deçà de ce qu'elle dit, de ce qu'elle intime, de ce qu'elle fait surgir comme sens, c'est en tant que son désir est inconnu, c'est en ce point de manque, que se constitue le désir du sujet (*Séminaire XI*, 199).

Desire is what is not satisfied, here linguistically. It is what is lacking. In the case of the poet, his/her desire to communicate stems from the inadequate linguistic representation of the concepts s/he wants to convey. The feminine ineffable relates language's insufficiency specifically to poetic production. Since desire is born of lack, it can be said that the feminine ineffable encourages poetic creation in an effort to fill the void in linguistic representation and to satisfy the desire for (self) expression. In this way, the feminine ineffable functions much the same as Merlin's mother's desire – it drives creation and influences the poetic act. With regard to Merlin's corporeality and its relation to the act of writing, the limits of poetic creation become apparent when the Dame du Lac entombs Merlin and ends his corporeal existence. She sets the limits for his body-as-signifier in the text and, in a reading of her role as related to poetic restriction, her actions reveal the limitations of poetic language.

## 6. APOLLINAIRE REWRITING THE DAME DU LAC

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In negating Merlin's corporeality, the Dame du Lac brings the cycle of the feminine ineffable's influence in and on the text full circle. In *L'Enchanteur* she is a central figure, the driving force behind the text. Her deception is the point of departure for Apollinaire's version of Merlin's story and provides the basis for the original material Apollinaire adds to the tale. Of the two main figures, the Dame du Lac and Merlin, she is the one that is represented as active and in control of both her and the Enchanter's physical destinies. Merlin, on the other hand, plays a relatively passive part – he has command over only his speech. Even though the Dame du Lac's imprisonment and, in this way, control of Merlin's corporeal fate is common to all of the texts that make up this study's focus, the importance of her role as equal to that of the Enchanter is original to Apollinaire's text. In the medieval texts we will consider, the thirteenth-century *Estoire de Merlin*, prose *Lancelot*, and *Prophecies de Merlin*, the theme of Merlin's confinement by the Dame du Lac remains constant. Additionally, Apollinaire's "Merlin et la vieille femme," a poem in the collection *Alcools*, portrays her relationship to Merlin, but only makes an intertextual reference to the entombment scene that is the core of *L'Enchanteur*.

The theme of Merlin's confinement is not originally tied to the Dame du Lac, however. Robert de Boron's late twelfth/early thirteenth-century *Perceval* ends with Merlin going off to enclose himself in the *esplumoir*:

Et lors vint Merlins a Perceval et a Blaise son maistre, et prist congié a els et lor dist que nostre Sire ne voloit que il se demonstrast au peule, ne il ne poroit morir devant le finement del siecle: 'Mais adont arai jou la joie parmenable. Et je volrai faire defors te maison un abitacle, et la volrai converser, et si profetiserai çou qu nostre Sire me commandera. Et tot cil qui men abitacle verront, si le clameront l'esplumoir Merlin.' Atant s'en torna Merlins

et fist son esplumoir, et entra dedens, ne onques puis au siecle ne fu veüs” (Bernard Cerquiglini, 301-302).

And then Merlin came to Perceval and to his master Blaise, and took leave of them and told them that our Lord did not want him to show himself to the people, but he could not die before the end of the world: ‘But so shall I have perpetual joy. And I will make a place to live outside your home, and I will live there, and I will prophesy as our Lord commands me. And all those who see my dwelling place will call it Merlin’s *esplumoir*.’<sup>1</sup> With that Merlin departed; and he made his *esplumoir* and entered it, and was never seen again in this world (translation adapted from Bryant).

In this text, Merlin goes off to the *esplumoir* of his own accord following a divine order. According to the passage, it is God’s will that Merlin enclose himself thus and Merlin will live in perpetual joy until the end of time. In the *Perceval*, Merlin does not die when he goes to his place of seclusion; indeed, he *could not* die in this place. Both the medieval *Prophecies* and *L’Enchanteur* alter this – they attach the idea of immortality to Merlin’s soul, while his body dies immediately. It is significant that Apollinaire adopted this detail from the *Prophecies*; we will see that Merlin’s body does not immediately die in either the prose *Lancelot* or the *Estoire de Merlin*. In *L’Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac returns Merlin to the nature of his father – a being without a physical body of his own, but Merlin remains tied to the tomb, even reduced to this aerial nature. Unlike the incubus demon, he is not free to come and go as he pleases. Part of the spell that the Dame du Lac uses to trap Merlin involves enclosing a place so that it cannot be reopened. The role Merlin’s body plays in this is significant. Merlin’s corporeal death and spiritual immortality are what motivates a reading of the feminine ineffable’s influence on the act of writing. We will continue with questions of Merlin’s body-as-signifier and what can and cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Cerquiglini explains *esplumoir* as a sort of birdcage (301). In “The Esplumoir and Viviane,” Arthur C.L. Brown associates the *esplumoir* to a “fairy abode” (429) and, through the tradition in the “oldest Irish stories” for fairies to assume bird form, with birds (431). He cites an episode in the *Perceval* wherein Perceval hears Merlin’s voice emanating from a shadow that passes over his head; Brown suggests that this might be Merlin in bird form (431-432). In this way he also relates Merlin to a bird.



represented in the words of the text later, but first it is important to explore the how the Dame du Lac has evolved as a character in literature.

The development of the character is far less linear than that of Merlin's mother, even though the entombment scenes are very similar in the different versions. The Dame du Lac has her origins in Celtic fairy mythology (Paton, *Studies*, 167). But Apollinaire's Dame du Lac is an amalgamation: the fairy Dame du Lac from Celtic mythology and another character that has been referred to as Niniane, Viviane, or Nimüe. These are traditionally two separate and distinct characters.<sup>2</sup> One main difference between them is that the character the Dame du Lac exists independently of Merlin – she takes part in textual episodes that do not concern the Enchanter – while Niniane/Viviane/Nimüe's representation is tied to her involvement with Merlin (Paton, *Studies*, 204). For example, in the prose *Lancelot*, the Dame du Lac is involved with Lancelot's upbringing, which is not directly associated with Merlin, but in the *Estoire de Merlin*, the character Viviane is primarily represented in her relationship to the Enchanter. What is more, Niniane/Viviane/Nimüe is usually depicted as a young girl, in contrast to the Dame du Lac's maturity (Berthelot, "From Niniane to Nimüe," 93). Traditionally, the character Niniane/Viviane/Nimüe is Merlin's love-interest who deceives him (Paton, *Studies*, 203). The Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* and in the *Prophesies* betrays the Enchanter's love and so her representation would seem to follow the tradition of the Niniane/Viviane/Nimüe

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<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth look at the development of the character, see Anne Berthelot, "From Niniane to Nimüe: Demonizing the Lady of the Lake" and Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*. Briefly, Berthelot mentions Chrétien de Troyes *Chevalier de la Charrette* as the first French text in which the Dame du Lac appears and the prose *Lancelot* as the first French text in which she is linked to Merlin ("From Niniane to Nimüe: Demonizing the Lady of the Lake," 89-90, "Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake," 64). Berthelot lists the Post-Vulgate *Suite* as a text in which the Niniane/Viviane/Nimüe character (Niviène) imprisons Merlin (93). This character also appears in the Vulgate *Estoire de Merlin*.

character. But, at the same time she is depicted in these texts as a mature figure and in the *Prophesies* independently of her involvement with Merlin, so she would also appear to be aligned with the fairy Dame du Lac. Her portrayal as such is what Lucy Allen Paton considers a fusion of the two traditions (Paton, *Studies*, 204). Nevertheless, in both texts she is specifically called the Dame du Lac.

The representations of the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* and in the medieval *Prophesies* are ambivalent – they depict both positive and negative characteristics. Anne Berthelot writes that the *Prophesies* portrays both the Dame du Lac and Merlin as rather positive characters, and that the Dame du Lac even expresses regret for her deception (Berthelot, “Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake,” 73). Apollinaire took the scene of Merlin’s entombment from a text in which critics generally agree on the virtuous nature of the character. As a maternal figure and the guardian of Lancelot, she is surrounded by an aura of goodness.<sup>3</sup> She is the antithesis of the “evil” sorceress in the prose *Lancelot* (Harf-Lancner, “Lancelot,” 30). However, in this text the name Niniane also associates her with the tradition of the character that exists with the sole purpose of betraying Merlin, which diverges from her association with the figure of the Dame du Lac that originated in the fairy tradition. In this text too, then, she represents a fusion of the characters.

Alexandre Leupin offers an interpretation of Viviane in the *Estoire de Merlin* that associates her with demonic notions. By inciting the Enchanter to teach her the spells she uses to entrap him she is “plus noire encore qu’un diable” (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 108). Plus, she uses enchantments – sorcery – and so is just as demoniacal as Merlin. (Leupin,

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the Dame du Lac in the prose *Lancelot* as a positive figure, see Anne Berthelot, “From Niniane to Nimüe,” Laurence Harf-Lancner, “Lancelot et la Dame du Lac,” 28-29, and Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies*.

114). Although it may be argued that this character is of the tradition that diverges from that of the Dame du Lac as a positive maternal figure, she is a predecessor to Apollinaire's Viviane. Moreover, Berthelot notes that by the end of the Middle Ages the figure of the Dame du Lac came to denote feminine falsehood (Berthelot, "From Niniane to Nimüe," 100). The Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* and in the *Prophesies*, then, is essentially an ambivalent character.

In the medieval *Prophesies*, the Dame du Lac's positive or negative traits often relate to her interactions with Arthur's world – the world of the court, chivalry, and Arthur's enchanter, Merlin. This would in part explain her characterization as the epitome of "feminine falsehood" in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, since the character derives from fairy mythology, a reading of the Dame du Lac's portrayal as negative also implies a reading of her character as counter to the religion depicted in the text (and the accepted religion of Arthur's court). In the preceding chapter, "Apollinaire Rewriting Merlin's Mother" we questioned Merlin's mother's piety and what the references to religion in the text represent. Considering this ambivalent signification of the religion in the medieval *Prophesies*, an analysis of the Dame du Lac in relation to religion in the Christian sense also raises questions concerning how the representation of religion relates to the act of writing. If, as we have seen, the religious signifiers point to the poet as the creator of the text, then the Dame du Lac's depiction as a counter influence supports a reading of her actions as representative of the feminine ineffable's effect on poetic creation in the *Prophesies* as well as in Apollinaire's twentieth-century rewriting.

Apollinaire's Dame du Lac, whom he also identifies as *Viviane or Eviène* ("la dame du lac, que l'on appelle Viviane ou Eviène" [Pr I, 10]), shares certain qualities of her

predecessors. The combination of the name Viviane with the designation the Dame du Lac expresses Apollinaire's blend of traditions and attitudes in *L'Enchanteur*. For example, her relationship to what is demoniacal. Although she specifies that she is not a demon, she is *like* the demon.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, she uses enchantments, like her medieval predecessors, to entomb Merlin. As another example, the name Viviane ties her to the tradition of the character that traditionally betrays Merlin and who, in the *Estoire de Merlin* does so out of a desire to preserve her virginity rather than hatred of the Enchanter, as we will discover. This name also brings Diana, the ancient goddess of the wood into Apollinaire's work, since in the medieval text Viviane is the daughter of a vassal who had relations with Diana. Diana had previously prophesied that the vassal's daughter – Viviane – would attract the attention of the wisest man in the world, so this association invokes ideas of predestination.<sup>5</sup> The name Eviène is also rich in intertextual symbolism. It brings to mind the concepts mentioned in chapter three, "Ancient and Medieval Influences" of the biblical first woman – Eve – and her "deception" as well as the idea of water, appropriate for the Dame du Lac.<sup>6</sup> Apollinaire's Dame du Lac is a new invention along the lines of his theory of poetic creation. She does share the above-mentioned similarities, among others, with the characters that influenced her creation, but also represents new qualities, such as her adherence to an inevitable role, predilection for nudity and association with the dance.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For the passage in which the Dame du Lac says that she is like the *diabliesse*, see chapter three, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> For more about the association of Niniane/Viviane with Diana, see also Anne Berthelot, "From Niniane to Nimüe," p. 97-98, "Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake," p. 60, Arthur C. L. Brown, "The Esplumoir," p. 430, and Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies*, p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter three, p. 103, note 41.

<sup>7</sup> In this she might be considered in her association with orphic or bacchic figures, but this study does not consider her in this light. Her nudity and relationship to the dance are, rather, related to her association with the influence the feminine ineffable has on writing, as we will discover.

“Merlin et la vieille femme” in the collection *Alcools* published in 1913, contains a very different picture of Viviane than either *L’Enchanteur* or any medieval text. The character in “Merlin et la vieille femme” is not identified as the Dame du Lac; she is named Viviane:

La dame qui m’attend se nomme Viviane  
Et vienne le printemps des nouvelles douleurs (Po, 89).

These lines recall the phrase in *L’Enchanteur* where the reader learns that she is also called Viviane or Eviène due to the similarity in sound between *Eviène* and *Et vienne*. The name has the same literary significance that it does in *L’Enchanteur*. But, in “Merlin et la vieille femme,” Apollinaire also refers to her as *Une vieille* and *l’amante*. Viviane’s age is in contrast to the Dame du Lac’s traditional youth and beauty, whether real or the product of enchantment.<sup>8</sup> More than does *L’Enchanteur*, this poem departs from the depiction of evil intent in the Dame du Lac’s actions, but there are references to Merlin’s legendary entombment in the mention of *aubépine*. She says, “Je n’ai jamais cueilli que la fleur d’aubépine” (Po, 89). This is an allusion to her traditional role. Also, the narrator says, “Je m’éterniserai sous l’aubépine en fleurs” (Po, 89), a reminder of Merlin’s eternal imprisonment in his tomb under the hawthorn flowers. Indeed, although the Dame du Lac and Merlin appear to be lovers reunited, there remains a sentiment of distrust: “Et l’antique Merlin dans la plaine déserte se frappait la poitrine en s’écriant Rival” (Po, 88). This a reference to the tradition by which Merlin teaches Viviane/the Dame du Lac all he knows of enchantments; since she now has the mastery once reserved only for the Enchanter, Merlin views her as a rival.

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<sup>8</sup> She uses enchantments to give herself the appearance of youth and beauty in the medieval *Prophecies*, as the pages that follow demonstrate.

The underlying theme of impossible love that is so strong in *L'Enchanteur* also pervades “Merlin et la vieille femme.” The Dame du Lac’s betrayal of Merlin expresses this impossibility in his work and serves as the basis for his retelling of the Enchanter’s story. In *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin enters into a symbiotic relationship with the Dame du Lac as he does with his mother, so they should be considered together and in this light. As Jean Markale has expressed, it is necessary to define the character of Viviane, or the Dame du Lac, if we are to understand Merlin (*Merlin, L'Enchanteur*, 88). But, by the same token, Merlin’s portrayal informs that of the Dame du Lac. This is why an analysis of Merlin’s representation with regard to his corporeal qualities reveals the Dame du Lac’s function as it relates to that of the feminine ineffable in writing.

## 6.2 APOLLINAIRE AND THE DAME DU LAC

### 6.2.1 The Entombment

As mentioned earlier, Apollinaire took the scene of Merlin’s entombment directly from the prose *Lancelot*:

*L'Enchanteur*

1 Il y avait dans la contrée une  
 2 demoiselle de très grande beauté  
 3 qui s'appelait Viviane ou Eviène.  
 4 Merlin commença à l'aimer, et  
 5 très souvent il venait là où elle  
 6 était, et par jour et par nuit. La  
 7 demoiselle, qui était sage et  
 8 courtoise, se défendit longtemps  
 9 et un jour elle le conjura de lui dire  
 10 qui il était et il dit la vérité. La demoiselle  
 11 lui promit de faire tout ce qu'il lui  
 12 plairait, s'il lui enseignait auparavant  
 13 une partie de son sens et de sa science.  
 14 Et lui, qui tant l'aimait que mortel cœur  
 15 ainsi ne pourrait plus aimer, promit de  
 16 lui apprendre tout ce qu'elle demanderait:  
 17

Prose *Lancelot*

Il avoit en la marche de la Petite  
 Bretagne une damoisele de mout  
 grant biauté, qui avoit non Ninienne.  
 Celi commença Merlins a amer, et  
 mout vint sovant la ou ele estoit et  
 par jor et par nuit. Et cele se  
 deffandié mout bien de lui, car mout  
 estoit sage et cortoise. Et tant c'un  
 jor li enquist et conjura qu'il li deïst  
 qui il estoit, et il l'an dist la verité. Et  
 ele li dist qu'ele feroit qancqu'il  
 voudroit, mais qu'il li enseignast une  
 partie avant de son grant san. Et cil,  
 qui tant l'amoit com cuers mortex  
 puet nule chose plus amer, li otria a  
 aprendre qancqu'ele deviseroit de  
 boche.

18 “Je veux, fait-elle, que vous  
 19 m’enseigniez comment, en quelle  
 20 manière et par quelles fortes paroles  
 21 je pourrais fermer un lieu et enserrer  
 22 qui je voudrais sans que nul ne pût entrer  
 23 dans ce lieu ni en sortir. Et je veux aussi  
 24 que vous m’enseigniez comment je pourrais  
 25 faire dormir qui je voudrais.

26

27 - Pourquoi, fit Merlin, voulez-vous savoir  
 28 tout cela?

29 Parce que, fit-elle, si mon père savait  
 30 que vous eussiez couché avec moi il me  
 31 tuerait sur l’heure et je serai certaine de  
 32 lui quand je l’aurai fait dormir. Mais  
 33 gardez-vous de me tromper touchant  
 34 ce que je vous demande, car sachez qu’en  
 35 ce cas vous n’auriez jamais ni mon amour  
 36 ni ma compagnie.’

37

38

39 Merlin lui enseigne ce qu’elle lui  
 40 demande et la demoiselle écrit les paroles  
 41 qu’elle entend, dont elle se servait toutes  
 42 les fois qu’il venait à elle. Et il s’endormait  
 43 incontinent. De cette manière, elle le mena  
 44 très longtemps et quand il la quittait, il  
 45 pensait toujours avoir couché avec elle.

46

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52 Elle le décevait ainsi parce qu’il était mortel;  
 53 mais s’il eût été en tout un diable elle ne  
 54 l’eût pu décevoir, car un diable ne peut  
 55 dormir. A la fin, elle sut par lui  
 56 tant de merveilles qu’elle le fit entrer au  
 57 tombeau, dans la forêt profonde, obscure  
 58 et périlleuse. Et celle qui endormit si bien  
 59 Merlin était la dame du lac où elle vivait.  
 60 Elle en sortait quand elle voulait et y  
 61 rentrait librement, joignant les  
 62 pieds et se lançant dedans (Pr I, 8-9).

63

‘Ge voil, fait ele, que vos  
 m’enseigniez comment ge porrai un  
 leu si fermer par force de paroles et  
 serrer dedanz ce que ge voudrai, que  
 nus n’i puisse ne issir ne entrer, ne  
 fors ne anz. Et si m’enseigneroiz  
 comment ge porrai faire dormir a  
 tozjorz mais cui ge voudrai, sanz  
 esveillier.’

‘Por quoi, dist Merlins, volez  
 vos ce savoir?’

‘Por ce, fait ele, que se  
 [me]s peres savoit que vos ne autres  
 geüssiez a moi, ge m’ocirroie  
 tantost; et issi serai asseür de lui qant  
 ge l’avrai fait endormir. Mais  
 bien gardez, fait ele, que vos ne  
 m’anseigniez chose ou il ait point de  
 mençonge, car bien sachiez que ja  
 mais a nul jor n’avriez ma  
 compagnie.’

Cil li anseigna et l’un et l’autre;  
 et ele escrist les paroles en parchemin,  
 car ele savoit assez de letres. Si an  
 conreoit si Mellin totes les hores  
 qu’il venoit a li parler que; maintenant  
 s’andormoit; et metoit sor ses deus  
 aignes deus nons de conjurement  
 que, ja tant com il i fussient, ne la  
 poïst nus despuceler ne a li chessir  
 charnelment.

En tel maniere lo mena  
 mout longuement, et cuidoit tozjorz  
 au partir que il eüst a li geü. Si lo  
 decevoit issi par ce qu’il estoit  
 mortex en une partie; mais se il fust  
 de tot deiabes, ele ne l’an poïst  
 decevoir, car diables ne puet dormir.  
 En la fin sot ele par lui tantes  
 mervoilles que ele l’angigna et lo  
 seela tot andormi en un cave dedanz  
 la perilleuse forest de Darnantes, qui  
 marchist a la mer de Carnoaille et au  
 reiaume de Sorelois. Illeuc remest en  
 tel maniere, car onques puis par  
 nelui ne fu seüz; et li leus fu mout

64	bien seelez par dedanz a force de
65	granz conjuremenz, si ne fu onques
66	puis par nul home veüz qui noveles
67	en seüst dire (23-24).

Prose *Lancelot* (translation)

There was in the borderland of lesser Brittany a damsel of great beauty, who was named Niniane. Merlin began to love her and went often where she was by day and by night. She defended herself well from him since she was very wise and courtly. And so one day she asked him who he was and he told her the truth. And she told him that she would do as he wished if he taught her some of his great wisdom beforehand. And he loved her as a mortal heart can love nothing better, asked her to tell him what she wanted to learn.

‘I want, she said, you to teach me how I can close up a place with words and lock inside who/what I want, so that none may enter or leave, neither from without nor from within. And I want you to teach me how I can put whom I want to sleep so they won’t awaken.’

‘Why, asked Merlin, do you want to know this?’

‘Because, she answered, if my father knew that you were lying with me, he would kill me; and this way I will be sure of him after putting him to sleep. But pay attention, she said, that you do not teach me anything in the least bit deceitful, because know well that you would never have my company.’

He taught her the one and the other; and she wrote his words on parchment, because she knew enough about writing. Whenever Merlin came to talk to her, she put him to sleep; and spoke two restraining words of enchantment so in that state, he could never take her virginity or have carnal knowledge of her.

In this way they went on for a long time, and he always believed when he left that he had lain with her. She deceived him thus because he was part mortal; but if he had been entirely demon, she would have not been able to deceive him, because demons cannot sleep. In the end, she knew so many marvels from him that she sealed him up asleep in a cave in the perilous forest of Arnantes, which borders the sea of Cornouaille and the kingdom of Sorelois. He remained in such a manner, because none knew where he was; and the place was so well sealed by such a great conjuring, that no one could see it or know of it.

Apollinaire’s passage about Merlin’s entombment is, like his conception scene, almost a word-for-word translation, or transcription, of the corresponding episode from the medieval text. As with the scene of Merlin’s conception, there are some differences, however. As mentioned, Apollinaire changed the place where Merlin is confined from a cave in the prose *Lancelot* to a tomb in an intertextual reference to the medieval *Prophecies*. Furthermore, Apollinaire departed from the prose *Lancelot* in that as mentioned, Merlin’s



body dies immediately in *L'Enchanteur* as in the *Prophesies*. This also differs from the *Estoire de Merlin*. Apollinaire's departure from the prose *Lancelot* in this respect reinforces the reading of Merlin's corporeality as a signifier that, once negated by death, reveals the truth of his dual nature.

Also, Apollinaire condensed the explanation of the maiden's knowledge of letters. This probably has to do with the period of time in which he rewrote the story – it would not be unusual for a twentieth-century woman to know how to write, so even though the medieval character's familiarity with *the letter* is still important to Apollinaire's text, he glosses over the explanation of her skill. The medieval text uses the phrase *ele savoit assez de letres* to describe the maiden's understanding of the written word. The etymology of *letre* is significant to our analysis with regard to writing. In Old French, *letre* has the sense of *letter of the alphabet*, but also refers to the knowledge gained from the text (*Le Robert Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*).<sup>9</sup> In *Le Graal et la Littérature*, Leupin writes that Viviane replaces Blaise in the *Estoire de Merlin* as Merlin's cleric and that in the *Estoire de Lancelot* she also displaces clerical mastery from the masculine to the feminine domain (40, 108). These readings also apply to the prose *Lancelot* and to *L'Enchanteur* with regard to Merlin's body-as-signifier and the text. If, as we have seen with regard to the *Prophesies*, references to religion point to authorial authority in this text as well and Viviane writes, she may be considered as a representation of the creative force. Unlike Merlin, the Dame du Lac is not a symbol for the poet, but one aspect of the force that inspires and limits poetic creation.

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of *the letter* in medieval French literature, see Roger Dragonetti, *La Vie de la lettre au Moyen Age (Le Conte du Graal)* and Alexandre Leupin's article "The Middle Ages, the Other."

Apollinaire writes that she *wrote the words she heard, which she used every time [Merlin] came to her and at the end, she knew so many marvels from him that she put him in the tomb*. In this way, her writing is linked to the enchantments she uses to entomb Merlin. Especially in the medieval text from which Apollinaire took the passage, her knowledge of letters is directly associated with the words she speaks to put Merlin to sleep. She entombs Merlin by the *word* – written and spoken. In fact, she uses *his own* words to entomb – symbolically castrate – him. Her writing represents her mastery of what was previously Merlin’s authority. As a representation of the feminine ineffable, her actions with regard to Merlin reflect the limits of linguistic expression and, in psychoanalytic terms, the symbolic castration (division) of the subject by language. This is why the Lacanian concept of non-rapport explains the relationship between Merlin and the Dame du Lac in Apollinaire’s text as one of futile love.

Many scholars believe that Merlin has foreknowledge of his fate. In a note to his edition of *L’Enchanteur*, Jean Burgos writes that Merlin knew what the Dame du Lac had planned for him and that all medieval texts agree on this. He writes that Merlin is thus a voluntary victim (145). Merlin does have foreknowledge of her deception, but he does not realize how far the deception goes. He knows that Viviane will trick him in the *Estoire de Merlin* and, in the *Prophesies*, Merlin prophesies that a *white serpent* will be his downfall, but he does not understand that the Dame du Lac is the *white serpent*, as we will discover. Apollinaire’s text mentions that whenever Merlin left the Dame du Lac, he believed to have had relations with her (*quand il la quittait, il pensait toujours avoir couché avec elle* [lines 43-44 in the above quotation]). His last words in the text attest to this foreknowledge and explain further why she is able to trick him: “Je pleurais à tes genoux, d’amour et de tout

savoir, même ma mort, qu'à cause de toi je chérissais" (Pr I, 71). Although he does know that she will be his undoing in this text, he is powerless to resist her because his love for her is so great.

There is also the suggestion of lechery in the episode of Merlin's entombment. In *L'Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac is presented as a young girl – a *demoiselle* – and Merlin is a wizened wizard. She tells Merlin that she wants to put her *father* to sleep, but it is *Merlin* that she tricks with the enchantment. Both the father and Merlin are authority figures. The reference to the father may even be read as an allusion to the poet, since the medieval father exercised an aspect of control in his daughter's life that could be compared to that of the poet directing the events of the text. We have seen that Merlin is often read as a poet figure in both medieval texts and in *L'Enchanteur*. Of course, the maiden respects the authority of neither her father nor her teacher – she refuses the wishes of one and deceives and entraps the other.<sup>10</sup> With respect to the poet, the Dame du Lac *puts him to sleep* – she censures his expression.

### 6.2.2 Merlin and Corporeality

Apollinaire's version of the entombment scene is very much like its medieval predecessors. As mentioned in the introduction, Apollinaire added the scenes of Merlin's entombment in 1909, five years after he first published what is now the central portion of the text (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXIII-LXIV). But, even though he added the sections from the medieval text after the completion of *L'Enchanteur*, his original text was

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<sup>10</sup> If Merlin can be read as a substitute father for the Dame du Lac, then his desire is more than lecherous – it borders on incest. Such a reading is in keeping with images of incest in Apollinaire's work. See, for example, Scott Bates' discussion of the scene of Angélique's rape in *L'Enchanteur* in "L'Erotisme," p. 87 and his reading of the oedipal theme in the same text in *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 26. However, here the suggestion of incest is reversed: rather than the son's incest with the mother, this reading implies the daughter's incest with the father.

the story of Merlin's entombment. The addition of the borrowed sections did not fundamentally *alter* *L'Enchanteur*; instead, as previously discussed, it served as a *compliment* to Apollinaire's rewriting. In *L'Enchanteur*, the tomb – and Merlin's experience of his decaying body – are the central features. Again, Merlin interacts with other characters but only those who are near his tomb and only through speech. He cannot relate to them on a physical level – his interactions are limited to language.

He can exist in such a state because of his dual nature. The following passage, previously quoted in chapter three, bears repeating because the seeming contradiction it contains explains Merlin's nature and existence in *L'Enchanteur*: “L'enchanteur mourut alors. Mais, comme il était immortel de nature et que sa mort provenait des incantations de la dame, l'âme de Merlin resta vivante en son cadavre” (Pr I, 10).<sup>11</sup> The passage specifies that *Merlin died*. Of course it is his human body that dies, but rather than saying that Merlin's *body* died, Apollinaire uses the Enchanter's *name*, implying Merlin's identity as connected to his corporeality. The next sentence appears to contradict this, informing the reader that Merlin was immortal and so his soul remained alive in his cadaver. Again, Apollinaire uses the subject pronoun *il*, this time in order to make Merlin's immortal nature explicit, linking it to his identity. In this way, Apollinaire presents Merlin as both corporeal and aerial, both man and demon.

Apollinaire specifies, “Or, l'enchanteur était étendu mort dans le sépulcre, mais son âme était vivante et la voix de son âme se fit entendre” (Pr I, 11). However, contrary to these theories, and in yet another reversal of Christian imagery, Merlin continues to exist *in the world* – he does not enjoy the reward of divine knowledge or unity (with God) that

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter three, p. 56.

medieval theologians such as Aquinas promised.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Merlin's knowledge in Apollinaire's text is even more limited than before because he cannot see, and therefore cannot know the events outside of his tomb. Merlin is in a sort of "no man's land," neither entirely spiritual nor corporeal. Certainly, the fact that Merlin is tied to the vestiges of his body is a main theme. The title – *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* – refers specifically to decay and, as previously mentioned, is a reference to the medieval *Prophesies* where Merlin says "la char desus moi sera pourrie avant que un mois soit passes" (the flesh above me will be decayed before a month has passed.) (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 15, notes). In another intertextual reference that the comparison of Apollinaire's medieval sources in this study uncovers, and which reinforces the circular nature of Merlin's corporeality and the influence his mother and the Dame du Lac have in this cycle, it takes the same amount of time for Merlin's mother to conceive him in Apollinaire's version as it does for his body to rot in the *Prophesies*. This also reinforces a reading of the feminine ineffable's influence as a cycle of what can and cannot be represented in the language of the text. Merlin's mother creates what can be represented linguistically – the signifier that denotes Merlin's corporeality – and the Dame du Lac's effects on this signifier represent what escapes language. In *L'Enchanteur* there are references to Merlin's decaying flesh throughout, for example: "je suis mort et froid" (Pr I, 17) and "je suis mort et froid ... mon cadavre pourrira bientôt" (Pr I, 37). His flesh's decay parallels his perceived loss of the Dame du Lac's love.

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter three, p. 111-113.

### 6.2.3 Religion and the Tomb

We have seen that Merlin's conception is a blasphemous reversal of the Immaculate Conception; in a similar manner, his state in the tomb reverses Christ's Resurrection. Apollinaire's reversal of biblical images in this text are all satanic (Couffignal, *L'inspiration biblique*, 112). *L'Enchanteur* overturns Christian images beginning with the *Noël funéraire* and continuing to and even beyond the tomb (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 83, notes). Burgos relates the three fairies that come to the forest to the three women at Christ's tomb the morning of the resurrection (83). Robert Couffignal writes that Merlin undergoes something of a parallel, but reversed Passion throughout the story (Couffignal, *L'inspiration biblique*, 130).<sup>13</sup>

The Gospel of Luke in the Bible tells of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, three women who go to Christ's tomb to anoint the body, but are mystified to find the body gone (Luke 24). Two "men in dazzling garments" – heavenly beings – appear to them and ask, "why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised" (Luke 24:4-6). Again Apollinaire reverses religious themes, offering, instead of a Risen Lord, a decaying demon/man, whose body does not leave the tomb.

The Gospel of John tells of only one woman who goes to the tomb: Mary of Magdala. At the sight of the empty tomb, "she ran ... and told them, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him'" (John 20:2). The Resurrection, a consequence of the Incarnation, entailed a drastically different concept of God from anything mankind had previously encountered or imagined. The steady parade of

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<sup>13</sup> This was briefly introduced in chapter three, p. 98.

characters in *L'Enchanteur* that are looking for the Enchanter's body recalls Mary of Magdala's search and incredulity. The Serpents say, "Il n'a jamais répondu celui qui est de notre race, que nous aimons et qui ne peut pas mourir" (Pr I, 12). Their disbelief is related to Merlin's lack of response, whereas Mary of Magdala's incredulity was in regard to Christ's Resurrection. The Dame du Lac is also a reverse image of Mary of Magdala. Instead of an empty tomb, she visits the tomb of one she has put there. Rather than desperately searching for her Lord, she knows precisely where the Enchanter is. She does not worship him, but causes his death. Finally, instead of being amazed at the Resurrection, the Dame du Lac is (impatiently) waiting for Merlin's body to die and rot.

In the Gospel of John, Christ is one of the heavenly beings that appear to Mary. He speaks to her and reveals his Resurrection. He tells her, "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). Again, Christ is the "perfect sign" – wherein the meaning of both his humanity and divinity is apparent. The Enchanter's state is a reverse image of both Christ's Resurrection and the perfection of the sign. Merlin speaks to the Dame du Lac as well, but he speaks from a dying corpse in a tomb. Rather than explaining the necessity and divine plan of Resurrection, Merlin poses a question to the one in control of his fate, "Dame, pourquoi avez-vous fait ceci?" (Pr I, 11). The Dame du Lac, instead of recognizing an aspect of divinity in Merlin, emphasizes his corporeality: "Merlin, ne bouge plus, tu es entré vivant dans le tombeau, mais tu vas mourir et déjà tu es enterré" (Pr I, 11). The signifier that is his body is erased through his entombment; both Merlin-the-poet and Merlin-the-signifier symbolically die in the tomb. They die, only to be reborn or renewed, but not Resurrected, in the next rewriting.

#### 6.2.4 The Dame du Lac and the Tomb

Once the Dame du Lac entombs Merlin and his body dies, the tomb comes to denote Merlin's physical existence. With this in mind, there are three points that are significant to our reading and which this section will explore. These are 1) the tomb as a simulacrum, 2) the absence of adequate communication between Merlin and the Dame du Lac, and 3) the Dame du Lac's expression of feminine *jouissance*.

In a reference to the incubus demon that uses a borrowed body, or simulacrum, to engage in relations with mortal women, the stone slab of the tomb comes to stand for Merlin's body. The Dame du Lac sits on the stone of Merlin's tomb and revels in her triumph:

Comme elle ne savait pas, la dame crut qu'il n'était pas encore mort et frappant de sa main la pierre tiède sur laquelle elle était assise, elle s'écria: 'Merlin, ne bouge plus, tu es entré vivant dans le tombeau, mais tu vas mourir et déjà tu es enterré' (Pr I, 11).

The warmth of the tomb's stone attests to the incomplete negation of Merlin's corporeality. The stone also serves as Merlin's physical presence – the Dame du Lac hits it with her hand to get the Enchanter's notice; in much the same way one would touch another person's arm to get their attention.

The Dame du Lac also gains a sense of pleasure and accomplishment through the medium of the tomb's stone slab:

Elle se vêtit, puis s'assit de nouveau sur la pierre du sépulcre et, la sentant froide, s'écria: 'Enchanteur, certainement tu es mort puisque la pierre de ta tombe l'atteste.' Elle eut la même joie que si elle avait touché le cadavre lui-même et ajouta: 'Tu es mort, la pierre l'atteste, ton cadavre est déjà glacé et bientôt tu pourriras' (Pr I, 11-12).

In this passage, the coldness of the tomb signifies Merlin's body's death and also his return to the nature of the incubus demon. Merlin does not *completely* return to the demon's aerial nature, however; he is not a representation of an ancient daemon or even a portrayal of a



Christianized demon, but something new. In the tomb he is neither entirely corporeal nor fully aerial – a demon tied to the vestiges of human corporeality or a man of a partially ethereal nature.<sup>14</sup> The Dame du Lac experiences the same elation from touching the cold stone of the tomb that she would from touching the body itself. She is delighted that she has accomplished her goal of tricking and entrapping the Enchanter, but she also receives a certain amount pleasure that is both psychological and – as we will discover – physical from her encounter with the stone: “Dehors, assise sur la tombe, la dame du lac, ... riait, éveillant les échos de la forêt profonde et obscure. Lorsque sa joie fut calmée, la dame parla, se croyant seule” (Pr I, 10). Along with her triumph, the Dame du Lac also revels in the non-fulfillment of her promise of a sexual union with Merlin – the promise made in exchange for the knowledge of enchantments. Her mirth reflects her mastery of the former master. L.C. Breunig relates her laughter to a cruel perversion and a “monstrous degree of insensitivity” in “The Laughter of Apollinaire” (69). This laughter reinforces Merlin-as-victim and renders his plight even more poignant (69-70). But, in our reading her laughter relates to Apollinaire’s representation of the different destinies of men and women, rather than to his portrayal of men as the target of women’s cruelty. In performing a function related to this difference, she is not malicious, as we will discover.

When she first traps Merlin and sits on his tomb, rejoicing in her triumph, she is nude. The narrator describes her lack of attire: “S’étant dévêtue alors la dame s’admira” (Pr I, 11). Her nudity is a provocation of sorts with regard to Merlin (Burgos, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, 13, notes). Later, her revelries finished, she dresses: “Elle se vêtit, puis s’assit

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<sup>14</sup> This impossible combination calls to mind the words Le Mari speaks in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*: “Je suis une honnête femme-monsieur  
Ma femme est un homme-madame (Po, 894). See the conclusion to this study, p. 263.

de nouveau sur la pierre du sépulcre” (Pr I, 11). Her nudity at the tomb turns her celebration into a sexualized episode, with her presence on the cold stone of the tomb a metaphor for the sex act – she is sitting naked on the slab of Merlin’s tomb laughing and experiencing great joy. In this way, the cold slab of the tomb-as-simulacrum attests to Merlin’s return to his father’s nature and reinforces the sexual nature of the episode.

The tomb’s substitution for Merlin’s body would seem to point to evidence of sexual rapport. As mentioned, use of a simulacrum provided sexual rapport (with their gods) for the ancients.<sup>15</sup> But, *L’Enchanteur* is not an ancient text and Merlin is not an ancient daemon. Even though the episode is sexualized, this does not equate to sexual rapport. The essential difference between Merlin and the Dame du Lac that makes their love (sexual rapport in Lacanian terms) futile also extends to communication. When Merlin realizes that the Dame du Lac has trapped him in the tomb, he asks, “Dame, pourquoi avez-vous fait ceci?” (Pr I, 11). Rather than answering his question or offering any explanation, she replies, “Merlin, ne bouge plus, tu es entré vivant dans le tombeau, mais tu vas mourir et déjà tu es enterré” (Pr I, 11). In the medieval *Prophecies*, on the other hand, Merlin does not even need to ask for the Dame du Lac to tell him how she tricked him. The only explanation Apollinaire’s Dame du Lac gives for her deception is her beauty:

la dame lasse éclata de rire et répondit ainsi aux paroles de Merlin: ‘Je suis belle comme le jardin d’avril, comme la forêt de juin, comme le verger d’octobre, comme la plaine de janvier.’ S’étant dévêtue alors la dame s’admira. Elle était comme le jardin d’avril, où poussent par places les toisons de persil et de fenouil, comme la forêt de juin, chevelue et lyrique, comme le verger d’octobre, plein de fruits mûrs, ronds, et appétissants, comme la plaine de janvier, blanche et froide (Pr I, 11).

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<sup>15</sup> See chapter three, p. 80-82 and p. 108.

The reference to the January plane evokes the *Prophesies'* *white serpent* – the woman Merlin prophesied would be his undoing – the Dame du Lac in the medieval text. The other images she suggests – the April, or spring, garden and the fall orchard – bring the cycle of the seasons and of nature to mind.<sup>16</sup> This relates to the feminine ineffable's effect on writing as a similar cycle. It influences the creation of the words that make up the text and censures the revelation of meaning by these words. The Dame du Lac's response to Merlin, while not what he (or the reader) would immediately consider to be adequate, relates all the information that is needed. Furthermore, Burgos writes that since the truth of the entombment is sexual difference, she *cannot* answer Merlin (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXV). It should be added that she cannot answer Merlin *any differently*.

But the conversation also does not convey the meaning of their respective words. For example, the sound of Merlin's reply, "Je suis mort!" (Pr I, 11), seems fundamentally contradictory. It would be impossible for the statement "I am dead" to be true in a literal sense. Merlin is, of course, referring to his body's death. It is only when Merlin stops speaking that she believes him dead: "L'enchanteur se taisant, la dame pensa: 'Il est mort'" (Pr I, 11). Even then, though, she does not understand his existence in the tomb. Language proves insufficient in their every effort to communicate. As this is manifested in

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<sup>16</sup> Apollinaire often uses images of fruit to describe the female body. In this passage he uses ripe, round, and appetizing fruits to describe the Dame du Lac. He also uses the word *toison*, a word that inspires animal images and that is frequently used as a sexualized metaphor in Apollinaire's work (Marzouki, 138). It is often a symbol of the (female) erotic triangle (Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, 174). This quote relates the Dame du Lac to a spring garden, with herbs sprouting from her pubic region and an autumn orchard, full of ripe delicious fruit waiting to be picked. The description of the Dame du Lac reduces her to the sum of her body parts and emphasizes her physicality, which is opposed to Merlin's lack of a physical body. However, the images of the seasons in the passage and their relation to the cyclic quality of life reinforce the idea of an organizing principle that directs the transformations of nature. In this respect, the Dame du Lac, performing an intended function in the text, as we will see, is more than the sum of her body parts; she is the vehicle for Merlin's transformation. See Claude Debon, *Apollinaire en somme*, p. 64, for more on the Dame du Lac's association with the text's cyclical theme. Burgos also remarks on her association with the theme of spring throughout the notes to his edition (171).

*L'Enchanteur*, the impossibility of (enduring) love or, in Lacanian terms, of sexual rapport – renders communication hopeless.

As mentioned in chapter two, *feminine jouissance* in Lacanian psychoanalysis refers to an experience outside the scope of description in language and one that is particular to the psychoanalytic idea of the feminine. It is indescribable, yet exquisite. Even more than physical enjoyment, the expression of the Dame du Lac's joy at the cold stone of Merlin's tomb is an expression of *feminine jouissance*. Lacan explains his concept of *jouissance féminine* with a reference to a statue of Saint Theresa: “vous n'avez qu'à aller regarder à Rome la statue du Bernin pour comprendre tout de suite qu'elle jouit, ça ne fait pas de doute. Et de quoi jouit-elle? ... ce n'est ni du bavardage, ni du verbiage” (*Séminaire XX*, 70-71). A photograph of the statue of Saint Theresa figures on the cover of *Séminaire XX* and her expression is one of utter ecstasy. Lacan does not say to what precisely this *jouissance* refers, but this is because he *cannot*. He relates it to the mystic's experience of God, a relation that recalls Augustine's experience of divine communion and subsequent lack of adequate articulation. The Dame du Lac's laugh, as a manifestation of her joy, is also a non-linguistic expression, albeit in this case related to the concept of the feminine ineffable rather than to that of mystery. As such, its existence can be logically determined and considered if not adequately represented in language. It is only after her joy abates somewhat that she speaks: “Dehors, assise sur la tombe, la dame du lac ... riait, éveillant les échos de la forêt profonde et obscure. *Lorsque sa joie fut calmée*, la dame parla...” (Pr I, 10 [the emphasis is mine]).

Since the expression of her joy is entirely non-linguistic and because she can only speak after her joy subsides to a certain extent, there is something on the order of the Real,

or the truth, and hence of the feminine ineffable, in her experience of Merlin's entombment. Her nudity, too, reveals this connection. In contemporary culture, nudity is related to a variety of concepts, depending on the situation and the interpretation. In the introduction to *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy*, Ruth Barcan discusses the association of nudity with ideas of society, culture, shame, and the erotic (11-76). Michel Deguy associates the idea of nudity with that of truth in rhetoric in "Le grand-dire: Pour contribuer à une relecture du Pseudo-Longin" (99). Nudity, in medieval literature, reveals a truth or meaning hidden behind the words of the text. In the thirteenth-century *Aucassin et Nicolette*, branches and thorns tear Aucassin's clothing, revealing his flesh.<sup>17</sup> Howard Bloch cites Macrobius' fifth-century association of the cloaking of Nature's secrets from human understanding with their revelation through poetry as an example of the relationship in medieval literature between the clothing that veils the body and the discourse that veils the truth ("Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère," 94-95).<sup>18</sup> If clothing can be associated to allegory, with the clothes characters wear representing the words that cover the true meaning of the text, then nudity is related to a meaning that is not concealed by allegory. While *L'Enchanteur* is not an allegorical text,

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<sup>17</sup> Aucassins ala par le forest ... Ne quidiés mie que les ronces et les espines l'esparnaiscent. Nenil nient! ains li desronpent ses dras qu'a painnes peust on nouer desu el plus entier, et que li sans li isci des bras et des costés et des ganbes en quarante lius u en trente, qu'après le vallet peust on suir le trace du sanc qui caoit sor l'erbe (114). (Aucassin went in the forest ... Don't imagine that the branches and thorns spared him. Not at all! They so ripped his clothes that one could hardly make a knot of the biggest piece, and so that the blood that flowed from his arms and his sides and his legs in forty places or in thirty, that afterwards, the valet could follow the trail of the blood that fell on the grass.) Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century *Conte du Graal*'s image of *la demoiselle maltraitée*'s torn clothing that reveals the effects of sun and wind on her flesh also illustrates the idea of nudity as revealing a truth.

<sup>18</sup> Bloch also relates clothing to a masking of sense in the medieval *Silence* (95). See also his *The Scandal of the Fabliaux*, p. 33. His description of clothing as allegory – the art of saying one thing, but meaning another – in the *Roman de la Rose* illustrates the association of clothing and a veiled meaning. He relates the tattered robe that Nature wears in the text to allegorical representation and the glimpses of nudity that can be seen through the holes in the cloth as the object of that representation. Also, Leupin discusses the relation between the ornaments of the body and rhetoric in Tertullien's *De cultu feminarum* in *Fiction et Incarnation* (50-51). See also Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 99-101.

due to its medieval atmosphere and intertextual associations, medieval modes of interpretation are often an appropriate analytical approach. In the scene of Merlin's entombment, the Dame du Lac's nudity, along with the above-mentioned expression of her joy, reveals that the episode is associated with the idea of truth.

#### 6.2.5 The Dame du Lac's Dance

Apollinaire's Dame du Lac differs from her predecessors in her actions and attitude after the entombment. As the sexually charged scene of her joy on the stone of the tomb attests, her satisfaction in entombing Merlin goes beyond contentment in entrapping the Enchanter. She expresses her delight in ways that her medieval predecessors do not. Alongside her laughter, another non-linguistic expression of her joy is her dance. Immediately after she entombs Merlin, the Dame du Lac associates spring with involuntary dance and death:

La danse involontaire des petits flots à fleur du lac est aussi une danse inévitable. J'ai enchanté le vieil enchanteur décevant et déloyal et voici que les printemps inévitables et la danse inévitable des petits flots me soumettront et m'enchanteront, moi, l'enchanteresse. Ainsi tout est juste dans l'univers: le vieil enchanteur décevant et déloyal est mort et quand je serai vieille, le printemps et la danse des petits flots me feront mourir (Pr I, 11).<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, springtime traditionally symbolizes a time of rebirth, and in *L'Enchanteur* it corresponds to a new level of existence that is illustrated by Merlin's state in the tomb. However, this new state is as involuntary and as predestined as the cycle of the seasons. The dance of spring is an inevitable, transformative dance that

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<sup>19</sup> She refers to Merlin as *décevant et déloyal*. In the *Prophesies*, one of the reasons for the Dame du Lac's entombment of the Enchanter is what she portrays as his deceitful misrepresentation of the relationship between them. This line is perhaps yet another intertextual reference to the *Prophesies*, since it has no definite antecedent in *L'Enchanteur*. See p. 250-251 of this chapter.

occurs every spring.<sup>20</sup> The Dame du Lac – along with her “treachery” – is caught up in the inevitable dance of spring. Her dance too is inevitable. She has a role to play and this ties into the grand scheme of the universe. The dance of spring corresponds to the time that she entombs – or symbolically castrates – Merlin. This relates to the Dame du Lac’s role in the cycle of Merlin’s corporeal existence. In *L’Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac’s dance is connected to flies and death as well as to the themes of springtime and renewal (Burgos, notes, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, 9). The Dame du Lac’s words underline this association:

Les mouches me ressemblent, les danseuses. ... Elles dansent longtemps, légèrement et voluptueusement. La danse des mouches est une danse funèbre pour toute mort et pour la leur aussi, car l’araignée ourdit sa toile entre le tronc et la branche, et un rayon joue sur les fils déjà tissés, et le vent fait peut-être vibrer agréablement les fils déjà tissés (Pr I, 68).

The flies’ role is essentially the same as that of the Dame du Lac and corresponds to the dance of spring. It is another expression of the cyclic nature of life and (Merlin’s) corporeality that is essential to Apollinaire’s text. Since Merlin’s transformation takes place through the medium of corporeal death, his death is necessary to the rebirth of the truth it reveals. The dance of spring is also the “dance” of the feminine ineffable – it is an inevitable cycle of influence – the desire for poetic expression encourages the creation of the text, yet something always remains inaccessible linguistically. But, just as Merlin’s body-as-signifier is reborn in each rewriting, poetic expression is also continually renewed by the cycle of the feminine ineffable’s influence. Like the cycle of the seasons and the dance of spring, the cycle of the feminine ineffable’s influence is also endless.

Apollinaire associates the Dame du Lac with the theme of springtime and renewal in his “Merlin et la vieille femme” as well. He writes:

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<sup>20</sup> For more on Apollinaire’s use of the theme of transformation see Margaret Davies, “‘La Chanson du mal-aimé’ Semblance et ressemblance” and for more on the renewal of spring, see Claude Debon, *Apollinaire en somme*.

Et soudain le printemps d'amour et d'héroïsme  
Amena par la main un jeune jour d'avril (Po, 88).

The entire poem is an intertextual reference to *L'Enchanteur*, but this line refers to the Dame du Lac's arrival and the spring day that she entombs the Enchanter.

Merlin guettait la vie et l'éternelle cause  
Qui fait mourir et puis renaître l'univers (Po, 88).

The renewal – this *eternal cause that makes the universe die and be reborn* – is reminiscent of the cycle of spring in *L'Enchanteur*. Both express the cyclic quality of life. Merlin is associated with the phoenix – the mythical bird that dies and is reborn out of its own ashes. The phoenix essentially regenerates itself from the flames of its destruction. The idea of regeneration is essential to a reading of Merlin (and of the feminine ineffable's influence on writing). Like the phoenix, in *L'Enchanteur* Merlin dies, but in a sense is reborn in a transformed state. Moreover, Merlin's body eventually dies after the Dame du Lac imprisons him in each version of his tale, but he is reborn again in each rewriting of his story.<sup>21</sup> Apollinaire himself demonstrated this with “Merlin et la vieille femme” and *L'Enchanteur*. This poem was published four years after *L'Enchanteur*, but written during the same period of time – 1898-1901 (Durry, *Alcools* Tome III, 57). The contemporary quality of the two texts supports a reading of them as intertextually related.

“Merlin et la vieille femme” shares the theme of futile, even impossible love and the idea of transformation. The Dame du Lac rejoins Merlin. Her dance is finished and the time of her death has come:

Et j'ai vieilli vois-tu pendant ta vie je danse  
Mais j'eusse été tôt lasse et l'aubépine en fleurs

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<sup>21</sup> See Adelaide Russo's M.A. Essay, “Apollinaire's Flame Imagery.” Apollinaire's use of the fable of the phoenix to illustrate his theory of the sublime is discussed in the conclusion to this study.



Cet avril aurait eu la pauvre confidence  
D'un corps de vieille morte en mimant la douleur (Po, 89).

She says that she has aged during her dance and tells of her weariness. The hawthorn plant – a reference to the plant that grows on Merlin's tomb – would have also covered her body. This recalls the idea of inevitable death and transformation in the above quote from *L'Enchanteur*. The cycle has run its course and returned to its beginning. Even though she goes to the Enchanter, they do not fully experience their love, either spiritually or physically:

Puis les pâles amants joignant leurs mains démentes  
L'entrelacs de leurs doigts fut leur seul laps d'amour (Po, 89).

The only expression of their love is the interlacing of their fantastical fingers, which represents the irreality of their bodies in this poem. Their “physical” “union” is neither truly physical nor truly a union. This is made even more explicit by the fact that after this brief encounter Merlin leaves: “Puis Merlin s'en alla vers l'est” (Po, 89). As we will discover in the conclusion to this study, Merlin and Viviane together create a text. This represents the influence the feminine ineffable has on poetic production and mirrors Merlin's mother's role as a representative of this influence. But, in a foreshadowing of things to come, the poem also contains references to Merlin's entombment; when the narrator refers to himself as entombed, Merlin is speaking. Accordingly, Merlin represents the poet in “Merlin et la vieille femme” as he does in so much of Apollinaire's work (Durry, *Alcools* Tome II, 128, Renaud, *Lecture d'Apollinaire*, 50). The following quotation illustrates this reading:

La dame qui *m'*attend se nomme Viviane  
Et vienne le printemps des nouvelles douleurs  
Couché parmi la marjolaine et les pas-d'âne  
*Je m'éterniserai* sous l'aubépine en fleurs (Po, 89 [the emphasis is mine]).

This is a reference to Merlin's eternal imprisonment beneath the hawthorn flowers in the tomb. Viviane is the springtime and the suffering it brings for Merlin's physical body. But, as far as she is concerned in this poem, spring has passed. Apollinaire represents her as old – there are no references to April gardens or the dance of spring. In fact, the poem represents the end of spring: “Aux printemps finissants qui voulaient défleurir” (Po 89). This, along with the reference to Merlin's entombment, indicates a return to the beginning of the cycle of the feminine ineffable's influence. However, as the line “Et vienne le printemps” (Po 89) attests, the cycle will continue and the Dame du Lac will once more assume her role as representative of the limiting effect of the feminine ineffable on linguistic production.

The idea of a cycle and its relation to ruinous love is also at the heart of “La Loreley,” another poem in *Alcools*. “La Loreley,” like *L'Enchanteur*, expresses the theme of love and regret. Moreover, this theme is related to the representation of a female character that has ties to the element water in both texts. This poem was first published in 1904, and is also contemporary to *L'Enchanteur*. Apollinaire rewrote the story of a legendary figure from the German *lied* in this poem (Orecchioni, 78).<sup>22</sup> The legend tells of a maiden who flung herself into a river and drowned over a disappointment in love. She became a siren and lured men to their deaths. Apollinaire based his rewriting on works by Heinrich Heine and Clemens Bretano; his Loreley is a combination of the opposing representations of the main characters in these texts (Orecchioni, 78).<sup>23</sup> The figure of La Loreley is a reference to Annie Playden and the men who love her in vain represent

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<sup>22</sup> The *lied* is a poetic rendering of German folklore (Orecchioni, 49).

<sup>23</sup> See also Marie-Jeanne Durry, *Alcools* Tome III, p. 81-87.

Apollinaire's own unrequited love for Annie (Durry, *Alcools* Tome III, 81). "La Loreley" tells of a blond sorceress that is reminiscent of the Dame du Lac:

A Bacharach il y avait une sorcière blonde  
 qui laissait mourir d'amour tous les hommes à la ronde ...  
 O belle Loreley aux yeux pleins de pierreries  
 De quel magicien tiens-tu ta sorcellerie (Po, 115).

This passage recalls the Dame du Lac's apprenticeship – and also her mastery. La Loreley *allows* men to die of love, while the Dame du Lac *actively seeks* Merlin's death, using his love for her as her weapon. But, La Loreley's source is a legendary siren, so in Apollinaire's poem, La Loreley's passive reaction to the men's plights is really more along the lines of an active participation in their deaths. In both cases, love is the cause of the men's demise. The words, *les hommes à la ronde* and the reference to *chevaliers avec leurs lances* evoke images of Arthurian literature. The poem ends with La Loreley succumbing to the very demise she permitted in the opening lines:

Mon cœur devient si doux c'est mon amant qui vient  
 Elle se penche alors et tombe dans le Rhin (Po, 116).

La Loreley dies of the same fate to which all her lovers were destined – she falls into the river waiting for her lover and ultimately dies of love. Her death is suggestive of the dance-of-the-flies metaphor in *L'Enchanteur*. The Dame du Lac's dialogue, as mentioned above, relates the dance of the flies to the cyclic nature of life and love. La Loreley meets her inevitable end as the flies and the Dame du Lac eventually will too. Furthermore, in *L'Enchanteur* the Dame du Lac runs away from Merlin's tomb to disappear into her palace at the bottom of the lake, as we will see. La Loreley's fall into the river recalls this return to a watery (feminine) space.

Apollinaire opens his rewriting of Merlin's tale with the words, "Que deviendra mon cœur parmi ceux qui s'entr'aiment?" (Pr I, 7) and ends with the essential difference between men and women: "Mais j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme" (Pr I, 77). Men and women are destined to be apart, according to Merlin, because they love differently: "Les femmes ne connaissent pas l'amour, et l'homme, l'homme ne peut-il aimer cet amour incarné dans la femme? Personne n'a pris l'habitude d'aimer. Les femmes souhaitent l'amour; et les hommes, les hommes, que désirent-ils?" (Pr I, 67).<sup>24</sup> His question of what will happen to his heart amongst those who love each other finds its answer in the different destinies of men and women, using Merlin as an example.

#### 6.2.6 The Dame du Lac's Attitudes

The Dame du Lac's animosity toward Merlin endures after she entombs Merlin in *L'Enchanter*, which is unlike any medieval text, even the *Prophesies*, where her hatred before the entombment is fierce and well-documented (Burgos, notes, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 93). But, her animosity is an extension of the theme of impossible love in the text. It is one way Apollinaire expresses the essential difference between her and the Enchanter. This is a plausible reason for its continuance after the entombment. In the medieval texts, since the primary goal of the entombment is the removal of Merlin's physical presence, once her goal is accomplished, she no longer needs her hatred as a motivating force. It no longer serves a purpose in the text.<sup>25</sup> In the *Prophesies* and the prose *Lancelot*, the Dame du Lac is engaged in other narrative episodes after the entombment

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<sup>24</sup> This quotation was first presented in part in chapter three, p. 90 to illustrate Merlin's continued love for the Dame du Lac and his lamentations that she does not return his love. See also chapter three, p. 105 for a discussion of how the Dame du Lac's words also express this difference.

<sup>25</sup> We will see, however, that Merlin's entombment in the medieval texts also illustrates difference and the Lacanian theory of the impossibility of sexual rapport.

scene. On the other hand, in *L'Enchanteur*, since the entombment forms the basis for the text, the Dame du Lac is not featured in narrative episodes that do not relate to Merlin and the impossibility of their love is a main theme. Apollinaire reminds the reader of her reaction to Merlin's death:

Le soleil éclaira une forêt fraîche et florale. ... La dame du lac fut sensible au bienfait des premiers rayons. Aucune pensée de malheur présent ne la troublait et son bonheur de voir le jour était encore augmenté, car elle était certaine que l'enchanteur, couché dans les ténèbres sépulcrales, ne le partagerait pas. ... Elle n'avait choisi la forêt comme lieu mortuaire de l'enchanteur que par cruauté (Pr I, 41).

She seems to take pleasure in Merlin's separation from the sunlight entering the forest and the fact that he would never again see the dawning of a new day. The words *soleil*, *fraîche*, and *florale* evoke images of spring. They recall the theme of spring and the associated inevitable cycle. The portrayal of her *bonheur* at the day's dawning contrasts with the depiction of her *cruauté* at choosing a place where the arrival of spring is so evident for Merlin's tomb. Like her hatred, this seeming cruelty relates to the impossibility of love. Her withholding of love appears heartless, but on a metaphorical level, it is virtually impossible for her to give her love entirely, according to the premises of the text (and of Lacanian psychoanalysis). Furthermore, in a reading of her role in relation to the act of writing, the positioning of Merlin's tomb in the midst of images of spring illustrates the feminine ineffable's cycle of influence in and on the text as a continuous, simultaneous process of influence and limitation.

In a turn that seems contradictory, Apollinaire also relates a sense of ambivalence in relation to the role his Dame du Lac plays at points throughout the text. The first example is at the end of the entombment scene after Merlin speaks for the first time from the tomb: "A ce moment seulement, au son de la véritable voix inouïe de l'âme de l'enchanteur, la

dame sentit la lassitude de la danse. Elle s'étira, puis essuya son front mouillé de sueur, et ce geste fit choir sur la tombe de l'enchanteur une couronne d'aubépine" (Pr I, 11). The image portrayed by this passage is one of fatigue after effort. It is, however, also one of the Dame du Lac's exhaustion after the sexually charged exertion of sitting on the tomb: her forehead is covered in sweat and the shower of hawthorn flowers recalls male *jouissance*. Later in the text, the narrator conveys a sense of nostalgia in association with the Dame du Lac:

Sur la tombe tiède et chargée de présents, la dame du lac s'ennuyait. Depuis longtemps, elle n'entendait plus la voix de l'enchanteur. Dans sa solitude, elle regrettait le temps où, danseuse infatigable, elle enchantait l'enchanteur, le temps où elle trompait son amour. La dame rêvait de son palais plein de lueurs de gemmes, au fond du lac (Pr, I, 59).

Like Merlin and the Dame du Lac themselves, these lines are ambiguous. The Dame du Lac regrets *the time* when she was at the height of her power – dancing tirelessly, enchanting the Enchanter, and residing in her palace at the bottom of the lake.<sup>26</sup> But does the Dame du Lac regret *the act* itself? In the notes to his version of the text, Burgos cites the Dame du Lac's apparent joy at hearing Merlin's voice again a few pages later as evidence of a change of heart and of an optimistic attitude (171).<sup>27</sup> She says, "O joie! Je t'entends encore, mon amant, qui savais tout ce que je sais" (Pr I, 69). However, the regret that this passage suggests is closer to nostalgia for the past than to remorse.

The Dame du Lac's role in the text is one of transformation. It is related to the theme of impossible love and comes into play alongside her attitude about Merlin's entombment. Her function is to set the limits for Merlin's corporeal existence, to remove his human covering, and to return him to the lack (of a body) in which he originates. She is

<sup>26</sup> As mentioned, her palace at the bottom of the lake and the associated feminine power recalls the siren of the German legend from which Apollinaire took "La Loreley" and La Loreley's plunge into the river.

<sup>27</sup> See also Michel Décaudin's *Notice* in his edition, note 2. (Pr I, 1103).

the vehicle by which this transformation takes place. The truth of the entombment is the Lacanian impossibility of establishing a sexual rapport. For example, in the following passage, she describes how she deceives Merlin and her description reflects a loathing of the Enchanter, but it also implies that she did what she was *meant* to do:

J'ai enchanté l'enchanteur décevant et déloyal que protégeaient les serpents, les hydres, les crapauds, parce que je suis jeune et belle, parce que j'ai été décevante et déloyale, parce que je sais charmer les serpents, parce que les hydres et les crapauds m'aiment aussi. Je suis lasse d'un tel travail (Pr I, 10).

Her description of herself as young and beautiful contrasts with the negative image she offers of the Enchanter – deceptive, disloyal, and associated with all manner of reptiles. Her claim to have charmed the serpents has both sexual and religious implications. The serpent is a representation of the male member and the association is fitting here, since the Dame du Lac uses his desire for her to trick him.<sup>28</sup> The reference to the Christian religion has to do with the Fall – the devil appears to the first woman in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. The medieval *Prophecies* contains a passage in which Merlin compares his deception by the Dame du Lac (Eviène in *L'Enchanteur*) to Adam's deception by Eve in the Garden of Eden.<sup>29</sup> Here, however, as usual in *L'Enchanteur*, Apollinaire reverses the religious images and it is the woman who charms the serpent, rather than the other way around. Whereas in the biblical Garden of Eden, the devil comes in the form of a snake to deceive woman, who then tempts and "entraps" man, the Dame du Lac is impervious to the snake's advances – she tempts, tricks, and entraps *him*. In this way, the image of the snake also signifies Merlin and his submission to the Dame du Lac; she charms both the snake and the Enchanter.

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<sup>28</sup> See Herbert Whittenberg, "L'Amour dans *Le Bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée*," and the corpus of Jean Burgos' work for more on Apollinaire's use of this analogy.

<sup>29</sup> See p. 242 of this chapter and chapter three, p. 113.

### 6.2.7 Merlin's Attitudes

As in the medieval versions, before the Dame du Lac tricks Merlin, he has great love and desire for her. Apollinaire's text does not contain the detail of his fantasies and how they lead Merlin to believe the Dame du Lac loves him that the *Propheies* does, although in the passage borrowed from the medieval text Apollinaire writes, "La demoiselle lui promet de faire tout ce qu'il lui plairait, s'il lui enseignait auparavant une partie de son sens et de sa science" (Pr I, 8).<sup>30</sup> Her promise to give Merlin her love is enough for Apollinaire's Enchanter. Merlin's love (desire) for the Dame is a great force that he cannot resist: "Et lui, qui tant l'aimait que mortel cœur ainsi ne pourrait plus aimer, promet de lui apprendre tout ce qu'elle demanderait" (Pr I, 8).

After his entombment in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin's attitude towards her does not change as drastically as it does in the *Propheies*, where he then considers her the incarnation of female deception. In Apollinaire's version, even Merlin appears to understand, at least to a certain degree, that the Dame du Lac's role is one of transformation. For example, in the *Propheies*, after Merlin comes to understand how the Dame du Lac tricked him, he says: "riens ne vaut sens d'oume encontre engien de femme; ... tout homme ki se metront en subiection de femme seront ausi houni comme je suy" (95). (Man's reason is worthless against woman's trickery; ... any man who puts himself at the mercy of a woman will be just as shamed as I am.) While he accepts his predicament as unchangeable and even inevitable, Merlin laments that the Dame du Lac's deceit overcame his reason. In Apollinaire's text, Merlin does question the Dame du Lac as to why she tricks him, but he does not express the surprise or outrage that he does in the medieval text.

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<sup>30</sup> This was previously cited in chapter three, p. 110 to illustrate Merlin's misreading of the Dame du Lac.



First he asks, as previously quoted, “Dame, pourquoi avez-vous fait ceci?” (Pr I, 11). Later, he simply and quietly tells her that her work is done: “Merlin *sourit en son âme* et dit *doucement*: ‘Je suis mort! Va-t-en, à cet heure, *car ton rôle est fini, tu as bien dansé*’ (Pr I, 11 [the emphasis is mine]). The sense that the passage relates is one of acceptance, but also of inevitability. Merlin’s words illustrate sexual difference and futile, even impossible love. The references to the Dame du Lac’s role and to her dance reflect her function as catalyst in his transformation. This apparent sense of wisdom on his part seems to be in opposition to his supplications for the Dame du Lac to return his love at the end of the text. However, his words in this passage express the futility of love.

Howard Bloch’s definition of misogyny in *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* certainly fits Merlin’s misogynistic protestations against the Dame du Lac after his entombment in the medieval *Prophecies*. Bloch defines misogyny as “a speech act in which woman is the subject of the sentence and the predicate a more general term” (5).<sup>31</sup> Bloch also stresses the importance of distinguishing “between language and action, words and deeds” when questioning whether instances are misogynistic (4). This informs our reading of the way *L’Enchanteur* presents Merlin’s attitudes towards the Dame du Lac. Representations of the Dame du Lac that might be considered misogynistic removed from the context of sexual difference motivate a different reading when the Dame du Lac’s function with regard to this essential difference is taken into account.

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<sup>31</sup> In his conclusion, Bloch extends representations of “abstractions of the feminine” that seek to end individual female identities (as in Courtly Love) to the “Lacanian version of the Woman as the Other” (196-197). While I agree with his assessment of generalizations and abstractions of women as misogynistic, the only issue I would take with this statement is that Lacanian psychoanalysis (and this study) considers the concept of the feminine (and not *women*) with respect to language. As such, this is a concept that can be considered logically and so is unrelated to the “Eternal Woman” of which Bloch writes. Furthermore, the signifier *the woman* is inadequate to designate fully women as a whole or the idea of the feminine. This would actually facilitate individual female identities, since only individual identities can exist in a theory that cannot make a generalized definition. See chapter two, p. 39-41.

Furthermore, whereas in the medieval *Prophecies* the Enchanter's words reveal misogynistic attitudes concerning the Dame du Lac, in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin does not speak disparagingly towards or about her. The only images of the Dame du Lac that may be considered as negative portrayals are primarily in narrative passages.

No moral judgement applies to her actions in the fulfillment of her role and the depiction of Merlin's attitudes acknowledges this. Merlin questions her reasons for deceiving him, but is not represented as holding her deception against her or as regretting his love. He even still believes that she once loved him too. This supports Daniel Delbreil's idea of *L'Enchanteur*'s theme of men's continuing fidelity as it contrasts with the infidelity of women ("Remarques," 68). However, continued masculine fidelity is one aspect of the larger theme of futile love. Merlin's last words to the Dame du Lac echo this sentiment:

O toi que j'aimais, te souviens-tu de notre amour? Car tu m'aimais! Je pleurais à tes genoux, d'amour et de tout savoir, même ma mort, qu'à cause de toi je chérissais, à cause de toi qui n'en pouvais rien savoir. Au temps de ma vie pour notre amour je pensais à toi ... O toi que j'aimais et pour qui les vers, depuis ma naissance, ô temps de la moelle fœtale, patientèrent, dis-moi la vérité (Pr I, 71).

He does remain faithful, but the reason that she entombs him and does not return his love is because the fundamental difference between men and women makes true, enduring love impossible in *L'Enchanteur* (Durry, *Alcools* Tome II, 82).

Additionally, the reference to the worms that have waited since Merlin's birth emphasizes the temporary nature of the human body bestowed upon him by his mother. Since his conception, his corporeal death is inevitable. This is also a play on the poetic meaning of the word *vers*. Worms and poetry await the Enchanter (and the Dame du Lac) from birth, and Merlin's incarnation in human flesh is the event that inspires both the worms' waiting and the poetry that tells the story. Merlin's story is that of futile, even

impossible love. The entombment and death of his body/signifier represents incomplete linguistic communication, but also a certain truth that is related to his makeup and to poetic expression. This passage illustrates how Merlin's corporeal states interact with the cyclic nature of the feminine ineffable's influence in and on the text. The truth his body/signifier's negation reveals is that only one part of the meaning attached to signifiers may be expressed in the words of the text – the truth of Merlin's dual nature is revealed after his body's death.

#### 6.2.8 Blood Writing

Even after his entombment, Merlin still believes that the Dame du Lac loved him. He speaks his last words at the same time that she, her role finished, ends their association:

A cet instant qui était celui où défleuri, le printemps finissait, la dame du lac pâlit, se dressa, souleva avec une hâte audacieuse sa robe immaculée et s'éloigna de la tombe ... tandis que coulait le long de ses jambes les larmes rouges de la perdition. Mais, soudain, la dame du lac s'élança, et, laissant derrière elle une traînée de sang, courut longtemps, sans se retourner. Des pétales feuillaient, détachés des arbres aux feuillards défleuris en l'attente de fructifier. La dame ne s'arrêta qu'au bord de son lac. Elle descendit lentement la pente que surbaigne l'onde silencieuse, et s'enfonçant sous les flots danseurs, gagna son beau palais dormant, plein de lueurs de gemmes, au fond du lac (Pr I, 71-72).<sup>32</sup>

Spring is ending – Merlin's transformation is finished and the Dame du Lac has effectively stripped him of his corporeality and returned him to his father's nature to the degree possible – so she has no more reason to stay. She hesitates at the sound of his voice, but does not stop. The part of the poem that recounts Merlin's story ends here and shifts to the narrator's discourse in the last chapter, *Onirocritique*. In *L'Enchanteur*, Viviane runs away from the Enchanter, from her former teacher, would-be lover, and possessor to escape to her own space under the water of the lake. But, she does this only after she fulfills her

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<sup>32</sup> This passage was first cited in part in chapter four, p. 139-140.

inevitable role. Merlin has no hold over her and she writes this story on the forest floor as she turns from him and returns to her uniquely feminine space, her lake. But, from what is she escaping, exactly? Merlin wants to possess her physically, but also emotionally – he wants her to love him in every sense of the word. But she rejects this mastery. Rather, *she* masters *him*.

One reading of the images of menstrual blood in this passage ties into the idea of disgrace and shame presented in the discussion of representations of women in Apollinaire's work.<sup>33</sup> However, since the main tenet of *L'Enchanteur* is not the evil nature of women, but the essential difference between the sexes which renders love futile, an alternate reading of the Dame du Lac's blood is in order. Given that *L'Enchanteur* relates intertextually to medieval works and is infused with a medieval aura, it should also be read with an eye to a medieval-influenced interpretation.

Early medieval literature associated the blood spilled from Christian Martyrs' wounds with purple, and later, red ink (Curtius, 321, 344). Production of the red ink necessary for ornamenting manuscripts came to be associated with the blood of martyrs (Curtius, 316). So, in such a reading, when characters spill blood, the sword that they use is a metaphor for the poet's tools and the blood spilled on the ground symbolizes ink on parchment. An example is the scene in *Aucassin et Nicolette* where branches and thorns

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<sup>33</sup> See chapter four, p. 144-145. "Merlin et la vieille femme" also contains a reference to blood writing. The day that Viviane arrives, the sun appears to bleed on the sky:

Le soleil ce jour-là s'étalait comme un ventre  
Maternel qui saignait lentement sur le ciel  
La lumière est ma mère ô lumière sanglante

Les nuages coulaient comme un flux menstruel (Po, 88).

Viviane is associated with this blood writing, since it seems to announce her arrival, but the metaphor is one of a bleeding maternal womb. There has been much critical work done on the association of women's blood (menstrual or other) with shame in Apollinaire's work. Among these, see Jean-Pol Madou, "Eros Solaire et figures du désir," Françoise Dininman, "blessures et mutilations symboliques dans l'œuvre d'Apollinaire," Jean Burgos' edition of *L'Enchanteur*, and Claude Debon, *Apollinaire en somme*.

shred Aucassin's clothing and scratch his skin.<sup>34</sup> We previously examined this scene with regard to the metaphorical relationship between nudity and truth. Blood drips from Aucassin's wounds, "writing" on the grass of the forest. In a comparable reading, the red blood that runs down the Dame du Lac's legs and leaves a trail on the forest floor behind her is also a metaphor for writing. The Dame du Lac writes on the leaves of the forest and on her own body. However, her blood writing differs from any writing in blood in medieval literature. Unlike the medieval knight who uses a sword to write in the blood of his enemies, the Dame du Lac uses only her body. She does not need an external tool to write – thorns and branches as in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, a sword as in *La Chanson de Roland* and the *Propheesies de Merlin*, or even the falcon that has injured a goose in *Le Conte du Graal*. She uses only her own – uninjured – body. Furthermore, she does not need external parchment on which to write; her blood leaves a trail on her (white) legs as well as on the forest floor. In the passage in which she extols her own beauty and in which she represents the cycle of the seasons, Apollinaire associates her with the color white: "Elle était ... comme la plaine de janvier, *blanche* et froide" (Pr I, 11 [the emphasis is mine]).<sup>35</sup> She represents everything necessary to write – poet, ink, pen, and parchment. However, her "writing" is not traditional, "masculine," courtly writing. Continuing the association of the knight as the poet to the rules of the court as the rules governing writing, or linguistic

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<sup>34</sup> This passage was presented on p. 216. Branches and thorns scratch Aucassin's skin so that blood flows from his wounds and his valet can "read" the trail of blood on the grass. In the *Propheesies*, Mador de la Porte "reads" a white horse and its rider covered in blood: "il regarde et voit le blanc cheval tout en sanc; et quant il voit cou, il s'escrive a haute vois: 'Seigneur chevalier, arrestes vous! Vees grant miervelle!' Et il s'arestent maintenant et voient le sanc ki degoutoit de la plaie au chevalier ochis" (106). (he looked and saw the white horse all bloody; and when he saw this, he cried in a loud voice: 'Sir knight, stop! This is a great marvel!' And he stopped now and saw the blood that dripped from the dead knight's wound.) The eleventh-century *La Chanson de Roland*'s representation of the Sarrasin blood that covers the ground and the twelfth-century *Le Conte du Graal*'s image of Perceval musing over the drops of red blood of an injured goose that fell on white snow are also examples of the medieval topos of blood writing.

<sup>35</sup> See p. 213-214 of this chapter.

production, her blood writing does not adhere to the rules of language. Her red blood on her white thigh paints a striking picture of an empowered, feminine-created and feminine-creative writing. She takes the creative power of writing usually attributed to male characters in medieval texts for herself. This turns the idea of shame inside out and instead offers a reading of feminine empowerment.

The Dame du Lac is linked to Merlin's mother in that they both play a part in the cycle of his corporeality and, by extension, the metaphoric presence of the signifier in the story of impossible love. The Dame du Lac's symbolic blood writing is an expression of her role in rewriting Merlin's existence. She symbolically castrates him and she does this by speaking the enchantments he taught her. When the Dame du Lac "writes" Merlin's entombment, she also creates. She undoes Merlin's corporeality, initiating the transformation that results in a new existence for the Enchanter. She also reveals the truth about Merlin, stripping him of his humanity and leaving only the ethereal demonic nature in the tomb (albeit trapped by his decaying body). The truth she reveals – and then *writes* in a writing without traditional words – by negating Merlin's signifier-flesh is related to the feminine ineffable's cycle of influence in and on the text as the creation of what can be linguistically represented and the limitations of expression.

This is her contribution to the text – she rewrites the mother's creation, her "desire-writing." The Dame du Lac's writing is also based on desire, but on Merlin's desire for her and the prohibition of its fulfillment. In the medieval conception of blood writing as the above quote from *Aucassin et Nicolette* illustrates, the thorns and branches both tear the hero's clothing and wound his exposed flesh; writing simultaneously exposes the truth and wounds, or symbolically castrates, the poet-figure. The Dame du Lac's blood also

represents the fact that she has not procreated. Merlin has not satisfied his desire for her, he has not attained a sense of sexual rapport in Lacanian terms, and he has not reproduced. There is no “fils de la Mémoire.”<sup>36</sup> The Dame du Lac, on the other hand, is neither wounded, nor in need of an external tool to “write.” This implies an association with the feminine ineffable; she represents a surplus, an overflowing of meaning, since she “writes” in a writing without traditional words using only her own body and censures the possibilities of “writing” or of “signifying” for Merlin.

### 6.3 THE MEDIEVAL VULGATE *ESTOIRE DE MERLIN* AND VIVIANE

The early thirteenth-century *Estoire de Merlin* includes a detailed description of the character that becomes the Dame du Lac in *L'Enchanteur* and the *Prophesies*. Viviane is the daughter of Dyonas, a high-ranking vassal with intimate ties to Diana, the goddess of the wood. Diana herself prophesies that Dyonas' first daughter will attract the wisest man on earth. His desire for her will be so strong, Diana predicts, that he will be helpless to resist her and will teach her all she wants to know. Dyonas has a daughter, names her Viviane and has her baptized. The mention of baptism invests the character with an air of “goodness” and religious devotion that she does not have in other texts. As foretold, Viviane meets Merlin by a fountain:

Et quant merlins la uit si laremira moult anchois quil dist mot. si dist que moult seroit fols se il sendormoit en son pechie quil en perdist son sens & son sauoir por auoir le deduit dune damoisele & lui honir & dieu perdre (209).

And when Merlin saw her he admired her so much that he said nothing. He said that he would be very foolish if he were to fall asleep in his impropriety so that he lost his reason and his knowledge in order to have the diversion of a maiden and so dishonor himself and lose God.

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<sup>36</sup> In “Merlin et la vieille femme” Merlin and Viviane together produce a “fils de la Mémoire” – a metaphor for the text (Renaud, *Lecture d'Apollinaire*, 49, Por, “Le Travestissement,” 96). See chapter seven, the conclusion, p. 273.

Even before Viviane imprisons Merlin, he begins to lose his faculties of communication. The words *sens* and *sauoir* (reason and knowledge) indicate faculties of communication. Furthermore, the fountain indicates an encounter with the feminine (ineffable) through water's association with the feminine, as previously discussed. This foreshadows a reading of Merlin-the-poet as symbolically castrated (by the limitations of linguistic faculties with regard to the feminine ineffable).<sup>37</sup> Whereas in the other texts in which she entraps Merlin, the Dame du Lac plans to use his spells against him when she asks him to teach them to her, in the *Estoire de Merlin*, her request is not motivated by hatred or revenge, but rather by curiosity. As in other versions of Merlin's entombment, she promises her love in return for his knowledge: "la pucele pense vn poi & puis dist sire si ferai iou par tel couent que apres chou que vous maures aprins toutes les coses que ie vous demanderai & que ien saurai ouurer" (211). (The maiden thought a moment and then said, Sire, thus do I promise that after you have taught me all the things that I ask of you and that I know how to use them [I will give you my love].)<sup>38</sup> As in the *Prophesies*, Merlin has foreknowledge that he will never return from his last visit to Viviane, though at this time he either doesn't know that she will deceive him or he is helpless to resist her.<sup>39</sup> He takes his leave of Blaise: "[Merlin] sen parti & dist a blaise que chest la daarraine foys. quar il seiourneroit avec samie. ne si nauroit iamaiz pooir de li laissier ne daler ne de uenir a son uoloir (451). (Merlin left and told Blaise that this was the last time. Because he was going to be with his friend. He would not be able to leave there nor go and come at his leisure.) After Merlin

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<sup>37</sup> For a reading of Merlin-the-poet in the *Estoire de Merlin* and of Viviane as Merlin's scribe, see Alexandre Leupin, *Le Graal et la littérature*, 35-43.

<sup>38</sup> The word *pucele* involves a sense of virginity.

<sup>39</sup> Leupin writes that Merlin knows his fate, but cannot resist his desire (*Le Graal et la littérature*, 108).



teaches Viviane all she asks, the maiden, wishing to avoid the repayment of her promise, convinces Merlin to teach her how to imprison a man by enchantment:

Quant merlins ot enseignie a samie tout quanquele li sot demander si sapensa comment elle le porroit detenir a tout iours ... et li dist sire encore ne sai iou mie vne chose que iou saueroie moult uolentiers. si vous pri que vous le menseignies. comment iou porroie .j. homme enserrer sans tour & sans mur & sans fer par enchantement. si que iamaiz nen issist se par moi non. Et quant merlins lentent si crolla le chief & commencha a souspirer. Et quant elle laperchut se demanda pour coi il souspiroit. ma dame fait il & ie le vous dirai. iou sai bien que vous pensez & que vous me uoles detenir. et iou sui si souspris de uostre amour que a force me conuient faire uostre uolente. Et quant la damoisele lentent si li mist les bras au col. & dist que bien doit il estre siens. des que elle est sieue. vous saues bien fait elle que la grant amor que iai en vous ma tant fait que iai laissie pere & mere pour vous tenir entre mes bras iour et nuit. et en uous est ma pensee & mon desirier. ... Certes madame fait merlins oil. Or dites dont que chest que vous uoles. Sire fait elle iou veul que vous menseignies afaire vn biau lieu bien conuenable. que iou puisse fermer par art si fort quil ne puist estre desfais. & serons illec moi & vous quant il nous plaira en ioie et en deduit.

... si trouuerent vn buisson bel & uert & haut dune aube espine qui estoit tous cargies de fleurs. si sassistrent en lombre. ... elle le commencha a tastonner tant quil sen dormi. Et quant la damoisele senti quil dormoit. si se leua tout belement & fist vn cerne de sa guimple tot entor le buisson et tout entour merlin. si commencha sez enchantemens & puis sala seoir deles lui. ... Et il regarda entour lui & li fu[st] auis quil fust en la plus bele tour del monde. et se trouua couchie en la plus bele couche ou il euste onques geu. ... Et elle li tint moult bien conuent. quar poi fu de iours ne de nuis. que elle ne fust avec lui. ne onques puis merlins nen issi de cele forteresse ou samie lauoit mis. mais elle en issoit & entroit quant elle uoloit. (451-452).

When Merlin had taught his friend all she had asked, she wondered how she could restrain him for all time ... and told him, Sire, there is still one thing I don't know that would like to. So I beg you to teach me how I can detain a man without a tower or walls or iron but by enchantment so that no one can leave except by means of me. And when Merlin heard this he shook his head and began to sigh, and when she saw this she asked why he sighed. My lady, he said, I'll tell you, I know very well what you are thinking and that you want to retain me. And I am so overcome with your love that by force I must do your will. And when the maiden heard that she put her arms around his neck and said that he must be hers as soon as she knew.<sup>40</sup> You know well, she said, that the great love I have for you led me to leave my father and mother to hold you in my arms day and night. In you are my thoughts and my desire.... Certainly, madam, said Merlin, yes. Tell me what you want. Sire, she said, I want you to teach me how to make a pretty place well suitable, that I can close by such strong art that it cannot be undone. And you and I will be there when it pleases us in joy and pleasure.

<sup>40</sup> This might also be translated as "as soon as she was his" if "des que elle est sieue" has been mis-transcribed from the manuscript and originally read "des que elle est siene."

... [they] found there a hawthorn bush that was pretty, green, and tall and that was full of flowers and sat in the shade. ... And she started to caress him until he fell asleep. And when the maiden sensed that he slept, she got up beautifully and made a circle with her wimple all around the bush and all around Merlin. She started her enchantments and then went to sit next to him. ... And he looked around himself and thought he was in the most beautiful tower in the world and found himself lying in the most beautiful bed he had ever lain in. ... And she kept him there so well contained. Because few were the days or the nights that she was not with him. Never after did Merlin leave this fortress where his friend had put him, but she came and went when she wanted.

Apollinaire's version of Merlin's entombment differs dramatically from the above quotation. First, in the *Estoire de Merlin*, Viviane imprisons Merlin to preserve her virginity, as previously mentioned. Second, she encloses him in a prison of air near a hawthorn bush and his prison seems to him to be a paradise. Third, Viviane visits Merlin in his prison, rather than sitting on his tomb waiting for him to die. His state in his confinement is also different from that in either *L'Enchanteur* or the other medieval texts considered in this study. Here, he lives on, satisfied it would seem, but cut off from the rest of the world. There is no indication that his body dies soon afterwards as there is in *L'Enchanteur* and the *Prophesies* or that he experiences an altered state (of sleep) as in the prose *Lancelot*.

Another seeming difference is the maiden's presence in Merlin's fortress of air. As the above quote reveals, *few were the days or the nights that she was not with him*. Does this imply that she does acquiesce to Merlin's wishes for a sexual relationship after she detains him in this text?<sup>41</sup> This would not be in keeping with her earlier portrayal as a

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<sup>41</sup> In *Le Graal et la littérature*, p. 109, Leupin argues that it is only when Merlin's body has been hidden from view in the prison of air that she acquiesces to his desire. This reading would imply the same affinity for the diabolical that Merlin's mother seems to have in *L'Enchanteur* (and the prose *Lancelot*). This is a valid avenue of interpretation and leads to an analysis of Viviane's demonic attributes. The supplemental reading of Viviane as another one of the illusions that Merlin perceives to be the reality of his prison offered herein, however, allows the character to retain the virginity that motivated her to imprison the Enchanter. Although this interpretation does not address the question of an affinity for the diabolical, it does allow for continuity in the representation of her virginity.

maiden who wanted to preserve her virginity at all costs. Merlin's prison seems to him to be very different from a fortress of air in the forest – he believes himself to be in a beautiful tower lying in the most comfortable bed in the world. Hence it would stand to reason that the maiden's continued presence is also part of the fantasy propagated by Viviane's enchantments. In a reading of the feminine ineffable as related to poetic creation, the beautiful tower and bed are illusions that give the impression of mastering language. These illusions are signifiers that do not entirely represent the reality of Merlin's situation. Furthermore, Viviane tells Merlin that she and Merlin will be in this place *when it pleases them in joy and pleasure*, then the text's narration indicates that *she came and went when she wanted*. This may not be behavior that is in keeping with a maiden trying to preserve her virginity, but it does indicate the cyclic nature of the feminine ineffable's influence. Certainly this influence comes and goes in the text.

#### 6.4 THE MEDIEVAL *PROPHESES* AND THE DAME DU LAC

##### 6.4.1 Whiteness and Desire

The medieval *Propheies* is very detailed in its description of the relationship between the Enchanter and the Dame du Lac. Its representation of the Enchanter's love for the Dame du Lac is in accord with tradition: “la riens el monde ke il plus amoit” (92). (the one he loved most in the world.) Before her deception, Merlin esteems her above all other women for her wisdom, natural sense, or reason, knowledge of arts, and finesse:

Di moi Mierlin se Diex te saut, fait maistre Antoine, la quele des dames ke tu as conneue par mi le monde as tu trouvee la plus sage des autres? –Or met en ton escrit, cou dist Mierlins, ke se toutes les femmes del monde estoient a une part, ke pour naturel sens, ke pour l'art de clergie, pour toute le soutillite del monde, et la dame del Lac fust d'autre part me tenroie iou avant a li que a toutes les autres. Et s'ele n'eust sa blancheur pardue et ele ne me vausist tant de bien com ele veut, se iou le savoie de cha la mer, je m'en fuioie dela, ne jamais ne vaurroie estre en liu ou ele fust (70-71).

Tell me Merlin, as God saves you, said Master Antoine, which of the women that you have known throughout the world did you find the most wise? – Put in writing, said Merlin, that if all the women in the world were on one side, for natural wisdom, and for clerical arts, for all of the finesse in the world, and the Dame du Lac was on the other side I would hold her above all the others. And if she had not lost her whiteness and didn't wish me well as much as she does, if I knew this, I would run away, I would never want to be in the same place that she was.

Merlin believes that the Dame du Lac is wise beyond compare. In this passage, her *naturel sens*, *l'art de clergie*, and *soutillite* (natural wisdom, clerical arts, and finesse) are signifiers that do not denote her true nature. Before she entombs him, she is to Merlin the epitome of what is good in women and the embodiment of his desire. The last lines of the above quotation indicate her strength and foreshadow her deception. Merlin says that if she had not lost her whiteness, then he would very reasonably be afraid of her. Of course, she knows as much about the arts of enchantment as he does. *Whiteness* is a reference to Merlin's belief in the Dame du Lac's virginity and to his prophecy that a *white serpent* – a metaphor for a virgin – will betray him. Her *blanceur* (whiteness) is another misleading signifier. As in *L'Enchanteur*, she tricks Merlin into believing that he has enjoyed a sexual relationship with her using the very spells he teaches her. He believes to have taken her virginity, so he considers himself safe from the *white serpent's* betrayal where she is concerned – since he knows she is not a virgin, she cannot/will not betray him.

But Merlin is adhering only to the immediate impression of the signifiers that represent the Dame du Lac rather than the true meaning behind them. What Merlin believes to be her lack of whiteness is just a mask she wears to cover the truth. She puts on the mask, pretending to be the devoted lover that Merlin wants her to be, when in reality she retains her virginity and her hatred: “La Dame del Lac s'acorde del tout a lui trechier mais onques n'en parla de sa bouce. Et ses cuers s'acorde a cou ke bien le metra en tel liu que il

n'en sera iamais ostes" (94). (The Dame du Lac set out to deceive him but said nothing of it. And her heart was set on putting him in a place from which he would never be freed.) She hides her true intentions beneath the mask of pretended love.

The Jehannot and Trepperel edition of the *Propheesies*' example of Merlin's complete and utter misjudgment of the Dame du Lac is more detailed concerning how she deceives him:

elle le hayoit de mortelle haine & il laymoit de tout son cuer. Icele le vouloit decepuoir et mettre en tel lieu dont il ne peust iamais yssir et il pensoit destre a son aise avecques elle dont il luy apprint a faire tel oignement des amours et des herbes et daultres choses assez dont elle baingnoit son corps et lauoit ses membres que si elle eust vescu iusques au iour de la fin du monde len eust cuyde que elle neust eu que quinze ans tant elle auoyt sa chair pollye et blanche.

Il luy apprint de tout tant que il scauoit de lart de nigromance et de tous aultres ars & sciences quil ne scauoit pas mieulx que elle (lxviii).

She hated him with a mortal hatred and he loved her with all his heart. She wanted to deceive him and put him in such a place that he would never escape and he considered himself at ease when he taught her to do such spells of love and herbs and other things so she bathed her body and washed her members so that if she lived until the end of the world everyone would believe that she was only fifteen, so white and polished was her skin. He taught her everything that he knew of the art of necromancy and other arts and sciences so that he knew no more than she did.

A series of binary oppositions illuminates the gap between Merlin and the Dame du Lac that extends to the disparity between Merlin's fantasy of his beloved and her reality. He loves her with all his heart, but she hates him with a mortal fury; he believes himself safe and secure, while she is plotting his demise. She even uses Merlin himself to accomplish her goals – he so believes the fantasy that he teaches her his arts, the very arts she later uses to entrap him. He also teaches her to make ointments that make her appear younger than she is, but that also invoke love, so she is using what he taught her to trick him into loving her more. In order to make herself appear as Merlin's fantasy, she bathes herself in the

ointments and herbal unctions so that their enchantments cover her body.<sup>42</sup> The image she portrays is the one that promises that she *is* and that she *will give* Merlin what he wants.

In *Fiction et Incarnation*, Leupin discusses Tertullien's *De cultu feminarum* and relates the use of cosmetics to writing (50-51).<sup>43</sup> The Dame du Lac is writing a promise of sexual relations on herself with the ointments. As in *L'Enchanteur*, the Dame du Lac writes, using her own body. Here, instead of writing on her body and on the forest floor with her own blood, she is writing on her body with her potions. The outcome is the same: she creates something that can be read. In the *Prophecies*, she creates an image of herself that will permit her to accomplish her goal, while in *L'Enchanteur*, her writing reflects the story of a function fulfilled. As Merlin says in *L'Enchanteur*, "Je suis mort par amour" (61).

In the *Prophecies* Merlin complains bitterly that the Dame du Lac not only betrays him, but that she makes his prophecies false when she entombs him:

vous ki l'aves pierdue, [la blancour] ensi comme vous meismes le saves, ne deussies avoir en vous si grant engien, car seulement pour cou ke vous en aves fait sunt mes prophecies fausees. Car iou ai fait metre en escrit que une blanche serpente me decheveroit, et iou vous en ai tolue la blancour (95).

you who have lost your whiteness as you yourself know, should not have such great trickery, because only by what you have done are my prophecies false. Because I had it written that a white serpent would deceive me, and I have taken your whiteness.

Merlin is distressed when he believes the Dame du Lac's actions have made his prophecies untrue, and quite rightly so. Merlin attributes his access to otherworldly knowledge and thus his ability to prophesy to "God" in the text: "Ensi sot Mierlins par la grasse nostre Seignor grant partie des coses avenues et a venir" (38). (Thus Merlin knew by the grace of

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<sup>42</sup> See the discussion of Apollinaire's use of this theme in *L'Enchanteur* in connection with the character Hélèn in chapter four, "Representations – Women in Apollinaire's Writing," p. 135-136.

<sup>43</sup> This reference was previously cited in the discussion of nudity and truth, p. 216, note 18.

our lord great many things that have come to pass and that were to come.) If the Dame du Lac were able to negate his prophecies, then she might also be able to undo his access to divine knowledge and privileged position as mediator between “God” and men. This would in effect erase him from the text as poet and as signifier, which is what the entombment does.

Furthermore, Merlin bemoans her trickery and relates her deception to that of Eve in the biblical Fall: “Adans fu crier de la main meismes de nostre Seignor, et *si* ne se pot garder ke il ne fust engignies par cele femme” (95 [the emphasis is mine]). (Adam was created by the very hand of our Lord and *so* he could not guard himself from being tricked by this woman.) If, as we have seen, the signifier “God” is an allusion to the poet as the creator of the text, then the word *si* (so) takes on even more significance in a reading of the Dame du Lac’s actions as related to the effects of the feminine ineffable. The use of *si* in this context implies an element of causality – as a creation of the poet, (the signifier) Adam (and the signifier Merlin) was as a result submitted to the castrating effects of language as associated with the cyclic nature of the feminine ineffable’s influence.

After entombing him, the Dame du Lac explains that she did trick him, but did not disprove his prophecies: “Mierlin, ... t’est il avis que iou soie la blanche sierpente ke tu as prophetisie par maintes fois, ki venue estoit de la Petite Bretagne, et se metoit avoec le demi homme en la forest d’Arnentes” (95). (Merlin, ... doesn’t it occur to you that I am the white serpent that you prophesied about numerous times that came from Lesser Brittany, and went with the half man in the forest of Arnentes.) When Merlin tells her that she has made his prophecies about the white serpent false, she replies that she tricked him into believing that he had lain with her:

Saces vraiment ke eles ne sunt pas fauses et si te dirai pour quoi. Te membre il del premier enseignement que tu m'appresis del art de ingremance? – Oil, mout bien, cou dist Mierlins, et cou fu d'endormir .i. homme ou une femme et d'esveiller les de quele eure ke tu vaurroies. Et la seconde art que iou t'apris si fu de fremer .i. liu ou un vaissiel en tel maniere ke par nul engien ne le peust on defremer. – Mierlin, fait la Damoisiele del Lac, cou est voirs ke tu quidoies jesir a moi et iou te faisoie endormir. Et quant iou veoie le point saces vraiment que iou te faisoie esveiller. Dont iou voel bien que tu saces vraiment que iou sui encore puciele (95).

Know well that they are not false and I will tell you why. Do you remember the first thing that you taught me of the art of necromancy? – Yes, very well, said Merlin, and it was to put a man or a woman to sleep and to wake them when you wanted. And the second art that I taught you was to close up a place or a vessel in such a way that no spell can open it. Merlin, said the Dame du Lac, when you believed you were lying with me I was putting you to sleep. And when I saw the moment, know truly I made you awaken. So I well want you to know that I am still a virgin.

In the same way that Viviane in the *Estoire de Merlin* conserves her virginity, the *Prophecies*' Dame du Lac takes control of her sexuality. This is similar to what Merlin's mother does, but in an inverse manner. Merlin's mother exercises her (self-appointed) right to choose and even create her partner in *L'Enchanteur* and the prose *Lancelot*. The Dame du Lac exercises the same (again, self-appointed) prerogative, but rather than engaging in sexual relations, she refrains from them. Merlin's mother will not be coerced into marriage or even celibacy, but the Dame du Lac will not be forced into a sexual relationship she does not want. In this as well as in relation to Merlin's corporeal existence, the Dame du Lac reverses what Merlin's mother does. She transforms Merlin's mother's active sexuality into active abstinence. This too is related to the act of writing – the mother's active creation contrasts with the Dame du Lac's active withholding.

#### 6.4.2 Desire, Lack, and Writing

In the quotation in which Merlin extols the Dame du Lac's virtues, he is projecting his desire onto her. Just as Merlin's mother creates her demon lover in *L'Enchanteur* through her desire, Merlin creates – at least in his own mind – the embodiment of his desire



in the Dame du Lac. He “writes” his desire on the Dame du Lac, so that what he believes to be her whiteness is the result of his projection. Merlin’s perception of the Dame du Lac is only an illusion on his part, only a fantasy he has created himself.

Blinded by his love, Merlin believes that the Dame du Lac feels the same about him and cannot see that she despises him with a mortal hatred: “Se Mierlins amoit la Dame del Lac a tout son pooir et de tout son cuer, la dame le haoit autant ou plus” (92). (If Merlin loved the Dame du Lac with all his strength and all his heart, she hated him as much or more.) Merlin in the *Propheies* is separated from the knowledge of the Dame du Lac’s loathing even though he has free access to other, otherworldly, even premonitory information. He is blind to facts concerning the Dame du Lac, the fantasy object of his desire, and his weakness. He is missing the “sight” necessary to see the truth about her, thus un-whole and effectively (symbolically) castrated. He lacks that which can make him a whole man and this leads him to believe that he can fulfill his desire for the Dame. But, the Dame du Lac herself propagates this illusion. This relates to the feminine ineffable and its influence in the creation of the text as operating in a cyclic fashion. The desire for expression of the feminine ineffable encourages poetic creation, but limits this expression by its very inaccessibility in language.

#### 6.4.3 The Place of Fantasy – The Forest House

As in the *Estoire de Merlin*, the Enchanter tells Antoine when he takes his leave of him and goes to meet the Dame du Lac that he will disappear in the forest of Arnentes to be seen no more and he prophesies about the *white serpent*’s betrayal. Although Merlin does not know the *white serpent*’s identity, he does know that he is not coming back from being

with her. This contrasts with Apollinaire's text in that in *L'Enchanteur* Merlin knows that the Dame du Lac will betray him, but is powerless to resist her charms. He says:

Il m'estuet en la forest d'Arntes aler ou la Dame dou Lac doit estre, ou iou ai une seule besoigne a akevier. Dont iou voel ke vous metes en mon livre que apries ma mort serai iou plus desires a veoir que on ne quide en vie (92).

I must go into the Forest of Arntes where the Dame du Lac must be, where I have a single goal to achieve. So I want you to put into my book that after my death I will be more sought after than in my life.

The one need that Merlin must achieve is the death of his body and the production of truth that it produces in this text as well as in *L'Enchanteur*. Accordingly, his prophecy that he will be more searched for after death than in life relates to the act of writing (and reading) and the quest for the meaning that is hidden behind the words. Although Merlin says that he will go into the Forest of Arntes to be with the Dame du Lac and achieve one desire/need, then speaks of his death and what will happen afterwards, he does not seem to associate the Dame du Lac with his death. There is, however, a link in the text – in Merlin's own prophecy – between the achievement of desire and death. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis includes the idea of *Thanatos*, the death drive, which is "a primary instinct aimed at the return of the organism to an inorganic state." (Eidelberg, 435). It is linked to sexual gratification since the goal of the sex act is its completion, the *petite mort*. Similarly, the goal of desire is its accomplishment and thereby, through the process of transference, the "return" to an (illusory) original state of oneness. So Merlin's all-encompassing and blinding desire for the Dame du Lac is, in psychoanalytic terms, linked to a desire for his own death. The idea of *Thanatos* is particularly relevant to Merlin's state after his entombment, since the object of his desire is the vehicle for his (bodily) death. However, before Merlin loses his physical existence, he has a last experience with his fantasy.

When Merlin and the Dame du Lac arrive at the Forest House, they both experience great joy in their reunion, although for different reasons:

Grans fut la ioie et la feste que Mierlins fist de la riens el monde ke il plus amoit. Et la dame ki ne baoit a autre chose fors seulement a li dechevoir fist ausi grant ioie de lui com se il fust chevaliers nouviaux. A celui point bien vous fust avis que la Dame del Lac l'amast autant comme nule femme del monde peust plus amer homme. Lors entrent entr'iaus .ii. en la forest grant ioie demenant. Se Mierlins amoit la Dame del Lac a tout son pooir et de tout son cuer, la dame le haoit autant ou plus. Tant errerent parmi la forest d'Arnentes ke il vinrent a l'entrée ou la croute estoit, ou Mierlins avoit estore la maison et la tombe dont la dame li avoit tant priet. Et sacies, seignour, que il estoit si desvoiables et si en requoi ke se tout li chevalier del monde se fuiscent mis en queste pour trouver celui liu, il fuiscent decheu ne iamais ne le trouvaiscent (92-93).

Great was the joy and the celebration that Merlin made of the one he loved most in the world. And the lady who came for no other reason than to deceive him made as much joy of him as if he were a new knight. So much so that you would think that the Dame du Lac loved him as much as no other woman in the world could love a man. Thus the two of them entered the forest with joy. If Merlin loved the Dame du Lac with all his power and all his heart, the Dame du Lac hated him as much or more. They wandered thus in the forest of Arnentes until they came to the entrance where the grotto was, where Merlin had built the house and tomb for which the lady had much pleaded. And know, good sir, that it was so hidden and secluded that if all the knights in the world quested to find this place, they would be disappointed to never find it.

Merlin is elated to see the one he loves most in the world, thinking that he is finally united with one who will fulfill all his desires and make him complete. For him, the forest house is a place of bliss and of the seeming fulfillment of desire. The Dame du Lac is so skilled at her deception that anyone would believe that she loved Merlin as much as any woman could love a man. The image of the knights that would not be able to find the place of Merlin's eventual entombment is a reference to those who adhere to courtly rules. The laws and restrictions of society cannot encroach on this fantasy world built by Merlin's desire for the Dame du Lac. The rules of society are analogous to the rules of language. Language cannot fully encompass the truth that Merlin's tomb will contain.

When Merlin and the Dame du Lac enter the house, they find all that they might possibly wish for: “Et lors vinrent a tant a le maison et entrerent dedens ou il trouverent toutes les coses ki mestier avoient a haute dame et a riche homme. Il n’i failloit riens ki ne fust tout la” (93). (And so they came to the house and entered where they found all the things that a grand lady and a rich man might have. Nothing that they might desire was missing.) The house in the forest, where the (supposed) lovers meet, is the physical embodiment of Merlin’s fantasy relationship with the Dame du Lac. As such, it represents the (illusory) place of fulfilled desire. For Merlin, this furthers the false impression that the Dame du Lac returns his love and that he might be able to accomplish his desire.

#### 6.4.4 Desire and the Tomb

The Dame du Lac propagates this illusion, offering Merlin promises of unity and love:

La Dame del Lac ki toutevoies pensoit as ouevres que ele baoit a akieuer demande a Mierlin se il bee jamais a partir d’illuec. Et il respont ke nenil. – Jou, fait la dame, jou en sui tant lie com nule dame poroit plus estre de nule riens. Jou bee, fait ele, a estre avoec toi tout mon eage et quant iou serai trespassee de cest siecle ausi voel iou que mi os soient mis en cele tombe la. Et quant tu morras, iou te pri tant com iou puis proier que tu te faces metre en ceste tombe avoec moi, dont m’ame en sera asses plus a aise (94).

The Dame du Lac who in all ways thought of the works that she came to achieve asked Merlin if he ever wanted to leave this place. And he responded that he did not – I, said the lady, I am happier than any other woman could be of anything. I desire, she said, to be with you all my time and when I leave this life I also want my bones put in this tomb. And when you die, I beseech as much as I can beseech that you have yourself put in this tomb with me, so my soul will be more at ease.

She tells him that she is inextricably linked to him, furthering the fantasy, then she promises to be with him for all eternity in the tomb. Even after death, their bones would be united; they would be forever inseparable, even unto eternity, even after their death. On one level of reading, she uses a false promise to fulfill Merlin’s most precious desire in order to

entrap him. She extends the assurance of a union before and after death – a guarantee of eternal rapport in Lacanian terms – to Merlin to get him to do her bidding.

But on another level, the promise is not false at all. If the Dame du Lac represents the feminine ineffable and Merlin's entombment reveals the truth about his dual nature that is only partially represented by his body-as-signifier, then she *is* with him in the tomb. She is with Merlin-the-poet, although he is symbolically castrated and cannot express her presence. She is also with Merlin-the-*new*-signifier, Merlin-the-*lack of*-signifier. Of course the signifier cannot be said to be united with the feminine ineffable, but their union – the symbolic negation of Merlin's physical existence – can result in a truth.

At the tomb, the Dame du Lac questions its adequacy for the two of them and Merlin, always eager to please her, lies down in the tomb to prove that there is enough room. Of course, this is exactly what she intends:

ele est asses grans et bien faite a nostre oes, et iou le vous mousterai apertement,' comme cil ke ne se gaitoit mie de cou ke la dame pensoit. Car il quidoit vraiment k'ele l'amast de trop grant amour.

Mierlins entra dedens la tombe et se couca dedens et puis parole et dist: 'Dame, or gardes se vous aves liu grant et lonc et let.' Et quant la Dame del Lac ki a cou l'avoit mene le vit gissant dedens la tombe ele en abati erramment le couviercle, et fist maintenant l'esperient, et tantost fu la tombe tant bien fremee et dedens et dehors, ensi com il meismes li avoit apris, que nus hom del monde, tant fust sages, ki dedens ne dehors le peust desfremer, ne tant ne quant (94-95).

it is big enough and well made for our usage and I'll show you,' as if he didn't know what the Dame was thinking. Because he really believed that she loved him with a great love.

Merlin entered the tomb and lay down and said: 'Dame, see if you have enough room.' And when the Dame du Lac who had led him [there] saw him lying there in the tomb she closed the cover, and said the spell and the tomb was so well closed outside and inside just as Merlin taught her, that no man in the world, however wise, could open it either from the outside or from the inside not even a little.

Of course the tomb is large enough for the usage the Dame du Lac intends. She uses her wiles to entice him into the tomb in much the same way that Viviane persuades Merlin to

teach her the spell she uses to detain him in the *Estoire de Merlin*. She seals the tomb so well that no man in the world can open it. The Enchanter's dual nature that stems from his conception as the son of an incubus demon and a human woman reaches even into the tomb. Merlin says that within a month his flesh will have rotted, but his spirit will continue to speak for a great while: "Dame, fait il, la cars desor moi sera pourie dedens anscois que uns mois soit passes; mais mes esperit ne faurra de parler a tous chiaus ki chi venront encore .i. grant tans" (95).<sup>44</sup> (Lady, he said, the flesh above me will be decayed before a month has passed; but my spirit will not fail to speak to all those that come here for a long time to come.)

The Dame du Lac seals Merlin in the tomb by speaking the enchantments he teaches her. Like the Enchanter's mother in *L'Enchanteur* and the prose *Lancelot*, she speaks the words that make her desire become reality. However, while Merlin's mother's words are creative, the Dame du Lac's are destructive with regard to Merlin's corporeal existence. She symbolically castrates him with her words. As in *L'Enchanteur*, however, her words do usher in a new existence for Merlin, and in this sense, they too are creative.

#### 6.4.5 Medieval Attitudes – Merlin and the Dame du Lac in the *Prophesies*

Whereas *L'Enchanteur* represents Merlin as accepting of his fate yet longing for what he perceives as lost love with the Dame du Lac, the *Prophesies* depicts his attitude toward the woman he once loved with all his heart as bitter. He says,

En sui iou deceus par mon mauvais sens. ... Et pour cou voel iou ke il face metre en escrit ke riens ne vaut sens d'oume encontre engien de femme; et dites lui que tout homme ki se metront en subiection de femme seront ausi houni comme je suy (95).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> This passage has been used to indicate the possible source for Apollinaire's title. See the introduction, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> This was first quoted in part in chapter three on page 113.

I was deceived by my bad judgement. ... And I want [Master Antoine] to put in writing that man's reason is worthless against woman's trickery; and tell him that any man who puts himself at the mercy of a woman will be just as shamed as I am.

Unlike Apollinaire's *Enchanter*, Merlin in the *Propheesies* does not go on about his enduring love for the Dame du Lac. Quite to the contrary, he deems her a representative of women's wiles. A reading of the *engien de femme* (woman's trickery) as overcoming the *sens d'oume* (man's reason) as that part of meaning that escapes representation aligns the Dame du Lac's deception with the feminine ineffable's surplus of meaning in this passage.

The *Propheesies* also presents the Dame du Lac's attitude toward Merlin as slightly different than does *L'Enchanteur*. Her hatred of Merlin is more pronounced in the medieval text and her reason for this hatred is clear. She says,

“iou voel que tu faces le remanant de ta vie ichi dedens, et iou te dirai pourquoi. Saces tout vraiment ke jou t'ai mis ichi dedens pour cou que tu aloies disant en tous les lius ou tu aloies ke tu avoies geu a moi, et si en fui pute clamee par la bouce meisme Morghain. Dont iou en voel prendre la veniance de ton cors meismes de la blancour que tu vas dissant que tu m'as tolue” (95).

I want you to spend the rest of your life in here, and I will tell you why. Know that I put you here because you were saying everywhere you went that you had slept with me and even Morghain has called me a woman of disrepute. So I want to take vengeance on your body for the whiteness you said that you took from me.

She tells him that the reason she entombed him is because he defamed her virtue. His claims to have slept with her were untrue and misleading, but he believed them to be otherwise. Bragging about his (imaginary) relationship with the Dame du Lac is a way to show mastery, a boast that he had possessed her physically. She wants to punish Merlin's body for the act that he only claimed to have committed. His crime is merely verbal – it is no more than a crime of words. In a reversal of sorts, Merlin never had carnal knowledge of her body, but insulted her character. She, on the other hand, erases his body's existence. As it relates to the act of writing, Merlin's claim to have taken the Dame du Lac's virginity

correlates to the poet's attempts to possess/express fully non-linguistic concepts (i.e.: the feminine ineffable) in language.

#### 6.5 CONCLUSION – CORPOREALITY AND REVERSAL

When the Dame du Lac entombs Merlin in *L'Enchanteur*, symbolically castrating him, she reveals the inadequacy of the signifier that is his flesh to denote his nature as both corporeal and aerial. His state in the tomb is one of corpo*Real* existence – one in which the vestiges of the signifier point to something Real – the truth of his dual nature. Furthermore, his entombment is a metaphorical recreation of his conception. The simulacrum Merlin's demon father uses to have relations with the maiden is echoed at Merlin's entombment in the cold slab of the tomb, which serves as a simulacrum in the sexualized episode of the Dame du Lac's expression of *jouissance*. The tomb also symbolizes Merlin's return – as much as is possible – to a demonic state. Again, desire is also the driving force behind his corporeal demise. This translates to the relationship between the feminine ineffable and language as a cycle of inspiration and limitation that has an effect on the language of the text.



## 7. CONCLUSION – *JE SUIS MORT PAR AMOUR*

### 7.1 *ONIROCRITIQUE* AND *LES ÉTERNITÉS DIFFÉRENTES DE L'HOMME ET DE LA FEMME*

Apollinaire wrote and first published the prose poem *Onirocritique* in *La Phalange* in 1908. A year later, in 1909 – at the same time that he imported the section from the prose *Lancelot* as the first chapter in his *L'Enchanteur* – he added *Onirocritique* as the final chapter. It begins where the preceding chapter ends: with the theme of unconsummated, futile, *impossible* love and – or rather, *because of* – the difference between the sexes: “Mais j’avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l’homme et de la femme” (Pr I, 73). Apollinaire repeats this phrase four times in the four pages of *Onirocritique*, a significant number of repetitions. The conclusion to his version of Merlin’s story opens and closes with this fundamental difference, which emphasizes its importance to his final chapter and to his text as a whole. This disparity is, accordingly, the main theme of *Onirocritique*, echoing and reinforcing that in *L'Enchanteur* (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 183, notes). The narrator’s reflections on *Les éternités différentes de l’homme et de la femme* is the only response to Merlin’s plaintive questioning (*O toi que j’aimais, te souviens-tu de notre amour?*) at the end of the preceding chapter (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXVI-LXVII).

In this final reply, however, the difference between men and women has a subtle dissimilarity from the way it is presented in the earlier parts of the text. In the last dialogue before *Onirocritique* Merlin says, “Nous nous ressemblons, mais l’homme et la femme ne se ressemblent pas. ... O toi que j’aimais, toi qui me ressembles, tu ressembles aussi à toutes les autres femmes. ... Toi que j’aimais, je sais tout ce qui me ressemble et tu me ressembles” (Pr I, 71). This both underlines the difference between Merlin and the

Dame du Lac and emphasizes their similarity. While such a claim seems contradictory, there is more than one interpretation of this passage. The first is that Merlin still believes the Dame du Lac might return his love. In which case, they would be alike in their love. Merlin taught her his enchantments, so her knowledge resembles his; Merlin explains why he and the Dame du Lac are alike while men and women are different: “nous nous ressemblons, parce que je t’ai tout appris” (Pr I, 71).<sup>1</sup> As previously quoted, She says: “O joie! Je t’entends encore, mon amant, qui savais tout ce que je sais” (Pr I, 69). The Dame du Lac addresses Merlin as *mon amant* and expresses joy at hearing his voice whereas before she was delighted that he had died; this relates to a nostalgic reminiscence of her own past powers.<sup>2</sup> If the Dame du Lac resembles Merlin because she derived her acumen concerning enchantments from him, then when she entombs him – even though this was her purpose – her power over him, like her role is finished.<sup>3</sup>

Another interpretation is to consider the resemblance between Merlin and the Dame du Lac as reinforcing their disparity – they are alike in that they are different or separated. Neither of them can experience the sort of unity in love that Merlin desires because of this essential difference; their love fails not because of the Dame du Lac’s cruelty, but because of the contradictory nature of men and women. Somehow the fact that Merlin taught the Dame du Lac his enchantments sets him apart from other men, since the Dame du Lac resembles women in general: “tu ressembles aussi à toutes les autres femmes” (Pr I, 71). Of course we know from Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that

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<sup>1</sup> Burgos attributes Merlin and the Dame du Lac’s resemblance despite the impossibility of their love to a parody of love that correlates to a parody of faith – the absence of love seems to relate to the absence of a true God (*L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXXXVIII).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter six, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> This idea ties into the cyclic theme of spring as discussed in chapter six, p. 217-218.

the signifier *la femme* is not adequate to represent women as a class (or the feminine), so Merlin's association of the Dame du Lac with *toutes les autres femmes* is flawed. It also relates to his desire – his desire for the Dame du Lac, but also, through the process of transference, which the above quote illustrates, to a desire for the feminine (ineffable), or for a sort of unity.

But the Dame du Lac does not pay attention to his words: “La dame assise sur la tombe tiède de l’enchanteur songeait au printemps qui défleurissait pour finir” (Pr I, 71). She is truly separated from him by the different destinies of men and women. In this sense then, it is clear that the Dame du Lac's representation as primarily fulfilling a function rather than acting out of pure hatred and revenge as in the *Prophecies* is not a misogynistic portrayal at all, but an expression of the difference that makes love futile, even impossible. Merlin and the Dame du Lac, like *men* and *women*, are signifiers. Hence their “impossible love” may be interpreted in terms of the logical relationship between signifiers in language. We know from Lacanian psychoanalysis that, due to the bar in the linguistic sign, meaning is always partially veiled. Similarly, the feminine or unconscious aspect of the divided human psyche remains partially inaccessible linguistically – a full and complete expression of the feminine or the unconscious is not possible.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is also not possible to form a relationship of logical rapport between the signifiers *men* and *women* or *Merlin* and *the Dame du Lac*. This applies to the love relationship for Lacan, which he also considers futile.<sup>5</sup> So, Lacan's theory that sexual rapport does not exist explains the hopeless love between Merlin and the Dame du Lac.

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter two, p. 36-41.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter three, p. 91-92. For an explanation of Lacan's theory of the impossibility of sexual rapport as related to the “fantasy” of love, see Leupin, *Lacan Today*, p. 98.

In *Onirocritique*, each time the sentence *Mais j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme* appears, it is followed by another phrase or phrases that seem to oppose it. For example, “Deux animaux dissemblables s'accouplaient” (Pr I, 73), “Le ciel allaitait ses pards” (Pr I, 74), and “Deux animaux dissemblables s'aimaient” (Pr I, 74).<sup>6</sup> Then at the end of the chapter: “Des ombres dissemblables assombrissaient de leur amour l'écarlate des voilures, tandis que mes yeux se multipliaient dans les fleuves, dans les villes et dans la neige des montagnes” (Pr I, 77). The basis of the seeming contradiction and the main difference from the preceding chapter is that these phrases express dissimilarity rather than resemblance (i.e.: between Merlin and the Dame du Lac). They emphasize the demarcation between two animals or entities. But these unlike entities come together, which contrasts with the earlier separation. Furthermore, there is a sense of union of difference in these quotations – for example, two *dissimilar* animals *coupled* and two *dissimilar* animals *loved*. In light of the preceding chapter's ending, this takes on even more significance. When the narrator/poet of *Onirocritique* writes of the two dissimilar animals that couple and that love each other, it is a reverse image of the lack of love or of sexual union between the Enchanter and the Dame du Lac and the resulting expression of *non-rapport*. Rather than futile and unconsummated love, two disparate animals unite.

But, man is different from the animals because of his reason; Merlin and the Dame du Lac are not like the animals. In an earlier chapter, Béhémouth says, “Avez-vous remarqué la raison admirable de l'homme? Nous [les animaux] lui sommes devenus étrangers” (Pr I, 43). And, in the game instigated by Béhémouth, the animals couple and then die. Man's faculty of reason is related to language. Human language, as mentioned

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<sup>6</sup> According to the note to the text, a *pard* is a mammal similar to a cat (Pr I, 1106).

in chapter three, is different from animal code.<sup>7</sup> As Leupin explains, “the distinction between the signifier and the signified is what characterizes human language and makes it ambiguous and equivocal” in contrast to animal univocal code (*Lacan Today*, 39). One word can have more than one meaning or even opposing meanings in human language (Leupin 39). But, it is also the nature of human language that causes a division of the subject. Again, Lacan writes, “Je ne fonde pas cette idée de discours sur l’ex-sistence de l’inconscient. C’est l’inconscient que j’en situe, - de n’ex-sister qu’à un discours” (*Télévision*, 26).<sup>8</sup> Animals, lacking language, do not have an unconscious and nothing is beyond their conscious awareness. Man on the other hand, cannot fully relate to the unconscious (or the feminine ineffable, or the truth, or the real...) because of the signifier’s inadequacy to represent *everything* linguistically. In a Lacanian interpretation, the seeming reversal of the impossibility of rapport that the union of disparate animals or entities (but not humans) illustrates is related to the difference between human language and animal code.

Burgos writes that *Onirocritique* signifies a reversal of Merlin’s position in the notes to his edition of *L’Enchanteur* (183).<sup>9</sup> Whereas he is entombed, separated from the object of his love, and powerless in the earlier sections of the text, in the conclusion, he is reborn into a new existence where he is in control. Furthermore, in *Onirocritique*, the narrator says, “je me vis au centuple” (Pr I, 74). In contrast to Merlin’s symbolically castrated and fragmentary existence in preceding chapters, in *Onirocritique*, the

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter three, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> This was originally cited in chapter two, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Burgos offers a reading of Merlin as the poet-enchanter and as Apollinaire in “Portrait de l’Enchanteur en costume d’Apollinaire – pour une nouvelle lecture de *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*.” He also presents the narrator as Merlin in the notes to *Onirocritique* in his edition of *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*. Catherine Moore presents the narrator/poet as Merlin/the Enchanter as well in *Apollinaire en 1908 la poésie de l’enchantelement*.

narrator/poet's presence becomes multiplied (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 183, notes). His presence corresponds to a surplus. This is similar to the Dame du Lac's creative power and unity in a reading of her blood writing. In Michel Décaudin's words, in "*L'Enchanteur pourrissant* prend donc sa forme définitive dans cette affirmation lyrique de la toute-puissance du poète face au monde et au temps" (*Notice*, Pr I, 1071). Décaudin considers *Onirocritique* as representative of union, calling it "un hymne à la puissance créatrice et à la fusion dans le cosmos" in *Apollinaire en somme* (148). Following this line of reasoning, in *Apollinaire en 1908 la poétique de l'enchantement: une lecture d'Onirocritique*, Catherine Moore interprets the final chapter of *L'Enchanteur* as a magical universe, that the poet/enchanter creates and where he is finally able to be a whole being. In psychoanalytic terms, this would correspond to recovering the original state of unity. According to this interpretation, Merlin and the Dame du Lac represent the opposing "male" and "female" parts of the psyche that come together in this poetic space (Moore, 12, 30). In *Onirocritique*, Apollinaire creates a fictionalized depiction of totality; creativity and imagination contribute to the fictional representation of (the poet's) attainment of desire in *Onirocritique* through the narrator/poet's all-powerful nature.

Merlin, as represented in the figure of the narrator/poet is the master of the poetic world that he creates. He is certainly all-powerful in this magical universe (Chevalier, 193). Indeed, Apollinaire represents him as virile and commanding: "vingt tailleurs aveugles vinrent dans le but de tailler et de coudre un voile destiné à couvrir la sardoine. Je les dirigeai moi-même, à reculons. ... Je procréai cent enfants mâles dont les nourrices furent la lune et la colline" (Pr I, 74). He is able to accomplish unheard-of and

contradictory feats, such as directing blind tailors to sew by moving backwards. In this, he is the originator of union, combining oppositions. This would have to be done through language, since it is the only way he could communicate with the tailors. Furthermore, the hundred male children represent a very prolific creative force, with the children serving as a metaphor for his poetic production.

*Onirocritique* is, accordingly, a commentary on language that lauds the seemingly unlimited power of the poet in the fictional world s/he creates.<sup>10</sup> It showcases the inventive aspect of language to imagine this new universe, while the preceding chapters commented upon language's inadequacy in their expression of difference and separation. The master of this language is the poet, whose capacity to create is divine, making the poet him/herself something of a god (Burgos, "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire," p. 202, Moore, p. 37).<sup>11</sup> Apollinaire, in the voice of the narrator/poet, writes, "Arrivé au bord d'un fleuve, je le pris à deux mains et le brandis. Cette épée me désaltéra" (Pr I, 75-76). Françoise Dininman offers a reading of Apollinaire's "Les Sept épées" in which she relates the sword to the phallus as a symbol of creative power and inspiration in Apollinaire's work (99-100). In the above passage from *Onirocritique*, the image of the river/sword is a sexualized metaphor for the poetic act. The sword represents the male member (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, 185, notes). The narrator/poet *writes* with the river/sword; the water is his ink, as in medieval literature the blood spilled by the knight's sword represents the poet's ink on parchment.

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<sup>10</sup> Among the critics that comment on the poet's unlimited creative powers in *Onirocritique* are Jean-Claude Chevalier, *Alcools d'Apollinaire*, p. 188-193, Jean Burgos, *Apollinaire en somme*, p. 148 and "Portrait de l'Enchanteur en costume d'Apollinaire," p. 201-206, and Michel Décaudin, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 64-74.

<sup>11</sup> In a similar vein, Michel Décaudin writes of the author as the creator of his own universe, in a mirroring of God as the Creator of the universe (*Apollinaire en somme*, 164).

As previously noted, Apollinaire was an avid student of the Middle Ages; he cites an unnumbered ballad by Charles d'Orléans' in *L'Esprit nouveau et les Poètes*: “*Je meurs de soif auprès de la fontaine*” (Pr II, 944).<sup>12</sup> The corresponding text of the ballad by Charles d'Orléans is: “*Je meurs de soif au près de la fontaine; J'ai tresgrant fain, et si ne puis mengier*” (Lemerre, 217). (I am dying of thirst next to the fountain; I have a great hunger, and I cannot eat.) The medieval ballad is a reference to the wound of love. He is dying of thirst next to the fountain; even though it is a source of water, the fountain does not satisfy his thirst. The object of his desire – the water of the fountain – remains inaccessible. In contrast, another ballad by Charles d'Orléans, *Ballade XIX*, seems to reverse this lack with respect to desire: “*Je n'ay plus soif, tairie est la fontaine; Bien eschauffé, sans le feu amoureux; Je vois bien cler, jà ne fault qu'on me maine; Folie et sens me government tous deux*” (Lemerre, 135-136). (I no longer thirst, the fountain is dry; Well warmed, without the amorous fire; I see clearly, it is no longer necessary that one lead me; Folly and sense both govern me.) These lines reflect satiation and fulfilled desire. In both cases, water represents the first object of desire. The inverse presentation of desire in *Ballade XIX* in comparison to the unnumbered ballad is similar to *Onirocritique*'s reversal of Merlin's desire and its (poetic) fulfillment.

In this poem about writing, Apollinaire's narrator/poet not only takes control of the water and writes with it, but he also *quenches his thirst* – “*cette épée me désaltéra*” (Pr I, 76). In what could be an intertextual reference to Charles d'Orléans' ballad, he actually seems to fulfill his desire through the act of writing. This represents the same

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<sup>12</sup> In the notes to “*L'Esprit nouveau et les Poètes*” in their edition of *L'Enchanteur*, Pierre Caizergues and Michel Décaudin mention this ballad and cite it thus: “*Je meurs de soif en couste la fontaine*” (Pr II, 1685).



aspect of satisfaction with respect to water/desire as *Ballade XIX*.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, he swims in the water: “Centuplé, je nageai vers un archipel” (Pr I, 76). There is an abundance of water – so much that not only can he quench his thirst, but also he can completely immerse himself in it. With regard to the metaphor of writing, the words he writes with the river/sword are so prolific that they are more than enough to satisfy him.

Given that this is a sexualized metaphor, the abundance of writing signifies that the poet/narrator is able to (re) produce poetry without a partner. It indicates his androgyny, or completeness with respect to poetic creation. This is similar to Moore’s assertion that Merlin, as the narrator/poet, is in a state of absolute totality ushered in by what she calls the “magical language” he acquires through dying (17-18). However, in her assessment it is the “magical language” that brings unity with it, whereas in the reading of the river/sword metaphor, it is the act of writing that permits the fictional attainment of desire. Language in and of itself remains inadequate, as previously described, but the poet can use the language that s/he has at his/her disposition – limited as it may be – to create a personal fantasy world. The poet is both inscribed in the reality of language and master of this reality because s/he uncovers this utopia to others (Chevalier, 193). Only through poetry is this possible (Burgos, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, CXXI).

And *Onirocritique* truly is a fantasy world where the usual rules that govern reality do not apply. For example, in the quotations that express the union of disparate

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<sup>13</sup> While Apollinaire’s citation of the unnumbered ballad in *L’Esprit nouveau et les Poètes* is evidence of his knowledge of Charles d’Orléans’ work, the absolute intentionality of this reference cannot be established. This does not preclude the intertextual reference, however, since Apollinaire’s citation of the unnumbered ballad in *L’Esprit nouveau et les Poètes* proves his familiarity with the medieval poet’s work. From the discussion of *influence* and *intertextuality* in theories of twentieth-century rewriting discussed in chapter two, intentionality is not a prerequisite for an intertextual reference (see p. 48-52).

animals or entities, “Le ciel allaitait ses pards” (Pr I, 74). While metaphorically speaking the sky nourishes every being on earth with the sun’s light, the image of cat-like creatures suckling at the sky defies reason and is a testament to the poet’s invention. Furthermore, poetic imagination conquers all the constraints of reality, including death, time, space, and human contradictions (Moore, 6). The narrator/poet exists in what appears to be a dream-sequence and what has often been read as such.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the title, *Onirocritique*, is a reference to the art of dream analysis and to Baudelaire’s *oneirocritie* – the art of interpreting dreams in poetry (Burgos, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, LVII and 179, notes, Moore, 19).<sup>15</sup> Only in dream or a work of fiction can there be unity and only in a fictionalized account of poetic creation can the poet be all-powerful. However, even in Apollinaire’s fictional fantasy-world, the symbolic object of desire, the Dame du Lac, is not present. Hence, there remains a missing element – one that relates to the feminine ineffable – in the narrator/poet’s fictionalized account of desire and poetic creation.

## 7.2 APOLLINAIRE’S THEORY OF POETIC CREATION – *LA NOUVELLE POESIE*

*Onirocritique* is an entirely new invention. As such, it differs from the other chapter that Apollinaire added in 1909 – the first chapter. *Onirocritique* illustrates Apollinaire’s theory of poetic creation in both its very newness in contrast to the section borrowed from the prose *Lancelot* and also in its metaphorical commentary on the act of writing. However, the transcribed borrowing is also representative of Apollinaire’s rewriting by virtue of its relation to the past. In his conference of November 6, 1909 entitled *Les Poètes d’aujourd’hui* Apollinaire explained his idea of new poetry and its

<sup>14</sup> For example, see Burgos, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, p. 187, notes, Pierre Brunel, *Apollinaire entre deux mondes: Mythocritique II*, p. 14-15, and Moore, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Claude Debon describes *Onirocritique* as “la loi des contrastes qui règle la divination de l’*onirocritique*, et les songes disent le contraire de ce qu’ils semblent dire” (*Apollinaire: Glossaire*, 87).

relationship to the sublime. New poetry requires invention, but invention that is based in already-existing concepts: “maintenant sur des penseurs nouveaux les poètes revenus aux principes les plus antiques y retrempe la pureté de leur inspiration. Et le monde entier s’étonnera de la nouveauté de cet effort” (Pr II, 916). *L’Enchanteur* illustrates this principle of new poetry with its basis in the medieval Merlin legend and its abundance of new characters and new portrayals of characters taken from other works. For example, Apollinaire took Merlin and the Dame du Lac from medieval legend and literature, the prophet Enoch from the Judeo-Christian religion, and Medée and Hélène from Ancient myth and legend. His *Monstre Chapalu*, however, was his own invention. (Burgos, *L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, CXII, Por, “Le Travestissement,” 92).

New literature, as the result of the collaboration of artists – poets and painters – and the individual differences between them, such as culture, taste, esthetics, and tendencies that often seemed contradictory, is a literature exhibiting a beauty that is completely new. Apollinaire, creating something of a homonym of the word *sublime*, considers this new beauty *the sublime*, so *la nouvelle poésie* is beautiful and sublime (Pr II, 914-915).<sup>16</sup> Creation, according to this new conception of poetry, is on the divine order, because it entails ordering a chaos (Pr II, 915). Additionally, since the poet of new poetry brings fresh ideas to his creation, his poetry is more aligned with the sublime than that of his predecessors: “Aussi audacieux et peut-être plus que nos aînés, nous apportons à la langue des beautés toutes neuves par le renouvellement profond et très pur des images” (Pr II, 915).

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<sup>16</sup> As with his work and his theory of new poetry, Apollinaire’s conception of the sublime is not identical to any of the concepts discussed in chapter two, but an amalgamation coupled with invention. It is the beauty that may be evoked by the combination of existing ideas in art – plastic and poetic – with the novelty of invention, as discussed below.

On November 26, 1917, Apollinaire presented what he called *l'esprit nouveau* and his conception of the poetry this movement was charged to create at a conference entitled *L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes*. His idea of the new spirit of art – both the poetic and plastic arts – contains a strong basis in the past. Apollinaire was involved in the expansion of the arts, the search for artistic expression in new and different forms.<sup>17</sup> *L'Esprit nouveau* inherits from the classics good sense, a critical spirit, and general views of the universe and of the human soul. From the Romantics, it is heir to the curiosity necessary to literary invention (Pr II, 943). The principle characteristics of this new spirit are the exploration of truth in reality as well as in the imagination and liberty in artistic expression, i.e.: the overthrowing of rules that define literary creation, such as grammar, punctuation, and rhyme (Pr II, 943-945). Apollinaire prepared this conference at roughly the same time that he wrote and included *Onirocritique* in *L'Enchanteur*. It is not surprising that the final chapter of his version of the Enchanter's tale illustrates many of the tenets of *l'esprit nouveau* as, for example, the absence of regulations that govern reality. One way *L'Enchanteur* fulfills the requirements of Apollinaire's new poetry, is with regard to the passage of time, since it does not adhere to the usual rules that govern it. Time in *L'Enchanteur* is immobile – from Merlin's entry into the tomb to the Dame du Lac's departure, all is contained in one moment in time (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* CXLIX). Time stops at the moment of separation. But, at the end of the last chapter before *Onirocritique*, when the Dame du Lac leaves Merlin definitively, time

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<sup>17</sup> Apollinaire was prolific in his critiques of the plastic arts. Certainly, the poet's interest in painting influenced his literature – for instance the character Pablo Canouris in *La Femme assise* was modeled on the painter Pablo Picasso (see chapter four, p. 145). His interest in the plastic arts also had an impact on his theories of artistic creation (which includes poetic/literary creation and creation in the plastic arts). Apollinaire's interest in the arts even included critiques of the theater and the emerging early French cinema.

resumes (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, CLI). *Onirocritique*, the fictionalized depiction of the poet's unity and power, also does not conform to the usual rules that govern the passage of time – time, rather than standing still, is abolished (Burgos, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, CLI). The lack of reality in *L'Enchanteur* is evident as well in the parade of mythical creatures that search for Merlin's tomb.

This is not, of course, limited to *L'Enchanteur*. Apollinaire's work in general expresses a certain amount of disassociation from the rules that govern reality and literary production. For example, in *L'Esprit nouveau* Apollinaire explained the idea of newness in relation to *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*:

j'exprime une vérité littéraire qui ne pourra être qualifié de fable que hors de la littérature, et je détermine la surprise. Mais ma vérité supposée n'est pas plus extraordinaire, ni plus invraisemblable que celle des Grecs, qui montraient Minerve sortant armée de la tête de Jupiter (Pr II, 949).

Although this statement applies to the 1917 play, it could just as easily have been written in regard to *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which Apollinaire called a *drame surréaliste*, portrays gender switching and a male protagonist that gives birth. As Le Mari explains,

Puisque ma femme est homme  
Il est juste que je sois femme  
Je suis une honnête femme-monsieur  
Ma femme est un homme-madame (Po 893-894).

Apollinaire coined the term *surréaliste* in 1917 in the preface to this play. The definition he offers reinforces the importance of imagination and invention in this quote and in his work in general: “j’ai forgé l’adjectif surréaliste qui ... définit assez bien une tendance de l’art qui si elle n’est pas plus nouvelle que tout ce qui se trouve sous le soleil n’a du

moins jamais servi à formuler aucun credo, aucune affirmation artistique et littéraire” (Po, 865).<sup>18</sup>

Although Apollinaire himself was not a member of the surrealist group, whose main tenets André Breton developed in his 1924 *Manifeste du surréalisme*, his work influenced surrealist thought. For instance, in his manifesto, Breton suggests the designation *surréalisme* for this “nouveau mode d’expression pure” in homage to Apollinaire, who “paraissait avoir obéi à un entraînement de ce genre” (35). Surrealism, according to Breton, “déclare assez notre *non-conformisme* absolu pour qu’il ne puisse être question de le traduire, au procès du monde réel, comme témoin à décharge” (60 [the emphasis is Breton’s]). This artistic movement also owes its relationship to the importance of the poetic imagination and invention to Apollinaire’s influence. Moreover, the surrealist idea of the mysteriously beautiful, but inaccessible woman as illustrated by André Breton’s *Nadja* is related to Apollinaire’s seeming fascination with the idea of feminine beauty and ever-prevalent theme of impossible love. Furthermore, Apollinaire’s Poème-Conversation, *Lundi Rue Christine* in the collection *Calligrammes* is a precursor to the surrealist *écriture automatique*.

Even before he wrote his manifesto, Breton realized the significance of Apollinaire’s influence. He referred to Apollinaire’s poetic creation in his 1917 chapter on the poet in *Les Pas perdus*, writing that *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* was a testament to Apollinaire’s poetic secret of “une gaieté moderne, à la fois plus profonde et tragique” (38). This idea relates to both Apollinaire’s influence on the surrealist movement and to

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<sup>18</sup> About Apollinaire’s invention of the word *surréalisme*, see also Philippe Renaud, *Lecture d’Apollinaire*, p. 247, Pierre Caizergues and Michel Décaudin, Notice, *L’Esprit nouveau*, Pr II, p. 1684, Michel Décaudin, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 152, and Marie-Louise Lentengre, *Apollinaire: le nouveau lyrisme*.

the poet's own theory of new poetry. As Breton explains, "Apollinaire prend à cœur de toujours combler ce Vœu d'imprévu qui signale le goût moderne" (28). For Apollinaire, it was inherently *modern* to revisit the past and to return with an improvised souvenir.

The strength of *l'esprit nouveau* poetry is its inventive force that is founded in the past.<sup>19</sup> Thus the resurgence of Merlin in *L'Enchanteur* and "Merlin et la vieille femme" and the medieval atmosphere of these and other works, such as "Arthur roi passé roi futur." The poet is one who creates – one who searches for new joys and imaginary spaces, and poetry is his creation (Pr II, 950-951). The modern poet is the poet of the always-new truth and he is charged with infusing his work with imagination and surprise (Pr II, 951). Poets of new poetry are thus creators, inventors and even prophets, because they imagine possibilities that might one day become reality (Pr II, 950 and 952).

This is the difference between the rewriting espoused in Apollinaire's conception of new poetry and medieval rewriting. For Apollinaire, creation and imagination infused with a dose of the past are paramount, while for the medieval poet, creation in the sense of pure invention did not exist. Only God, as the Creator of the universe truly created; the poet mimed this creation in his work (Dragonetti, *Le Mirage des sources*, 31). Medieval poetic creation, then, was related to the idea of imitation. Medieval poets borrowed heavily from their predecessors, as did Apollinaire, but for the medieval poet, this involved the concept of authority – references to preceding works, whether real or

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<sup>19</sup> For interpretations of the importance of invention to Apollinaire's poetry and its relation to the past, see Marie-Louise Lentengre, *Apollinaire: le nouveau lyrisme*, p. 15, Pierre Brunel, *Apollinaire entre deux mondes: Mythocritique II*, p. 1-3, Susan Harrow, "Iconoclasm and Desire in the Early Poems of Apollinaire," Michel Décaudin, "L'Ecrivain en son temps" in *Apollinaire en somme* and *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 64, Anna Boschetti, *La Poésie partout*, p.17-32 and 79-98, Margareth Wijk, *Guillaume Apollinaire et l'esprit nouveau*, Françoise Dininman, "Blessures et mutilations symboliques dans l'œuvre d'Apollinaire," p. 68, Daniel Delbreil, "Les exploits d'un jeune Don Juan," p. 110, Jean Burgos, *Apollinaire en somme*, p. 184, Peter Por, "Le Travestissement de la tradition et/ou la création du nouveau dans *Alcools*," and Scott Bates, *Guillaume Apollinaire*, p. 40.

fictitious, gave an air of authority to their text. Apollinaire did not turn to the past for credibility, but rather for inspiration and because he found something of what he called the sublime in existing works.

“La Démocratie sociale – La Loi de renaissance” (1912) relates the importance of newness and invention in Apollinaire’s theory of poetic creation to the idea of rebirth, or renewal, and the sublime. It underlines the significance the past holds in the creation of what is new: “En effet ce mot [renaissance] qui promet l’avenir exprime aussi le plus grand effort du passé dans les temps modernes” (Pr II, 963). *Renaissance* for Apollinaire signifies *rebirth* and *renewal*, a *resurgence* of the past, rather than solely original invention. His Merlin is an ideal example. As Burgos explains, Apollinaire suffused his Enchanter with new characteristics without sacrificing his medieval identity (“Portrait de l’Enchanteur en costume d’Apollinaire,” 197). To create him, Apollinaire took the legendary figure from literature of the past and added surprise and invention – the mythical parade before the tomb, the Dame du Lac’s and Merlin’s attitudes, sexual difference, the (overt) identification with the poet – in short, he allowed the medieval to mix with the “modern” and produce something familiar, yet new.

In “Le Tombeau de Robert ou la tradition encryptée,” Adelaide Russo writes that any poetic work constitutes a cenotaph (3). She relates the idea of the poet erecting a sort of monument to a dead predecessor in his own work to Robert Desnos’ poetry. As in Apollinaire’s theory of new poetry, intertextual references – or incorporations – to a preceding poet are a way for Desnos to both align himself with the authoritative voice of his precursor and to make something new out of the past (47). Apollinaire as well both raids the tombs of his literary ancestors to find his material and erects monuments to their



genius in his poetry. In fact, the idea of continuity in poetic creation is central to Apollinaire's idea of the sublime. Apollinaire expresses the sublime as, "ce qui dans les arts et les lettres ne change point et les modifications qu'ils subissent au cours des temps sont destinées à garder intacte leur essence" (Pr II, 963). It does not change over time.

Apollinaire cites the fable of the phoenix to illustrate the sublime's regenerative power:

L'oiseau de l'éternité se consume et ne change point, les flammes le préservent de la décrépitude et l'on a dit qu'il renaissait de ses cendres. De même le sublime renaît des cendres des arts. Ils changent, et le sublime ne change point, et s'il changeait il ne pourrait qu'être abaissé et deviendrait la médiocrité (Pr II, 963).

The sublime rises out of the "ashes" of the literary works of the past that, although beautiful and containing elements of the sublime themselves, do not suit the artistic requirements of new poetry and so do not effectively evoke the sublime. *Esprit nouveau* poets, by using pre-existing material and infusing it with elements of surprise and imagination, create new poetry through which the sublime is reborn. The evocation of the sublime in new poetry is the monument *esprit nouveau* poets erect to the genius of their predecessors.

The sublime's resurrection will continue ad infinitum if the requirements of imagination and surprise are respected in poetic creation: "Le sublime moderne est identique au sublime des siècles passés et le sublime des artistes de l'avenir ne sera rien autre que ce qu'il est aujourd'hui" (Pr II, 965). Without these elements, however, literature would certainly continue to exist, but the sublime would be lost (Pr II, 965). As Apollinaire explains, artistic desire is akin to a desire for the sublime, so there is little danger of losing the sublime in literature and art: "Ce désir artistique ... a amené nos jeunes peintres à exprimer des formules plastiques [et non pas des reproductions photographiques] par quoi leur art se distingue à la fois des industries de reproduction et

de l'art populaire. C'est ainsi que le sublime demeure sain et sauf" (Pr II, 965). It is artistic desire that drives the young painters to seek out the expression of the sublime in their art; the same desire drives the poet to create.

What Apollinaire communicates is the necessity on the part of the poet to express the beauty of the sublime of which he finds hints in pre-existing works, but that needs to be infused with something – invention, imagination, surprise – in order to evoke the sublime. Although this is an *Apollinarian* sublime, the explanation Apollinaire offers does recall certain aspects of the conceptions of the sublime advanced by Michel Deguy and Roland Barthes, which describe the simultaneous longing for artistic expression (of the sublime) and the impossibility of expressing it in language. The feminine ineffable has a similar cycle of inspiration with regard to poetic creation, although it is specifically unrelated to concepts of mystery since it can be considered logically as a related to (and an effect of) language.

*Onirocritique* represents a poetic utopia where the poet/narrator/Enchanter's desire comes to fruition. However, even with the image of the all-powerful poet and his creative abundance, Apollinaire repeats the phrase *Mais, j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme* a significant number of times in the poem. The last time it appears, it closes the text and is preceded by the phrase, "Je me désespérai" (Pr I, 77). Burgos relates the expression of *les éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme* to signs of the difference that the poet had tried to unite since the Dame du Lac's departure (*L'Enchanteur pourrissant*, CVI). Even in this fiction of poetic plenitude, *something*, as we have seen, is missing.

While love and poetic utopias are possible in fiction, even Apollinaire's new poetry, with its emphasis on imagination and surprise is limited by language. Apollinaire's theory of artistic expression as a means of evoking the sublime is similar to the idea of poetic creation as an effort to express something on the order of the feminine ineffable and a desire for a unity of expression. The idea that the poet is driven by (unconscious) desire to fill a lack, whether in expression or in preceding texts relates to Apollinaire's view of the sublime as present in existing works and which the imagination of new poets evokes. Apollinaire's idea of the sublime does not have the logical relationship to language that defines the feminine ineffable, however. This does not preclude the similarities in the way his concept of the sublime encourages artistic creation and the manner by which the cycle of the feminine ineffable's influence functions with regard to the text. This influence amounts to rewritings of varying levels.

Merlin's tomb, what Apollinaire borrowed from his predecessors and what evokes the sublime in Apollinaire's theory and the feminine ineffable in the theoretical paradigm of this study, is Apollinaire's *cenotaph* to the genius of the past. In an ironic reversal that is fitting, considering the role desire plays in Merlin's entombment and the subsequent representation of the feminine ineffable's role in poetic creation, Apollinaire's monument to the past is a tomb.

### 7.3 POETIC (RE) CREATION

#### 7.3.1 Rewriting in Theory

Apollinaire, in *L'Enchanteur*, as mentioned above, suffuses his version of Merlin's story with the medieval legend, but he does so to varying degrees. His rewriting ranges from the transcription of the prose *Lancelot* to intertextual references to the

*Prophesies* and other medieval texts to characters loosely modeled on representations in other works. Theoretically speaking, there are degrees of rewriting as well. Based on the rewritings of Merlin's tale that we have discussed, we can consider four general degrees of rewriting in Apollinaire's work. On the first level of rewriting, akin to medieval scribal copying, is Apollinaire's Transcription. In the same way that there are variations, intentional or accidental, in the different copies of hand-written medieval manuscripts, Apollinaire transcribed the passages of Merlin's conception and entombment from the prose *Lancelot* with small changes. Some of Apollinaire's changes, as we have seen, involve translation into modern French and others have more significance for his version. Although the process by which he included these scenes in his text is similar to that of scribal copying in the Middle Ages, the results of incorporating a medieval passage almost directly into a twentieth-century text have implications that go beyond intertextual references. These include an infusion of *L'Enchanteur* with the medieval atmosphere and the incorporation of the Merlin legend so that Apollinaire did not need to repeat every aspect of Merlin's tale – the passages from the medieval text represent the entire medieval literary tradition.

The next level of rewriting is Intertextual Reference. Apollinaire's rewriting also includes references to other texts that range in the size of topics or ideas. Examples of Apollinaire's intertextual borrowing include the title to his text, which is a reference to a line in the *Prophesies* where Merlin says his flesh will be *pourrie* within a month. Apollinaire's use of the tomb rather than a prison of air or a cave for Merlin's place of confinement and Merlin's body's immediate death both come from the *Prophesies* as well. Other, less obvious references include Apollinaire's adjustment in the amount of

time it takes for Merlin's mother to conceive, which he aligns with the period of time it takes for Merlin's body to die in the *Prophesies*, emphasizing the cyclic nature of the Enchanter's corporeality. Apollinaire also makes references to myth, such as his use of the characters Hélène and Médée. The character Empedocles represents ancient philosophy. A sub-category of Intertextual Reference includes Apollinaire's references to his own texts. His work is a web of intertextual references; for instance, *L'Enchanteur*, the poems "Merlin et la vieille femme," "La Loreley," and the prose *Le Poète assassiné* all contain references to the Dame du Lac in one way or another.

Finally, the third level of Apollinaire's rewriting involves Influence. As we have seen in the discussion of theories of influence, all texts are related to those that precede them to some extent. Apollinaire's reversal of the Christian religion is perhaps related to the influence the Christian religion had on him personally. The theme of the river/sword in *Onirocritique* is related to the reversal of images of desire in two of Charles d'Orléans ballads. We know that Apollinaire was familiar with the medieval poet's work; this influence may have manifested itself in *Onirocritique*. Finally, the ancient body/soul debate and medieval theology concerning the body and the soul undoubtedly influenced Apollinaire's representation of Merlin's state as neither ancient nor modern, neither entirely of the body, nor entirely of the soul.

### 7.3.2 Rewriting in Apollinaire

While the focus of this study has been *L'Enchanteur*, its main considerations – rewriting, the impossibility of love, and the influence of the feminine ineffable on poetic creation – are also pertinent to other works by Apollinaire. *L'Enchanteur*, an early work, influenced many of the texts that followed it. Burgos wrote of this in the introduction to

his critical edition: “Au centre de ces deux grandes pôles de l’amour et de la création poétique, comment *L’Enchanteur pourrissant* ... n’aurait-il pas eu d’influence sur toute l’œuvre d’Apollinaire, constamment tiraillée entre ces deux mêmes pôles?” (CXXII). As an example, Merlin’s last words to the Dame du Lac in the chapter before *Onirocritique* bear repeating: “O toi que j’aimais, te souviens-tu de notre amour? Car tu m’aimais!” (Pr I, 71). This sentiment of longing is echoed in a *Poème à Lou* written in March of 1915: “Et souviens-toi parfois du temps où tu m’aimais” (“Poème XXIV,” Po, 412). In the chapter on Apollinaire’s representation of women we also saw this plaintive yearning for the beloved that does not return love in relation to *La Femme assise*: ‘Elbirre, écoute-moi oubrrre-moi, jé te aime, jé te adore” (Pr I, 478). Burgos writes that, like *L’Enchanteur*, *La Femme assise* and *Le Poète assassiné* represent Apollinaire’s experience of love (*L’Enchanteur pourrissant*, LXXV). Among other intertextual references to *L’Enchanteur*, *Le Poète assassiné* contains an allusion to Merlin’s entombment by the Dame du Lac. La Source speaks to Croniamantal, saying: “Au fond de mon petit lit plein d’un orient de gemmes, je t’entends avec agrément, ô poète! que j’ai enchanté. Je me souviens d’un Avallon où nous aurions pu vivre, toi comme le roi Pêcheur et moi t’attendant sous les pommiers” (Pr I, 272). Croniamantal responds: “O source fécondante ... nous nous aimerons toujours” (Pr I, 273). Croniamantal represents Merlin and La Source denotes the Dame du Lac (Poupon, 31). This is a reversal of the Dame du Lac’s disregard for Merlin in *L’Enchanteur*, but even though she professes her love for him, they are still separated, as Merlin and the Dame du Lac are in *L’Enchanteur*.

Another text that shares this undercurrent of impossible love is, as we have seen, “Merlin et la vieille femme.” This poem also contains a commentary on poetic creation in

the *filz de la Mémoire*. Philippe Renaud relates the poem to Apollinaire's theory of poetic creation through the idea that poetry is born from an ancient Memory (*Lecture d'Apollinaire*, 50). Michel Décaudin relates the character of la vieille femme to Merlin's memory and his past, but also to a promise of the future in *Le Dossier d'“Alcools”* (145).<sup>20</sup> The narrator/Merlin says,

Ma Mémoire venir et m'aimer ma semblable  
Et quel fils malheureux et beau je veux avoir (Po, 88).

This is in reference to Viviane's arrival. Together, Merlin and Viviane create poetry (Renaud, 50, Por, “Le Travestissement,” 96). In this text, as in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin is a representation of the poet and of Apollinaire himself (Durry, *Alcools* Tome II, 128, Renaud, 49). The narrator/poet recounts the genesis of Merlin and Viviane's poetic creation:

Et leurs mains s'élevaient comme un vol de colombes  
Clarté sur qui la nuit fondit comme un vautour  
Puis Merlin s'en alla vers l'est disant Qu'il monte  
Le fils de la Mémoire égale de l'Amour (Po, 89).

*Le fils de la Mémoire* is their poetry (Renaud, 49). This Poetic creation based on Memory illustrates Apollinaire's theory with regard to writing. Like the text itself, it is the invention of something new based on what is old, in this case, *la Mémoire, la vieille femme*. The poetry that Merlin and Viviane conceive in “Merlin et la vieille femme” is equal to Love. Décaudin relates memory to love because both stop time (*Dossier*, 145).<sup>21</sup>

In this way, love and poetry are linked. As in *L'Enchanteur*, Merlin seems to be aware of

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<sup>20</sup> See also “Le Travestissement de la tradition et/ou la création du nouveau dans *Alcools*,” p. 96, where Peter Por offers a reading of Viviane as a personification of Memory.

<sup>21</sup> Décaudin mentions Quinet's *Merlin l'Enchanteur* as a source for this poem. In Quinet's text, Merlin and Viviane together have a son, which Décaudin likens to the *filz de la Mémoire égale de l'amour* of “Merlin et la vieille femme” (*Dossier*, 145).

Viviane's role in his fate; Décaudin writes that he knows his destiny and accepts it (*Dossier*, 145). The themes of immobile time and impossible love recall their use in *L'Enchanteur*, as discussed above, where they also illustrate the association of love and poetic production.

#### 7.4 POETIC (RE) CREATION (II) – DESIRE AND AMBIGUITY

In “Silence and Holes: The *Roman de Silence* and the Art of the Trouvère,” Bloch relates the idea of glossing the text, or adding meaning to the obscurity in previous works to a desire for poetry. He discusses the Prologue to Marie de France's *Lais* within the context of the poet's desire to “fill in” or “supplement” the points in the text where the transmission of meaning breaks down (90-91). In her Prologue, Marie de France mentions an obscurity in preceding texts that subsequent authors might illuminate with their *glose*, or rewriting:

Ceo tes[tmoine Preciens,  
Es livres ke jadis feseient  
Assez oscurement diseient  
Pur ceus ki a venir esteient  
E ki aprendre les deveient,  
K'i peüssent gloser la lettre  
E de lur sen le surplus mettre. (lines 10-16).

As Priscian bears witness,  
in the books that they made  
they said rather obscurely  
for those that were to come  
and learn what was written there,  
they could gloss the text (or the *letter*)  
and from their meaning add the surplus.

These lines express the idea of adding a surplus of meaning to the absent sense in the existing work and imply that not only was something lacking in the original text – explanation, understanding, clear meaning – but also that the commentator or translator



could supply it. In his analysis of “Guigemar” in his *The Anonymous Marie de France*, Bloch writes that words – “a proper signification or the full word” – are the objects of desire the poet hopes to achieve through gloss (42). The object of rewriting in the *Lais*, then, is to complete expression.

Bloch’s analysis is related to the main problematic of rewriting that this study considers – the desire to communicate something that the poet perceives as lacking in previous works, but that, if articulated, would allow for the expression of poetic unity. He also associates what he terms a “problem of indeterminacy,” an impossibility of expressing silence, with the task of the poet, who must find a way to express what is inexpressible (98-99). This ties into language’s insufficiency with regard to complete expression of the feminine ineffable.

Additionally, the idea of ambiguity, which is a major theme in Merlin’s representation in *L’Enchanteur* and in the texts that influenced Apollinaire’s rewriting is also related to a certain indeterminacy in linguistic expression. This is especially true of *L’Enchanteur*, since Merlin’s ambiguous qualities stem from his dual makeup – as the son of a demon and a human maiden he is both demon and man at the same time. These same qualities eventually lead to the evocation of a truth, tied to the representation of Merlin’s corporeal nature and to language. Furthermore, Merlin is knowledgeable enough to prophesy and influence the rule of a kingdom, but allows himself to be tricked and entrapped by a woman using the very spells he taught her. Merlin’s ambiguous and contradictory nature is essential to his character’s depiction and is directly tied to the representations of his mother and the Dame du Lac. Perhaps part of Merlin’s appeal and a

reason for the continuing interest in his story is precisely the inherent ambiguity of his character.

Apollinaire wrote, “La grande force est le désir” (Po, 173) and this statement is illustrative of his work, especially with regard to *L’Enchanteur*. It is Merlin’s desire for the Dame du Lac that leads to his entombment and it is the poet’s desire that drives poetic creation. But there is ambiguity in the way desire is played out in the text and in the legend. It is the desire to capture and possess the beloved that makes love futile, even impossible, according to the explanation the Dame du Lac offers:

On ne saisit pas le printemps, on vit en lui, au centre de son éloignement et l’on n’appelle pas le bon printemps fleuri, un fantôme. L’homme devrait vivre en nous comme dans le printemps. Il n’a pas toujours le printemps, mais il nous a toujours: une incantation, la diablesse ou la libellule. Au lieu de cette bonne vie au centre de notre éloignement, il préfère chercher à nous saisir afin que l’on s’entr’aime (Pr I, 67).

Considering her association with the cycle of spring, this passage relates the futility of trying to take possession of the beloved, rather than accepting ambiguity. Like Pablo Canouris in *La Femme assise*, who cannot accept Elvire’s *mormonisme à rebours*, Merlin – or men, according to the Dame du Lac – cannot love without the request for possession. This is what leads to the end of love and what renders it futile. According to this passage, love without the necessity of possession would be possible, but it is the all-encompassing desire to become one with the beloved, to, in a sense, incorporate the beloved into the self, that leads to destruction. The last phrase, *afin que l’on s’entr’aime*, which comes in the last chapter before *Onirocritique*, refers back to the first line of the text, “Que deviendra mon cœur parmi ceux qui s’entr’aiment?” (Pr I, 7). In this way, Apollinaire answers the question posed by the opening line of his version of Merlin’s tale with the Enchanter’s ultimate separation from the Dame du Lac. Apollinaire’s assessment of

desire was correct – desire is a force that governs all human interactions, from literary creation, to the (psychoanalytic) theories that purport to explain its ambiguous, contradictory, and ineffable nature.

## 7.5 ARTISTIC RECREATION AND THE TEXT

The edition of *L'Enchanteur* that was published in 1909 by the editor Henry Kahnweiler, was the first publication of the text in its complete form and also included for the first time the illustrations by André Derain. These illustrations are inherently modern in style. The bulletin that accompanied this publication and which Apollinaire himself edited explains their modernity: “Le plus précis réformateur de l'esthétique plastique a gravé sur le bois des images, des lettrines et des ornements qui font de ce livre une pure merveille artistique” (Pr I, 1071 [cited in Décaudin, *Notice*]). As Décaudin notes, Apollinaire would later refer to the illustrations as “les plus beaux des bois modernes que je connaisse” (Pr I, 1071). *L'Enchanteur* represents the aspect of Apollinaire's theory of artistic creation that involves invention and new direction. The combination of art and literature, for Apollinaire, symbolized the new spirit in art. The bulletin reads, “Le goût des belles éditions paraît revenir. L'éditeur bibliophile Henry Kahnweiler offre aujourd'hui aux amateurs d'art et de lettres, un livre qui réunit à l'attrait littéraire et artistique” (PR I, 1072 [cited in Décaudin, *Notice*]). The notion of a revived taste for *belles éditions* brings Apollinaire's theory of the sublime to mind. *L'Enchanteur*, by the modernity of illustrations and their unique combination with an inventive literary text, would, according to this theory, evoke the sublime. And Apollinaire did consider *L'Enchanteur* to be original; the bulletin of accompaniment describes the text as “plein

d'idées toutes neuves et saisissantes dont l'affabulation n'a d'analogue dans aucune littérature" (Pr I, 1071 [cited in Décaudin, *Notice*]).

Apollinaire's theory of new poetry involves a recourse to the past, which the bulletin also expresses as the source of the text extending back to the "profondeurs celtiques" of the French culture (Pr I, 1071 [cited in Décaudin, *Notice*]). *L'Enchanteur's* inventiveness in contrast to the inspiration it derives from past works makes it "new." Furthermore, the publication of *L'Enchanteur* with its illustrations also characterizes the new spirit in art by the modernity expressed through an art form that is hundreds of years old. As the bulletin of accompaniment points out, woodcuts date back to the Middle Ages; the first printed work to combine a literary text with woodcut images dates from 1454 (Pr I, 1071 [cited in Décaudin, *Notice*]). Derain used the old art form to fashion a modern image just as Apollinaire used the medieval Merlin legend and passages from a medieval text to create his version of Merlin's story. Once again, *L'Enchanteur's* newness paradoxically lies in the influence of the past.

As one feature of the illustrations, each chapter of the Pléiade edition published by Gallimard of *L'Enchanteur* begins with an initial decorated in the manner of medieval decorated manuscripts. As we have seen, Apollinaire transcribed the passages from the prose *Lancelot* and changed some of the narrative elements to suit his purposes; similarly, the initial that opens the text is also a modernized version of a medieval decorated initial. The modern, pre-cubist style of the decorated initials, like that of the illustrations in general, is a stark contrast to the oldness of the art form and the opening chapter, the passage borrowed from the medieval text.

Furthermore, one particular illustration, the first image of a character in the text, portrays a nude woman who is sitting in a rather revealing posture. This image is placed at the end of the first chapter and is the first significant illustration (excluding the decorated initial) that the reader encounters. The image is decentering, even troubling due to its juxtaposition with the passage borrowed from the prose *Lancelot* and because of the way the woman is depicted. The boldness of this illustration sets it apart from others in the text; it is the most provocative, even aggressive image of a female character (or of any character, for that matter) in the text.<sup>22</sup> The shock-value of the image emphasizes the novelty of Apollinaire's invention in contrast to the transcribed medieval passage. The text that concludes the chapter above the image forms an inverted pyramid in the Pléiade edition so that the words of the text point to the image.<sup>23</sup> The last sentence of this section reads:

Et celle qui endormit si bien Merlin était la dame  
du lac où elle vivait. Elle en sortait  
quand elle voulait et y rentrait  
librement, joignant les  
pieds et se lançant  
dedans  
(Pr I, 9).

The last word, *dedans* points directly to the image of the woman and refers to the lake where she makes her home. The text and the image are intrinsically related. In this way, the image is a pictorial representation of the words of the text. Of course the image is of the Dame du Lac and the lake represents her (feminine) power.<sup>24</sup> Her posture is one of

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<sup>22</sup> For example, the images of the woman on p. 21 and of the male druid on p. 15 are far less explicit.

<sup>23</sup> This is the case for the final lines of most chapters.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter six, p. 225.

strength – not of submission or of shame. Furthermore, her pose reflects Apollinaire's representation of the unabashed sexuality of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac.

Just as the feminine ineffable partially escapes representation on the page, there is an element of the image below the words that escapes representation as well. The woodcuts in *L'Enchanteur* are actually reverse images – to make an illustration, the artist traced the image onto the wood, then cut the traced image out of the wood. In so doing, the image itself was removed, but its outline remained. Ultimately, it is the wood that was cut away that formed the image on the page; the empty space in the ink is what we perceive as an image. The visible ink marks the absence of wood and the image that we see is the absence of ink. In view of this, we can consider this image of the Dame du Lac as an artistic representation of the feminine ineffable's influence on the text. The way we see the image in the woodcut illustration is related to the idea of meaning that is revealed through the combination of presence and absence of linguistic representation. Just as the woodcut consists of the sections that stand out in relief and transfer ink as well as the cutaway sections that leave no ink on the page yet are vital to the production of the image, the feminine ineffable leaves its mark on the text. Like the meaning that ultimately results from the combination of the actions of Merlin's mother and the Dame du Lac – the combination of what can and cannot be said – the image that we see is the result of the presence and absence of ink on the page. This image of the Dame du Lac is revealing in its representation of a certain intensity, which is akin to the feminine ineffable, through absence.

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## APPENDIX – A COMPARISON OF THE BERTHELOT EDITION OF THE *PROPHESIES DE MERLIN* WITH THE JEHANNOT AND TREPPEREL EDITION

The following passages are offered herein in order to facilitate a comparison of episodes that are pertinent to the parameters of this study in the Berthelot edition of the *Propheſies* (from the Bodmer Manuscript 116) and the Jehannot and Trepperel edition (the printed and bound version published by the widow of Jehan Trepperel and Jehan Jehannot in approximately 1510).<sup>1</sup> In cases where the same episode is found in both editions, the passage from the Berthelot edition is presented first.

1. The following passage, quoted from the Jehannot and Trepperel edition, describes the Dame du Lac's utter hatred of Merlin and the way she uses lotions and unguents to give herself a certain appearance. It is not found in the Berthelot edition of the *Propheſies*:

elle le hayoit de mortelle haine & il laymoit de tout son cuer. Icelle le vouloit decepuoir et mettre en tel lieu dont il ne peust iamaiz yssir et il pensoit destre a son aise avecques elle dont il luy apprint a faire tel oignement des amours et des herbes et daultres choses assez dont elle baingnoit son corps et lauoit ses membres que si elle eust vescu iusques au iour de la fin du monde len eust cuyde que elle neust eu que quinze ans tant elle auoyt sa chair pollye et blanche.

Il luy apprint de tout tant que il scauoit de lart de nigromance et de tous aultres ars & sciences quil ne scauoit pas mieulx que elle. (lxiii).

2. This passage, also from the Jehannot and Trepperel edition, describes how the Dame du Lac used enchantments to put Merlin to sleep when he came to her and, in this manner, to make him believe he had enjoyed a sexual relationship with her:

quant il fut venu la dame luy compte toute la chose ainsi comme auoit este et luy prie quil ne la descoeure plus & il dist aisi dieu me garde de lengin a la blanche serpente. Celle nuyt cuidort merlin auoir geu avec la dame du lac & incontinent quil fut deuant le lict a la Dame du lac elle gecte ses ars dessus luy si le fist endormir uisques au iour et lors quant le iour vint elle le fist esueiller & entelle maniere le decepuoit ycelle dame souuent & se aucun ne vouloit demander comment pourroit ce estre que merlin qui si sage estoit que vne dame le decluoit et ie leur repondray dict la dame du lac se merlin eust este extraict de la lignee des ennemis celle femme ne leust peu auoir deceu mais il auoit chair et dormoit & pource le decepuoit elle dont ie dys que aux femmes est la grant subtilité de

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 14-18 of the Introduction.



sens qui appartient a engigner aultruy. Et si le pouez bien scauloirse vous eustes iamais acointance a aulcune femme soit dame ou damoiselle & touteffois voit ses engins enamendant et si vous le monstrera clerement (Jehannot and Trepperel, lxiii).

3. The following passages illustrate Merlin's reaction to his entombment. The first is from the Berthelot edition and the second is from the Jehannot/Trepperel edition:

Dame, fait Mierlin, Adans fu cries de la main meismes de nostre Seignor, et si ne se pot garder ke il ne fust engignies par cele femme ki encore avoit sa blancor desour li, mais vous ki l'aves pierdue, ensi comme vous meismes le saves, ne eussies avoir en vous si grant engien, car seulement pour cu ke vous en aves fait sunt mes propheties fausees. Car iou ai fait metre en escrit que une blance serpente me decheveroit, et iou vous en ai tolue la blancour. (*Prophesies*, 95).

dame adan qui fut cree de la propre main de Dieu ne se peult garder destre engigne par sa propre femme donc ne me pouoys ie garder de vous Donc pource que vous mauvez fait sont mes propheties faulces que iay faict escrire vne serpente blanche et ie vous en ay tolue la blancheur. (Jehannot and Trepperel, lxxi).

4. The passages below provide the Dame du Lac's explanation to Merlin. Again, the Berthelot edition is quoted first, followed by the Jehannot/Trepperel edition:

Mierlin, fait la Dame dou Lac, certes tes propheties ne sont pas par moi fausees; mais oi u voel que tu faces le remanant de ta vie ichi dedens, et iou te dirai pourquoi. Saces tout vraiment ke jou t'ai mis ichi dedens pour cou que tu aloies disant en tous les lus ou tu aloies ke tu avoies geu a moi, et si en fui pute clamee par la bouce meisme Morghain. Dont iou en voel prendre la veniance de ton cors meismes de la blancour que tu vas dissant que tu m'as tolue. Saces vraiment ke eles ne sunt pas fauses et si te dirai pour quoi. Te membre il del premier enseignement que tu m'appreis del art de igremance? – Oil, mout bien, cou dist Mierlins, et cou fu d'endormir .i. homme ou une femme et d'esveiller les de quele eure ke tu vaurroies. Et la seconde art que oi u t'apris si fu de fremer .i. liu ou un vaissiel en tel maniere ke par nul engien ne le peust on defremer.

- Mierlin, fait la Damoisiele del Lac, cou est voirs ke tu quidoies jesir a moi et iou te faisoie endormir. Et quant iou veoie le point saces vraiment que iou te faisoie esveiller. Dont iou voel bien que tu saces vraiment que iou sui encore puciele. – Dont, fait Mierlins, en sui iou deceus par mon mauvais sens (*Prophesies*, 95).

Merlin fait la dame du lac certes tes propheties ne sont pas pary moy faul ces. saches certainement que ie tay mis cy dedens pour ce que tu alloys disant en tous lieux que tu auois geu aueuc moy et pource ien fus clamee putain par la bouche mesme de morgain dont ien vueil prendre vengeance suz ton corps de la blancheur que tu dys que tu mas tolue & dis que tes propnecies sont faulees pour ce que tu fis mettre en escrit que demy homme plain de cience sen alloit auec la blanche serpente en la forest daruantes et la blanche serpente sen retournoit a chere ioyeuse. Et des lors enauant tu ne veois la demy

homme Et de ceste chose ne pourroys tu scauoir la verite or tay ie enferme icy pour ces choses te souuient il point du premier art de nigromance que tu mapprins. Haa ouy deist merlin ce fut dendormir vng homme ou vne femme. Et les esueiller quant on vouldroit et le second art que ie tapprins ce fut de enfermer vng lieu en telle maniere que par nul engin ne pourroyt deffermer Merlin faict la dame du lac cest voir que tu cuydoys gesir avecques moy Et ie te faisoie endormir. Et quant ie veoye la pont saches certainement que ie te faisoie esueiller Dont ie vueil bien que tu saches que ie suis encore pucelle (Jehannot & Trepperel, lxxi).

5. The passages below illustrate Merlin's warning against the trickery of women. The passage in the Berthelot edition is followed by its counterpart in the Jehannot/Trepperel edition:

Et pour cou voel iou ke il face metre en escrit ke riens ne vaut sens d'oume encontre engien de femme; et dites lui que tout homme ki se metront en subiection de femme seront ausi houni comme je suy (*Prophesies*, 95).

vng homme se garderoit mieulx de lart du dyable aue de lengin de vne femme car tous les grans philosophes du monde ont este deceus par femmes (Jehannot & Trepperel, lxxi).

6. The passages quoted below demonstrate Merlin's dual nature. The first, from the *Prophesies*, probably influenced Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur pourrissant*:

[the Dame du Lac says:] tant voel iou que tu me dies, se tu le ses, combien de tans poras tu souffrir l'esperit dedens ton cors. – Dame, fait il, *la cars desor moi sera pourrie* dedens ancois que uns mois soit passes; mais mes esperit ne faurra de parler a tous chiaus ke chi venront encore .i. grant tans. (*Prophesies*, 95 [the emphasis is mine]).

[the Dame du Lac says:] ie veul que tu me dyes se tu scais point combien tu pourras souffrir ton esperit dedens ton corps / dame respondit merlin / *la chair de dessus moy sera pourrie* auant que vng moys soit passe mais mon esperit ne fauldra a tous ceulx la qui viendront (Jehannot & Trepperel, lxxi [the emphasis is mine]).

7. In these passages, the Dame du Lac travels by water – indicative of crossing between worlds in medieval literature – from Merlin's tomb in the forest to Arthur's court. Again, the Berthelot edition is cited first, followed by the Jehannot/Trepperel edition:

[The Dame du Lac] trouua une nef mout bien apareillie pour passer en Gaulle la ou ele voloit aler.

La Dame del Lac se mist en cele nef; li tans estoit boins et biaux, la merscoie et serie. Et ele se mist maintenant ens, car asses avoit desiret le boin tans; li maronnier

desploient les voiles au vent, dont la nef s'en prist a aler en Gaulles et furent arivet au port au tiers iour. (*Prophesies*, 96).

[The Dame du Lac] vint au port ou elle trouua vne nef bien appateiller pour passer en Gaulle. Or se mist la dame du lac en celle nef et le temps estoit moult beau et la mer guoye. Et elle se mist en mer / et les mariniers desployent les voilles ou vent. et tant nagerent quilz arriuerent au port au tiers iour (Jehannot & Trepperel, lxii).

## VITA

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