THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Morgan le Fay and Other Women:

A Study of the Female Phantasm in Medieval Literature

being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the Degree of a PhD in English

in the University of Hull

by

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November 2015

Thesis Abstract

'Morgan le Fay and Other Women' is an interdisciplinary study that seeks to rationalise the various manifestations of a universal Other in medieval culture. Using Theresa Bane's statement that 'Morgan le F[a]y is a complicated figure in history and mythology; she has had many names and fulfilled many roles in religion and folklore' as a focal argument, I present a methodology that identifies these 'many names' from what might be described as a primarily medieval perspective. Exploring the medieval notion of 'character type', this establishes a series of defining attributes that the culture of the period likely regarded as a 'standard list' for Morgan's underlying identity: the Other Woman. Asserting that Morgan's role in the medieval tradition is largely an attempt on to manifest this age-old concept in a variety of forms appropriate for different authors' milieus and genres, this thesis suggests that medieval writers project onto the character a series of attributes recognised as Other from their own contexts. By applying this method, which has a basis in medieval semiotics and philosophy, to a range of characters, I propose that derivatives of the 'Morganic' persona might be found in a range of genres including medieval romance, drama, folklore, and, in my final chapter, the tradition of male outlaws.

Contents

Introduction

[Morgan's] myriad forms provide an opportunity to comment on contemporary social expectations for women and men alike, and a means by which we can imagine how those expectations might be expanded, rebelled against, even overturned.[1]

Jill Marie Hebert

Since the publication of Lucy Paton's 1903 *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* – a study undertaken 'in the hope of obtaining light upon the wider subject of fairy mythology [and Morgan le Fay that] no-one has hitherto attempted'[2] – attempts to rationalise Morgan le Fay's equivocal characterisation have dominated studies of Arthurian women. While this is in part a natural response to Morgan's function as a literary 'Other', a character type whose mysterious alterity has prompted what Richard Kearney terms 'a vertiginous blend of fear and fascination'[3] for generations of readers, Morgan's popularity as a subject of scholarly discussion is largely the result of her compound identity. Hailed as a healer by Geoffrey of Monmouth, denounced as the devil's accomplice by Hartmann von Aue, and erratically recast as everything in between over a near millennial period, Morgan le Fay, at once goddess, witch and fairy, presents a diverse array of faces to her multi-generational audience.

Although Jill Marie Hebert is right to note that Morgan's flexibility has provided authors with an opportunity to comment on 'social expectations for women and men alike',[4] these myriad guises have also generated a greater disparity of scholarly opinion than that surrounding any other figure from the Arthurian *dramatis personae*. Whilst Ivo Kamps defends Morgan's role throughout the chivalric saga in unequivocal terms, claiming that it is only because of her habitually 'scapegoat' function that Round Table society is able to maintain its order and integrity,[5] Robin Fox believes she represents all that is negative about women in Arthurian stories; a disabling, solitary figure whose attempts to advance her own interests are particularly malign when considered

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[1] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.248.

[2] Paton, Lucy Allen (1960, 1903) *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance.* Ayer Publishing: London. P.41.

[3] Kearney, Richard (2003) *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness.* Routledge: London and New York. P.35.

[4] Hebert, P.248.

[5] Kamps, Ivo (1989) 'Magic, Women, and Incest: The Real Challenges of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'. *Exemplaria*, 1: Pp. 313-336 (314).

alongside the homosocial world of male camaraderie. [6] Where Corinne Saunders believes that Morgan's inclusion in Chrétien's *Yvain* intimates the grand interventions of fate that often befall the great heroes of romance ('destiny provides him, as it did Erec, with the magical healing ointment of Morgan le Fay' [7]), Evans Smith claims that Chrétien's Morgan remains a 'mysterious goddess of whom [the three ladies who come across the ailing Yvain] represent the courtly incarnation.'[8] And in *Le Morte Darthur* Margery Hourihan reads Malory's Morgan as the darker of 'the two opposite aspects of the great goddess'[9] – the 'light' being, she argues, the beautiful lady of the lake – a point sharply countered by Saunders' argument that Malory intended his Morgan to be perceived in mortal fashion by emphasising her blood relationship to Arthur: 'Malory does not probe Morgan's identity as 'le Fay', but rather notes that she was "put to scole in a nunnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a greate clerke of nygromancye" (I.2, 10)'.[10]

While scholarly discord is far from uncommon in Arthurian studies, the lack of general consensus surrounding Morgan le Fay goes far beyond that typically experienced in relation to a singular character. In her *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*, Herbert ascribes this conflict to the character's lack of adherence with the conventional models of 'good' and 'bad' femininity typically found in medieval romance, emphasising that it is primarily Morgan's metamorphic function that causes her to appear under such an extensive range of identities. This is a fairly common argument. In her *The Myth of Morgan la Fey*, Kristina Pérez asserts that scholars have yet to arrive at a conclusion regarding the fay's true identity because 'Morgan rejects the label of either Madonna or Whore' typically experienced in relation to medieval females,[11] an assertion that begins to address the issue of character type that is fundamental to this study. And Jeana Jorgensen claims that Morgan's aversion of the typical roles imposed upon medieval women has thwarted our 'attempts to contain her'[12] within any given classification, a valid argument given that

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[6] Fox, Robin (2005) 'Male Bonding in the Epics and Romances' in Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson (eds) *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative.* Northwestern University Press: Evanston. Pp.126-144 (143).

[7] Saunders, Corinne J. (1993) *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.71.

[8] Smith, Evans Lansing (1997) *The Hero Journey in Literature: Parables of Poesis.* University Press of America: Lanham and London. 117.

[9] Hourihan, Margery (1997) *Deconstructing the hero: literary theory and children's literature*. Routledge: London. P.179.

[10] Saunders, Corrine (2011) 'Magic, Enchantment and Female Power' in Sue Niebrzydowski (ed) *Middle-aged Women in the Middle Ages*. D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.37-52 (50).

[11] Pérez, Kristina (2014) *The Myth of Morgan la Fey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.8.

[12] Jorgensen, Jeana (2014) 'Strategic Silences: Voiceless Heroes in Fairy Tales' in Lori M. Campbell (ed) *A Quest of Her Own: Essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy.* McFarland: Jefferson. Pp.15-95 (36).

these groupings do not originate from Morgan's own literary environment. However, where these analyses simply accept that Morgan does not comply with twentieth- and twenty-first-century classifications of medieval woman, Eugène Vinaver provides a more caustic argument, suggesting in his *The Rise of Romance* that the confusion surrounding Morgan should be attributed to her 'most consistent and most effective [conspiracy] against our preconceived notions of literary form'.[13] This is a particularly effective rationale when noted alongside the fact that attempts to reconcile the fay with contemporary models such as the *femme fatale*, a term not formulated until Jules Claretie's reference to '*une femme qui porte malheurthe*' in 1897,[14] or even feminist theory, have been generally unsuccessful.[15] Yet there is also a problem with this assessment. Given that even a nineteenth-century analysis of the character significantly postdates Morgan's conception, it seems less likely that the character conspires against *our* preconceived notions of literary form, and rather more that our preconceptions have failed to accommodate the medieval background from which Morgan arises.

If we continue to align Morgan with expectations of how we believe medieval characters – and particularly women – *should* behave, the character is bound to remain enigmatic, elusive, and outside of the 'boxes and binaries'[16] that contemporary scholarship has attempted to impose upon her. Indeed, the Morgan we perceive through contemporary eyes must differ immensely from how a medieval reader, living in what were for them 'modern times',[17] would have perceived her, a factor that has received relatively little attention in modern academia. Even Hebert, who in her seminal 2013 work, *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter,* recognises that a study of Morgan requires a theoretical approach 'compatible with the changeable nature of the subject',[18] refers more closely to the discipline of 'New Medievalism' than medieval theory in its own right. Yet the scholar is right to call for a reappraisal of Morgan, for the character's myriad guises remain a source of confusion to the modern reader. In light of the fact that our own methodologies have generally failed to answer the questions surrounding her fluctuating identity, it is likely that Morgan's multiple *personae* can only be explained by turning to literary

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[13] Vinaver, Eugene (1971) *The Rise of Romance.* Clarendon Press: Michigan. P.90.

[14] 'A woman who is unlucky'. Claretie, Jules (1897) *La vie à Paris.* Bibliothèque Charpentier: Paris. P.254.

[15] For examples of this see for instance Hume, Lynne and Phillips, Katherine (2006) *Popular Spiritualities: the politics of contemporary enchantment.* Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot. P.19. and Jenkins, Janet (2002) 'The Once and Future Queen: Guinevere in a New Age' in Donald L. Hoffman and Elizabeth Sherr Sklar (eds) *King Arthur in Popular Culture*. McFarland & Company: Jefferson. Pp. 249-258 (250).

[16] Hebert, P.1.

[17] Murphy, James Jerome (1974) *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance.* University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles. P.362.

[18] Ibid. P.7.

methods from the time of her conception. With this in mind, my study seeks to develop a better understanding of Morgan within her original context and, in accordance with more flexible methods of medieval characterisation than their contemporary equivalents, extend the boundaries of what we consider to be 'Morganic'. By turning away from modern hypotheses that have attempted to confine Morgan to a rigid designation for which she is clearly not designed, I suggest that, just as the character is not bound to one physiognomy, neither is she bound to one name, but is instead part of a wider network of Other women. Using a variety of sources drawn from medieval philosophy, rhetoric, and grammatical theory, I re-evaluate common perceptions of Morgan as an anomaly to our dichotomised perceptions of medieval women, instead presenting her as the final addition to a trio of character types: Virgin, Whore, and Other.

Morgan: A Medieval Character

> *Morgan le F[a]y is a complicated figure in history and mythology. She has had many names and fulfilled many roles in religion and folklore.* [19]

> Theresa Bane

Although recent literary and media works have striven to reinvigorate Morgan as a tragic product of social misogyny and authorial misconstruction – for instance Nancy Springer's best-selling 2001 work, *I am Morgan le Fay,*[20] and the first two series of the BBC's 2008-2012 series, *Merlin* – her High and Late Medieval appearances remain comparatively ambivalent. Neither a Marian figure nor a fallen harlot, she evades what contemporary scholarship largely defines as the bipolar distillation of medieval literary women, 'confound[ing] traditional and social gender expectations…[and eluding] the Eve/Ave dichotomy'.[21] Incorporating myriad analogues from Celtic deities to classical matriarchs and popular vernacular figures, the medieval Morgan instead imbibes a range of characteristics that give her the appearance of multiple *personae*. First appearing in around 1150 as the beautiful ruler of the *Vita Merlini's* matriarchic Isle of Apples, Geoffrey of Monmouth describes his 'Morgen' as a beautiful, kindly healer, the world's most learned pharmacologist and a distinguished mathematician. The character restores the mortally wounded Arthur to health, has the ability to fly through the air, and can change her shape at will. Although a 'new' character for Geoffrey, it is generally accepted that the twelfth-century Morgan derives from various analogues; scholars have

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[19] Bane, Theresa (2013) *Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology.* McFarland and Company: Jefferson. P.237.
[20] Springer, Nancy (2001) *I am Morgan le Fay*. Philomena: New York.
[21] Hebert, P.6.

commented on her obvious parallels with the Celtic Morrígan, who shares Morgan's transformative power of flight in Irish legend. Chris Barber and David Pykitt have also argued that Geoffrey's referral to Isle of Applesis as the 'Jnsula pomorum que fortunata uocatur'[22] can be read as a reference to 'Fortuna', the Roman goddess of destiny who carried a wheel in her hand to show her rule of the turning year.[23]

However, Geoffrey's Morgan does not set a fixed precedent for future interpretations of the character: only a decade after the completion of the *Vita*, Benôit de Sainte-Maure presents an aggressively jealous 'Morgen' in his *Roman de Troie.* Although he retains the Latin spelling of Morgan's name, Benôit introduces a licentious element to the character not present in Geoffrey's text; upon falling in love with Arthur's foster father Hector, Morgan promptly turns against him when he does not return her affections. This portrayal of Morgan is also decidedly short-lived; in her next appearance in Étienne de Rouen's *Draco Normannicus,* Étienne adds a further dimension by naming her as King Arthur's sister: '[h]ere Morgan the eternal nymph receives her brother, cares for him and feeds him, heals him and make him immortal.'[24] This marks a notable turning point in the character's history; although she is almost consistently described as Otherworldly it is not until now that Morgan is described as *nympha perennis,*[25] a sobriquet that continues to fluctuate between 'fairy', 'goddess' and 'necromancer' over the next few centuries. However, so keen is the author to emphasise Morgan's removal from human society that, rather than subjecting her to mortality so that her blood-status might equal that of Arthur, Étienne has Arthur himself made immortal and established as the head of a fairy legion. As Hebert notes: '[l]ike the *Vita,* Etienne de Rouen's *Draco Normannicus* (c.1168) opens the way to ambiguity.'[26]

Chrétien furthers this ambiguity in *Érec et Énide* by avoiding any magical reference to Morgan at all.[27] Writing almost concurrently to Étienne, Chrétien de Troyes instead chooses to stress her 'miraculous' power, the author perhaps feeling that a de-emphasis

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[22] 'the Island of Apples which men call fortunate' *Vita Merlini*, line 1213.

[23] Barber, Chris and Pykitt, David (1997) Journey to Avalon: The Final Discovery of King Arthur. Wieser: York Beach. P.103.

[24] Étienne de Rouen, M.H. Ormot (ed) (1884) *Le Dragon Normand et autres poèms d'Étienne de Rouen.* Translation cited from Larrington, Carolyne (2006) *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her sisters in Arthurian Tradition.* I B Tauris: London, New York. P.29.

[25] 'eternal nymph'

[26] Hebert, P.11.

[27] Given their close proximity, scholars differ in their opinion of whether Etienne's Morgan predates Chrétien's. On the subject of which author was first to introduce Morgan as sister to King Arthur, Farina states: 'Chrétien may have picked up on this, or perhaps it was the other way around, or possibly both writers used a common lost source or oral tradition.' Farina, William (2010) *Chrétien de Troyes and the Dawn of Arthurian Romance*. McFarland: Jefferson. P.97.

of her magic was necessary if the character was to remain a munificent part of the Arthurian court:[28]

> The king sighed deeply, then had an ointment brought which his sister Morgan had made. The ointment that Morgan had given Arthur was so wonderfully effective that the wound to which it was applied, whether on nerve or joint, could not fail to be completely cured and healed within a week, provided it was treated with the ointment once a day.[29]

Despite referencing her in this way in *Érec,* it would seem that the author became increasingly uncomfortable with Morgan's position as Arthur's sister. In his subsequent romance, *Yvain,* Chrétien redubs Morgan with the guarded epithet of 'the wise', by doing so excluding any possibility of Arthur's heroism being attributed to magical rather than mortal prowess. Says the maiden who applies the salve: 'I remember an ointment given to me by Morgan the Wise, who told me that there's no madness in the head it won't clear'.[30] James Wade comments on this precipitous change in Morgan's standing in his *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, remarking that 'this loss of her fairy status results in the loss of her Otherworld realm.'[31] Chrétien must have felt there was a need, he claims, for romance authors to make Morgan human in order to integrate her fully into the romance's human world 'and make her a more dynamic and active member of the Arthurian court.'[32]

While scholars may generally read the alterations to Morgan's persona as a gradual degeneration from benevolence to malice, the process is neither straightforward nor chronological. Although the thirteenth-century chronicler Gerald of Wales appears to have been uncomfortable with Morgan's magic and her close familial relationship with Arthur (relegating her to the role of royal cousin in his 1216 *Itinerarium Kambriae*), the author of the 1220 *Vulgate Cycle* quickly restores the sibling connection between

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[28] This about-face is particularly interesting when we consider that Chrétien is thought to have not only been familiar with Geoffrey's work, but also a further body of vernacular literature including the *Chanson de Roland,* the early part of the *William of Orange* cycle, Wace's *Roman de Brut* and *Roman de Rou,* the *Roman d'Eneas, Roman de Thèbes,* and *Roman de Troie* (c.1160).

[29] Chrétien de Troyes (1991) 'Erec and Enide'. In Carlton W Carroll and William W Kibler (eds) *Chretién de Troyes Arthurian Romances.* Penguin Books: London. Pp. 37-122, lines 4215-20.

[30] Chrétien De Troyes (1991) 'The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)'. In Carlton W Carroll and William W Kibler (eds) *Chretién de Troyes Arthurian Romances.* Penguin Books: London. Pp. 295-380, lines 4192-4201.

[31] In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (c.1150) she presides over the marvellous 'insula pomorum,' and her powers reflect this supernatural locale. But by the time of Chrétien's *Erec* (c.1170), Avalon has been normalized as the home of Greslemuef's brother Guingamar, a friend of Morgan. For more detail see Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.12.

[32] Wade (Ibid).

Morgan and Arthur, naming the former as the youngest daughter of Hoel (Gorlois), Duke of Tintagel. Equally incongruous is Hartmann von Aue's portrayal of Morgan in *Erec* in which, as part of his ninety-one line addendum to Chrétien's original, Morgan is simultaneously hailed as a wondrous healer of knights and yet denounced as a wicked, impious and terrifying companion of the Devil:

> 'With her own hands the queen dressed the knight's side. At no time has the world ever seen a better bandage. If anyone wonders, and would like to hear, where the bandage came from, Morgan le Fay, the king's sister, had left it a long time ago, when she died...She lived in great defiance of God, for the birds and wild animals in the woods and the fields obeyed her commands, and – what strikes me as most powerful – the evil spirits called devils were all in her power'.[33]

Although by the thirteenth century Morgan's association with the supernatural appears to have been regarded as an irretrievable aspect of her persona, in both *Vulgate* and *Post Vulgate* cycles Morgan's former healing power gives way to necromancy, and her earlier matriarchal governance to sexual insatiability. Her illustrious beauty is also adulterated in emphasis of the character's now split personality. As Charlotte Spivack observes: '[i]n the Prose *Lancelot,* while her loveliness is praised, she is also seen as ugly, hot (the bodily quality medieval associated with sexuality) and lecherous.'[34] However it should be noted that in these instances the character's antagonism is not directed so much towards the world of male chivalry as it is towards that of romantic infidelity. In the *Prose Tristan* Morgan attempts to send an enchanted horn to Camelot from which no adulterous lady can drink without spilling, and it is in the *Vulgate* that we are first informed of the character's infamous valley for the imprisonment of unfaithful knights. Although in the latter text the fay is traditionally relegated to what Pérez terms the category of 'bad' Morgans on the basis of her fraternal antipathy, by confining unfaithful knights to the Valley of No Return, she in fact provides an integral counterpoint to the domineering masculine sexuality beginning to arise in the Arthurian saga. She is neither wholly 'good'

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[33] Hartmann Von Aue (2001) 'Erec' (trans. Kim Vivian) in *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric Poetry. The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. Pp. 51-164, lines 5151-5194.

[34] 'To this point the Vulgate *Merlin* adds that she was very brown of face. Morgan thus diverges from the pink-and-white complexion and golden hair of the heroine.' Spivack, Charlotte (1992) 'Morgan le Fay: Goddess or Witch?' in Sally K Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* State University Popular Press: New York. Pp. 18-23 (13).

nor 'bad', but rather, as both an antagonist and powerful vigilante, a woman outside (and thus not bound by) the confines of courtly respectability.

While thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century portrayals of Morgan retain elements of the formerly benign healer, Morgan's later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century appearances take on a more malevolent aspect. Turning to her role in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* we are presented with an almost disembodied, ambivalent Morgan who, rather than appearing as a variation on a singular identity, is presented with literal multiple faces. Aware of the character's fractured identity, the poet integrates her manifold guises into an amalgamation of temptress, witch, and healer, with further suggestions of the transformative Loathly Lady in the form of Bertilak's beautiful wife.[35] Bearing in mind Stone's comment that 'the least understood role in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is undoubtedly the role of Morgan',[36] it would appear that the *Gawain* poet, composing his Morgan in the wake of such extensive modification, sought to generate a Morgan who heals and yet harms, has the power to transform the shape of human beings, and is yet relegated to the ostracised wilderness castle of Hautdesert. Is she now 'good or bad? Does she want to hurt the queen or help the court? Is she loathly or honourable?'[37] These questions are only partially answered in her next appearance, Morgan's most illustrious form in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur.* By the time of the *Morte*, Morgan is so altered from Geoffrey's original that, were it not for her intermediary appearances, we would wonder how Malory could justify attributing her with the same name. She is no longer the beautiful matriarch, distinguished mathematician and gracious healer from the *Vita,* but a metamorphic necromancer who opposes the Arthurian community. The fay devotes the majority of her attention to wreaking havoc and destruction upon Arthur and his knights, stealing the king's Excalibur before throwing it into a lake, and using her formerly deific powers of metamorphosis as a form of military prowess. Yet even Malory's Morgan resists proper resolution; most confusingly, at the end of the work Morgan lays her half-brother to rest, a benevolent act firmly at odds with her earlier malice that bears traces of *Vita*'s description of her healing of Arthur on the golden couch. The extent of this character ambivalence is, as Kenneth Hodges points out, 'troubling': we cannot fully understand the late medieval Morgan by contemporary standards because she 'is not defined by the feminine, either

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[35] See Carson, Angela (1962) 'Morgain la Fee as the Principle of Unity in *Gawain and the Green Knight*' in *Modern Language Quarterly,* XXIII. P. 3-16.
[36] Stone, Brian (1974, 2003) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Penguin Classics: London. P.86.
[37] Breuer, Heidi (2009) *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England.* Routledge: New York. P.85.

in being a positive image of womanhood or the kind of simple villain defined only by violating certain feminine ideals.'[38]

While character variability is far from uncommon in Arthurian romance, with representations of Arthur himself differing from text to text, so particularly diverse are Morgan's manifestations that an audience is hard pressed to reconcile the character even with herself: at what point does the woman who 'excels her sisters in the beauty of her person'[39] in *Vita Merlini* resolve with the unsightly hag in the *Prose Lancelot,* who upon coming of age is described as being so wanton that 'a looser woman could not have been found'?[40] Given the extent of her deviations we would be justified in questioning whether Morgan should even be considered a 'character' in the contemporary sense of the word at all. Although shifting social attitudes towards female behaviours, such as healing and sexual provocation, may explain Morgan's range of 'faces', this does not wholly account for why authors would not simply incorporate a more suitable character into their narratives, rather than so extensively altering Morgan's persona. Was Morgan le Fay felt to be an inherent part of the romance world, or merely a means of 'Arthurianising' texts that perhaps lacked a significant claim to the genre?[41]

As Teresa Bane explains in her *Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Mythology and Folklore*: 'Morgan le F[a]y is a complicated figure in history and mythology. She has had many names and fulfilled many roles in religion and folklore.'[42] This is a critical point, for Bane is highlighting the flexibility of what medieval culture regarded as 'character'. Given that Morgan is generally presented with little real sense of continuity or mimetic function within the narratives in which she features, it is certainly difficult to think of her as a character in the sense that we might apply the term to contemporary literature. The variations that occur in her persona problematise any notion of permanence, yet we also lack a rationalisation for the dramatic alterations to her identity. When examined collectively, Morgan le Fay appears to fulfil the specification for 'character type' rather than 'character'; authors may individualise her, yet she is still representative of a certain type of female. This idea of type is also particularly useful to analysing the fay's multiple

[38] Hodges, Kenneth (2005) *Forging Chivalric Communities in Malory's Le Morte D'arthur.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.37.

[39] Geoffrey of Monmouth, ed. Basil Clarke (1973) *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini.* Cardiff University Press: Cardiff. Line 919.

[40] Lacy, Norris J, ed (2010) *Lancelot Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation (parts III and IV).* Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge. P.140.

[41] Kittredge for instance believed that the *Gawain* poet only included Morgan in his alliterative work in order to 'attach his narrative to the orthodox Arthurian saga'. Kittredge, George (1960,1916) *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Harvard University Press: Cambridge. P.133.

[42] Bane, P.237.

guises, for it removes some of the expectations that surround the mimetic literary figure, allowing characters to appear both under different behavioural forms and a range of named identities. Ultimately, however, the question surrounding the nature of this type can only be rationalised by identifying a common denominator between Morgan's medieval roles. Using this factor, we might then question what the character's overall purpose is, and why her appearances vary so greatly from text to text.

When examined collectively, Morgan's appearances seem to converge only on one point: their consistent signification of things outside of ordered society. Whether she seeks to harm or help the male ordered world of chivalry, is associated with magic, sexuality, or devilment, Morgan le Fay's characterisation in medieval texts might ultimately be defined as a full-blown manifestation of female Otherness. Sarah Wakefield supports this point in her *Folklore in British Literature: Naming and Narrating in Women's Fiction,* proposing that the very notion of female outsiderness (a concept stemming from prominent medieval social anxieties surrounding sexuality, class and national boundaries) finds ready expression in Morgan because, as a *fée,* she represents the indeterminacy of those aspects most troubling to the ordered world.[43] As a primarily semiotic reading of the character, Wakefield's analysis would certainly begin to account for some of the variations in Morgan's persona, for she assumes a predominantly representational role that does not require a personal continuation. Such an interpretation also suggests that she is more illustrative of a character type than a fixed personality, a form of literary 'shorthand' used to express a generic identity that might vary to accommodate the cultural demands of each work in which she is featured.[44] As a signifier rather than a literary 'character' in the way that contemporary scholarship views the term, we should not expect Morgan to exhibit personal continuity between texts, but rather remain consistent in her projection of the subject matter behind her universal persona: the female Other.

While Morgan's character type may not have received much attention in contemporary academia, it is encouraging to note the general discussions concerning the character's emblematic function. For Sandra Elaine Capps, Morgan's universal persona represents what the scholar terms 'a hermeneutical stasis of Otherness' that can be found across the boundaries of not only medieval romance texts, but a much wider range of

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[43] Wakefield, Sarah (2006) *Folklore in British Literature: Naming and Narrating in Women's Fiction, 1750-1880.* Peter Lang Publishing: New York. P.4.
[44] For further discussion of Morgan's role as an example of this character type see Bogdanow, Fanni (1969) 'Morgan's Role in the 13th Century French Prose Romances of the Arthurian Cycle' in *Medium Aevum,* 38. Pp.123-33.

narratives. She states: 'we begin to see how the shifting figure of Morgan le Fay is a palimpsest of medieval constructs of alterity.'[45] As a 'shifting figure' Morgan is not ascribed with a fixed identity which she then 'rejects' when she moves between texts, but rather provides a consistent representation of a subject matter relating to social outsiderness and marginality. Narin provides a similar argument, claiming that medieval authors, recognising her semiotic function, use Morgan as a continual receptacle for the negative aspects of human Otherness;[46] as a metamorphic character even within the boundaries of narrative, Morgan is readily able to move literally and metaphorically 'among, outside of, and around assumptions as necessary.[47] This is a valid point, for it suggests that the variations in Morgan's persona may be ascribed to the variations in what each culture regarded as 'Other'; what Geoffrey of Monmouth may have considered marginal would for instance have differed significantly for Malory. Hebert also comments on Morgan's representational function in medieval literature, noting that the character's metamorphoses take place not only in the stories that describe her shapeshifting, but in and around the texts that allow her to take multiple forms. Indeed, regarded less as a 'character' than she is a literary signifier, 'Morgan literally represents...the potential for representation',[48] for it is onto Morgan that the Middle Ages' disquieting female Otherness is most readily imagined.

However, although scholars may have commented on Morgan's role as an expression of Otherness, this aspect of her function has not always been properly understood. Contemporary critics have been almost consistently encouraged to read her as an 'embodiment', an anachronism for which Morgan, a medieval character, was never intended and is not designed. John Gardner for example, in his *exposé* on Morgan's role in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* regards Morgan as the embodiment of a 'perverted metaphysical order',[49] while Richard Leviton believes she 'embodies' the stolen scabbard in *Le Morte Darthur*.[50] For Hebert, Morgan's manifestations as the Loathly Lady embody

[45] Capps, Sandra Elaine (1996) 'Morgan le Fay as Other in English Medieval and Modern Texts'. Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences 57, no. 10: 4377. Abstract no: DA9708997. ISSN: 0419-4209. University of Tennessee: Knoxville. P.29.
[46] Narin, Elisa Marie. (Nov 1988) 'þat on...þat oþer: Rhetorical Descriptio and Morgan le Fay in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'. In *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2. Pp.60-66.
[47] Hebert, P.6.
[48] Ibid. P.7.
[49] Gardner, John (2011, 1965) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: In a Modern English Version with a Critical Introduction.* University of Chicago Press: London. P.79.
[50] Leviton, Richard (2005) *Encyclopedia of Earth Myths: An Insider's A-Z Guide to Mythic People, Places, Objects, and Events Central to the Earth's Visionary Geography.* Hampton Roads Publishing: Charlottesville.

'the Otherness that men fear';[51] and Hourihan perceives her as 'an embodiment of evil'.[52] While there is merit in these arguments, for the medieval audience in immediate reception of Morgan's earliest appearances, having not even the words for designating 'fiction' from 'non-fiction' (for indeed the two were largely interchangeable), what we regard as 'embodiment' simply did not exist. To 'embody', derived from the Latin *incorporare* ('to incorporate'), does not occur in the English language until 1548 and, despite making a series of spasmodic appearances in vernacular dramas completed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is not defined in Samuel Johnson's 1755 *English Dictionary*. Although the medieval community may have understood the meaning of the expression, notions of 'giving body' were more frequently used in their verbatim sense (in reference to the literal process of giving incarnation to God in the form of Christ) than as a literary device. It is therefore important that we begin to recognise the ways in which semiotic characters from the Middle Ages were intended to function, and the historical purpose for which authors put them to use.

Whilst I do not mean to suggest that Morgan does not fulfil the specifications of 'embodiment', the assimilation of abstract entities into a written format is in its medieval context much more closely affiliated with logic and correspondence theory than literature, a factor that would present Morgan's character variations in a very different light to how we recognise them. Indeed, the medieval equivalent for literary embodiment, *confirmatio*, derives from Aristotle's conception of the phantasm, an idea adopted into medieval literature on the basis that the culture of the period promoted the written word as an intermediary between the intellect and the created world. In Book IV of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* a work formerly attributed to Cicero and widely acknowledged as the most popular guide to medieval rhetoric, the author identifies '*conformatio*' as a device 'to give conformation, shape or form':

> Conformatio is the fashioning of a person non-present as present, or the making of mute things or those made unformed eloquent, and providing to it form and either language or actions appropriate to its status.[53]

Despite frequently being translated as 'personification' – a concept not defined in English until the mid-eighteenth century – in contemporary editions of the *Rhetorica*,

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[51] Hebert, P.93.
[52] Hourihan, P.178.
[53] Conformatio est cum aliqua quae non adest persona confingitur quasi adsit, aut cum res muta aut informis fit eloquens, et forma ei et oratio adtribuitur ad dignitatem adcommodata aut action quaedem. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.53.66. (All Latin translations are my own unless otherwise indicated).

the fashioning of *conformatio* is in fact a semiotic process formulated in response to the potentially 'unknowable' nature of abstract matters in ancient and medieval culture. Jan Ziolkowski highlights this connection, observing that this description suggests that the *Rhetorica* author was both familiar with and drew upon Aristotelian correspondence theories: 'Aristotle's treatises are, after a fashion, an art of memory comparable to that laid out in the *Rhetorica'*.[54] Rather than being treated as a form of literary elaboration, therefore, emblematic characters in medieval texts ought to be approached from a perspective that recognises the critical nature of *conformatio* in the culture of the period, the literary figure 'giving form' to a range of unformed entities so that, as signs, abstract notions like the female Other might be perceptible to the human mind.

Literary characters therefore had enormous potential for the medieval author; not only could the imaginative network of storytelling be used to entertain a new generation of readers, but characters could be used to convey the potent, intangible matters of the universe. Yet despite the obvious influence of classical sign theory upon medieval writing practices, semiotics in medieval character writing has received little scholarly attention. Even when critics have attempted to trace the development of character-based techniques through literary history, rarely, as Elizabeth Fowler notes, do they 'acknowledge or attempt to explain how readers recognize the various techniques as figuration, how they integrate the scrap-like details of characterisation into coherent persons, or how authors exploit the powerful appeal figures make to readerly identification.'[55] So long as the predominantly nineteenth-century idea of characters existing simply for their own sake has continued to dominate critical attitudes, it has been easy for scholars to forget that 'every work of art [and every character] must have a different meaning for every age'.[56] Particularly in medieval characterisation, scholars have often been far more concerned with analysing a character's role within a story than considering how that character came into being. This disregard is even further accentuated in regard to literary females, who are less frequently considered within the context of the theory of characterisation than their male counterparts. As Thelma

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[54] Ziolkowski, Jan (2002) 'Albertus Magnus, *Commentary* on Aristotle, On *Memory and Recollection'* in Mary Jean Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (eds) *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. Pp.118-152 (119).

[55] Fowler, Elizabeth (2003) *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing.* Cornell University Press: Ithica. P.4.

[56] Gordon, Ida L. (1973) 'Process of Characterisation in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde'* in William Rothwell (ed) *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages: In Memory of Frederick Whitehead.* Manchester University Press: Manchester. Pp. 117-132 (117).

Fenster observes: 'analyses of female characters written during more than two decades now have often come under the umbrella of feminist literary history and theory'.[57]

There is a clear advantage to using medieval theories of signs in conjunction with studies of characterisation. Accepting that medieval characters have the potential to be considered as *conformatio* or 'signs' allows figures like Morgan to differ and yet be considered 'the same', for in medieval semiotics there can be written signs of objects that appear quite different to one another and yet refer to the same concept.[58] This is further emphasised when we consider that the processes of naming used to divide characters from one another in contemporary scholarship should not necessarily be applied in the same way to medieval characters. In her *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance,* Jane Bliss asserts that a medieval audience would have read a far greater distinction between the question of 'who are you?' and 'what is your name?' than might we.[59] As signs, we are expected to recognise medieval characters on the basis of their behaviours, attributes, and settings: identity arises from the factors that exist around the medieval character just as much as his or her name. [60]

Bane's assertion that 'Morgan le F[a]y...has had many names and fulfilled many roles in religion and folklore'[61] therefore leads us to consider that although the character may present a prominent – if not *the* most prominent – facet of the larger body of Otherness to which she belongs, this is not to say that she is the only one. Just as Morgan's behaviour may differ from text to text and yet still indicate the subject matter of Otherness, so might additional characters, who for reasons ranging from 'de-Arthurianisation' to an author's desire for originality, be likewise used to indicate this general persona without being given the name of Morgan. Combining this with Thelma Fenster's argument that the variations in Morgan's character 'were due to the use of her by each work in which she appeared',[62] authors could theoretically rename or even

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[57] Fenster, Thelma S. (1996) 'Introduction' in *Arthurian Women.* (Ed) Thelma S. Fenster. Routledge: London. Pp.xvii-lxiii (xviii).

[58] Marenbon, John (2002) *Early Medieval Philosophy 480-1150: An Introduction.* Routledge: New York. P.137.

[59] Bliss, Jane (2008) *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.29.

[60] The conventions of medieval drama (an expression which, as Hirsh points out, differed radically from even the productions of Shakespeare's age) particularly demonstrate how, especially in the tradition of morality plays, identity in the form of a personal name was often made secondary to an actor's representation of a particular virtue or vice. Hirsh, James E. (2003) *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury, London and Mississauga. P.355.

[61] Bane, P.237.

[62] Cited from Fenster, Themla S. (2000) 'Introduction' In Thelma S. Fenster (ed) *Arthurian Women.* Routledge: London. Pp.xvii-xlv (xviii).

anonymise an Otherworldly mistress to fulfil the generic role of a 'Morgan', but avoid the increasingly negative or Arthurian connotations that Morgan's name had begun to provoke. Both Marie's fairy mistress in *Lanval* and Laȝamon's Argante have for instance been read as 'misplaced' Morgans, demonstrating aspects of what might be thought of as her universal persona and defining traits. Morgan le Fay has also been connected to a much older series of goddess figures (for instance the Irish trinity goddess Morrígan), whom scholars have described as different expressions of an ancient identity of Other womanhood.

Although the predominantly semiotic culture that might have influenced this form of characterisation has not received a great deal of scholarship in literary studies, various scholars have commented on Morgan's interrelation with a further range of characters who appear to belong to the same type. Rather than focussing solely on the fractured, ambivalent and somewhat shadowy presences of 'Morgan le Fay' as she appears as a named character in the Arthurian canon, a wider search has in recent years been cast in attempts to account for the variations in the fay's role. Commenting on the old crone often found in Late Medieval works, Martin Puhvel remarks that 'the figure of an old hag is of course one of the common manifestations in medieval literature of the protean Morgan.'[63] This not only suggests that the generic old hag found in later medieval works belongs to the same character type as Morgan, but also reminds us that, as shapeshifters, these hags may be regarded as different expressions of Morgan herself. Concerning the more central world of Arthuriana, Sally Slocum regards several female characters in the romance genre as 'literally watered-down [Morgans]', women conceived as water spirits from what the scholar perceives as an underlying denominator. She claims that '[m]ore beneficent splittings-off from [Morgan's] original role emerge in the several Ladies of the Lake who later develop from her archetype',[64] suggesting these Ladies to be as much variants on Morgan's persona as Malory's fay is arguably a derivative of Geoffrey's. In her study of archetype, myth and identity, moreover, Terrie Waddell suggests that it is possible to identify characters from multiple genres as emblems of the same universal Otherness. Women figures like Morgan are, she says, the natural precursors to the witch, the very concept of Otherness being manifested across various cultures in a range of

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[63] Puhvel, Martin (1985) 'Art and the Supernatural in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* in Richard Barber, Tony Hunt and Toshiyuki Takamiya (eds) *Arthurian Literature.* D.S. Brewer: Woodbridge. Pp. 1-70 (31).
[64] Slocum, Sally (1992) 'Introduction' in Sally Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* Bowling Green University Popular Press: Bowling Green. P.1-17 (12).

bodies and signifiers.[65] The Other Woman exists beyond and outside any given text, but is able to appear in multiple guises throughout history: she is 'the murderess succubus, the Morgan le Fay or Circe who brings down kingdoms.'[66]

While these arguments might all encourage a reading of Morgan as part of a collective identity with multiple guises and forms, however, it is Norris J. Lacy's *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature* that provides the most convincing argument in favour of Morgan's 'renaming'. The author observes that although Morgan's representational characteristics may be transposed between texts, her name does not necessarily move with her:

> Morgain is a type of character that Theodore Ziolkowski dubbed a 'figure on loan' – a figure transferred from one text to another in a process that Wolfgang Müller has called 'interfigurality'. Interfigurality is a kind of intertextuality that specifically involves characters or figures. Once borrowed, a figure both is and is not the same figure as before, for as Müller says, '[i]f an author takes over a figure from a work by another author into his own work, he absorbs it into the formal and ideological structure of his own product, putting it to his own uses (Müller, 107). To apply this to Morgain...she remains recognizable as Morgain la Fée but is also an adapted figure – an allomorph of her Arthurian forms.[67]

This idea of Morgan as an interfigural character, one who is simultaneously both the same and yet not the same, prevails in various contemporary studies. Particularly during the last decade, a period that has seen an upsurge of interest in theories of medieval writing, several scholars have commented on Morgan's role as a universal symbol with numerous faces. In her *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition,* Carolyne Larrington describes the fay as merely one aspect of 'the multiplynamed woman who turns Merlin's own magic against him'. [68] As 'multiplynamed', medieval authors have not only subjected Morgan to dramatic variations in her own persona, she claims, but also seem to have refashioned her in a series of different forms that Larrington terms her 'sisters'. Hebert is also aware of Morgan's interfigurality; in a study that by her own admission attempts to redefine

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[65] Waddell, Terrie (2006) *Mis/Takes: Archetype, Myth and Identity in Screen Fiction*. Routledge: Hove, New York. Pp.44-45.

[66] Frankel, Valerie (2010) *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey Through Myth and Legend.* Macfarland: Jefferson. Pp.226.

[67] Lacy, Norris J (2012,1996) *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature.* Routledge: New York, Abingdon.

[68] Larrington, P.2.

Morgan's 'complex and enigmatic nature' from a perspective that 'embraces, rather than excludes, *all* her manifestations, however contradictory, inconsistent, and baffling they may be',[69] she states that 'Morgan may then be only one woman, or she may perform many roles.'[70] And most recently in her 2014 *The Myth of Morgan la Fey*, Pérez provides a detailed study of Morgan's evolution (or 'devolution',[71] to use her own terminology) that examines the fay's 'dual function as kingmaker and death-dealer' by considering her 'alternate…or simultaneous…present[ation] in the contrary roles of lover, mother, sister, wife, enchantress, and healer'.[72]

While this theory has clearly gained some vogue in recent scholarship, however, critics also appear to have accepted Morgan as a 'multiplynamed' character without providing much explanation for this. Have we ascribed various characters to her universal persona on the basis that they are merely 'similar', or is there a further means of accounting for her many faces? Moreover, by what criteria may a character be defined as 'Morganic' or 'Other', if that is our estimation of Morgan's underlying identity? Studies concerned with Morgan le Fay have so far been – with good reason – predominantly literary, and are therefore governed by the limitations of a single-discipline study. Likewise, where 'character' has been vaguely discussed as an extension of semiotics, these studies have been generally focussed upon substantiating theories, rather than facilitating independent literary studies in their own right. Yet in order to fully understand Morgan's fractured identity as a natural expression of medieval writing processes, or an even wider context of semiotics, it is vital that we begin to consider both factors simultaneously. As medieval and modern audiences approach the written word in very different ways, our own preconceptions overlooking the more semiotic aspects of medieval literature, we must therefore attempt to read Morgan as would her original audience, identifying the characteristics that define her, and reapplying them within a wider range of contexts.

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[69] Hebert, P.13.
[70] Ibid. P.81.
[71] Pérez, P.5.
[72] Ibid. P.2.

<u>A Theoretical Problem</u>

> *So different was the thought-world of medieval writers and audiences that we are unjustified in seeking reflections of modern subjectivity in medieval works.*[73]

> David Mills

Whilst it is one thing to describe Morgan as having had many roles – this being self-evidenced by her miscellaneous history – to attribute 'Morgan le Fay' with Bane's idea of multiple names is altogether more complex. In addition to the fact that naming forms an inherent part of character identity in contemporary literature and criticism – as Reynolds observes, '[n]ames have power: they establish and define identity[74] – our natural response to increasing the potential number of figures in a field with an already substantial subject matter is that doing so could only complicate, rather than simplifying the question of Morgan's compound identity. Moreover, although the idea of a universal 'Other' is clearly popular among scholars, the technicalities of this have not been properly explored in a way that would validate further extensions of Morgan's semiotic persona. To what extent would a medieval audience have recognised Morgan's role as a signifier of female Otherness? And must differently appellated characters bear a significant resemblance to Morgan in order to designate the same concept, or do authors rely on a different means of identification to present characters as continuations of her identity? As the interchangeability of medieval characters (and most notably Other women) depends entirely on understanding medieval principles of identification, the first purpose of this thesis is to engage in a thorough understanding of the influence of medieval philosophy and rhetoric upon writing practices, and the subsequent influence of these disciplines upon character writing.

Although there is a difficulty in attempting to analyse Morgan from an entirely medieval viewpoint (for we can never be entirely medieval in our mind-set), it is hugely beneficial to consider the contexts in which characters are produced. Turning from the increasingly anachronistic world of modern academia (an environment within which Morgan's identity has often been overshadowed by the limitations of contemporary theory) to methodologies from the age of her conception, Morgan appears more obviously as a semiotic figure born of a predominantly sign-focussed culture. It is particularly important that we recognise the implications of this semiotic environment

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[73] Mills, David (2004) 'Characterisation in the English Mystery Cycles' in Roger Dalrymple (ed) *Middle English Literature: A Guide to Criticism.* Blackwell Publishing: Maldon, Oxford and Carlton. Pp. 204-212 (210).

[74] Reynolds, Nancy Thalia (2009) *Mixed Heritage in Young Adult Literature.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham. P.xxi.

upon Morgan's development, for the High Medieval era promoted greater affiliation between signs and the written word than any other. As Virginie Greene notes: 'literature and logic intersected in various ways'.[75] Owing to the fact that this revival coincided with the birth of romance, occurring in the same geographical areas and at about the same time, any study of Morgan le Fay should therefore include a study of medieval logic.

In addition to witnessing the translation of popular classical guides such as the *Rhetorica* into Latin, the twelfth century saw the rise of 'logical grammaticians' such as Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whose works equally promoted the use of correspondence theory in fictional writing. Romance literature itself might thus be regarded as a product of a highly semiotic environment: in addition to witnessing the inauguration of university learning, the translation of many ancient writings into Latin, and a reprisal of Aristotelian thought, the twelfth century witnessed the birth of a figure responsible for the changing face of literary intellectualism: the author. Although scholars have suggested various reasons for the sudden rise in imaginative writing (in contrast with earlier oral culture), including the increasing population of towns and urban areas and the growing inclusivity of academic institutions, the most prominent of these is undoubtedly the revival of classical philosophy among the intellectual community. Together with the years immediately following, the twelfth century saw 'the full recovery of the philosophy and science of Aristotle',[76] the revival of whose treatises characterise the scholasticism of the period and which has a significant bearing on writers schooled in the burgeoning world of the universities. In his 'Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II', Ian Short suggests that this new literary consciousness was in part representative of new levels of a cultural sophistication that adopted the philosophical ideas of giving permanent form to intangible things.[77]

That the obvious relationship between medieval philosophy and medieval literature (a description that I will continue to use for the sake of ease, despite Martin Irvine's discomfort with the term) has often been overlooked, might be ascribed to a divide

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[75] Greene, Virginie (2014) *Logical Fictions in Medieval Literature and Philosophy.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.3.

[76] Haskins, Charles Homer (1955, 1927) *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.* Harvard University Press: Cambridge. P.342

[77] 'as a uniquely productive literary culture – one…that consists also of giving a voice to an orality that had hitherto been little heard beyond its demotic origins.' Short, Ian (2007) 'Literary Culture at the Court of Henry II' in Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (eds) *Henry II: New Interpretations.* The Boydell Press: Woodbridge. Pp. 335-361 (360).

between the disciplines.[78] Whether the reasons for this stem from that which David Rudrum believes is the natural tendency of modern philosophy to '[snub] with obvious indifference'[79] other academic disciplines, or simply the fact that examining multiple subject areas poses a significant challenge to the limitations of time and space to which every scholar must subscribe, it exists nonetheless. Considering this problem more specifically, John Marenbon ascribes the gulf to the fact that academics have tended to view the dry and technical manner of the writing of philosophers such as Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Ockham, as indicative of works belonging to an entirely different world to that of the colourful vernacular poets with their tales of valour and courtly romance. However, just because theorists may not write in a poetic manner, and poets do not outwardly adopt the technicalities of philosophy, the disciplines should not be wholly divided, particularly as the concept of 'literature' as we know it did not even exist within what Alastair Minnis terms 'the discourse of medieval theory about texts, poetry and interpretation'.[80] As Marenbon rightly notes, philosophers were highly attuned to the significance of the written word within popular correspondence theory, just as writers of 'fiction' were largely schooled in philosophical discourse:

> The Middle Ages abound, not only in poetic-philosophers (such as Eriugena and Abelard) and philosopher-poets (such as Dante), but also in writing which lies on the indistinct borderland between philosophical and poetic reflection, such as Boethius' *De consolatione philosphiae,* Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia* and many of the writings of Hildegard of Bingen and Alan of Lille.[81]

Not only would writers such as Chrétien de Troyes and Geoffrey Chaucer likely have been familiar with the writings of popular philosophers such as Hugh of St. Victor and, in later years, Thomas Aquinas, but also with guides to writing that were equally infused with philosophy and rhetoric.

However, even after identifying the extent to which medieval characterisation relies on these philosophical systems, performing a logical reading of a medieval character is not particularly straightforward. In addition to the fact that medieval sign systems 'are all

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[78] See Gersh, Stephen (2001) 'Cratylus Mediaevalis- Ontology and Polysemy in Medieval Platonism (to ca. 1200)'. In John Marenbon (ed) *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke.* Koninklijke Brill: Leiden. Pp.79-98 (81).
[79] Rudrum, David (2013) *Stanley Cavell and the Claim of Literature.* The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore. P.2.
[80] Minnis, Alaistair (2010, 1984) *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.161.
[81] Marenbon, John (2000) 'Preface' in John Marenbon (ed) *Poetry and Philosophy in the Middle Ages: A Festschrift for Peter Dronke.* Brill: Leiden, Boston and Köln. Pp i-xi (x).

too complexly different from our own for us to assert that we have anything more than partial knowledge of the culture',[82] such an assessment must take an interdisciplinary approach if it is going to succeed. This is a method that, as Don Monson rightly observes, is 'never without difficulties and pitfalls',[83] though is entirely necessary to a reformulation of our approach to medieval characterisation. The limited number of studies to have approached medieval texts from a theoretical perspective (some of which are listed below) have generally sought to determine the extent of the use of rhetorical models by arguing for or against their application in a broader sense. For instance, Tony Hunt's documentation in 'the Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue'[84] highlights general instances in which prologues (such as those belonging to Chrétien) follow the structure of 'the *exordium* described in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* in Cicero's *De inventione,* and in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*'.[85] Likewise, Logan Whalen's observations on Marie de France's deliberate adoption of Ciceronian theory in her *lais*, a work entitled *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory*, considers the author's romances as a collective example of philosophically influenced texts.[86] These works have yet to consider the application of philosophical processes in relation to characterisation more generally, let alone a singular identity across the wider codex of Arthurian literature.

Even where literary studies have considered the role of theory within a particular work or body of works, such as Nitze's critical analysis of the prologues to Chrétien de Troyes' romances,[87] they tend only to have touched on their influence by the arts of rhetorical poetry, a trend that, as Keith Busby notes, has until recent years has '[rarely gone] beyond observing the presence of a particular rhetorical device at a particular location'.[88] We experience a similar problem in theoretically focussed studies. As instrumental as works such as Irvine's *The Making of Textual Culture: Grammatica and*

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[82] Collette, Carolyn P. (2001) *Species, Phantasms, and Images: Vision and Medieval Psychology in The Canterbury Tales.* The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor. P.184.

[83] Monson, Don A. (2005) *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition.* The Catholic University of America Press: Washington. P.6.

[84] Hunt, Tony (1970) 'The Rhetorical Background to the Arthurian Prologue: Tradition and the Old French Vernacular Prologues' in Douglas Owen (ed) *Arthurian Romance, Forum for Modern Language Studies* 6/1. Pp. 1-23.

[85] Losse, Deborah N. (1989) 'From Auctor to Auteur: Authorization and Appropriation in the Renaissance' in Paul Maurice Clogan (ed) *Medievalia Et Humanistica. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture. New Series – Number 16: Literary Theory.* Roman & Littlefield Publishers: Totowa. Pp.153-164 (153).

[86] Whalen, Logan E. (2008) *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory.* The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C.

[87] Nitze, W.A. (1915-17) '"Matière et sans" dans le roman d'*Erec et Enide*' in *Romania.* Pp.14-36.

[88] Busby, Keith and Taylor, Jane H.M (2006) 'French Arthurian Literature' in Norris Lacy (ed) *A History of Arthurian Scholarship.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.95-121 (106).

Literary Theory 350-1100 and Mary Carruthers' *The Book of Memory* have been to understanding of the effects of medieval philosophy upon literature, the primary focus of these studies has been largely conjectural, including only short literary extracts to supplement a wider discussion. Ultimately, although more recent scholarship may have witnessed a number of notable efforts to bridge the divide between medieval philosophy and literature, there remains a significant breach in our understanding of the influence of philosophical and rhetorical commentary upon medieval texts, particularly outside of the school of Latin poetry to which these commentaries relate most directly.

This study takes a tandem approach, with the theories that contribute most significantly to Morgan's development being outlined concurrently with a study of how the character and her counterparts derive from a universal identity. Given that this may only be addressed by identifying texts and methodologies in their own right, my first chapter seeks to establish a theoretical basis for the remainder of this thesis. Outlining the particular philosophical and rhetorical theories (for the two are in their medieval context largely interchangeable) that most significantly affect Morgan's relationship with her cognates, my aim is to provide a conjectural means of looking at these characters within a framework that discusses the Other Woman as a medieval character type with a basis in semiotics. By limiting my research in this way, I also intend to avoid the spatial problems often encountered in interdisciplinary case-studies. Beginning with a general consideration of ancient and medieval sign theories, my first chapter closely examines the philosophical models behind medieval writing practices, before moving into a more specified consideration of the use of the written word as a form of sign in characterisation. Introducing the phantasm, a fundamental aspect of this thesis' methodology, and the relationship between the phantasm and romance during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, I discuss the written word as an intermediary between abstract concepts such as female marginality and the human intellect. From this point I explore the idea that the medieval character may be considered a synthetic alternative to the natural phantasm, a theory that would arguably allow for Morgan's variations under a range of names and guises.

My second chapter, 'Making Manifest: The Morgan Phantasm', considers the relationship between Morgan and semiotic theory more specifically. Avoiding the idea of 'applying' philosophy to literature, a system which may encourage anachronistic perspectives of texts (as demonstrated by the aforementioned proleptic attempts to align Morgan with contemporary theories), I consider what Stanley Cavell terms 'the interplay of

philosophy with literature',[89] in which the natural effects of one discipline on the other may be observed. Using Douglas Kelly's notion of 'the Invention of the Work', this chapter explores the 'mental conception' behind the archetypal Morgan, laying a practical foundation for the thesis' later discussions concerning her interrelation with Other women, before moving into a discussion of the 'statement' through which this is expressed.

My third chapter, 'Cues and Triggers', considers the effects of 'conceptualising' upon character construction. Using the Aquinian principle that 'the things which belong to the species of a material thing…can be thought without the individual principles which do not belong to the notion of the species',[90] I propose that Morgan and the characters who share her identity may be recognised by a series of what Carruthers terms 'cues and triggers'. Rather than being regarded as merely 'similar', Morgan's cognates are in fact the result of a careful process of repetition and formulation, relying upon a series of authorised markers to signify their allegiance to a universal persona. Putting this theory into practice, my fourth chapter, 'Re-Named Morgans', enters more conclusive territory; it is here that I begin to conduct specific examinations of women who may be perceived as extensions of Morgan's identity by demonstrating the aforementioned triggers. I discuss a range of women from the genres of medieval romance and drama, including Jean d'Arras' Mélusine, *Partenope of Blois'* Melior, Laȝamon's Argante and the Digby Playwright's Mary Magdalene. Chapter Five, respectively entitled 'Unnamed Morgans' follows a similar premise except that, rather than considering differently appellated expressions of the Morgan persona, it focuses on her anonymous counterparts. These are useful and informative chapters, for they demonstrate the universality of female Otherness in medieval contexts while putting into practice the hypotheses outlined earlier in the thesis. My sixth and final chapter, 'Outlaws and Other Outcasts' takes a slightly different approach to the rest of the study: focussing on the outlaw tradition, I discuss a range of male characters who appear to exhibit Morgan's 'cues' in fugitive literature. While the male outlaw cannot logistically be designated as an example of the Other Woman, I argue that his demonstration of Morganic 'triggers' provides a means of indicating the characters' mutual marginality and inversion of social normalcy, a process that extends from the keeping of the law to the boundaries of gender itself.

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[89] Cavell, Stanley (2003) *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare.* Updated Edition. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.179.
[90] Aquinas, Thomas (1945, C13th) *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas: God and the Order of Creation.* Random House: New York. P.814.

In his 1945 'Morgan la Fee and the Celtic Goddesses', Roger Sherman Loomis observes: 'manifestly a creature of tradition rather than invention, [Morgan le Fay] must have had a long and complicated history – a history which has yet to be written'.[91] While this study cannot hope to fulfil such a specification (which has effectively been achieved by the combined multiple analyses of Morgan published after this statement), by considering Morgan le Fay and 'Other' women from a primarily theoretical perspective, I hope to resolve some of the inconsistencies surrounding the character's compound identity. Although my intent is not to provide a thorough biography of Morgan le Fay, the thesis covers most of her major appearances from the High and Late Middle Ages, from her first named role in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini,* through her appearances in Chrétien's works and the *Vulgate* texts, to Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur.* Alongside these texts I discuss a variety of relevant philosophical works, most prominently belonging to Thomas Aquinas, but also Henry of Ghent, Richard of Middleton, Hugh of St. Victor and Saint Bonaventure. The additional characters I discuss as potential extensions of Morgan's persona derive from a range of sources. In addition to those examined during my 'Re-Named Morgans' chapter, I consider the unnamed maidens in Chrétien's *Érec* and *Yvain,* the mistress in Marie de France's *Lanval,* the fairy lover belonging to *Thomas of Erceldoune,* and the unnamed Queen of Fluratrône featured in the Middle High German *Gauriel von Muntabel.* My sixth chapter discusses a range of major outlaw texts including but not limited to *A Gest of Robyn Hode, Fouke le Fitz Waryn,* and the twelfth-century *Gesta Herewardi.*

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[91] Loomis, Roger Sherman (1945) 'Morgan La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses'. *Speculum*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr, 1945), pp. 183-203 (200).

Chapter One: Literary Phantasms

Existence manifests itself as a…simulacrum or phantasm.[92]

Timothy Wilson

Although critics such as Tony Hunt and, more recently, Logan Whalen, have presented convincing arguments in favour of studying the effects of medieval and classical discourse on medieval writing, others, such as James Schultz and Marie-Louise Ollier, have dismissed the practice as counterproductive. For Schultz in particular, 'to apply such doctrines…does not make any sense at all',[93] as the precepts of classical and medieval treatises are, he argues, substantially at odds with the majority of actual vernacular prologues. Even Deborah Losse, who in her essay 'From Auctor to Auteur' delivers a well-balanced discussion on the application of these hypotheses to medieval texts, expresses a concern that in doing so she may be 'add[ing] fuel to the fire'[94] of the ongoing debate. However, whether or not medieval texts appear to fully comply with the treatises of the period, to discount these theories in favour of their contemporary counterparts can only be equally counterproductive. Although the editions, glosses, textual notes, transcriptions, and translations through which medieval literature is filtered and transmitted both mediate these texts and render them more accessible, the sheer bulk of this material also serves as a constant reminder of 'how historically distant, how alien these poets really are.'[95] While it is important that we recognise the differentiations between medieval and contemporary literary culture, there is a danger that too great an acknowledgement of this may relegate the medieval author to a position of 'Other' that sets itself against our analysis of his or her work. Moreover, while modern theorems may allow for analyses of medieval texts that are more advanced and retrospective than their medieval counterparts, these are not especially productive when it comes to understanding how medieval authors viewed the writing process. As

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[92] Wilson, Timothy (1995) 'Foucault, Genealogy, History' in *Philosophy Today* 39.2. Pp.157-70 (158).

[93] Schultz, James A. (1984) 'Classical Rhetoric, Medieval Prologues, and the Medieval Vernacular Prologue' in *Speculum 59.* Pp.1-15 (15).

[94] Losse, Deborah N. (1989) 'From Auctor to Auteur: Authorization and Appropriation in the Renaissance' in Paul Maurice Clogan (ed) *Medievalia Et Humanistica. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture. New Series – Number 16: Literary Theory.* Roman & Littlefield Publishers: Totowa. Pp.153-164 (153).

[95] Finke, Laurie and Shichtman, Martin B. (1987) 'Introduction: Critical Theory and the Study of the Middle Ages' in Laurie Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (eds) *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers.* Cornell University Press: Ithica. Pp.1-14 (1).

Michael Clanchy rightly surmises, '[p]ast ideas must be analysed in their own terms before they are addressed in modern ones.'[96]

In order to fully appreciate how medieval writers expected their texts to be read, we must develop a more thorough knowledge of how these authors viewed the world around them. Avoiding Schultz' idea of 'applying' specific doctrines that may or may not have had a particular influence on a given text, this involves looking at a range of sources that exert a more general stimulus on the intellectual culture of the period. The result of this is arguably less a theory of 'literature' than a 'theory of authorship', which begins by looking at the environments in which medieval texts are produced. Alastair Minnis supports this idea, providing in his *Medieval Theory of Authorship* a positive and encouraging argument in favour of using theories of authorship to analyse medieval texts. Claiming that anything that facilitates our understanding of literature with 'the desire to listen and learn, not shout down and dominate'[97] can only be beneficial to our understanding of this material, he wholly endorses the idea of considering medieval texts against their own theoretic backgrounds:

> [The] medieval theory of authorship provides us moderns with a window on the medieval world of books. To our gaze this window may seem small and its glass unclear and distorting, but these, after all, are characteristic features of a medieval window, indications that it is genuine and historically right. Our standards must change if we are to appreciate what it has to offer. To make the same point in a different way, while we cannot re-experience the past, we can recognise the integrity of past experience and apply the resultant information in evaluating our present experience of the past. In this process of recognition and application, knowledge of…medieval theory must play a crucial part: it will help us to understand how major writings of the same period entered into the culture of their time, and it will provide criteria for the acceptance or rejection of those modern concepts and terms which seem to have some bearing on medieval literature.[98]

While this is not to say that use of contemporary theories cannot facilitate our understanding of older texts when considered appropriately and with suitable

[96] Clanchy, Michael T. (2007) 'Literate and Illiterate; Hearing and Seeing: England, 1066-1307' in Harvey J. Graff (ed) *Literacy and Historical Development.* SIU Press: Carbondale. Pp.38-81 (46).
[97] Minnis, Alaistair (2010, 1984) *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.7.
[98] Ibid, P.xxxviii.

limitation, Minnis makes a useful point in stating that studying medieval discourse promotes the reading of medieval texts in a way that is 'genuine and historically right'. It should also be noted that the scholar's primary focus is not the validation of a particular theory, but rather a more general search for meaning in textual culture; indeed, he does not even state that these theories must be strictly literary, provided that they encourage a more comprehensive understanding of the medieval intellectual environment.

Recalling my earlier statement that it is not Morgan who conspires against contemporary literary preconceptions, but rather our conceptions that fail to accommodate her as a medieval character, our standards must indeed change if we are to develop a better understanding of her. In light of the anachronistic readings of Morgan le Fay presented in my introduction, it is particularly important that this study avoids replacing one such perspective with another. Using the idea of a theory of authorship, I hope to evaluate our present experience of Morgan in a way that recognises her as a character within a medieval environment. This can only be achieved by gathering a more comprehensive knowledge of this context, and the ways in which the intellectual beliefs of the period may have affected the development of character typing prior to her development. Using a range of sources including classical and medieval philosophy, as well as grammatical theory, this chapter provides a groundwork for the later Morgan-focussed discussions of this thesis by developing a more thorough understanding of medieval textual culture. By studying the interrelation between medieval sign systems and phantasms, I explore the idea of the written word as a necessary intermediary between abstract concepts (in Morgan's case the Other Woman), and the ways in which medieval theory encourages the expression of these matters through tangible cyphers (literary characters). Beginning to consider the idea of universality, this chapter also begins to identify the means through which medieval literary culture accommodates variations on character types not found in contemporary scholarship. Although I do not begin to consider specific examples of Morgan's appearances here, nor that of her 'sisters', this is a deliberate effort to move away from the usual examinations of the character, attempting to achieve a better understanding of how medieval writing was perceived within its own milieu by authors and audiences alike.

> *Human beings must know by remembering physically formed phantasms.*[99]
>
> Dante Alighieri

In her 'Umberto Eco, Semiotics, and *The Merchant's Tale'* Carolyne Collette poses a series of questions that she believes scholars 'often avoid answering'[100] in relation to medieval texts: what is the text we are reading? What is our relation to it? Can we ever 'know' the text in the same way as its original audience?[101] The solution to these questions can be found, she claims, by looking at the semiotic culture of the Middle Ages, for 'Western thought has, from the Classical era, been interested in the relations among signs, words, and their referents in the world of matter and ideas.'[102] This is a valid point, for medieval culture gives the impression of being immersed in a system of signs in a way that we can no longer claim to be; for this reason, semiotics, the study of these signs, has much to offer a theory of medieval authorship. However, utilising Penn's statement that it is hugely beneficial to 'consider the contexts in which [signs] have been used',[103] we must bear in mind the distinctions between medieval and contemporary sign systems in order for a medieval reading of Morgan to work. For the medieval semiotician, working in the Augustinian tradition, all signs were thought to derive their meaning 'from a priori Being and from knowledge latent in the mind of the receptor.'[104] As Chene Heady states, unlike our own conception of semiotics, 'the medieval sign systems and the medieval world function because they dance, moving in perpetual variations and permutations, but always around God as a central term.'[105] As a result, where contemporary signs can posit the creator of the sign as the creator of the thing itself, medieval signs indicate reality by a process of perception, positing signs as a revelation of something already formulated by a higher being. This is not a process of invention but rather revelation; to

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[99] Cited from Carruthers, Mary (2008, 1990) *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.73.

[100] Collette, Carolyne (2013, 1999) 'Umberto Eco, Semiotics, and *The Merchant's Tale'* in Steve Ellis (ed) *Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales.* Routledge: Abingdon and New York. Pp140-146 (140).

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Penn, Stephen (1997) 'Literary Nominalism and Medieval Sign Theory: Problems and Perspectives' in Hugo Keiper, Christopher Bode and Richard J. Utz (eds) *Nominalism and Literary Discourse: New Perspectives.* Pp. 157-190 (162).

[104] Ibid.

[105] Heady, Chene (2001) 'Heraldry and Red Hats: Linguistic Skepticism and Chesterton's Revision of Ruskinian Medievalism' in Claire A. Simmons (ed) *Medievalism and the Quest for the Real Middle Ages.* Frank Cass: Abingdon and New York. Pp.131-143 (138).

use Carruthers' description: 'signs make something present to the mind by acting on memory.' [106]

Given the interdisciplinary nature of medieval intellectual culture, the powerful belief in signs that pervaded the working environment would have had a profound effect on authors of literature. In keeping with what is suggested in both ancient and medieval philosophy, letters, words, and the narratives they are used to construct were largely treated as signs by virtue of the fact that they recall memory of things known to the reader. As suggested by Carruthers: 'letters, *litterae,* make present the voices (*voces*) and ideas (*res*) of those who are not in fact present'.[107] A major theoretical provocation for this can be found in William of Ockham's *Summa Logicae*, in which the author explains the logico-linguistic theory of meaning and the theory of semiotics. For Ockham, there are two forms of sign: natural and conventional. As Gordon Leff surmises, Ockham's natural signs 'signify something for which they can stand, independently or as a part of mental propositions',[108] whereas conventional signs, including the written word, are representative of extant concepts determined by a higher power. Although the scholar attempts to differentiate himself from his peers, rejecting in particular Duns Scotus' descriptions of the processes of intellect, his hypothesis has a significant bearing on conceptions of medieval literature as a primarily semiotic device. Reformulating Boethius' earlier belief that the spoken word is indicative of concept, and that the 'subordinate' written word signifies that which has been spoken, Ockham asserts that, in accordance with what medieval culture terms the *phantasm*, the word is a sign imposed to signify what is already known in the soul as a concept.

For Ockham, where words may be signifiers in the literal sense, most obviously in the cases of simple nouns like 'man', they may also be used to convey the intangible matters of human existence, concepts like female marginality that might otherwise be incomprehensible to the senses. In *Summa Logica* he makes a noted distinction between these external signs and internal concepts:

> Whether accepted in one way, as a natural sign or the second sense as a word
> imposed by convention, its function is the same of making something other than

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[106] Carruthers, P.275.
[107] Carruthers, P.222.
[108] *Summa Logicae,* I, ch.12, p.39. Cited from Leff, Gordon (1975) *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse.* Manchester University Press: Manchester. P.128.

itself known. Said another way, knowledge of a sign implies both cognitions which are distinct and two which are known'[109]

As noted in relation to *conformatio*, medieval culture linked this concept of signs directly to earlier phantasmal theory. Arising primarily on the grounds that, with the exception of 'Higher Knowledge', medieval philosophy abounds with belief in the 'necessarily sensual nature of experiential information',[110] both principles promote the idea that tangible things are more accessible to the intellect than abstract matters. Robert Pellerey explores this connection in his 'Natural semiotics and the epistemological process', a study in which he claims that both signs and phantasms behave as intermediaries between objects and human understanding:

> The sequence of signs which starts with reality due to the operation of the sense can be specified and defined according to a coherent model of signs: the phantasm is an 'iconic sign' of the sensible species, which in turn is an 'indexical sign' of reality or of the external objects from which is generated the perceptive process on the part of the sensory organs. Each object generates a complete series of sensible data which are a different sensible genus (optical, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory); these behave like 'distinctive traits' which finally reconstitute themselves in a unique sign, the phantasm.[111]

As cognitive signs, medieval intellectual thought promoted phantasms as a critical part of the thinking process, for they were thought to provide the basis for human perceptions of the universe and the communication of knowledge.

Just as the semiotic features of contemporary texts are influenced by our conceptions of signs, it is likely that medieval authors would have composed their material with this particular belief system firmly in place. Linking writing with what authors believed about representations of external subject matters, phantasmal theory was bound up with the idea of semiotic knowledge acquisition because, as Leen Spruit notes, 'it

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[109] Signum duplicitur accepitur: Uno modo pro omni illo quod apprehensum aliquid aliud in cognitionem facit venire…Et sic vox naturaliter significat…Aliter accipitur signum pro illo quod aliquid facet in cognitionem venire et natum est pro illo supponere vel tali addi in propositione. *Summa Logicae I,* ch.I, 9-10.

[110] Collette, P.10.

[111] Pellerey, Robert (1989) 'Natural Semiotics and the Epistemological Process' in Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (eds) *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*. John Benjamins B.V: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp.81-106 (90).

presumed a physical-like reception of mental representations.'[112] For the contemporary critic seeking to understand the influence of these subjects upon literature, it is therefore necessary 'to delineate the paradigms of thinking that constituted…medieval understanding of the connection among the senses'[113] (semiotics and phantasms), for these had a significant impact on literary culture as a whole.

Although phantasmal discourse is a particularly influential factor within medieval semiotics, the phantasm itself is not a medieval construct, but derives from a much older classical philosophy. As William Covino notes, for the ancients 'phantasy denotes cognition, and all prevailing models of mind presume that one cannot understand without phantasms'.[114] Originally designated by Plato in the Sophist as *phantazein* – literally meaning, 'to make visible or apparent' – the phantasm is, in its most basic form, a mental image derived from our sensory perceptions. Things encountered by the senses, be they seen, touched, tasted, heard or smelled, are impressed upon the mind in the form of a likeness and retained there after encountering the thing itself. Aristotle reformulates Plato's idea that the phantasm should, as an illusory image, be regarded less favourably than the eikōn (which he defines in terms of its accuracy), arguing that the memory aspect of the mind, perceived in this context as a passive entity, in contrast with the active nature of the created world, is able to hold an accurate reference of external objects in the form of an imprint. In his famous 'wax' analogy from *De Anima*, the philosopher equates the mental representation with an impression of a stamp in wax: 'as wax receives the imprint of a signet-ring without the iron or gold; it takes the imprint of gold or of bronze, but not *as* gold or bronze'.[115] Using a largely semiotic principle, Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that, 'the power of knowledge is "proportioned to the thing known" and the thing known is retained in the mind through its *phantasm,* the image the mind retains in the thing's absence.'[116] The phantasm here assumes the form of a visual sign, and since the phantasm is the image of a physical thing, classical and medieval philosophy suggest that it performs upon the intellect the same process as occurs in the drawing of a diagram. Thinking of the example of a

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[112] Spruit, Leen (1995) *Species Intelligibis: From Perception to Knowledge. II. Renaissance Controversies, Later Scholasticism, and the Elimination of the Intelligible Species in Modern Philosophy.* E.J. Brill: Leiden, New York, Köln. P.263.

[113] Collette, P.5.

[114] Covino, William A. (1994) *Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination.* State University of New York Press: Albany. P.32.

[115] res sensibiles non agunt in medium sensus per potentias naturales, sed agunt in ipsa per solem formae intentionem sicut sigillum in ceram, absque eo quad de potentiis materialibus suis metallum sigilli aliquid inferate cerae. *De Anima* II. 12: 424a17-24.

[116] Collette, P.10

triangle, this is not 'specific' in the sense that it is bound by any particular size or even shape, but instead belongs to a universal classification that is recognised by its defining property of having three sides.

At the time of Morgan le Fay's conception the enthusiasm for phantasm based philosophies was, as Wanda Zemler-Cizewski notes, 'overwhelming', largely on the basis of the interdisciplinary environments of the universities, the 1205 establishment of the Byzantine Latin Empire, and the easy access to Greek manuscripts these things provided.[117] Ancient phantasmal discourses naturally found their way into the unified pillar of philosophy, science, and literature that comprised the intellectual culture of the Middle Ages for, unlike the subject-based compartmentalisations that define contemporary scholasticism, 'eleventh-century medieval scholars began to recover much of the [same] classical corpus [of texts]'.[118] Following the translations of these ancient writings into Latin and Arabic, twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars not only began to incorporate ideas of the phantasm into their cognitive studies, but also 'affirmed the *phantasm* and its link to the material world as absolutely necessary to the mind's ability to think'.[119] This prompted various twelfth-century discussions of phantasms within larger works, such as David of Dinant's *De Affecto* (which states that 'memory is created by the persistence of the phantasms in the place of the imagination'[120]), and logician Pierre Abelard's *Ingredientibus* (in which Pierre comments that 'the intellectual plane is the necessary intermediary between things and concepts'[121]).

In the years immediately following, the academic community began to explore the philosophy of the phantasm as a fundamental aspect of cognitive scholasticism. The Italian theologian and philosopher Saint Bonaventure authored various studies concerning the nature of cognition as a means of better knowing Christ, into which he integrates both Aristotelian and Augustinian philosophies of correspondence. [122]

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[117] Zemler-Cizewski, Wanda (2012) 'William of Moerbeke' in Frank N. Magill (ed) *The Middle Ages: Dictionary of World Biography, Volume 2.* Pp 985-986 (985).
[118] Mitchell, Linda E. (2001, 1999) *Women in Medieval Western European Culture.* Routledge: New York.
[119] Collette, P.9.
[120] Kurdzialek, M. (ed) (1963) *Davidis de Dinanto Quaternulorum Fragmenta.* Studia Mediewistyczne III: Warsaw. P.63.
[121] Eco, Umberto (1989) 'Denotation' in Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (eds) *On the Medieval Theory of Signs.* John Benjamins B.V: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp. 43-78 (51).
[122] Augustine differs from Aristotle in his description of what determines 'phantasm'. As Montgomery notes: 'The image that remains in the memory Augustine calls a 'phantasy.' 'Phantasm' on the other hand, is a term he reserves for something different: it is recovery by an act of will, not of sense experience, but of an image constituted in the imagination from other remembered images. A phantasm is thus composite and in part invented, and the operation that produces it is akin to what was sometimes called 'phantasy'

Claiming that the divine entity of the intellect cannot function without phantasms from which to abstract knowledge, he states in his *Commentarius in quatuor libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*: [123]

> Nor is the possible intellect purely passive: for it has to turn itself to the species existing in phantasms, and by doing so with the help of the agent intellect it receives the species and is the judge of it. In the same way, neither is the agent intellect all in act, for it is not able to understand something other than itself, unless it is assisted by the species, which, abstracted from the phantasm, has to be united to the intellect.[124]

Although this notion of the passive intellect differs from Aristotle's wax theory, which promotes the passivity of this aspect of the mind, Bonaventure concurs with the Aristotelian opinion that the phantasm is inherent to human knowledge. By 'carrying' information from the senses to the intellect, he claims, the intellect 'strips' information from the phantasm and conveys it to the mind in the form of understanding. In his *Sententiarum* the Franciscan theologian and philosopher Richard of Middleton subscribes to a similar idea, claiming that all human knowledge derives from the senses and is assimilated into phantasmal form.[125] Richard Cross précises:

> The universal exists potentially in the phantasm (*In I Sent.* 22.1.2), and is abstracted – actualized – by the agent intellect (*In I Sent* 3.2.1). The passive intellect then receives the impressed intelligible species (*In II Sent.* 24.3.2)...The abstracted universal has *esse repraesentativum*: it represents the common essence of the things that fall under it (*In II Sent.* 3.3.1.); the phantasm, likewise, represents the extra-mental individuals themselves (*In II Sent* 25.5.1).[126]

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in later medieval concepts of the soul.' Montgomery, Robert L. (1979) *The Reader's Eye: Studies in Didactic Literary Theory from Dante to Tasso.* University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles. P. 31.

[123] For a detailed study of Bonaventure's contribution to these theories, see chapter two of Karnes, Michelle (2011) 'A Bonaventuran Synthesis' in *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages.* Chicago University Press: Chicago and London. Pp.63-110.

[124] 'nec intellectus possibilis est *pure passivus;* habet enim supra speciem existentem in phantasmate se *convertere,* et convertendo per auxilium intellectus agentis illam *suscipere,* et de ea *iudicare.* Similiter nec intellectus agens est *omnio in actu;* non enim potest intelligere aliud a se, nisi adiuvetur a *specie,* quae abstracta a phantasmate intellectui habet uniri.' Bonaventure, *II Sententiarum.* XXIV.i.ii.iv, resp., *Opera Omnia* 2:569.

[125] *In II Sent.* (25.5.1)

[126] Cross, Richard (2002) 'Richard of Middleton' in J.E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (eds) *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages.* Blackwell Publishing: Malden, Oxford, Melbourne and Berlin. Pp.573-578 (575).

While this relates more closely to the Aristotelian model than Bonaventure's, Richard also stresses that, like medieval signs more generally, the unique traits of each phantasm are stripped away, leaving only the generic information of a 'type' within.

Thomas Aquinas' thirteenth-century discourses on the subject cemented the phantasm as a critical aspect of High Medieval learning culture. Posing the rhetorical question of whether the intellect can actually understand through the intelligible species of which it is possessed without turning to phantasms, Aquinas describes the phantasm as the first and most significant operation of the intellect. He asserts that the intellect can never draw on the sensory impressions themselves, without the mediation of phantasm,[127] for there is, he believes, a complicated cognitive processing that occurs between what our senses perceive and the transmission of this information to our understanding:

> Because the distance between the intelligible being and sensible material being is so extreme, the form of a material thing is not taken up by the intellect right away, but is brought to it through many intermediaries. So, the form of something sensible is initially in the medium, where it is more spiritual than in the sensible object, then it is in the organ of sense, next it is led to phantasia and to the other lower powers, and finally it is brought all the way to intellect.[128]

In order to truly 'know', Aquinas claims, the human mind remains as equally dependent upon these signs as the subjects from which the phantasm is formed.[129] As an 'intermediary' the phantasm is therefore not merely beneficial to learning, but an indispensable part of intellectual cognition. All that is required for intellection to occur following an encounter is for human beings to use the phantasm as a means of acquiring information from the sensible things themselves, for phantasms behave, like signs, as indices towards things we already know. This hypothesis formed the basis for various other works seeking to 'bridge the gap' between sense perception and intellectual knowledge because, as Spruit reminds us, 'many Scholastics had postulated an intelligible species, abstracted by the agent intellect, and purveying to the possible

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[127] See Pasnau, Robert (2002) *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.284.
[128] 'Cum enim maxima sit distantia inter intelligibile et esse materiale et sensibile, non statim forma rei materialis ab intellectu accipitur, sed per multa media ad eum deducitur. Puta, forma alicuius sensibilis prius fit in medio, ubi est spiritualior quam in re sensibili, et postmodum in organo sensus; et exinde derivatur ad phantasiam, et ad alias inferiores vires; et ulterius tandem perducitur ad intellectum.' QDA 20c; see 55.2 ad 2, QDV 19.1c Trans cited from ibid.
[129] This is not to say that all medieval learning theory is based exclusively around the concept of phantasms for every philosopher; for Aquinas intellectual reasoning and divine revelation are also sources of knowing. However, vision and manifestation were undoubtedly the most prominent means of acquiring understanding.

intellect an integrated representation of information from the senses.'[130] Ultimately, 'the soul understands nothing without a phantasm' for the phantasm is our 'link to the corporeal world.'[131]

However, as rational as the concept of phantasms no doubt seemed to the scholastic community, theorists were also quick to note an obvious problem with the Aristotelian hypothesis 'that there can be no idea without an image'.[132] If phantasms are formed in response to our sensory experiences, and knowledge is only acquired by abstracting information from these phantasms, how are human beings to 'know' the non-sensory? Indeed, while Plato separates the 'sensible' from 'thinkable' in that we have the potential to think of things for which there are no bodies, he presents knowledge primarily as a relation between a subject and a tangible thing, which can either be in concrete form or a signifier. On the basis of this, and largely in response to his own teaching that we need an intermediary between the world and the mind, and that intermediary is the phantasm, Aquinas suggests that we must interpret these matters through sensible bodies from which phantasms can then be formed. Recalling the *Rhetorica* author's suggestion that in cases of 'things or events…of a nature that we either have not seen or cannot see what we wish to remember…we should make them visible by marking them with a sort of image or figure (*quasi et imagio et figura*)',[133] it would appear that Aquinas is here referring to the written word, an idea formed in response to much earlier conceptions regarding the import of sensory knowledge. Carruthers supports this contention in her *Book of Memory*, claiming that *litterae* and *pictura* assume the role of the phantasm in medieval philosophy for subject matters existing only in the abstract. For subjects without a sensory output, the mediums of art and literature may be used as an intermediary, a sort of 'synthetic phantasm' whose purpose forms a critical part of cognition. For Aristotle, the *topoi* that inform rhetorical invention are therefore regions in the mind where arguments are stored as phantasms. Likewise for Quintilian, 'the greatest part of rhetorical activity involves the [phantastic] functions of the sensory soul, forming, reacting to, storing, and recollecting sense images.' [134] Such 'image forming activity' is, Carruthers claims, 'necessary to the entire thought-formation

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[130] Spruit, P.364.
[131] Collette, P.10.
[132] Collette, P.10.
[133] Carruthers, P.26.
[134] Carruthers, P.206.

process'.[135] Indeed, the act of reading itself was considered part of the phantasmal procedure: 'whatever enters into the mind changes a 'see-able' form for storing in memory'[136] for the activity of the rhetorical and literary invention is 'a replication, or redirection, of the phantastic imagination'.[137]

Within the Aristotelian and Augustinian schools of thought that dominate early medieval learning culture, there exists a natural conflation between phantasms and sign theories. For a variety of medieval scholars, particularly the early thirteenth-century theologian William of Auvergne, what is meant by 'phantasm' is the same as is meant by 'intelligible form' or 'sign'.[138] As Leff notes, descriptions of mental conceptions of real things use the interchangeable terms of 'image, likeness, picture, phantasm, [and] species',[139] for the analogues upon which these medieval descriptions are based recognise phantasms and signs as similarly representational devices. For Aristotle, phantasms are signs because they are cyphers, or referential imitations of something else, that rely on our understanding of their defining qualities. He remarks in *De memoria et reminiscentia*:

> Just as the animal depicted on the panel is both animal and representation, and, while remaining one self-identical thing, is yet both of these, and we can regard it both as animal and copy, so too the image in us [phantasm] must be considered as being both an object of direct consciousness in itself and relatively to something else and image, so far as it represents something else it is a copy and a souvenir.[140]

Just as the natural 'sign' imprinted upon the cognizance behaves as 'a reminder' of qualities existing in the real word, therefore, so the written sign depends upon a series of characteristics that replicate the entity to which it refers.

Provided that a sign possesses the characteristics that denote the universal substance of a subject matter, it can thus be ascribed with supplementary attributes that also make it 'unique', a process that supports Marenbon's statement concerning the singular universality of medieval signs. This occurs by a method termed 'abstraction', in which the

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[135] Carruthers, Mary (2013) 'Virtue, Intention and the Mind's Eye in *Troilus and Criseyde*' in Charlotte Brewer and Barry A. Windeatt (eds) *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.73-88 (78).

[136] Carruthers (2008, 1990) P.18.

[137] Covino, P.36.

[138] Ernest Addison Moody, P,54. Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Collected papers.

[139] Leff, P.97.

[140] Aristotle, trans. G.R.T Ross (2014, 1906) *Aristotle De Sensu and De Memoria.* Cambridge University Pres: Cambridge and New York. P.107. 450b 21-7.

individual characteristics of signs are 'stripped away', leaving only the 'universal' quality within. For Aquinas in particular, it is not only possible but natural to abstract the *species universales* from the *specifica phantasma*, using his terminology for the universal subject matter and the individual phantasm, for the agent intellect considers the phantasm's general nature before it does the characteristics of the phantasm itself. [141] Using the generic examples of a stone, a man and a horse, he proposes that 'the things which belong to the species of a material thing…can be thought without the individual principles which do not belong to the notion of the species'.[142] Dubbing this process 'conceptualising', the philosopher explains that this produces in the intellect 'a representation of the common nature that is the phantasm, but without the material and individuating conditions there.'[143]

Although the written phantasm has not received much discussion in literary scholarship, there has been a great deal of theorization devoted to the mnemonic/phantasmal function of medieval artwork. Given that the purpose of the phantasm is primarily to convey knowledge, the medieval church relied on what Whalen describes as 'the invention of identifiable images'[144] to communicate intangible matters. Particularly in the case of divine subjects deemed overly complex for a congregation made up of largely illiterate parishioners, the use of visual formats allowed for more easy communication of thought. Identifiable images act both as signs, for are they are indications of external realities, but also intermediaries from which phantasms can then be formed. As Jill Bennet observes, '[d]evotional imagery was thought by medieval theologians to be effective in acting upon memory, insofar as it could – like the *phantasm,*

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[141] Henry of Ghent presents a comparable argument in his *Summa*, stating that conceptualising is brought about by the agent intellect, the 'spiritual light which shines or radiates over the particular phantasms stored in the imagination' and 'separates them from their material and particular conditions and presents [the phantasm] as a universal representation (species universales) to the possible intellect' Cited from Freidman, Russell L (2013) *Intellectual Traditions At The Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology Among The Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250-1350.* Koninklijke Brill: Leiden. P.263. Likewise for Albert the Great, who defined four variations of abstraction, 'we perceive…in ourselves a cognition of sensible forms even when [the thing of which it is a] form is not present and this cognition is of a higher abstraction [than] external sense cognition'. Henry of Ghent, *Summa,* a. 58, q. 2: 'Sed lumen agentis splendens spiritualiter super illa sicut lumen materiale materialiter resplendent super colores, separat ea a condicionibus materialibus et particularibus et sub ratione speciei universalis proponit (*Ba*: praeponit) ea intellectui possibili, qui et movetur mediantibus illis a rebus universalibus et informatur intellctione universalium secundum actum, quaemadmodum colores specie sua in luce actu movent visum ad videndum colores'. Alb., *De anima* 2.4.7, Ed. Colon 7/1, 156. Ln. 80 –p. 157, ln 22.

[142] Aquinas, Thomas. Trans. Robert Pasnau (2002) *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89.* Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis. P.814.

[143] Fitzpatrick, P.J and Haldine, John (2003) 'Medieval Philosophy in Later Thought' in A.S. McGrade (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp.300-327.

[144] Whalen, Logan E. (2008) *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory.* The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C.

or memory icon – act as a trigger, inciting an affective response.'[145] This allowed for the instantaneous recollection of matters already known to a person, for phantasms have the same revelatory effect on the subject as do conventional signs. Carruthers observes in her *The Book of Memory*:

> [From a medieval perspective], one remembers abstract concepts by a concrete image: sweetness by an image of someone happily eating sugar or honey, bitterness by an image of someone foully vomiting. Wholly abstract ideas like God, angels, or the trinity can be attached to an image 'as painters make it' or, later in the treatise, as it is usually painted in churches...[E]very sort of image, whatever its source or placement, was considered to have some memorial utility.[146]

Considering this memorial utility in architectural terms, the Gothic cathedral was essentially a Bible in stone and glass, its images 'designed to substitute for the written word in communicating the stories of the Bible to a lay congregation which could not read'.[147] Don Skemer links this directly to medieval ideas of the phantasm, which he believes has a significant bearing on medieval Christian modes of veneration (for instance the recollection and understanding of sacred texts such as creeds and the *Pater Noster*). Medieval psalters and Books of Hours containing images such as the 'Ten Stages of Life' and 'The Last Judgment' were not intended to impart new doctrines, but rather 'to cue and trigger recollections of textual material that the reader already knows'.[148] From being etched into the memory through idolatry in the forms of writing and images, a mental picture 'sealed into wax', these images serve as both phantasms and talismans, 'a reusable font of personal protection'.[149]

While the pictorial phantasm may cohere more easily with contemporary notions of visual signs, medieval culture did not so readily distinguish between the mediums of pictures and writing. According to the eleventh-century Abbot of Westminster, '[j]ust as

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[145] Bennett, Jill (2005) *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art.* Stanford Universty Press: Stanford. P.36.

[146] Carruthers also states that various further expressions of the intellect were likely regarded as created, or 'synthetic' phantasms during the Middle Ages, with the *Rhetorica* informing readers that memories are divided into the two categories of natural and artificial: 'Therefore, here are two kinds of memory, one natural and the other artificial. Natural memory is that which is embedded in our minds when we are born. The artificial memory is strengthened by a kind of training and system of discipline.' Carruthers *The Book of Memory.* P.168-169.

[147] Carruthers, P.274.

[148] Ibid. P.285.

[149] Skemer, Don C. (2006) *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages.* The Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. P.151.

letters become the figures of note for spoken words, so the pictures of things exist as the similitudes of writing'.[150] Likewise, Richard de Fournival, author of the thirteenth-century *Li bestiaires d'amours*, claims that 'images' in a text are not confined to painted illuminations on a manuscript folio, but are also mental images that the text 'paints' in the mind of the audience to facilitate memory.[151] It therefore seems logical to assume that, as Armstrong and Kay note in their *Knowing Poetry,* medieval literature 'bears the imprint of the phantasm, a concept that, following medieval Aristotelianism, is the intermediary between sense perception and intellectual abstraction.'[152] Although this does not mean that every example of medieval literature should be automatically read as a synthetic phantasm (particularly in cases of narratives intended for primarily entertainment purposes), medieval culture promoted the *potential* of writing to convey the intangible matters of the universe.

This idea has a much older basis than Aquinas or even Ockham, allowing us to read earlier texts as examples of the semiotic trend. In Augustine's common theory of signs, formulated in around 397 AD, the scholar stresses the semiotic nature of the written word, which he claims behaves 'not merely as instrumental entities but as indices of realities that exist outside of and prior to the knowing subject'.[153] This is, Augustine argues, a result of man's natural condition: prior to the Fall man had enjoyed 'a direct knowledge of God through an "inner word" – an unmediated intellectual vision like that enjoyed by the angels themselves."'[154] Following the exile from Paradise, however, the philosopher informs us that Adam and his descendants were displaced into an 'alien realm' where they were compelled to seek knowledge 'indirectly through material signs apprehended by the bodily senses, signs being either things themselves, or images, or words'.[155]

In answer to Leen Spruit's question of 'what is the relationship of literature to the phantasm?' [156] it would therefore seem that medieval culture generally regarded

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[150] Crispin, Gilbert (1956) *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani*, section 157 (ed. Abulafia and Evans, 52) Aedibus Spectrum. 'Sicut enim littere quodam modo fiunt uerborum figure et note, ita et pictura scriptarum rerum existent similitudines et note'.
[151] Whalen, P.7.
[152] Armstrong, Adrian and Kay, Sarah (2011) *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from The Rose to the Rhétoriquers.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London. P.21.
[153] Colish, Marcia L. (1983, 1968) *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge.* University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln. P.vii.
[154] Jager, Eric (1993) *The Tempter's Voice: Language and the Fall in Medieval Literature.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca. P.52.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Spruit, P.47.

'literature' as a man-made intermediary between the incorporeal matters of the universe and the human intellect. This notion of words as cyphers to understanding (derived from earlier philosophies concerning scriptural hermeneutics[157] and opposing the modern viewpoint of language as principally self-explanatory) supports this idea, suggesting that the written word was regarded as much a product of philosophical trends for logic as it was the imagination during the Middle Ages.[158] It is largely owing to this interrelation that from around the time of Bede onwards literature and linguistic theory evolved together, with poetic language serving as what Eugene Vance terms 'a major source of philosophical provocation'.[159] Authors from a variety of genres explore the idea of language as a mediator between man and the world, an approach that is consistent with the medieval conviction that signs present human beings with a gateway to knowledge. In his *Ars Versificatoria* the twelfth-century grammatician Matthew of Vendôme utilises Augustine's correspondence principle by likening the act of writing to God's breathing the spirit of life into man. Describing the non-corporeal matter as being 'given flesh' by the author's semiotic intervention,[160] he suggests that the human intellect uses the written equivalent of the phantasm to move 'from the context to its heterogeneous content, the abstract words, and thence to the descriptive personification.'[161]

Within a more literary context Dante contends that 'human beings must know by remembering physically formed phantasms',[162] interrupting his *Inferno* to urge readers to 'note the doctrine hidden under the veil of strange verses'.[163] Given the widespread consensus that *The Divine Comedy* can be read as Aquinas' *Summa* in verse,[164] Dante's instruction is most likely a direct allusion to his philosophical mentor's description of

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[157] In the *De anima* (420b), Aristotle directly associates the phantasm with language, affirming in regard to phonation that not all sounds emitted by an animal are words, only those accompanied by a phantasm (*meta phantasies tinos*) – because words are sounds that signify. Similarly, while Plato does not present the phantasm in overly positive terms, his designation of phantasms shares a common essence with his designation of words, for both, he argues, share a transient nature. See Agamben, Giorgio (1993) *Stanzas: Words and Phantasm in Western Culture.* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. P.76.

[158] Hugh of St. Victor supported this idea with his claim that books are written by the finger of God, and that everything constructed, particularly in the form of writing, is a sign through which God speaks.

[159] Vance, Eugene (1986) *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages.* The University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln. P.xii

[160] Matthew *Ars Versificatoria* 3.50.

[161] Summarised by Kelly, Douglas (1978) *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love.* The University of Winsconsin Press: Madison and London. P.84.

[162] Carruthers, P.73.

[163] *Inf.* (9.61-3).

[164] As Norman Cantor observes: '[*The Divine Comedy*] has been viewed as the summation of medieval orthodox religious thought and also as a presentation in allegorical and poetical form of the chief teaching of (Aquinas)'. Cantor, Norman (1963) *Medieval History.* New York: The Macmillan Company. P.551.

phantasms as gateways to meaning.[165] Various scholars have also noted that the English poet John Gower's guiding principle to reading his own work in the *Confessio amantis* draws directly on the memorial processes employed in logical discourse. For James Simpson, 'the *Confessio* is not a representation of direct reading being transmitted to memory; but it does portray texts which have been remembered being recalled from the treasury of the imagination, in the service of a readerly desire.'[166] His discussion of 'inward wits' is, the scholar continues, a refashioning of medieval beliefs in the working of the imagination: his characters' reading represents both the effectualness of traditional memory schemes, and the way in which this natural process can be blocked by irrational desire. Unlike Dante, who openly refers to his knowledge of the phantasm, Gower veils these allusions under a layer of narrative in which his characters enact the ideologies surrounding medieval processes of cognition. As the reader gets further into the *Confessio,* they will find 'Genius invoking Memory even more frequently than Gower does in his prologue',[167] a more general yet nonetheless patent reference to the necessity of the storehouse of memory to the human intellect. As Skemer comments in his *Binding Words*, a work whose interdisciplinary nature reflects the environment of medieval intellectual culture, 'Gower's Medea taught Jason to 'read' the text, in the sense of teaching him how to recognise...and articulate powerful names that he had already committed to memory.'[168]

There is much to suggest that authors of popular romance were purposefully schooled in the arts of learning, memory and phantasms. Chrétien of Troyes is thought to have been heavily influenced by the philosophies of Hugh of St. Victor, [169] his work demonstrating what Greene describes as a desire to 'conceptualize the particular [by] abstracting it'.[170] In her *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions* Claire Barbetti supports this with her proposal that images such as the carved ivory saddle bows in Chrétien's *Érec* signify an awareness of phantasmal visualisation in medieval Western thought. According to twelfth-century exegetes and cathedral builders, she says, God had chosen to reveal

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[165] As Wetherbee notes: '[Dante] wished 'to summon his audience to the practice of philosophical wisdom...by means of truths embedded in his own poetry'. Wetherbee, Winthrop (2014) 'Dante Alighieri' in Edward N. Zalta (ed) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition).

[166] Simpson, James (1995) *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's* Anticlaudianus *and John Gower's* Confessio amantis. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo. P. 255.

[167] Peck, Russell A. (1978) *Kingship & Common Profit in Gower's* Confessio amantis. Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale. P.3

[168] Skemer, P.148.

[169] See Vance, Eugene (1987) *From Topic to Tale: Logic and Narrativity in the Middle Ages.* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.

[170] Greene, Page numbers not provided.

human destiny by telling his story episode by episode; in the same way Chrétien's method 'allowed the audience to discover meaning only *in and through the narrative.*'[171] In keeping with the medieval idea of the mind as a receptacle for phantasms formed in response to sensory encounters, the scholar also believes Chrétien's work reflects what she terms 'the mnemonic architectural structures of Paul, Augustine, Gregory, and Boethius, among others.'[172] While the author's lack of reference to any philosophical discourse prevents us from identifying the influence of a particular school of thought upon his writing, the fact that he hailed from Troyes, a flourishing centre of intellectual activity during the Middle Ages, makes it likely that Chrétien would have received a substantial philosophical education. As Zrinka Stahuljak notes in her *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes,* during the twelfth- and thirteenth centuries Troyes was a place 'where the works of specialists could be digested and translated into forms and languages understandable by a broader audience than monks and scholars.' [173] Most likely being familiar with a codex of recently translated classical philosophy, Chrétien appears particularly attuned to the possibilities of semiotics and memory, placing 'great emphasis both on the possibility of exploiting the polyvalence of signs…[and] illustrates in myriad ways the difficulty of interpreting nonverbal and verbal data'. [174]

Even more pronounced is the suggestion of philosophical influence upon the works of Marie de France, a woman whose writing emphasises what Whalen terms 'the role and responsibility of the author in the transmission of knowledge.'[175] The models she uses appear to be primarily Augustinian theories of signs, promoting the idea that words as material signs take an intermediary role between external truths and the human intellect. This has been well documented among scholars seeking to identify the role of semiotics in medieval literature. In his 2008 *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory,* Logan Whalen explores the influence of memory arts and signs upon Marie's work, proposing that the author deliberately sought to establish vivid mental images in the minds of her readers as a means of facilitating future recollection of her stories. Peter Haidu presents a similar argument in his *The Subject of Medieval/Modern*, going as far as to describe Marie's tales as 'a site of cultural exploration where semiotic models are

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[171] Nolan, Barbara (1997) *The Gothic Visionary Perspective.* Princeton University Press: Princeton. P.129.
[172] Barbetti, Claire (2011) *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.7.
[173] Stahuljak, Zrinka (2011) 'Introduction' in Peggy McCracken, Virginie Greene, Sarah Kay, Sharon Kinoshita and Zrinka Stahuljak (eds) *Thinking Through Chrétien de Troyes.* Pp.1-14 (7).
[174] Roney, Lois and Wasserman, Julian N. (1989) 'Editor's Introduction' in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (eds) *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature.* Syracuse University Press: New York. P.p.47-50 (47).
[175] Whalen, P.37.

tried, tested, and fleshed out'.[176] These models are primarily foregrounded in Marie's prologue to the *Lais,* which reflects the art of rhetoric as semiotic intervention. Her use of the noun 'escïence' can for instance mean knowledge or intelligence, and according to Whalen thus evokes medieval discourses concerning the craft of memory as well as the distinction between natural and artificial phantasms.[177]

Marie also references the sixth-century grammatician Priscian in her introduction to the *Lais*, substantiating both her extensive literary training and intent that her texts be interpreted using a largely sign-based method.[178] As Kelly reminds us:

> [I]f Marie de France learned to write by studying Priscian, what she learned was the ability to digress from the *matiere* at hand in order to discover – to invent – a *san* in which descriptions, among other amplificatory subjects, can enunciate, schematically, systematically, and satisfactorily for the proposed audience.[179]

While these ideas are verbalised in the so-called *General Prologue*, they are also implied throughout the general corpus of Marie's work. Howard Bloch provides a convincing argument in favour of this in his *The Anonymous Marie de France,* noting that the author appears to have been schooled in Augustine's theories of signs and correspondence:

> Augustine's speculation about signs, verbal signs in particular, which lies at the core of speculation about the personal, the social, and the metaphysical world, and the Augustinian tradition according to which words are flawed and indeed proof of the contingent nature of man, are manifested throughout all that is attributed to the name Marie de France.[180]

This is a valid point: where Chrétien uses signs as a means to convey further signification to his readers, Marie provides an additional dimension to this by incorporating signs into her storylines, primarily in the way that her characters relate to one another. The most prominent example of this may be found in the hazel stick episode of the *lai of*

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[176] Haidu, Peter (2004) *The Subject of Medieval/modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages.* Stanford University Press: Stanford. P.125.

[177] Whalen, P.37-38.

[178] 'Among the ancients, custom was – Priscian can testify to this – that in their books they made obscure much that they wrote; this would ensure that wise folk of another day, needing to know what these texts say, could gloss these works, and with their sense give all the more intelligence.' Marie de France, trans. Dorothy Gilbert (2015) 'Prologue' in *Marie de France: Poetry (Norton Critical Editions)* W.W. Norton and Company: New York. Lines 9-16.

[179] Kelly, Douglas (1987) 'The Art of Description' in Keith Busby, Douglas Kelly, and Norris J. Lacy (eds) *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes. Vol I.* Rodopi: Amsterdam. Pp.191-221 (196).

[180] Bloch, Howard R. (2003) *The Anonymous Marie de France.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London. P.35.

Chievrefoil, in which both audience and Iseut are expected to draw upon their storehouse of memory. States the author:

> [Tristan] cut a branch in half and squared it. When he had whittled the stick he wrote his name on it with his knife. If the queen, who would be on the look-out, spotted it (on an earlier occasion she had successfully observed it in this way), she would recogni[s]e her beloved's stick when she saw it.[181]

There is expectation that Marie's description of the stick will operate on two semiotic levels. This is a sign included not only for the benefit of Iseut, but also Marie's audience, a sophisticated use of semiotics that demonstrates the author's particular allegiance to Aristotle's description of a simultaneous image and representation in signs. As Whalen notes: '[w]ithin the episode itself, Iseut is able to recall the past events that are evoked by the sight of the stick. Likewise, within the broader context of the *lai* of *Chievrefoil,* the audience is reminded of the Tristan story in general'.[182]

Whilst it is not the purpose of this study to validate the awareness of romance authors with phantasms, it is useful to note the extent to which phantasmal and semiotic philosophies have an obvious influence in literary contexts. Carolyne Collette firmly believes that Chaucer signals a knowledge of phantasms in his narratives, expecting his audience to both perceive and react to this in his work: '[Chaucer] created both characters and plots whose humour and meaning are fully apparent to those familiar with the philosophical context in which they were conceived and received'.[183] Julian Wasserman supports this idea, supplementing Collette's statement with an argument that focusses more generally on Augustinian sign theory. He believes that Pandarus' initial argument in Chaucer's 1370 *Troilus and Criseyde* (that Criseyde can only be won by speaking) deliberately parallels the argument of *De magistro,* a text in which Augustine 'first argues that nothing can be taught without signs.'[184] Various scholars have noted similar parallels between Geoffrey of Monmouth's writings and Augustinian modes of communication. The significance of etymology for both Geoffrey and his near contemporaries Wace and Laʒamon elicits what Joanna Bellis terms 'a medieval Christian understanding of language and meaning [deriving from Augustine's argument

[181] Marie de France, trans. Glynn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (2011) *The Lais of Marie de France.* Penguin Books: London. Lines 49-60.
[182] Whalen, P.78.
[183] Collette, P.88.
[184] Wasserman, Julian (1989) 'Both Fixed and Free: *Language and Destiny in Chaucer's* Knight's Tale *and* Troilus and Criseyde' in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (eds) *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature.* Syracuse University Press: New York. Pp. 194-224 (221).

in the *De Doctrina Christiana*] that "all teaching is teaching of either things or signs…[W]ords have gained an altogether dominant role among humans in signifying the ideas conceived by the mind."'[185] Julia Crick presents a similar argument in her introduction to the *Historia Regum Britannie,* stating that Geoffrey's work demonstrates 'the actual effectiveness of means of transmission… [using] the power of the written word'.[186]

Literary 'Character' Phantasms

> *One of the important ways literary signs are transposed into tropes is the making of a literary character, the giving of a face to a person.*[187]

> Kai Mikkonen

Whilst it is important to observe the familiarity of romance authors with phantasmal theory, there are still aspects of this relationship that have yet to be understood. Where contemporary studies have commented on the influence of semiotic culture upon the belief systems of medieval writers, and how this is evidenced within their work, rarely has this been the primary focus of any particular analysis. Moreover, where scholars such as Joan Grimbert have identified the use of semiotics within a given text or by a certain author, they have generally looked at how these trends are presented within the boundaries of a story, rather than focussing on the ways in which an author might use them to communicate a particular body of ideas.[188] This is particularly notable in relation to medieval authors' use of characters as signs to 'bridge the gap' between the intellect and the created world. Although the subject has been briefly assessed – Ann Caesar claims in her *Characters and Authors in Luigi Pirandello* that 'literary characters are phantasms put together with words',[189] and Andrea Denny-Brown believes that medieval characterisation, particularly that of female figures, depends largely on philosophical allegory [190] – the idea of characters as semiotic alternatives to the

[185] Bellis, Joanna (2013) 'Mapping the National Narrative: Place-name Etymology in Laȝamon's *Brut* and Its Sources' in Rosamund Allen, Jane Roberts, and Carole Weinberg (eds) *Reading Laȝamon's* Brut: *Approaches and Explorations.* Rodopi B.V,: Amsterdam. Pp.321-342 (327).

[186] Crick, Julia C. (1991) 'Introduction' in Julia C. Crick (ed) *Historia Regum Britannie.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.1-12 (12).

[187] Mikkonen, Kai (1997) *The Writer's Metamorphosis: Tropes of Literary Reflection and Revision.* Tampere University Press: Tampere. P.42.

[188] See Grimbert, Joan Tasker (1989) 'Misrepresentation and Misconception in Chrétien de Troyes: *Nonverbal and Verbal Semiotics in* Erec et Enide *and* Perceval' in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (eds) *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature.* Syracuse University Press: New York. P.p.50-79.

[189] Caesar, Ann (1998) *Characters and Authors in Luigi Pirandello.* Oxford University Press: New York. P.25.

[190] The scholar argues that '[p]hilosophy became a mark of literary authenticity, and eventually an element of medieval poetic convention.' Denny-Brown, Andrea (2006) 'Gendered Personifications' in Margaret

phantasm remains largely unexplored. It is therefore important that we develop a more appropriate methodology through which to consider medieval characters as expressions of a culture that promoted semiotics, for literary figures from any time period are constructed in accordance with the material codes of that era.

Within a culture that largely promoted literature as an intermediary between abstract concepts and human intelligence, authors attempting to breach the divide between intangible matters and knoweldge would naturally have projected these entities onto tangible yet transferrable forms. This resulted in a corpus of signs that recur with unusual regularity throughout the general codex of medieval literature: objects, magical places, and characters. Authors appear to have been particularly prone to projecting cultural matters onto humanised (or in the cases of beast fables, animal) forms. Not only does the medieval equivalent for embodiment, *conformatio,*[191] refer directly to the human body in *Rhetorica*, but characters in medieval texts are recognised for their greater potential for conveying psychological and philosophical conceptions than static objects or places, while being open to greater symbolic flexibility. Indeed, without being presented in the terms of bodies known to the reader, states Emily Francomano, complex intangible matters may have proven 'beyond the grasp of everyday language.'[192] Medieval and Early Modern rhetorical manuals celebrate *confirmatio* as a simultaneously philosophical and literary device, a tool with 'vividness, persuasive force, and mnemonic power.'[193]

Where modern characters may bear traces of signification, they rarely demonstrate the same levels of representational function exhibited by their medieval counterparts. In keeping with the conventional medieval view that words are signposts to external things, medieval authors' understanding of literature as a primarily cypheric device has a profound effect on the process of characterisation. Contrasting our natural response to either identify with or disassociate from characters – as Paula Leverage points out, '[w]hen we read a work of literature, we treat characters as if they were real people'[194]

Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. P.649.

[191] This is a phantasmal description of 'the fashioning of a person non-present as present, or the making of mute things or those made unformed eloquent, and providing to it form and either language or actions appropriate to its status' Conformatio est cum aliqua quae non adest persona confingitur quasi adsit, aut cum res muta aut informis fit eloquens, et forma ei et oratio adtribuitur ad dignitatem adcommodata aut action quaedem*. Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.53.66.

[192] Francomano, Emily C. (2008) *Wisdom and Her Lovers in Medieval and Early Modern Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.16.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Leverage, Paula (2011) 'Introduction' in Paula Leverage (ed) *Theory of Mind and Literature.* Purdue University Press: Lafayette. Pp.1-12 (2).

– a medieval audience had to be more attuned to the semiotic aspects of literary works, for authors presupposed their familiarity with culturally authorised signs. As Michelle Sweeney notes in her *Magic in Medieval Romance,* a medieval audience 'is assumed to be familiar with magical characters such as Morgan Le Fay, or locations such as the Isle of Avalon, and the existence of magical swords, rings, beds, bridges and girdles.'[195] This places the contemporary reader at a disadvantage when trying to understand medieval characters, for where we may be tempted to read a literary person as an individual in his or her own right, 'the medieval reader would be largely controlled by the *traditional* associations of the figure.'[196] Hanne Bewernick comments on this problem in his *The Storyteller's Memory Palace,* alleging that the modern reader 'usually fails' in wholly identifying the semiotic implications of medieval characters because we lack the same ability of a medieval audience to create a mental visualisation (i.e. phantasm) through extant associations in the imagination. [197] Bearing this in mind, he continues, as medievalists '[we too] must recall items stored in our memory and linked by association to a particular topic, brought to our attention through visualisation (image-making).'[198]

Eliciting Caesar's notion that 'characters are phantasms put together with words,'[199] it would seem that medieval authors largely regarded semiotic characters as mnemonic aids to recalling concepts already known to the reader. As Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog note: 'similar applications of memory arts to those found in popular philosophical works of the period [are used] to construct characters and shape identities in written texts'. [200] Sign-based characters assume the form of literary shorthand, for like the 'abstracted' phantasms promoted by memory culture, they can be moved between texts while still conveying a particular meaning. In this sense, the codes that constitute character equally reflect the way in which medieval authors engaged in philosophical conventions. As Jerome Taylor remarks, Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon* serves to demonstrate how man may use the written word as a means of interpreting divine Wisdom and the created world by 'set[ting] forth a program insisting

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[195] Sweeney, Michelle (2000) *Magic in Medieval Romance: from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer.* Four Courts Press: Dublin. P.47.

[196] Smith, Ben H. (1966) *Traditional Imagery of Christ in* Piers Plowman. Mouton: The Hague and Paris. P.59.

[197] Bewernick, Hanne (2010) *The Storyteller's Memory Palace: A Method of Interpretation Based on the Function of Memory Systems in Literature: Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Thomas Pynchon and Paul Auster.* Peter Lang: Frankfurt. P.81.

[198] Bewernick, P.81.

[199] Caesar, P.25.

[200] Cotter-Lynch, Margaret and Herzog, Brad (2012) 'Introduction' in Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog (eds) *Reading Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. Pp 1-12 (6).

on the indispensability of a whole complex of the traditional arts'. [201] Using various classical theories of cognition as a basis for argument, Hugh stresses that the human soul 'represents within ourself' the 'imagined likeness'[202] of things outside ourselves, which can be formulated in either natural phantasms or man-made forms. The treatise, which discusses 'the use of literal and figurative language, and allegorical interpretation',[203] compares the process of characterisation with Aristotle's wax theory, for both 'impress' an essence upon a ductile form to facilitate identity and recognisability. Indeed, says Carruthers, Hugh appears to have perceived the phantasm as a prerequisite to character itself:

> The link is suggested in the fact that Greek *charakter* means literally 'the mark engraved or stamped' on a coin or seal… [I]n *Orator*, Cicero translates it with the Latin word *forma*, which had a similar range of meanings. One basic conception of a memory phantasm, as we have seen, employs exactly the same model, that of 'seal' or 'stamp' in wax most commonly, but also on a coin (as in Hugh's *Didascalicon*)…Perhaps here, as clearly as anywhere else in ancient and medieval culture, the fundamental symbiosis of memorized reading and ethics can be grasped, for each is a matter of stamping the body-soul, of *charakter.* [204]

In addition to Chrétien's evident familiarity with Hugh's philosophy, the *Didascalicon* is widely referenced as a popular work in medieval scholarship, and provides a wealth of suggestions as to how we, the reader, should engage with characters in texts. The philosopher knows the signification of words, looking to demonstrate how they may be used as the 'sign of man's perceptions'. These 'signs' are then unfolded in three stages: 'the letter, the sense, and the inner meaning.' The letters signify the formulation of words in their most obvious capacity, the 'sense' the way in which words convey meaning (for instance the name of a character) and inner meaning 'the deeper understanding which can be found only through interpretation and commentary.'[205]

Traces of philosophical memory arts can also be found in the grammatical treatises of the period. For Matthew of Vendôme, a character's inclusion in a text should be intended

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[201] Taylor, Jerome (trans) (1991) *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor.* Columbia University Press: New York. P.4.
[202] 'imaginis…similitudinem' Hugh of St Victor *Didascalicon* I.i.
[203] Habib, M.A.R. (2005) *A History of Literary Criticsim and Theory: From Plato to the Present.* Blackwell Publishing: Maldon, Oxford, Carlton. P.178
[204] Carruthers, P.180.
[205] 'sentential est profundior intelligentia, quae nisi expositione vel interpretatione non invenitur.' Hugh of St Victor *Didascalicon* III.viii.

to recall a reader's previous experience of literary persons as much as it meant to contribute to an imaginative mode of storytelling. He suggests that characters behave like signs in that they have universal qualities, depicting a number of character types with fixed and conventional qualities: 'a prelate, a prince, a young man, an old woman'.[206] As a semiotic device, the grammatician also claims that 'name, the first of the Personal Attributes, may in addition be interpreted to indicate qualities of the person'.[207] Medieval characters, particularly those belonging to the same genre, should thus be regarded as part of a network of signs in which each example is almost always a predecessor, successor, or variation on another sign of the same type. Taylor comments on this in her 'Context, Text, and Intertext', likening the process of understanding these literary signs with the intellectual processing of natural phantasms:

> [This is] an often virtuoso process of analysis (the extraction of particular elements from already constituted wholes) and of synthesis (the combining of these heterogeneous elements into a whole with newly chosen significance, new hermeneutic codes).[208]

Combining this with Hugh's theory, we arrive at a general conclusion that, on the basis of the medieval need for physically formed phantasms, literary characters ought to be considered as being significantly more disposed to semiotic delineation than their contemporary counterparts. While this might be difficult for us to understand on the grounds that symbolic sensibility was, as Heller notes, 'so habitual for medieval authors that they hardly experienced the need to alert readers of their semantic or didactic intentions',[209] once we establish a process of analysis from which we can extract the 'particular elements' that constitute the 'wholes' of characters (as my third chapter seeks to do), we will arrive at a much more appropriate platform from which to consider different semiotic characters as expressions of Morgan's universal persona.

Whilst engaging with correspondence theory may present a temptation to regard all figures from medieval literature as wholly synthetic phantasms, it is also important to remember that as literary characters they still have both 'semiotic' and 'mimetic'

[206] Atkins, John William Hey (1943) *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phrase.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.104.
[207] Cited from Bliss, P.18.
[208] Taylor, Jane H.M. (1987) 'The Fourteenth Century: Context, Text and Intertext' in Douglas Kelly and Norris J. Lacy (eds) *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes: Chrétien et ses contemporains.* Rodopi B.V.: Amsterdam. Pp. 267-332 (318).
[209] Heller, Sarah-Grace (2010) 'Semiotics of Culture' in *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms – Methods – Trends.* Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG: Berlin and New York. Pp.1233-1252 (1239).

function. [210] Although medieval characters are generally constructed with a more prominent semiotic function in that they behave more like their signs than their contemporary counterparts, medieval texts are not wholly didactic; the characters of these texts, especially in romance, are not intended merely to instruct, but also to entertain. The majority of characters thus contain both mimetic and semiotic elements, though these ratios differ significantly from figure to figure. Where some characters are almost entirely mimetic in the sense that he or she behaves as a person with psychologically credible traits, others may be almost entirely intended as signifiers of extra-textual concepts. While major – and often pseudo-historic – characters like Arthur and Lancelot are partially semiotic in that they convey subject matters from outside a story, they are also concerned with everyday actions, courtly behaviours and psychologies with which a reader is familiar. Moreover, characters who are primarily mimetic are almost habitually appropriated for the context of their original audience. Even when delineating 'historical' figures from Anglo-Saxon or earlier culture, these characters assume an anachronistic form when authors present them in overtly medieval settings. Battle is tempered to fit more closely with chivalric ideals than real-life warfare, Biblical figures are dressed according to medieval fashion, and the interrelation between central characters is notably human, demonstrating realistic behaviours and emotions.

On the other hand, there are characters in medieval texts whose function appears to be primarily semiotic; while these characters may still exhibit occasional human behaviours and serve as a source of entertainment, they maintain a far greater semiotic to mimetic ratio. This is particularly true in medieval drama in which there are characters who have virtually no qualities that define them as ordinary human beings. We find this most often in morality plays, a genre in which symbolic characters with names ranging from common virtues and vices like Charity and Pride, or conditions like Poverty, to more fanciful appellations like Ashamed-to-tell-his-sins demonstrate a straightforward signification of their quality rather than a human persona. Scholars have traditionally perceived these characters as universal signifiers, in which an actor is able to make apparent to the viewer's senses the intangible features of these qualities. As Karen Gould notes, '[o]ne of the principle attributes of these nonhuman characters is that, with few exceptions, they always represent the…concept of their name and

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[210] For a full discussion of this see Nikolajeva, Maria (2005) *Aethetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham. P.146.

therefore never develop or change as would a human character.'[211] Although these characters may be thought of as 'people' in the sense that they occupy the stage as human beings, walking, talking, and interacting with others, they do not exhibit complex human psychologies, functioning as rather static representations of their name. Although this trend is most obviously found on the medieval stage, semiotic characters are also found in romance and other narrative traditions. In Eberhard's *Laborintus,* a didactic work that endeavours to teach the points of poetic composition by emphasising the aspects of good grammatical writing, the author presents his characters according to the processes of semiotics and philosophy he believes are critical to successful arrangement. Arguably in reference to the treatises that defined verse as a branch of philosophy during the twelfth- to fourteenth centuries (making even more explicit what was presupposed in earlier medieval *grammatica* concerning philosophical discourse), Eberhard presents 'Philosophy' as a character who appears, addresses the seven other liberal arts, and then gives way to grammar.[212] Similarly in Langland's *Piers Plowman,* a work that is part allegory and part social satire, the author presents a series of characters who accentuate Matthew's idea of 'giving flesh' to figurative conceptions. Ranging from Conscience to Patience and the Dreamer, contemporary scholars have commented that, like Morgan, these figures are wanting in continuity, 'not in the abstract concept which [their name] refers, but [as] a unified self or subject, a 'character' who undergoes development or education in the poem.'[213]

Regardless of gender or genre, it is useful to note whether a character is primarily mimetic or semiotic, because semiotic characters are more likely to behave as different facets of universal identities than their mimetic equivalents. Recalling Marenbon's statement that signs may appear in forms that are quite different to one another and yet refer to the same concept,[214] a 'character [too] resembles all the others in its group, with the exception of a single detail, and it is precisely that detail which imparts its signification.'[215] This is a process enacted largely in response to the way in which medieval intellectual culture recognised the properties of writing. Rather than being wholly concerned with storytelling, as has on occasion been supposed in response to

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[211] Gould, Karen (2006, 1995) 'Morality Plays' in William W. Kibler (ed) *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia.* Taylor & Francis e-Library. Pp.1206-1208 (1207).

[212] See Purcell, William Michael (1996) *Ars Poetriae: Rhetorical and Grammatical Invention at the Margin of Literacy.* The University of South Carolina Press: Columbia. P.122.

[213] Wood, Sarah (2012) *Conscience and the Composition of Piers Plowman*. Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.8.

[214] Marenbon, P.137

[215] Heller, P.1240.

the setting down of oral legend, medieval authors employed verse 'to call attention to universal aspects of human identity through experimentation with allegorical voices.'[216] Ockham himself states that the written word has the ability to convey fundamental elements of a generic thing even within the context of individual narratives: 'here the individual is a sign of the universal, until the final universal knowledge is conceived.'[217] Various scholars have commented on this, noting the interrelation between standard medieval theories of knowledge, literature, and the phantasmal discourses that dominate the philosophy of the period. Alessandro Conti discusses the relationship between Ockham's theories and those of Aquinas and Giles of Rome in particular, stressing that in both disciplines 'the primary object of the human intellect is the common nature (or essence) of material things'.[218] Likewise, Janet Coleman believes that in medieval thinking, phantasms are formed 'as a necessary consequence of evident knowledge based on an intuition of terms… establish[ing] the validity of linguistic conventions which signify natural signs in the mind.'[219]

If the phantasm is a form of sign and vice versa, then it follows that literary signs in the form of character should be expected to behave in the same way. Contrasting contemporary tendencies to emphasise so-called individual rather than typical features in romance characters, it is therefore important that we begin to acknowledge the universality of designations previously thought of as 'unique'. Rather than rejecting character variations or attributing them to a character's metamorphic nature within a story-based context, we should instead explore this as a natural part of medieval semiotics. Fowler, one of the few contemporary critics to consider character as a discipline in itself, supports this stance by discussing the phantasmal theory of 'particular universals' within a more literary context. Referring to the universal identities behind medieval characters as 'social persons', she claims that individuals may signify complex subject matters outside the confines of a given narrative:

> [S]ocial persons provide a shorthand notation that gives us enormous leverage in reference…In this way, social persons are like genres: they are abstract

[216] Kamath, Stephanie A.V.G. (2008) 'Deversifying Knowledge: The Poetic Alphabet of the Prose *Pélerinage de la vie humaine*' in Rebecca Dixon and Finn E. Sinclair (eds) *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.111-124 (113).

[217] Pellerey, P.99.

[218] Conti, Alessandro (2013) 'Knowledge' in Alessandro Conti (ed) *A Companion to Walter Burley: Late Medieval Logician and Metaphysician.* Koninklihke Brill NV,: Leiden. Pp.225-246 (225).

[219] Coleman, Janet (1992) *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past.* Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge: Cambridge, New York, Melbourne. P.526.

conventions that never actually 'appear' in any pure form, but are the implied referents by which characters are understood.'[220]

While these character 'types' may not be immediately apparent to us, a medieval audience would have been familiar with different genres of literary person and the means used to designate them.[221] Considering medieval drama in particular, playwrights could rely on their audience's awareness of signs to implicate a character as part of a particular type using very little description. As Martin Andrew observes in his 'Cut so Like [Her] Character', 'the viewer's gaze can read the signs and identify the preconstructed...character...Their significance as identities and symbols is encoded [as] character';[222] the chaste woman is for instance immediately recognisable by her silence and closed mouth, and the whore by open mouthed garrulity.[223] Kelly furthers this idea in his *The Art of French Romance,* claiming that the concept surrounding social persons is not unique to medieval drama, but in fact derives from a much older methodology. According to Horace and his contemporaries, *qualitas,* the careful and consistent delineation of character persons, 'determined topical elaboration by insistence on selection of attributes that conform to a model for the type chosen for representation.'[224] It is arguably on the basis of this that Matthew of Vendôme comes to promote his *mediocritas* in medieval culture, the 'golden mean' of characterisation that 'expresses the correlation of all properties to one essential quality from which they emanate, a quality which defines the representative by fitting the particular person or thing to its mental model'.[225]

Although Fowler does not refer to medieval semiotics in much detail, her idea of social persons as literary 'shorthand' (essentially 'signs') has received notable discussion within the small world of character-based studies. John Frow comments on her use of the term – which he reformulates as 'phantom templates' in his study *Character and*

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[220] Fowler, P.17.

[221] Likewise, popular beast fables such as the *Roman de Renart* use extant iconography from medieval culture to create meaningful stories that related truths about the human world. The medieval literary use of the animal, whether a faithful familiar of the chivalric hero, a symbol, or an anthropomorphic character, provides an 'instrument du sens' as equally as their human counterparts in other genres. Gordon, Sarah (2007) *Culinary Comedy in Medieval French Literature.* Purdue University Press: Indiana. P.141.

[222] Andrew, Martin (1996) 'Cut so Like [Her] Character': Preconstructing Celia in *Volpone'* in Leeds Barroll (ed) *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, Volume 8.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury, London and Mississauga. Pp. 94-118 (99).

[223] For a full discussion of this see Stallybrass, Peter (1986) 'Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed' in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (eds) *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe.* University of Chicago Press: Chicago. Pp.123-42 (126-127).

[224] Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance.* P.54.

[225] Ibid, P.55.

Person – stating that it is on the basis of these universal identities that medieval authors generate individuals that, like Morgan, are at once unique and yet part of a wider persona: '[t]he formation of literary character from the raw materials of the social person is thus, in part, a question of the institute of literature, and of its relation not just to the particular types of social person but to the general category of person of with which those types are interested.'[226] This is a valid point for it leads us to consider not only the fact that semiotic characters may belong to a universal *species,* to use Henry of Ghent's term for the general identities of phantasms, but also that medieval authors were familiar with multiple 'types' of character. He goes on to add: '[t]o formulaic conventions corresponds a highly stylized cast of characters'.[227] Connecting Fowler's statement with Matthew of Vendôme's suggestion that literary characters should be formulated using an established *mediocritas,* this 'cast' may be anything from the Christ-like figures found in Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Guillaume de Deguileville's fourteenth-century pilgrimage allegories, to the Other Women belonging to a range of texts from the prophetic works of Thomas the Rhymer and Malory's *Le Morte Darthur.* Indeed, semiotic characters can designate generic historical figures, allegorical persons, or social types, for the sign systems of the Middle Ages promoted the idea of singular universality.

While Frow uses Fowler's hypothesis to support his more extensive theory of what is meant by character in a general sense, the idea of 'social persons' has also been used to facilitate studies of particular characters in literary based discussions of medieval texts. In her *Wisdom and Her Lovers in Medieval and Early Modern Literature,* Emily Francomano uses Fowler's proposition to substantiate her belief that the eponymous heroine from the Late Medieval *Celestina* behaves as one face of a multiplynamed persona. In the same way that Morgan le Fay is often identified, Francomano believes that Celestina's development depends largely on medieval sign systems to express the otherwise abstract conceptions of female identity that surround the work. In this sense, the character behaves as a sign because her function is primarily to indicate matters beyond the scope of the narrative:

> [T]he name 'Celestina' goes beyond merely naming a character. It contains a wealth of information about the kind of character authors present and audiences expect, as well as about the kind of knowledge held within the character and the kind of language that will issue forth from the celestinesque mouth. Indeed, Celestina and her ilk are what Elizabeth Fowler has termed 'social persons',

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[226] Frow, John (2014) *Character and Person.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.118.
[227] Ibid, P.257.

characters that are 'inherently allegorical' because they personify 'a position in the network of social structures' and convey a known set of arguments about such societal structures. Moreover, an important effect of Celestina's existence as an archetypal figure is that, like all archetypes, she belongs to a shared, 'weirdly populated' literary and mnemonic imagery.[228]

Although she does not go into the same theoretical detail as Frow, the scholar connects Fowler's premise with the medieval concept of the participation of universals in specific bodies. Linking the character to the Aristotelian idea that 'there can be no idea without an image', Francomano describes the celestinesque figure as a 'go-between' between a body of abstract knowledge concerning sensuality and the knowing subject (who is usually male). While the character of Celestina exists in universal form, she claims, each of her appearances is unique to the texts in which it features: her feminine form may be generic, but each 'go-between' 'comes in the form of a specific and concrete female body'.[229] Stating that this manifestation of abstract concepts into literary characters 'dramati[ses] the Aristotelian concept that all intellectual knowledge originates with the senses and the creation phantasms perceptible to the soul', we are encouraged to read Celestina as a visualisation of an entity from which the soul can then take a sign.[230] More specifically, the author stresses the semiotic function of the 'celestinesque' figure, who, appearing in multiple texts over several centuries, 'could be resurrected by any number of pens in order to invoke the same welter of associations about speech, sin, heresy, and deviant feminine sexuality.'[231] In this sense, sign-based characters are 'often the definitive markers of allegorical discourse', for they 'signal the existence of meanings hidden within textual surfaces and alert readers to the didactic and interpretive possibilities of a given work.'[232]

While Celestina may not belong to the same *species* of character as Morgan le Fay and Other women, given the limited number of studies that consider the influence of medieval semiotics upon character, this study provides an encouraging platform from which we might go on to consider other literary figures as belonging to generic identities. Just as Francomano is able to conclude that 'writers knew that the image of the wise old woman was guaranteed to connote and to function in a particular way',[233]

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[228] Francomano, P.139.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Francomano, P.139.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.

so might Morgan-based characters be considered expressions of the same *mediocritas* of Otherness. Likewise, where the scholar treats Celestina as an intermediary between abstract concepts from the real world and the human intellect (a role that substitutes that of the phantasm in relation to physical objects), 'Morganic' characters may be thought of as 'go-betweens' between the unformed concept of Otherness and our understanding of it. While spatial constrictions prevent this chapter from discussing the semiotic implications of medieval characters any further, it is useful to recognise these patterns in advance of a more specified discussion of a particular character or group of characters for, as my introduction states, it is only after developing a more medievally appropriate methodology that we ought to attempt an evaluation of Morgan le Fay within her own context.

Chapter Two: Making Manifest - The Morgan Phantasm

> *'It is remarkable how little has been said about the theory of character in literary history and criticism.'*[234]
>
> Seymour Chatman

Taking Leen Spruit's statement, 'what is the relationship of the faculty of literature to the phantasm',[235] we might then restate it as 'what is the relationship of Morgan le Fay, a literary character, to the phantasm?' Does understanding the philosophy behind medieval modes of composition have a significant bearing on how we perceive Morgan as one face of a multifaceted Other? And can the problems surrounding her supposed inconsistencies be answered by trying to establish additional characters, who could theoretically 'fill the gaps' in Morgan's history, as further extensions of her persona? As the previous chapter suggests, it is beneficial to any study of medieval literature to consider the theoretical context in which a text is produced. We should therefore do the same in relation to character, particularly in light of 'how little has been said about the theory of character in literary history and criticism.'[236] Aleid Fokkemer stresses this point in his *Postmodern Characters: A Study of Characterization in British and American Postmodern Fiction*, stating that the analysis of any character should always consider the theoretical culture from which he or she arises: 'when characters in texts that belong to a certain literary movement...are examined, certain expectations, established conventions, and hypotheses will serve as guiding questions in the analysis.'[237] Although Fokkemer is concerned with postmodern rather than medieval characterisation, this is a universal methodology that is particularly valuable in cases where authorial conceptions of character differ significantly from our own. Indeed, if characters are signs, and signs are generated by codes, he concludes, then 'the connotative codes that play a part in the process of signification must be studied if we are to examine character as a sign'.[238] In order to develop a more thorough understanding of Morgan le Fay, we must foreground the semiotic expectations, conventions, and hypotheses with which the authors behind her creation would most likely have been familiar. In an attempt to

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[234] Chatman, Seymour (1978) *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film.* Cornell University Press: Ithica. P.107.

[235] Spruit, Leen (1994) *Species Intelligibilis. 1. Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions.* E.J. Brill: Lieden. P.47.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Fokkema, Aleid (1991) *Postmodern Characters: A Study of Characterization in British and American Postmodern Fiction.* Rodopi B.V,: Amsterdam, Atlanta. P.48.

[238] Fokkema, P.46.

achieve this foregrounding, this chapter identifies Morgan's role within medieval culture, establishing her sign-based function in advance of the more specified discussions of her interrelation with Other women still to come.

In her *Reading for Learning* Maria Nikolajeva asserts that almost every character from the literary canon has a ratio of semiotic to mimetic property that is unique to them. An investigation of a character should, she claims, ascertain whether this character should be thought of as primarily mimetic or semiotic before attempting to engage in an analysis of him or of her.[239] Although some characters may be obviously semiotic, for instance those belonging to morality drama, this usually requires further investigation, particularly in cases of characters like Morgan le Fay who have a less obvious literary purpose. Whilst a character may appear to behave as a 'real' person, he or she may also have semiotic properties; indeed, a mimetic character may be used primarily in the telling of a story, but have symbolic or allegorical elements that exist in conjunction with their narrative-based role. Likewise, a character that at first appears to be entirely representative may also go on to be given a role as a person within the context of a story. On the basis of Augustine's teaching that 'a sign is a thing which *causes it to think* of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses'[240] Ross Arthur believes that a medieval character may be identified as semiotic if he or she has the effect of making their reader think primarily of something beyond the scope of a narrative, rather than causing them to be firstly thought of as a person in their own right. It is particularly important that we identify this in discussions of characters like Morgan, for the medieval community relied more on general conceptions of signs for their construction of semiotic figures, expecting their audience to interpret literary characters in a certain way.

Morgan appears to fulfil the specifications for a medieval semiotic character; as numerous scholars have noted, she repeatedly signifies an Otherness that exists beyond the narratives in which she features. For Elisa Marie Narin, Morgan provides a symbolic template onto which authors project subject matters concerning the unknown or unpredictable: she is a receptacle for the Otherness of every milieu in which she features. [241] Likewise for Herbert, '[e]mblematic of female power, Morgan literally

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[239] Nikolajeva, Maria (2002) *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham. Pp.76-99.

[240] Augustine, trans. D.W. Robertson, Rr (1958) *On Christian Doctrine.* Bobbs-Merrill: Indianapolis. P.34. (emphasis added)

[241] Narin, Elisa Marie. (Nov 1988) 'þat on…þat oþer: Rhetorical Descriptio and Morgan le Fay in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'. In *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2. Pp.60-66.

represents the concept of the potential for representation; her ability to cross and/or blur boundaries, making them personally irrelevant',[242] marks her as a primarily semiotic figure. While this function may be a fairly common feature of characters in early romance texts, that Morgan maintains an almost continually representative function throughout the corpus of Arthuriana indicates that authors foremostly recognised her as a sign, whose primary focus is to make us 'think of something beyond the impression [that she herself] makes upon the senses'. Rather than evolving as a human being, she appears in a text, usually within the context of a magical space, performs an action, and causes us to recall a conception of female Otherness.[243]

Morgan's function as a literary sign is also highlighted by her lack of regular participation in the central plotlines of Arthurian romance. Frequently occupying what might be thought of as minor roles within the general corpus of medieval literature, Morgan's lack of personal descriptions often presents her as more a point of reference than a fully developed character. Of her major named appearances, we are exposed to very little of Morgan's inner-psychology. 'Perhaps rightly' say Boitani and Hall, 'she is left out of the play of psychological motivations in which [the majority of other Arthurian characters] are involved.'[244] When we are informed of her motivations, they are often insubstantial (as has been argued concerning *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) or are born of the generic sort of motives we might expect from a 'scorned woman' type. However, this level of semiosis does not prohibit her from interacting with other characters. Unlike morality dramatists, romance authors generate characters who are able to function on two levels: as persons within the textual society of a given narrative, and as signifiers to external concepts with which the reader is expected to be familiar. This process derives from medieval theories of signs more generally, in which signifiers have the potential to act as both indicators to generic concepts and objects in their own right. As Irvine notes, the application of this principle within literary contexts has a particular relevance to character writing:

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[242] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.5.

[243] Boitani and Hall comment on Morgan's continued function as a sign in Late Medieval texts, explaining that where writers of romance had begun to move away from the idea of characters as 'exempla of moral qualities or character types', Morgan le Fay avoids the human depth beginning to be ascribed to characters such as Arthur and Gawain who are 'motivated by particular impulses and reactions.' This is an important point, for it suggests that even when the semiotic culture that had so dominated the twelfth- and thirteenth-centuries began to diminish, the medieval community saw Morgan as being irretrievably attuned to the convention of manifesting abstract things. Boitani, Piero, and Hall, Joan Krakover (1982) *English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.65.

[244] Boitani and Hall, P.67.

> [W]hen the human mind is reacting symbolically, this means that words, action, gestures, in a word all the elements of the environment, stand not only for themselves, but [also] for something else of which they are the sign. [They have not only a natural character but also a] semiotic character.[245]

While this is not to say that Morgan does not also have mimetic function (in the *Vulgate* and *Post Vulgate* cycles and *Le Morte Darthur* she is given more psychological depth than her earlier incarnations) her primary function seems to be to convey the Otherness behind her conception *before* engaging in her secondary role as a person within the Arthurian network.

Having established the semiotic aspect of Morgan's persona, we must then enquire as to whether the thing she causes us to think of is tangible or abstract in nature, for this has a direct effect on her interpretation. Whilst all representational characters may be signs towards things already known to the reader, those which refer to concrete matters (for instance 'Goods' in *Everyman*) should be regarded as straightforward examples of literary 'shorthand', rather than 'synthetic phantasms', which are instead intended to convey more abstract subject matters. The former is not concerned with manifesting an intangible thing to make it more perceptible to the human mind, but rather with facilitating an emblem of a tangible thing for the purpose of storytelling. Contrastingly, the latter relies wholly on its intermediary representation in visual format for the subject matter to become more easily 'knowable' to the reader. Covino highlights this distinction in his *Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy*, stressing that 'phantasy was associated with the *production of the unreal,* and imagination with the *reproduction of objects of sense:*'[246] producing the 'unreal' involves the manifestation of intangible matters, such as a particular emotion or conception, in a written format. The literary phantasm is therefore, the scholar continues, 'a human creative faculty for materializing the possible but non-existent [for instance fictitious kings and queens]...the impossible (e.g., a centaur), [or] the diabolical (given the rise of Christian demonology)'.[247] While Morgan may not fall wholly under any one of these designations, her literary manifestations comply with all three of Covino's descriptions of the written phantasm. We see projected onto Morgan a series of attributes that a medieval reader would have considered as part of the intangible subject matter of Otherness: healing, the performing of 'miracles',

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[245] Irvine, Judith T. and Sapir, Edward (1993) *The Psychology of Culture: A Course of Lectures.* Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin. P.222.
[246] Covino, William A. (1994) *Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination.* State University of New York Press: Albany. P.39.
[247] Ibid. P.39.

sexual licentiousness, and women in positions of authority, which for some readers would have signified 'the possible but non-existent'. In the same way, her ability to shapeshift, perform post-mortem magic and fly through the air would have suggested a symbolic representation of the impossible but representative. It is ultimately the changing cultural attitudes towards female Others that tarnish Morgan with the designation of 'diabolical'; her former healing potions become poisons, and her treatment of wounded bodies is supplanted with her practicing of necromancy.

Reading Morgan as a sign-based character or phantasm also provides a useful means of accounting for the some of the scholarly discord surrounding her multifaceted, fragmented persona, for it diffuses the more problematic aspects of her characterisation. As Nikolajeva notes: '[w]ith a semiotic approach characters are merely signs or signifiers; they do not have to behave logically or even plausibly; they do not have to be whole, coherent, and believable.'[248] That Morgan is not 'whole' in that her role is often limited, 'coherent' in her endless variations, or even 'believable' in the sense that her motivations may on occasion appear unfounded, should therefore not be interpreted as a reflection of any 'conspiracy' the character has against us, but rather a natural consequence of her sign-based function. Her variations may be similarly accounted for on these terms; as a representation of Otherness, Morgan's deviations from text to text reflect the unfixed nature of the volatile subject matter, which is adapted to the purposes of every author who utilises her. To use Wade's description: 'Morgan le Fay's characterisation in romance is a manifestation…of the literary and social contexts in which they were written.'[249] Although this may be frustrating in terms of her character continuity (or outward lack thereof), Morgan provides a useful tool through which to interpret medieval attitudes towards inclusive and 'outsider' women. Representing both the universal identity at the source of her persona, and real-life issues expressed through the individual 'character' belonging to each narrative in which she features, states Tara Manubay, Morgan signifies how 'in the tradition of medieval authors, [one] might have combined those sources to make a tale both relevant to his time and solidly based on ancient traditions.'[250]

In her earliest incarnations, Morgan appears as an ambiguous or even benign healer who seeks to help Arthur and his knights; although consistently presented as Other, and

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[248] Nikolajeva, P.146.

[249] Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.6.

[250] Manubay, Tara (2010) *Random Thoughts from the Mind of a Loosely Canonized Scholar.* Creative Commons Attribution. P.31.

often marginalised beyond the realms of conventional society, Morgan is in these instances not so much feared as she is accepted as an exotic yet necessary part of medieval culture. As Spivack observes: '[in her] first appearance in literature, then, Morgan seems identified with the Wise Woman aspect of the goddess.'[251] However, following the recasting of the enigmatic female outsider in the role of subversive occultist during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Morgan's beauty is replaced with ugliness, her desire to help the court substituted for a more malevolent intent, and her adoption of traits belonging to earlier goddess figures displayed as evidence for her diabolism. Indeed, the author of the *Post Vulgate* suite, aware of the contradiction in Morgan's characterisation, even offers a rationale for her degeneracy that reflects the thirteenth-century attitudes towards female healers and practitioners of 'magic':

> She was indeed a very beautiful damsel, as long as she did not practice enchantments and conjurations. But, as soon as the devil entered her and she was filled with luxury and demons, she lost so completely her beauty that she became very ugly, and from then on nobody could ever find her beautiful, without being enchanted.[252]

This fall from grace has no other explanation than to be attributed to the changing cultural standards in what was regarded as acceptable behaviour for women in medieval society. Once a source of mysterious fascination, by the fifteenth century the Other Woman is perceived as a fearsome entity only marginally removed from the designations of 'witch' imposed upon outsider women during the next hundred years. As a representation of this Otherness, it is therefore only natural that Morgan le Fay's character undergoes significant changes, a process that demonstrates a remarkable level of continuity in her semiotic delineation.

However, just as romance did not spring full-blown from the head of Chrétien de Troyes, nor did Morgan and her 'sisters' arrive as pre-made expressions of medieval female Otherness. From a semiotic perspective there remains a breach in our awareness of how Morgan comes to be utilised in this fashion. Whilst incorporating an established sign into a work of literature provides a useful means of connoting what a particular culture has already ascribed to that sign, understanding how this designation becomes established is significantly more complex. For Geoffrey of Monmouth, the first medieval

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[251] Spivack, Charlotte (1992) 'Morgan le Fay: Goddess or Witch?' in Sally K Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* State University Popular Press: New York. Pp. 18-23 (18).
[252] Lacy, Norris J, ed (1992-1996) *Lancelot-Grail: The Post Vulgate Cycle- The Merlin Continuation.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.27.

author to include Morgan in *Vita Merlini*, we cannot think of the character in the same terms of 'shorthand' we might ascribe to her later appearances, for the author would not have had the same corpus of material to draw upon as his later counterparts. Although it is useful to note the contemporary analyses of Morgan that categorise the character as Other (Chism for instance reads the character as 'a full blown projection of feminine magic in all its unassimilable otherness'[253]), contemporary scholars also view the character with a chronological advantage that makes understanding this 'medieval' process of construction difficult. Indeed, even when analysing Morgan's function in *Érec* and the *Vita Merlini* as standalone texts, we are to a certain extent influenced by our historical knowledge of the character. Being aware of her degeneration from benevolent healer into malevolent witch has the potential to taint our perceptions of Morgan, ascribing her with an Otherness that we automatically expect to find in her earlier roles. In order to understand Morgan from her medieval perspective we must therefore examine whether she was originally intended as a sign towards Otherness by her earliest authors, or whether her appearance in later texts has influenced how we view the character's inaugural roles. This involves looking only at the analogues available to each author of the Morgan legend, and whether he or she expects us to draw upon our existing knowledge of motifs and *topoi* to recognise the character as a sign. Hartmann von Aue would for instance have had as little knowledge of Malory's Morgan as we do of authors potentially writing about the character three centuries from now. And for Geoffrey of Monmouth, the first author to include Morgan in his *Vita Merlini,* the character must be regarded not as a reiterated sign, but as the product of a process of careful formulation used to connote an Otherness existing in earlier folklore and legend within a more appropriately medieval setting.

Douglas Kelly believes that in order to understand the process of formulating a literary sign we must first identify the subject matter behind it. As he observes in his *The Art of French Romance,* to understand the distinctions between 'phantasm', 'species' and 'object', these aspects must be considered as they appear *prior* to assimilation. This is achieved, Kelly claims, by deconstructing the three stages involved in medieval composition, deciphering what is rhetorical phantasm and what is extramental *species universales*:

> First, the author has an idea of a mental conception of a subject. Second, material is sought and identified through which the initial conception may find

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[253] Chism, Christine (2002) *Alliterative Revivals.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.91.

appropriate statement and elaboration. Third, the mental conception and the *material* are meshed as the subject matter of the work.[254]

Using the twelfth-century scholastic philosopher Guillaume de Conches' theory as a basis for argument ('[j]ust as the artist who wishes to fashion something first sets it out in his mind, then, having looked for material, fashions it to fit his mental conception'[255]), Kelly's hypothesis stresses that medieval composition has first the idea of a *concept* rather than 'character' and an author creates a sign to that concept by using material with which an audience is already expected to be familiar. Recalling Matthew of Vendôme's notion of character as being non-corporeal matter 'given flesh'[256] by an author's semiotic intervention, we see the same process occurring in the construction of medieval literary characters as signs. The first step to understanding Morgan is therefore not to specify how her literary behaviours may be defined as Other, but rather considering this Otherness as a 'mental conception' that existed for Geoffrey of Monmouth before her coming into being. We must then identify the means by which medieval authors 'elaborate' this subject by 'appropriate statement', for every culture has a definition of Otherness that is unique to itself. Only then will we begin to study Morgan's sign-based role as a 'meshing' of these two factors, continually keeping in mind the specific culture for which each of her appearances is intended; as Fokkema states: '[a] semiotic theory of character…is not complete without a concept of the interpretant'.[257]

A Mental Conception: The Other Woman

> *[T]he woman, whose biological difference stimulates fantasies of castration and devoration…behind whose apparently human features a malign and preternatural intelligence is thought to lurk. [It] is not so much that She is feared because She is evil; rather She is evil because she is Other, alien, different, strange, unclean, and unfamiliar.[258]*

Frederick Jameson

The 'mental conception' generally ascribed to Morgan le Fay, the female Other, is an age-old model in the traditions of history and literature, a universal expression of female

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[254] Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance,* 38.
[255] '[u]t enim faber, volens aliquid fabriare, prius illus in mente disponit, postea, quesita material, iuxta mentem suam operatur.' Ibid (p.32)
[256] Matthew *Ars Vers* 3.50.
[257] Fokema, P.48.
[258] Jameson, Frederick (1981) *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca. P.115.

outsider-ness that disregards cultural expectations, discards conventional morality, and engages in subversive behaviour. The concept of the Other Woman both predates and postdates that of Morgan herself. In her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir posits that historical study shows definitively that 'men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy's earliest times they have deemed it useful to keep women in a state of dependence. Their codes were set up against her; she was thus concretely established as the Other'.[259] This is a valid point, various historical documentations also indicating that women have indeed been cast in the role of a 'second sex'. Suggesting that women as a group have been defined as Other since the beginnings of European culture, classical logic promotes the idea that women were perceived as 'lacking', thus being thrust outside of the intellectual spheres that promoted masculine inclusivity. As Linda Mitchell notes: '[c]lassical philosophy and science, which provided the basis for the Western intellectual tradition into the modern period, used the 'male' as the standard by which humanity was measured.'[260] This trend can also be identified in Judeo-Christian history, where the female Other can be perceived in a physical manifestation that Grant Horner terms the ultimate *femme fatale*: Eve. Indeed, the account from Genesis has informed four-thousand years of Judeo-Christians that, even in her beginnings, Woman is responsible for the world's evil, generating an idea of biological and universal Otherness surrounding not only medieval females, but a much larger spectrum of women. As a result of this ongoing history, the strong misogynistic tendency to blame the feminine half of humanity as the source of male pain and destruction has, as Horner notes, taken many forms in the tradition of religion and literature: '[w]e see shades of the [Eve] figure in Delilah, Salome, Bathsheba, Helen of Troyes, Circe, [and] Morgan le Fay in the medieval Arthurian cycles.'[261]

In literary terms, various scholars have argued for the universality of this Other Woman figure, and the different forms through which her identity is expressed. Although these accounts do not generally consider the medieval belief in the universal capacity of signs, it is encouraging to note that the hypothetical Other Woman's multifacetedness is a common hypothesis in modern literary studies. In addition to those outlined in my introduction, there are numerous discussions concerning the universality of female outsiderness. In her essay, 'Esoterica', Emily Auger discusses the various manifestations

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[259] De Beauvoir, Simone. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (trans) (2010, 1949) *The Second Sex.* Vintage: London. P.163.

[260] Mitchell, Linda E. (2001, 1999) *Women in Medieval Western European Culture.* Routledge: New York. P.303.

[261] Horner, Grant (2010) Meaning at the Movies: Becoming a Discerning Viewer. Crossway: Wheaton. P.172.

of the Celtic figure of 'Other', Sovereignty, a woman whom she believes appears in a series of guises throughout the Arthurian legend.[262] Extending to Morgan le Fay herself, this general treatment is, Auger claims, 'indicative of the authors' greater tendency to emphasize the archetypal rather than the individualized manifestations of Arthurian legend'.[263] Patricia Monaghan presents a similar observation in her claim that various Otherworldly heroines derive from the same ancient Celtic original, 'perhaps a water goddess' and so should be regarded equivalently.[264] This argument is furthered by John Darrah's *Paganism in Arthurian Romance,* in which the scholar regards the characters of Morgan and the goddess Diana as equivalent expressions of the same deity belonging to the analogous traditions of classical literature and the Matter of Britain.[265]

Concerning the archetypal persons found in literary sources more generally, Jackie Hogan believes that where male characters in medieval texts are bound by their national identity, 'the women in these tales are often defined more by their Otherness than by their essential Britishness.'[266] This is suggested in response to the idea that female Others are not created by authors or by a particular legend, but exist ahead of them, each character acting as a cypher to an age-old identity with which generations of audiences are expected to be familiar. Robert Ellis furthers this idea in his *Middle Way Philosophy*, claiming that the Other Woman exists as a universal identity with multiple bodies that arise on the basis that female outsiders fall under an even greater identity known as 'The Shadow', an archetype of the rejected Other who is 'the psyche beyond our current identifications.'[267] This Other takes many forms, he claims, which stem from expressions of Satan in the Christian Church, the figure of Mara in Buddhism, and 'Morgana le Fay' in Arthuriana.[268]

However, if the Other Woman is indeed a universal, aeons-old concept, this prompts the question of why a more specified study of Morgan is necessary for the purpose of this thesis: if Morgan le Fay is thought to be a sign to the Other, and this Otherness exists in a more general format, why should we explore this concept any further? The answer to

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[262]Auger, Emily (2002) 'Esoterica' in Donald L. Hoffman and Elizabeth S. Sklar (eds) *King Arthur in Popular Culture.* McFarland: Jefferson. Pp 233-248 (245).

[263] Auger, P.235-246.

[264]Of Morgan and the ambitious queen Morgause, for instance, '[b]oth were children of Igraine by her first husband and thus were half-sisters to King Arthur'. Monaghan, Patricia (2014) *Encyclopedia of Goddesses and Heroines.* New World Library: Novato. P.208.

[265]Darrah, John (1997, 1994) *Paganism in Arthurian Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.68

[266] Hogan, Jackie (2009) *Gender, Race and National Identity: Nations of Flesh and Blood.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon.

[267] Ellis, Robert M. (2015) *Middle Way Philosophy: Omnibus Edition.* Lulu: Raleigh. P.332.

[268] Ibid.

this lies in the fact that Geoffrey's Morgan, a semiotic character, derives from a process of formulation not found in many of the folkloric manifestations expressing this underlying identity. Largely in response to the widespread translation of classical doctrines during the twelfth century, medieval authors used their knowledge of sign systems to employ verse to call attention to what Kamath terms 'universal aspects of human identity through experimentation with allegorical voices.'[269] It is primarily by drawing on these sign systems that medieval authors are able to generate in Morgan a character who behaves both as an individual as well as a manifestation of the Other Woman. Moreover, whilst each manifestation of this general identity may belong to the universal persona of Other, they are also unique to the individual settings in which they are used, an individuality that often reflects the cultural milieu behind a particular text. What might be Other for a contemporary reader would, for instance, differ significantly for a medieval audience, and vice-versa. Whilst earlier Others abound in the popular literature and folklore of the period, medieval culture perpetrated very real notions that the female sex was formed 'outside' the superlative boundaries of masculinity, and so must be considered within its own context. In order to understand the 'mental conception' that exists in advance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Morgan, it is not enough to state that he wished to formulate 'the Other Woman'; rather, we should be concerned with what would have been his impressions, as a twelfth-century man, of a female Otherness relevant to his own culture, and incorporate that into how we view the Morgan belonging to his work as a sign.

As Alcuin Blamires suggests, for a medieval audience the Otherness of 'Woman' was conceived largely in response to her relative difference to the masculine body and psyche. Heavily influenced by Aristotle's proposition that the female should be considered a deformed male, men came to perceive 'revulsion from the "otherness" of the female, construed as "lack", or castration'[270] on the grounds that female bodies were 'by nature inferior to man'.[271] Woman is thus not feared necessarily because she is evil (though in her literary incarnations this becomes a more common feature), but because she is Other: 'alien, different, strange, unclean, and unfamiliar.'[272] Unlike thinkers of radical alterity, who reject ideas of comparative Otherness in favour of that which

[269] Kamath, Stephanie A.V.G. (2008) 'Deversifying Knowledge: The Poetic Alphabet of the Prose *Pélerinage de la vie humaine*' in Rebecca Dixon and Finn E. Sinclair (eds) *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.111-124 (113).

[270] Blamires, Alcuin (1997) *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture.* Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.41

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid.

'expresses itself', Kearney explains that the medieval Other was thus perceived along the Platonic lines of relativity: '[f]or the Eleatic stranger the other is other, finally, only in relation to the same. The Other as a distinct class is not comprehensible unless it is considered relative to some Other (*pros hereron*) (255d)'.[273] This notion forced some serious consequences for women in centuries to come, with the idea of female bodies as generically Other coming to form a fundamental part of medieval gender ideology. Like the heretic and the outlaw, who were decreed by medieval society as belonging to the less godly realms of men because of their failure to adhere with cultural paradigms, women too were put aside as an inferior variety of the ideal man. However, where the heretic could theoretically abjure his status of Other, a woman could not, as Schibanoff notes, put aside her sex to comply with ideas of the male superlative: the patriarchal solution to the threat of her proximity was therefore 'to re-establish woman's distance from man, to reinscribe her as inferior and subordinate to him, which Augustine, Aquinas, and others repeatedly did.'[274]

Regarded as more sinful than men on the basis of their inherent propensity to commit 'sinful' acts and ability to tempt the otherwise upright male conscience into sin, discourses on Woman as devilish and dangerous abounded during the Middle Ages. Although this was not a universal opinion (women who fall under the acceptable boundaries of female behaviour are often praised for their beauty and virtue), the treatises of philosophers and poets largely concur in one generic conclusion: 'that the behaviour of women is [more] inclined to and full of every vice' than that of men.[275] In his *Liber lamentationum* the thirteenth-century scholar Matheolus claims that although women are not sexually colder than males – *femina* being etymologically associated with 'fire' – 'even if their bodies *are* colder, this coolness generates a frantic sexual ardour arising from the need to 'purge' through coitus humours which they cannot otherwise disperse.'[276] Likewise, Boccaccio criticises women for what he regards as their lack of intellectual drive. He believes men and women have the same intellectual capacity, but that women squander themselves for 'the embraces of men, giving birth, and raising children'.[277] A particularly vehement example of this trend can be found in the

[273] Kearney, Richard (2003) *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness.* Routledge: London and New York. P.15

[274] Schibanoff, Sheila (2002) 'Worlds Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale*' in Kathryn L. Lynch (ed) *Chaucer's Cultural Geography.* Routledge: New York and London. Pp.248-280 (253).

[275] Larrington, Carolyne (1995) *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook.* Routledge: London and New York. P.255.

[276] Cited from Blamires, Alcuin (1997) P.130.

[277] Boccaccio, Giovani. Tr. Guarino. Ed Zacc (1963) *De Mulieribus Claris.*

fourteenth-century Italian scholar Antonino Pierozzi's discussion of an unpublished commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes. Here the author sets out an aggressive diatribe against the dangers of Woman presented in a strangely alphabetised format:

> This, then, is woman: Avid animal. Bestial abyss. Concupiscence of the flesh. Dolorous duel. Every-burning fever. False faith. Garrulous gullet. Hateful harpy. Invidiousness inflamed. Kaos of calumny. Luring pestilence. Mendacious monster. Nurse of shipwrecks. Odious operator. Primal sinner. Quasher of quiet. Ruler of realms. Savage in pride. Truculent tyrant. Vanity of vanities. Xerxes' insanity. Ymage of idols. Zealous in jealousy.' [278]

It is useful to note that these analyses arise from a largely theocentric perspective; writing far ahead of Pierozzi, Matheolus, and even Boccaccio, Augustine's discourses on the subject exert a significant influence on the medieval tirade against female bodies. In chapter twelve of Book fourteen of *De Trinitate,* Augustine conflates the literal and metaphoric senses of women by arguing that Eve, 'both as a female person and as the lower reason, was the intermediary who exposed Adam or the higher reason to the temptation of the serpent and thus caused original sin.'[279] He also argues vehemently and consistently that 'the natural inferiority of women is represented in the essential carnality of her body which she is not only incapable of escaping, but which acts as a snare for men.'[280]

It is largely in response to the re-emergence of Augustine's teachings during the twelfth century that medieval Christianity became increasingly instrumental in the construction and relegation of women to the place of Other. While the conception of Eve as responsible for man's fall was not a new idea, the more formally sexual, not to mention Christian, culture of the High Middle Ages began to ascribe further aspects of bodily sinfulness onto women, more prominently foregrounding Eve as a representation of this sin. Indeed, Ruth Karras observes that before this point, concern about the sexuality of even monastic women seems to have focussed on their role as occasions of sin for men rather than their own struggles: '[t]hey are exhorted to resist, not temptation, but rape; for them, too, divine intervention is often necessary to win the

[278] Rusconi, Roberto (2010) 'Hearing Women's Sins' in Daniel E. Bornstein (ed) *Medieval Christianity.* Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis. Pp.205-228 (217-218).

[279] Baker, Denise Nowakowski (2012) 'Soul' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.770-771 (771).

[280] Voaden, Rosalynn (1999) *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries.* York Medieval Press: York. P.24.

battle.[281] During the High and Late Middle Ages, however, the new fervour for rooting out sin and heresy, particularly surrounding the Inquisition, assumed women to be 'a particular source of moral contagion.'[282] In her *Devils, Women and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories,* Joan Gregg observes the effect of this within the context of homily, a mode by which the concept of Otherness was consistently projected onto the familiar body of Eve:

> Women too, like devils both potent and inferior, embodied the paradoxical oppositions central to the medieval imagination. Born in paradise from the body of the male, and responsible thereafter for giving life to humankind, it was, nevertheless, the female sex, inheriting its disobedience and seductiveness from Eve, that lost us our blissful state and brought work, misery and death to the human race. While the female saints, and pre-eminently the Virgin Mary, were present in the exempla as the church's model of the feminine ideal, the genre in the main depicts the female sex as vain, corrupt, vulnerable to damnation by their nature and a threat to the salvation of the male.[283]

It is predominantly in response to these ideas that Aquinas and other later medieval authorities read both creation accounts as justification of the binary opposition between the genders, expressing and promoting even more widespread anxiety about the same similitude that Sheila Schibanoff believes 'fuels antifeminist discourse.'[284] The creation story of Adam's rib was, the scholar claims, 'expropriated to implicate woman's alarming propensity to elide differences between the senses and encroach upon male status.'[285] While the term *virago* may initially have indicated Eve's Otherness from Adam in a merely derivational sense, by the later Middle Ages 'it could also refer to woman's perverse desire to take over male roles and claim similitude to him.'[286]

Owing to the religious dichotomy that relegated women to the 'inclusive' domain signified by the venerated Mary and 'outsider' group represented by Eve, a wife's ideals

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[281] Karras, Ruth (2012) 'Thomas Aquinas's Chastity Belt: Clerical Masculinity in Medieval Europe' in Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (eds) *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. Pp.52-68 (58).

[282] Mitchell, Linda E. (2001, 1999) *Witchcraft in Medieval Western European Culture.* Routledge: New York. P.297.

[283] Gregg, Joan Young (1997) *Devils; Women & Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories*. State University of New York Press: New York. P.19.

[284] See Schibanoff, Sheila (2002) 'Worlds Apart: Orientalism, Antifeminism, and Heresy in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale*' in Kathryn L. Lynch (ed) *Chaucer's Cultural Geography.* Routledge: New York and London. Pp.248-280 (253).

[285] Ibid.

[286] Ibid.

were also judged according to these standards, for even in the home attitudes toward women were 'articulated by the Church and the aristocracy.'[287] For women to behave outside of the ways regulated by male authority posed a threat not only to the individual male, but also to the regulations of social hierarchy itself. Within the domestic sphere, reason and speech supposedly belonged to men, whereas emotional behaviour, as well as an idealised silence, to women. It has been well documented that obedience, chastity, and silence 'form an interlocking group of honorific female characteristics, on the one hand, while disobedience, sexual license, and a shrewish tongue comprise a pejorative grouping on the other.'[288] However, it is also this very 'real' aspect of Otherness that prompted medieval authors to generate a wider range of expressions for female outsiderness than simply the dogmatic figure of Eve. Differentiating themselves from the genre of stories heeding readers against 'fallen women' in religious literature, writers of romance recognised that their genre provided a space where the more familiar aspects of women's behaviour could be discussed without the limitations of hagiography and scripture.

Noah Guynn comments on this in his 'Eroticism in Literature', observing that one of the primary purposes of romance was to stimulate cultural anxieties surrounding women – particularly the disruptive effects of the female libido – and 'to empower feudal institutions to regulate sexual acts and desires'[289] on an everyday level. Practical issues such as female healing and women's sexual relationships could be readily discussed here, romance being a genre that 'seemed best to fit best [authors'] need for inscribing cultural anxieties'.[290] Particularly in later medieval romance works – primarily the *Vulgate* and *Post Vulgate* Cycles*, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Le Morte Darthur* – women who fall under the categorisation of Other represent a real danger to the stable existence of the courtly code, for they possess these qualities in abundance. As noted by Arlyn Diamond, while masculine identity may serve as an indubitably dominant force within romance texts, the idealised patriarchal values signified by popular paradigms of

[287] Watson, Jeanie (1987) 'Enid the Disobedient: The *Mabinogion's Gereint and Enid*' in Carole Levin (ed) *Ambiguous Realities: Wwomen in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.* Wayne State University Press: Detroit. Pp.114-164 (117).
[288] Ibid.
[289] Guynn, Noah (2012) 'Eroticism in Literature' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.261-264 (263).
[290] Charbonneau, Joanne (2004) 'Transgressive Fathers in *Sir Elgamour of Artois* and *Torrent of Portyngale*' in Albrecht Classen (ed) *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature.* Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies: Tempe. Pp. 243-265 (264).

masculine virtue such as Arthur and Lancelot are consistently 'threatened by the possibility of female [O]therness'.[291]

It would seem that the idea of an Other Woman was familiar and fascinating to all in medieval culture, both to those who promoted and those who demeaned women. While lawmakers 'sought to bind women's every step, storytellers and their audiences were in many ways ensnared by the manifestations of female Otherness',[292] for these were women beyond their control. Indeed, says Lisa Bitel, 'the very men who wrote the laws probably went home at night to read of, or hear a bard singing of, the woman who raised or devastated kingdoms.'[293] However, despite the innumerable medieval documentations that warn of the dangers of Woman, the realities of female life could not realistically have fallen consistently under these designations. Bitel comments on this, stating that peasant women, sharing with their husbands the struggle for subsistence and taking care of their families, 'could hardly afford to be passive, shrinking violets.'[294] In the same way nor could women of the nobility, who had the responsibility of managing large households and expenses, as well as making decisions in their husbands' absences, have been regarded as subversive Others. While certain female behaviours may have fallen firmly outside of what medieval society regarded as acceptable – actions ranging from the practicing of enchantments to the donning of men's clothing – women as a sex were not automatically banished to the margins of society as fearsome outsiders. Women contributed to medieval culture, being employed as brewers, in the production of textiles, and in various forms of trade and agriculture, not to mention fulfilling an extensive range of domestic duties. This presents medieval female Otherness as a largely abstract construct which, rather than being directly affected by female behaviour, instead relegated various behaviours to the designation of Other. It is also arguably owing to the abstract nature of this subject matter that we experience such a range of literary manifestations of the subject matter, for each signifies an author's 'mental conception' of an issue that is, by its unfixed and intangible nature, readily open to individual interpretation. To explore this idea in more detail, we must turn, as Kelly suggests, to the statement used to communicate the conception of Otherness in relation to Morgan le Fay, because each will be unique to the context in which it is used.

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[291] Diamond, Arlyn (1994) 'Unhappy Endings: Failed Love/Failed Faith in Late Romances' in Carol M. Meale (ed) *Readings in Medieval English Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.65-82 (69).
[292] Bitel, P.76.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.

<u>'Appropriate Statement'</u>

> *The author then has to assign a topic, or subject, to a matter, or person, by means of his attributes; that is to say, he must consider what kind of impression he wishes the character to convey, whether he wishes to praise or blame, and choose the details in accordance with this theme.*[295]

Pamela Gradon

As a prominent form of social anxiety, the subject of the Other Woman would have been a forerunning contender for medieval authors wishing to 'make visible' noteworthy concepts devoid of sensory output, particularly as gender-based topics were popular sources of literary commentary in the culture of the period. As Julia Smith notes: 'through literary representations of these embodiments of [O]therness…cultural boundaries could be affirmed and gender hierarchy maintained in situations where both were in flux.'[296] Just as Eve fulfils the role of signifier in homily and religious texts, romance authors looked to manifest the cultural ideology of female Otherness in a 'sign' appropriate to their genre. Naturally prompted by audience-based petitions for female characters who could caution readers against subversive feminine behaviours, they also recognised that the pervasive obsession with Other womanhood required a form that could be utilised across a wide codex of texts. This is as much a cautionary device as one intended for commentary; as Sharon Yang points out, a reader's ability to immediately recognise characters like Morgan provided them with an automatic signal of female Otherness that could be recognised, identified, and in some measure resisted.[297] Given this demand for the 'incorporation' of Other women, it may even be argued that the literary projections of female Otherness from the High and early Late Middle Ages eventually gave way to a living form, to whom Morgan may be regarded as the natural precursor: the witch.

Even prior to the re-emergence of phantasmal theories during the Middle Ages, representational figures were commonly used as mediums for expressing Other womanhood in folklore and legend. O'Brien notes of the ancient Greek figure of the siren, for instance, that the hybrid monster was 'a literal exposition of the belief that women

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[295] Gradon, Pamela (1971) *Form and Style in Early English Literature.* Methuen: London. P.239

[296] Smith, Julia M. H. (2004) 'Introduction: gendering the early medieval world' in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (eds) *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp.1-22 (14).

[297] Yang, Sharon R. (2011) *Goddesses, Mages, and Wise Women: The Female Pastoral Guide in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century English Drama.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury. P.62.

were closer to nature, more animalistic, and therefore more dangerous than men'.[298] Images or references to sirens, with their bi-human bodies and sexual allure, prompted instant connotations of female deviousness, subversion, and eroticism. Within the same culture, the Amazon motif was shown to signify an Otherness to the rest of masculinity and femininity in epic-hero life, becoming increasingly imbued with not only gender based but also ethnographic alterity. For Nizar Hermes, these Amazons became 'an emblem of Otherness in many guises',[299] especially when it became commonplace among Greek writers to compare the Amazons with non-Greek peoples. This ethnographic Amazonology was, the scholar observes, an attempt to give the Amazons a tangible form by connecting them with various peoples among whom the Greeks detected unusual customs, and a high level of female mobility. This could include sexual or marital situations in which men failed to assume authority over women and children, or practices such as horse-riding and bearing arms in female contexts.[300] In British culture, the early medieval society preceding Morgan's conception preserved a similar notion of a 'Cult of Diana', an expression of gynophobic Otherness that the tenth-century *Canon Episcopi* explicitly describes as a subversive communion of women operating outside the boundaries of Christian society:[301]

> Some wicked women, turning back after Satan, seduced by illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and profess that in nightly hours they, with the pagan goddess Diana and countless numbers of women, to ride on certain beasts, and in the silence of the dead of night to traverse great spaces and earth, and to obey her commands as mistress on certain nights when they are summoned to her service.[302]

This description reflects what Ginzburg terms the medieval fears of 'a primarily female ecstatic religion, dominated by a nocturnal goddess with many names'.[303] That she is

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[298] O'Brien, Patty (2006) *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific.* University of Washington Press: Seattle. P.44.

[299] Cited from Hermes, Nizar F. (2012) *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture: Ninth-Twelfth Century AD.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.120.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Desmond, Marilynn Robin and Sheingorn, Pamela (2006) *Myth, Montage and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture.* The University of Michigan Press: Michigan. P.118.

[302] Quaedam sceleratae mulieres retro post Satanam conversae deamonum illusionibus et phantasmatibus seductae, credun se et profitentur nocturnis horis cum Diana paganorum dea et innumera multitudine mulierum equitare super quasdam bestias, et multa terrarium spatial intempestate noctis silentio pertransire, eiusque iussionibus velut dominae obedire, et certis noctibus ad eius servitum evocari.Regino of Prüm, *De Synodalibus* 2.371.

[303] Ginzburg, C. (trans. R. Rosenthal) (1991) *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*. Penguin: New York. P.122.

'many named' also emphasises the universality of Diana's underlying identity of Otherness, a multiplynamed persona that is manifested in a variety of pre-Christian deities and, in later years, the Other women of romance.

Unlike mythical figures born of generations of cultural orality, however, philosophically educated writers composing texts during the Middle Ages could tailor their characters in accordance with what they wished to make reference. 'Imagined' rhetoric was no longer forced to rely exclusively on pre-existing classical and folk legends, but could rather develop more appropriate signs to imprint their phantasms upon the intellect. As Sharron Gu notes: 'these new images did not only imprint or imitate the vision of the eyes, but they also portrayed what the writer chose to see and where he focussed the naked vision'.[304] Unlike fables, hagiographies, or even folkloric tales, the 'imagined' world of romance could therefore be generated in direct response to the requirements of everyday readers within culturally specific contexts. Whilst authors may have drawn on anything from Biblical or classical stories, to folklore, to daily life for their subjects, states Claire Waters, in many cases the depiction of recognizable, contemporary situations and characters lay 'at the heart of medieval writing'.[305] Indeed, one of the primary purposes of foregrounding Eve, an Old Testament figure, within what may be thought of as largely medieval settings in the art of the period was to exemplify an image of female outsiderness that accorded with medieval, rather than Biblical, constructs of alterity. One of the most prominent recurring symbols in medieval art is the medieval image of the female-headed serpent, of which there is no evidence in Genesis. Relegating her to the designation of Other occupied by bi-human figures such as the sirens and Melusine, this sign was instead generated by Peter Comestor's statement in the late twelfth-century *Historia scholastica* that the Devil chose the serpent with the face of Woman as his cohort because 'like prefers like'.[306]

This desire for a specifically medieval Otherness finds a similar outlet in romance. In Morgan le Fay, authors provide a receptacle for Otherness that can be transposed between texts, identified as a signifier of female subversion, and yet behave cohesively within a wider spectrum of medieval literature. However, the process of establishing Morgan as such a sign relied on her demonstrating traits that would instantly connote

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[304] Gu, Sharron (2012) *Language and Culture in the Growth of Imperialism.* McFarland: Jefferson. P.123.
[305] See Waters, Claire (2006) 'Exemplum' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.268-269 (268).
[306] 'Elegit etiam quoddam genus serpentis, ut ait Beda, virgineum vultum habens, quia similia similibus applaudant,' cited from Crowther, Kathleen M. (2010) *Adam and Eve in the Protestant Reformation.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York. P.28.

the suggestion of Otherness to a medieval reader. In response to this, Geoffrey presents in his *Vita* a character who complied with the generic female Others known to him as a folklorist, but who was also compatible within the newly Arthurian setting in which his story takes place. Educated at Monmouth priory, Geoffrey's tutelage was largely centred on the Augustinian models that dominated twelfth-century scholastic learning, indicating that he would have been well aware of what Kelly terms the process of 'appropriate statement'. To reiterate this using a medieval designation from *Poetria Nova*: 'the image selected to demonstrate a mental conception must 'fit and express the intention behind the author's conception of the work…The material *propinqua* must be pertinent to the subject, that is, to authorial intention.'[307] Contrasting authors like Chrétien de Troyes, who incorporate Morgan as a shorthand Other into their texts with the anticipation that their readers will be aware of the character's prior history, Geoffrey relies on a more constructive method to delineate his 'Morgen' in the *Vita Merlini.* Having both an awareness of extant outsider women (the author was, as I go on to discuss, seemingly familiar with a variety of Celtic deities and folkloric figures who fall under the designation), and a 'mental conception' that likely reflected the medieval Otherness outlined in the previous section, it is highly probable that Geoffrey used this semiotic approach in his construction of Morgan.

That Geoffrey's Morgan is the semiotic product of a deliberate, formulated mode of composition (rather than the more natural growth that is arguably the case for the likes of Merlin, Lancelot and Arthur) may also be evidenced by the fact that she does not appear in literary form until the twelfth century. As Elizabeth Sklar notes, she is 'deficient in literary lineage, a virtual unknown to pre-modern Anglophone Arthurian literature.'[308] Basil Clarke supports this with his contention that 'there is no evidence of new material in [the *Vita*] except for Morgen.'[309] However, Morgan's 'formulated' role has led to a distinct lack of criticism surrounding her characterisation in *Vita*, both as a result of her lack of historical verification and, arguably, the underlying problem of her gender. As Fiona Tolhurst notes:

> [R]ecent criticism has had nothing to say about a striking feature of this poem: both a female prophet and an early version of Morgan le Fay feature prominently in it. Such a reading…has utility because it would remedy an awkward situation:

[307] Kelly, P.38.
[308] Sklar, Elizabeth S. (1992) 'Thoroughly Modern Morgan: Morgan le Fay in Twentieth-Century Popular Arthuriana' in Sally Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* Bowling Green University Popular Press: Bowling Green. Pp.24-35 (24).
[309] Clarke, Basil (ed) (1973) *Vita Merlini.* University of Wales Press: Cardiff. P.4.

while some readings…deal with the text too cursorily to examine particular characters in detail, other ones approach it using interpretive paradigms that…exclude female figures from consideration.[310]

Morgan's inclusion in *Vita* is certainly unusual; there is no reference to her in *Historia Regum Britanniae* and she has in fact been confused with another character, Anna, described as the mother of Gawain and Mordred. It is also extremely unlikely that Geoffrey believed her to be a real person, for he would otherwise have included the character in his history of the British royals. Yet it is her 'fictitious' role that makes Morgan such an important feature of the text, for it suggests that she was to Geoffrey a representational figure, an invocation of a particular concept or set of ideals rather than a real person. The author also likely recognised that his readers would expect and enjoy the same character 'types' as those with which they were already familiar in the folkloric tradition. Taking a range of pre-Christian deities, figures of folklore, and classical Others, Geoffrey strips them of their attributes and reconstitutes them in the form of a symbolic character well suited to the burgeoning genre of Arthuriana. As Larrington notes, '[w]hen Morgen (as she is called in this text) appears towards the end of the poem, she is a fully-imagined yet mysterious figure…[who] steps on to the Arthurian stage here for the first time.'[311]

As the instigator of what Lacy terms 'the full-fledged literary tradition',[312] Geoffrey, aware of the character's function as a signifier, uses a series of rhetorical conventions in constructing his Morgan. Taking his 'mental conception' of female Otherness, he 'clothes' his character using the compositional methods outlined in the previous chapter. Although presented over a mere thirty-six lines, Morgan is attributed with various 'markers' that a medieval audience would have immediately connected with the universal identity of Other womanhood:

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> The island of apples, which is called the Fortunate
> island has its name because it produces all things
> for itself. There is no work for the farmers in
> plowing the fields, all cultivation is absent except
> for what nature manages by herself. On its own the
> island produces fertile crops and grapes and native
> apples by means of its own trees in the cropped

[310] Tolhurst, Fiona (2012) *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.2.

[311] Larrington, P.8.

[312] Lacy, Norris (2006) 'MEDIEVAL LITERATURE' in Norris Lacy (ed) *A History of Arthurian Scholarship.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge.Pp.56-76 (63).

915   pastures. On its own the overflowing soil puts forth
all things in addition to the grass, and in that place
one lives for one hundred years or more. There
nine sisters give pleasant laws to those who come
from our parts to them, and of those sisters, she who
920   is higher becomes a doctor in the art of healing and
exceeds her sisters in excellent form. Morgen is her
name, and she has learned what usefulness all the
herbs bear so that she may cure sick bodies. Also
that art is known to her by which she can change
925   shape and cut the air on new wings in the manner of
Dedalus. When she wishes, she is in Brist, Carnot,
or Papie; when she wishes, she glides out of the air
onto your lands. They say that this lady has taught
mathematics to her sisters Moronoe, Mazoe, Gliten,
930   Glitonea, Gliton, Tyronoe, and Thiten the most
noteworthy on the cither. To that place after the
battle of Camblan we brought Arthur, hurt by
wounds, with Barinthus leading us, to whom the
waters and the stars of the sky were known. With
935   this guide for our raft we came to that place with
our leader, and with what was fitting Morgen did
honor to us, and in her rooms she placed the king
upon a golden couch and with her own honourable
hand she uncovered his wound and inspected it for
940   a long time, and at last she said that health could
return to him, if he were with her for a long time and
wished to undergo her treatment. Therefore rejoicing
we committed the king to her and returning gave sails
to the assisting winds.[313]

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[313] Insula pomorum que Fortunata vocatur ex re nomen habet quia per se singula profert. Non opus est illis sulcantibus arva colonis, omnis abest cultus nisi quem natura ministrat. Ultro fecundas segetes producit et uvas nataque poma suis pretonso gramine silvis. Omnia gignit humus vice graminis ultro redudans, annis centenis aut ultra vivitur illic. Illic jura novem geniali lege sorores dant his qui veniunt nostris ex partibus ad se, quarum que prior est fit doctior arte medendi exceditque suas forma prestante sorores. Morgen ei nomen didicitque quid utilitatis gramina cuncta ferant ut languida corpora curet. Ars quoque nota sibi qua scit mutare figuram et resecare novis quasi Dedalus aera pennis. Cum vult, est Bristi, Carnoti sive Papie, cum vult, in vestris ex aere labitur horis. Hancque mathematicam dicunt didicisse sorores Moronoe, Mazoe, Gliten, Glitonea, Gliton, Tyronoe, Thiten cithara notissima Thiten. Illuc post bellum Camblani vulnere lesum duximus Arcturum nos conducente Barintho, equora cui fuerant et celi sydera nota. Hoc rectore ratis cum principe venimus illuc, et nos quo decuit Morgen suscepit honore, inque suis talamis posuit super aurea regem fulcra manuque sibi detexit vulnus honesta inspexitque diu, tandemque redire salute posse sibi dixit, si secum tempore longo esset et ipsius vellet mendicamine fungi. Gaudentes igitur regem commisimus illi et dedimus ventis redeundo vela secundis. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini.* Lines 908-944.

'Fitting and expressing' the conception of Otherness behind his work, Geoffrey positions his 'Morgen' within a landscape deliberately intended to alert his readers to her semiotic role; islands, caves, valleys, and fertile lands were thought to represent both the female body and the typically subversive behaviour of female outsiders, a familiar motif from older legends in which expressions of the universal female Other regularly participate. The self-fertilising fields are for instance reminiscent of female pagan deities (for instance Cerridwen and Rigantona) who wielded a powerful influence over the natural world in Welsh mythology. This provides a sharp contrast to the Christian image of the field-tilling man as a humble servant of God, engaging in the work set out for him as punishment for Adam's sin. The evocation of Genesis is furthered with Geoffrey's allusion to Morgan's dwelling as 'Insula Pomorum',[314] the apple being associated with the ultimate feminine Other, Eve. His description of the island also draws on the fictive account of the nine sisters who appear in the Old Welsh poem, 'The Spoils of Annwn', a pagan tale somewhat cautiously positioned within the otherwise Christian framework of the narrative. Having come to the end of a description of notably fantastic geography, the author of 'Annwn', Taliesin, appears in the *Vita*, and relates the story of how he and Arthur's men brought the wounded king to be treated by Morgan.

While Larrington is right to note that Morgan is for Geoffrey a new character upon the Arthurian stage, the general conception of powerful female healers forms part of the underlying identity of Otherness upon which Morgan is developed. Indeed, although the character is not described as Arthur's sister, Geoffrey presents her healing capabilities with a familiarity that suggests the character should already be known to her audience. However, this aspect of Morgan's persona is, like the character in general, presented in accordance with a specifically medieval construct of the medieval female healers. Initially presented in positive (though marginalised) terms, we see in *Vita Merlini* an equivocal representation of female healing that reflects the general tolerance, if not necessary celebration, of women doctors during the twelfth century.[315] As Achterberg notes, this was a comparatively liberal era for women healers, the period's 'sociopolitical developments and the still-fluid-religious tone',[316] allowing for women to practice medicine without fearing the suggestions of diabolism imposed in later centuries.

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[314] Ibid, line 908.

[315] Although this is certainly 'Otherness' it should be noted that this is a mysterious Otherness that reflects the author's mental conception as a twelfth-century writer, and should not be confused with the openly aggressive Others of later works.

[316] Achterberg, Jeanne (1990) *Woman as Healer*. Shambhala Publications: Boston. P.58.

Geoffrey's description of Morgan also reflects the early medieval community's belief in the ability of the written word, as an intermediary between abstract concepts and the intellect, to contain aspects of the medicinal process itself. As Bishop suggests in her study of the 'healing word' in medieval and Early Modern England, words become, and words were, 'powerful instruments of healing, invested with what moderns would call magic. Plato's *pharmakon* [pharmacy] recognises words' material effects in a different register from the word *catharsis*: they are more fraught, more dangerous.'[317] The 'dangerous' healing power of words produced a paradox that might be linked with how the medieval community perceived the Other Woman's healing power. For Hebert, Geoffrey's use of the word 'medicamen' in relation to Morgan's knowledge signifies the twelfth-century ambivalence of the female Other, for it suggests 'a medication with both positive and negative repercussions – antidote and poison.'[318] Rollo supports this with his assertion that, particularly for the more educated community of readers, the Latin *medicamen* could mean 'rhetorical medicine' or 'drug' or both.[319] While her healing magic may be beneficial in the case of *Vita*, Geoffrey therefore deliberately ostracises Morgan from courtly society. Although her medical practice may be regarded as 'safe' because it takes place quite literally within the confines of her own home, he ensures that this 'home' falls outside of the sanctions of prescribed female spaces.[320]

As a sign for female Otherness, various scholars have also noted the possible connection between Geoffrey's representation of Morgan in *Vita* and his support for the twelfth-century Empress Matilda.[321] Antonia Grasden notes in her *Historical Writing in England* that Geoffrey's support of Matilda can be discerned not only by his position as a protégé of Robert of Gloucester, but by his discernible 'praise [of] women rulers, giving examples of successful British queens'.[322] Geoffrey may well have drawn upon this in his depiction of Morgan, the character's matriarchy over the Isle of Apples arguably mirroring Matilda's relationship to her cousin Stephen of Blois by contrasting the 'official' royal

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[317] Bishop, Louise M. (2007) *Words, Stones, & Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England.* Syracuse University Press: New York. P.89.
[318] Hebert, P.29.
[319] For further information on this see Rollo, David (2007) *Glamorous Sorcery: Magic and Literacy in the High Middle Ages.* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. P.45.
[320] Hebert supplements this with her suggestion that while Morgan's practice of 'domestic' healing by herbs upon her golden couch may reflect a notably female brand of medicine (with masculine healing being recognised in terms of more scholastic methods such as book learning and bleeding), Geoffrey's deliberate masculinisation of Morgan's name may also reflect the growing belief that while female healers formed a tolerable aspect of medieval society, all medical practice *should* in fact be male. See Hebert, P.26
[321] See particularly Tolhurst, Fiona (2013) *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Translation of Female Kingship.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York.
[322] Gransden, Antonia (1996, 1974) *Historical Writing in England: c. 500 to c. 1307.* Routledge: London and New York. P.206.

lineage of Arthur. Although never strictly exiled, Matilda's recall to Normandy by her father following the death of her husband the Emperor in 1125 may also be thought to evoke the outsiderness of Morgan's life on the Otherworldly Isle. Removed from the Anglo courts that dominate both Geoffrey's *Vita* and Matilda's historical seat in England, both women appear as powerful outsiders whose authority is mediated by their absence from the central political sphere. The parallel is yet further emphasised when we consider that Matilda's attempted reign was famously characterised by the collision of what Mitchell describes as two well-established principles in medieval culture: 'inheritance by blood-right and divinely approved male authority/patriarchy'.[323] Geoffrey draws attention to this issue in *Vita,* presenting the matriarchal Isle of Apples as a paradoxical example of successful female rulership. However, as the author makes no direct reference to Matilda, and this role could have been fulfilled by a number of characters, Morgan should not be read as a direct allegory of the Empress. Rather more likely would be the suggestion that the author uses Morgan, a template for generic female Otherness, to convey an aspect of the subject matter that is particularly apposite to his own generation of readers: a female ruler with her own power and agency.

A more popular subject for discussion among scholars are the various pre-Christian deities from which Geoffrey's Morgan derives various attributes. To use Loomis' description, the Morgan of the *Vita* acquires 'not only the attributes and activities of Macha, the Morrigan and Matrona, but also the mythic heritage of other Celtic deities: she is a female pantheon in miniature.'[324] These (often many-faced) goddesses not only belong to the universal persona of Other into which Geoffrey integrates his newly formulated Morgan, but were also thought by the twelfth century to be opposed to notions of orthodox Christianity. On the basis that certain aspects of pre-Christian religions had been incorporated into the developing Christian faith, those aspects rejected for being too subversive (primarily those connected with powerful female deities) provided an automatic indication of Otherness with which to 'clothe' conceptions of Other womanhood. As Edwin James notes, the Church 'incorporat[ed] into its own tradition and institutions those elements of the earlier culture which could be so adapted, and by making them an essential and integral part of a highly organised movement'.[325] Aspects in keeping with pro-masculine Christian values, such as the

[323] Mitchell, P.189.
[324] Loomis, Roger Sherman (1945) 'Morgan La Fee and the Celtic Goddesses'. *Speculum*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr, 1945), pp. 183-203 (200).
[325] James, E.O. (1947) 'The Influence of Christianity on Folklore'. In *Folklore*, Volume 58, Issue 4. Pp. 361-376 (376).

honouring of the Feast of the Unconquered Sun at Rome on the twenty-fifth of December were retained in mainstream Catholicism, with other rites being either eliminated or entirely rebranded. Those aspects left over, rejected on the grounds of their lack of cohesion with the Church's teaching, became tarnished with designations of outsiderness, and were thus adapted into cultural representations of Otherness.

The effects of medieval transmogrification can be most obviously felt in relation to representations of the Devil in the artwork of the period; given his lack of scriptural description, artists utilised characteristics belonging to pre-Christian deities to instantly engender him as a dissident symbol of Otherness. Rather than developing new cyphers to instruct viewers on the topic of diabolism, artists simply relocated extant symbols belonging to the dreaded pagan divinities of Pan and Poseidon,[326] such as horns and pitchforks, onto images of the devil. As a means of furthering this the signs and symbols used to describe the character were also given deliberately female overtones. The red ascribed to the devil in Christian art is also used to denote a traditionally female sexuality in earlier culture, while his triton draws on both earlier masculine mythology and the life-giving water of pagan female figureheads. Likewise, the snake, once revered as a powerful symbol of fertility for the Goddess, became a symbol for diabolism, the serpentine associations of both Eve and the devil unifying them in deceit and sin. This connection was likely forged with the intention of emphasising the growing medieval contention that women and devils were linked in their subversive intent.[327]

Female deities came under particularly harsh censorship during the process of Christian syncretism, largely on the grounds of their incompatibility with the increasing de-sexualisation of women in Christianity. As part of the de-feminisation of mainstream religion, goddess statues and works of classical art featuring female divinities were removed from homes and public spaces,[328] or even destroyed[329] on the grounds of their amorality:

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[326] As the Ancient Greek god of the wild, Pan has the hindquarters, legs and horns of a goat and closely resembles a satyr with a large phallus, all of which point to the decidedly anti-Christian notions of bestiality, lust and, of course the unholy goats that are cast into hell-fire in the Biblical parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). Poseidon, one of the twelve Olympian deities, traditionally carries a trident rather than a pitchfork, a symbol that was altered in order to appear more frightening in Christian imagery.

[327] See Corry, Jennifer M. (2005) *Perceptions of Magic in Medieval Spanish Literature.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury. P.93.

[328] See Long, Jane (2012) 'An Introduction' in Sherry C.M. Lindquist (ed) *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art.* Ashgate Publishing: Farnham.Pp.1-64 (57).

[329] E.g. from the records of the 1357 Concistoro: *'Pro statua fontis Campi. Item quod statua marmoreal ad presens in Fonte Campi posita, quam [c]itius potest tollatur ex inde [c]um inhonestum videatur; et fiat ex*

As western Europeans sought to define themselves, the discourse of idolatry provided a "propaganda of fear and prejudice" against the pagan, the Muslim, the Jew, and the homosexual. As it applies to transvestism, this discourse also reveals deep-seated anxieties about western Europe's "oldest Other" – woman.[330]

Those deities, rites and festivals rejected for their lack of cohesion with basic Catholicism, and relegated to the category of subversive and dangerous, would have seemed to Geoffrey an ideal statement for his conception of Otherness. Scholars have posited that the author transposed various elements from the Irish Morrígan onto Morgan, a goddess not only known for her antithesis towards chivalric (and thus Christian) ideals, but also for the many forms associated with Other women more generally. Like the later Morgan and her cognates, the shapeshifting Morrígan signifies a universal identity that is expressed across a range of personas. As Stephanie Woodfield observes:

> The Morrigan appears both as a single goddess and as a trio of goddesses. The names of these goddesses are used interchangeable, with the understanding that they all refer to the same being. In some cases these women are specifically referred to as the 'Three Morrigans' or 'Morígna', making their divine status obvious; other times they are simply referred to as sisters. Each of these goddesses embodies a certain aspect of the whole and allows us to explore different facets of a complex divinity.[331]

The denouncing of these goddess-types may be largely attributed to Augustine's perpetuation of Judeo-Christian misogyny. In addition to the Celtic goddess, once revered for her reproductive power and regenerative nature, Augustine also denounced the once celebrated figure of Circe from the classical tradition. In Ancient Greek theology the goddess Circe is famed for her powers of transformation, and presents multiple aspects of female subversion throughout her long history. However, Augustine famously denounced Circe's metamorphosis as 'merely apparent and involved phantasms created

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inde et de et quod Dominis Duodecim videbitur et placebit' (Regarding the statue before the fountain of Campo: Also that this marble statue, which is placed on the fountain of Campo, be removed as quickly as possible, because it may be seen as dishonourable: and let this be done thereafter, then furthermore that which it will be seen by the twelve masters and it will please them) Published in 'Una Statua greca trovata in Siena nel sec. XIV,' *Miscellanea Storica Senese 5* (1898): Pp.175-76 (76).

[330] DeVries, Kelly (1999) 'A Woman as Leader of Men: Joan of Arc's Military Career'. In Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (eds) *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc.* Garland Publishing: New York.

[331] Woodfield, Stephanie. (2011) *Celtic Lore & Spellcraft of the Dark Goddess: Invoking the Morrigan.* Llewellyn Publications: Woodbury. P.47.

by demons to deceive and delude the human senses.'[332] Within the medieval community the character was therefore redefined according to the propaganda of fear and prejudice projected onto pagan figures from their own culture, and assimilated into the generic spectrum of Other from which the medieval Morgan arises. As Francesca Sardi notes: 'she has represented a sinister otherness, a dangerous natural force, a linkage between the feminine, the natural and the deadly, the Queen of Lust, an aggressive and charming sorceress, the voluptuous embodiment of the forbidden, a witch, a temptress, a whore, a femme fatale.'[333]

That Geoffrey's Morgan is 'clothed' with Celtic Others is, as Loomis notes, 'no new discovery',[334] for the issue has long since been a subject of extensive discussion. John Rhys, for instance, induces us to compare Morgan both with the Morrígu of Irish legend,[335] and a goddess known to early Welsh myth as Gwyar, Arthur's sister when taken as the equivalent of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Anna. Lewis Spence also comments on this, supplementing Rhys' description with a comparison of the medieval Morgan with the wife of the sky-god Lludd, 'a figure who bears a resemblance to the Irish 'Valkyrie' known as the Morrígan, who hovered over the battlefield in the form of a crow or raven'.[336] Hebert supports this idea, noting that Morgan's shapeshifting in *Vita* is so strongly reminiscent of the Irish Morrígan that she may be regarded as the 'most strongly responsible for Morgan's early characterization.'[337] The scholar compares Geoffrey's description of Morgan's powers of flight to the Celtic Morrígan's transformation into a blackbird in her dealings with the Irish mythological hero Cuchulainn. Pérez shares Hebert's contention that Geoffrey's Morgan is derived from Irish mythology, but believes this occurs in more general terms than his using the Morrígan as a particular analogue. In *The Myth of Morgan le Fay* she states that Geoffrey's original readers would have recognised a reference to the universal Sovereignty Goddess in Morgan, primarily as a sign towards the intangible opposition to ordered society posed by subversive women.[338]

Morgan has also been connected with a variety of figures from early Welsh mythology. In her *Studies in Fairy Mythology* Lucy Paton explores Geoffrey's use of etymology to

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[332] Zika, Charles (2007) *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Europe.* Routledge: London and New York. P.135.
[333] Sardi, Francesca (2008) *Psychological Activity in the Homeric Circe Episode.* ProQuest: Chicago. P.3.
[334] Loomis, p220.
[335] Rhys, John (2004, 1901) *Studies in the Arthurian Legend.* Kissinger Publishing: London. P.163.
[336] Spence, Lewis (1979, 1948) *Minor Traditions of British Mythology.* Arno Press: London. P.28.
[337] Hebert, P.20.
[338] Pérez, Kristina (2014) *The Myth of Morgan le Fey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.8.

connect Morgan with Welsh expressions of Other womanhood, rather than attributing her with a strictly Irish descent.[339] She claims that traces of her underlying identity can be found in the Morigenos associated with the coasts of both Wales and Ireland, creatures used to signify the dangers of men liaising with powerful women. Born of the sea, a symbol of frightful female treachery, these symbolic women were, like the goddess Diana, treated as nocturnal demons, and represent the potential influence of sexual allure upon otherwise stalwart males. Various scholars have likewise attributed Morgan's aquatic nature to Modron, the early Welsh river goddess with a correspondingly fertile persona. As Woodfield notes, Geoffrey's account of Morgan seems to be based on Modron's mythology, since she was also connected to Avalon. She also forms part of a universal identity of Otherness '[t]he nine sisters mentioned in the *Vita Merlini* point to Modron being a many-faced goddess, with each sister representing one of her aspects.'[340] Indeed, Rosemary Guiley even goes as far as to suggest that Modron should be considered 'one of Morgan's names'[341] on the basis that both have roots in the mythological Morganes who occupied the Breton coast in even earlier legends. In terms of character description, there is a further connection in that Morgan and Modron are often portrayed as mother to Owain or Ywain by Urien. Despite being presented as the daughter of the Lady Igraine and her first husband Gorlois in later Grail legend, Morgan's initial role in Geoffrey's *Vita* implicates her as the daughter of the great mystical ruler Afallach. Malory also tells us that Morgan marries Urien of Gorre in *Le Morte Darthur*, a familial relationship modelled directly on the Welsh goddess. This genealogical relationship is revealed in the following description of Modron in the Triad number 70 from the Peniarth Manuscript: 'The second, Owain son of Urien and Mor(fudd) his sister who were carried together in the womb of Modron daughter of Afallach'.[342]

In contrast with these Celtic descriptions of the character, however, Carolyn Larrington believes that Geoffrey's portrayal of Morgan 'owes almost nothing to the mythic traditions of Britain and Ireland.'[343] Instead, the scholar claims that Geoffrey derives the character's Otherness from two most influential enchantresses from Greek mythology, Medea and Circe:

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[339] Paton, Lucy Allen (1960, 1903) *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance.* Ayer Publishing: London. P.9.

[340] Woodfield, P.116.

[341] Guiley, Rosemary (2006) *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy.* Facts on File: New York. P.210.

[342] *'A'd cii, Owein mab Urien a Morwyd y chwaer, a vaunt yn un dorliwyt yghailon Modron ferch Avallach.'* Rachel Bromwich, trans. (1963). Peniarth Manuscript. 147. *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*. Cardiff: UWP. P 248.

[343] Larrington, P.8.

Morgan's sisters all have Greek or quasi-Greek names; their form and number probably recall the nine Muses, patrons of the different arts. Their island kingdom, where the climate is temperate, the soil fruitful and the inhabitants do not have to work, belongs to the familiar tradition of the Earthly Paradise. Geoffrey derives his account directly from the work of the sixth-century encyclopedia author Isidore of Seville; the Fortunate Isles are based on Isidore's description of the Canary Islands. As listed, Morgan's own powers combine those usually assigned to Circe and Medea, though Geoffrey emphasizes that Morgan, unlike the Greek enchantresses, uses her capabilities entirely for good.[344]

This is a valid argument, particularly given that in medieval commentaries of texts containing the goddesses, primarily belonging to Ovid, Virgil, Seneca and Hyginus, Christian commentators were 'quick to point out the fictional nature of many of the magical achievements ascribed to Medea and Circe',[345] a response founded on the belief that the powers of resurrection and shape-shifting belonged only to the Christian God. Earlier female representations were reworked as myths or demons, making them a fitting source of Otherness for medieval authors wishing to generate new characters. However, Paul Rovang does not believe Larrington is correct in assuming that Geoffrey of Monmouth relied solely on the classical tradition in depicting Morgan in his *Vita Merlini*.[346] He claims that Morgan's inaugural nature in the text makes it more likely that Geoffrey would have turned to sources with which he and his readers would have been most familiar as a means of engendering the character's recognisability as a sign: 'it is hard to see why [Geoffrey] could not have integrated Celtic fairy lore into [his] development of Morgan just as authors like Chrétien de Troyes have done with other romance characters and themes.'[347]

If Morgan is indeed a semiotic character, then the lack of scholarly consensus surrounding her derivation in *Vita* may be validated by the fact that Geoffrey did not invoke any singular source in his description of her. While she bears a notable resemblance to a range of Welsh deities, including Macha and Modron, her obvious assimilation of aspects belonging to the Irish Morrígan *and* the classical deities alluded to by Larrington indicates that the author drew upon various extant models to engender the character as a recognisable manifestation of Otherness. In 'clothing' his conception,

[344] Ibid.
[345] Larrington, P.9.
[346] Rovang, Paul (2015) *Malory's Anatomy of Chivalry: Characterization in the Morte Darthur.* Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Lanham and London. P.167.
[347] Ibid.

there is nothing to suggest that he could not have drawn on multiple sources, particularly in light of the fact that, as Hebert notes, the Celtic and classical foundations upon which Geoffrey's Morgan is conceived demonstrate an ability to 'embrace seemingly contradictory aspects simultaneously'.[348] This would also account for some of Morgan's split personalities in later works, with her appearances continuing to draw upon the multiplicity of analogues alluded to by Geoffrey in *Vita*. As Mickey Sweeney observes:

> The significance of Morgan's historical and literary relationships to other such vital and dangerous women as the Lady of Avalon (also interestingly enough connected to apples) and the Lady of the Lake suggests another potential convergence between historical, religious, and literary women who represent a warning to men who interact with them…[bringing] to the fore Classical, pre-Christian traditions.[349]

Having established Morgan as a manifestation of Otherness, Geoffrey's 'meshing' of his mental conception with appropriate statement generates a figure with the ability to evoke an age-old Other in the minds of her audience, whilst also manifesting a character suitable for the Arthurian tales that would soon come to dominate medieval literary culture. For the network of Arthurian authors arising over the next few decades, Morgan, now a ready-made assimilation of female Otherness, thus provides a shorthand indication of an outsiderness that is, as Dorsey Armstrong rightly notes, a critical and intrinsic part of the romance genre: '[t]hrough spells, gifts, and shrewd manipulation of conventional gender roles, such female characters often function to *produce* – rather than merely participate in – the narrative action.'[350]

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[348] Hebert, P.6.

[349] Sweeney, Mickey (2004) 'Gawain's Tempting Helen: Prophesying the Fall of Camelot' in Karen Rathmell Moranski, Edward L. Risden and Stephen Yandell (eds) *Prophet Margins: The Medieval Vatic Impulse and Social Stability.* Peter Lang: New York, Washington, D.C., Bern Frankfurt am Main, Merlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford. Pp.69-78 (75).

[350] Armstrong, Dorsey (2006) 'Supernatural Women' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.786-786 (786).

<u>'Meshing': The Morgan Sign</u>

A creator can name…Morgan [l]e F[a]y and presume the reader will fill in any unexplained issues of exposition. Arthurian myth has become thematic shorthand.[351]

Jason Tondro

That Morgan was intended to 'make visible' an otherwise abstract notion is most evident when we consider the predilection among medieval authors to utilise her as a sign with which we are expected to be familiar. As Jason Tondro observes, Morgan is used to a shorthand effect in Arthurian texts on the basis of her shorthand ability to 'trigger' her audience's extant knowledge of female outsiderness. Using Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'meshing' of the medieval concept of Other womanhood with a range of additional material to connote the subject matter within new contexts, the ready-made Morgan sign appears so frequently in medieval works that she becomes almost as great a symbol for female Otherness as the Biblical Eve. Following Geoffrey's completion of the *Vita,* the impact of which Michael Faletra believes 'cannot be underestimated',[352] Morgan appears in a number of literary works that present her as though her audience is already expected to be familiar with her and what she represents. In his 1216 *Speculum Ecclesiae* Gerald of Wales not only alludes to Morgan but refers to her extant role in the pseudo-histories now in popular circulation, deliberately stressing her fictitious (and thus representational) nature. However, whereas Geoffrey is notably ambivalent in his fantastic portrayal of Morgan, reflecting what may be regarded as the author's more liberal conception of twelfth-century female Otherness, Gerald openly derides his predecessor's account of the goddess, whom he believes has no place in the chivalric kingdom. Instead the celibate and, as Morgan Prys suspects, 'misogynistic Gerald' [353] uses the character as a cypher for his disdain towards women, particularly women healers, referring to those with confidence in Morgan's healing power as 'lying Britons'. [354] He also re-emphasises Morgan's Otherness in geographical terms, accentuating Geoffrey's allusion to the topographies thought to connote female outsiders, connecting Morgan's kingdom of Avalon in *De Instructione Principis* to the real

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[351]Tondro, Jason (2011) *Superheroes of the Round Table: Comics Connections to Medieval and Renaissance Literature.* McFarland: Jefferson. P.187.

[352] Faletra, Michael (2008) *The History of the Kings of Britain.* Broadview Press: Peterborough, Plymouth, and Sydney. P.29.

[353] Morgan, Prys (2005) Wales: An Illustrated History. Tempus: Dublin. P.111.

[354] See Echard, Siân (1998) *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.73.

province of Glastonbury, a known site of pagan ritual. [355] As Ashe notes, Gerald's depiction of Morgan 'was probably helped by a lingering sense of "otherness" at Glastonbury, rooted in its strange topography and non-Christian associations.'[356]

Morgan's function as a sign is even more pronounced in the world of fictive romance. There is a particular tendency among High Medieval authors to incorporate Morgan as a point of reference with little or no character description; as Lucienne Carasso-Bulow states, '[t]he fairy Morgue is very often mentioned in connection with magical objects, but never [or rarely] appears herself'.[357] It is likely that these shorthand descriptions of Morgan were largely generated in response to the character's representative function in the *Vita,* a role that subsequent authors clearly expected their audience to know. To reiterate Sweeney's point in her *Magic in Medieval Romance,* Arthurian symbols do not require excessive description, for a medieval audience 'is assumed to be familiar with magical characters such as Morgan Le Fay, or locations such as the Isle of Avalon, and the existence of magical swords, rings, beds, bridges and girdles.'[358] In Chrétien de Troyes' *Érec et Énide* Morgan is presented less like a literary character and more like an emblematic reference to medieval female Otherness. The author offers none of Geoffrey's description, but instead invokes Morgan's name with the expectation that we will be acquainted with the character and, more importantly, her connotations from earlier contexts. As Heidi Breuer notes, 'she appears only as a name, an invocation of mysterious (but non-threatening) feminine healing magic',[359] Chrétien stating simply: '[t]he king thereto/sent for a salve, one he declared/his sister Morgan had prepared.'[360]

Without having to engage in the workings of the plot, Morgan's sudden appearance in *Érec* primarily informs us that this is a narrative in which we should expect the presence

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[355] That place which is now called Glastonbury, was in former times an island called Avalon. For it has been entirely sown with swamps, like an island, for which reason it was called Inis Avallon by the Britons, that is, the apple-bearing island. For apples, which are called *aval* in the British language, once abounded in that place. And Morgan, noble mother, ruler and patron of those parts, and also a relative by blood to King Arthur, carried Arthur after the war from Camlaan to the island which is now called Glastonbury for the healing of his wounds. Gerald of Wales (1861-91, c.1223) '*De Instructione Principis'* in J.S Brewer, J.F Dimock, and G.F. Warner (eds) *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera.* Vol 8. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Lines 1160-4.

[356] Ashe, Geoffrey (1991) 'Avalon' in Norris J. Lacy (ed) *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, New York: Garland. Pp.25-26 (25).

[357] Carasso-Bulow, Lucienne (1976) *The Merveilleux in Chrétien de Troyes' Romances.* Librairie Droz: Genève. P.83.

[358] Sweeney, Michelle (2000) *Magic in Medieval Romance: from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer.* Four Courts Press: Dublin. P.47.

[359] Breuer, P.30.

[360] Chrétien de Troyes (1990) 'Erec et Enide' in David Stains (trans) *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes.* Indiana University Press: Bloomington. Vv. 4192-94.P.53.

of magic, female power, and interactions with the Otherworld. Bliss supports this point, arguing in her *Naming and Namelessness* that including the name of 'Morgan' in a romance 'advertises it as promising a certain kind of tale.'[361] Although this may arguably have been more effective at the beginning of the poem than at the half-way point in which Morgan appears, this is a deliberate move on Chrétien's part, the author's allusion to the character marking a distinctive turning point in the narrative. Whereas the lines preceding her are dominated by worldly descriptions of the knights' martial combat and Érec's engaging in a contest with King Guivret the Small, the lines proceeding Chrétien's reference to Morgan are accompanied with various supernatural references. Although arguably more *merveilleux* than 'magical', the appearance of the two giants shortly after Chrétien's naming of the healer transforms *Érec* into a world more akin to the fantastical adventures of Celtic legend. While the dwarfs and giants that appear elsewhere suggest that an audience should expect the presence of the *merveilleux*, the garden with its invisible wall belongs firmly to the world of magical women perpetrated by romance. Indeed, without his allusion to the famously magical Morgan, Chrétien's description of the magical garden in the *Joie de la Cort* episode would sit rather uncomfortably within the otherwise worldly boundaries of this narrative.

Morgan's semiotic function appears to have been equally recognised by authors of German romance, in whose works she appears as an often disembodied reference to female outsiderness and subversion. To use Jon Sherman's description from his *The Magician in Medieval German Literature,* 'Morgan is known to Middle High German medieval audiences as the greatest of female magicians, but she is conspicuously absent from these same narratives. [362] In the example of Hartmann's *Iwein*, a German readaptation of Chrétien's earlier *Yvain*, Morgan's power is presented as a powerful force but she 'herself never makes an appearance in the romance':[363]

> If Sir Iwein's sickness comes from his brain, I can easily help him, because I have still a salve that the fairy Morgan le Fay made with her own hands. It is so constituted that anyone suffering madness will swiftly regain his well-being and his health, upon being treated with it.[364]

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[361] Bliss, Jane (2008) *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.76.

[362] Sherman, Jon B. (2009) *The Magician in Medieval German Literature*. ProQuest: Ann Arbor. Pp.61.

[363] Sherman, P.61.

[364] Hartmann Von Aue (2001, 11?) 'Iwein' (trans. Richard H. Lawson) in *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric Poetry. The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. Pp. 235-322 (3419-23).

This trend is likely derived from Chrétien's 'distance' method of referencing female Others; by literally forcing Morgan outside the boundaries of the narrative, the author does not have to engage too thoroughly with her magic, with which he is clearly uncomfortable. Says Breuer, it might be stated that '[Morgan's] absence diffuses the latent threat of her transformative (healing) magic...She herself is outside of society, but the fruits of her labour are available within it.'[365] Indeed, recalling the idea that literary manifestations of female Otherness provide a means by which subversive women might be recognised, identified, and in some measure resisted, it would seem that semiotic inclusions of female Others were as much a cautionary device as one used for commentary in medieval texts. Despite the habitual presence of the fay's magical knowledge and power throughout Hartmann's Arthurian works, it is therefore likely that the fay remains a conspicuously absent, bodiless manifestation of Otherness in both *Iwein* and his later *Erec*, the intensification of which correlates directly with the author's emphasis on her newly malignant prowess. [366]

This 'distant' trend is found again in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*, a work in which Morgan is referenced as a powerful and learned woman with potent magic, but who does not appear within the main body of the narrative. Instead, the king's daughter, who has 'read books about all [types of] knowledge',[367] is compared with Morgan to highlight her accomplishments: 'Except for the mighty Morgan le Fay, no woman could compare with her, as far as I have ever heard.'[368] In drawing our attention to the character in this way, it has been noted that Ulrich perhaps sought to indicate his unnamed fairy queen as a variant on the official Morgan, who is not named because the author wished to rebrand Geoffrey's pagan elements within a Christian setting. Her lack of being named as Feimurgân here expresses a more cautious approach to female Otherness than typically found in medieval French texts, German authors perhaps seeking to disempower the character by a more exaggerated means to accommodate the cultural demands of their readers. For this reason, the idea of a 'Morgan-but-not-Morgan' is a fairly common motif in medieval German texts. In the c.1220 Middle High German poem *Diu Crône,* Morgan is not named, yet the character of Giramphiel is presented in a way

[365] Ibid.
[366] Hartmann was clearly determined that his Morgan not merely be distanced by the spatial and temporal means introduced by his French predecessor, but rather by the ultimate segregation of death: 'If anyone wonders, and would like to hear, where the bandage came from, Morgan le Fay, the king's sister, had left it a long time ago, when she died.' Hartmann Von Aue (2001) 'Erec' (trans. Kim Vivian) in *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric Poetry. The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. Pp. 51-164. Line 5153.
[367] 'gelesen/ diu buoch von allen listen' 7182-83.
[368] 'âne Feimurgân die rîchen/ sô enkund sich ir gelîchen/ keip wîp, von der ich ie vernam' 7185-87.

that suggests she may have been intended as a reworking of the character. We are informed that, like the chasuble in the Guiot edition of *Érec,* the girdle given to Gasozein is worked by the magical Giramphiel. Loomis makes a detailed identification of the similarities between Morgan's earlier apparitions and Giramphiel in his 'More Celtic Elements in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'*, mostly on the basis that he believes they are derived from a shared source. Arguing that the Gasozein episode in *Diu Krone* provides 'the strongest proof of the Irish origin of the magic girdle'[369] associated with Giramphiel, Loomis suggests that Morgan's chasuble and Giramphiel's lace both originate from the Celtic tale, *The Death of Cú Roí*. The character is also openly connected with Fortuna, a 'split' from Giramphiel whom Neil Thomas regards as 'a stem from which the [Morgan] shoot might have been removed.'[370]

Whilst attempting to establish constancy in Morgan's role as a sign may seem only to emphasise the distinctions between her roles as she appears across a range of texts, her variations also provide a means of identifying culturally specific conceptions of female Otherness within medieval Europe. As Ross Arthur notes in his discussion of sign-based characters, 'it follows that the meaning of a sign is in part determined by those who perceive it, and that if there are different audiences for the same sign, they will attribute different meanings to it.'[371] When looking at different examples of Morgan, we see different meanings projected onto the character that reflect a variety of cultures and audience demands, particularly when considering her appearances in texts from what are now France and Germany. As Pierre Jonin notes, by comparing the way in which the same generic plots are treated in French and German texts, the workings of each may be used to demonstrate 'the influence of historical reality, literary currents, and religious climate upon each episode or event in which female characters appear.'[372] This seems to particularly relevant in studies of Other women. Although Hartmann may replicate the majority of Chrétien's *Érec,* his most notable alteration to the earlier text is his powerful ninety-one line diatribe against Morgan le Fay.

[369] Loomis, Roger Sherman (1943) 'More Celtic Elements in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 42, No. 2. University of Illinois Press: Champaign. Pp.149-184 (160).
[370] Thomas, Neil (2002) *Diu Crône and the Medieval Arthurian Cycle.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge.P.69.
[371] Ross, Arthur, G. (1989) 'Emaré's Cloak and Audience Response' in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (eds) *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature.* Syracuse University Press: New York. Pp.80-92 (80).
[372] Jonin, Pierre (1958) 'Les personnages feminins dam les romans francais de Tristan XIIe siècle: Etude des influences contemporaines. In Publications des annals de la Faculte des Lettres, n.s. 22. Editions Ophrys: Aix-en-Provence. P.14.

Although Morgan remains a disembodied presence in Hartmann's text, being described as one long dead, she is also denounced as a wicked, impious and terrifying companion of the Devil:

> 'With her own hands the queen dressed the knight's side. At no time has the world ever seen a better bandage. If anyone wonders, and would like to hear, where the bandage came from, Morgan le Fay, the king's sister, had left it a long time ago, when she died...She lived in great defiance of God, for the birds and wild animals in the woods and the fields obeyed her commands, and – what strikes me as most powerful – the evil spirits called devils were all in her power'.[373]

Although writing only twenty years after Chrétien, there is a marked distinction between how the authors approach the subject. Chrétien merely states that the king's 'wise' sister provided an ointment for the benefit of the injured hero, a description that Hartmann clearly felt to be insubstantial. As McConeghy points out, Hartman inserts, in his didactic way, a recreation of his 'Christian world view into [his] Arthurian stories'[374] that extends to the German Church's more definite distinctions as to which branches of healing could be called 'miraculous' and which 'magical'. While there is much to suggest that during the Early Middle Ages German women had widely practiced healing as part of their spiritual art,[375] the Cluniac reforms that began to take place during the eleventh century 'relegated religious women to a more subservient role, always under the watchful eye of a male confessor.'[376] As a result, female healing was relegated to a more subjugated position, being feared for its potentially demonic implications. Deborah Stoudt emphasises this in her 'Medieval Women and the Power of Healing', claiming that '[b]y the twelfth century there is evidence to support the thesis that laywomen legally practiced medicine in European cities such as Salerno and Paris...[but] there are only

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[373] Hartmann Von Aue (2001) 'Erec' (trans. Kim Vivian) in *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric Poetry. The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. Pp. 51-164. Lines 5151-5194

[374] McConeghy, Patrick M. (1977) *A Translation of Hartmann von Aue's Iwein: with introduction and interpretive commentary.* Stanford University Press: Redwood City. P720.

[375] Lioba (died 782), a nun from the community of Wimborne, journeyed from her Anglo Saxon homeland to the area around Würzburg at the request of Boniface; she assisted in the conversion of the German people and later directed the abbey at Tauberbischofsheim. At the behest of Queen Hildegard, Lioba visited Charlemagne's court at Aachen on several occasions. In the tenth and eleventh centuries the abbey of Gandersheim was allied closely with the royal family, whose princesses, for example Gerberg II (died 1001), daughter of the duke of Bavaria, served as the leaders of the community. (See ibid)

[376] Ibid.

occasional references to laywomen in German-speaking areas renowned for the medieval expertise.'[377]

The changes in Morgan's appearances are equally dependent upon the 'appropriate statement' that authors thought would be most relevant to their own culture. Hartmann alludes to both Sibyl, the seeress from classical tradition, as well as Erichtho the sorceress in his description of the character, both of whom are referenced by Lucan in the *Pharsalia* 'at different periods of crisis to predict the future of the endangered Roman polity.'[378] These references were undoubtedly intended to liken Morgan to a collection of women categorically defined as Other; the Erichtho in particular was recognised as far more malevolent than the Irish Morrígan, participating in acts of necromancy we find in Morgan's later roles. Larrington also believes Hartmann deliberately drew upon the goddess Circe in his representation of Morgan, a comparison that, although less familiar to Geoffrey's original audience, Hartmann may have expected his readers to know:[379]

> Circe is the chief exemplar for Hartmann's version of Morgan, again mediated through Ovid, Virgil and Hyginus. Like Circe, Feimurgân has herbal knowledge, the ability to walk on water, and, most distinctively, the power and inclination to turn men into animals. Passage through the different elements, including fire, transformation, and understanding of the medicinal qualities of a plant are emphasized among Feimurgân's talents.[380]

Like Circe, Morgan is here presented as a 'goddess', one of only four instances throughout her literary history where she is referenced as such. This is an important turning point in Morgan's development; recalling the transitional nature of German Christianity, Hartmann reconstitutes the Other woman as not only separate from traditional Catholicism, but actively working against it. Indeed, says Wolf, by looking at Chrétien and Hartmann's treatment of the subject of Other womanhood, 'one can

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[377] Stoudt, Deborah L. (2015, 1997) 'Medieval Women and the Power of Healing' in Lilian R. Furst (ed) *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill.* The University Press of Kentucky: Lexington. Pp.13-42 (14).

[378] Larrington, Carolyne. (2006) *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her sisters in Arthurian Tradition.* I B Tauris: London, New York. P.12.

[379] See Larrington, P.9.

[380] Ibid.

discern that the latter…is able to deal in an original fashion with concepts that were anchored in the religious thought of his time.'[381]

Although the influence of sign philosophy upon Morgan's role is perhaps most prevalent in High Medieval works, we continue to witness Morgan's use as a form of rhetorical shorthand in later texts. After the establishment of the Morgan phantasm as a literary device, this method came to be used to a two-way effect: just as the presence of a Morganic woman could automatically indicate that a story would contain sexual or magical elements, narrative aspects such as streams, islands and forests could pre-empt or even replace physical descriptions of Other women. Certainly by the fourteenth century, a reference to 'Morgan' would have included suggestions to the majority of her famed characteristics without the need for lengthy personal descriptions. For instance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a work in which Morgan has been described by contemporary scholars as 'excrescent'[382] and 'superfluous',[383] it is likely that where modern readers have failed to rationalise her function, a medieval audience would have perceived Morgan's involvement from the start of the text. Owing to the story's fantastic wilderness setting, proximity to borders and Gawain's frequent traversing of rivers linked to the tradition of Welsh deities, a medieval reader would likely have expected the presence of Morgan or one of her cognates because these are the qualities with which the medieval Other Woman is traditionally designated. The *Gawain* poet also follows the trend of earlier authors for disembodied female signs. Although she might be both named and physicalised in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*[384] her power is mediated by her physical distance from the narrative axis: in her bodily manifestation she remains a nameless old woman, though when her identity is revealed – within her own domain of the Green Chapel, no less – she is nowhere to be seen. As Sachi Shimomura notes in her *Odd Bodies and Visible Ends*: 'all magical transformations occur, as it were, off-stage, outside the view of the poem',[385] leaving the symbolic occurrences of Morgan's power, like that in *Érec* and *Yvain,* out of the reader's sight. Yet more telling

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[381] Wolf, Alois (2005) 'Hartmann von Aue and Chrétien de Troyes: Respective Approaches to the Matter of Britain' in Francis G. Gentry (ed) *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Camden House: Rochester and Woodbridge. Pp.43-70 (67).

[382] Hulbert, James R. (1931) 'A Hypothesis Concerning the Alliterative Revival'. In *Modern Philology,* Vol. 28. No. 4. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. Pp 405-422.

[383] Kittredge, George. (1960, 1916) *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

[384] While this may seem of little consequence to us, there is a trend among medieval authors to include Morgan either by name or in body in earlier texts as a means of disabling her potency.

[385] Shimomura, Sachi (2006) *Odd Bodies and Visible Ends in Medieval Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.153.

is Bertilak's admission that it is 'þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye'[386] that the entire beheading game has been enabled. This unusual statement that it is not simply 'by Morgan' comes with the suggestion of a strangely non-embodied power, an abstract form of subversive female prowess that is, somewhat troublingly, able to threaten Camelot even from such a distance. As Elizabeth Scala claims in her *Absent Narratives,* Morgan occupies an overtly symbolic space in the poem, one that Arthurian history characterizes most strikingly by its absence. And it is 'this absence rather than her presence that makes the mysterious story work.'[387]

It should also be noted that where earlier invocations of Morgan had connoted aspects of female Otherness primarily relating to healing and magic, in the increasingly turbulent political climate of Late Medieval England she is often used to suggest a more civic form of outsiderness. While political Others were rarely female, their outsider nature readily likened them to the Other Woman (outsider men being a rare commodity apart from in the outlaw tradition), who, being recognised as viable signs for Otherness, could be used convey messages of a political nature. In addition to the political struggles between the Welsh and the Bretons, one overt rivalry between the nations was the contested cultural ownership of the Arthurian tradition. As William Farina notes, typifying this struggle between battling bards were 'multiple, disputed locations of Arthurian landmarks, beginning with the Isle of Avalon, mentioned by Chrétien in *Érec and Énide* (line 1907) as the home of Arthur's sister Morgan le Fay.'[388] Gerald of Wales provides an unusually early example of this in his *Speculum*, in which Morgan is used as a partial expression of the political tensions between the Welsh and the English. As Gerald was a part-native Welshman living and working in England, Bartlett believes that, unlike Geoffrey, the author was far more conscious of his own state of 'between-ness' and lack of adherence to either Welsh or English nationality.[389] As a result 'Gerald was critical of and sympathetic to Welsh and English royalty in turn; he aided in the control and subjugation of his Welsh countrymen, yet at other times served as 'eulogist and apologist' for the Marchers.[390] Hebert believes that Gerald, recognising Morgan's

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[386] Barron, W.R.J (ed) (1998) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Manchester University Press: Manchester. 2446

[387] Scala, Elizabeth. (2002) *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.64.

[388]Farina, William (2010) Chrétien de Troyes and the Dawn of Arthurian Romance. McFarland: Jefferson. P.69.

[389] Bartlett, Robert (1982) *Gerald of Wales: 1146-1223.* Clarendon Press: Oxford. Pp.13-58.

[390] Hebert, P.54.

function as a signifier, uses the character as a receptacle for these tensions in the *Speculum:*

> Despite the uncertainty of his own identity, or perhaps because of it, Gerald's emphasis on the distance between himself as a collector and reporter of facts and the bards who seemingly insist on repeating outlandish falsehoods about Arthur's fate…As a clerk to Henry II, Gerald likely felt obligated to belittle the Britons' beliefs [in Morgan]; yet his simultaneous propagation of those beliefs seems a minor expression of rebellion of a Welshman who is himself subject to English scorn for his heritage.[391]

This is a particularly valid point when we consider that medieval English culture generally equated 'Welshness', a quality that Morgan possesses in abundance, with 'Otherness'. As Ian Bradley reminds us, 'from the time that the Greeks first coined the term *Keltoi*, Celts were essentially outsiders, defined in terms of their "otherness"'.[392] Gerald emphasises this in his *Descriptio Kambriae,* playing on the etymological abjectness of the Welsh Celts he associates with Morgan: '[b]ecause in [the barbarous Saxons'] language they call all that is alien Welsh (*Wallicum*), also called the peoples alien to them Welsh (*Walenses*). And hence, up to today, by a barbarous naming the people are called Welsh and the land Wales.'[393]

This political element is more commonly found in later representations of Morgan, primarily because by the later Middle Ages signs were regarded as a more enigmatic mode of expression than the direct modes of revelation featured in earlier narratives. As Reiss notes, signs no longer offered what was necessarily an immediate or universal understanding: 'the shell containing the kernel of truth might well be tough to crack.'[394] It is therefore unsurprising that by the fifteenth century the representative Morgan figures as a more intricately symbolic device; in *Le Morte Darthur* the character imbibes not only the generic attributes of the female Other, but also the Otherness attributed to those outside the 'we' and 'us' of Arthur's court. Farina even goes as far as to ascribe Morgan's transition from 'benign enchantress in Chrétien to something akin to the

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[391] Hebert, 54-56.

[392] Bradley, Ian (1999) *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams.* Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh. P.226.

[393] Gerald of Wales (1194) *Descriptio Kamrbiae,* 1.7, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera* (Ed) J.S. Brewer, James F. Dimock and George F. Warner. Rolls Ser: London. P.179.

[394] Reiss, Edmund (1989) 'Ambiguous Signs and Authorial Deceptions in Fourteenth-Century Fictions' in Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (eds) *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature.* Syracuse University Press: New York. Pp.113-140 (114).

Wicked Witch of the West by the 15th century'[395] to the frequent political and military transitions occurring in England during Malory's composition of the *Morte.* Within the context of the narrative her function is suggestive of various political deliberations on Malory's part: notions of women in power, the fragility of kingship, and royal sibling rivalry. Malory's equating of Camelot with Winchester in *Le Morte Darthur* – a means of associating the monarch with Arthurian sovereigns such as Henry II and Edward III, while positioning the otherworldly realm occupied by Morgan, Viviane and other deific female progenies among the misty domain of Avalon – would likewise have suggested a subtle mockery of the political opponents of the English monarchy. Given that literary magic is frequently used as a means of reflecting medieval European's perception of the Other, moreover, Jolly supplements this with her argument that Morgan, a manifestation of 'evil magic', signifies 'court intrigue involving jealousy and political rivalry'.[396] Although as a political Other her judgement on Camelot may signify the general attitudes between antagonistic states, Morgan's position outside the realm also allows Malory to provide what is arguably a more balanced view of political chivalry. As Hebert notes, Morgan 'is knowledgeable about, yet outside the system, a position that provides a clear view of chivalry's flaws and an unfettered voice for Malory's concerns.'[397]

Malory also uses Morgan as a cypher for provoking discussions concerning the role of women more generally, those whom he considers 'inclusive' to society and those outside of it. Both Morgan and Nymue in the *Morte* provide 'cautionary tales about the consequences of educating women'.[398] For Maureen Fries, this is indicative of the medieval attitudes towards female learning: '[p]erhaps – as male authors for centuries before and after, as well as during Malory's own, maintained – [Morgan's] schooling illustrates the danger of educating women beyond their appropriate sphere (which is to further male interests rather than their own).'[399] This is a valid argument when we consider that one of the most prevalent and indeed dangerous aspects of the Morgan figure during the Middle Ages was her intellectual capacity. Not satisfied with the simple roles of wife and motherhood, the Other Woman is frequently associated with learning in literature and earlier folklore. The classical Circe was known for her extensive

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[395] Farina, William (2010) Chrétien de Troyes and the Dawn of Arthurian Romance. McFarland: Jefferson. P.109.

[396] Jolly, Karen (2002) *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages.* The Athlone Press: London. P.70.

[397] Hebert, P.69.

[398] Pérez, P.139.

[399] Fries, Maureen (1994) 'From the Lady to the Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance' in *Arthuriana* 4:1. Pp.1-18 (10).

knowledge of herbs, and the goddess Macha was thought to promote medicinal education for women. Rather than lessening according to what we might think of as the natural means of academic progression, however, this aspect of the Other woman's identity appears to have become more troublesome for authors and chroniclers in later medieval culture. In her analysis of the education of medieval lay women, Cruz notes that 'by the late Middle Ages...most women learned household tasks, manners, and Christian virtues from informal verbal instruction'.[400] Using the late medieval portrait of the author Christine de Pizan sitting at her desk writing as a basis for argument, the scholar suggests that, given the discouragement of women learning to write, this portrayal is both 'unusual and remarkable, as was [Christine's] passionate advocacy of female education and the role of learned women.'[401]

Like the topical quality of healing for Geoffrey, the subject of women's education is projected onto the tangible manifestations of female Otherness found in popular fifteenth-century romance. As various scholars have observed, Malory deliberately mitigates the extensiveness of Morgan's education, which is presented in his earlier French sources as a comprehensive process of intellectual instruction ranging from letter writing to astronomy. Says the author of the *Prose Merlin:*

> Upon the advice of all of his friends together, the king [Neutres] had her study letters in a house of religion. And she learned so much and so well that she learned the [seven liberal] arts, becoming wonderfully adept at an art called astronomy. And she worked hard all the time and knew a great deal about the physics of the healing arts, and through her mastery from the clergy she became known as Morgan the Fay. [402]

For Malory, however, Morgan is simply put to school in a nunnery, where she becomes a great clerk of necromancy. Young comments on this, stating that as a signifier for Other womanhood, it is likely that Malory wished to remove some of the former mystique surrounding the goddess as a means of attributing her knowledge to diabolical sources rather than a formal education: '[c]ongruent with the declining status of Celtic women, Morgan began to lose her divine characteristics during the Middle Ages, eventually

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[400] Cruz, Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran (2012) 'Education, Lay' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York P240-241 (241).
[401] Ibid
[402] Et par le consoil de touz les amis ensemble la fist li rois apredre letres en une maison de religion et celle aprist tant et si bien qu'elle aprist des arz, et si sot merveille d'un art que l'en apele astronomie et molt en ouvra toz jorz et sot molt de fisique, et par celle mastrie de clergie qu'ele avoit fu apelee Morgain le faee. Robert de Boron, trans. (1979) *Merlin: Roman du XIIIe siècle.* ed. A. Micha. Textes Littéraires Français: Geneva. P.245.

becoming a mortal woman who possessed some occult knowledge.'[403] However, the nunnery is in itself an important factor in Malory's description, for it suggests that Malory felt even a lack of personal control over the subject matter behind Morgan's character. In the *Morte,* the two institutions generally designed for control of the feminine in the chivalric community, which Armstrong has defined as 'marriage and the convent' both seem incapable of constraining Morgan: '[i]ndeed, not only does she escape the nunnery, but while there, this "third sister" of King Arthur manages to appropriate and adapt the function of the convent to suit her own ends.'[404]

While Morgan clearly has greater mimetic function in these later appearances than her earlier counterparts (particularly for Malory, who describes her marriage to Uriens in some detail), she is still used to a largely semiotic effect. McAlindon comments on Morgan's primarily symbolic function in the *Morte,* highlighting Malory's continuation of the 'distance' method established in earlier texts: '[a]gain and again Malory's narratives exhibit a heavy reliance on…the treacherous manoeuvres of…[Morgan le Fay] who, though indispensable to the plot, barely emerges from the background of events.'[405] Signifying an Otherness that applies both to Arthur's court and the fifteenth-century milieu against which he positions the character, Malory projects onto Morgan a series of attitudes concerning female behaviours, social conflicts, and a notably masculine message for his own generation of readers. In her discussion of the masculine symbology of the *Morte,* Armstrong comments on Malory's use of Morgan as a primarily representational figure:

> In the danger she poses to the masculine chivalric community, Morgan also ironically provides that community with tests which, when successfully passed by the knight in question, serve to strengthen the institution of knighthood. Yet…the masculine agents of the community never adequately deal with Morgan's threat; the knights do not seem to learn anything from these encounters in terms of strategy, should they meet her again.[406]

The symbolic implications of this within a more general context are obvious. Just as Arthur's knights seem not to learn from their encounters with Morgan, Malory stresses

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[403] Young, Serinity 'King Arthur and Morgan le Fay' *Goddesses Who Rule* In Elisabeth Anne Bernard and Beverly Ann Moon (eds) Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.181-194 (191).
[404] Armstrong, Dorsey (2003) *Gender and the Chivalric Community of Malory's Morte D'Arthur.* University Press of Florida: Gainesville. P.60.
[405] McAlindon, T. (1965) 'Magic, Fate, and Providence in Medieval Narrative and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in *The Review of English Studies,* New Series, 16.62. P.123.
[406] Armstrong, Dorsey (2003) *Gender and the Chivalric Community of Malory's Morte D'Arthur.* University Press of Florida: Gainesville. P.99.

the endless recurrence of Other women within the narrative tradition as a whole. No matter how frequently Morgan and her 'sisters' appear within medieval stories, they are never defeated, but rather regenerate in a continuing series of narratives. She might appear as 'Morgan', or under another designation, but the Other Woman's overriding message is the same; she may be constrained, ejected, and marginalised, but her subversive presence remains both a threat towards masculine identity, and, intriguingly, a paradigm around which this identity is validated. To use Allison Weir's description: 'the assimilation of woman's [O]therness is necessary for the construction of man's unified and universal self; and this self requires the projection of man's own [O]therness, or his need for an [O]ther, onto woman – the construction of her "[O]therness," which is only a reflection of himself.'[407]

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[407] Weir, Allison (1996) *Sacrificial Logics: Feminist Theory and the Critique of Identity.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. P.94.

Chapter Three: Cues and Triggers

Social memory is inherently...active and performative in nature, and can be mediated...by the written and spoken word.[408]

Howard Williams

Using medieval methodologies to understand the texts of the period is particularly useful when exploring the traditionally under-researched domain of character. Beginning to dispel some of the scholarly criticisms surrounding Morgan's supposedly ambivalent role in medieval texts, a sign-based analysis of the fay rejects the idea that she somehow 'conspires' against contemporary literary theory, and instead presents her as a figure that is consistent with the medieval desire for physically formed phantasms. Not only fulfilling Minnis' specification for an understanding of medieval texts that is 'genuine and historically right,'[409] accepting Morgan le Fay as a primarily semiotic figure generates various possibilities in how we might approach her as a representation of authorial concepts. As a signifier, Morgan's intertextual variations are accounted for by the fact that semiotic characters do not have to be 'whole, coherent, or believable',[410] her changing faces instead being ascribed to the constant fluctuations of her connotative subject matter: the female Other.

Further development of this theory might be used to substantiate Bane's claim that Morgan le Fay has 'had many names...in religion and folklore'.[411] Without conjectural validation, it is not enough to assert that Morgan and her 'sisters' share a universal identity on the basis that they are merely 'similar'. Although basically defensible, such a statement lacks analytical depth, not to mention raising the potential for all literary characters that are simply 'alike' to be considered as different faces of a generic identity. By approaching the subject from a primarily medieval perspective, however, we might verify this argument with a more solid theoretical basis. As Marenbon states, contrary to our own semiotic ideologies, written signs of objects might in medieval culture appear quite different to one another, 'and yet [can still be] used to refer to the same

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[408] Williams, Howard (2006) *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.2

[409] Minnis, Alaistair (2010, 1984) *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.7.

[410] Nikolajeva, Maria (2002) *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham. P.146.

[411] Bane, Theresa (2013) *Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology.* McFarland and Company: Jefferson. P.237.

concept'. [412] This idea, an Avicennian position developed on the basis of singular universality, provides a suitable perspective from which to explore Morgan as a collective yet multiply-named character. However, this complex mode of analysis requires further discussion before it can be put to practical use within the context of this thesis. We must for instance establish which aspects of a sign are variable and which are not, in order for it to have simultaneously individual and representative functions. Are there standard patterns involved in constructing signs belonging to universal subjects, or are they simply developed according to the cultural instincts of the designer? Concerning the construction of literary characters more specifically, are there qualities that are generic to the Other Woman, and 'unique' to Morgan le Fay, or does her semiotic universality rely on a different mode of interpretation? And if we establish a standard set of universal qualities that might be used to define 'the Other Woman' does this provide us with a standardised means of establishing a further range of characters belonging to Morgan's universal identity? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by exploring how the principle of medieval character 'types' reflects the sign culture of the period, and how this might be used to substantiate Morgan's many names and faces throughout literature and folklore.

Abstraction

> *The romance and the fabliau are both conventional genres, inhabited by conventional character types. In the hands of a skilled artist a conventional type can be brought to vivid life but it still triggers an automatic response in the audience – a reflex indicated by many previous encounters with similar characters in similar situations.*[413]

Corinne J. Saunders

Recalling Ockham's suggestion that 'the individual is [also] a sign of the universal',[414] medieval semioticians use phantasmal theory to stress the potential of created signs to connote universal subject matters, while still possessing an identity in their own right. According to this principle, the human mind is able to perceive both that which signs designate as individual objects (for instance a crucifix as a wooden cross), and that which they represent in a universal sense (a crucifix as a sign of the Crucifixion).

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[412] Marenbon, John (2002) *Early Medieval Philosophy 480-1150: An Introduction.* Routledge: New York. P.137

[413] Saunders, Corinne J. (2005) *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P20.

[414] Pellerey, Roberto (1989) 'Thomas Aquinas: Natural Semiotics and the Epistemological Process' in Umberto Eco (ed) *On the Medieval Theory of Signs.* John Benjamins B.V: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp 81-106 (99).

According to medieval discourse this is a natural process, though the human intellect may also rely on previous encounters with signs of the same 'type' to determine which of these attributes are general, and which are supplementary. As the eleventh-century Persian polymath Avicenna states: '[t]he first thing that [the intellect] inquires into is the confused mixture in the phantasm; for it finds accidental and essential features, and among the accidents those which are necessary and those which are not.'[415] Signs may differ in shape, size, and outward appearance, but by demonstrating 'essential features' the intellect is able to categorise them into a series of 'types' not unlike that of character. Adam Wood explores this concept in his 'Transduction and Singular Cognition in Thomas Aquinas': claiming that after a sign's accidental qualities are stripped away from the *specifica phantasma,* he says that we are left with only the essential markers, the attributes that the intellect stores and then uses to collate future objects of the same kind. He then states that the intellect must therefore 'be capable of sorting its data into kinds – cats, people, sheep, etc. – so that the agent intellect, stripping away what is particular to *this* cat, can think about cats in general.'[416] In the case of the crucifix, the essential features might include the perpendicular shape, elongated stem, and angular bisection, while the accidental features would refer to the cross' building material, weight, and size. Likewise for the cat, the *species universales* consists of four paws, slit-pupils, and whiskers, while the *specifica phantasma* refers to the cat's colour, length of fur, and sex.

The medieval understanding that all cognition occurs by way of signs places literary cyphers in a higher position of authority than might be said of their contemporary counterparts. As signs, medieval characters not only have the potential to present otherwise abstract matters to the intellect in tangible form, but are also able, if we subscribe to Ockham's idea, to connote universal subject matters while featuring as persons in their own right. Nikolajeva supports this statement, encouraging her readers to analyse semiotic characters using the same principles found in medieval phantasmal discourse. She alleges that 'assuming that characters are closed textual constructions (semiotic entities) we extract the essential traits of the characters exclusively from their sayings and doings in the text.' [417] These 'sayings and doings' (which might be supplemented with 'appearances') will generally combine the essential with the

[415] Avincenna, III.5, 160.7-17; 222.1-11.
[416] Wood, Adam (2011) 'Transduction and Singular Cognition in Thomas Aquinas' in Alexander W. Hall (ed) *The Demonic Temptations of Medieval Nominalism* (Volume 9: Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics). Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle upon Tyne. Pp.11-24 (16).
[417] Nikolajeva, Maria (2002) *Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham.

accidental; semiotic characters might belong to an older, universal identity, and yet behave as individual people within a work or body of works. According to the medieval theorists, it is owing to our previous experience of these 'essential traits' that we are able to determine which qualities belong to the *species universales,* and which, belonging to the *specifica phantasma,* should be stripped away. We are thus reliant upon our knowledge of characters belonging to the same 'type' to actualise this, a factor presupposed by medieval authors who took for granted their audience's familiarity with popular motifs and *topoi.*

Carruthers, mindful of the theoretical distinctions between medieval and contemporary approaches to writing, explores this process of memorial universality in her *The Book of Memory.* Subscribing to the idea of the written word as a synthetic alternative to the natural phantasm, she believes that medieval writers, aware of the processes involved in cognition, construct their literary 'signs' in accordance with their beliefs in the functioning of the human intellect. Concerning the intellect's understanding of signs more generally, the 'sign' of a physical object, the phantasm, is constituted as an impression of various sensory qualities. For Aquinas in particular, '[t]his impression constitutes a completely valid and true sign of the object',[418] the interpretation of which depends in turn upon our intellect's capability to recognise the universal meaning of qualities in particular combinations. For Carruthers, the main function of the word-picture therefore has the same purpose as the phantasm: 'to cue and trigger recollection of textual material that the reader already knows'.[419] In the same way, the functioning of this memorial utility depends wholly on an author's use of literary 'markers' that are at once correct and instantly recognisable. These may take the form of a character's physical attributes, personal associations, or transpositions of earlier motifs, and are particularly important in written manifestations of abstract concepts. Tara Hamling supports this idea, observing in her 'Visual Culture', that 'the system of standardised, easily recognisable pictorial [and written] signs which "bodied forth" and stood for abstract concepts such as moral qualities or spiritual tenets formed a common vocabulary'[420] in the Middle Ages. Just as our experience teaches us to recognise the

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[418] Tabarroni, Andrea (1989) 'Mental signs and the theory of representation in Ockham' in Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (eds) *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*. John Benjamins B.V: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp.195-214 (200).

[419] Carruthers, P.285.

[420] Hamling, Tara (2014) 'Visual Culture' in Dr Abigail Shinn and Dr Matthew Dimmock (eds) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England.* Ashgate Publishing: Surrey. Pp. 75-102 (100).

essential qualities belonging to the universal cat and crucifix, so would a medieval reader recognise the 'common vocabulary' for entities including the female Other.

Given the abstract and non-sensory nature of the *species* designated by *litterae*, the effective functioning of literary phantasms depends even more thoroughly on their having an agreed and thus ascertainable set of essential traits than the natural phantasm. Just as the human intellect interprets 'cues' from sensory information in the real world, so authors must provide recognisable indications of subject matters in their written work. Robert Pasnau emphasises this in his 'Abstract Truth in Thomas Aquinas', an essay in which his use of 'similarity' should be interpreted more theoretically than what we might think of as something being commonly 'similar':

> There must be real similarity between members of a kind, and that similarity must be isomorphic within our conceptual scheme. Since the ultimate grounds of similarity within a species are often hidden from us, we must take our cues from what we can observe, and what we can observe must be closely correlated with the underlying essences we wish to understand. On this depends the very meaningfulness of thought and language.[421]

This 'meaningfulness of thought and language' may be observed in medieval characters constructed in accordance with particular models already known to the reader. Like the universal cat, which is immediately identifiable by the characteristics that are left to us after its individuating qualities are stripped away, so literary characters might demonstrate a blueprint that exists when his or her 'personal' traits have been removed.

It is largely on the basis of these universal 'markers' that medieval literary culture facilitates the idea of character types. Characters are constructed using essential qualities, to which the 'accidental' traits that make a person unique are supplemented either for the purposes of entertainment and storytelling, or to make a character more suitable for the requirements of a particular genre or narrative. In Morgan's case, for instance…. Ernest Gallo comments on Matthew's description of this method, which the grammatician terms *manifesatio*. For Matthew, he says, '[t]he pleasure of reading poems of this kind is the pleasure of recognition, not discovery.'[422]

The theorists of the Middle Ages suggest that characters may utilise sets of pre-fashioned markers to indicate their general type while still behaving as individuals

[421] Pasnau, Robert (2007) 'Abstract Truth in Thomas Aquinas' in Henrik Lagerlund (ed) *Representation and Objects of Thought in Medieval Philosophy.* Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot and Burlington. Pp. 33-62 (59).
[422] Gallo, P.56.

within a story. As Keen notes, 'authors seldom exploited intricacies of character and tended to portray their heroes and villains as type figures'.[423] These types include a further host of identities ranging from the Christ-allegory to the comical bawd, from the virtuous Marian to the Celestina-type described by Francomano in Chapter One. Substantiating Carruthers' idea of the memorial purpose of literature, Matthew of Vendôme informs his audience of medieval writers that the chief occupation of poetry is to reveal the essential properties of a subject matter. The characters or objects of these texts should, being fitted to an 'essential model', be described in terms already familiar to a reader, and then 'be taken to stand for a general designation according to the nature of the subject and not according to the subject used to exemplify that nature.'[424] Like Ockham's signs, literary works contain meaning behind veils of figurative representation, which depend on our knowledge of universals and the means used to designate them. For Matthew, a semiotic character need therefore not be fully realised as a human being, but should rather be typical of his class: 'whatever individualising traits his author gives him should not obscure "the nature of the subject"' that is the particular type or class of human beings which he exemplifies.'[425]

Rather than relying wholly on naming to identify characters, Matthew therefore suggests that there are 'standard lists of characteristics to describe various types of people'.[426] While this is a common methodology among medieval authors, Gerhard Jaritz believes that Other women are particularly prone to being presented in this way because the material culture of the Middle Ages automatically designated particular patterns or characters as Other: [427]

> [Medieval] 'others'…were often constructed following similar or even the same patterns of outer appearance, gesture or material culture…To make them easily recognisable, the sign languages of various…'otherness' shaped them alike.[428]

[423] Keen, Maurice (1961) *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend.* Routledge and Kegan Paul: London. P.60.

[424] Gallo, Ernest (trans) (1974) 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise on the Art of Poetry' in *PAPS,* 118. Pp. 51-92 (72).

[425] Kennedy, Beverly (1985) *Knighthood in the Morte D'arthur.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.57.

[426] Ibid.

[427] In his study of what he calls 'quick images', Theodore Lerud even goes as far as to argue that the staged images demonstrated in medieval drama illustrate this point: [Dramatic texts and performance] reflect the key role of the image, or phantasm, as a bridge in Thomist (and Aristotelian) thought between *sensibilia* and intellectual understanding. They further manifest an appreciation of the primacy among sensed objects of visual *sensibilia* in creating images. Lerud, Theodore K. (2001) in Kathleen M. Ashley and Wim N.M Hüsken (eds) *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.* Rodopi: Amsterdam. 213-238 (214).

[428] Jaritz, Gerhard (2009) 'The Visual Image of the 'Other' in Late Medieval Urban Space: Patterns and Constructions' in Derek Keene, Balázs Nagy and Katalin Szende (eds) *Segregation: Integration,*

Wade supports this stance, noting in his *Fairies in Medieval Romance* that 'the manifestations of fairies in the romances were rather precisely delineated' (in contrast with what he terms the 'ambiguous supernatural'[429]), resulting in the fact that all fairy women in romance texts are constructed in accordance with an established model. This may be attributed to both the medieval obsession with female 'outsiderness' but also the fact that the medieval community regarded female bodies as being more suited to impregnation with abstract matters than males. Given that the qualities used to characterise masculinity are typically physical (for instance battle prowess), there is a less obvious need for male characters to adopt a semiotic roles in medieval literature; abstract concepts are usually feminine, 'and hence so are the personifications of those abstract concepts'.[430] Utilising the Platonic and Aristotelian visions of the participations of substance and matter, which describe matter as being 'made pregnant with form', abstract concepts in writing are literally, says Francomano, a 'representation of feminine matter impregnated by form'.[431] This is a useful point to note for, excluding Love and Genius, a medieval audience would have more readily expected their female characters to behave as signs, looking closely for the distinguishing factors that might identify them as belonging to a particular type. [432] Andrea Denny-Brown agrees with this point, claiming that the nature of medieval language meant female figures were more readily viable for linguistic representation than men. Owing to the highly gendered languages of the Middle Ages (particularly Latin), she claims female characters would be anticipated to be used as a means of manifesting external, non-tangible subjects, and are by consequence more likely to fall under the designation of set character types.[433]

Unfortunately, if medieval authors had a certified 'standard list' of characteristics with which to align characters to the identity of Other womanhood, no record of this remains to us. However, there are several ways in which we might determine the qualities used to connect female characters with the universal *species*. For Fowler, this might be inferred by the markers left upon their construction: 'like chisels, scaffolding, and plans that have left their marks on a monument but since disappeared, social persons must be

Assimilation: Religious Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe. Ashgate Publishing: Farnham and Burlington. Pp.235-250 (249).

[429] Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.5.

[430] Ibid, P.649.

[431] Francomano, Emily C. (2008) *Wisdom and Her Lovers in Medieval and Early Modern Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.16.

[432] In medieval poetry 'at times the few abstract nouns that are grammatically masculine were personified as women'. Francomano, P.15.

[433] Denny-Brown, Andrea (2006) 'Gendered Personifications' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. P.649.

inferred from their artifactual traces if characteri[s]ation is to be understood.'[434] While the most obvious means of identifying these 'traces' might seem to be collating a series of seemingly Other females from the literary tradition and determining which of their qualities appear with most frequency, this is not the most effective or accurate means of establishing these 'cues and triggers'. The purpose of this enquiry is to *develop* a means of identifying which women from the medieval tradition might be considered the 'other faces' of Morgan's persona, meaning that the standard list should be identified before further characters are ascribed to it. Rather more appropriate would therefore be to chronicle the appearances of Morgan le Fay, a woman we already know to be Other, and examine which of her characteristics appear with the most regularity in the medieval tradition. On the basis of these 'essential qualities' we might then establish a list from which to authenticate a range of further characters as expressions of Morgan's central persona.

Looking at the character's major roles in the medieval tradition, there are ten qualities that appear with most frequency. These include her pagan heritage, a sexually predatory nature, having magical powers, occupying caves/valleys, serving as a ruler, being situated against a wilderness backdrop, an aquaticism or a border, being associated with either metamorphosis or healing, and having an M headed name.[435] Presenting this standard list in a visual format allows us to identify which cues are most popular among medieval authors, as well as highlighting the chronological increase/decline of particular markers that reflect the cultural standards behind each work:

Marker Text	Pagan Herit-age	Sexually Predatory	Magical	Caves/ Valleys	Ruler	Wilder-ness Dwelling	Meta-morphic	Borders/ Aquatics	Heal-ing	'M' name
Vita Merlini (1150)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draco Normanni-cus (1168)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Erec et Enide (1170)			✓	✓[436]	✓	✓			✓	✓
Yvain (c.1170)	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓

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[434] Ibid.

[435] The final attribute on this list will become more significant when considering Morgan's differently named cognates.

[436] Guiot manuscript only. In Guiot's edition of *Erec* Guingamar is referred to as the friend of Morgan le Fay at 1904 and at 2353 Enide offers a chasuble originally fabricated by Morgan in the '*Val sans Retour'* (2358) for her friend (identified as Guingamor) but obtained by Queen Guenievre 'par engin molt grant' (v.2363) and given to Enid as her gift for the alter of Notre Dame. The reference is included in a passage that was Guiot's sole interpolation or addition to Chretien's work. See M. Roques, ed., *Erec et Enide* (Paris: Champion, 1968), XLIX. Malicote P.111.

Erec (1180-90)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Journey Through Wales (1188)	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Layamon's Brut (1200)			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Vulgate Cycle (early C.13th)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Post Vulgate Cycle (mid C.13th)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Les Prophecies de Merlin (c.1297)		✓	✓						✓	✓
Prose Tristan (Late C.13th)		✓	✓	✓						✓
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (late C.14th)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Le Morte Darthur (1485)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

While there is no standard as to how many of these qualities a character must possess in order to be categorised as Other – Morgan herself demonstrates these markers in different quantities from text to text – they provide a useful starting point from which to begin determining which characters might constitute the other aspects of Morgan's persona for, as Galvez notes, medieval literature 'draws from a common storehouse to give form to an idea under conventional rhetorical codes.'[437]

However, while this approach has a theoretical background that is useful for substantiating the otherwise vague definition of a universal Other, it also has the potential to be problematic. Although as contemporary analysts we can list the qualities that characterise the archetypal Morgan, we do not possess the same natural understanding of these symbols as would the original readers of these texts. Stalking the pages of their narratives like 'hunter-gatherer[s] on the trail, seeking out meaning

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[437] Galvez, Maria (2012) *Songbook: How Lyrics Became Poetry in Medieval Europe.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London. P.154.

in the smallest signs',[438] the medieval audience with their extant knowledge of literary *topoi* had an immediate advantage that we must attempt to counterbalance by increasing our knowledge of Morgan's connotative subject matter. Hanne Bewernick supports this point, asserting that 'the ability to interpret the encoded signs and symbols in characterisation is necessary if the memorised images are to be decoded and made useful when recalled.'[439] Whilst it would be impossible to 'read' a medieval text exactly in the same way as its original audience, we can attempt to understand the semiotic implications of this 'standard list' in as medieval a fashion as possible by considering why they appear with such regularity in portrayals of Other women. Before engaging in a practical demonstration of the methodology that will dominate the second half of the thesis, we must perform a basic analysis of the qualities that constitute the Other Woman as a *species universalis*. The remainder of this chapter seeks to understand the implications of Morgan's defining markers from a medieval perspective, determining both the reasons behind their inclusion in this standard list, as well as how they would have been interpreted by their original readers.

Spaces: Forests and the Wilderness

> [T]he forest stands as Other, as a place for mystery, disorder, the unknown, and fear.[440]

Jill Marie Hebert

While the idea of 'cues' may not appear to differ from the 'appropriate statement' discussed in Chapter Two, the appropriation of suitable material to a 'mental conception' refers to the process involved in crafting a character, with 'triggers' being more closely affiliated with later recollections of the subject matter. Moreover, where appropriate statement tends to apply to the details of personal character construction, such as name, appearance, and relationship with analogues, cues and triggers can be sourced both in the character and the background against which he or she is placed. Hugh of St. Victor emphasises this point in the preface to his *Chronica.* The theologian compares the system of memory with that of images placed against particular backgrounds, an analogy which is, as Roberta Albrecht observes, clearly a reworking of Aristotle's 'wax' theory from *De Anima*. Hugh thought of memory as images stored, like coins, in the various compartments of a purse, and as one needs or wants these coins,

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[438] Lucas, Raymond (2008) 'Walking as an Aesthetic Practice' in Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (eds) *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot.* Ashgate: Aldershot. Pp. 169-184 (170).
[439] Bewernick, Hanne (2010) *The Storyteller's Memory Palace: A Method of Interpretation Based on the Function of Memory Systems in Literature: Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Thomas Pynchon and Paul Auster.* Peter Lang: Frankfurt. P.75.
[440] Hebert, P.60.

'they are pulled out of their respective pockets.'[441] Whalen supplements this with his summary of the image theory presented in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*:

> [The] artificial memory sharpen[s] the innate ability of the person to remember material through…placement of such images. The image functions as a marker of the object we wish to remember and must be placed in a background that will facilitate its recall.[442]

The 'artificial' phantasm, so described by the *Rhetorica* author,[443] thus depends not only on its position in the human memory, but also on its position within a text. This can be literal (i.e. the chronological point in the text at which a character appears), or figurative (the backdrop or setting against which a character a placed. For female Others in particular, geographical spaces are triggers to our extant knowledge of the subject matter because the culture of the period upheld intrinsic associations between these spaces and marginal women.

The most common of these geographical markers is the wilderness location in which the Other Woman of romance is almost habitually placed. As Laurence Harf-Lancner notes in her *Les Fées au Moyen Age*, the true 'conte morganien'[444] is not defined by the lady's name, but by her occupation of the forest space, a boundary between worlds that signifies her lack of inclusion in mortal society. Although the idea of the forest as a phantasmal 'cue' remains fairly under-analysed in modern scholarship, various critics have commented on medieval authors' use of forest spaces to connect female characters with the universal Other. For Cynthia Kraman the landscape provides a semiotic solution to dealing with the subject of subversive females, authors rendering the female body 'less hot to handle in language'[445] by linking it through description to forests. The scholar argues that this marker is used to indicate the presence of Other women, who resultantly perform less like real persons and more as symbols of outsiderness. This is also used to a destabilising effect, reducing the Other Woman's power by making her identity dependent upon factors outside of her own body: as Kraman observes, '[t]he

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[441] Albrecht, Roberta (2005) *The Virgin Mary as Alchemical and Lullian Reference in Donne.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury. P.124.
[442] Whalen, P.12.
[443] 'Quod genus equi, leonis, aquilae memoriam si volemus habere, imagines eorum locis certis conlocare oportebit'. 'If we wish to recall the memory of the genuses of a horse, a lion or of an eagle, it is necessary to place the images of them against a definite background' (3.16.29).
[444] 'Morganian story' Harf-Lancner, Laurence. (1984) *Les fées au Moyen Age. Morgane et Mélusine. La naissance des fées.* Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Age: Paris, Champion. P.8.
[445] Kraman, Cynthia (1997) 'Communities of Otherness in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale' in Diane Watt (ed) *Medieval Women in Their Communities.* The University of Toronto Press: Toronto. Pp. 138-154 (139)

body, absorbed into the language of flowers and trees, is effectively disembodied.'[446] Elizabeth Edwards presents a similar argument in her 'The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur'*. Claiming that 'the mood of otherness, enigma and danger which characterises the forest of adventures generates physical damsels who populate it',[447] the Other Woman's personal identity is here presented as a variable factor – for she may appear in the form of multiple characters – whereas the forest space, a fixed entity in the medieval consciousness, is a firm indication of her universal persona. As part of the *species universales* the forest is therefore a denominating factor for all variants on the character type, existing even when the Other Woman's accidental qualities have been stripped away. The wilderness location might be used to indicate Morgan le Fay, or the Loathly Lady, or a generically anonymous *fée*.

Rarely depicted within the home, and often without the title of 'wife' or 'daughter' so often suffixed to female characters in medieval texts, the connections between forest spaces and marginal women – Morgan le Fay, Argante, Mélusine, Melior, and a range of unnamed *fées* – emphasise the subversive woman's removal from the male ordered world. Contrasting the inclusive courtly spaces occupied by Guinevere and her ilk, Morgan le Fay and her cognates inhabit a world of subversive female independence that epitomises the female Other herself. In medieval narratives the forest may be thought to represent 'the male projection of otherness as female',[448] because untamed areas of woodland signify both her literal exclusion from inclusive, courtly society, and the alienism of the female body; exotic, fertile, and dangerous. In this sense the wilderness is not merely a 'setting' for female characters, but is as inherent to their construction as descriptions of their physiognomy and personal traits. Roslyn Rossignol emphasises this point in her *Critical Companion to Chaucer,* asserting that forest spaces are often included in medieval texts primarily as a means of indicating or substantiating the role of the generic Other Woman. She states: '[m]any of the adventures of King Arthur and his knights are associated with the [forest] realm of Fairie because enchantresses like Morgan le Fay and other magical figures appear in those stories.'[449] Not only does this connect the Other Woman intrinsically with the forest as a marker, but makes the obvious assumption that 'enchantresses like Morgan le Fay and other magical figures' are interchangeable characters within the wider network of medieval narratives.

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[446] Ibid.

[447] Edwards, Elizabeth (1996) 'The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur*' in Elizabeth Archibald, Anthony Stockwell and Garfield Edwards (eds) *A Companion to Malory.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp. 37-54 (39).

[448] Ibid, P.39.

[449] Rossignol, Rosalyn (2006) *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work.* Infobase Publishing: New York. P.431.

Drawing on multiple sources from the traditions of Celtic and classical mythology[450] it is also here that we are most powerfully reminded of the character's multiply-named persona for it is in the ancient forest that 'the educator, the…wild woman, the fairy figure, and the loathly lady combine in Morgan as the powerful feminine icon of Arthurian romance.'[451]

Medieval society upheld a general consensus that extensive contact between females and the outside world lay at the root of venality and subversive behaviour, primarily because forests represent a lack of domesticity that was regarded as a serious threat to the patriarchal order of Church and state. As a non-civilised place, the wilderness was thought to contain dangerous beings that did not conform to cultural expectations. As Eluned Summers-Bremner notes: '[t]he medieval forest was feared as the haunt of [women and demons] because its opacity doubled the darkness of night, so that further darkness might hide there.'[452] Diana the huntress, the unnamed *fées* of legend, and Celtic deities like the Morrígan therefore occupy these spaces because they provide concealment from normal society. This is emphasised by the fertility of the earlier goddesses. Upon entering the forest space, a site of fundamentally male desires, the knights of medieval romance enter a quite literally female body which, having power over them, jeopardises the stable masculine hierarchy to which they belong. Patrick Ford believes this might be ascribed not only to the forest's vegetative aspect, but also the earlier folkloric figures known for their reproductive function and cyclic associations with the life-giving world:

> The native nomenclature for women who, like the sheelas, are hags etc. include the following: *caillech.* This is presumably a borrowing from Latin *pallium* (veil), which would give Irish *caille,* whence the adjective *caillech* (veiled). The term is used…more generally for an old woman or hag, but also for native goddesses such as the Mórrígan and Badb…It has also been suggested that the word belongs with Irish *caill* (wood, forest), and in some locutions, outlawry. Thus someone who lives in the wood or outside of the borders of society.[453]

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[450] In classical and Celtic mythology, women ranging from Diana the huntress to the demi-gods of the *Mabinogion* are presented as keepers of the forest.

[451] Hebert, P.65.

[452] Summers-Bremner, Eluned (2008) *Insomnia: A Cultural History.* Reaktion Books: London. P.38.

[453] Ford, Patrick K. (1998) 'The *Which* on the Wall: Obscenity Exposed in Early Ireland' in Jan M. Ziolkowski (ed) *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages.* Brill: Leiden, Boston, and Köln. Pp.176-192 (180).

As a natural, cyclic, and regenerative space, the wilderness is thus linked with female bodies on the basis of what might be described as Woman's most powerful form of agency: her reproductive function. This natural linguistic relationship is facilitated by a further connection in the romance tradition; in Ciceronian and medieval Latin the term 'natura' can equally be applied to mean 'vagina' as 'forest', for both are fundamentally sites of gestation and form.

There are also various historical factors that connect the Other Woman with forest spaces. Documents such as the 1217 Charter of the Forest suggest that from the early thirteenth century onwards the forest was officially demarked as a social margin, relegating both literal forest dwellers and characters associated with the space to the role of outsiders. This was partially enacted in response to the physical dangers posed by the medieval forest to travellers – poor weather conditions, wild beasts and the sheer expanse of often unchartered space could be life-threatening – but also due to what Arnold terms 'an escalated rhetoric of danger'[454] encouraged by the increasing fervour of European Christianity. In the same way that medieval images of the devil drew upon existing 'demons' to generate an immediately threatening visualisation of masculine Otherness, the testing vulnerabilities of the Biblical desert 'were transposed to the medieval forest',[455] an alien and threatening space thought to give shelter to clerics' temporal enemies as well as the devil himself.[456] Gaufridus Grossususes demonstrates this in his description of the wilderness of Europe as a second Egypt in *Vita Beati Bernardi Tironiensis*. Here the terms 'forest' and 'desert' are used interchangeably, with 'forest' being presented as a cue to the Biblical wilderness: desolate, diabolical and frightening. Saunders supports with her claim that the forests of romance are often signified less by the presence of trees and woodland than they are the absence of those things that were integral to courtly living: '[t]he European forest, like the Biblical desert, was frequently described in terms of emptiness and aridity, as *gaste* or *gastine.* Although…wasteland formed a part of the forest landscape, it seems that these words are employed to indicate a landscape empty of habitation and cultivation rather than of trees.'[457]

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[454]Arnold, Ellen Fenzel (2006) *Environment and the Shaping of Monastic Identity: Stavelot-Malmedy and the Medieval Ardennes.* ProQuest: Ann Arbor. P.377.
[455]Ibid.
[456]Ibid.
[457]Saunders, Corinne J. (1993) *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.17.

While the sheer repetition of sign-based markers may cause us to question their readerly appeal, it is also the duplication of the forest 'cue' that makes it both effective and inherently appealing. As Saunders notes, the semiotic use of the wilderness is structured around 'the fusion of different traditions, the interplay of various readings, and the reader's expectations of knowledge of a familiar motif'.[458] Rather than rendering the forest 'a lustreless and conventional landscape', the scholar continues, this familiarity 'affords it immense power, as it comes to play a central role in the growing self-consciousness of the romance tradition.'[459] In keeping with this growing familiarity, while the generic forest space is used to connote an equally generic Other Woman, a more specific landscape might then be used to suggest the particular character of Morgan le Fay. Although it is not always named as such, Inglewood forest is associated with Morgan in various legends; the place is proximately alluded to in the *Prose Lancelot, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* and *Le Morte Darthur,* arguably indicating the presence of a specifically romance-based female Otherness. With a close proximity to Carlisle, the geographical province associated with Morgan's Celtic archetypes, and the Scottish border, a demarcation with both figurative and political connotations, the heightened sense of Otherness associated with Inglewood forest certainly makes it an appropriate site for Morganic stories. [460] As Dalrymple observes, 'the localities of the "Tarn Wadling"...and Inglewood Forest recur in [medieval] texts, where associations of fairies and the supernatural are attached to them',[461] most notably fays like Morgan who impose their own brand of magic upon the landscape. In *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* the unnamed author is clearly aware of the vicinity's affiliation with fairy women, staging Gawain's initial encounter with the Loathly Lady within a specifically identified 'Ingleswod'[462] area. With only a month left to discover what it is that women most desire, the author's move from the general questing space into the specified locality of Inglewood is immediately indicative of supernatural women with the power to grant the hero the knowledge he requires. Likewise in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*[463] Gawain's arrival at the lake Tarn Wadling, an irriguous landmark presented within a

[458] Saunders, Corinne J. (1993) *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.162.

[459] Ibid.

[460] Emphasising its role as a cultural border, the mid-fourteenth-century Gough map shows the wooded area as only one of two forests (the other being the Forest of Dean) to be demarked in red.

[461] Dalrymple, Roger. (2012) 'Sir Gawain in Middle English Romance' in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature.* (ed) Helen Fulton. Blackwell Publishing: Chichester. Pp 265-277 (274).

[462] Shepherd, Stephen H. A. (ed) (1995) 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell' in *Middle English Romances.* Norton Publishing: New York. Pp. 243-67. (line 16).

[463] Gates, Robert J. (ed) (1969) *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*: A Critical Edition. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.

'Carlele' forest specifically designated, as was Inglewood, for hunting, immediately suggests the presence of an Otherworldly Woman. It is here that he encounters an obvious Morgan-type who, despite identifying herself as the spirit of Guenevere's mother, describes her degeneration from a 'quene..brighter of browes'[464] to a 'grisly'[465] spectacle, a metamorphosis that occurs chiefly as a result of her promiscuity. While they not be named as such, these magical, metamorphic women connote the same Otherness as Morgan and should, appearing in this vicinity, be therefore regarded as further expressions of her central persona.

<u>Caves and Valleys:</u>

> *Throughout the Middle Ages...the images of a cave or grotto frequently symbolised sexual love that could develop into a benign fulfilment of nature, itself a fruitful womb.*[466]

Irving Singer

Both a relic from the pagan past and a medieval symbol for sexual ensnarement, the cave/valley marker is frequently used to connote biological and metaphorical Otherness in the women of romance.[467] From d'Arras' depiction of Mélusine, who imprisons her father in a cave, to the Prose *Merlin's* Viviane who secures the protagonist in his rocky tomb, topographical cavities suggest the dangerous potential of women to 'entrap' the otherwise powerful male. These confinements are often erotically motivated, and have been linked with the Other Woman's later entrapment of males within castle spaces.[468] Although first used in conjunction with Morgan le Fay in the twelfth-century *Érec et Énide,* in which the Guiot author describes her home in the '*Val sans Retour'* (otherwise known as 'The Valley of no Return' or the '*Val Perilleous*'[469]), the cave motif is, for James Hulbert, 'not a romantic convention'[470] but a feature belonging to a considerably older tradition:

> In tales dating from the eighth century at the very latest...[in] one of the staples of Irish peasant belief we find a tribe of superhuman beings whose abiding

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[464] Line 144.
[465] Line 125.
[466] Singer, Irving (2009) *The Nature of Love.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. P.105.
[467] While valleys, caves, and crevices may be used to slightly different connotative effect in medieval texts, it is useful for the purposes of this discussion to consider them as belonging to the same motif.
[468] See Larrington, P.23.
[469] Chrétien de Troyes (1970, c.1170) 'Erec et Enide' in *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes* (ed) M. Roques. Classiques Français du Moyen Age: Paris. P.80
[470] Hulbert, J.R. (1916) 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyȝt'. Modern Philology, XIII. Pp. 454-462 (457).

dwelling-place is the fairy mound, the hollow hill.....They are the Tuatha De Danann of the annal.[471]

The appearance of a cave or valley in romance should therefore be read as a reworking of the fairy mound, a 'customary element' of Otherworldly women in earlier traditions. This is particularly felt in relation to the general supernatural women in romance who are connected most obviously to Celtic deities; as Harold Bloom notes, 'in the insular tradition..faries…are likely to live, as in *Orfeo, Reinbrun, Thomas of Ercledoun,* and Marie de France's *Yonec*, in underground kingdoms, entered through a cave.'[472] This connection can also be found in a range of further stories, suggesting that caves and valleys have long been associated with Other women in literature and folklore. Mirroring Avicenna's description of 'essential features', Muriel Whittaker notes that '[a]n essential part of the happy Otherworld is beautiful, generous *fée* who is all too willing to become a mortal's mistress.'[473] While the description of a 'beautiful, generous *fée*' may only refer to Morgan's earliest and most benign appearances, as an 'essential part' the valley may be regarded as a collective cue to the Other even when the woman is no longer regarded as a mysterious source of alluring exoticism.

Concerning Morgan le Fay more specifically, her famous caves and valleys in the romance tradition are often thought to be derived from the *sidh,* Irish burial mounds in Celtic folklore that provide both a home for licentious fairy women and a gateway to the Otherworld. For Rosalyn Rossignol these cavities are not only Other because of their associations with pre-Christian, pagan modes of worship, but can also be connected to literal outsiders from medieval culture on the grounds of their ostracism from conventional society:

> One theory holds that legends of an enchanted land date back to the earliest known inhabitants of the British Isles, people who in Irish lore became known as the Sidhe. When later European settlers invaded, the Sidhe went underground (literally), living in barrows, springs and other enchanted places and coming out

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[471] Brain, Imram (Translated by Kuno Meyer) (2000) *Voyage of Bran, I,* In Parenthesis Publications: Cambridge. Pp. 174-75.

[472] Bloom, Harold (2008) *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.* Infobase Publishing: New York. Pp.185.

[473] Whitaker, Muriel A. (1984, 1991) 'Otherworld Castles in Middle English Arthurian Romance' in Faye Powe and Kathryn Reyerson (eds) *The Medieval Castle: Romance and Reality.* University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. Pp. 27-46 (27).

on moonlit nights to dance in the forest and perform various acts of mischief, usually aimed at vexing the descendants of their conquerors.[474]

The Morrígan inhabits these fairy mounds and, by assuming a beautiful form not unlike that of the more generic French *fées*, is able to lure desirable mortal men into what is essentially a physical representation of cultural outsiderness. For Charles Foulon it is this element of the legend that most obviously influences representations of female Otherness in the romance tradition. The scholar suggests that the Guiot scribe incorporated Morgan's Valley into his text as a means of connecting her with an older character type: 'although Morgan is consistently represented as a benign, absent healer in *Erec* and *Yvain,* the legend of Morgan's valley...must have already been current at the end of the twelfth century, known to the Guiot copyist, if not necessarily to Chrétien himself'.[475]

Like the forest with its suggestions of cyclic fertility and rebirth, the caves and valleys that denote the presence of Other women in medieval texts are used to connote female sexual ensnarement and procreativity. As Tory Pearman points out, subversive women are often associated with caves and valleys in medieval narratives because the culture of the period perceived '[a] strong link between the social production of Others and the female procreative body.'[476] This is particularly relevant in tales that describe the 'rebirth' of a knight, a common motif in romance that usually involves an Otherworldly woman. Supplementing descriptions of knightly journeys to Avalon and the Otherworld where the protagonist is borne into a literal state of new life, male characters often undergo dramatic physical or psychological transitions, marking the death of their current existence and regeneration into a morally superior form. Piotr Sadowski comments on this in his *The Knight on his Quest*:

> Th[e] "radical modification" of one's socioreligious and existential status often assumes the form of a drastic or even catastrophic change or crisis in life, best compared to, and indeed often symbolically identified with the "death" of an individual for his former life and existence, followed by a subsequent "rebirth" as a "new man," readapted to society with different parameters of personality.[477]

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[474] Rossignol, Rosalyn (2006) *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work.* Infobase Publishing: New York.P.431.

[475] Foulon, Charles (1970) 'La fée Morgue dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes' in *Mélanges Jean Frappier*, 2 vols, I. Geveva. Pp.283-90.

[476] Vandeventer Pearman, Tory (2010) *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.25.

[477] Sadowski, Piotr (1996) *The Knight on His Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury, Mississauga and London. P.52.

These 'catastrophic changes' are typically overseen by a powerful Otherworldly woman who, manifesting Woman's reproductive agency, catalyses the events that follow in a way that suggests an actual rebirth. Like the literal reproductive space occupied by the gestating infant, the cave adopts a womb-like function into which the knight-errant is drawn – either by magic, his own madness, or a woman's overpowering sexual allure – 'remade', and ejected back into the Arthurian community, wiser, more contemplative and more aware of his Christian self.[478]

Unsurprisingly, these spaces are presented in a way that resembles the female genitalia, an aspect of the Morgan *species* that was particularly feared by the medieval community. The springs and streams belonging to the valley dales present obvious connotations of female fecundity and arousal, while the steep sides bordered with a fringing of trees and grasses present the possibility of pubic phallic confinement, either within the pleasurable sense of intercourse or a more subversive imprisonment. In his description of Morgan's valley, often described as the Valley of no Return or 'Vale Parlous' the author of the *Vulgate Lancelot* describes the place in terms of this overt fertility and overgrowth:

> [B]road and deep and surrounded on all sides by broad, high hills, [i]t was covered with thick green grass, and right in the middle a lovely, clear spring welled up...Outside, just at the entry to the enclosed valley, there was a chapel were they heard Mass every day; that is, while they were inside the valley, the priest was inside the chapel. And that is how Morgan herself planned it.[479]

Here the author suggests that the knights in the 'enclosed valley', entombed as punishment for their infidelity, must undergo a psychological transformation before returning to the Arthurian community. As Pérez observes, because the vale is characterised by its viridity, this transformation should also be linked to the female body: '[these spaces] are vulvas through which the heroes must pass in order to have their manhood tested – remnants of sovereignty tests – and be reborn.'[480] It is

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[478] This is a common motif in a variety of medieval iconographies. Images of Christ's side wound, a prominent symbol of rebirth during the Middle Ages, for instance acquire a highly literal dimension, visualised in popular artwork of the period as graphic entry-ways to the womb and new life.

[479] 'Ce dist li contes tot anat que li vals estoit apelés le Val sans Retor et li Vals as Faus Amans. Li Vals sans Retour avoit il non por ce que nus chavaliers n'en retornoit; et si avoit no li Vals as Faus Amans por ce que tuit li chavalier I remanoient, s'il avoient fausé a lo ramies de quell que meffet que ce fust, neïs de pensé, et si orrois comet ce avint. Il fu voirs que Morgue le suer al roi Artu sot d'enchantment et de araies sor totes femes.' Lacy, Norris J. (2010) *Lancelot Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation (parts V and VI).* Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge. P.305.

[480] Pérez (ibid).

particularly relevant that the poet informs us of a priest's occupancy of Morgan's space; the Otherness of female bodies, so feared by the medieval community because of their ability to tempt the virtue of men, are especially threatening in their potential to subvert the otherwise upright stability of the Church.

Like the Other Woman herself, this reproductive element is shown to have both positive and negative aspects. The cave/valley can function as a place of penance, but also one of physical and spiritual regeneration. As Irving Singer notes, in addition to the popular caves of punishment, '[t]hroughout the Middle Ages…the images of a cave or grotto frequently symbolised sexual love that could develop into a benign fulfilment of nature, itself a fruitful womb.'[481] In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the Chapel's cavernous moisture and fertility provide a womb-like space that not only recalls Morgan's affiliation with Modron, the Welsh mother goddess, but facilitates the knight's spiritual rebirth. Says Pérez: '[h]e literally and figuratively enters into the inner space of the Oresteian Mother'.[482] Following his near-decapitation and recognition of his folly in placing faith in the talismanic green girdle, a repentant Gawain, no longer the beardless youth from the poem's opening, returns to Camelot where he imparts his message to his fellow knights. Remaking not only Gawain but also his cohorts, the men now wear Morgan's girdle as a mark of honour. In a more obviously maternal fashion, the lovers' cave in Gottfried von Strassen's *Tristan and Isolde* may be read as a more positive reworking of the female reproductive system, described by Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand as 'a sheltered, womb-like space'.[483] Gottfried situates the place as a cavern in a wild mountain, lined beneath and around its entryway by the branches of lime trees, but not at the rounded knoll above. There is a level glade at its base through which flows a spring, and foliage to soften the otherwise harsh wilderness around the hole. In this space Isolde is described as a goddess, assuming the function of an early, benevolent Morgan-type as she tends to Tristan, who is sustained by her love. Although the Valley is not exclusive to Morgan, by examining the character's history, we can observe the development of this topographical motif as it evolves through a multiplicity of texts, appearing, as my subsequent chapters go on to describe, in numerous texts before its final appearance in *Le Morte Darthur* as the Valley of Stones. [484]

[481] Singer, Irving (2009) *The Nature of Love.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. P.105.

[482] Pérez (ibid).

[483] Sterling-Hellenbrand, Alexandra (2006) 'Gottfried von Strassen' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.331-332 (332).

[484] Malory, Thomas. (1998, c.1485) Le Morte D'Arthur: The Winchester Manuscript. (ed Helen Cooper). Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.106.

Borders

> *[R]epresentatives of female [O]therness inhabited the space just beyond the*
> *margins of the known landscape.*[485]
>
> Lorraine Stock

Along with the obvious implications of outsiderness and liminality suggested by border regions in romance – a genre which, as Neil Cartlidge points out, 'capitali[ses] on the dramatic or suggestive possibilities implicit in…boundaries'[486] – the Other Woman is often identified by her inclusion on or around geographical margins. Marking the end of civilisation and frontier of an ungoverned and dangerous locale, the boundaries of proscribed spaces – be they physical, moral or even legal – signify the distinctions between acceptability and unacceptability, social inclusion and Otherness in medieval culture. Like those medieval maps where 'still unchartered territories were marked out with drawings of hideous creatures,'[487] the abjectness of the border space is projected onto subversive women in romance texts as a means of highlighting their fundamental outsiderness. This has a primarily psychological basis. A confusing blend of 'we' and 'you', boundary areas create a generic separation between 'normal' society and the Other in medieval texts because, as Graham Seal rightly observes, 'borders…define and delineate difference and otherness.'[488] Dorothy Yamamoto presents a similar argument in her *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, a work in which she considers the borders portrayed in medieval culture as belonging to a psychological model where rhetorical peripheries are linked directly to marginality:

> [B]orders, margins, edges, are always the sites of the 'most powerful symbolic repertoires', since cultural identity itself is 'inseparable from limits'. It is 'always a boundary phenomenon and its order is always constructed around the figures of its territorial edge'. Therefore, the 'centre' is forever in animated dialogue with the 'periphery'' in fact, it can only maintain its full identity through activity of this kind.[489]

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[485] Stock, Lorraine (2006) 'Amazons' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.16-17 (16).

[486] Cartlidge, Neil (2008) 'Introduction' in Neil Cartlidge (ed) *Boundaries in Medieval Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.1-12 (1).

[487] Kearney, Richard (2003) *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness.* Routledge: London and New York. P.121.

[488] Seal, Graham (2011) *Outlaw Heroes in Myth and History.* Anthem Press: London, New York. P.88.

[489] Yamamoto, Dorothy (2000) *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature.* Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York. P.4.

As a primarily semiotic character, the Morganic woman makes use of this 'powerfully symbolic site', her marginality being quite literally repositioned along the borders of the civilized world. Neither inclusive nor entirely savage, she manifests the very qualities that define the boundary itself: outsiderness, alienism, and the unknown.

While the female is biologically Other to the male in medieval culture, the Morganic woman is shown to be marginalised even within this gendered classification by occupying boundary spaces as her primary dwelling point. While the men of medieval legend may generally pass through the boundaries that define spaces, and inclusive women avoid them altogether, the Other Woman remains suspended within the border for the majority of her literary appearances. Living in a state of 'betweenness' the character, although often ascribed with monstrous appearances and tendencies, also exhibits human qualities that prevent her from being entirely ostracised like the actual monster. This motif is particularly prominent in romance analogues that present Other women as demi-gods who are able to interact with both the human world and the realm beyond. In these Celtic tales the mysterious Otherworld is not only psychologically removed from the mortal realm's social hierarchy, but physically segregated by a literal boundary through which a hero must travail during Undrentide if he wishes to penetrate the territory beyond. Divided from our own reality by 'a physical barrier such as a forest or river', it is 'this [boundary] of the supernatural, along with the legend of Arthur, which the Breton lay gains from Celtic myth.'[490] In the legend of Rhiannon, an Otherworldly woman who engages in a relationship with a mortal man, the boundary to the Otherworld is presented on the natural mound on which her lover Pwyll waits. Likewise, in *Lord of Dyved* and *The Dream of Maxen* the forest boundary occurs as a physical passage into the fairy kingdom, a motif that would have thus been familiar to the medieval reader. It is largely on this basis that John Reinhard links the boundary with the Other Woman's other markers of cave and stream, for male entry to the other world was, he observes, "made by one of the three ways: over water, through water, or through the *sidh* or earth mound.'"[491]

Concerning Morgan herself, the character is habitually positioned against the Scottish perimeter (a distinguishing feature of which is Inglewood forest) as a means of indicating her liminal roles between both the mortal and Otherworldly kingdoms. Both Gore, the homeland of Morgan's husband Urien in numerous legends, and Norgales, Morgan's

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[490] Saunders, P.46.
[491] Cited from Gose, Elliot B. (1985) *The World of Irish Wonder Tale.* University of Toronto Press: Toronto. P.99

primary Vulgate dwelling, fall within this area of Cumbria, a detail substantiated by the fact that during the fourteenth century the usual name given to Cumbria in French was, as Ernst Brugger states, 'Norgales or Estregales'.[492] Indeed, such is the emphasis upon Morgan's connection to the border vicinity of Taneborc in French works of the period that the area is arguably presented more centrally to her legend than the mythic and Otherworldly Isle of Avalon. According to the *French Vulgate VI*, Morgan had a castle near the reclusive stronghold of Tauroc, which Karr believes 'must have been near Taneborc Castle at the Entrance of Norgales'[493] that we can now assume with some conviction to be modern day Cumbria. Similarly in the French *Mort Artu* 'Morgain' abides with her damsels in a castle two days' journey from Taneborc (elsewhere known as 'Taneburgh') which can be identified both geographically and etymologically with modern day Edinburgh. On the basis of this Leslie Brook and Glyn Burgess argue that a true 'tale of Morgan' depends upon the female character's geographical association with the same northern border locations frequently occupied by the *fées* in *lais* such as *Desiré*, *Lanval,* and *Doon.* That the opening of *Lanval* takes place in a Carlisle setting frequently equated with Inglewood forest, while *Desiré* and much of *Doon* occur along the opposing side of the Scottish border is, they assert, Marie de France's way of connecting her generic fairies to the Morgan-type:

> It has often been thought that [the unnamed *fée's*] behaviour, and the fact that at the close of the narrative she takes the man of her choice to her own land, links her to the figure of Morgan, who is also consistently associated with Edinburgh and Lothian.[494]

This argument is particularly relevant when we consider that, despite the obvious 'Frenchness' of popular *lais* belonging to continental authors such as Marie de France and Guillaume de Machaut, the borders that form such an integral part of their *contes* are, in keeping with Morgan's existing connections, positioned along the same perimeters beyond the forest of Inglewood found in Middle English Romance.

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[492]Brugger, Ernest. (1928) 'Almain and Ermonie as Tristan's Home'. Modern Philology Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 269-290. Published by: The University of Chicago Press.
[493]Karr, Phyllis Ann. (1983) *The King Arthur Companion.* Reston Publishing: Reston. P.133.
[494] Brook, Leslie C and Burgess, Glyn S. (2007) *French Literature IV. Old French Narrative Lays.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.17.

Islands, Streams and Rivers

'It was believed that, within or next to watery places like rivers, one could spy, commune with, and learn from fairy spirits'.[495]

Anne Scott

Reflecting the philosophical and scientific beliefs of the Middle Ages there is, as Cartlidge notes, 'an especially close connection'[496] between Other women and water in medieval texts. Morgan le Fay is often presented as the ruler of an island, a landmark that is quite literally surrounded by the feminine element,[497] and in the tradition of supernatural *fées* a woman with supernatural powers will frequently encounter a mortal man alongside a stream or river. In keeping with the early Greek medical treatises that suggested women's bodies were significantly more fluid than males', medieval culture preserved a notion that female flesh was 'fundamentally different from male flesh – softer, smoother, more retentive of water'.[498] Not only furthering the biotic Otherness imposed upon the female body on the basis of its distinction from the superlative male, this 'essential trait' presents the Morgan *species* as a particularly subversive character type because of the way in which the medieval community viewed powerful bodies of water. As Sebastian Sobecki notes, these Others 'clothe [themselves] in some of the sea's mythopoeic attributes' as a means of signifying the qualities typically associated with water: 'its unpredictability, immeasurability, animal force and elemental otherness.'[499] Whilst European society may have generally regarded all women as more fluid than men, authors are therefore able to differentiate 'inclusive' women like Guinevere from the generic outsider type to which Morgan belongs by visualising her connection with this element. As with her psychological border connotations, the fluid aspect of the Morganic woman is repositioned outside of her body to assume an all-encompassing Otherness that can quite literally consume the vulnerable male. While this is not always wholly negative (in his *History of the Kings of Britain,* Geoffrey discusses the healing powers of

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[495]Scott, Anne (2009) 'Come Hell or High Water' in Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (eds) *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity Through the Renaissance.* Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden. Pp.407-127 (419).

[496] Cartlidge, Neil (2010) 'The Fairies in the Fountain: Promiscuous Liaisons' in Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordević and Judith Elizabeth Weiss (eds) *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.15-27 (16)

[497] As Saunders notes: '[t]he otherworld which [fées] inhabit is often depicted as an island, separate from but existing in conjunction with reality'. Saunders, Corinne J. (1993) *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P45.

[498] Mandel, Jerome (1999) '"Polymorphous Sexualities" in Chrétien de Troyes and Sir Thomas Malory' in Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (eds) *The Body and Soul in Medieval Literature.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.63-78 (66).

[499] Sobecki, Sebastian I. (2008) *The Sea and Medieval English Literature.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.7.

hot springs that, 'although curative for most diseases, are especially beneficial for "morbos...femineos [women's disorders]"'[500]) the positioning of female characters against streams and rivers is most often used to indicate a character's more powerful allegiance to the universal and supernatural Other, than the 'other' that is simply the female sex.

The 'triggering' of female Otherness by reference to water also has a sexual aspect. Rivers generally evoke sexual nuances in tales of medieval Others women, their moisture and fertile banks being especially emphasised in cases where young men undergo processes of 'becoming' and 'rebirth' (as in the case of *Partenope* who in the French tradition is taken to his fairy mistress by a mysterious unmanned boat) in or beside a river. It should also be noted that many Celtic fertility goddesses take their names from aquatic landmarks, whose names in turn derive from associations with the Great Earth Mother. This seems to have resulted in a correlative pantheism by which multi-religious goddess figures are bound by both their fertile aspect and geographical connections to streams and other waters:

> In inscriptions from Eastern and Cisalpine Gaul, and from the Rhine and Danube region, the *Matreonæ* are mentioned, and this name is probably indicative of goddesses like the *Matres.* It is akin to that of many rivers, e.g. the Marne or Meyrone, and shows that the Mothers were associated with rivers. The Mother river fertilised a large district, and exhibited the characteristic of the whole group of goddesses.[501]

This connection may be supplemented by tales of Morgan's Irish forebear, the Morrígan, whose role as the 'ferrier who brings the souls of fallen warriors to rest in the Celtic Otherworld',[502] links the medieval stream with the boundary marker. Both are used to differentiate the meeting point between worlds, and are overseen by powerful women whose allegiance is to the natural world rather than Church and state.[503] It is largely because of this association, says Cartlidge, that encounters with beautiful women near

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[500] Tolhurst, Fiona (2012) *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Feminist Origins of the Arthurian Legend.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.127.

[501] MacCulloch, John Arnott (2014) *The Religion of the Ancient Celts.* Bookpubber.

[502] Woodfield, Stephanie. (2011) *Celtic Lore & Spellcraft of the Dark Goddess: Invoking the Morrigan.* Llewellyn Publications: Woodbury. P.11.

[503] Hill supplements this with his argument that 'one of the principal Celtic beliefs concerning the dead and the afterlife was that the soul journeyed to the Otherworld *via* a river; thus when corpses would be decapitated, the head, which contained the soul, would be placed in a dark river associated with death.' Hill, Ordelle. (2009) *Looking Westward: Poetry, Landscape and Politics in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Rosemont Publishing: Eastpark Boulevard. P.123.

running water are a common feature of medieval literature, for they 'provide a licence for sexual fantasy'.[504] Being unbound from the same social conventions that limit the behaviours of the inclusive Christian woman, the Other Women signifies the same fecundity found in her deific analogues. Externalising the Other Woman's sexual aspect (and often allowing male characters to subsume themselves in it) in the form of a body of water emblemises these medieval attitudes towards female sexuality; she might be restorative, pleasurable and life-giving, or all-consuming and powerful.

As Larrington asserts, '[b]y the mid-thirteenth century, Morgan's realm had become part of the collective imaginary landscape of Europe',[505] meaning that 'renamed' or 'unnamed' Morgans could be identified by their allegiance to the same geographical markers found in association with the archetypal legend. It is no coincidence that in the *Awntyrs off Arthure* Gawain's arrival at the lake Tarn Wadling pre-empts the appearance of a supernatural woman who, despite identifying herself as the spirit of Guenevere's mother, assumes the form of the transformative Loathly Lady. In addition to being positioned within Morgan's locality of Inglewood, the lake contains specifically diabolical connotations that a medieval reader would have likely connected with female Otherness. Based largely upon Gervase of Tilbury's description of the place as *laikibrais,* 'the lake that cries', Chris Wooglar believes that references to the Tarn Wadling would have suggested both the negative aspect of Woman's emotional capability, and 'dire associations' with devilish noises. He states: '[crying], cachinnation or cackling, mad and angry voices, mocking and bellowing' were all associated with the devil.[506] The *Gawain* poet may also have expected us to perceive Morgan's involvement in the text before she makes an appearance, including rivers with obvious connections to Morgan's history as a means of indicating her driving force behind the narrative. Although Gawain does not cross wholly over to the Otherworld in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* he traverses several bodies of water in his journey to meet with the goddess. While the poet does not elaborate on the identity of the fords and headlands on line 699 these promontories may well refer, if Gawain does pass through the much disputed terrain of Holyhead, to the mouths of the rivers Conwy and Clwyd, a duo with much older connections to the generic *species*. According to Welsh mythology it is upon the banks of the Clwyd that Urien Rheged, Morgan's husband in various legends, first encounters Modron in the

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[504] Cartlidge (ibid)
[505] Larrington, P.48.
[506] Wooglar, C.M (2006) *The Senses in Late Medieval England*. Yale University Press: New Haven and London. P.75.

customary style of a 'Washer at the Ford' fable.[507] Given that this strain of legend originated from Scottish tales of the *bean nighe* (a death fairy who in addition to sharing the fay's penchant for shape-shifting between beautiful woman and repugnant hag is frequently recounted with an outward greenish colouring like that which Morgan bestows upon Bertilak), the *Gawain* poet may have expected his readers to perceive the involvement of a supernatural woman arising from a long line of female Others.

The connection between Celtic deities, medieval Others, and water is also emphasised in onomastic terms. Nimue is frequently referenced by her watery epithet of 'the Lady of the Lake', and Morgause, Morgan's half-sister, derives her name from the Latin word for the Orkney islands, '*Orcades*'.[508] This is also experienced in relation to Morgan herself. In addition to the character's titles – empress of the wilderness, queen of the damsels, lady of the isles, and governor of the waves of the great sea – the etymology of Morgan's personal name has a notable basis in water. 'Morgan' has been traced to various water-based antecedents, 'such as the Old Irish *Muirgen* (derivative of Morigenos, a masculine name meaning 'sea-born''[509]), and numerous Celtic words with nautical or aquatic derivations. In her 'Aspects of the Morrígan in Early Irish Literature', Rosalind Clark states that Geoffrey of Monmouth deliberately sought to connect Morgan with the earlier aquatic goddess Morrígan through a primarily etymological means. She suggests that 'mor...is a form of the old Irish word 'muir' meaning 'sea' or 'water'; in this case the name would mean 'Sea Queen' and thus may be connected with that of Morgan le Fay in the Arthurian cycle'.[510] As the Celtic derivations of the word 'mor' may also mean 'great' (and 'Rigan' means 'Queen'), this argument may also be used to link Morgan to a further range of earlier deities, the term 'great queen' being used in reference to the third goddess of the Morrígan trinity, Macha. Serenity Young supports this point, noting that it is Macha of the trinity who maintains the strongest affiliation with water, being associated in various traditions with the Irish leaders who founded settlements after the

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[507] Upon encountering the deity washing her clothes, Urien, being so overcome with her beauty, seizes hold of Morgan's ancestor and copulates with her beside the irriguous channel of the Clwyd.

[508] In the earliest occurrence of Morgause's name in the First Continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* she is described as Orcades or MORCADES. The former is the Latin name for ORKNEY, of which Morgause is generally given as queen: 'Gauvins, se Dex me beneïe./ Filz sui le roi Lot d'Orcanie,/ et la reïne Morcadés'. Chrétien de Troyes, ed William Roach (1952) *The Continuations of the Old French* Perceval *of Chrétien de Troyes.* Volume III Part 1, The First Continuation, redaction of *Mss ALPRS.* University of Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania. P.445, 6859-6861.

[509] Hebert, P.161.

[510] Clark, Rosalind (1987) 'Aspects of the Morrígan in Early Irish Literature'. Source: *Irish University Review,* Vol.17, No. 2. Published by: Irish University Review. Pp. 223-236 (223-224).

legendary great flood.[511] Rhys uses a similar argument to connect Morgan to an even further range of aquatic deities. In his *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* the scholar associates her with the Welsh 'Murigenos' which can be applied in translation to the water ladies, or 'née de la mer' of French Romances, the sea-born Welsh Morgen, and with 'the Irish Muirgen, one of the names of the aquatic lady Liban'.[512] These references are made all the more significant when we consider that, in early Brythonic languages, a 'morgan' is usually a mermaid or 'sea-woman' who, despite experiencing urgent physical desires for human men, cannot be satisfied by their touch.

Metamorphosis

> *Metamorphoses are in fact illusions created by demons, mere phantasms, and hallucinatory dreams.*[513]

St. Augustine

Connoting femininity, fluidity, and monstrousness, the 'essential quality' of metamorphosis is often used to indicate generic forms of Otherness in medieval literature. According to the culture of the period, signs that equated danger or sinfulness were thought to be more disposed to having multifaceted aspects. Devils and demons are frequently appellated with the ability to change their shape in medieval texts, making 'newe bodies...of elementz',[514] as explained in the *Friar's Tale,* as a means of defying cultural normalcy. This is especially felt in relation to semiotic characters for, particularly during the twelfth and thirteenth-centuries, 'there was a fundamental need for categorization, both ecclesiastically and culturally'.[515] Good, pure, and 'fixed' iconographic images like that of the Virgin Mary were firmly established under the rigid category of virtue. In direct contrast to this, says Pérez, the Other Woman's destabilising ambiguity 'was further agitated by her ability to shapeshift.'[516] Concerning the generic principle of singular universality, the multifaceted sign was therefore regarded as more likely to connote a subversive subject matter, for it defied the categorisation imposed

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[511] However, Young argues that this amalgamation was neither deliberate nor purposeful, but that it was rather 'through variations in pronunciation and other factors [that] Morgan took on the queenly attributes of Morrígan as well as her divine powers and became the queen of the fairies', a valuable hypothesis considering that it is perhaps her relationship with the lesser aquatic Irish goddess that prompted a certain level of Morgan's maritime associations to be replaced with some of Morrígan's more aggressive tendencies. Young, Serenity (2000) 'King Arthur and Morgan le Fay' in *Goddesses who Rule* (ed) Elisabeth Anne Bernard and Beverley Ann Moon. Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. Pp.181-194 (188).

[512] Rhys, John (2004, 1901) *Studies in the Arthurian Legend.* Kissinger Publishing: London. P.163.

[513] St. Augustine, trans. John Healey (1903) *City of God.* J.M. Dent and Company: London. Lines 17-18.

[514] *The Friar's Tale* (1505-6).

[515] Pérez, P.48.

[516] Ibid.

upon symbols of virtue. As Peter Hawkins points out: '[t]he traditional metaphors for the vices all demonstrate their propensity to metastasize: the single tree sprouts many branches, leaves and fruit; the armed forces of sin boast regiments, battalions, armaments. Needless to say, they can also be represented one by one.'[517]

In addition to its fundamentally subversive connotations, the metamorphoses of female bodies in medieval narratives is used to exemplify woman's sexual difference from men, 'a radical otherness…that addresses the potential crossing of sexual, cultural, and species boundaries.'[518] Maria Frangos emphasises this point in her suggestion that shapeshifting in medieval narratives gives visibility to the Otherness of woman's natural sexual difference, exaggerated to the point of monstrosity. Shapeshifters like Morgan 'allow us to confront questions about what is distinctive about female body morphology, and about how particular female morphologies materialize the women who inhabit them.'[519] However, this also provides a further removal of Other women from the demands of cultural expectation; recalling the biological means by which medieval – and even earlier – women are forced into the position of Other to begin with, metamorphosis may be read as female assertiveness against misogynist culture. By removing herself from the physical stereotype of Aristotle's 'deformed male', the transformative woman attempts what is ultimately a redefinition of the female physiognomy. For Dana Oswold this is a significant part of the Other Woman's identity, and can be connected with real-life women such as the Amazons who sought to redefine the gender ideologies of ancient and medieval culture. She states: '[these are] human women who become monstrous when they mark their bodies as physically different',[520] removing their breasts as a means of eliminating themselves from the rigid definitions of supposed female weakness. It is largely on this basis that the scholar goes on to identify the Amazon with the more generic type of shapeshifter. Even though her transformation may not involve magic, medieval accounts present her as definitively outside of the designations for female acceptability, as highlighted by John Mandeville's description of the Amazons in his mid-fourteenth century *Travels*: 'And yf þei be of gentel blood, þei brenne of þe lyft

[517] Hawkins, Peter S. (2012) 'The Religion of the Mountain: Handling Sin in Dante's *Purgatorio*' in Richard G. Newhauser and Susan Janet Ridyard (eds) *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins.* York Medieval Press: York. Pp. 223-239 (226).
[518] Frangos, Maria (2008) '*The Shame of All Her Kind': A Genealogy of Female Monstrosity and Metamorphosis from the Middle Ages Through Early Modernity.* ProQuest: Ann Arbor. P.12.
[519] Frangos, P.195.
[520] Oswald, Dana (2010) *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature.* D.S.Brewer: Cambridge. P.143.

pap for beryng of a schild; and yf þei be of oþer blood, þei brenne of þe riȝt pap for scheotyng of a bowe. For wymmen þere beþ goode werriouris.'[521]

Female transformation is also used to a signify the inherent negativity and unnatural social effects of Other women, particularly in later medieval contexts. Where Geoffrey's Morgan's metamorphosis may reject the constraints of her gender within a narrative that is concerned with the exotic supernatural, descriptions of transformations of beautiful women into repugnant forms can also be used to demonstrate the hidden monstrosity of female sexuality. In a reverse of the redemptive Loathly Lady, tales such as the Vulgate *Lancelot* present Morgan as a metamorphic creature who uses her ability to shapeshift to magically conceal her aging appearance. As Spivak notes: [i]n the Vulgate *Lancelot* she splits into two selves, sending a younger version of herself to seduce Lancelot when the older person proves incapable of doing so.'[522] She is presented similarly in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* scholars having suggested that the beautiful Lady Bertilak is a magical 'splitting off' from Morgan's outwardly haggard persona. For Susan Crane the Other woman's metamorphic power is therefore linked to her magical ability, a natural progression given that both elements are linked with the monstrous: 'shape-shifting naturalizes woman's contradictoriness, and that magical power essentializes her otherness.'[523] Interestingly, the scholar also associates female metamorphosis with notions of a universal Other in medieval narratives, where the physical transformations of individual characters defy fixed notions of rigid, singular personas, and promote that of fluid universality.[524] By appearing under various names, she infers, medieval authors provide a further dimension to the schizophrenic shape-shifting that has become as much a defining aspect of the Morganic persona as any name or title.

Authors' ability to connote Otherness by shapeshifting is also linked directly with the medieval belief that monstrosity surrounded split-personas, twins being regarded as the result of a woman's sexual encounters with multiple men. Combined with the medieval rejection of things perceived as contrary to nature, subversive women were linked with the birth of twins, triplets and quadruplets because they were regarded as inherently more sexual and dangerous. Jean d'Arras makes Mélusine a triplet in emphasis of

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[521] Mandeville, John (2002, c.1360) *The Defective Version of Mandeville's Travels.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.69.

[522] Spivack, Charlotte (1992) 'Morgan le Fay: Goddess or Witch?' in Sally K Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* State University Popular Press: New York. Pp. 18-23 (18).

[523] Crane, Susan (2014) *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'.* Princeton University Press: Princeton. P.164.

[524] Crane, Pp.84-92.

her idiosyncratic transformations from woman to serpent,[525] and in Marie de France's *Le Fresne* a woman's fear of being accused of infidelity causes her to send one of her twin daughters into exile rather than face the shame of bearing multiple offspring. Gabrielle Spiegel discusses this at length in her 'Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the *Roman de Mélusine'*, in which she encourages us to read the phenomena of multiple human births against the largely Aristotelian medieval views of reproductive biology:

> Aristotle presents his theories on the biology of twins in the context of an exposition of the generation of a *monstra* in general; thus, by implication twins are some kind of monsters. For Aristotle, twins are monstrous for two reason. First because of their rarity, since Aristotle defines a monstrosity as that which belongs to the class of 'things contrary to nature,'…[Secondly] they are 'monstrous'…in that they constitute anomalies not only by virtue of their rarity but because – like, indeed, all animals that occupy more than one zoological category (seals, sea anemones, hermit crabs, ostriches, etc.) – they are said, in Aristotelian terms, to dualise.[526]

This biological 'splitting' links twins, triplets, and other multiply-formed creatures with monstrosity because, for Aristotle, twins confound the categories of human and animal: 'humans reproduce singly, animals in multiples.'[527] While this may be the result of a heterosexual copulation, moreover, the monstrosity of 'split' births was linked primarily to the maternal influence, highlighting the connection between multiple bodies and Other women. As Peggy McCracken notes, 'in medieval reproductive theory, the responsibility for monstrosity lies with the mother, for it is explained by an excess of material, of *menstruum.'*[528]

The increasingly sexual associations between women and multiple births has an additional basis in Celtic mythology; as Stephanie Woodfield observes, 'the number of

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[525] That Jean makes Mélusine a triplet, rather than a twin, however, suggests a further attempt on his part to present her as straddling the delicate veil between worlds indicated by his transient forest space, for despite their defiance of the natural order there remains a sense of an alternate Trinity around the sisters, who are bound by blood, spirit and their transcendental ability to move between this world and the next.

[526] Spiegel, Gabrielle M. (1996) 'Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the *Roman de Mélusine'* in Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (eds) *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France.* University of Georgia Press: Athens. Pp.100-125. (103-104).

[527] McCracken, Peggy (2003) *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero. Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.83.

[528] Ibid.

children [that Celtic] goddesses bear are symbols of their fertility.'[529] This is particularly emphasised in the tale of Morgan's deific analogues: the goddess Modron is known for giving birth to unidentical twins (arguably a precursor to the Morganic woman's split personality), a son, Owain, and a daughter, Morvyth. Likewise in the *Noínden Ulad*, a story from the early Irish Ulster Cycle, Macha conceives and brings forth twins amidst great pain as she is forced to race against the royal horses.[530] This practice is not unique to the Celtic tradition; as Larrington notes, '[s]hape-changing, transforming oneself and others, is [also] a skill inherited by the medieval enchantresses from Circe.'[531] Likewise, the legend of Medusa, whose serpentine deformity provides an obvious link to both Mélusine and Eve, describes her being raped by Poseidon; she falls pregnant and brings into the world the twins Pegasus, the winged horse, and Chrysaor, the warrior.[532] Yet it should also be noted that in these sources the woman's association with multiple forms is not necessarily linked with monstrosity. Indeed, as Hebert notes, Morgan's analogues featured the ability to 'embrace seemingly contradictory aspects simultaneously':[533]

> Certain contradictions stem from authorial manipulation, to be sure, but another feasible explanation for Morgan's variable representations is that goddesses are expected to be capricious and multidimensional. Such a connection to Morgan provides an overarching explanation for the inherent complexity and volatility of her character and acknowledges the range of her behaviour.

This reinterpreting of multiply-formed bodies, particularly in relation to women, may thus be read as substantiation of the declining role of the powerful woman in medieval culture. Where the capricious multidimensionality of the Celtic goddess may have been revered, it is used in medieval contexts to 'clothe' an increasingly malevolent conception of female outsiderness.

Where metamorphosis is frequently used as a 'trigger' for generic conceptions of Otherness in medieval texts, the connections between multiple guises and the Other are doubly felt in relation to Morgan le Fay. Not only does the character change her shape within the stories in which she features (her metamorphosis in *Érec,* assumption of

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[529] Woodfield, Stephanie. (2011) *Celtic Lore & Spellcraft of the Dark Goddess: Invoking the Morrigan.* Llewellyn Publications: Woodbury.
[530] This aspect of the legend has caused various scholars to remark that her offspring are really foals, a factor that shares the same bi-human element as the later Mélusine.
[531] Larrington, P.21
[532] Seifert and Stanton supplement this with their claim that '[t]he stories in Ovid's Metamorphosis, extremely popular throughout early modern Europe, were particularly useful to the conteuses, especially for the concept of metamorphosis and the plot situations it could generate.'
[533] Hebert, P.6.

beautiful guises in the *Prose Lancelot* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* and turning to stone in *Le Morte Darthur*), but also avoids subscribing to a fixed 'face' throughout the general corpus of Arthuriana. As Hebert observes:

> Morgan's ability to change shape signifies her potential to evade and resist the shape(s) that others – authors, critics, and characters – attempt to impose upon her, to use the expectations of others against them, and to move among, outside of, and around assumptions as necessary.[534]

This is a particularly interesting argument given the fundamentality of character type to Morgan's identity. As a 'fixed' aspect of Morgan's persona, her shapeshifting partially derives from the fact that her identity is essentially 'unfixed'. Reinforcing Hawkins' idea that vices are most frequently represented by signs with multiple forms, Morgan's moving 'among, outside of, and around assumptions as necessary' not only defies standards of acceptable female behaviour, but also evades the fixed forms used to denote positive subject matters. As a semiotic character, Morgan's ability to convey different aspects of the same conception connotes a greater potential for Otherness in medieval contexts than would a figure with a more fixed identity.

Healing

> *Women are so frequently associated with quasi-magical domestic healing in the romances and chronicles that damsels with healing magic become a part of the landscape.*[535]

Heidi Breuer

Another 'essential quality' belonging to the Other Woman's standard list is her healing ability. Usually single or widowed, independent of the control of husbands or fathers, women in possession of healing knowledge were perceived as 'menaces to both clerical and secular male domination.'[536] Whilst in Early Medieval culture the female healer may have been considered potentially subversive, however, she does not have the same connections with Otherness in later literary works. Certainly between the tenth and twelfth-centuries, medical practitioners of both sexes learned their trade from oral transmission passed down through the ages and from observing the patients they served. As Christine Rinck notes: '[n]o medical university curriculum specifically addressed medicine as a profession until the establishment of the University of Salerno

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[534] Hebert, P.5.
[535] Breuer, P.23.
[536] Gregg, Joan Young (1997) *Devils; Women & Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories.* State University of New York Press: New York. P.98.

in Salerno Capparoni described the university as a place where doctor guilds began in the twelfth century.'[537] Any outsiderness ascribed to the female healer was therefore more likely to result from the physical agency required to perform healing than a reflection of the practice itself. Where male practitioners could travel freely among the community to provide care during the Middle Ages, female physicians were largely limited to practicing medicine within the proximity of their own homes. The Otherness of the female healer was therefore not a response to a woman's acquisition of supposedly demonic knowledge, but because women who too often strayed beyond the domestic sphere were believed to be more capable of malicious intent. As Deborah Ellis notes: 'it is not merely that the Wife of Bath is an inveterate gossip or that Celestina is a bawd or that Margery Kempe is given to public hysterics that make their wanderings so threatening to their societies and to their husbands; it is the very act of leaving the house that implies their potential deviance.'[538]

While female healing may have been accepted in earlier medieval culture as a natural extension of woman's domestic duties (recalling Geoffrey of Monmouth's ambivalent description of Morgan's healing in *Vita Merlini*), the increasingly stringent social definitions of what constituted women's respectability soon relegated the female healer to the margins of medieval society. As Joseph Snow claims, the formerly 'natural' figure of the Old Woman-Crone 'became denatured over time',[539] because female healers were gradually associated with subversive malevolence, demonism, and Otherness. Following the elevation of healing from the status of 'skill' to that of 'profession' in the twelfth century women were effectively barred from practicing medicine. John Benton observes: '[o]nce universities had been granted a role in medical licensing, female practitioners could easily be prosecuted as charlatans'.[540] In response to this by the thirteenth century the non-academic source of the female healer's power had brought her ability into question; how could female practitioners have acquired their skill if not from demonic sources? Laws against women healers were introduced and enforced; as

[537] Rinck, Christine Dombourian (2007) *Trotula and Hildegard: Reflections of female medieval medicine*. University of Missouri: City of Kansas. Pp.1-2.
[538] Ellis, Deborah S (1998) 'Domesticating the Spanish Inquisition' in Anna Klosowska and Anna Roberts (eds) *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts.* University Press of Florida: Gainesville. Pp. 195-209 (200).
[539] Snow, Joseph T. (2005) 'Some Literary Portraits of the Old Woman in Medieval and Early Modern Spain' in Manuel Da costa Fontes and Joseph T. Snow (eds) *"Entra mayo y sale abril": Medieval Spanish Literary and Folklore Studies in memory of Harriet Goldberg.* Juan de la Cuesta-Hispanic Monographs: Newark. Pp.349-363 (352).
[540] Benton, John (1983) 'Trotula, Women's Problems, and the Professionalization of Medicine in the Middle Ages'. The California Institute of Technology: California. P.2.

noted by Sue Rosser, women who would have qualified as physicians in the twelfth century 'would be treated as charlatans and witches in the 14th and 15th centuries'.[541] In light of her lack of a university education, assumptions that the female healer's ability had to derive from a non-Christian source replaced some of the earlier faith placed in women practitioners of medicine. As Nancy Nenno observes, when Church authorities sought to eliminate, absorb, or demonize pre-Christian traditions, 'the woman healer became a target for anxieties about autonomous medical practice, pagan traditions, and demonic magic'.[542]

As part of the elimination of non-Christian practices surrounding healing, birthing and contraception, women healers were 'increasingly expelled from the threshold into the zone of 'otherness' by…medieval [society].'[543] The formerly ambivalent relationship between magic and healing also underwent a subsequent change; 'acceptable' forms of healing are presented in post-twelfth-century romance texts almost entirely without the magical intervention associated with Morganic characters. Where Geoffrey of Monmouth seems to have been comfortable describing Morgan's Otherworldly healing power, Chrétien, aware that the character no longer complied with the acceptable standards of his own culture, makes radical changes to the character's medical ability. The 'wise' Morgan presented in *Yvain* possesses more of an understanding of natural herblore than the deific power of her *Vita* antecedent, the natural healing of the former having the potential for demonic connotations by the time of his late twelfth-century composition. Chrétien also suggests that Morgan's power is bound by certain mortal limitations: unlike earlier texts that suggest her healing power is unlimited, the lady of Noroison's treatment of the damsel's over-usage of the ointment as an irreparable loss indicates that in Chrétien's world 'even Morgan's ointments are finite.'[544] This distinction between acceptable 'types' of female healing continues to be emphasised in later works: in the *Lancelot*, the Dame du Lac uses a natural herbal remedy in her restoration of Lancelot, with the supernatural brand of magical healing (on which Arthur nonetheless relies) being attributed solely to the now antagonistic Morgan. For Pérez this reflects the fact that by the time of the *Vulgate* Cycle 'Morgan has been cast as

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[541] Rosser, Sue Vilhauer (2008) *Women, Science, and Myth: Gender Beliefs from Antiquity to the Present.* ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara. P.23.

[542] Nenno, Nancy P. (2015, 1997) 'Between Magic and Medicine: Medieval Images of the Woman Healer' in Lilian R. Furst (ed) *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill.* The University Press of Kentucky: Lexington. Pp.43-63 (46).

[543] O'Shaughnessy, Tim (1994) *Adoption, Social Work and Social Theory: Making the Connections.* Avebury. P.162.

[544] Mullally, Evelyn (1988) *The Artist at Work: Narrative Technique in Chrétien de Troyes.* The American Philosophical Society: Philadelphia. P.189.

the evil enchantress ("bad" breast) inducing madness while the Dame du Lac (the "good," life-sustaining breast) restores sanity',[545] the 'breasts' of the characters suggesting, she argues, the distinction between licentious harlot (Eve) and life-giving mother (the Virgin Mary) within which Morgan falls between.

It is largely the emphasis on Morgan's healing power that provokes her deterioration from benevolent healer to malevolent witch, reflecting what Fries terms the growing 'inability of male Arthurian authors to cope with the image of a woman of power in positive terms.'[546] Indeed, as a primarily semiotic character, a chronicled study of Morgan, '[t]he one named healer who appears in both the romance and chronicle traditions',[547] provides a microcosmic study of female healing during the Middle Ages. Sally Slocum supports this idea, observing in her introduction to *Arthurian Women: A Casebook,* that Morgan's transformation from a lovely and learned woman into a lecherous hag signifies the gradually disintegrating approaches towards female healers in medieval society:

> This character elaboration, incidentally coinciding with the growth of women-hatred in the latter Middle Ages (Heer, ch. 13), turns Morgan from a nurturing ruler of a sea-girt paradise into a destructive sorceress who entraps men sexually rather than healing them.[548]

Not only do we anticipate the quality in Morgan's delineation (as Pérez notes, 'Morgan's reputation as a gifted healer precedes her in the romances'[549]), but magical forms of healing are used in a range of other texts to connect female characters with the generic identity of Other. Particularly in cases of 'unnamed' Morgans, their allegiance to the universal identity can often be inferred solely by her use of healing spells and ointments. As I go on to discuss in chapters Five and Six, the ability to heal male bodies using supernatural means marks a woman as alien, outsider, and subversive – even when her intentions are positive – for she assumes a superiority upon which male characters must depend.

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[545] Pérez, P.94.

[546] Fries, Maureen (1996) 'Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition' in Thelma S. Fenster (ed) *Arthurian Women.* Routledge: London. Pp.59-74 (70).

[547] Breuer, Heidi (2009) *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England.* Routledge: New York. P.24.

[548] Slocum, Sally (1992) 'Introduction' in Sally Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* Bowling Green University Popular Press: Bowling Green. P.1-17 (13).

[549] Pérez, Kristina (2014) *The Myth of Morgan le Fey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.94

<u>Magic</u>

> *The lack of a strict division between magic and medicine in the medieval period is indicated in the very names given to the woman healer, many of which she shared with the magical fays of Celtic literature: saga, wise woman, and belladonna.*[550]

Nancy Nenno

Linked closely to anxieties surrounding female healing, medieval culture identified female practitioners of enchantment as insurgent to the ordered structures of Church and society at a time when the two were wholly identified.[551] As the image of the positive woman healer began to decline so the idea of the female magician increased, authors more readily associating female characters with the universal Other on the basis of their magical abilities. The concept of magic posed an automatic threat to medieval society because it offered alternatives to the structured order represented by God, king and clergy. However, given the suggestions that medieval society did not necessarily believe in 'magic' as a supernatural power (certainly until later centuries), we might read the magic presented in romance texts as a more general indication of what was thought to be dangerous and Other. Saunders endorses this view with her suggestion that magic is frequently presented in medieval (and particularly High Medieval) literature as a means of signposting the general fear of subversion, rather than wholly a fear of magic itself. She notes: 'the idea of magic, and especially the figure of the witch, [are] linked to social and political disorder'.[552] The characters onto whom conceptions of magic are projected should therefore be read, particularly recalling the idea of the semiotic female, as indications of various real-life issues. The scholar continues: '[the] topics that figure so prominently in romance provide imaginative escape, their manifestations attractive in their exoticism and sometimes pleasantly fearful, but there is also a strong case for a more realist approach to magic and the supernatural.'[553]

A 'realistic' approach to a study of magic considers the projection of magical attributes onto women as an expression of other factors, a significant point given that although women were often regarded as the natural companions of the devil during the Middle Ages there is little or no evidence to support the belief in actual women as devil

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[550] Nenno, P.46.

[551] See Russell, Jeffrey Burton (1972) *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages.* Cornell University Press: New York. P.3.

[552] Saunders, Corrine (2011) 'Middle Age in Romance? Magic, Enchantment and Female Power' in Sue Niebrzydowski (ed) *Middle-aged Women in the Middle Ages.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.37-52 (40).

[553] Ibid.

worshippers. [554] Michael Bailey supports this point, noting that the early Morgan, elsewhere 'a literary archetype for powerful and threatening female magic', [555] is far removed from the figure of the actual witch whose image widely perpetrated the social consciousness of late-medieval and early-modern Europe. Morgan is instead linked with earlier folkloric characters whose magic is presented as what might be described as a primarily emblematic metaphor for Otherness. In the *Canon Episcopi* (a source based in part upon antecedent depictions of Medea and Circe) we detect an anxiety that is for instance less focussed on enchantments than it is on the *potential* of the subversive, magical female to turn women away from the teachings of the Church. It is highly unlikely that the writers of the *Canon* actually believed in the existence of the goddess Diana – during the Early Middle Ages, punishment for accepting the power of enchantments as true was often more severe than infringements on those who had supposedly practiced them – but warn of the danger that she, as a subversive woman poses to ordered society:

> The most powerful sorceresses of romance tend to be given otherworldly associations. Human practitioners are treated with suspicion, for their transformative arts are dangerous. Enchantment, sorcery, witchcraft, 'nigromancy': all these terms seem to be employed interchangeably, and their connotations are largely negative…indicat[ing] unease over feminine learning.[556]

The 'interchangeability' of magical terms would certainly suggest that the concept of sorcery was not specified to a particular character or action, but was rather linked with the medieval discomfort surrounding powerful women more generally. Margaret Miles supports this point with her observation that there are very few recorded instances of women attempting to practice magic during the High Middle Ages. She believes that medieval conceptions concerning 'Woman' demonstrate 'very little on what actual women were doing', [557] and instead relate to the more socially threatening aspects of her behaviour: sexual liberty, a lack of domestication, and demands for education.

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[554] Waegeman observes that this in in part a result of the non-aggressive Christian attitudes towards magic that prevailed in European culture prior to the thirteenth-century. He claims that 'from the beginning of time women have played a major role in visionary prophecy; in the early days of Christianity it was still possible for them to do the work of a prophetess in the community.' Waegeman, A (1998) 'The Medieval Sybil' in Ludo J.R Mills (ed) *The Pagan Middle Ages.* The Boydell Press: Woodbridge. Pp.83-105 (103).

[555] Bailey, Michael D. (2003) *The A to Z of Witchcraft.* Scarecrow Press: Lanham. P.94.

[556] Saunders, P.169.

[557] Miles, Margaret (1997) 'Carnal Abominations: The Female Body as Grotesque' in James Luther Adams, Robert Penn Warren and Wilson Yates (eds) *The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflections.* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids. Pp. 83-112 (104).

Contrary to popular belief, references to magic during the Early and High Middle Ages did not immediately incur the wrath of witch burners and fervent religious zealots. Indeed, rather than diminishing towards the end of the period, medieval rhabdophobia appears to have been more prevalent during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than in earlier decades. Early Medieval Christian clerics not only sanctioned the use of charms, but, being 'particularly interested in magical practices',[558] would consult and even perform them in an ecclesiastical setting for healing purposes. In the early eleventh century *Lacnunga,* Christian prayers designed to cure mysterious illnesses such as 'elf-shot' are prescribed in conjunction with apparently nonsensical incantations (a practice often misattributed to solely pagan practices) such as the famous '[a]cre arcre arnem nona aernem beoðor aernem nidren acrun cunað ele harassan fidine',[559] intended to be performed over healing salves. In light of this, Morgan's earlier incarnations are likely used to indicate the more positive aspects of female magic that medieval culture had retained from its Celtic antecedents. As John Matthews observes:

> Female children who displayed a talent for the second sight, or other aptitudes for the mystical life, were sent to be educated by schools of priestesses such as once flourished in both Britain and Ireland. Morgan, who became known by the epithet *le Fay*, 'the Faery', retained some of her Goddesly qualities, even in the medieval tales.[560]

While Morgan's magic may be presented as an explicitly malevolent manifestation of female agency in later instances of the Arthurian saga, her magical prowess in earlier texts is therefore likely to have been intended as a means of suggesting the Otherness of magic as an (admittedly dubious) alternative to Christian healing. For Geoffrey, Wace and Laȝamon, Morgan's magic may define her as Other, but is nonetheless presented as a benign, fascinating and even welcome part of the chivalric ethos.

By the thirteenth century, however, the more tolerant attitudes toward 'magic' had begun to disintegrate, being quickly usurped by a more real fear of enchantment itself. This change was enacted largely in response to new formulations of magic following the rediscovery of Aristotle's writings and upsurge in 'pseudo-scientific' writings. As Saunders notes: '[f]rom the twelfth century onwards, natural philosophy was

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[558] Meens, Rob (2012) 'Agobard, the Tempestarii and Christianity' in John Marenbon, Carlos G. Steel and Werner Verbeke (eds) *Paganism in the Middle Ages: Threat and Fascination.* Leuven University Press: Minderbroedersstraat. Pp.157-194 (163).

[559] Kieckhefer, Richard (1989,2000) *Magic in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp.65-66.

[560] Matthews, John (2011) *The Arthurian Tradition.* Aeon Books: London. P.52.

complicated and encouraged by new intellectual and cultural developments'. [561] Distinctions were made between the natural and the marvellous, certain forms of magic being attributed to study and hidden meanings in God's universe (allowing the sanctioning of magic belonging to Merlin and his equivalents) and other forms being recognised as demonic.[562] In literary contexts, practitioners of female magic are usually denied the same magical sanctioning provided to characters like Merlin, a significant point given that in romance it is often, as Jon Sherman notes, 'the manner in which [magic] is used that makes it either beneficial or detrimental to society.'[563] We see this expressed most obviously in the Hartmann von Aue's *Erec,* a readaptation of Chrétien's earlier work in which the alterations to Morgan's magic signify a dramatic change in social attitudes. As Larrington points out, Chrétien takes care that Morgan's 'particular legacy – a healing salve – does not require the invocation of demons in its application and thus its use presents no ethical problems'[564] for either Yvain or the injured hero in *Érec*. Contrasting this careful delineation, however, Hartmann greatly exaggerates the demonic source of Morgan's power, removing her from the vague position of benevolent fairy and recasting her as a malevolent sorceress:

> Whenever she began to perform her magic, she would fly around the world in a short time and come back quickly. I do not know who taught her. Before I could turn my hand over or blink an eye she would quickly travel back and forth. She lived in great splendour. She could hover and rest in the air as on the ground, and could live in the water or beneath it. It was also not unusual for her to live in fire as gently as on the dew. The lady could do all of these things. And if she wanted, she could turn a man into a bird or an animal. Afterward she quickly gave him back his original shape. She was indeed capable of magical powers.

> She lived in great defiance of God…I shall not tell you any more about her at this time, for it would be too much- since then, rest assured, the earth has not seen a better mistress of magical powers than Morgain le Fay, about whom I have told you. Therefore, the man for whom she prepared a bandage would not be wise if he were greatly offended by this. Indeed, I believe one could find nowhere,

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[561] Saunders, P.101.
[562] See Larrington, Pp.9-11.
[563] Sherman, Jon B. (2009) *The Magicianper in Medieval German Literature*. ProQuest: Ann Arbor. P.211.
[564] Larrington, Carolyne (2006) *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her sisters in Arthurian Tradition.* I B Tauris: London, New York. P.12.

however much one looked for magical powers in medical books, such powerful arts as she practiced, whenever she wanted, in defiance of Christ.[565]

The negative associations between women and magic continue to develop up until *Le Morte Darthur,* in which the Other Woman is presented as 'ontologically evil' on the basis of her supernatural ability.[566] In the *Merlin Suite* and *Post-Vulgate Cycle* it is because of Morgan's significant magical and astronomical knowledge, as well as her understanding of medicine, that she gains the byname *la fée,* a dehumanising sobriquet used to place the Other Woman even further outside of courtly society. Contextually, representations of female magic are now linked directly with the dangers of educating women beyond their appropriate sphere. Even the largely inclusive, monastic woman's schooling became mitigated by the time of Malory's malicious Morgan, who uses her education to great advantage over her male counterparts. As Fiona Griffiths observes:

> By the later medieval period, monasteries were no longer vibrant educational centers, as universities rapidly moved to the forefront of medieval education. Although many monastic women continued to read and to study, women's sanctity was increasingly divorced from education after the thirteenth century, and holy women from this period were regularly described as illiterate or lacking in formal education.[567]

It is therefore unsurprising that medieval authors often present the educated woman as 'magical', for the true potency of her power lies in her ability to challenge the male-dominated sphere of intellectualism from which she was excluded. Morgan le Fay, the archetypal expression of this Otherness, is linked with women's education as her magical malevolence increases.

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[565] Hartmann Von Aue (2001) 'Erec' (trans. Kim Vivian) in *Arthurian Romances, Tales and Lyric Poetry. The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. Pp. 51-164.
[566] Nolan, Barbara (1996) 'The Tale of Sir Gareth and the Tale of Sir Lancelot' in Elizabeth Archibald, Anthony Stockwell and Garfield Edwards (eds) *A Companion to Malory.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.153-182 (179).
[567] Griffiths, Fiona J. (2006) 'Education, Monastic' in Margaret Schaus (ed) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia.* Routledge: Milton Park and New York. Pp.241-243 (243).

<u>Sexuality</u>

'[S]exuality, particularly female sexuality, is encoded as negative.'[568]

Samantha Riches

One of the most obvious means of identifying a female character as Other in medieval texts is by her unusually high sexual appetite. Demonstrating a stereotypically male excess of lust, females that exhibit a greater than usual physical desire are presented as subversive because, outside the comedic world of the *fabliau*, carnality was regarded as an inherently masculine (and thus repellent by its inversion) quality in women. As Blamires notes: '[f]rom the fourth century to the twelfth and beyond, one current of opinion insisted that although lust occurs in both men and women, it is more repugnant in women than in men'.[569] Resulting both from Christian scriptures that denied female sexual appetites, and images of the Virgin Mary, 'both of which denied women their natural identity until they had undergone a desexualizing transformation',[570] virginity was widely popularised as the female ideal in medieval culture. Where earlier Celtic religions had celebrated the sexual, life-giving nature of its female deities, medieval Christianity sought to emphasise this aspect above all others. As Gregg notes, women's virtue and chastity became 'powerful weapons in the armo[u]ry of Christianity [which] served as touchstones of its difference from its pagan and Jewish enemies.'[571] Indeed, so staunchly were notions of female virginity perpetrated that a cult of 'virgin martyrs' sprung up in medieval Europe as a means of defying the liberated women of earlier religions. Encouraging women to be 'brides of Christ', the sexual woman was recast as sexual and dangerous:

> In dismissing earthly marriage as impoverished by comparison to the celestial union that the virgin saints would enjoy in heaven, and in degrading the ordinary human sexuality that was the lot of most women, the church promoted the notion that women in their natural, sexual status were outsiders to the salvatory process.[572]

This is a source of cultural anxiety that ultimately stems from woman's natural ability to provide the otherwise upright conscience of man with troubling sexual provocation,

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[568] Riches, Samantha J.E. (2008) 'Virtue and Violence: Saints, Monsters and Sexuality in Medieval Culture' in April Harper and Caroline Proctor (eds) *Medieval Sexuality: A Casebook.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. Pp.59-80 (75).
[569] Blamires, P.137.
[570] Gregg, P.103.
[571] Gregg, P.104.
[572] Ibid.

an aspect that finds natural expression in 'malicious personifications of lust [like Morgan] who pose a constant threat to man's salvation'.[573]

Medieval theologians saw women, especially in sexual contexts, as a sign of debauchery and an avenue to sin. Crucial for determining the direction of theology in the Middle Ages, Augustine argued that sexual desire is itself a punishment for original sin and that all sexual intercourse, tainted by uncontrollable desire, is at least venially sinful. Furthermore, he held desire responsible for passing on the stain of original sin to future generations. Eve, and thus all women, became symbols of a body and sexuality no longer under rational control, inescapably inciting men to desire participation in the foremost effect of the Fall itself. As a result, theological opposition towards female sexuality generated a largely bipolar attitude towards women from a Christian perspective. To fall short of the exempla designated by the salvific figure of the Virgin Mary allowed women to be tarnished with the more negative associations connected with the damnable Eve, even if their behaviour was far removed from that of the aggregate sinner. This had a practical influence on everyday parishioners, who were encouraged to apply the dogmatic implications of theological and symbolic women into their own lives. As Christine Peters explains: '[a]t one extreme was the figure of the Virgin Mary, embodying female virtues, and at the other the figure of Eve, symbolizing the disastrous consequences of female weakness and justifying women's inferiority and subordination'.[574] Moreover, while traditional gender philosophy may have painted men as the pursuers in sexual relationships, medieval theological culture largely saw Woman as the instigator of sexual acts, prompting the Aquinian suggestion that males needed to be protected from sexual women. Aquinas himself described an occasion in which he 'fought off seductive female demons, chasing them out of his room and then praying tearfully for a chastity belt to protect his virginity in future duels with temptresses.'[575]

Attributing women with carnal appetites provided an automatic means for authors to align literary characters with the universal Other, because medieval culture had already united female sexual behaviour with devilment, subversion, and monstrosity in other semiotic contexts. Not least stemming from the common image of Eve as an unclothed,

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[573] McLeod, Glenda and Wilson, Katharina M. (1999) 'Sounding Trumpets, Chords of Light, and Little Knives: Medieval Women Writers' in Linda Elizabeth Mitchell (ed) *Women in Medieval Western European Culture.* Routledge: New York. Pp.331-344 (339).

[574] Peters, Christine (2003) *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England. Cambridge University Press: New York and Cambridge.* P.130.

[575] Bitel, Lisa (2012) 'Introduction: Convent Ruins and Christian Profession: Towards a Methodology for the History of Religion and Gender' in Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (eds) *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. Pp.1-16 (12)

errant temptress, images of the *vagina dentata* are common in medieval art, gaping, toothed vaginas that signify the hidden sin involved in engaging with carnal women. This may also reflect the third-century scholar Quintus Tertullian's accusation in *The Apparel of Women* of women being 'the devil's gateway',[576] a popular idea among medieval theologians who sought to entirely connect the female sex with the Other, Eve. Concerning the Morganic woman more specifically, Tory Pearman believes that the *vagina dentata* is more commonly connected with non-human women in medieval literature because it signifies the fears of what can happen if female sexuality is left unconstrained. She notes:

> The explicit association of female desire with the destruction of male bodies reveals an anxiety about the female body's capability of not only destroying men, but also usurping established structures of male power.[577]

However, such extreme gynophobia also signals the conflicting medieval attitudes towards female sexuality. Even in cases where the female reproductive female organs might be feared and relegated as Other, medieval authors remain uncomfortably aware of their necessity. As with the cave marker, says Mikhail Bakhton, '[t]he bodily depths [of these women] are fertile; the old dies in them, and the new is born in abundance.'[578]

This conflicting attitude towards the female body is expressed in various literary contexts. As with the *Vale Parlous,* the Green Chapel is presented in highly suggestive terms, the sexual connotations of the grasses that surround the hole being emphasised by the close proximity of the burbling stream:

> Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayþer syde,
>
> And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,
>
> And al watȝ holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue,
>
> Or a creuisse of an olde cragge – he couþe hit noȝt deme
>
> with spelle.[579]

While this might be connected with the semiotic womb-space, the knight undergoing a process of 'remaking' not unlike that of a gestating infant at the behest of an unseen

[576] Dor, Juliette (2003) in Ruth Evans, Sarah Salih, and Anke Bernau (eds) *Medieval Virginities.* University of Toronto Press: Toronto and Buffalo. Pp.33-54 (47).

[577] Pearman, Tory Vandeventer (2010) *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.36.

[578] Bakhton, Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (1984) *Rabelais and His World.* Indiana University Press: Bloomington. P.339.

[579] Lines 2180-2184.

mother, the *Gawain* poet also presents the potential danger of Woman's sexual organs. Although Gawain's experience here might be one of positive rebirth, for Robert J. Edgeworth the Chapel entryway's venereal connotations are irrefutable; he suggests that the 'rough manuscript illustration of the barrow's gash-like opening'[580] indicates the female genitalia because it shadows Morgan with a weird topographical explicitness. That these vaginal nuances apply specifically to Morgan is almost beyond doubt; used in only one other instance throughout the course of the narrative, in reference to Morgan's buttocks as 'balȝ and brode',[581] the 'smoothly rounded barrow' atop the cave links the female body with the demonic space Gawain believes the Chapel to be.[582] If we read the chapel as a vaginal space then as a 'devil's hole' the chapel has an obvious connection with Tertullian's description of women as a satanic gateway, for the jagged rocks that surround the opening are notably evocative of the serrated *vagina dentata*. In describing the knight's penetration of the hollow, the poet is narrating a symbolic permeation of Morgan le Fay, the archetypal Other, an ironic statement given Gawain's refusal to penetrate her more beautiful aspect in the poem's third fit.

Gregg makes the interesting point that while literary Others demonstrate changing medieval attitudes towards sexuality, this was also a process of cause and effect influenced by perceptions of female healing and magic in written culture. Literature, providing a 'knowable' manifestation of magical Otherness, fuelled negative attitudes towards mental conceptions of female sexuality, authors giving form to abstract notions that had otherwise existed only in intangible format. This resulted, she believes, in more concrete associations between women, diabolism, and sexual acts:

> As women became increasingly demonized…in literature through the Middle Ages, the accusations of sexual relationships between witches and devils became more pronounced, and women were increasingly viewed as the *voluntary* accomplices of the devil, rather than as his victims. The chimerical accusation that witches sometimes committed sexual mutilation, that it, castration of men, and the serious attention this issue receives in the *Malleus maleficarum,* indicates the depths of masculine fear of women in the sexual realm.[583]

By giving form to cultural fears surrounding Other women, even with the intent of

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[580] Edgeworth, Robert J. (1985) 'Anatomical Geography in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in *Neophilologus.* Volume 69, Issue 2. Pp.318-19 (318).
[581] Line 966.
[582] See Chism, Christine (2002) *Alliterative Revivals.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.106.

[583] Gregg, P.98.

circumventing these fears, audiences in direct reception of these texts would have had an increased reason to mistrust the Morganic woman, who is resultantly portrayed as more sexualised in literary narratives. Where she is rarely portrayed as sexual in her earlier appearances (sexuality not arriving at the forefront of conceptions about Otherness until after the twelfth century), from the *Vulgate* onwards the character's licentiousness becomes one of her most definitive markers. In in the *Prophesies de Merlin* the Dame d'Avalon aims fire at Morgan's clothes; mirroring the *vagina dentata,* says Larrington, 'her vagina has literally become the burning pit invoked in clerical misogynist attacks on female sexuality'.[584] This association is made yet more prominent is the Alexander episode in *Le Morte Darthur.* Manifesting the predatory aspect of Woman so feared in medieval culture, Morgan abducts Alexander with the intention of taking pleasure from his body at her own will. A horrified Alexander retorts with the claim, 'Ah Jesus, I will...kut away my hangers...'[585] This rebuff redefines any notion of men as sexual predators, expressing both the fears inherent to Aquinian thought and distaste for this entirely unchivalric action. Armstrong highlights Malory's portrayal of the overtly sexual woman as not 'real', and therefore Other to the feminine ideals of courtly culture. She states: 'Morgan has crossed a boundary and is no longer a "real" woman in the terms of the knightly understanding of such: sex with her would not *be* heterosexual or heteronormative, due to her emphatic denial of her gendered position, and thus, Alexander is willing to emasculate himself physically to avoid the symbolic emasculation and heteronormative transgression that sex with Morgan would create.'[586]

<u>What's in a Name?</u>

> *Naming is used as a signal or confirmation that recognition is happening,*
> *rather than one causing the other.*[587]

Jane Bliss

Even with their insistence that names should not be used as the sole means of identifying literary figures with character *exempla*, medieval grammaticians place considerable emphasis on the symbolic relevance of a character's name.[588] For authors schooled in rhetorical theory, the semiotic implication of names – or namelessness – is

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[584] Larrington, P.24.

[585] Malory, Thomas (1998) *Le Morte D'Arthur: The Winchester Manuscript* (ed Helen Cooper). Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.623.

[586] Armstrong, P.126.

[587] Bliss, Jane (2008) *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.41.

[588] Vitz, Evelyn Birge (1999) *Orality and Performance in Early French Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.97.

of equal import to the designations of physiognomy and behaviour in indicating a character's 'type'. As is the case with all markers that determine character types, a name can reveal something good or bad about a person so named, linking them to a range of similarly appellated characters. As with the written sign, the medieval process of literary naming derives from a series of older philosophical sources that returned to medieval popularity during the twelfth century. These generally promote the idea that the names with which we identify signifiers assume the form of signs in themselves, meaning that analysis should not only consider the recall of phantasms, but also '[foreground] the relationship between the names with which we mark or signal our phantasms.'[589] Plato for instance suggests that 'the inventors of first names imitated the things, trying to reproduce, by coordinating letters and syllables, the nature of those things',[590] an idea later adopted by various medieval philosophers.[591] Likewise, in response to the re-emergence of the writings of Priscian, the sixth-century inheritor of a grammatical tradition with roots in the Socratic tradition, Eco observes that the medieval grammarians also link names with meaning in their advice on writing literary persons.[592]

Such is the significance of the semiotic function of naming in medieval narratives that Douglas Kelly believes we should perform the same analysis on character names as we do the other essential qualities of a *species:* '[s]tudying topical inventions like names can…identify the type of human being and, often, the context of a given romance's narrative.' [593] This is a valid argument, particularly given the aforementioned discussions of Morgan's etymological history. However, since 'Morgan' is used to reference only one face of the Other Woman, and this thesis is concerned with connecting the character with a further range of figures, we must also consider how 'rememorative' names may be used to unite female characters with the more generic *species universales*. Lucia Boldrini believes that authors achieve singular universality in literary characters by a primarily typographical methodology. In her exploration of medieval polysemy she asserts that writers use lexical denominators to connect their

[589] Frost, P.60.
[590] Plato, *Cratylus,* 44d-425b.
[591] See Cameron, Margaret (2012) 'Meaning: Foundational and Semantic Theories' in John Marenbon (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy.* Oxford University Press: Oxford etc. Pp. 342-362.
[592] Eco, U., Lamertini, R., Marmo, C., Tabarroni, A. (1989) 'On Animal Language in the Medieval Classification of Signs' in Umberto Eco and Constantino Marmo (eds) *On the Medieval Theory of Signs*. John Benjamins B.V: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp.3-42 (12).
[593] Kelly, Douglas (2000) 'The Name Topos in the *Chevalier aux deux épées'* in Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (eds) *Por Le Soie Amisté: Essays in Honour of Norris J. Lacy.* Rodopi B.V.: Amsterdam and Atlanta. Pp.257-268 (259).

characters to generic types, while still allowing their literary figures to demonstrate their individual personas:

> [T]he "character"'s presence is marked by the appearance of his or her initials (or siglum) – i.e., typographical characters; but the initials may stand for something else beginning with the same letters. Thus an identification of all things, no matter how heterogeneous, is brought about by the sharing of the same initials – that is, the sharing of an apparently outward, superficial, arbitrary, and literally *literal,* or "letter-al" character(istic).[594]

The 'sharing of initials' in personal names may be regarded as a further 'essential trait' in the 'standard list' of Morganic women, particularly given their obvious allegiance to a certain grapheme. From the popular characters of Morgause and Mélusine to older deities including Macha, Morrígan and Modron, and figures from medieval culture such as Maid Marian and Mary Magdalene, female Others seem to be dominated by their designation under M initialled names. This is particularly relevant when we observe that, as Emiliano notes, medieval attitudes towards the Roman alphabet perceived graphemes as simply 'a code, a set of symbols'.[595]

There are various arguments that point to M being an authorised recommendation for indicating Other women in medieval texts, not least the unusual regularity with which it occurs. Firstly, M, originally descended from a hieroglyph meaning 'water', was considered both fluid and sacred in ancient culture, prompting the same connection to female Otherness as is suggested by streams and rivers in medieval narratives. Ancient Water-Mother emblems, depicted in the interchangeable forms of Mary, Maria, Myrrha, Miriam, and Mara are thus appellated because of their inherent association with the fluid M. As Harold Bayley notes:

> [W]hen the letter M was taken over from the Egyptians by the Phoenicians, it was supposed to resemble ripples and was christened *Mem,* 'the water'. The word *em* is Hebrew for *water,* and in the emblems herewith the letter M is designed like the waves or ripples of Water.[596]

[594] Boldrini, Lucia (2002) 'Let Dante be Silent: *Finnegans Wake* and the Medieval Theory of Polysemy' in Lucia Boldrini (ed) *Medieval Joyce.* Rodopi B.V: Amsterdam and New York. P.p 199-218 (207).

[595]Emiliano, António (2011) 'Issues in the Typographic Representation of Medieval Primary Sources' in Yuji Kawaguchi, Makoto Minegishi and Wolfgang Viereck (eds) *Corpus-based Analysis and Diachronic Linguistics.* John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. Pp.153-174 (154)

[596] Bayley, Harold (2006) *The Lost Language of Symbolism.* Dover Publications: Mineola.P.236.

The grapheme is also linked with the same volatility of gender stereotyping as that of the Other Woman herself: as Helena Blavatsky states, it is 'at once masculine and feminine and also symbolic of water in its original state'.[597] Whilst in all major European and many Eastern languages the character is feminised by its association with the mother figure (names for 'the mother' are traditionally M headed – i.e. *mamma*, *maman*, *mamaí* – and 'm' noises are often the first conscious sounds made by infants), the grapheme also has linguistic correlations with masculine bodies: *masculum, mâle, männlich*. As a form of androgynous 'code', M is thus used in representations of Other women because it signifies both immense power and that which Glenn Bogue terms 'the sacred feminine as supernal mother container',[598] a particularly relevant premise when we recall the Other Woman's simultaneous association with masculine behaviours and feminine womb-spaces.

It has also been thought that M might have been used to connote female Otherness in medieval culture on the basis of its central position in the Roman alphabet, a stance that suggests a much older association between the letter and female bodies. Robin Pavitt even believes that it is because of M's distinctly feminine associations that it was initially placed as the thirteenth letter of our Roman Alphabet, an argument that he verifies on the basis that 'there are [thirteen] lunar moons annually',[599] and lunular activity is traditionally allied with the female body and menstrual patterns. While we cannot be certain as to the legitimacy of this argument, the centrality of M has also been used to suggest it as a polysemic character, a hypothesis that would be particularly relevant to a study of multiplynamed women. For Ken Nicholson the letter's location signifies the 'unity of diverse things' that stems from the Greek letter Mu's original position between Alpha and Omega:

> Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Green alphabet and are significant symbols in Christian cemeteries to represent the beginning and end of all things (Revelations 21:16): 'He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." 'If the Greek letter M (Mu) is inserted between the Alpha and Omega, it means the beginning, the continuation, and the end of all things.[600]

[597] Blavatsky, H.P (1888) *The Secret Doctrine.* The Theosophical Publishing Company: London. P.9.
[598] Bogue, Glenn (2011) *The Black Madonna- Isis and the Magdalene.* Authorhouse. P.140.
[599] Pavitt, Robin (2012) *The Ancient Symbolism Within the Heart.* Completely Novel. P.21.
[600] Nicolson, Ken (2010) *The Happy Valley: A History and Tour of the Hong Kong Cemetery.* Hong Kong University Press: Aberdeen. P.121.

Although we cannot be certain of the influence of this upon medieval authors, the idea of M signifying both universality and continuation would have appealed to medieval authors looking to identify a range of characters belonging to a collective identity.[601]

While the discussion of M as part of the Other Woman's standard list may seem to lack the academic substance of her other markers, it should be noted that, like her associations with healing, magic, and sexuality, the same decline in popularity seems to occur between the grapheme and Other womanhood as her other 'essential qualities'. Where M's central positioning in the alphabet may have connoted the sacred feminine in ancient tradition, traces of which remain in Early and High medieval depictions of female Others, by the Late Middle Ages the grapheme's locus had developed a more malevolent subtext, a premise with an obvious connection to the declining Morgan figure. While thirteen had long been considered an unlucky number, heightening the thirteenth position of M as a symbol for misfortune in the later Middle Ages, it is partially because of its association with the lunar and feminine monthly cycles[602] that the number came to be connoted with evil. Medieval culture also regarded the number with suspicion owing to there being thirteen present at the last supper, the scene of Jesus' betrayal. This superstition has continued into contemporary culture, many cultures still perpetrating the notion that it is unlucky for thirteen people to dine together. However, this appears to have been a process of cause and effect in medieval culture; as superstitions surrounding thirteen grew, so did they around M as the thirteenth grapheme, and vice versa. Some scholars have even noted that the arrests of the Knights Templar were deliberately arranged to begin at dawn on Friday the thirteenth of October 1307 so that it would adhere with the extant superstitions surrounding the number.[603]

Although we cannot be sure how significantly medieval authors allowed this level of symbolism to impact their writing, there is a definite correlation between the decline in attitudes towards the letter M and the naming of female characters associated with subversion and Otherness. Morgan le Fay undergoes a significant transformation from

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[601] Michael Stewart has discussed this in relation to poetry more generally, claiming that M allows poets to 'mediate between the physical and the non-physical', for the centrality of its position allows both author and reader 'to explore the ambivalence of the position of self.' Stewart, Michael (1999) 'The Unnamable Mirror: The Reflective Identity in Beckett's Prose' in Matthijs Engelberts, Marius Buning, and Sjerf Houppermans (eds) *Poetry and Other Prose: Poésies et Autres Proses.* Rodopi: Amsterdam and Atlanta. Pp.107-130 (109).

[602] Leet, Leonora (2004) *The Universal Kabbalah.* Inner Traditions: Vermont. P.183.

[603] Brian Palls observes that *triskaidekaphobia*, the fear of the number thirteen, existed long before the Christian era, the raid and arrest of many Knights Templar simply giving rise to the extant ill fortune of the date. Palls, Brian P. (2008) *Cultural Portraits: A Synoptic Guide.* AuthorHouse: Bloomington. P.274.

benignity to malevolence, while Morgause, a later addition to the Arthurian sphere, is immediately generated in keeping with supposedly negative medieval attitudes towards the letter. While this may not appear to have much significance in cases of women who are named as Morgan, use of the grapheme provides a useful indicator for potential instances of female Otherness in medieval texts. In the following chapter, in which I examine the redeployment of Morgan's identity across a range of differently named characters, the penchant for subversive, M initialled women becomes even more apparent: Jean d'Arras' Mélusine, the *Partenope* author's Melior, and even Laȝamon's Argante, an arguably 'misnamed' example of the character, all demonstrate a correlation with the trend. In the outlaw narratives explored in my final chapter, the significance of Maid Marion's name also lends credibility to this argument.

While the interrelation between Morgan le Fay and her cognates has received modest analysis in contemporary scholarship, rarely have medieval characters been considered from a perspective that so readily engages in their theoretical background. By attempting to understand not only the medieval concept of the 'standard list' used to define the Other Woman's generic character type, but also the connotative effects of each of these qualities, we are able participate more wholly in what might be considered as an historical reading of her identity. We also align ourselves more closely with the general philosophical background of the period, which promotes the idea of physically formed signs in order to communicate otherwise abstract ideas. While characters may differ in their outward appearance, construction in accordance with these 'patterns' suggests that they might be considered as part of the same persona of Other womanhood. As Pellerey suggests, when we read semiotic characters each of these objects generates 'a complete series of sensible data which…behave like "distinctive traits" which finally reconstitute themselves in a unique sign, the phantasm'.[604] The remaining chapters of this thesis put this theory into practice, exploring a range of further characters who, despite being differently named (or not named at all), might be considered expressions of Morgan's ultimate persona on the basis of these 'cues and triggers'.

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[604]Pellerey, P.90.

Chapter Four: 'Re-Named Morgans'

> *The power of female characters may be dispersed, but Morgan's*
> *many manifestations lurk just beneath the surface.*[605]

> Jill Marie Hebert

Subscribing to Aquinas' hypothesis of conceptualising (by which 'the things which belong to the species of a material thing…can be thought without the individual principles which do not belong to the notion of the species'[606]), medieval signs may be interpreted from a perspective that accepts both their 'universal' and 'individual' meaning, the intellect 'stripping away' a sign's individual qualities and leaving only the universal behind. These individual qualities are 'accidental' in that they belong to the sign as an object or image in its own right; their universal traits, however, are 'essential' because they connote a generic subject matter or type behind the sign's intention. Given the interrelation between medieval semiotics and literature, reading literary characters as signs means we might apply the same process to Matthew of Vendôme's notion of character type. By this principle, the aesthetic distinctions often used to differentiate literary characters from one another should not be read as indicative of a character's 'difference', but have the potential to be considered as 'accidental' features that might be used to supplement a generic identity. The removal of these features (for instance a character's name or plot-based role) may expose an underlying series of qualities that attach him or her to a more standard character type. Facilitating Bane's statement that Morgan le Fay 'has had many names and fulfilled many roles in religion and folklore', we might use this primarily medieval methodology to align further a range of characters with the Other Woman's universal persona. This chapter seeks to identify some of these women, characters who might be considered Morganic by nature if not by name, using the 'cues and triggers' discussed in the previous chapter to verify their allegiance to the *species universales.*

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[605] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.18.
[606] Aquinas, Thomas (1945, C13th) *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas: God and the Order of Creation.* Random House: New York. P.814.

<u>A Woman of Many Faces</u>

> *[T]he identity of the* selfsame *[must] be repeatable and identifiable* in, through, and even in view *of its alteration.*[607]

> Laurie Finke

When literary characters may reasonably be described as signs in that their purpose is to manifest concepts from the real world, the universal identity of the *species* to which they belong must be derived from a distinct process of semiotic formulation. This relies both upon an author's selection of appropriate cues, and the capacity of a particular culture to distinguish the relationship between these cues and an abstract entity. As Douglas Harrell observes, the 'cultural phantasm' relies on the creator's ability to convey a particular subject matter, but also upon the way in which an audience interprets it. On this basis signs can vary outwardly and yet still refer to the same concept:

> Cultural phantasms are created, sustained, dismantled, and reconfigured through human practices and experiences. They can change dramatically and continuously. Their degree or 'reality' in terms of impact on people's minds and lives, depends upon people subscribing to them.[608]

If Morgan le Fay is able to 'change dramatically' between texts and yet still be regarded as the same character there is, particularly given the distinctions between medieval and contemporary conventions of naming, little to prevent a further range of women from being considered as extensions of her persona. Provided that they demonstrate a significant number of her essential qualities, even characters with their own identity might be thought of as 'renamed Morgans'. As Beverly Kennedy asserts in response to Matthew of Vendôme's theory of type: '[it is not important] that the character be fully realised; it is important only that [she] be typical of [her] class and that whatever individuating traits [her] author gives [her] should not obscure "the nature of the subject" that is the particular type or class of human beings which [she] exemplifies.'[609]

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[607] Despite Finke's use of Derrida's notion of iterability as a primary stance point, the idea that phantasms can differ from one another and yet convey the same meaning dominates medieval correspondence theory. Finke, Laurie (1987) 'Truth's Treasure: Allegory and Meaning in *Piers* Plowman' in Laurie Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (eds) *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers.* Cornell University Press: Ithica. Pp.52-68 (62).

[608] Harrell, Douglas Fox (2013) *Phantasmal Media: An Approach to Imagination, Computation, and Expression.* MIT Press: Cambridge. P.180.

[609] Kennedy, Beverly (1985) *Knighthood in the Morte D'arthur.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.57.

These characters do not need to exhibit all ten markers belonging to the Other Woman's standard list; as Kelly points out, '[a]n author rarely uses all the standard *topoi*'[610] in aligning a character with a universal type. Indeed, differently named 'Morgans' may on occasion exhibit a seemingly greater allegiance to her universal identity than in her named appearances. Thomas the Rhymer's queen correlates with Morgan's identity so precisely that it is arguably only because of the author's desire to *de-Arthurianise* the text that his fairy mistress does not fulfil Morgan's entire specification or bear her name. This can also be used to the opposite effect; a character's demonstration of fewer markers can reflect her minor role in a narrative (such as in the case of Chrétien's unnamed healer), a factor that should therefore not be used to automatically exclude her from the general persona. Distinctions aside, however, by collating the literary females who share a significant number of Morgan's characteristic *topoi,* we identify a range of women who fall within the medieval designation of female Otherness. These characters, who should be thought of as belonging to the same collective identity as Morgan, range from major 'umbrella' personas like those of Mélusine and Mary Magdalene, to lesser-known individuals such as Maboagrain's nameless lover in *Érec et Énide* and the anonymous queen in *Thomas of Erceldoune*:

Marker / Character	Pagan Heritage	Sexually Predatory	Magi-cal	Caves/ Valleys	Ruler	Wilderness Dwelling	Metamor-phic	Borders/ Aquatics	Healing	M name
Fairy Mistress (*Lanval*)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Melior (*Partenope of Blois*)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mélusine (Jean d'Arras' *Mélusine*)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Mary Magdalene (Digby Play)	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Unnamed Healer (*Yvain*)		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	
Lady (*Wedding of Sir Gawain*)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		
Loathly Lady (*The Wife of Bath's Tale*)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Mistress (Thomas of Erceldoune)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Queen of Flu-ratrône (Gauriel von Muntabel)	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		
Enide's Cousin (*Erec et Enide*)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		

[610] Kelly, Douglas (2000) 'The Name Topos in the *Chevalier aux deux épées'* in Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (eds) *Por Le Soie Amisté: Essays in Honour of Norris J. Lacy.* Rodopi B.V.: Amsterdam and Atlanta. Pp.257-268 (259).

However, while this method may provide a useful means of cataloguing Other females, it also raises issues surrounding the purpose of conceptualising in literary characters. Particularly in light of Morgan's obvious recognisability as a literary sign (as discussed in Chapter Two), we must question why authors would want to apply these markers to a further range of characters if they were intended to evoke the same subject matter. As Hebert notes, why should writers 'create new characters such as Duessa (or Acrasia, or Malecasta) rather than simply use Morgan, if they are featured in a supposedly Arthurian work and share some of her multiple aspects?'[611]

There are various reasons for this 'renaming'. Firstly, while characters may have been intended to participate in the same character type as Morgan, a medieval audience would have recognised that changing the name of an established character 'indicate[d] a change in point-of-view.'[612] Recalling my earlier statement that variations in literary signs might be used as part of the process of singular universality, a character's name might even be read as one of the 'accidental features' that give a sign individual meaning. These features are therefore partially included to give a story greater entertainment value, to attach (or disassociate) a narrative from a particular sub-genre, or to reflect an author's cultural milieu. The latter is a particularly important factor in descriptions of Other Women, for while the female Other might be an age-old, universal concept, the Otherness she signifies has a different meaning for every culture and context in which she features. As Larrington notes, medieval authors were highly conscious of their participation in what she terms the 'larger Arthurian universe', which incorporates all existing Arthurian texts. Although characters may have distinctive roles in the plot of any one tale 'their actions and fates are, to some extent, constrained by tradition'.[613] An author may have wished to circumvent these constraints, or perhaps invoke the universal Other but not the accidental features belonging to the Morgan archetype (for instance her relationship to King Arthur) because of the increasingly malevolent subtext attached to her in later works. Where a reference to 'Morgan' in earlier material might have indicated a simple reference to the Other Woman as a benign and fascinating entity, by the fourteenth century her name warranted a series of far more antagonistic behaviours that later authors may have wanted to avoid.

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[611] Hebert, P.153.

[612] Bliss, Jane (2008) *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.85

[613] Larrington, Carolyne (2006) *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her sisters in Arthurian Tradition.* I B Tauris: London, New York. P.3.

Providing that a character demonstrates a significant number of the Other Woman's defining factors, the elements that authors choose to exhibit (or eliminate) in her characterisation also signifies the way in which this character signifies the concept of female outsiderness. An author may have wished to focus more closely on a certain aspect of the Other Woman's identity (for instance her healing ability) or remove others (such as her sexual prowess), a function that the standard list makes possible. Wade comments on this in his *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, stating that medieval authors actively manipulate the conventions used to delineate Other women 'in order to fit different narrative, aesthetic, and imaginative purposes'.[614] Renaming is a particularly important part of this process, for powerful fairy women who are not appellated as Morgan promote greater flexibility for the contexts in which they might be used. Because of this, renaming should not be used to automatically divide characters from the same type; rather, we should look at how a character behaves within a narrative to determine their underlying persona, as well as considering what their name in itself might tell us. Recalling Boldrini's argument that 'an identification of all things, no matter how heterogeneous, is brought about by the sharing of the same initials – that is, the sharing of an apparently outward, superficial, arbitrary, and literally *literal,* or "letter-al" character(istic)'[615] a character might be connected to a generic type by sharing the initials of two differently sounding names. In keeping with the M marker discussed in the previous chapter, three (and potentially all) of the four characters discussed in this chapter are interlinked by the initials of their personal name. A woman's personal etymology may also provide an individual interpretation of female Otherness that recalls both the universal and singular aspects of her persona, because the word with which she is named has its own connotative factors. To use Umberto Eco's description: 'in order to establish what the interpretant of a sign is, it is necessary to name it by means of another sign'.[616]

The process of active manipulation can also be used, like the 'distance' method employed by Chrétien and Hartmann, to constrain or limit the Other Woman in medieval texts. As Hebert asserts, 'assigning only one traditional aspect of her nature – seduction, manipulation, derision of knights, sorcery – to a single character at a time allows authors to create manageable, non-threatening and ultimately flat characters.'[617] Fokkema

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[614] Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.2

[615] Boldrini, Lucia (2002) 'Let Dante be Silent: *Finnegans Wake* and the Medieval Theory of Polysemy' in Lucia Boldrini (ed) *Medieval Joyce.* Rodopi B.V: Amsterdam and New York. P.p 199-218 (207).

[616] Eco, Umberto (1976) *A Theory of Semiotics.* Indiana University Press: Bloomington. P.68.

[617] Hebert, P.153.

corroborates this point, emphasising that when a set of criteria is established as a means of denoting a semiotic character, 'any character that does not meet the criteria…will be dismissed as…"flat".'[618] However, this does not reflect poor authorship in medieval texts (Fokkema notes that a character's lack of adherence to a set criteria may simply reflect the fact that the text is 'badly written'), but rather suggests that medieval authors were wholly aware of how they could use this criteria to their advantage. Where restrained examples of Other women might share the archetypal Morgan's debilitating prowess and outsider nature, authors had the potential to create 'watered down', and less threatening examples of the *species* in situations where this might be warranted. This has a significant effect on how we might interpret different examples of the type, and how these characters might in themselves be presented. In the works of Chrétien de Troyes, for instance, Morgan's array of attributes are distributed among several women, 'reducing their sphere of influence and diffusing the implied threat a complex and realistic woman might post.'[619] This process also influences the comparative centrality of renamed Other women; while the named Morgan is typically relegated to the sidelines of the narratives she occupies, the renamed (and thus diluted) 'Morgan' is able to step into a leading role without posing too significant a threat to the male ordered world. Of the four 'renamed' Morgans discussed in this chapter, the three foremost examples (Jean d'Arras' Melusine, the *Partenope* writer's Melior, and the Digby Playwright's Mary Magdalene) occupy central positions in a way that the named Morgans discussed in Chapter Two do not.

Ascribing semiotic characters of the same type with a variety of names is therefore not only possible, but beneficial to literary practice. A differently named character may inform us of a universal type whilst also providing an interesting, original, and innovative function in a narrative. Having a basic understanding of medieval sign theories therefore facilitates our reading of such characters, particularly encouraging us to utilise the semiotic information presented in Chapter One. Considering Laurie Finke's observation on medieval character that 'the identity of the *selfsame* [must] be repeatable and identifiable *in, through*, and even *in view of* its alteration,'[620]medieval authors expected their audience to recognise the *species* behind literary signs on the basis of their characteristic markers, a process largely influenced by the philosophical

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[618] Fokkema, Aleid (1991) *Postmodern Characters: A Study of Characterization in British and American Postmodern Fiction.* Rodopi B.V,: Amsterdam, Atlanta. P.42.

[619] Hebert, P.148.
[620] Finke, P.62.

culture of the period. While naming might be a powerful tool for connoting this meaning, we should also look at a character's behaviour, appearance, and geographical associations if we are hoping to ascribe them to the Other Woman's generic type. Although this may appear to further the problems typically ascribed to Morgan's constantly fluctuating identity by increasing the scope for variation, by reading a larger number of characters as 'Morganic' we provide a more convincing argument in favour of her sign-based purpose, for the subject matter is presented as superior to the named character. Whilst I do not intend to explore all of Morgan's further manifestations in full, this chapter discusses how four very different characters may be considered expressions of her universal identity. Using markers from the standard list I examine Jean d'Arras' Mélusine, the *Partenope* author's Melior, Laʒamon's Argante, and the Digby Playwright's Mary Magdalene as expressions of Other womanhood.

Jean d'Arras' Mélusine

> *In Jean's romance…Melusine is about the feminization of the image; or rather the evil that images of history, conceived as feminized, can provoke.*[621]

(Stephen G. Nichols)

As a serpentine shapeshifter with an M initialled name and a long folkloric history, Jean d'Arras' Mélusine seems an obvious choice for consideration in a study of 'renamed' Morgans. She is positioned outside the boundaries of normal human society, is well-known for her penchant for ensnaring men, and has various connections with Celtic analogues. However, possibly owing to Harf-Lancner's division of Other women into the sub-categories of *conte morganien* and *conte melusine*, scholars have often segregated Mélusine from the more general classification of Morgan-types. Jack Zipes for instance classifies a range of medieval female characters under the separate designations of 'Morgan' and 'Mélusine', because the typical 'tale of Morgan' lacks what he describes as the Mélusine story's defining features: the hero's extended residence in the supernatural realm, the permission and prohibition imposed upon the hero, and the hero's violation of his promise.[622] Carol Chase likewise describes the distinct 'narrative schemes' used to portray the Morgan and Mélusine 'types' that exist as narrative blueprints in medieval stories. By using these blueprints, she argues, authors of the period generally present outsider females as one of two generic categories epitomised by the female

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[621] Nichols, Stephen G. (1996) 'Melusine Between Myth and History: Profile of a Female Demon' in Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (eds) *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France.* University of Georgia Press: Athens. Pp.137-165 (138)

[622] Zipes, Jack (2012) *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre.* Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford. P.32.

characters of these tales.[623] While such arguments are undoubtedly valid, these scholarly distinctions derive from the characters' plot-based roles, and do not necessarily account for the factors that might connect the women as standalone literary figures to a universal persona. Indeed, when the individuating conditions of Mélusine and Morgan are stripped away we are left with a remarkably similar series of defining attributes that would suggest that both characters, despite participating in different story types, in fact belong to the same universal persona. These traits include but are not limited to the fact that each exhibits an unusually liberated sexual awareness, has the ability to metamorphose, upholds powerful associations with water, and occupies spaces outside of inclusive society. Jean's Mélusine is also linked with a number of caves and islands throughout her folkloric history, as well as fulfilling Morgan's characteristically matriarchal role.

It is perhaps on the basis of this that scholars, many of whom use aspects belonging to the Other Woman's standard list as a basis for argument, have recently begun to consider the potential relationship between Morgan and Mélusine in more detail. Katja Garloff connects the Mélusine figure to the more generic Morgan type on the grounds that both characters occupy the same geographical spaces. She notes: '[a]ssociated with Melusine is a contrast between land and water that reflects the division of the world into a sphere of human action and a sphere of numinous otherness inhabited by females who are, like M[é]lusine, banished from the human world.'[624] Her reference to the 'females like Mélusine' automatically positions the character within a wider network of characters whose identity is more closely connected to the locations they inhabit than the plotlines in which they participate. It has also been noted that Jean's Mélusine is clothed with the same Celtic material used to connote Otherness in Morgan's earliest descriptions. Says Gillian Alban: '[t]hey are both rooted in the all-powerful goddess, who possesses both beneficent and terrifying aspects, as the primal life source.'[625] This is a particularly useful statement: rather than going as far as to suggest that Jean wholly based his Mélusine on Morgan le Fay, the scholar proposes that both characters derive from a shared (and culturally authorised) source of Otherness. Pérez presents a similar argument in her *The Myth of Morgan le Fay,* supplementing Alban's claim with her suggestion

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[623] Chase, Carol (2000) 'Whatever Happened to Hector's *Amie*? Love, Marriage, and Land in the Prose *Lancelot*' in Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (eds) *Por Le Soie Amisté: Essays in Honor of Norris J. Lacy.* Rodopi B.V.,: Amsterdam and Atlanta. Pp. 129-148 (136).

[624] Garloff, Katja (2005) *Words from Abroad: Trauma and Displacement in Postwar German Jewish Writers.* Wayne State University Press: Detroit. P.120.

[625] Alban, Gillian M.E. (2003) *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A.S Byatt's Possession and in Mythology.* Lexington Books: Lanham. P.11.

that any variation between Morgan and Mélusine should be overlooked in light of the fact that they derive from what she believes to be a common source:

> Mélusine is a useful *entrée* to an appraisal of Morgan la Fey in the twelfth and thirteenth-century romances both because she remains the image of monstrous motherhood *par excellence,* and because she and Morgan share common Celtic origins. Behind this monstrous Mother looms the Sovereignty Goddess. She is yet another version of the Oresteian Mother who forms a part of the subjectivity of all men.[626]

Presenting Mélusine as 'yet another version' of the Oresteian Mother (a generic term that the scholar uses to define Morgan's character type throughout her work), Pérez encourages us to identify Mélusine with Morgan because, in spite of their story-based distinctions, they signify the same defiance of patriarchal rulership.

While his character may not fully subscribe to the Morganic woman's behavioural *topoi*, Jean relies heavily on her geographical markers to connect Mélusine with the medieval female Other*.* This is particularly significant when we recall that the author had no other obvious literary sources from which to derive stimulus: as Gareth Knight observes, 'the story of Mélusine seems to date from the book of Jean d'Arras' on that basis that 'no previous story is known, [and] even the name of Mélusine is not found anywhere'.[627] Although his opening description of the forest might be said to rely on more general medieval convictions surrounding the wilderness, various factors point to his transmutation of material from Morganic texts. Based on a number of extant narratives that stress the relationship between supernatural women and the liminal forest (thinking particularly of the twelfth-century *Guingamar* in which the hero's encountering of a fairy maiden bathing in a pool signifies a similar shift into the narrative's supernatural section), the author's opening description of the fantastical woodland space indicates a definitively female Otherness, a factor included in the narrative because this is what readers versed in romance would have expected to find. We know that this a place of magic and Otherness; Mélusine's father is compelled by some mysterious force to follow Pressine deep into the woodland 'where as were many trees high & strayt/ and [it] was in the season that the tyme is swete & gracyous'.[628] After absorbing the multiple effects

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[626] Pérez, Kristina (2014) *The Myth of Morgan le Fey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York.
[627] Knight, Gareth (2013) *The Book of Melusine of Lusignan in History, Legend and Romance.* Skylight Press: Cheltenham. P.81.
[628] Ibid (P.10).

of the beautiful fountain and forest, Elynas declares himself spellbound by his approximation to fairyland: 'And byganne to think on the songe & on the beaulte of the lady. In so moche that he was as rauysshed knew nat yf it was daylight or nyght, ne yf he slept or wakked.'[629] Recalling Rossignol's argument that the adventures of male characters are often associated with the magical forest 'because enchantresses like Morgan le Fay and other magical figures appear in those stories'[630] Jean's forest space should not be read as a casual background setting, but one that occurs to deliberately implicate the presence of such a figure.

Jean's inclusion of the magical fountain also connects the *Roman* with the generic Otherness implied by watery spaces. As Misty Rae Urban notes, the central 'moche fayre fontayn*ne*' informs the usual 'intersection of the fairy and human worlds'[631] typically portrayed in such scenes:

> Cultural associations of the fountain as both evidence for a greater power and the intersection of the fairy and human worlds clearly inform the author's strategic placement of the fountains in the narrative of *Melusine*.'[632]

That the fountain is 'strategically placed' would suggest that Jean was aware of the rememorative function of these symbols, deliberately looking to cue and trigger his readers' extant knowledge of aquatic markers. We are also reminded of the 'washer at the ford' fable, a Celtic tale upon which later Morgan narratives are thought to have been inspired by. In the time-honoured scene, derived from the legend of the Morrígan's exchanging of sexual favours with the Celtic god Dagda for victory in battle, a man comes across a woman bathing herself during a masculine pursuit such as hunting or a military quest. A direct mimicry of this, Jean describes Elynas' hunting in the forest – a device often used to prefigure mortal meetings with *fées* – before coming upon his beloved alongside a body of water. As in the Celtic motif, the man's discovery of the woman is accidental, a fortuitous result of a knight's greater quest, and has a sexual outcome. She is also unfailingly beautiful, often bathing in or alongside a stream or well, and the man,

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[629]Ibid.

[630] Rossignol, Rosalyn (2006) *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work.* Infobase Publishing: New York. P.431.

[631] Urban, Misty Rae (2009) 'Magical Fountains in Middle English Romance' in Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (eds) *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity Through the Renaissance.* Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden. Pp.427-452 (446).

[632] All citations are taken from a late fifteenth century Middle English edition of Jean d'Arras' *Roman de Mélusine.* Jean d'Arras (1895) *Melusine* (edited from a unique manuscript in the library of the British Museum by A.K. Donald). The Early English Text Society: London. P.7.

overcome by her allure, solicits copulation. The motif is used to double effect in the *Roman*; to connect Pressine with the generic Other Woman, and to prefigure Raymondin's prohibited discovery of the bathing Mélusine.

That the mortal aspect of the narrative is located within or in close proximity to 'Northomberland' also suggests that the place belongs to the same wooded area constituting the famed locality of various Morgan narratives, Inglewood Forest. This is reinforced by Pressine's ability to depart straight from the forest to 'Aualon, that was named the yle lost'[633] to raise her three daughters under her sister's governance. Various scholars have commented on the fact that the mysterious and shadowy figure of Mélusine's aunt is likened to or even identified as Morgan le Fay because she occupies and appears to be the ruler of Avalon. As Knight asserts in his *The Book of Mélusine*:

> The Isle of Avalon where Pressine hides is an orchard of delicious golden apples…Morgan, sister of Oberon and of Arthur, takes Arthur there to heal him of his wounds. She keeps Ogier the Dane there. Pressine's sister rules this paradise. She must therefore be Morgan.[634]

If Morgan does have a role in the narrative then it does not make Mélusine any less Morganic, but rather reinforces the idea that diffusing the Other Woman's qualities across a number of arguably weaker characters reduces their power, a vital point for an author (like Jean) wishing to present an Otherworldly female protagonist. As a renamed Morgan, Mélusine is not presented with the same antagonistic behaviours attributed to Morgan at this time, because, as the story's central character, she cannot be so firmly marginalised. Engaging in a loving relationship with a mortal, Morgan's excessive Otherness is reduced in Mélusine so that the character can assume the function of eponymous protagonist, one of the only female Others to achieve this role. However, the more aggressive female Other is not entirely removed from the *Roman*, but simply displaced. Like the 'distant' Morgans who do not feature bodily in Chrétien's romances, Jean's true Morgan remains a distant but nonetheless extant threat to society upon the margins of patriarchal culture.

Concerning Mélusine's personal characterisation the author ascribes her with various Morganic traits, including both her function as a ruler and the Other Woman's famous penchant for ensnaring men. Arguably undercutting the more positive aspects of Mélusine's building powers, the latter marker in particular represents 'the unnatural rule of

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[633] Ibid, P.22.
[634] Knight, P.82.

women,'[635] for it forces men to both submit physically and engage with an uncomfortable degree of emotional intimacy. This is an aspect of the chivalric code which Larrington believes is 'not easily integrated with the public masculine world of action'[636] and highlights the ultimately female agency that dominates the work. Emulating Morgan's role in the *Vulgate*, a source with which Jean would have been familiar and would likely have expected his readers to know, Mélusine, with the help of her sisters, engenders her father's entrapment in the Brandebois mountain: 'Thanne the thre doughtirs dide so moch, that by theyre false condycion they toke theyre fader, & closed or shett hym on the said mountayne'.[637] Although the accounts differ (Elynas is not, for instance, imprisoned due to a breach of his romantic fidelity), given that both the *Vulgate* Morgan and Jean's Mélusine act on behalf of other women while treating male inconstancy and, more specifically, breaches of trust with what has in both cases been described as an undue severity, draws an obvious parallel. Albert Hamilton comments on this use of 'mapping' to indicate character, suggesting that '[t]he symbolically female body of [romance texts] thus joins its characteristically female landscape (enclosing forest, mysterious cave, enveloping bower) as a space the knight or reader must quest through and emerge from.'[638] That Elynas does not emerge from the space presents the marker in its more negative capacity, in which the womb-space becomes a female prison for the helpless knight. Any sense of development is therefore limited to the reader, for it is in response to this action that Pressine places her daughter under the transformative curse for which the *Roman* is so famed.

Jean's most obvious 'cue' to female Otherness in the *Roman* is Mélusine's illustrious transformations from mortal to half-serpent. This element of Mélusine's persona is presented above all others, and is emphasised in further aspects of her identity: she is biform by descent, having a human father and a fairy mother, and is described as a triplet, Jean drawing on the medieval association between monstrosity and multiple births. Sharing with Morgan a rejection of the biological restrictions that medieval thought imposed upon the 'lesser' female body, Mélusine's transformations therefore signal a recognition of 'an unassimilable kind of difference'.[639] Her potential to transform into a

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[635] Larrington, P.57.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Hamilton, Albert Charles (1990) *The Spenser Encylopedia.* University of Toronto Press: Toronto, Buffalo, and London. P.617.
[639] Frangos, Maria (2008) '*The Shame of All Her Kind': A Genealogy of Female Monstrosity and Metamorphosis from the Middle Ages Through Early Modernity.* ProQuest: Ann Arbor. P.88.

monstrous form is also thought to signify the general medieval gynophobia that perpetrated fear of menstruation, a time when women became altered and untouchable, as well as the Other woman's potential for social dissonance. As Miranda Griffin notes:

> Mélusine's shifting body offers an alternative version of the 'natural woman': not a sublime figure towards which she and her sisters might aspire, but one which renders visible the sin, corruption, and punishment with which post-lapsarian women are indelibly, inescapably – yet sometimes imperceptibly – marked.[640]

Although the symbolism behind Mélusine's metamorphosis has been extensively discussed in contemporary scholarship, various critics also use this aspect of her persona to connect the character with a range of additional females from the medieval tradition. Susan Crane for instance sees Jean's Mélusine as an analogue to Chaucer's Loathly Lady on the basis that 'Mélusine's transformations…constitute an ongoing test of submission for Raymondin, until he breaks his promise not to seek her out on Saturdays and so brings about her permanent transformation into a serpent.'[641] While the Loathly Lady has not been a major focus of this study, she falls quite naturally under the designation of the medieval Other Woman, fulfilling, as shown by the table on page 155, the majority of the character's essential features. For Bliss, however, Mélusine's metamorphosis links her with the *Partenope* author's Melior because both women have supernatural forms that their lovers are prohibited from seeing.[642] That Mélusine's sister shares her name with Melior furthers this connection, perhaps suggesting that Jean (like Carolyne Larrington) regarded the transformative Other women of romance as 'sisters'. Supplementing this familial connection, Hebert regards Mélusine as being 'outside' Morgan's personal definition, and yet 'related' to her in medieval literature, referring to Mélusine as 'Morgan's lamia-like, half-serpent and half-human niece'.[643]

While Jean's Mélusine should not be regarded as 'the same' as Morgan, there is much to support a reading of her as a character belonging to the same type. Particularly given that in medieval culture the definition of metamorphosis was not confined to the mixing of species or shapeshifting, but also to moral growth or deterioration (recalling Hawkins' description of the multiply-formed sign as sinful), we are reminded of the Other Woman's semiotic demonstration of real-life conceptions, an attribute which Morgan

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[640] Griffin, Miranda (2015) *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.159.
[641] Crane, Susan (2014) *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'.* Princeton University Press: Princeton. P.85.
[642] Bliss, P.58.
[643] Hebert, P.23.

and Mélusine clearly share. In this respect, says Pérez, Mélusine's physical transformations may be read as 'a visual manifestation that mirrors Morgan's fall from grace in the Arthurian tradition as Morgan's maternal aspects become disembodied'.[644] Mélusine's lack of restriction to one bodily form also correlates with Morgan's shapeshifting in that both may be read as a defiance of the biological inferiority imposed upon the female sex. We should avoid dividing the characters because, by imposing contemporary distinctions on these medieval women, we fall under the trappings of anachronism that often cause us to overlook the universal aspects of medieval characterisation. Moreover, as Pérez states, in dividing the functions of Morgan and Mélusine we only 'serve to naturalize the separation of these different aspects of "femininity" ascribed by patriarchal culture',[645] a factor that should be wholly avoided in discussions of a universal Other Woman.

Melior, *Partenope of Blois*

The author constructs Melior's character according to the conventions of a fairy mistress as understood within the imaginative network in which this romance participates.[646]

(James Wade)

While the folkloric Mélusine might adopt Morgan's 'essential qualities' as a means of familiarising her role within a literary context, Melior, a more 'constructed' and semiotic character, provides a more straightforward example of a 'renamed' Morgan. As Wade notes: 'the author constructs [her] character according to the conventions of a fairy mistress as understood within the imaginative network in which this romance participates'.[647] Melior exhibits the Morganic woman's predilection for M headed names,[648] is presented as a powerful female monarch, and enjoys an uncommonly liberated sex life. The fact that she is not named as Morgan is therefore likely a 'change in point of view' in how we are expected to view the character. Although the story is named after its leading male, a common practice in medieval texts, Melior, like Mélusine, avoids the same level of narrative marginalisation imposed upon Morgan le Fay to assume a central function in the narrative. By stepping into this leading role, Melior is not wholly relegated to the outskirts of society, but is instead able to engage in a relationship with Partenope while fulfilling her duties as queen of Byzantium. Her renaming may also be a result of

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[644] Pérez, P.58.
[645] Perez, P.59.
[646] Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.22.
[647] Ibid.
[648] While hers is not thought to derive from the same Celtic analogues as 'Morgan', its Latin meaning of 'more good' arguably signifies Melior's function as a 'better' version of antagonistic Morgan.

what Sif Rikhardsdottir describes as the author's attempt to 'remove the text from its social context, making it both more generalised and more applicable to a reading community formed of multiple diverse layers of society'.[649] This is a valid argument: the author's efforts to blend a variety of Celtic, Classical and folkloric elements in his narrative would indicate the story's intended appeal to a wider audience than the generally middle and upper-class readers of Arthurian romance.

Helaine Newstead supports this point, theorising in her 'The Traditional Background of *Partonopeus de Blois'*, that the *Partenope* author deliberately blends elements of the Celtic traditions associated with Morgan le Fay with other legends and elements to create a new and yet familiar character in Melior. For Newstead, Melior automatically connotes the female Other because of her penchant for magic, sexuality, the occupancy of islands, and healing,[650] but also provides 'accidental features' in the form of her occupancy of Byzantium and loving relationship with a mortal. Certainly in the Old French thirteenth-century *Partenopeus de Blois* upon which the Middle English version is based, the author incorporates Celtic elements into his description of the eponymous hero's supposedly Christian lover, Melior, as a means of justifying her sexual nature and making her what Laura Hibbard describes a 'a rationalised *fée*'[651] who is both familiar and yet unfamiliar. Demonstrating the general principles of singular universality, we are here reminded that in the hands of a skilled artist 'a conventional type can be brought to vivid life but it still triggers an automatic response in the audience – a reflex indicated by many previous encounters with similar characters in similar situations.'[652] While the author of the Old French version of the story was perhaps only familiar with Morgan's role in *Vita Merlini* and elements of the *Roman de Brut,* the Middle English adaptation relies heavily on this 'triggering' effect, drawing on the Other Woman's standard list without incorporating references that would by the fifteenth century have had decidedly negative connotations.

In an attempt to recreate the exotic Otherness manifested in earlier delineations of Morgan, the English *Partenope* author presents a series of markers that generate an archaic reinterpretation of the Other Woman. The author's use of the older elements from the standard list is made apparent from the beginning of the narrative. As is customary in

[649] Rikhardsdottir, Sif (2012) *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.131.

[650] Newstead, Helaine (1946) 'The Traditional Background of *Partonopeus de Blois*' in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* 61. Pp.916-946.

[651] Hibbard, Laura (1960) *Medieval Romance in England.* Franklin: New York. P.211.

[652] Saunders, Corinne J. (2005) *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P20.

tales of Morganic women (particularly in cases where the lady is famed for her beauty rather than her malice), the romance begins with the hero entering a beautiful yet mysterious city, an effective substitute for the linear woodland most commonly found in Morgan narratives. As Saunders observes, '*Partenope* [employs] the narrative of an otherworldly journey to an exotic location where the hero encounters his beloved',[653] a motif also used by Marie de France in the *lai* of *Guigemar.* Partenope feels as soon as he embarks off the bizarre, empty ship that he has come to an enchanted country, a place as removed from normal society as is the Otherworldly Avalon described in Geoffrey's *Vita*:

> He sayde: Allas, what may þys be?
>
> He thoȝte he was but in fayre,
>
> And weneth hyt were þe develles werke.[654]

As a variant on the streams found alongside the Morganic woman's typical wilderness dwelling, or indeed the seas that surround the Fortunate Isle, the moat-surrounded-castle may be read as an alternative to the Other Woman's typically magical locality. It is certainly not like the 'real' descriptions of Camelot found in other texts of the period, its closets affiliate arguably being the *Gawain* poet's mysterious description of Morgan's home in Hautdesert. The place is surrounded by 'no-þynge that [bare] lyffe',[655] and is removed from Melior's subjects (whose role only becomes relevant later in the narrative) in a way that mirrors the Otherworld's removal from courtly society. Moreover, that the moat is all encompassing creates an island setting around the castle not unlike that the Isle of Apples itself: 'A-bowte þe walle full brode and longe/ A dyche þer was of water clere.'[656] Although this constructed body of water differs from the typical streams used to indicate the presence of female Others, that it is placed here with no other obvious function (it hardly serves as a mode of defence, for Partenope enters both town and castle with little resistance) indicates the presence of an inherently sexual, no doubt supernatural female within a space that is enticingly carnal.

In order to reach its mysterious shores of this pseudo-island, Partenope must undertake the customary passage to the Otherworld, a journey entailing either the hero's course

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[653] Saunders, Corrine J. (2010) *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.155-156.

[654] Bödtker, A. Trampe (ed) (1912) *The Middle English Versions of Sir Partenope of Blois.* The Early English Text Society: London. P.24. Lines 886-888.

[655] Ibid. P.23. Line 858.

[656] Ibid. P.26. Lines 975-976.

through a chasm of rock or a sojourn across water. In accordance with this, the castle assumes the function of the restorative cave; upon entering, Partenope is washed, fed and allowed to remain with his lady for over a year. However, like the dual-natured womb-space that is reminiscent of healing, fertility, and female arousal in tales of Other women, the castle serves both as a place of restoration and debasement for Partenope. The hero is returned to full health, vigour and spiritual wholeness, but has a price to pay that goes against the grain of his chivalric code. There is also a demonic element here that bears traces of the *vagina dentata.* Although he maintains an overtly Christian stance throughout his time in the mysterious would-be Otherworld, praying to God and invoking his guidance, Partenope eats the food prepared by invisible hands, follows the bearer-less torches to bed and seduces the invisible lady in a land whose mysteries he has declared to be 'deuyllys werke'.[657] Just as Gawain faces self-debasement by accepting the girdle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* and Lanval must forsake his life in the mortal realm in Marie's eponymous *lai*, Partenope, despite his consistent attempts to reassure his religious convictions, defies the laws of chivalry by engaging in a sexual relationship with a supernatural being whom he openly compares with the Roman goddess Venus: 'But to þat lady I clepe and call/ That Venus ys called, goddas of loue,/ þat in heuen sytteste a-boue.'[658] Given the common use of pre-Christian deities to indicate subversive behaviour in literary women, a medieval audience would almost certainly have recognised the inherent Otherness of this relationship. Indeed, it is primarily because of this that in his translation of Juan Luis Vive's *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (translated as The Instruction of a Christen Woman), Richard Hyrde added to Vive's original list of censured narratives for women a string of English works that comprised 'Parthenope' on the grounds of its 'fylthynes'. [659]

Given the expectation that audiences (and on occasion literary characters) are expected to refer to their extant knowledge of the larger Arthurian universe, Partenope is also aware that the drink extended to him by unseen hands, in however a friendly gesture, '[m]yghte well be herberowed poysone'.[660] Although this may simply be attributed to his natural instincts as a knight wholly engaged with the conventions of chivalric culture, his suspicion that the goblet may not be what it seems arguably suggests a knowledge of the *Lancelot Grail*, in which Morgan uses her pharmaceutical knowledge

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[657] Ibid. P.27. Line 1007.
[658] *Partenope* P.33. Lines 1245-1247.
[659] Vives, Juan Luis (with translations by Denise Albanese and Richard Hyrde) (2002, 1524) *The Instruction of a Christen Woman.* University of Illinois Press: Champaigne. P.25.
[660] *Partenope.* P.29. Line 1059.

to taint the knight's wine with a terrifying hallucinatory poison. Like Morgan's potentially noxious herbal medicine in Geoffrey's *Vita,* Melior's magic is presented as a dualistic entity that may just as easily be poison as life-giving medicine. For Partenope it is the latter, suggesting a medicinal skill on Melior's part that Stewart Rose uses to link the character to earlier renderings of Morgan. Both are educated women, he says, and '[s]kill in fayery so often assigned to ladies of distinction in the old romances may be attributed to their superior education'. [661] Saunders likewise points out that 'the poet does not include the provenance of the 'grette clerkes' and 'c. mastres' who teach her'[662] suggesting that, like Morgan, Melior's skill is the result of her own study and talent. Whether or not the *Partenope* author deliberately drew upon *Lanval* as a means of triggering his readers' recollections of this earlier material, he surrounds the Other Woman's powerful healing ability with the same level of magical ambiguity found in other High Medieval narratives. Although we cannot be sure whether the invisible hands that wash and serve Partenope belong to Melior (the author of the shorter version concedes that they are perhaps of a 'womman'[663]), Morgan's generally 'hands on' approach would point to Melior's responsibility for washing her soon-to-be lover.

It should also be noted that although Melior's role during the first part of *Partenope* is almost quintessentially Morganic (their relationship fulfilling the 'promise' aspect, a form of taboo that is 'almost universally characteristic of stories in which supernatural beings enter into relations with mortals'[664]), she goes on to offer, particularly to women readers of the romance, that which Amy Vines terms 'a second template for female behaviour, one that involves a public acknowledgment of her decisions.'[665] Using a magic lantern from his mother so as to see Melior in her true form, Partenope breaks his promise to not attempt to view her within the period of 'too yere hen, and euen halfe a yere'.[666] It is from this point onwards that the 'real' ramifications of dominant female sexuality come into play, deviating from the unconventional world of the typical Other who, stemming from her detachment from normal society, is generally unfazed by the prospect of social vitriol. It is as though after the enchantment protecting them from censure has been lifted, the couple, whose erotic relationship is described in fairly positive terms during their time in 'fayre' land, must face the harsh realities of continuing

[661] Rose, W. Stewart (1807) *Partenopex de Blois.* Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme: London. P.50.
[662] Saunders, Corinne (2008) 'Bodily Narratives: Illness, Medicine and Healing in Middle English Romance' in Neil Cartlidge (ed) *Boundaries in Medieval Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.175-190 (188).
[663] *Partenope* P.485. Line 188.
[664] Hibbard, Laura (1960) *Mediaeval Romance in England.* Franklin: New York. P.209.
[665] Vines, Amy N. (2011) *Women's Power in Late Medieval Romance.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.105.
[666] Bödtker, P.50. Line 1804.

their liaison in the eyes of a court that is normally prohibited to female Others. This contrast is made all the more apparent by the immediacy of their sexual encounter, for their hastily consummated relationship is, as Penny Eley and Penny Simons observe in their 'Male Beauty and Sexual Orientation in *Partonopeus de Blois*', unique in its placement within the narrative framework:

> In no other romance text of the period does the relationship between hero and heroine *begin* with a sexual encounter, without prior acquaintance or narratorial preparation.[667]

Realising that her lords are about to learn of her copulation with Partenope, Melior displays neither anger nor dismay, but shame, a quality not typically ascribed to Morgan le Fay. We are here reminded of Melior's dual persona, though in Melior's case her split is not the physical transformation of the Loathly Lady, but a personal division of loyalty.

Given that it is only by means of her marginality that the Morganic woman is able to indulge her sexual appetites (the *species'* aspect of sexual dominance being ultimately reliant upon her social ostracism), Melior's sudden regard for how she is perceived by her subjects signifies a shift from her straightforward role as Morganic woman to her ambiguous function as a fairy-queen-cum-empress. As Eley states: '[a]s a fairy-mistress, Melior had no need of an experienced vassal to advise her; as a young unmarried heiress, she now becomes more dependent on the good counsel of an older man'.[668] However, the lovers' relationship is not entirely deviated from the Morganic tradition; it is Melior's sovereign authority as 'quene and lady of þys londe',[669] a quality perhaps modelled on that of Morgan, that ultimately saves her from the shame she so fears. When Melior's sister Urake 'forces Part[e]nope and Melior to face the genuine social and political challenges that obstruct their relationship'[670] by telling her lords plainly that she has chosen a husband for herself, a man whom she has already known carnally, her need for sexual pleasure is accepted because she has proved she can 'rule hem alle ryghte as ye lust'.[671] Not wishing to be bound to the Arthurian realm that Morgan's name so readily conjures, Melior evokes the Other Woman's ultimate identity, but is simultaneously restored to the mortal kingdom.

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667 Eley, Penny and Simons, Penny (1999) 'Male Beauty and Sexual Orientation in *Partonopeus de Blois'* in *Romance Studies* 17. P.41-56 (42).
668 Eley, Penny (2001) *Partonopeus de Blois.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.43.
669 Ibid. P.36. Line 1329.
670 Vines, P.103.
671 Bödtker, P.242. Line 6307.

<u>Argante:</u>

> *Argante's presence, even though embodied in the insular position of queen*
> *of Avalon, resonates throughout the realm of the marvellous within which*
> *Laȝamon situates his history.*[672]

(Sandra Elaine Capps)

Whether writers of romance sought to rename their Other women as a means of increasing their scope for character development or to reduce the implications of Morgan le Fay's personal history, there are also cases where Morgan's apparent renaming may be the result of authorial or scribal error. Various scholars have argued that Geoffrey of Monmouth intended his Anna to in fact be named Morgan in *Historia Regum Brittaniae* on the basis of 'scribal abbreviation in Latin texts'.[673] This notion of Anna as an early form of Morgan, rather than Morgause (as is generally accepted owing to their analogous marriages to Lot), would certainly comply with the Fay's descent from the Irish triple war goddess, for 'the war goddess appears in triple form under many name-combinations: Badb, Macha, and Morrigan, or Badb, Macha, and *Ana.*'[674] Hebert supports this point with her suggestion that 'Anna could have been a shortened form of the alternate name of 'Morgana' sometimes given to Morgan, or contrariwise 'later conflated with Morgan to make Morgana.'[675]

Rather than using naming as the principal means of dividing medieval characters from one another, we should therefore accept that there is a greater interrelation between characters that might previously (and erroneously) have been regarded as separate entities. As Frank Reno notes in his 'Biographical Dictionary' of Arthurian figures, the Other women of romance belong to a collective identity, whose names may have gradually become corrupted as a result of multiple translations and transmissions:

> It is difficult (probably impossible) to determine if the name Morgana evolved
> from Margawse or Morgan le Fay, the latter whose name is based upon the Celtic
> goddess Modron. Another option is that the suffix *ana* might have been based on

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[672] Capps, Sandra Elaine (1996) 'Morgan le Fay as Other in English Medieval and Modern Texts'. Dissertation Abstracts International, Section A: The Humanities and Social Sciences 57, no. 10: 4377. Abstract no: DA9708997. ISSN: 0419-4209. University of Tennessee: Knoxville. P.53.
[673] Hebert, P.48.
[674] Clark, Rosalind (1987) 'Aspects of the Morrígan in Early Irish Literature'. In *Irish University Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2. Pp. 223-236 (226).
[675] Hebert, P.40.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's Anna, Arthur's sister, who has only an incidental role in Arthuriana as compared to Morgan le Fay's major one.[676]

The scholar perceives a similar conflation of names in *Le Morte Darthur*, proposing that Malory relied on his audience's knowledge of Morgan's behaviour in prior narratives, rather than necessarily naming, to identify her. He observes that there is a definitive overlap between Morgan and additional Other women in the *Morte* and what they signify more generally. Claiming that when Thomas Malory penned the text there was still confusion about who was Morgause, Morgana, or Morgan le Fay (likely on the basis of their derivation from a universal entity), the scholar believes that his female characters are partially intermingled. For Reno, the fact that in Book One, Chapter Two, Malory writes, 'King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney then wedded Morgause that was Gawain's mother,' implies only one son. In Book One, Chapter Nineteen, however, that Malory records that 'King Lot's wife came thither to King Arthur's court to espy on Arthur, and with Morgause came her four sons Gawain, Gaheris, Agravain, and Gareth', adds a confusing detail that makes us question the character's identity. Reno claims that these details become yet more confused in Book Two, Chapter Ten, when the reader is informed that King Lot was wedded to the sister of King Arthur, and Arthur lay by King Lot's wife 'and gat on her Mordred'. In the very next section, Chapter Eleven, when twelve kings are being interred, Morgause and her four sons attend, as well as King Uriens along with his wife, 'Morgan le Fay that was King Arthur's sister'.[677] While we cannot be certain as to whether Malory intended this potential confusion to occur, Reno's argument highlights the interrelation between Other women in medieval narratives, particularly those with M initialled names, as well as suggesting the possibility that supposedly 'renamed' Morgans might in fact be 'misnamed'.

The most famous example of a 'misnamed' Morgan is the fair elf-Queen in Laȝamon's *Brut*, a woman who, despite being named as 'Argante', is widely regarded as a continuation of Morgan's persona. In the Middle English adaptation of Wace's *Roman de Brut,* a work composed around the turn of the thirteenth century, Laȝamon combines Wace's original text with elements of Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica,* generating a narrative that reflects the period's penchant for saga-like, extensive histories as well as the semiotic conventions of romance. Being, as Lewis Staples points out,

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[676] Reno, Frank D. (2010) *Arthurian Figures of History and Legend: A Biographical Dictionary.* McFarland & Company: Jefferson. P.193.
[677] Reno, Frank D. (2010) *Arthurian Figures of History and Legend: A Biographical Dictionary.* McFarland & Company: Jefferson. P.193.

'rather more interested in marvels than Wace had been',[678] one of the most significant additions Laȝamon makes to the *Brut* is his inclusion of the Other Woman, 'Argante', who tends to Arthur's wounds. Whereas Wace describes Arthur's healing with the simple description that '[e]n Avalon se fist porter/ Pur ses plaies mediciner',[679] Laȝamon includes an expanded reference to the mysterious and beautiful Queen of Avalon:

> And ich wulle uaren to Aualun,   to uairest alre maidene,
>
> to argante þere queen,   aluen swiðe sceone;
>
> and heo scal mine wunden,   makien alle isunde,
>
> al hal me makien   mid halweiȝe drenchen.
>
> And seoðe ich cumen wulle   to mine kineriche
>
> And wunien mid Brutten   mid muchelere wunne.[680]

For the majority of scholars this addition to Wace's text is simply a transposition of the Morgen featured in Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini*. Françoise Le Saux points out that the resemblance between the characters is 'striking';[681] likewise, Hebert believes that 'Argante can be read as a variant of Morgan, since Morgan is a fairy who rules the isle of Avalon.'[682] In the more specific terms of markers belonging to the standard list, each author gives a repeated emphasis to the character's healing power, her supremacy of Avalon, her magical prowess (although Laȝamon replaces the supernaturalism implied by Morgan's power of flight in the *Vita* with his identification of her as an elf) and, as is often the case in Morgan's earlier appearances, her considerable beauty:

> quarum que prior est fit doctor arte medendi
>
> exceditque suas forma prestante sorores.
>
> Morgen ei nomen didicitque quid utilitatis
>
> gramina cuncta ferant ut languida corpora curet.
>
> Ars quoque nota sibi qua scit mutare figuram

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[678] Lewis, Clive Staples (1963) 'Introduction' in G.L. Brook (ed) *Selections From Layamon's Brut.* Clarendon Press: Oxford. Pp.vii-xv (ix).

[679] 'He had himself borne to Avalon to have his wounds tended' (lines 13277-8)

[680] And I shall voyage to Avalon, to the fairest of all maidens,/ To the queen Argante, the very beautiful elf,/ And she will make quite sound every one of my wounds,/ Will make me quite whole with her healing draughts potions./ And then I will come to my kingdom/ and dwell with the Britons with great joy. (The translation here is my own, though the original citation is taken from Barron and Weinberg's edition.) La3amon (1995, ca 1190-1215) (ed. W.R.J Barron and S. C. Weinberg) *Brut or Hystoria Brutonum*. Longman: Harlow. P.11. (lines 14277-82).

[681] Le Saux, Françoise H.M. (1989) *Laȝamon's Brut: The Poem and its Sources.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge

[682] Hebert, P.96.

et resecare novis quasi Dedalus aera pennis.[683]

So closely does her character align with Geoffrey's Morgan (Laȝamon either directly borrowing from the *Vita* or having an extensive knowledge of Geoffrey's potential textual or oral source), that for Brook this description makes their corresponding identities indisputable. In the index of names that concludes his edition of the *Brut* he specifies that Argante 'is none other than 'Morgan le Faye, Arthur's half-sister.' [684]

A scribal error would also account for why Laȝamon seems to have deviated from the pattern of M headed names that generally dominate medieval Other women. Loomis supports this point, proposing that in both the *Brut* and other works where Other women are featured without an obviously Arthurian name (such as 'Orguein', 'Argant' and the aforementioned 'Anna'), this should not be regarded as an attempt to modify characters, but rather a scribal corruption. He substantiates this with his argument that proper names in manuscript transmission sometimes lost their initial letter:

> The loss of initial M in such cases was probably due to the fact that the mediaeval scribes often left the space vacant at the beginning of a paragraph with the intention of filling it later with an elaborate initial letter, but sometimes failed to carry out this intention. If the first word of the paragraph were a proper name, it would thus lose its initial letter.[685]

If we accept this proposition, 'Argante' should not be considered 'renamed' at all, but rather a true Morgan who shares the qualities and appellation of Geoffrey's original character. However, this is not a universal consensus among scholars. For Paton, Laȝamon's elf-queen provides, despite the tradition for Morgan as the healer of knightly wounds, an 'isolated' instance of a separate character name:

> [A]lthough there is reason to believe that the story recorded by La[ȝ]amon survived in sundry developments and was rationalised, it is to Morgain that these developments and rationalisations are all attached. Argante is apparently the feminine of Argant (brilliant), a masculine name which we find in its simple form as early as 869…Hence we have excellent reason to assume that Argante was a

[683] *Vita Merlini* (lines 918-23): 'The one who is first among them has great skill in the art of healing, as her beauty exceeds that of her sisters. Morgan is her name, and she has learned the uses of plants in curing feeble bodies. Also, that art is known to her by which she can change her shape and fly through the air like the strange wings of Daedalus'.

[684] Brook, G.L. (ed) (1963) *Selections From Layamon's Brut.* Clarendon Press: Oxford. P.157.

[685] Loomis, Roger Sherman (1911) *Modern Language Notes XXVI:* 6,7 N. 14. In *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 234.

proper Celtic name, well known in La[ʒ]amon's time. He may have adopted it into his story by mistake or deliberate intention, perhaps simply through almost unconscious process by which narrators at all times have been prone to substitute for an unfamiliar name one that is familiar, resembling the original in sound.[686]

While this is no doubt a convincing argument, Paton's allegation should not necessarily encourage a reading of Argante as a separate character from Morgan. Whether Laʒamon intended to name his fairy mistress Argante, or envisioned her as Morgan but his written work suffered the effects of corruption, her reference to the author's 'unconscious processes' suggests that Laʒamon, exhibiting the power of associative memory arts, was more familiar with the Other Woman's standard list than any particular name. If indeed the author's knowledge of the Other Woman was based in the oral tradition then, perhaps having either misheard or mis-remembered the name 'Morgan', the author simply used a name that sounded familiar. This lack of concern surrounding Morgan's name suggests an underlying variability in the naming of outsider females, even if we do not accept Loomis's proposal that Argante 'lost her initial M'. That Laʒamon both remembers and identifies her famous characteristics (these being her occupation of the Isle of Avalon, propensity for healing and, at this point, illustrious beauty) indicates that is a character's qualities, rather than name, that qualify a female Other.

Mary Magdalene

> *As a gendered symbol, Mary Magdalene in her late medieval incarnations occupies the borders between flesh and spirit, body and word, abjection and privilege, profane and sacred.*[687]

(Theresa Coletti)

Although Mary Magdalene cannot realistically be described as a 'renamed' Morgan le Fay in the same way as Mélusine and Melior, medieval descriptions of the character have much in common with her literary cognates. Both Mary and Morgan have significant roles in the Grail legend, are famously known for their sexual proclivity, are associated with devilment and social ostracism, and are involved with anointing the bodies of Christ/Arthur at the ends of their earthly lives. Moreover, like the archetypal Morgan le Fay, the iconographic Mary Magdalene is not a singular character, but a multifaceted

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[686] Paton, Lucy Allen (1960, 1903) *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance.* Ayer Publishing: London. Pp.108-9.

[687] Coletti, Theresa (2004) *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval England*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.3.

social construct. Reflecting the classical predilection for unified phantasms, the Biblical Magdalene derives from a multiplicity of sources, including the descriptions of Mary the sister of Martha in the Gospels of John and Mark, and the unnamed sinner in Luke and Matthew. Until Pope Gregory the Great's declaration that the women were in fact one and the same in 591, there is in fact no connection between Mary Magdalene and the anonymous sinner, the transgressions of whom become key to the character's salvation. There is also evidence to suggest that medieval accounts 'used the narrative of the unnamed Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John who was said to have had several husbands (Jn 4.18)'[688] in crafting Mary's identity, along with that of the anonymous adulterous woman who was saved from stoning by Jesus (Jn 8.1-11). Given the medieval predilection for identifying characters as belonging to the same type irrespective of naming, it is unsurprising that the medieval community continued to identify these outsider women as one and the same. Indeed, Michelle Erhardt and Amy Morris go as far as to describe Mary's popular characterisation as 'one of the most well-known examples of mistaken identity in religious history,'[689] a reference to 'Mary Magdalene' coming to signify a generic term for the Biblical Other in medieval culture.

It is largely because of this absence of a fixed identity that authors and artists seeking 'essential features' for depictions of the Magdalene turned to a universal persona with which their audiences were already familiar: the medieval Other Woman. Even the character's most famous attribute as the woman with the alabaster jar is arguably a medieval construct, a factor that Johnson connects with Morgan le Fay on the basis that both have sources in Celtic religions that encouraged the notion of rebirth, for which a female vessel is often required.[690] Michelle Moseley-Christian supports this point, observing in her discussion of the 'marketing' of Mary Magdalene that her medieval identity was crafted in response to descriptions of female sinners in romance; sensual, aristocratic

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[688] De Boer, Esther (2005) *The Gospel of Mary: Listening to the Beloved Disciple.* Continuum: London and New York. P.2.

[689] Erdhardt, Michelle A. and Morris, Amy M. (2012) 'Introduction' in Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris (eds) *Mary Magdalene, Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* Pp.1-18 (5).

[690] In her study of ancient female deities, Johnson proposes that women of the *Mabinogion* who serve as a primary analogue for later depictions of Morgan le Fay have in turn their own analogue dating from as early as the eighteenth century BC. She suggests that this figure, known as 'the Goddess of the Flowing Vase' is 'a remote ancestor of the Celtic Lady of the Fountain', a Near Eastern deity who may have influenced European ideas of reincarnation *via* the sacred feminine: 'Rituals of rebirth spring from the early view of woman as the container of the seed. To them she is the vessel, the sacred water basin, and the pollen-filled pail; she embodies the life-giving water'. Johnson, Buffie (1994) *Lady of the Beasts: The Goddess and her Sacred Animals.* Inner Traditions International: Rochester. P.243.

beauties whose downfall is often prompted by their sexual allure over men.[691] In Jacobus de Vorgine's widely popular thirteenth-century apocryphal *Golden Legend,* Mary is for instance recast as a courtly courtesan-type:

> When Magdalen abounded in riches, and because delight is fellow to riches and abundance of things; and so much as she shone in beauty greatly, and in riches, so much the more she submitted her body to delight, and there fore she lost her right name, and was called customably [*sic*] a sinner.[692]

This is not an uncommon practice in medieval Europe. Given the lack of physical and even personal descriptions of Biblical figures, authors and craftsmen were often compelled to draw upon medieval sources to convey the saint's general memorandum. As a result, descriptions and visualisations of saints' lives are often a product of medieval cultural expectation, something that had an active influence upon how hagiography was perceived within its own context. Religious texts and images had to 'move with the times' in order to impose their world-view upon a changing audience, incorporating representational features into their narratives as a means of engendering recognisability to each generation.[693] Like the semiotic characters used to indicate abstract conceptions in the romance tradition, the majority of medieval saints should therefore be regarded as constructed beings in that, 'being necessarily saints for other people, they are remodelled in the collective representation which is made of them.'[694]

Given the historical Mary's significant predating of Morgan le Fay, there is also an interplay between the characters that is infrequently found in other examples of the *species.* Whereas characters like Melior derive largely from Morgan-type figures belonging to extant romances, Morgan's 'cues and triggers' may have a minor basis in the Mary Magdalene histories available to medieval authors. As one aspect of the Christian paradoxical icons of sanctity of the two extremes of womanhood, Mary, like Morgan, occupies the

[691] Moseley-Christian, Michelle (2012) 'Marketing Mary Magdalene in Early Modern Northern European Prints and Paintings' in Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris (eds) *Mary Magdalene, Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden. Pp.399-420 (400-01).

[692] Jacobus de Vorgraine, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (1989, c.1260) *The Golden Legend.* Longmans, Green and Co: New York. Pp.355-64.

[693] Campbell, Emma (2008) in Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp. 210-224 (215).

[694] Delooz, Pierre (1983) 'Towards a Sociological Study of Canonized Sainthood in the Catholic Church' in Stephen Wilson (ed) *Saints and Their Cults.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp.189-216 (195).

'constantly changing gr[e]y area'[695] of the woman on the edge of society. This relationship is made more likely when we consider the Saint's well-known association with Gaul, a flourishing centre of Arthurian activity during the Middle Ages. In terms of her attributes, moreover, Morgan's famous healing ointment in early romances has been linked to the composite Biblical figure of Mary Magdalene, most notably in Chrétien's *Yvain* in which the salve is first described*. That the knight provides a sign to Christ at this point in the narrative would likely have been obvious to a medieval reader, particularly owing to the evocations of his bestial counterpart, the lion.[696] Yvain's traversing in the wilderness also provides a thinly veiled allusion to Christ's period in the wilderness, while his promise to return to Laudine indicates what Vance terms a 'ludic iconographical [allusion] to the events surrounding Christ's resurrection'[697] in Luke 24. Although the events that follow do not parallel their chronological equivalents in the Gospel, with Chrétien's description of Morgan's ointment evoking both Mary's anointing of Christ's feet with the perfume from the jar, as well as his body at the tomb, there is an obvious connection between Yvain, Christ, and the women who consecrate them. Regarding the former event, we are informed that the nameless damsel who performs the healing rite rubs Morgan's salve into Yvain's feet, the same extremity involved in the Magdalene's application of the perfumed oil onto Christ. Concerning the latter, upon being discovered by the ladies, mirroring Mary's discovery of Christ's body in the garden at Calvary, the three women who surround the insentient Yvain seem to parallel the three women in Mark and Luke's accounts of the resurrection. Says Mark: '[a]nd when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.'[698]

It has also been noted that the sexualisation of female healers in romance may have derived from the scriptural account of Mary's anointing in Luke, Chrétien's description in particular adopting a highly charged sexual atmosphere as the nameless damsel begins to anoint the naked hero. As Siobhan Houston notes, '[a] position that is analogous to healer is that of priestess [in this context], one of Magdalene's various guises.'[699] The

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[695] Taylor, Larissa Juliet (2014) 'Apostle to the Apostles: The Complexity of Medieval Preaching about Mary Magdalene' in Peter Loewen and Robin Waugh (eds) *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture: Conflicted Roles.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. Pp.33-50 (35).

[696] Medieval imagery commonly delineated the lion as a symbol for Christ.

[697] Vance, Eugene (1986) *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages.* The University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln. P.146.

[698] The King James Bible. Mark 16: 1-8.

[699] Houston, Siobhan (2006) *Invoking Mary Magdalene.* Sounds True: West Gardiner. P.49.

priestess' assimilation of physical anointing with sexual acts made a significant contribution to medieval conceptions of the character as a prostitute. In the fifteenth-century Middle Welsh *Buched Meir Vadlen* the author of the text links the themes, not only identifying Mary Magdalene as the sinner who anoints Christ's feet in the house of Simon, but suggesting that her life of promiscuity was the direct result of her rejection at the hands of a lover who chose to follow Christ:

> There are many books which say that when John the Evangelist should have married Mary Magdalene. Jesus asked him to follow Him and retain his virginity, and so he did. Because of that Mary Magdalene sulked and gave herself to [a life of] sin and above all lust/adultery.[700]

Just as Magdalene's application of the perfumed oil signifies her conversion from a woman possessed by seven devils to a devoted follower of Christ, Chrétien restores Yvain to full vigour and sanctifies Morgan's magic by presenting it in a way that various scholars have associated with baptism. Margaret Starbird even suggests that, rather than one having an influence on the other, the depictions of both women may in fact derive from a mutual, much older source, because 'among ancient pagan rites celebrating the sacrificed bridegroom/king, anointing of the king had sexual connotations.'[701]

Whether the medieval Mary was modelled on Morgan, or vice-versa, Heidi Hornik observe that in the art of the period the Magdalene has 'a repertoire of…attributes that enabled her to be easily identifiable by both literate and illiterate audiences'.[702] This is an interesting argument, for these attributes may be interpreted as variants on the 'cues and triggers' belonging to phantasmal theory, or the standard lists used to assign character types in medieval literature. Yet more interesting is the fact that this 'repertoire' aligns with the markers used to designate female Others in romance contexts, involving a wilderness setting, removal from courtly society, and outward demonstrations of promiscuity. Despite her saintly role, Mary is highly sexualised in these contexts, an aspect of her persona that sets her firmly against the iconography depicting the virgin, and aligning her more closely with the romance heroine. Often presented as an ascetic in

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[700] Lauer o lyfreü y syd yn dyuedüd pan dylysseü Ieüan Evangylur briodi Mair Vagdalen ryerchi or Iessü ido I ga[n]lyn ef a chadu I foruyndaud ac fel y gunaeth. Am hynny sorri a unaeth Mair Vagdalen ac ymrodi i bechodaü ac yn fuya i odineb. Trans. Cartwright, Jane (2008) *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales.* University of Wales Press: Cardiff. P.135.

[701] Starbird, Margaret (2005) *Mary Magdalene, Bride in Exile.* Inner Traditions: Rochester. P.9.

[702] Hornik, Heidi J. (2014) 'The Invention and Development of the 'Secular' Mary Magdalene in Late Renaissance Florentine Painting' in Peter Loewen and Robin Waugh (eds) *Mary Magdalene in Medieval Culture: Conflicted Roles.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. Pp.75-98 (76).

varying states of undress,[703] images of Mary Magdalene might therefore be said to demonstrate little allegiance to Biblical ideologies, and rather more to popular visualisations of medieval female subversion like Morgan le Fay. Indeed, even the red and blue garb typically associated with Mary Magdalene seems to be taken from images of literally marginalised women, such as the series of bizarre, bi-human Mélusine figures depicted with flora bedecked tails and posed in provocative stances in folio sixty-four of the Luttrell psalter.

While this is a common feature of medieval art, there are a handful of works that are especially known for their depictions of romance inspired Others. In Jan van Scorel's Late Medieval *Mary Magdalene in a Landscape* the artist for instance depicts a nude woman perusing an open book in a forest setting, a courtly space just visible in the distant background. We are here reminded of Morgan's occupancy of the wilderness, a setting within which her Otherness is positioned at a safe distance from the masculine Camelot mirrored in the Flemish court. Despite the saintly subject there is, as Manfred Wundram observes, 'a certain secular element within the subject'[704] generated by the woman's courtly posture and being dressed in sumptuous green fabric. Were it not for the alabaster jar foregrounded upon the woman's lap (a feature which may connect her with the Morganic ointment that recurs throughout Arthurian lore), the sitter might well be mistaken for a typecast Otherworldly damsel. Similarly, in Lucas van Leyden's *The Dance of Saint Mary Magdalene* a clothed Mary saunters through a forest that closely resembles the Other Woman's typical wilderness backdrop in romance texts. Featuring a party of the same type of sword-wielding nobles archetypally depicted in these settings, Lucas presents the scene as a variant on the romance motif in which mortals enter the forest as a means of liberating their behaviour from the restrictions of courtly society.

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[703] See for instance Donatello's wood sculpture of the *Penitent Magdalene*, c. 1454 or Titian's several later versions (*Saint Mary Magdalene*, c. 1533, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, or his *Penitent Magdalene* of 1565, Hermitage, St. Petersburg) Hunt, Patrick (2012) 'Irony and Realism in the Iconography of Caravaggio's *Penitent Magdalene* in Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris (eds) *Mary Magdalene, Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* Pp 161-188 (167).

[704] Wundram, Manfred (2002) 'Renaissance and Mannerism' in Ingo F. Walther (ed) *Masterpieces of Western Art: A history of art in 900 individual studies from the Gothic to the Present Day. Part 1: From the Gothic to Neoclassicism.* Taschen: Koln, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Tokyo. Pp.145-212 (203).

In her 'New Reading of Lucas van Leyden's *Dance of the Magdalene*' Liesel Nolan uses this factor to connect the work to the 'legendary narrative traditions'[705] used in conjunction with Biblical sources in medieval theological art. In addition to the Biblical 'power of women' topos represented by Delilah, Potiphar's wife, and Jezebel, the scholar asserts that Lucas deliberately projects medieval and Renaissance elements onto his Magdalene to generate an Otherness that is relevant to his own culture. While Mary's role here may be used to indicate the benefits of salvation, her presence serves a dual purpose, for we are reminded of the subversive women who typically lure knights into sexual relations. As Annette LeZotte notes, the Magdalene serves as a warning against the luxurious frivolities of the contemporary nobility who chose to engage in practices not necessarily endorsed by the Christian code.[706]

While Mary Magdalene's position as a saint derives from her ultimate redemption, images showing the character in what we can assume to be a pre-conversion state evoke the same antagonism towards mainstream religion as do descriptions of Morgan and her sisters in romance texts. In his *Penitent Magdalene* (alternatively known as *The Magdalen Reading*), Rogier van der Weyden vies away from the character's habitual red and blue garb, opting instead for a seductive, Celtic green garment with a cinched waist and suggestive bosom that recalls the sensual goddesses from the folkloric tradition. That she is also wearing furs is an indication of the saint's associations with prostitution, 'fur [being] a signifier of the female genitalia.'[707] The Morganic woman's associations with learning are also highlighted. Mary is perusing an open book of uncertain subject, contrasting the typical representations of Biblical women with closed volumes (a means of suggesting piety), and indicating the same threat to male scholasticism that Malory was so keen to mitigate. The imagery here should not be confused with later examples in which female characters' piety might be emphasised by their reading the Bible or Books of Hours. This is a sixteenth-century practice arising primarily from Juan Vive's *De institutione de feminae christianaie,* in which Mary Magdalene is conflated with Mary of Bethany to demonstrate the ideal woman. Using Erasmus' advocacy of women's education (despite his conventional restriction of it to the familial environment), Vives encourages

[705] Nolan, Liesel (1990) 'Is She Dancing? A New Reading of Lucas van Leyden's *Dance of the Magdalene* of 1519' in Julia Bolton Holloway and Constance S. Wright (eds) *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages.* Peter Lang: New York etc. Pp.233-250 (233).

[706] LeZotte, Annette (2012) 'Mary Magdalene and the Iconography of Domesticity' in Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris (eds) *Mary Magdalene, Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden. Pp. 383-398 (403).

[707] Crispin, Philip (2008) 'Scandal, Malice, and the Kingdom of the Bazoche' in April Harper and Caroline Proctor (eds) *Medieval Sexuality: A Casebook.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. Pp.154-174 (157).

women to read, though, as Haskins notes, her reading matter is closely scrutinised and restricted to 'the Bible and improving literature, for domestic consumption only.'[708]

Ruth Evans believes that the Magdalene character presented in medieval drama is also partially based on romance Others, and allows a new way of looking at the character type. By studying representations of female Others on stage, she argues, marginalised women are automatically centralised by their physical position (much in the same way as *Partenope's* Melior), allowing for female protagonists 'who do not necessarily represent cultural norms but who offer instead a range of behavioural options for women.'[709] As a 'gendered symbol' with a heightened prominence through her prominent role in the Church, delineations of the Magdalene for theatre provide a powerful platform for female outsiderness, an aspect of her characterisation that is arguably mitigated by her saintly role and positive name associations. However, these factors do not make her wholly inclusive. Within medieval drama the characterisation of women is presented in much the same way as in courtly romance, describing an ideal archetype in the Virgin and a powerful but more negative opposite 'depicted as Eve…in the cycle plays but appearing in various avatars in fabliaux, lyric and dramatic traditions.'[710] While she may fall under the third medieval designation of 'Other', the most obvious example of a partial Eve 'avatar' is found in the fifteenth-century *Digby Play of Mary Magdalene,* a popular devotional drama in which the Magdalene demonstrates various motifs with which an audience would have been familiar.

While the play is too extensive to be considered in full here, there are several scenes that rely particularly heavily on the audience's familiarity with Other women. The playwright's incorporation of a 'hell mouth' into the staging is arguably immediately suggestive of the *vagina dentata,* a factor that links to extant notions of female Otherness because it is at the Devil's scaffold that the temptation of Magdalene occurs. The stage directions also indicate the extensive use of a ship (most likely on wheels) upon which the character would have been physically moved from one part of the setting to another. This draws on multiple aspects of the Other Woman's standard list: as Sebastian Sobecki notes, 'much of the narrative consists of boarding ships and disembarking, with stage

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[708] Haskins, Susan (2012) 'Foreword' in Michelle A. Erhardt and Amy M. Morris (eds) *Mary Magdalene, Iconographic Studies from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.* Koninklijke Brill NV: Leiden. Pp.i-xxxv (xxxiv-xxxv).

[709] Evans, Ruth (2005) 'Body Politics: Engendering Medieval Cycle Drama' in Ruth Evans and Leslie Johnson (eds) *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect.* Routledge: London. Pp.112-139 (116).

[710] Campbell, Josie (1986) *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press: Bowling Green. P.53.

directions frequently referring to coasts.'[711] The result is a scene with 'a natural affinity with romance',[712] for powerful woman like Morgan and Mélusine are inherently linked with water, boundaries, and a lack of domestication. Moreover, although Mary's journey describes her conversion of the King and Queen of Marseille to Christianity, the playwright likens the voyage to the typical overseeing of the dead by the Other women of popular folklore and romance. After converting the King and Queen, Mary accompanies them on a ship as part of a journey that continues until the Queen dies in childbirth. At this point the Magdalene sets the bodies of mother and child upon an island, a seemingly miraculous place in which Mary brings both characters back to life. There is 'a strong romantic colouration'[713] here, the playwright recalling the trend for life giving, Otherworldly women in island settings like Morgan's famed Avalon.

Given that the Magdalene is arguably as much a social construct as Morgan le Fay, the playwright 'interweaves ideas from the Romance tradition and the Golden legend, and in doing so a variety of roles are projected onto Magdalene.'[714] Freely mixing the historical with the abstract and the culturally authorised marker, the tavern scene has thus been described as the playwright's attempt to draw attention to 'the multiple personalities already inherent in Mary's character at this stage'.[715] One of those characters is clearly the Otherworldly fairy mistress, the following description resembling the typical beauties of immortal love:

> A, dere dewchesse, my daysyys iee!
> Splendavnt of colour, most of femynyte,
> Your sofreyn colourrys set with synseryte!
> Consedere my loue into yower alye,
> Or ellys I am smet with peynnys of perplexite! (ll. 515-19)

That she is compared with both the daisy, a flower regarded as a sign of sensual love and metamorphosis during the Middle Ages (owing to Alcestis' transformation into the bloom and Chaucer's subsequent devotion to it), and the lily, an 'emblem of the Virgin

[711] Sobecki, Sebastian I. (2008) *The Sea and Medieval English Literature.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.109.
[712] Dillon, Janette (2010) 'Shakespeare's tragicomedies' in Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (eds) *New Cambridge companion to Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.181.
[713] Gassner and Quinn, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama.* P.204.
[714] Normington, Katie (2013) *Medieval English Drama.* Polity Press: Cambridge. Pages not given.
[715] Ibid.

Mary and aristocratic gardens',[716] supports a reading of the character as a partial romance heroine. As a sinner the sexual aspect of her role, based primarily on the Otherworldly mistresses, is critical to the Magdalene's redemptive aspect, a more positive interpretation of Other Womanhood in which female outsiders are not wholly marginalised, but rather encouraged to engage in an inclusive, Christian lifestyle.

The famous arbour scene from Part One, scene Two has also been linked to more general descriptions of Other women in medieval culture, partially on the basis that she exhibits a connection with an older series of powerful goddess figures. Arguing that Mary here undergoes 'a period of radical otherness'[717] Marjorie Malvern has suggested that the Mary Magdalene of the Digby saint play 'exhibits a kinship with the Magdalene of second-century apocryphal and Gnostic writings such as the *Gospel of Mary* and *Pistis Sophia*, which represent the figure as feminine counterpart to Christ and wisdom goddess who rules over the material world.'[718] This deific connection links the arbour scene to a popular romance *topos* that describes a hero sleeping under a tree or beside a stream. The motif, which normally pre-empts a mortal's encounter with a Morganic woman, is derived from a Celtic legend and 'worked as a shorthand for writers as well as a base point from which they might subvert an audience's expectations…by signalling several cues at once.'[719]

Such is the familiarity of this scene that, when watching the play, Joanne Findon believes 'the late medieval East Anglian audience would likely have heard powerful echoes of other garden scenes, many of which are to be found in medieval romance.'[720] Indeed, the Digby writer portrays a highly sexualised Magdalene languishing in the garden in a way that is highly 'reminiscent of early fourteenth-century representations of the Soul receiving her Lover in the mystical marriage bed,'[721] a motif that combines the courtly with the Scriptural:

> I wll restyn in þis erbyr
> Amons thes bamys precyus of prysse,
> Tyll som lover wol apere,

[716] Findon, Joanne (2006) 'Napping in the Arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalen* Play' in *Early Theatre 9:2.* Pp.35-55 (38-39).
[717] Ibid P.44-45
[718] Coletti, P.188.
[719] Ashton, Gail (2010) *Medieval English Romance in Context.* P.50.
[720] Ibid P.36
[721] McAvoy, Liz Herbert (2004) *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.125.

that me is wont to halse and kysse.[722]

However, the gendering of the scene gives particular meaning to the *topos,* and yet more to the Magdalene herself. In cases where a mortal woman falls asleep under a tree, she is usually either sexually assaulted (for instance in *Sir Degaré* where the lady of the piece is raped at the dangerous time of noon while her handmaids continue to sleep) or abducted (as is the case in *Sir Orfeo* when Heurodis is taken by the Fairy King). Yet in this unusual sequence, we see Mary Magdalene, a semi-Morganic woman, presented in the role of the hero. Removing the character from the role of aggressive Other, the Magdalene assumes a more feminine role that is necessary to remind us of her ultimately redemptive function.

Recalling the notion of accidental qualities as a means of promoting character individuality, it is arguably the Magdalene's combination of Biblical and cultural elements that make the drama so successful in terms of entertainment. Says Findon, 'the Digby *Mary Magdalen* play takes full advantage of the resulting ambiguities in its portrayal of Mary as both saint and anti-romance heroine'.[723] This is a common practice in medieval writing: authors, wholly aware of the potential to create new versions of the same stories, manipulated well-known standard lists of identity 'types' to provide informative and yet compelling characters within individual stories. We experience this trend in other reworkings of the Morgan legend. For instance in Jean's *Roman de Mélusine* it is arguably the central character's serpentine body and unique building prowess that give the romance its distinguishing flair. And by Melior's archaic description in the Middle English *Partenope of Blois* the author provides a throwback to an earlier form of Otherness in which powerful females were a source of mutual fascination as well as fear, a factor he combines with his unique descriptions of Byzantium. Each of these variations on the universal *species* encourage a different perception of Otherness, while not entirely detracting from its substantiality as an underlying subject matter. As Jeffrey Bardzell notes, 'in the semiotic system of allegory, an agent can take physical form without ceasing to be also a universal. This appears to suggest that the universal is the substance, and each of its manifestations is an accident.'[724] To rephrase this in relation to Morgan, the Other Woman appears under a variety of names quite simply because she can.

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[722] Digby *Mary Magdalen,* p.76.
[723] Findon, P.37
[724] Barzdell, Jeffrey (2009) *Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative.* Routledge: New York. P.36.

Chapter Five: 'Unnamed Morgans'

Even if she is secondary to the hero whose name labels the romance, her name-lessness signifies mystery and power rather than inferiority. But romances containing such figures have undergone much adaptation since their presumed Celtic origins, and magic does not work straightforwardly: naming a fairy could give you power over her, or give her power over you.[725]

Jane Bliss

In his *Argument and Authority,* Conal Condren describes the process of characterisation as 'frequently requiring semiotic markers to sustain the *persona*'.[726] If this description is valid, then the identification of a 'person' in literature might be said to rely less on naming and more on a character's demonstration of particular qualities relating to an authorised type. This is particularly relevant to a study of medieval characterisation, in which naming has a quite different meaning to contemporary characters. In keeping with Matthew of Vendôme's observation that 'standard lists of characteristics [should be used] to describe various types of people',[727] these 'semiotic markers' sustain generic personas in literature because of our familiarity with the subject matters and *species* they signify. With this in mind we should not limit our enquiry of female Others to named characters for, even considering the popular use of M to indicate outsiders in medieval culture, there are women who demonstrate Morgan's 'standard list' without being named at all. Indeed, Hebert believes that anonymous expressions of Morgan's persona can be found 'lurking' beneath the surfaces of medieval stories in both renamed and nameless forms.[728] Theoretically constraining the Other Woman's potency – an argument that Bliss counters with her statement that the anonymous *fée* 'signifies mystery and power' – these 'lurking' manifestations are therefore entirely reliant on their demonstration of 'semiotic markers to sustain the *persona*'.[729] Supplementing my discussion of Morgan's 'renamed' appearances in the previous section, this chapter seeks to identify a selection of these nameless women, identifying not only where such characters appear, but the purpose to which their anonymity is used.

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[725] Bliss, Jane (2008) *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance.* Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. P.57.

[726] Condren, Conal (2006) *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: the Presupposition of Oaths and Offices.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York. P.25.

[727] Gallo, Ernest (1974) 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise on the Art of Poetry' in *PAPS,* 118. Pp. 51-92 (56).

[728] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.11.

[729] Condren, P.25.

<u>'Naming and Namelessness'</u>

Continuity remains in analogues who are granted recognizable aspects of [Morgan's] multifaceted persona.[730]

While the Other Woman's namelessness may be used to a particular effect in every instance in which she is 'unnamed', anonymity is a fairly common motif is medieval romance. Defined by Joseph Duggan as 'the tendency to hide the names of significant characters until long after one would normally expect them to have been named, or even permanently,'[731] names and titles are often presented secondarily to character identity as a means of augmenting or reducing the implications of a character's role. As Bliss notes, this has a range of significations for the medieval author: '[s]ometimes it indicates universality or exemplarity; sometimes it is a form of incognito, or disguise, and thus self-confident; sometimes it is a mark of special power.'[732] In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Morgan le Fay is not given a name when she is physically present in the narrative, a deliberate means of reducing the character's potency while linking her to the equally nameless woman whom modern critics have entitled 'the lady Bertilak'. Likewise, in Chrétien's *Érec,* Énide, a symbol of the virtuous woman, is not named until her wedding day, her personal name being seemingly immaterial until she has assumed the role of a wife. Chrétien performs a similar 'unnaming' in *Cliges,* a text in which, like *Érec*, Arthur's queen remains wholly anonymous. This is an interesting example of character typecasting, for although the author refers to the character as 'the queen' throughout the poem, critics, likely on the basis of her actions and matrimonial relationship with Arthur, almost consistently describe her as 'Guinevere' in scholarly accounts.

Where renaming might be used to give a character a more obvious personal identity in male-centred texts where a knight must prove himself without relying on his performances in former narratives, removing a woman's name often presents her as a more conspicuous indication of the Otherness she signifies. [733] As Breuer notes, the nameless '"Woman" can be…a free-floating signifier of mysterious otherness'.[734] There is both

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[730] Ibid.

[731] Duggan, Joseph J. (2001) The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Sheridan Books: Chelsea. P.307.

[732] Bliss, P.51.

[733] Namelessness is for instance a common feature in *Perceval,* the names of Perceval's mother, father, cousin, and uncle and of the Fisher King and his father all being withheld. Even the protagonist remains unaware of his personal name, an aspect that is perhaps the author's way of suggesting that a knight's identity should depend equally on his deeds and feats in arms as it does a famous name. As Duggan notes: 'Perceval does not know his own name and has to guess it when his cousin asks him what it is (3575-77).' Duggan, P.308.

[734] Breuer, Heidi (2009) *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England.* Routledge: New York. P.25.

merit and disadvantage to be found in this. On the one hand anonymous characters are easier to ascribe to a particular type, because without a name they rely more heavily on the cues and triggers used to indicate their generic persona. As a result, Morgan's characteristic markers are likely to be more prominent in cases of nameless Other women, who do not come with the added complications that etymological signification can entail. 'Unnaming' a character also has the benefit of removing superficial segregations that may unintentionally divide different expressions of the same identity: if we imagine each of the characters discussed in this thesis without the restrictions of naming, their resemblances to each other would undoubtedly become more apparent. On the other hand, however, the process of identifying characters as 'Morgans' without the advantage of naming may prove more challenging, particularly to a contemporary audience, because we are without the obvious indications (for instance the M initialled name) that make her semiotic function so useful. As Ann Cothran points out, '[t]he uninitiated reader is uncomfortable in a fictional world of nameless characters',[735] whose anonymity may signify something that is at odds with the expectations of contemporary characterisation.

As a variation on the 'distance' method discussed in Chapter Two, a lack of name often provides a means of constraining a woman's power, which might be particularly fearsome in instances where the unnamed – and thus dehumanised – woman is not restricted by the expectations of mortal society. However, this does not implicate Other females as weak, but rather emphasises their potential for strength, an aspect of Morgan's identity that poses a significant threat to male-ordered society. Bliss supports this point, rationalising the paradoxically central-yet-marginal role of the anonymous fairy mistress by claiming that her namelessness is indicative of mystery and power rather than inferiority. She states: 'authors did this 'because they feared her complexity. They may have required characters that could be more easily contained and configured to her purpose.' [736] There is also a defensive mechanism that prevents the Other Woman from being drawn into the same mortal struggles as named characters by protecting her identity. As Duggan observes: '[a] lack of naming may be a remnant of the motif that a fairy should not reveal her name lest someone with knowledge of it use the name to gain power over her.'[737] However, both Bliss and Duggan also emphasise the fact that, as with

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[735] Cothran, Ann (1991) 'Nathalie Sarraute' in Eva Martin Sartori and Dorothy Wynne Zimmerman (eds) *French Women Writers.* University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and Lincoln. Pp. 412-422 (412).
[736] Hebert, P.153.
[737] Duggan, P.308.

renaming, 'unnaming' a character does not have a fixed purpose, and can reflect a multiplicity of meanings. One of these connotations includes an emphasis on the Other Woman's semiotic function. Recalling the idea that sign-based characters do not have to be whole, coherent, or even believable, the nameless woman's lack of personal appellation makes her connotative subject matter all the more apparent, for it avoids being obscured by 'accidental features' that might detract from her essential Otherness. As Bliss notes: 'anonymity makes space for the general where the personalized is superficial.'[738] In an attempt to indicate the *species* behind her individual appearances without any influence from the intertextual variations imposed upon the Other Woman's identity, the unnamed woman arguably lacks a personal identity because her name was not deemed necessary by authors using characteristic markers to allude to her generic persona.

While their obvious use of the standard list does not make the anonymous Other difficult to identify within a narrative, without any indication of Morgan's name or an M initial they may not immediately present themselves in the same way as might a Mélusine or Magdalene figure. Perhaps for this reason, there are likely to be a great number of anonymous characters who have not been included in this study. However, provided that a character adheres to the standard list, she (or even he) might be considered as extensions of Morgan's archetypal persona by fulfilling Matthew's specification for character type. They may even adhere more closely to the standard list than Morgan herself, for characters who are not restricted by names or family connections can behave wholly as indications of their particular type or *species*, rather than even proportionately mimetic figures who are partially bound by human expectations. In an attempt to understand the implications of the Other Woman's namelessness, the five figures discussed in this chapter – the nameless healer in *Yvain,* Thomas the Rhymer's fairy queen, Konrad von Stoffen's Otherworldly mistress in *Gauriel von Muntabel,* Chrétien's description of Énide's cousin in *Érec,* and the anonymous *fée* in Marie's *Lanval,* describe a range of methodologies and rationales for anonymization, ranging from class-based distinctions and marginality, to 'de-Arthurianisation' and character adulteration.

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[738] Bliss, P.54.

<u>*Yvain:* The Nameless Damsel</u>

> *[The] embellishment or 'mystification' of sexual division is a textual strategy*
> *which Chrétien simultaneously adopts and debunks.*[739]

> Roberta L. Krueger.

As I claim in Chapter Two, Chrétien's presentation of Morgan as the almost hypothetical maker of the hero's critical healing ointment in *Yvain* has a disembodying – and thus destabilising – effect on her Otherness. Says the Lady of Noroison when espying the injured knight: 'I remember an ointment Morgan the Wise gave me, and she told me it would remove from the mind any grave illness.'[740] A form of anonymity in itself, this disembodiment reduces Morgan's role as it is presented in the *Vita,* relieving the (still plot-essential) Morgan of any mimetic function. As Angela Weisl notes, being pushed almost entirely out of the text, Morgan 'stands for the narrative itself in the romance; she is the source of the narrative even when she is not actually in it.'[741] While this may have been an attempt on Chrétien's part to disempower the fay, her physical absence from the poem generates a further problem for the author, leaving her healing process to be undertaken by another character. It is for this reason that he incorporates a nameless damsel into the forest scene in which Yvain is cured of his madness, a character whose function is irrelevant to any other aspect of the narrative. Chrétien does not outwardly explain why the Lady does not apply the ointment herself; she certainly seems knowledgeable about the process, stating that the maiden should be sparing in her application, and not to attend to any area of the knight's body that is not afflicted. However, given that the maiden is required to effectuate Morgan's magic by proxy, Chrétien uses the damsel's anonymity to impose a similar marginality to that of Morgan herself, a comparison that presents the women as two facets of the same persona. Where one character is attributed with potent magic and a semiotic name (Morgan), the other has the ability to move within the narrative, 'reducing their sphere of influence and diffusing the implied threat a complex and realistic woman might post.'[742] Evans Smith supports this idea of an interrelation between the characters, alleging that all of the powerful women in the narrative signify different representations of a universal female Otherness: 'Chrétien's version of what Goethe called the eternal feminine is both the cause

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[739] Krueger, Roberta L. (1996) 'Love, Honor, and the Exchange of Women in *Yvain*' in Thelma S. Fenster (ed) *Arthurian Women.* Routledge: London. Pp.3-40 (6).

[740] Chrétien de Troyes (1990, c.1170) 'The Knight With the Lion' in David Staines (ed and trans.) *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes.* Indiana Press: Bloomington. Pp. 257-338 (92).

[741] Weisl, Angela Jane (1995) *Conquering the Reign of Femeny: Gender and Genre in Chaucer's Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.75.

[742] Hebert, P.148.

and the cure of Yvain's breakdown: as Laudine, the Lady of the Fountain, she drives him mad; and as Lady Noroison and the two maidens, incarnations of Morgan the Wise, she restores his wandering wits and brings him back to life.'[743]

For Breuer the maiden's anonymity can also be linked with her derivation from a lower social class. Contrasting Bliss' statement that namelessness generates power over male characters in Arthurian romance, she argues that Chrétien uses this element to lessen, rather than reinforce the damsel's authority:[744]

> Though [anonymous female healers] have power, their social position subverts that power, as they are economically dispossessed, performing their services for free (often in the name of love). It is because these damsels use domestic healing magic, accepted as the usual fare of average women, that they can play such an important role in the narratives without threatening the privileged position of patriarchy therein.[745]

This class-based argument would account for why the socially inclusive Lady, who later appears within the narrative's courtly sphere, does not anoint Yvain with her own hands; the damsel's anonymity makes her a marginal figure, and thus more suited to a task associated with Other women. Moreover, by using her namelessness to suggest that the damsel is of a lower social class than both the Lady of Noroison and the typically aristocratic Morgan, Chrétien is able to partially offset the subversive associations with female healing, a common marker for Otherness in medieval texts. Though she clearly has power, that she performs her healing with no suggestion of a fee (as one might expect from a male physician) allows Chrétien's nameless damsel to perform an important function without posing a threat to the courtly sphere to which Yvain must return.

Chrétien furthers the unnamed maiden's marginality by attributing her with various markers from the Other Woman's standard list. Positioning her within a wilderness setting, the abnormality of which is emphasised by Yvain's nakedness and having eaten raw meat (factors that would to a medieval reader have 'mark[ed] him as a savage'[746]), the forest pre-empts the maiden's Otherworldly behaviour: within this locality we can

[743] Smith, Evans Lansing (1997) *The Hero Journey in Literature: Parables of Poesis.* University Press of America: Lanham and London. P.117.

[744] This is not to say that Bliss' statement might not be used as a general paradigm, for as Roberta Krueger notes, 'Chrétien simultaneously adopts and debunks' aspects of the mystification typically used in portrayals of gender in romance. Krueger, P.6.

[745] Breuer, P.24.

[746] Le Goff, Jacques (1988) *The Medieval Imagination* (originally published in 1985 as *L'imaginaire médiéval*) Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London. P.114.

expect women to behave like Morgan because this is a space that the narrative tradition has relegated to female Others. Entering the carefully constructed scene, the maiden's anonymity is accentuated by the universality of this role, for it is one that has already been undertaken by manifold women in literature and folklore. As Saunders notes, she now 'belongs to and represents workings of the forest which has become a refuge for Yvain'.[747] Possessing a knowledge of the healing arts that is never fully explained (other than by our assumption that is she is an offshoot of Morgan), the damsel demonstrates the Other Woman's penchant for pharmacology, a role that is crucial to the hero's survival and the general rebirth motif that pervades the poem. Liberally anointing Yvain with the healing balm in spite of her mistress' advice to be sparing (a shrewd move given that it is only due to her copious application that the madness is expelled from Yvain's brain: 'Que du chervel l'en issi hors/ Le rage et le melancholie[748]), this aspect of the lady's characterisation has much in common with the named Morgan. 'Borrowing from her reputation in Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini*',[749] says Breuer, the damsel brings to the forefront of the narrative the nurturing aspect that the bodiless Morgan is unable to do from her position on the narrative side-lines.

However, unlike Geoffrey's description in the *Vita*, the scene in *Yvain* is notably sexualised, Chrétien wryly pointing out that the dressing of any area other than the afflicted temples and forehead is surplus to requirement:

> She rubbed his temples and his whole body so vigorously under the hot sun that she expelled the madness and melancholy from his brain; but she was foolish to anoint his body, for it was of no avail to him. [750]

Whilst in later contexts the sexualisation of Other women may be used to highlight their subversive nature, for Chrétien this is a further means of disempowering the girl. As LaineDoggett observes, the maiden's enthusiasm is presented humorously in order to further destabilise the Other Woman's potency. Already lessened by the lady's anonymity, Chrétien 'poke[s] fun at the traditional trappings of herbal magic'[751] by suggesting

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[747] Saunders, Corinne J. (1993) *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.71.

[748] 'For from his brain there issued forth/ The madness and the melancholy'. Cited with translation from Duggan, Joseph J. (2001) The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Sheridan Books: Chelsea. P.160.

[749] Breuer, P.23.

[750] 'Tant li froia au chaut soloil/ Les temples et trestot le cors/ Que del cervel li trest si fors/ La rage et la melancholie;/ Mes del cors fist ele folie/ Qu'il ne li estoit nus mestiers. Cited from Saunders, pp.120-121. Lines 3004-3005.

[751] Doggett, Laine E. (2009) *Love Cures: Healing and Love Magic in Old French Romance.* Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park. P.5

that the girl has a sexual sub-motive. Despite his general forbearance for the magical ointment, Chrétien thus condemns her behaviour as foolish, emphasising that, despite her minor role in the narrative, the damsel does not belong to the inclusive woman-type found elsewhere in the story.

Thomas of Erceldoune: the Fairy Queen

> *"Woman" can be…a free-floating signifier of mysterious otherness.*[752]

> Heidi Breuer

A more extensive case of the unnamed Morgan can be found in *Thomas of Erceldoune*, a fourteenth-century narrative that tells of the relationship between Thomas, a character modelled on the historic Thomas Rymour (or 'the Rhymer') and a nameless Other-worldly queen who instils him with the gifts of prophecy and minstrelsy in return for his love. Contrasting Chrétien's nameless damsel, whose anonymity seems to be an attempt to destabilise her Otherness, *Thomas'* ambiguous fairy queen exemplifies Bliss' idea of the nameless female as a symbol of power in medieval romance. The lady's representational function allows the author to capitalise on the power balance between the Other Woman, with her powers of enchantment and seduction, and the would-be-chivalric man with his social advantages and physical strength. Her namelessness may also be an attempt to remove the narrative from similar genres of story. Rather than had been the case for earlier authors such as Geoffrey and Chrétien, for whom the name 'Morgan' was still suggestive of a certain ambivalent mystery, the *Thomas* author likely recognised that, in addition to being used to designate female Otherness, Morgan le Fay's familial relationship with Arthur (an aspect that was also degenerating in accordance with her malevolent nature) had resulted in her utility as a means of 'Arthurianising' stories that authors wanted to connect more obviously to the Round Table.[753] By contrast, the anonymity of Thomas' lady might be said to de-Arthurianise a work well-known for eschewing the confines of traditional subgenres, adopting elements of the ballad, prophecy and romance forms.

Although the *Thomas* writer's fairy queen may not demonstrate each of the *species'* markers (she is for instance not the ruler of her homeland, which is instead governed by a terrifying Otherworldly king; she also initially lacks the sexual dominance often demonstrated by Morganic women in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts), she is

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[752] Breuer, P.25.

[753] Recalling particularly Kittredge's famous allegation that the Gawain poet's incorporation of Morgan into Sir Gawain and the Green Knight signifies nothing more than his desire to 'attach his narrative to the orthodox Arthurian saga.' Kittredge, George (1960,1916) *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge. P.133

more representative of the archetypal Other woman than Thomas is of the typical knightly hero. As Wade points out, it is the text's 'treatment of the Otherworldly mistress…[that] bring[s] it within romance's generic boundaries.'[754] This is reinforced by her leading him, as is customary in cases of *conte morganien* with its distinguishing motif of knightly abduction, through a dank underground passage that, 'dirke als myd- nyght myrke',[755] recalls the highly sexualised caves, valleys and passageways that recur throughout the Morganic tradition. In fact, such is the blatancy of the lady's adherence to the character type that, as part of his study of *The Loathly Lady in 'Thomas of Erceldoune',* William Albrecht incorporates a catalogue of what he calls the 'constant elements' found in medieval accounts of Other women:

> Of these [constant elements] *Thomas* includes the water barrier, the approach through a tunnel or cave, the castle, its location on top of a mountain, music, a garden where trees are laden with fruit and birds sing, the danger of eating the fruit…the abnormal passage of time…a mortal and his fairy love, the encounter under a tree, the suggestion that one of the characters has been hunting, the fairy's beauty and splendid array, confusion of the fairy with the Virgin, the fairy's arbitrary procedure once she has the mortal in her power, the delightful stay in fairyland [and] the hero's return home. [756]

Although less detailed than my description of the *species'* markers, Albrecht's analysis of these 'constant elements' suggests that women of this type were conceived in accordance with an established model, a rhetorical prototype to which Thomas' nameless lady undoubtedly belongs. It is also important to note that, in addition to the elements that connect the lady with Morgan's generic identity, the 'accidental elements' of her characterisation that might be used to divide her from the *species* – for instance that she visits the mortal realm while hunting – are not necessarily part of the author's original. According to Edward Byrnes and Charles Dunn, the minstrels who conveyed the romance and the scribes who recorded it 'did not fully understand its primitive background, so the road that leads Thomas to the Otherworld is confused with the Christian

[754] Wade, James (2011) *Fairies in Medieval Romance.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.86.

[755] Murray, J.A.H. (ed) (1875) *Thomas of Erceldoune.* N. Trübner: London. Line 171.

[756] Albrecht, William P. (1954) *The Loathly Lady in 'Thomas of Erceldoune'* in University of New Mexico Publications in Language and Literature Number Eleven. The University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque. Pp.20-21.

concept of three alternate roads that lead to heaven (1. 149), purgatory (1. 157) and hell (1. 162)'.[757]

The author also utilises the association between Other women and geographical markers, his narrative taking place within a series of locations derived from Morgan's standard list. At the opening of the story Thomas is lying down alongside 'Huntley Banks', a backdrop that a medieval audience would immediately have associated with female Others on the basis of their association with boundaries of moving water, and Huntley Brae's location on the Scottish borders below the Eildon Hills. This is confirmed when we told that, upon waking, the hero perceives a lady of almost unnatural beauty: 'Als dose þe sonne on someres daye, / þat faire lady hir selfe scho schone'.[758] Initially mistaking her for the Virgin Mary[759] (an error that may be have been included as a reference to the Other woman's penchant for biform personas), Thomas greets the lady with reverence before she reveals that she is not of this world, but 'of ane oþer countree'.[760] For Marijane Osborn it is this aspect of the narrative that links the unnamed fairy mistress most persuasively with Morgan le Fay for, despite not being a typical element of the tradition, the description seems to be modelled on an earlier analogue concerning Ogier the Dane:

> The particular episode that links [the French story of Ogier the Dane] clearly to that of Thomas is Ogier's misidentification of Morgan when he first sees her approach him in her glamorous fairy attire. He thinks she is the Virgin Mary and addresses her accordingly; she replies that she has never aspired to such high rank and then identifies herself as the fairy she is.[761]

That a named manifestation of Morgan seems to have inspired the author's rendering of the unnamed lady indicates his not only his awareness of the markers required for facilitating the *species* of Other womanhood, but also his understanding that these markers transcend the identity of individual characters. This is certainly how Francis Child perceives the narrative; he claims that the relationship between Thomas and the fairy

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[757] Byrnes, Edward T. and Dunn, Charles W. (1990) *Middle English Literature.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. P.495.
[758] Thomas of Erceldoune (47–48).
[759] We know that the historical Thomas of Erceldoune was associated with Melrose owing to his witnessing of a late twelfth century legal deed ('Thomas Rimor de Ercildun' is one of five names called to witness a deed confirming that Petrus de Haga de Bemersyde is to pay a yearly half a stone of wax to the abbot and convent of Melrose (*Liber de Melros*, Bannatyne Club, i. 298)) a place with powerful female connections.
[760] Line 100. In the ballad version she claims to be from 'Elfland', but both cases are clearly suggestive of Morgan's Otherworldly Avalon.
[761] Osborn, Marijane (2010) *Nine Medieval Romances of Magic: Re-Rhymed in Modern English.* Broadview Press: Peterborough etc. P.43.

queen is 'but another version of what is related of Ogier le Danois and Morgan the Fay',[762] largely because the 'gift' element of the Ogier legend (that 'after a long and fatiguing career of glory, he should live with her at the castle of Avalon, in the enjoyment of a still longer youth and unwearying pleasures') seems to have inspired the author in his rendering of Thomas' fairy mistress.

Thomas' misidentification of the lady also foreshadows a more obvious manifestation of the typifying duality found within the Morganic *species*: the extreme metamorphosis belonging to the Loathly Lady motif. After coercing the queen into a forceful consummation (seven times in some versions of the narrative, a number with powerful supernatural connotations), the anonymous Lady's beauty morphs into outright hideousness as a form of punishment:

> Hir hare it hange all ouer hir hede,
> Hir eghne semede owte, þat are were graye.
> And all þe riche clothynge was a-waye,
> Þat he by-fore sawe in þat stede;
> Hir a schanke blake, hir oþer graye,
> And all hir body lyke the lede.
> (131–36)

In his exploration of the text's Loathly Lady theme, Albrecht claims that this portion of text uses Gerald of Wales' *Itinerarium Kambriae et Descriptio Kambriae* as a partial analogue, for the Welsh author describes a comparable transformation from beauty to repugnance in the story of a man named Melerius:

> Having, on a certain night, namely that of Palm Sunday, met a damsel whom he had long loved, in a pleasant and convenient place, while he was indulging in her embraces, suddenly, instead of a beautiful girl, he found in his arms a hairy, rough, and hideous creature, the sight of which deprived him of his senses, and he became mad. After remaining many years in this condition, he was restored to health in the church of St. David's, through the merits of its saints. But having

762 Child, Francis James (ed) (2003) The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 5 vols. Dover Publications: New York. 1: Pp.317-58.

always an extraordinary familiarity with unclean spirits, by seeing them, knowing them, talking with them, and calling each by his proper name he was enabled, through their assistance, to foretell future events.[763]

Given Gerald of Wales' familiarity with Morgan le Fay (describing her in his *Speculum Ecclesiae* as 'dea quaedam phantastica'[764]), that he does not link her with this episode suggests the author either believed he was relating an actual event or that he felt that in anonymising the woman he was in fact reducing her potential for subversive power. It should also be noted that because it is the Lady and not Thomas who undergoes such a radical transformation (a metamorphosis that, unlike in the majority of comparable episodes, is not within the lady's power but is rather inflicted upon her by an unknown authority) as a penalty for his lechery reflects the Other Woman's function as a receptacle for the abstract, a utility heightened in cases where she remains anonymous. However, rather than serving as a warning to men about the dangers of liaising with women who fall outside of social acceptability (as is customary in the *Vulgate* cycle), or as a cautionary appeal against rape (as advocated by Chaucer in his *Wife of Bath's Tale*), the *Thomas* author presents the scene as a sort of social commentary pertaining to the often unfairly apportioned blame on women who have been the subject of that which, although not strictly rape, Helen Cooper terms 'sexual bullying'.[765]

Gauriel von Muntabel: the Queen of Fluratrône

> *By abbreviating, obscuring and omitting aspects of her story, Konrad allows the fairy queen to retain her magical knowledge without it actually being overtly present in* Gauriel.[766]
>
> Jon B. Sherman

In Konrad von Stoffen's *Gauriel von Muntabel*, a late thirteenth-century work often regarded as the last German Arthurian romance composed in verse, the author draws various features from the Other Woman's standard list in his depiction of the hero's Otherworldly lover. In a 'reprise of the "fairy-mistress" tradition underlying *Yvain*',[767] Konrad's romance describes Gauriel's relationship with the unnamed Queen of

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[763] Albrecht, P.52.

[764] Gerald of Wales, (1861-1891) *Speculum ecclesiae* in John Sherren Brewer (ed) *Opera.* Vol 4. London. P.146.

[765] Cooper, Helen (2004) *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.214.

[766] Sherman, Jon B. (2009) *The Magician in Medieval German Literature*. ProQuest: Ann Arbor. P.216.

[767] Thomas, Neil (2005) *Wirnt Von Gravenberg's Wigalois.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.18.

Fluratrône, a fairy woman with whom he becomes so infatuated that he is led to perform acts that are 'against the interest of his Arthurian peers'.[768] Indeed, that his fairy mistress is featured only three times despite her pivotal function in the narrative – and never given a personal name – presents the Other Woman not as a whole, coherent, or believable person, but as an edifying representation of the abstract. In addition to presenting his hero's journey to the land of Fluratrône as a 'reflection of a journey into the Celtic Other World',[769] a gesture towards extant tales concerning Other women, Konrad recalls the universal *species* by describing his lady as beautiful, sexually alluring and, at least in the outset, autonomous. Following the trend for imposing taboos upon the relationship between mortal men and Morganic women – which are almost invariably broken by the male party – Konrad also has Gauriel betray the identity of his fairy lover in a way that mirrors the broken promise motif in Jean's *Roman de Mélusine* and *Partenope of Blois*. For this transgression the Queen punishes him with exile in a monstrous form, a reinterpretation of the metamorphic aspect associated with Morgan.

What is particularly interesting about Konrad's *Gauriel* is that, rather than using his queen to caution his readers against the dangers of affiliating with Other women, the author uses her semiotic function to suggest how subversive women ought to be managed. In a deliberate evasion of the typical conclusion in which the hero is left with his fairy mistress to begin a life in the Otherworld (as is the case in the work's partial analogue, *Iwein*), Konrad's eponymous hero brings the lady back into the mortal realm to share an 'inclusive' life with him. This reversal of the usual *conte morganien* is undertaken at the advice of Erec, one of the lady's hostages, who suffered what he describes as a forfeit of his knightly honour after being beguiled by a woman:[770]

> A man should not allow his bravery to languish because of a woman or a loving glance. It almost happened to me that time when I brought Enîten to my court for the first time. Love for her robbed me of my manly courage.

[768] Ibid, P.19.

[769] Thomas, Neil (2002) *Diu Crône and the Medieval Arthurian Cycle.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.49.

770 'ein man sol ein vrumen lîp/ niht lâzen verderben umb ein wîp/ noch durch ein liebez anesehen./ mir was vil nâhe alsô geschehen/ in den selben zîten,/ dô ich vrowe Ênîten/ von êrst ze hûse sazte;/ ir liebe mich entsazte/ von manlicher wirdicheit.' Konrad von Stoffeln (translated by Siegfried Christoph) (c.1300, 2007) *German Romance II: Gauriel von Muntabel.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Lines 3281-3289.

For Neil Thomas, who believes that sexual relations between a knight and a *fée* 'came to be seen as emblematic of a surrender of personal autonomy to atavistic, "pagan" impulses'[771] during the Middle Ages, Konrad intended this modified ending to 'correct' earlier examples of more traditional Morgan stories, in which chivalry can ultimately be perceived as a lesser force in the face of supernaturalism. Konrad's active awareness of his lady's semiotic role therefore not only enables his activation of the fearful female Otherness in his readers' subconscious, but reasserts the cultural norms of dominant masculinity at the narrative's conclusion.

We know that Konrad expected his original audience to be familiar with extant High Middle German romances featuring Other women, alluding to several romance 'masters' who discuss the theme in *Gauriel*'s opening lines:

> They [the knights from the writings of the masters] are well known to you and so I will leave them unnamed. Master Gotfrit, Sir Hartmann Sir Wolfram von Eschenbach have made them known to you.[772]

While this is not unusual, particularly in light of my earlier discussion concerning medieval intertextuality, Konrad takes the assumption of audience knowledgeability and memory arts to unprecedented levels in *Gauriel*. Konrad not only expects, but *requires* his readers to draw upon their familiarity with extant texts in order to fully comprehend the *Gauriel* narrative. As Jon Sherman states in his *The Magician in Medieval German Literature*: '[t]he narrator leaves out important events, forcing his audience to fill in the gaps with their knowledge of other medieval narratives'.[773] Although the resultantly minimal narrative has prompted various scholars to dismiss *Gauriel* as 'a tedious recital of borrowed motifs, eked out in a romance that would have been more suited to a shorter narrative form'[774] (an exaggerated critique in any case given the propensity for 'borrowing' among medieval – and particularly Arthurian – authors), Konrad's awareness of his audience's existing knowledge, and justification for using 'cues and triggers' to present his narrative's themes, indicates a heightened awareness of medieval writing theory.

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[771] Thomas, P.18.

[772] 'die sint iu alle wol erkant/ dâ von lâze ich sie ungenant./ meister Gotfrit und her Wolfram/ und von Ouwe her Hartman/ die hânts iu kunt getân.' Konrad. Ibid. Lines 28.1-31.

[773] Sherman, P.64.

[774] Gibbs, Marion and Johnson, Sidney (2000) *Medieval German Literature: A Companion.* Routledge: New York, London. P.370.

Any doubts regarding Konrad's reliance upon these hypotheses can be relieved not merely by assuming that medieval audiences would have been able to 'fill in the gaps' in *Gauriel*, but by the appraisals of contemporary scholars who have done this for themselves. This is most notable in Konrad's omission of a scene in which the making of a pact between Gauriel and his fairy-mistress should arguably have been included, but which may have been left out because there existed a plethora of comparable scenes that Konrad thought his audience might 'supplement' to their reading of the *Gauriel*. While we cannot be sure of his success during the Middle Ages, Sherman points out that contemporary scholars have often made these assumptions about the narrative, believing themselves to have read that which is in fact not there:

> [S]cholars tend to full in the gaps in Konrad's narrative without acknowledging their presence. Joachim Bumke claims that 'Gauriel von Muntabel erfreut sich der Gunst einer Liebesgöttin unter der Bedingung, daß er niemals von ihr spricht,' ('Gauriel von Muntabel enjoys the favo[u]r of a love goddess with the condition that he never speak of her'), although no explicit reference is made in the narrative to what it is that Gauriel does that loses him her good graces. Joachin Bumke, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur im hohen Mittelalter* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), p. 231. Similarly, Karin Cieslik attributes Gauriel's punishment by his lady-love to his reference to her beauty: 'Bei seiner Heimkehr verstößt ihn diese jedoch, da er gegen ihr Gebot verstoßen habe, niemals von ihrer Schönheit zu sprechen' ('on his return [she] casts him out, because he broke her command never to speak of her beauty'). *Reclams Romanlexikon: Band 1: Vom Mittelalter bis zur Klassik* (Stuggart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1998), p. 101.[775]

With this in mind it might be said that Konrad's fairy queen, a receptacle for triggering particular themes and episodes from extant texts, provides a fascinating instance of sign-based writing, the author demonstrating just how minimal a description can be to suggest complex matters existing in and around a narrative. That we are so knowledgeable of the Other Woman's role in romance that both her name and her appearance become surplus to requirement indicates just how few details authors felt were necessary

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[775] Sherman, P.63.

to ascribe characters to the type. She requires no name because her function is so familiar to us, her defining characteristics prompting our recollections of a persona that we already know.

Érec et Énide: Énide's Cousin

Maboagrain's lady is never named, although we do learn that she is Enide's cousin.[776]

Joseph Duggan

Although the role of Énide's cousin in *Érec et Énide* has begun to receive more scholarly attention in recent years, the subject of this nameless dameisele remains notably under-analysed. This is surprising given that the author only presents the subject of total female autonomy three times throughout his entire body of works, and may be attributed to our tendency to overlook nameless characters in romance texts. Contrasting the narrative's central relationship, which is ultimately one of propriety,[777] the dameisele's Otherness threatens the structure of the courtly norms upon which the story's main trajectory is based. Appearing in the story's *Joie de la Cort* episode, the lady has ensnared her lover Maboagrain within an enchanted garden, a bond enacted by means of his own promise that he can only leave after being defeated in battle:

> Ma dameisele, qui siet la
> tantost de ma foi m'apela
> et dist que plevi li avole
> que ja mes de ceanz n'istroie,
> tant que chevaliers i venist
> qui par armes me conqueïst.
> Reisons fu que je remainsisse…[778]

Clearly recognising that the power of 'true' chivalry is entirely on the side of the woman whom a knight may be sworn to protect, Chrétien presents the episode as a 'rash boon' that has Maboagrain as tightly ensnared by his own promise as he is by the garden in which he is being kept. Although the rash boon is not a particularly common feature in narratives featuring Other women (for within their own domains their Otherworldly behaviour needs no rationalisation), by drawing the two worlds together in a way not

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[776] Duggan, P.308.

[777] As Penny Schine Gold points out, '[Enide] must learn not to assert herself so inappropriately as she did in telling Erec that his reputation was suffering (2540-2571)'. Gold, Penny Schine (1985) *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth Century France.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London. P.27.

[778] *Érec*, line 6025.

unlike the *Partenope* writer's description of Melior's kingdom, Chrétien provides a stark reminder that the fairy kingdoms and supernatural women of romance represent the 'real' Others in medieval society.

However this is not to say that the garden is not a place of the Morganic woman's distinguishing 'faerie and magic'.[779] Although there is no valley or cave, as is often the case in narratives where a knight is placed under an autonomous woman's control, her 'magic garden' assumes the function of both a prison and place of sexual discovery. On the one hand the garden signifies the same imprisonment suggested by Morgan's Valley, a place of black magic into which a knight is drawn as a result of his own behaviour. On the other hand it is the delicious garden of love, 'the body of the beloved; closed, exclusive, difficult to secure, but ultimately approachable and even penetrable by the bold lover':[780]

> El vergier n'avoit an viron
> mur ne paliz, se de l'air non;
> mes de l'air est de totes parz
> par nigromance clos li jarz,
> si que riens antrer n'i pooit,
> se par un seul leu n'i antroit,
> ne que s'il fust toz clos de fer.[781]

As a place of private pleasures, the magic garden is, like a combination of forest and cave, presented as a space where women 'can elude constant male supervision and surveillance…and enjoy the erotic autonomy that is forbidden to them [in courtly spaces].[782] It is on this basis that Roberta Krueger consigns the lady to what she regards as one of Morgan's many manifestations: '[t]he figure of the desiring female who at-

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[779] Murray, Sarah-Jane K. (2008) *From Plato to Lancelot: A Preface to Chrétien de Troyes.* Syracuse University Press: New York. P.205.

[780] Kraman, Cynthia (1997) 'Communities of Otherness in Chuacer's Merchant's Tale' in Diane Watt (ed) *Medieval Women in Their Communities.* The University of Toronto Press: Toronto. Pp. 138-154 (139).

[781] 'Around the garden the only wall or palisade was one of air; yet by black magic the garden was enclosed on all sides with air as though it were ringed with iron, so that nothing could enter except at one single place' (5689-95).

[782] Augspach, Elizabeth A. (2004) *The Garden as Woman's Space in Twelfth-and Thirteenth Century Literature.* Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston and New York. P.iii.

tempts to 'entrap' or otherwise test the knight will recur in numerous guises in Arthurian functions – a memorable instance being the Pucele del Gaut Destroit in *La Vengeance Raguidel*, and, in a different guise, in the fairy Morgan.'[783]

This connection is furthered by the lady's familial status, a factor that, included as Chrétien's way of explaining her presence within the narrative by its vague connection to Érec, is suggestive of the Other Woman's marginalisation. As a cousin the dameisele is just close enough to the central family to justify her role within the text (as is often the case with Morgan le Fay, remembering that she is Arthur's *half*-sister), but does not merit either a proper introduction or further discussion following her brief spell in the *Joie de la Cort*. After Erec breaks that which Krueger believes represents the 'perverse "custom" of female power and re-establishes "courtly" masculine norms'[784] by freeing Maboagrain, the unnamed lady is not reabsorbed into the courtly sphere, but disappears altogether:

> Like so many unmarried 'puceles' and 'amies' who cannot be absorbed into the Arthurian world through marriage, Enide's cousin disappears from the narrative, which turns to focus on the magnificent coronation of the married couple, the romance's ultimate *molt bele conjointure.* Arthurian romance, in this founding instance, abhors the single woman. But, at the same time, by refusing to be delighted by Erec's victory and by telling her own story, Enide's cousin has provided an important counter-narrative of female pleasure and control.[785]

However, while Krueger is right to point out the significance of the dameisele's counternarrative, if only on the grounds that in Hartmann's version of the story her relationship with Maboagrain is told exclusively from the male perspective, it must also be noted that the lady's voice remains bound by the marginality often applied to 'absent Morgan' narratives. Not only is there a discrepancy between her version of events and Maboagrain's (as Karen Pratt points out his story is presented 'very much in terms of the *don contraignant* and the female entrapment of the male'[786]), but also by the fact that his narrative, presented as superior on the basis of his gender, is allocated a hugely disproportionate one-hundred-and-eight lines. Provided with a mere twenty lines in which

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[783] Krueger, Roberta L. (2011) 'Transforming Maidens' in Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (eds) *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. Pp.146-191 (162)

[784] Krueger, P.162.

[785] Ibid.

[786] Pratt, Karen (1993) 'Adapting Enide: Chrétien, Hartmann, and the Female Reader' in Martin H. Jones and Roy Albert Visbey (eds) *Chrétien de Troyes and the German Middle Ages: Papers from an International Symposium.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.67-84 (76).

to articulate her account between 6265 and 6285, a point that is even more telling when we recall that Chrétien interrupts the story's opening to incorporate thirty lines describing Énide's beauty,[787] Énide's cousin's personal narrative is deliberately undermined by its minimisation.

As is sometimes the case with Other women in medieval romance, Énide's cousin remains unmarried, a status that is clearly threatening to Érec who cannot free her obligatory lover Maboagrain fast enough. Although Morganic women are not by definition single, in cases where they are espoused their marriages often take place either towards the conclusion of a narrative (thinking for instance of the relationship between Melior and Partenope) or, when married for the majority of a text such as we see in the case of Morgan in the thirteenth-century *Vulgate Cycle*, their marital relationships are rarely happy and are presented as secondary to their function as a queen or fairy mistress. However, the lady's single status does not position her in the same virgin 'type' often presented admirable within the courtly tradition (Lacy makes the point that the dameisele's Otherness 'underscore[s] Énide's innocence and virtue',[788] these being the qualities that are praised throughout the text), but rather signifies an exclusive and remarkably modern sexual status in which she is able to enjoy the advantages of connubiality without submitting to the restrictions of wedlock. It is also, as Chase points out, 'noteworthy that in both verse and prose Énide's cousin has chosen her mate herself, as opposed to Énide, who is an object of exchange between two men'.[789] This is reemphasised in the prose adaptation of the text in which the author alters Chrétien's version so that the *Joie de la Cort* episode culminates not with Maboagrain's escape from the dameisele, but rather his marriage to her, a status that is unusual by being prompted by a woman's agency.

Recalling Chrétien's description of the Lady of Noroison's nameless damsel, it is interesting that in both *Érec* and *Yvain* the author clearly expects his readers to recognise the qualities that delineate a woman's Otherness, yet also uses this to diminish their power. The otherwise subversive power of his outsider women is notably lessened in comparison to characters like Melior, who are both named and exist within the central sphere of the narrative; Chrétien's Other Women are attributed with either a name or body, but rarely both. In manifesting not one but two examples of the Morganic woman in *Érec* –

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[787] Lines 411-41.

[788] Lacy, Norris J. (1980) *The Craft of Chrétien de Troyes: An Essay on Narrative Art.* E. J. Brill: Leiden. P.80.

[789] Chase, Carol J. (2013) 'Transmuer de rime en prose': The Transformation of Chrétien de Troyes's Joie de la Cour episode in the Burgundian Prose *Erec* (1450-60) in Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (eds) *Arthurian Literature XXX.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.101-116 (112).

these being Morgan herself, disembodiment as the faceless sender of Arthur's healing ointment, and Énide's cousin, who appears bodily but is denied the privilege of a name – Chrétien, emulating his twice-numbered yet half-powered representation of Morgan and the healing damsel in *Yvain*, dilutes the Morganic woman's power by splitting it across two bodies. Presented as mirror images of each other the two women in *Érec* therefore provide, in a weak mimicry of the Loathly Lady, the aspects of the *species* that the other lacks. In the same way, where the unnamed lady's social ostracism is in part the result of her position as an unmarried woman, Morgan's marriage to the Lord of Avalon makes her, somewhat ironically, a weaker counterpart to her autonomous equivalents in the works of writers like Geoffrey and Laȝamon.[790] Where Morgan signifies the elements of magic and healing by sending the ointment that heals Arthur, the dameisele denotes the Other Woman's penchant for abduction and exaggerated sexual desire. Reiterating Hebert's point from Chapter Four, these women might display one or two of Morgan's qualities – they may heal, harm, seduce, frighten, teach, or inspire – but no single character embodies more than one or two of these traits at once.[791]

Lanval: the anonymous *fée*

> *Morgan or a Morgan-like figure also appears…[in] Marie de France's Lanval.*[792]
>
> Jill Marie Hebert

Perhaps the most famous example of an unnamed Morgan is the anonymous lady from Marie de France's *Lanval,* a figure whose connection to the Other Woman's archetype has been noted by various scholars. What is most interesting about these accounts, however, is that critics do not generally view the fay as a nameless version of Tryamour, the appellation given to the character in other versions of the story, but as a manifestation of Morgan le Fay. In his study of the Celtic elements of *Lanval,* Tom Pete Cross suggests that Lanval's fairy mistress is 'borrowed' from earlier medieval tales that share Morgan's Celtic background, such as 'Argante, the [renamed] elfin queen who heals Arthur's wounds'.[793] Bearing in mind the fact that Argante is likely an example of a 'misnamed Morgan', Cross' argument suggests a close affiliation with the characters that requires further investigation. In the same way, Hebert perceives Marie's character

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[790] Morgan's relationship to Guingemar, the Lord of the Isle of Avalon, in presented the Guiot edition of *Erec.* In some translations he is described as her lover or consort.
[791] Hebert, P.148.
[792] Hebert, P.15.
[793] Cross, Tom Peete (1915) 'The Celtic Elements in the Lays of "Lanval" and "Graelent"' in Modern Philology, Vol. 12, No. 10. Pp. 585-646 (592).

as simply 'another form' of Morgan, alleging: 'they are unmistakably alike in that they are equally provocative and derive their power over men and society from forms of sexuality.' [794] Describing her as 'a Morgan-like figure', Hebert's analysis draws a significant parallel between the characters in such a way that suggest that Marie was aware of Morgan's burgeoning role in the Arthurian sphere. And Kristina Pérez, who includes *Lanval* as one of the primary texts in her Morgan-centred study, *The Myth of Morgan la Fey,* simply describes the fairy as 'Morgan incognito'.[795] While the lady might be anonymous, the critic substantiates her argument by linking the name of the eponymous hero with Morgan's most distinguishing geographical marker. She notes: 'the alternate spelling of the hero's name, "Launval," in *Manuscript C* of Marie de France's *Lais…*is an anagram of "Avalun"'.[796]

As in all versions of the Lanval legend Marie's fairy mistress is drawn from the Celtic tradition, though, unlike Chestre's and Chrétien's adaptations of the story, Marie does not divulge her identity. There are several reasons for this 'unnaming', the most prominent of which may be ascribed to the author's personal convictions surrounding the process of naming. As Bliss notes, anonymity in the *lais* is used to emphasise the meaning of stories and reduce excessive analysis of naming. She asserts that 'Marie de France is not interested in name either as etymology or as "renown", in spite of her well-known concern with naming (and with the way names mean).'[797] As a female writer both educated and well-versed in courtly politics, Marie would have been only too aware of the automatic assumptions that could be made on the basis of a name. Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman support this point, suggesting in their study of Marie's *lais* that the author's anonymising of the *fée* may feflect her personal anxieties surrounding 'the competition for patronage and the circulation of intellectual property within the Anglo-Norman court', within which women may have felt more empowered under the guise of anonymity.[798] Although the author may not have used a pseudonym to disguise her professional identity (primarily so that other authors could not pass of her work as their own), Marie de France was clearly aware of the potential judgement attached to female characters, whom she frequently presents without the connotations that a name like

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[794] Hebert, P.13.

[795] Pérez, Kristina (2014) *The Myth of Morgan le Fey.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.30.

[796] Ibid.

[797] Bliss, P.25.

[798] Finke, Laurie and Shichtman, Martin (2000) 'Magical Mistress Tour: Patronage, Intellectual Property, and the Dissemination of Wealth in the *Lais* of Marie de France' in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.*25.2 Pp. 479-503 (495).

'Morgan' could evoke. However, unlike in Chrétien's writing, this is not intended to diminish the power of subversive women or remove them from an existing character type; for Marie's anonymous women, says Bliss, 'it is possible to be visible, and perhaps even to find power in visibility, without being named.'[799]

The author expresses a personal interest in the power and purpose of rememorative character writing that would support *Lanval*'s being more indebted to the semiotic principles of character writing than naming. Referencing the art of memory frequently throughout her twelve *lais* (in contrast with Chrétien who references memory only once in the prologues to his five romances: 'Now I will begin the story/ That I have always remembered'.[800]), Marie seems to have actively embraced the theories of Aristotle and Augustine:

> The narrative arrangement of different episodes in her *Lais* implicitly reveals that she comprehended [Dante's] method [a century earlier] as a way to store source material in her own memory, and later to decompartmentalise it and rearrange it for the work at hand.[801]

Even if Marie did not have access to any particular written doctrine that would have outlined the systematic approaches to memory so prominent in medieval culture, Carruthers believes her sufficient awareness of the subject matter reflects the popularity of phantasmal theory within the educated sphere in which she was writing. If not from reading classical literature Marie's knowledge of the discourse would naturally have arisen from '*pictura,* medieval painting conventions, the *Bestiary*, and various conventions of pictorial diagrams'.[802] This knowledge of memory and 'triggers' is likely to have had a significant bearing on Marie's understanding of writing and character-types, for she would have recognised the potential of reiterating extant signs within new contexts. Whalen supports this point, stating that 'Marie strategically places vivid descriptions throughout her narratives so that we an audience may conceptualize…and thus retain them in the faculty of our memories'.[803] Recalling the remarkably visual way in that Tristan places the hazel branch in the author's *Chevrefoil* so that Iseut 'would recognise it and recall their times together',[804] he proposes that Marie presents her characterisation

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[799] Bliss, P.55.
[800] 'Des or comancerai l'estoire/ Qui toz jorz mes iert an memoire' Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec und Enide,* lines 23-24. Cited from Whalen, Logan E. (2008) *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory.* The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C. P.6.
[801] Ibid. P.5.
[802] Carruthers, P.123.
[803] Whalen, P.7.
[804] Ibid.

in semiotic fashion in *Lanval* because she expects us to be familiar with the *topoi* of romance that denote the lady's character type. Concerning her opening description of the fairy mistress, he claims that '[Marie's] readers will not miss the importance of the moment [in which Lanval enters the world of the Other]'[805] for it is a motif with which they are already well-versed.

Understanding that her audience would have likely been acquainted with the markers used to designate Other women, Marie is able to present her lady anonymously because her characterisation and systematic markers speak for themselves. Even in this late-twelfth-century context, the location in which the knight first meets his lady is typical of the habitats of benevolent Others. A familiar motif from Geoffrey's *Vita,* Laȝamon's *Brut* and Wace's *Roman,* her description of the island links the fairy mistress persuasively with Morgan, a character in relation to whom Avalon had been described almost exclusively up to this point. Being situated outside of the confines of courtly life, 'He went out of the town/ and came, all alone, to a meadow',[806] Marie is able to avoid the lengthy descriptions of her forebears, her inclusion of Avalon connoting a female Otherness with which we are expected to be familiar:

> With her he went to Avalon,
>
> so the Bretons tell us,
>
> to a very beautiful island'. [807]

However, Marie's anonymising of the character allows her to describe Avalon in a fashion that relates both to the *Lanval* story as but also the real-life aspects that Marie's *lais* so frequently connote. Rather than representing an Otherworld that a mortal might visit in order to undergo a process of healing or restoration, Lanval's removal from mortal society signifies a different stance that various scholars have connected to the author's experiences at the Angevin court. As David Chamberlain notes, Avalon in the works of Geoffrey and Wace is a place of healing so Arthur can *return*, an aspect that the nameless 'Morgan' does not promote in *Lanval:* '[t]o disappear forever from human society is not

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[805] Whalen, P.92.

[806] '[f]ors de la vile est eissuz,/ tut sul est en un pre venuz'. Ibid. *Lanval.* P.108. (Lines 43-44)

[807] 'Od li s'en vait en Avalun,/ ceo nus recuntent li Bretun,/en un isle que mu est beus'. Marie de France (2011, c.1170) 'Marie de France' (*Lanval*) in Joseph Black, Leonard Conolly, Kate Flint, Isobel Grundy, Don le Pan, Roy Liuzza, Jerome J. McGann, Anne Lake Prescott, Barry V. Qualls, Claire Waters (eds) *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature, Concise Edition. Volume A. Second Edition.* Broadview Press: London. Pp. 111-126 (126) line 643.

a twelfth-century ideal.'[808] In this sense, the scholar suggests, the lady's anonymity promotes a political reading of the text, its civil aspects having less relevance to her as a character and rather more to what she represents outside the narrative. Truly, he says, Marie created an Arthurian story closely related to Angevin culture because, by being drawn to the symbolic Other Woman, 'Lanval himself portrays the dangers of pleasure and irresponsibility for young Henri au Cort Mantel.'[809]

In addition to this political reading Chamberlain also comments on Marie's use of familiar motifs to pre-empt the arrival of the Other Woman. Just before Lanval's meeting with the mysterious lady, or 'fairy' he states that 'Marie portends her nature'.[810] Recalling the associations between moving aquatic bodies of water and Other women (primarily on the basis of their suggestions of journeys to the afterlife in Celtic worship), Marie's allusion to the stream in *Lanval* indicates a barrier to the Otherworld deriving from a series of known sources. While pastoral scenes may be thought to signify loving relationships in other contexts, Marie presents the meadow and stream as directly indicative of the Other Woman, giving little further description of the narrative scene than to prompt our awareness of the character. As Saunders notes, 'Marie's only specific description [within this otherwise vague landscape] is of Lanval's arrival at a meadow with a stream nearby…a setting which appears to herald otherworldly events or encounters.'[811] Before Lanval lies down by the water's edge (a well-known analogue for later Lancelot texts in which the knight is abducted to Cart Castle after falling asleep under an apple tree), we are told that, 'his horse trembled terribly',[812] the proximity of the fairy world causing the horse to tremble with fear.[813] Moreover, while Marie does not include any reference to the valley/cave marker there is an obvious connection between the inclusive, nurturing 'womb' spaces found in the more loving tales of Otherworldly women, and the pavilion in which Lanval is first introduced to his paramour. However, rather than being hewn from the landscape like the primordial *sidh,* the lady's pavilion is described as splendid in its richness, very beautiful in its furnishings and so fine that even Queen

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[808] Chamberlain, David (1994) '*Marie de France's Arthurian Lai:* Subtle and Political' in Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (eds) *Culture and the King: the Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend.* State University of New York Press: Albany. Pp.15-35 (27).

[809] Chamberlain, P.28.

[810] By the end of the *lai* Lanval is forever separated from his heritage, 'a situation that was abhorrent to medieval lords and subjects, and especially to Henry II, who made careful early plans for the succession of "the Young King," Henri au Cort Mantel.' Chamberlain, P.19.

[811] Saunders, P.55.

[812] 'sur une ewe curaunt descent,/ Mes sis cheual tremble forment' 'He got down beside running water-/ but his horse trembled terribly' (Lines 45-46).

[813] Vines, P.128.

Semiramis could not have afforded a small part of it. Here the author presents an unusual variation on the Other Woman's characterisation; where she is usually autonomous within her own domain, Marie's fairy mistress has the financial stability to rival the leaders of even the mortal world.

The connection between the anonymous woman and Morgan is furthered by the fact that Lanval's fairy lover operates from the confines of an exclusively matriarchal coterie; her envoys are not only female but young and beautiful, a common feature in stories that name Morgan as their leader. Geoffrey presents Morgan as the leader of nine maidens, her sisters, who occupy the Isle of Avalon, and in the healing scene in *Yvain* the hero is discovered by a female trio led by the Lady of Noroison. Within the latter Smith identifies Chrétien's use of the universal Other, going as far as to claim that '[the] three women suggest the symbolism of the Triple Goddess of Celtic as well as Christian and Classical origins'.[814] The similarly anonymous maidens presented in Marie's *lai* are thus, being 'unencumbered by any male relationships',[815] used to suggest that her elusive lady is not bound by the socio-cultural constrains of the inclusive Christian women found in reality:

> Not only does Marie's fairy mistress occupy a place almost completely separate from the real, Arthurian world in which the romance's action takes place, she is purely fantastical because she operates "outside the system of exchanges of land and women by which aristocratic men perpetuated their class privilege".[816]

Although Vines does not connect these factors, Marie's conception of her fairy lover indicates her awareness of the Other Woman's primarily semiotic function. Being, as the scholar claims, 'completely separate' from the Arthurian domain (a removal which can be interpreted both literally and figuratively), Marie signifies the notion of female outsiderness without directly invoking women's marginality in extant narratives. This aspect of her anonymity also counters the lady's wealth, something that outside of the normal, material world, has little real value. Unlike the tacitly unspoken financial independence of the typically Morganic woman, Marie takes unusual pains to stress this aspect, which is for Howard Bloch a 'literary incarnation of a fantasized solution to the

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[814] Smith, P.117.
[815] Ibid.
[816] Ibid.

marital problems of the class of unmarried, unendowed, and wandering younger knights'.[817]

Although Marie's fairy mistress is portrayed without the malevolent aspect so frequently attributed to later representations of Morgan, this pattern of events complies precisely with earlier descriptions of female Others as mysterious, exotic beings with whom a mortal man is often eager to exchange sexual favours. In his 'The Celtic Elements in the Lays of "Lanval" and "Graelent"', Cross presents a series of arguments suggesting that the sexualisation of *Lanval*'s fairy mistress derives from the same Celtic analogues as the archetypal Morgan. Using the general principle that 'the women of early Irish saga exhibit a freedom in sexual matters which is quite foreign to the great Aryan peoples',[818] he compares Lanval's *amie* with the Celtic battle goddess Morrígan, most prominently the 'Macha' aspect of her persona that has been regarded as Morgan's primary antecedent.[819] He also believes that the 'broken promise' motif (which he redubs 'the Offended Fee') that occurs in tales of Other women is descendent from these folk-stories:

> This formula of the Offended Fee is widespread in the folk-lore of many ages and countries. It is found in the early literatures of India, Greece, Italy, and Western Europe, as well as in a large number of modern folk-tales in various languages.[820]

Although we can only speculate as to the effectiveness of Marie's use of the literary sign upon her original audience, its efficiency is, in the same way as aspects of *Gauriel von Muntabel*, verified by the way in which the lady has been interpreted in modern scholarship. In his appendix to Chestre's version of the legend (in which the lady is re-named rather than unnamed) Bliss for instance refers to the lady as 'Morgan' on the basis of their shared analogue:

> [There is] little doubt that the lady in the story, whose supernatural powers are so conspicuous, is to be identified here with the *fee*, a recurring figure in Celtic mythology and romance whose most familiar manifestation is Morgan la Fee in the Arthurian cycle.[821]

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[817] Bloch, Howard R. (2003) *The Anonymous Marie de France.* The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London. P.69.

[818] Ibid. P.612.

[819] In the Irish tradition Macha is the subject of a similar broken promise motif, with her husband refusing to keep her existence a secret.

[820] Cross, P.588-9.

[821] Chestre, Thomas (1960, c.1580) *Sir Launfal*, ed. A.J Bliss. T. Nelson: London. P.89.

Pérez provides a similar argument, claiming that the lady's connection to the Morgan archetype occurs because of various factors in the *Lanval* narrative (she cites the running stream, the motif of the sleeping knight, the beautiful handmaidens and the broken promise) that signal Morgan's presence as an example of what she terms a 'bad' source of desire without ever naming her: [i]t's almost as if by not naming Morgan specifically…there is an unconscious attempt not to reveal her as the [Freudian] Thing, but to cloak her in anonymity – making her easier to Veil.'[822]

As with the renamed Morgan, the anonymous woman provides a different way of identifying and interpreting female Otherness in medieval texts. 'Veiling' her Otherness, the character's namelessness can signify power (as in *Thomas of Erceldoune*) constraint (as Chrétien attempts in *Yvain and Érec*) a reading based outside the narrative (as is partially the case for Marie's fairy in *Lanval*) or simply an expectation that a writer's audience will be familiar with the character type (as demonstrated by Konrad). Particularly in the case of the latter, 'Everywoman', as Bliss refers to her, is likely to be an exemplary figure who indicates an authorised persona.[823] The nameless woman underscores the phantasmal purpose of the literary Other described in Chapter One, because her role is generally unencumbered by the additional features that lend themselves to more elaborate reinterpretations of the character. Indicative of a concept, type, or social construct, the anonymous Morgan behaves less like a mimetic person and more as a semiotic indication of the external Other that prompted her inclusion into the literary sphere. Signifying the medieval community's propensity for sign-based identities, the markers used to indicate this persona should thus be read as equally critical to these forms of character writing as the traditions of naming generally found in literary contexts elsewhere. This should not be read as a sign of her inferiority, but rather her ability to manifest across a far more extensive range of narratives. As Krueger surmises: 'Morgan [combines with]…dozens of anonymous damsels to create a vast network of female characters who both assist the male protagonists in their quest for honour and threaten to undermine their independence or integrity.'[824]

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[822] Ibid. P.28.
[823] Bliss, P.51.
[824] Krueger, Roberta (2000) 'Questions of Gender in Old French Courtly Romance' in Roberta L. Krueger (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Chapter Six: Outlaws and Other Outcasts - the Male Face of Morgan le Fay

> *In essence, indeed, they are the same stories, merely associated by different authors with the name of a different hero.*[825]

<div align="right">Maurice Keen</div>

Despite consistently ascribing the variations in Morgan's persona to her derivation from a universal female Other that exists before, during, and after her medieval conception, my final chapter examines the use of Morgan's characteristic markers in the facilitation of the less common marginalised male in literature. While the Morganic woman's Otherness might connote very real gender-based aspects from the medieval world (such as female healing and allusions to women's domestic roles), the recognisability of the character type means that her standard list would likely have been appealing to authors wishing to present subversive behaviour or outsiderness within more general literary contexts. The 'borrowing' of traits between character types is certainly not uncommon in medieval writing, for authors relied on the recognisability of their characters' 'essential qualities' above all else. Indeed, in the same way as authors conceiving the Other Woman transposed subversive elements from older traditions with which their readers would have likely been familiar, so might authors of male character types have derived aspects of their identity from the extant *species* to which Morgan belongs. Considering Hebert's earlier statement that '[Morgan's] myriad forms provide an opportunity to comment on contemporary social expectations for women *and men* alike',[826] we should therefore not limit our analyses of the cues and triggers presented in Chapter Three to female characters (even if they are used most prominently in this context), but extend our appraisals to include a further range of literary persons. After performing a careful examination of male characters in the medieval tradition, it would seem that medieval authors use the Other Woman's standard list most obviously in relation to a marginalised figure whom I have come to regard as Morgan's natural masculine counterpart: the outlaw.

Although they might not directly associate male outlaws with the underlying identity often ascribed to Morgan, various critics have commented on what appears to be a universal persona behind the medieval literary fugitive. For Thomas Ohlgren there is a definite ideology of the outlaw as a generic figure who might be broken down into three

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[825] Keen, Maurice (1961) *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend.* Routledge and Kegan Paul: London. P.65
[826] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.248. Italics my own.

further models: 'the Social Bandit, the Good Outlaw, and the Trickster.'[827] As with Morgan and her cognates, he claims, these variants have their individuating qualities, but possess a range of essential attributes that might also be used to identify them with the outlaw's general persona. Richard Dobson and John Taylor present a similar argument in their claim that all variants of the literary outlaw are derived from a shared model, the widespread nature of which has caused him to become a global concept:

> [N]o longer – if he ever was – a merely English hero, the medieval greenwood outlaw is now a genuinely universal figure, as familiar in Japan and Australia as in Western Europe and America.[828]

This 'universal figure' clearly has much in common with the Morganic woman's collective identity, an umbrella persona with 'accidental' manifestations that occur in every milieu in which he is featured. Maurice Keen links this suggestion to the idea of universal character types that abound in medieval literature more generally, proposing that the outlaw tales of the Middle Ages are essentially 'the same stories, merely associated by different authors with the name of a different hero.'[829] While Keen's hypothesis is more concerned with the broader context of plot than signs and phantasms, referencing the anonymous sixteenth century Scottish verse, '[t]hair is no story that I of hier/Of Johne nor Robene Hude/ Nor yit of Wallace wicht but weir/ That me thinks halfe so gude',[830] his statement recognises the same basic premise as that of Aquinas' semiotic model. By demonstrating a series of shared characteristics the common nature of the *species* may be identified without the 'individuating condition' that is the specific outlaw.

However, unlike the Morganic woman, who might be thought of as a primarily sign-based character, the medieval literary outlaw combines semiotic and mimetic attributes in equal proportion. Recalling the prevalence of real-life fugitives in medieval culture, we must take into account the evidence we have about genuine forest outlaws, the analogue 'to which contemporary listeners and readers would have related the idealised fictional hero of the ballads.'[831] In this sense the outlaw 'type' should be recognised as having a basis rooted as much in history as it does in literature. Yet where the historical aspect of his analogue might be obvious, the source of his literary element is less clear.

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[827] Ohlgren, Thomas H. (2005) *Medieval Outlaws: Twelve Tales in Modern English Translation.* Parlor Press: West Lafayette. P.xxvi.

[828] Dobson, Richard Barrie and Taylor, John (eds) (1976) *Rymes of Robin Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw.* Heinemann: London. P.23.

[829] Keen, P.65.

[830] The Wallace to whom Keen refers is William Wallace, a historical Scottish outlaw whose story has been recorded in various literary accounts since his death in 1305 (ibid).

[831] Keen, P.xviii.

As Stephen Knight notes: 'the closet apparent literary characters [such as the fable of King Arthur] seem to offer no clear parallel to shape a system for Robin Hood studies.'[832] It is perhaps for this reason that the connections which exist between the archetypal Other Woman, Morgan le Fay, and the emblematic outlaw have gone mostly unnoticed. As a female character she cannot be described as a 'close apparent' to the outlaw, and is not even part of the same subgenre of medieval text.

However, stripping away the characters' individuating conditions (for instance their name, occupation, and even sex) exposes a number of close parallels between the Other Woman and the outlaw man. Both occupy the forest space as their primary dwelling place, are characterised by their social ostracism, and participate in acts of shape-shifting and androgynous behaviour. However, these connections require further investigation before we begin to ascribe fugitive men to Morgan's character type. We must question for instance whether the affiliation between Other women and outlaw men is a deliberate move by authors attempting to create a universal Other that goes beyond the boundaries of gender, or are the similarities between the characters purely coincidental? And should outlaw men potentially be considered extensions of Morgan's persona in the same way as her 'renamed' counterparts, or merely observed as a different character type that shares some of the Other Woman's characteristic markers? In an attempt to resolve some of these queries, my final chapter offers a discussion on the four primary associations between the Morganic woman and the outlaw man (geography, magic, their pagan heritage and shape-shifting) in a concluding exploration of the use of Morgan's distinguishing 'cues'.

Borders, Peripheries, and the Matter of the Greenwood.

> *The criminal element, the outlaw, the queer in us all, edged ever further from sight, to the periphery, a geographic marginalization.*[833]
>
> (John Howard)

Perhaps owing to the fact that the male protagonists of medieval narratives are not typically presented as lawbreakers, medieval authors have no direct analogue from which to draw the characteristic *topoi* for their literary outlaws. An uncommon fighting ability, feats in arms, and chivalric considerations towards women might associate the outlaw

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[832] Knight, Stephen (2000) 'Which Way to the Forest? Directions in Robin Hood Studies' in Thomas G. Hahn (ed) *Robin Hood in Popular Culture: Violence, Transgression, and Justice.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge.Pp.111-128 (112).

[833] Howard, John (2000) 'The Talk of the Country' in William Fitzhugh Brundage (ed) *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory and Southern Identity.* The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. Pp.191-219 (214).

with the generic knight, but as a fugitive he depends on additional qualities to differentiate him from extant male character types. He might be inclusive in that he is male, but as a man quite literally 'outside the law' the fugitive hero requires further qualities in order to present him as Other to the likes of Arthur and Lancelot. Because of this distinction, if Morgan's standard list was indeed involved in the characterisation of outlaws, her presence should not hinder our understanding of literary fugitives, but rather reinforce our perception of a group of men whose very mode of existence has been inverted. As Jaritz notes, the vogue for medieval Otherness has to be seen as relating to the implementation of patterns of the world upside down; while for women this might be a simple exclusion from the domestic sphere, for the outlaw this could equally involve assuming a partially feminine identity.[834] Although the outlaw's gender may prevent him from identifying wholly with the generic Otherness surrounding Woman, his assimilation of Morgan's defining markers positions him more closely to the social margins than the more inclusive courtly knight, most obviously in the way he occupies the world around him.

In her analysis of the geography of medieval outlaw texts, Keagan LeJeune observes that 'while certain general traits and basic components seem universal, many details remain specific to a locale.'[835] These details are the 'accidental features' that we might ascribe to the outlaw genre, the 'essential quality' of the woodland space being derived from extant traditions concerning literary Others. This is a significant point, for with the exception of figures belonging to religious tales and hagiographies (in which saints and hermits opt to live in the forest as a means of spiritual development), the outlaw is the only male character to habitually occupy the wilderness home of the Morganic woman. In courtly romance men may occupy the forest for a brief time, but rarely make it their home as do the heroes of fugitive stories and female Others. For Keen it is largely this geographical element that distinguishes the outlaw narrative from other male stories from the medieval tradition. Whereas the other three primary genera - the Matter of Britain, the Matter of France, and the Matter of Greece and Rome - traditionally present the forest as either a transitional zone traversed by men between quests (it being of course a border of sorts), or a point of rebirth featured towards the end of a narrative,

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[834] Jaritz, Gerhard (2009) 'The Visual Image of the 'Other' in Late Medieval Urban Space: Patterns and Constructions' in Derek Keene, Balázs Nagy and Katalin Szende (eds) *Segregation: Integration, Assimilation: Religious Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe.* Ashgate Publishing: Farnham and Burlington. Pp.235-250 (249).
[835] LeJeune, Keagan. (2010) *Always for the Underdog: Leather Britches Smith and the Grabow War*. University of North Texas Press: Denton. P.177.

within the genre of outlaw literature, hence termed 'the Matter of the Greenwood', the transitional forest area takes 'centre stage':[836]

> [W]ithin its bounds their whole drama was enacted. If they ventured outside it, it would only be some brief expedition to avenge wrong done, and to return to it, when right had been restored and whatever sheriff or abbot was the villain of the piece had been brought low.[837]

In the same way that Morganic representations of female Otherness typically inhabit the space beyond the margins of the known landscape to emblemise their social ostracism, the outlaw is bound within this point of physical and psychological marginality. As in the traditional tales of Morgan, these can be generic places (the 'wilde wode' in the *Tale of Gamelyn* as compared with the home of the Morganic Malgier the Grey), a fantasy place derived from romance tradition (Morgan's Avalon and the supernatural 'forest of Belregard' in the *Outlaw's Song of Trailbaston*), or a real location that is topographically and often jurisdictionally defined as forest, such as the 'great forests of Northamptonshire in *Hereward;* Windsor Forest, the New Forest and a whole series of other woodlands in *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*; Sherwood Forest and Barnsdale in the Robin Hood tales; Inglewood Forest in *Adam Bell.*[838]

Although the outlaw man and the Morganic woman share the Greenwood as a central location, it is also by this centrality that authors make a distinction between male and female character types. Even in cases where her involvement is critical to a narrative, the Morganic woman is often presented secondarily to the main plot of the stories in which she features, meaning that the forest locale forms a minor – if crucial – part of the staging process. For the outlaw, however, the Greenwood forms a central part of the narrative description because he himself is central to the story. In the popular Prose *Tristan*, *Le Morte Darthur*, and Ulrich Von Zatzikhovn's *Lanzelot*, the forest is depicted as a tantalisingly beautiful yet dangerous place in which, at the summons of a Morganic lady, the hero and his companions venture from their principle quests to revel in the darker glamour of the supernatural. This may result in a man's rebirth but might just as easily end in his madness or death, the liminal wilderness being a place of danger and vulnerability for men. By contrast, the forest in the outlaw tradition becomes a convivial

[836] Ohlgren, Thomas H. (2005) *Medieval Outlaws: Twelve Tales in Modern English Translation.* Parlor Press: West Lafayette. P.xv.
[837] Keen, Maurice (2000,1961) *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend.* Routledge: Abingdon, New York. P.2.
[838] Musson, P.12-13.

counterworld in which, like the Morganic woman, male protagonists can enjoy liberties unavailable to them elsewhere in feudal society. Says the author of the *Gest*:

> Whan he came to grene wode,
> In a mery mornynge,
> There he herde the notes small
> Of byrdes mery syngyng.

> ...Robyn slewe a full grete harte;
> His horne than gan he blow,
> That all the outlawes of that forest
> That horne coud they knowe[.][839]

The outlaw's underlying masculinity allows the character to maintain a heroic stance whilst occupying a space that both tradition and rhetoric has relegated for the socially outcast, because he and this space are made central to it. In this sense, the centralising of the Greenwood therefore has an absolvent effect on the outlaw's Otherness that Seal believes reflects his position as an anti-hero: although he may be defined as 'Other' by both name and law, the outlaw must follow a moral code which is '[e]mbedded within the narrative framework like a genetic sequence...[as] a set of informal guidelines for approved and disapproved actions'.[840]

While the Other Woman and outlaw man may differ in how their forest dwellings are presented, however, they share a common association with Inglewood, a connection that seems to have arisen primarily on the basis of the forest's extant literary associations. Not merely coupling its proximity to the Scottish border with a near contiguous coast line, Inglewood boasts specific demarcations that could only have heightened the medieval fascination for boundary areas, being well-known for subversive activity and supernatural women. Unlike later works that typically position Robin Hood within the proximity of Sherwood Forest, in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Chronicle* he is linked deliberately with the same site of alterity described in tales of Other women:

> Lytil Jhon and Robyne Hude
> Wayth-men ware commendyd gude
> In Yngil-wode and Barnysdale

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[839] *A Gest of Robyn Hode,* P.111.
[840] Seal, Graham (2011) *Outlaw Heroes in Myth and History.* Anthem Press: London, New York., P.171.

<p style="text-align: center;">Thai oysyd all this tyme thare trawale[841]</p>

Although the *Chronicle* is a relatively late example of medieval outlaw literature, believed to have been written around 1420, Knight and Ohlgren believe this idea to be much older than Wyntoun's edition, the *Chronicle* being simply the elaboration of an existing legend: 'the language of the reference is rather oddly amplified, and it may be that there was an earlier popular jingle which ran: *Litil Iohun and Robert Hude Waythmen war in Ingilwode.*'[842] Moreover, although there is some scholarly dispute over the following point, with Holt arguing for a Lancashire location and Child for a vicinity near Knaresborough, for many the 'Plomton Park' described in line 1427 of *A Gest of Robyn Hode* was also intended to relate to Morgan's Inglewood setting. As Thomas Hahn alleges: 'it seems...likely that the author intended the Inglewood Plumpton Park...[given that this was] a famous royal hunting preserve...renowned in literature, and associated with Robin by Andrew of Wyntoun'.[843] Given that the historical Robin Hood is thought to have originated from Barnsdale in South Yorkshire, the decision to locate the character within the proximity Inglewood is likely to have arisen because authors wished to present a locality in which readers could expect strange occurrences. While this may have been lost in later accounts, authors moving away from the supernatural in their attempts to align their literary outlaws more closely with the typical heroes of medieval legend, the presence of Inglewood in the earlier texts '[presents] its story more excitingly and with greater narrative ease than any of the [later] surviving Robin Hood poems.'[844]

<u>Magical Prowess</u>

Since the early Middle Ages, European rulers had tried to outlaw occult magic.[845]

<p style="text-align: right;">Ruth A. Johnston</p>

Given the changing attitudes and jurisdictions towards magic during the Middle Ages, it is often difficult to establish the legal nature of this controversial subject. As Anthony Musson notes: 'even by medieval standards '[m]agic (and its associated practices) was

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[841] Knight, Stephen and Ohlgren, Thomas H. (1997) 'The Chronicler's Robin Hood' in Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren (eds) *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales.* Medieval Institute Publications: Kalamazoo.
[842] Ibid
[843] Hahn, Thomas G. (2000) *Robin Hood in Popular Culture: Violence, Transgression, and Justice.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. P.207.
[844] Grey, Douglas (2008) *Later Medieval English Literature.* Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.397.
[845] Johnston, Ruth A. (2011) *All Things Medieval: An Encyclopedia of the Medieval World, Volume I.* Greenwood: Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford. P.468.

something that troubled canon law commentators'.[846] However, we know that by the fourteenth century the supposed practicing of magic was officially punishable by execution, making it a potential cause for outlawry. Even if medieval reality did not reflect this practice (there are relatively few examples of real-life outlaws allegedly using magic in British culture, though we know Icelandic jurisdiction had the accused 'taken out to sea and drowned'[847]), the symptomatic 'Otherness' of magic is simultaneously allied with outsider females and literary outlaws. Indeed, Jean Addison Roberts sees the standard figure of the witch as another form of outlaw on the basis that she belongs not to the tamed world of culture but rather 'the dreaded wild of uncontrolled female sexuality.'[848] Moreover, although it is difficult to assess Morgan's legal position in the majority of texts in which she features, that the character continues to hover 'elusively, malevolent or strangely benevolent[ly], on the fringes of Arthur's story'[849] as an agent of crimes ranging from necromancy to murder, arguably presents her physical ostracism from courtly society as a variation of the waivery placed upon female perpetrators of serious crimes in the real world.[850] Because of this, Arthur's continual failure to defeat his half-sister perhaps articulates that which Musson describes as the 'discrepancies between the theory and practice of administering the law in medieval England'.[851] In permanently evading and even triumphing over him Morgan demonstrates, as do the protagonists of outlaw tales, 'failure on the part of the judicial agencies to locate an individual and bring him/her to justice.'[852]

As with Morgan's personal history, the outlaw's collective identity signifies the changing historical attitudes towards enchantment in medieval Europe. In the Middle Latin *Gesta Herewardi*, magic is presented both frequently and unremarkably; that Hereward overhears not one but two women casually discussing sorcery (one is the witch 'Phitonissa' and the other her hostess) before following them to 'custode fontium'[853] ('the guardian of the springs'), suggests Other women to be, at least outside of conventional society, as

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[846] Musson, Anthony (2005) *Boundaries of the Law: Geography, Gender and Jurisdiction in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.* Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot, Burlington. P.5.

[847] Mitchell, Stephen A. (2011) *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.164

[848] Roberts, Jean Addison (2003) 'The Crone in English Renaissance Drama' in Susan Cerasano, Robert Lindsey and John Pitcher (eds) *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England, Volume 15.* Associated University Presses: Cranbury, London and Mississauga. Pp.116-138 (122).

[849] Morris, Lewis (1878) *Celtic Remains.* Harvard University Press: Cambridge. Pp.97.

[850] Despite not being technically able to be outlawed during the Middle Ages female perpetrators of serious crime could be 'waived', though the result was much the same. *Bracton*, vol.2, pp.353-4.

[851] Musson, P.3.

[852] Ibid.

[853] Geffrei Gaimer (1888-9) 'Gesta Herewardi' in Thomas Duffus Hardy and Charles Trice Martin (eds) *Lestoire des Engles.* Eyre & Spottiswoode: London. P.389.

familiar a motif in early medieval outlaw texts as it is in romance. George Kittredge even suggests that, owing to its association with the sorcerer and the ancient relationship between female magic and wells, the *custode fontium* is in fact a water-demon, a link to the pagan past in which Other women were not outlawed.[854] There are also references to the High Medieval woman's more acceptable use of herbal magic in twelfth and thir-teenth-century outlaw narratives. In *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, the author describes John de Rampaigne's chewing on an unnamed herb to disguise his appearance so as to enter his enemies courts unrecognised: 'sa face comença d'engroser e emflyr moult gros' ('[h]is face began to swell and to become grossly puffed up'[855]). In her study of trickery in out-law narratives Allison Williams questions 'why this figure, whose historical existence is questionable, should be introduced, when Fouke has already demonstrated his own wit and skill at disguise[?]'[856] That John de Rampaigne is only incorporated into the narra-tive in order to adopt various personas that require his physical alteration suggests that the author was unwilling, given the more traditional overtones of this would-be ro-mance, to detract from 'the noble dignity of Fouke Fitz Waryn'[857] by having him endure a potentially humiliating transformation. However, while the act may be Other this does not necessarily make it demonic. As in earlier works where Morgan's magic is benign and beneficial to the main characters such as *Yvain*, general references to 'herbs' are often included as a way of legitimising her enchantments. As Saunders points out: '[i]n romance, licit, [herbal] medical magic transforms the body in extreme but not unimagi-nable ways, and may play a significant role in the enactment of divine providence'.[858]

In accordance with the Other Woman's connotative subject matter however, the ambiv-alent associations between outlawry and magic began to decline from the thirteenth century, *Eustace the Monk* presenting magic in fundamentally negative terms. While male magic may be authorised in other contexts (Cartlidge notes that Robert de Boron's Merlin illustrates 'a healthy confidence in the exorcising functions of baptism, as if bap-tism in itself were capable of resolving all of the moral and philosophical difficulties created by his demonic paternity'[859]), without these sanctions Eustace's prowess is more evocative of the Other Woman than the Merlin-type. In fact, so closely does the

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[854] Kittredge, George Lyman (2003, 1929) *Witchcraft in Old and New England.* Kessinger Publishing: Whitefish. Pp.33-34.

[855] *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, pp.32, 1. 11-33, 1. 9 (p. 32, 11.17-18); 'Fouke', trans. Burgess, pp. 157-9 (p. 158).

[856] Williams, Alison (2000) *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.* Rodopi: Amsterdam. P.131.

[857] Ibid.

[858] Saunders, Corinne (2010) 'Magic and Christianity' in Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman and Michelle Sweeney (eds) *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.84-101 (89).

[859] Cartlidge, Neil (2012) *Heroes and Anti-heroes in Medieval Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.228.

author's portrayal of Eustace's magic resemble the Morgan of Hartman's *Erec*, that it is not difficult to imagine that he modelled the following description on Hartmann's earlier character:[860]

> When [Eustace] returned from Toledo, where he had learned necromancy, there was no one in the kingdom of France who was so skilled in the arts of magic and sorcery. He played many tricks on many people. He had spent a whole winter and summer in Toledo under ground, in an abyss where he spoke to the devil himself, who taught him the tricks and the ruses by which everybody is deceived and taken in. He learned a thousand spells, a thousand magic tricks and a thousand incantations. He found out how to look into a sword and how to recite the psalter backwards. And from the shoulder of a sheep he had many a lost object returned to its owner. He knew how to look into a basin in order to restore losses and thefts, how to bewitch women and how to cast spells over men. There was no one from there to Santiago de Compostella who knew as much about the zodiac, the firmament or the vault of heaven. He could imitate the chimera, the best which no one can get to know, and he caused monks to fart in the cloister. When Eustace had learned enough, he took leave of the Devil. The Devil told him he would go on living until he had done a great deal of harm. He would wage war against kings and counts and be killed at sea.[861]

Whether the anonymous author of *Eustace* was familiar with the German text we cannot be sure, but given the certainty with which scholars attribute Hartmann's knowledge of romance legend to the labours of wayfaring troubadours from the south of France there is no reason to suppose that German narratives – and particularly those with as much precedence as Hartmann's – would not have found their way back there.[862] Indeed, given that the historical Eustace Busket was not strictly associated with magic but rather 'marvels'[863] (as his contemporary, the unknown author of the *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie,* asserts during the period of Eustace's outlawry), the poem's opening lines are arguably closer to Hartmann's depiction of Morgan, written just decades prior to

[860] For Hartmann's description see page 144-145.

[861] Burgess, Glynn S. (trans) (1997) 'The Romance of Eustace the Monk (Translation)' in *Two Medieval Outlaws.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.50-78 (50).

[862] It is also worth noting that in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* Ann Marie Rasmussen claims fragments from an early manuscript 'strongly suggest that *Erec* was composed and circulated' widely in parallel versions. (Rasmussen, Ann Marie (2000) 'Medieval Romance' in Roberta L. Krueger (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Pp.183-102 (188)).

[863] Cannon, H.L. (1912) 'The Battle of Sandwich and Eustace the Monk' in *English Historical Review*, vol.27, iss.108. P.652.

Eustace, than to what we know of the historical figure. It is certainly unusual that author describes Eustace's penchant for necromancy; the practice was generally associated with women because of the exclusion of females from sanctioned clerical sects of necromancy during the Early and High Middle Ages.[864] This resemblance is heightened by the fact that in both cases there is a sense of the extrinsic; for Kathryn Bedford this opening magical element is 'less well integrated'[865] than other elements of the poem, and it is well-known that Hartmann supplemented, somewhat atypically, Chrétien's original description in *Érec et Énide* with a ninety-one line tirade against Morgan le Fay.

Pagan Heritage:

> *Both outlaws and fairies live in the forest, both wear green, and Robin is a*
> *name for spirits, as in Robin Goodfellow.*[866]

Frank McLynn

The Other Woman and the outlaw man also share a common denominator in the form of their pagan heritage. Outlaws were famous for their 'wild, un-Christian and animalistic behaviour',[867] as demonstrated by the *Gawain* poet's description of the residents living in the outlaw territory of Wirral: 'wonde þer bot lyte/ þat auþer God oþer gome wyth goud hert louied',[868] and fairies are typically presented as spirits of the Otherworld. Despite the outward Christianity of the heroes presented in medieval fugitive texts, the majority also appear to be driven by the pre-Christian forces at work in the Greenwood. Fouke le Fitz Waryn for instance disguises himself as a pagan during his long sojourn into non-Christian territory, a gesture towards the affiliation between outlaws and non-Christians during the Middle Ages. Likewise, in *A Gest of Robyn Hod*e Robin experiences salvation at the hand of Mary Magdalene, the Other Woman whose sanctuary, like Morgan's 'grene chapelle,'[869] is hewn from the Greenwood itself. Although Mary Magdalene might be a Christian figure, the women who traditionally bring about the 'rebirth' of the

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[864] Necromancy is one of Morgan le Fay's most famous attributes, not least owing to Malory's allusion to her as a necromancer in *Le Morte d'Arthur* but also from much earlier traditions in which the Morganic woman is frequently associated with the journey to the afterlife and close encounters with the dead. 'Morgan le Fay was put to scole in a nunnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye' (10.5-12)

[865] Bedford, Kathryn (2011) 'Fouke le Fitz Waryn: Outlaw or Chivalric Hero?' in Alexander L. Kaufman (ed) *British Outlaws of Literature and History: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Figures from Robin Hood to Twm Shon Catty.* McFarland & Company: Jefferson. P.107.

[866] McLynn, Frank (2012) *Lionheart and Lackland: King Richard, King John and the Wars of Conquest*. Random House: London. P.243.

[867] Chadwick, Adrian M. (2004*) Stories from the Landscape: Archaeologies of Inhabitation*. Archaeopress: Oxford. P.84

[868] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Lines 701-2.

[869] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Line 2186.

medieval hero (Robin goes on to live for 'twenty yere and two'[870] even though the story is essentially over) stem from much older, Celtic traditions, providing a thinly veiled allusion to the Morganic female upon whom this particular incarnation of the Magdalene is likely based.

It should also be noted that the medieval clergy viewed Robin Hood as emblematic of all that was Other to Christian society. In one of seven sermons delivered to Henry VI, Bishop Latimer declares that it is not the 'lewde sportes' of the Robin Hood May games that so offend him, but rather the figure of Robin Hood, a character whose 'fits' Latimer couples with 'profane histories, or Cantorburye tales' as examples of irreverent reading. In Latimer's view, what should be a 'busye daye wyth us' has been supplanted with 'Robyn hoodes daye', his own 'rochet', the green garment of pontifical authority, being superseded by the fugitive's attire of the same colour. In Latimer's account the holy day has been inverted, replaced by the irreverent actions of a man wholly outside the regulations of Church and state. Says Peter Stallybrass: '[t]he sacred itself is excluded in the transformation of holy day to holiday. Gathering for Robyn hoode' is equated with 'put[ting] out a preacher'' for the Bishop despairs at finding the church door locked as the parishioners enjoy the outdoor festivities.'[871] Latimer exclaims:

> It is no laughynge matter my friends, it is a weeping matter, a heavy matter, a heavy matter, under the pretence for gatherynge for Robyn hoode, a traytoure, and a thefe, to put out a preacher, to have hys office lesse esteemed, to prefer Robyn hod before the ministracion of Gods word.[872]

The association between outlaw festivities and godlessness is furthered in various other aspects of the legend. The drinking and revelry of the nonetheless munificent Friar Tuck epitomises aspects of clerical life that the Church was attempting to suppress. And such was the prevalence of Marian's association with non-Catholicism that in his 1528 *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* Thomas More compares Luther and his wife not to unpopular Biblical sinners such as Judas and Jezebel, but rather 'Friar Tuck and Maid Marion'. [873]

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[870] *A Gest of Robin Hode.* Line 450.
[871] Stallybrass, Peter (1999) '"Drunk with the cup of Liberty": Robin Hood, the Carnivalesque, and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England' in Stephen Thomas Knight (ed) *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism.* D.S Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.297-328 (316).
[872] Latimer (1869,1549) *Seven Sermons Before Edward VI. 1549.* Birmingham Publishing: Birmingham. P.74.
[873] More, Sir Thomas (1528) *Dialogue Concerning Heresies, Book iv, Chapter viii.*

As the archetypes for the Other Woman and the outlaw man Morgan le Fay and Robin Hood share a particular affiliation, both featuring prominently in the popular rural festivities of England and Scotland. In contrast with the pious attitudes found in other aspects of Robin Hood literature (in that the fugitives are at least ostensibly Christian), the festive enactments of the period link the historical rebel much more closely with the earlier pagan culture from which Morgan also derives. Frank McLynn even suggests that Robin and Morgan are descended from the same fairy tradition, as 'both outlaws and fairies live in the forest, both wear green, and Robin is a name for spirits, as in Robin Goodfellow'.[874] This is a valid point, for in name Robin Hood arguably alludes to the early pagan forest dwellers, perhaps being originally cited as '"Robin in a hood", a reference to the hoods worn by the followers of the Nature gods or of those following the Wild Hunt.[875] As Keen reminds us, 'the rites of country festivals certainly did preserve a great deal of the less offensive of pre-Christian practice', suggesting that in addition to playing a fundamental role in the development of outlaw literature, Robin Hood must be treated as 'a traditional figure, whose role in pagan rites has been preserved in the drama of seasonal rustic celebrations'.[876]

Other scholars have commented on the connection between medieval May-day festivals as pagan celebrations and the unruly Robin Hood figure. Lord Raglan argues that Robin is the hero of a ritual drama in which nature is revered, obscuring attempts to Christianise the character in medieval texts. He notes:

> There can be no doubt that [the May-day festival in which Robin Hood played such a prominent part] was of pagan origin – that it was, in fact, the spring festival which was theoretically superseded by the Christian Easter. We should expect a pagan festival to be associated with a pagan deity, and we should not be disappointed. We have in Robin Hood a deity particularly associated with spring and vegetation. He was the King of May, and Maid Marian was the Queen of May.[877]

Through this description we are strongly reminded of romance authors' amalgamation of earlier pagan attributes onto the medieval Morgan. Just as Robin imbibes aspects of

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[874] McLynn, P.243.

[875] Curran, Bob (2007) *Walking with the Green Man: Father of the Forest, Spirit of Nature.* The Career Press: Franklin Lakes. P.85.

[876] Keen, P.220.

[877] Lord Raglan (1999) 'Robin Hood' in Stephen Thomas Knight (ed) *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. Pp.385-392 (388).

the Green Man, a personification of springtime renewal, Morgan has adopted the qualities of nature goddesses such as Babh and Modron. As with the May Queen, says Max Harris, 'people would have recognised a counterpart to their own mother goddesses'.[878] Likewise, as the May Games featuring Robin Hood predate his historical equivalent by some years, the traditional role of the May King, usually performed by a local man with a discernible nod in the direction of earlier pagan rites invoking the Green Man, appears to have been usurped by the popular legend. Records from these May Games also suggest that Robin Hood's original female counterpart is far closer to the Celtic figure of Morgan than it is to the courtly Marian we associate with later Robin Hood legends.

Raglan also makes a good point in that, rather than being automatically coupled with Maid Marian (as is the case in Adam de la Halle's late thirteenth century play *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion[879]*), the natural equivalent to the May King is the May Queen, whose rustic Celtic associations frequently name her as Morgan, 'the queen of the fairies'. This comes of little surprise when we recall that the Maid Marian featured in earlier tales is most often associated with the Virgin Mary, the antithesis of Morgan le Fay as the acceptable face of chaste yet maternal womanhood during the Middle Ages.[880] However, as Marian became a more regular part of the Robin Hood legend, so she appears to have adopted a greater number of the Morganic woman's standard qualities. As Raven Grimassi observes in her *Springtime Rituals,* the legends of Robin and Marian are simply reworkings of Celtic lore, medieval characters 'grafted onto an older concept' in which Morgan plays a part:

> In such a scenario, Maid Marion becomes the May Queen wed to the Green Man, and the Merry Men become the May Dancers, armed with swords like the morris dancers.[881]

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[878] Harris, Max (1998) 'Sweet Moll and Malinche: Maid Marian Goes to Mexico' in Lois Potter (ed) *Playing Robin Hood: The Legend as Performance in Five Centuries.* Associated University Presses: Cranbery, London and Mississauga. Pp.101-110 (107).

[879] The name Marian was indeed a familiar one in country festivals, though she and Robin remained notably separate aspects of these rites until around the time of the reformation. *Le Jou de Robin et Marion* is a pastoral secular play set to music that tells of a young shepherdess named Marion and her knightly swain. However, there is nothing to suggest that the French play served as an analogue for any later Robin and Marian tradition.

[880] '*Webster's Dictionary* states that Maid Marian refers to the Virgin Mary, the name Marian in French being the diminutive form of Mary, and that Maid Marian means the lesser or little Virgin Mary' St. Lawrence Finney, W.E. (1936) 'Mediæval Games and Gaderyngs at Kingston-Upon-Thames' in Surrey Archaeological Collections, Volume 44. P.118

[881] Grimassi, Raven (2001) *Beltane: Springtime Rituals, Lore and Celebration.* Llewellyn Publications: St. Paul. P.27.

This 'grafting' closely resembles the idea of markers in character typing, and would suggest that Marian, the 'folk-figure regarded by many Pagans as a version of the Goddess, the May Queen, Bride of the Green Man,'[882] was generated in accordance with an extant *species* incorporating females with an obvious Celtic descent. As with other women, says Jackie Hogan, 'expanding and changing representations of Marian through the ages serve as an index of women's changing roles in British society'.[883]

Metamorphosis: Androgyny and Cross-Dressing

> *Males and females who adopted the appearance of the opposite sex, whether in the way they dressed, cut their hair, or in the insignia they bore (such as on weapons), could be declared outlaws.*[884]
>
> Bonnie Bullough and Vern Bullough

Although the term 'outlaw' may have been recast as an integrally masculine term within contemporary culture, the world of medieval outlaw narratives is riddled with feminine elements. As Seal observes, '[w]e frequently hear of male outlaws dressed as women; we also hear of mostly mythical women taking male roles, such as female highway men.'[885] From a practical perspective it is also important to remember that during the Middle Ages the outlaw was considered almost jurisdictionally female. A term of medieval outlawry during the Middle Ages was a revoking of one's right to owning land, paralleling the relinquishing of dowry lands from women to their husbands upon marriage. Moreover, as Henry de Bracton states in his c.1235 *The Laws and Customs of England,* medieval women were considered 'not under the law, that is, in frankpledge or tithing, as is a male of twelve years and upwards'.[886] Of Morgan's markers, the 'property ownership' element is the only aspect that the fugitives of outlaw narratives wholly lack, an anomaly which is acceptable considering that both the outlaw and the Morganic woman are 'Other' to the customs of their gender.

While this feminisation cannot be wholly attributed to medieval authors being inspired by Morgan's standard list, the more effeminate elements that emerge in medieval outlaw narratives may be attributed to the fugitive's occupancy of the liminal woodland

[882] Sheard, K.M. (2011) *Llewellyn's Complete Book of Names.* Llewellyn Publications: Woodbury. P.381.

[883] Hogan, Jackie (2009) *Gender, Race and National Identity: Nations of Flesh and Blood.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. P.59.

[884] Bullough, Bonnie and Bullough, Vern L. (1993) *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. Pp.45-46.

[885] Seal, P.179.

[886] *Bracton*, vol.2, pp.353-4.

space, a locality often equated with the female body. Indeed, without the social structures and distinctions that create and sustain hierarchies, Timothy Jones believes the medieval forest is characterised by the qualities of anonymity, the suspension of things opposed to ordinary society, and, in keeping with the Other woman's metamorphosis and masculine authority, androgyny.[887] Although the scholar makes this point respective to the outlaw tradition, many of the women who occupy the Greenwood demonstrate their androgynous quality in equal measure. In name alone Morgan blurs the traditional polarities of gender by fusing the integrally feminine epithet of 'fairy' with her uniquely masculine forename. As Hebert notes in her *Shapeshifter,* '[t]he most common form of Morgan's name, *Morgan,* was understood to be exclusively masculine in common usage prior to 1600, and in Wales is still only used for males.' [888] Regarding her characteristic markers, moreover, Morgan imbibes a range of traditionally male characteristics: her overt sexuality, ownership of land, and lack of subservience to a parental or spousal figure are qualities that a medieval reader would have perceived as inherently masculine. As Larrington notes, although 'frequently shown as anti-chivalric…[Morgan] is always adept in the rhetoric of courtly masculinity, both with her family and in her dealings with other knights.'[889] Likewise in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* she is generally regarded as a source of jeopardy to Camelot's patriarchal society because 'her attraction to extramarital sex subverts the conventional notions of women's passivity and inferiority'.[890] And in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur,* the fay evades any circumscribed definition of gender by being, as Dorsey Armstrong observes, 'simultaneously and never fully *both* masculine and feminine in her actions.'[891]

As characters belonging to the social margins, the outlaw and the Morganic woman share a mutual need for disguise and concealment that prompts various forms of metamorphosis. While for Morgan and her cognates this is traditionally invoked *via* magic (thinking particularly of the Loathly Lady), whereas the outlaw must rely on highly sophisticated subterfuge, the resulting condition is almost invariably a dangerous one which must, as Seal maintains, be 'constrained, channelled and controlled for the sake of all involved'.[892] It is often the fact that this artifice is left *unconstrained* that the more

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[887] Jones, Timothy S. (2010) *Outlawry in Medieval Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.90.

[888] 'The most common form of Morgan's name, *Morgan*, was understood to be exclusively masculine in common usage prior to 1600, and in Wales is still only used for males'. Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.40.

[889] Larrington, P.45

[890] Ibid.

[891] Armstrong, Dorsey (2003) *Gender and the Chivalric Community of Malory's Morte D'Arthur.* University Press of Florida: Gainesville. P.59.

[892] Seal, P.179.

challenging aspects of outlaw and Morgan narratives are left to unfold, a trend influenced by general fears surrounding shapeshifters adopted by Christian missionaries as 'a translation term for the devil'.[893] While figures such as Robin Hood and Eustace may have been regarded with a degree of reverence during the Middle Ages, there was a fear that admirers of these anti-heroes would begin to emulate their criminal activity by using the same disguises as the characters of legend.[894] During the mid-sixteenth century, fears that Robin Hood ballads and dramas would embolden more perpetrators to commit real-life acts of delinquency led to the passing of a decree in 1555 by Scottish Parliament, stating that anyone impersonating Robin Hood would, in imitation of their literary agnate, be banished and deprived of their freedom and liberties for five years. This was not entirely successful, provoking a new strain of perpetrators to perform extreme changes in their guise and even gender appearance. Claire Sponsler explores these 'counterfeit' elements to the Robin Hood legend, making the interesting point that 'the penetration and subversion of urban social and economic structures featured in the ballads were often played out within the real space of late medieval communities'.[895] This not only resulted, she argues, in an increase in the number of acts of 'trespass, poaching, robbery and riot' during the festival periods that traditionally provided the backdrop for Robin Hood performances, but also encouraged male rioters to cross dress, not only to conceal their identities, 'but also to use the symbolics of the "unruly woman" to their advantage.'[896]

While the Morganic woman's androgyny is for the most part either symbolic or behavioural, the cross-dressing aspect of the outlaw's persona thus represents a much more literal expression of gender inversion. During the thirteenth-century *Eustace* we are told of the renegade Monk using women's garments as a means of entering a city unrecognised: '[m]eanwhile Eustace entered the town in the disguise of a woman, stole two of the count's horses, and threw the sergeant, who had the care of them into a bog'.[897] Whilst it is not uncommon for the great heroes of romance to use disguise as a means of facilitating their passing through border lands – areas that are almost invariably both

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[893] Jones, Timothy S. (2010) *Outlawry in Medieval Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.101.

[894] The 1432 *Rolls of Parliament*, for instance, show one Piers Venables from Derbyshire carrying out a frightening attempt at insurgent social 'rescue' where, 'in manner of insurrection, he went into the woods in that country, like as it had been Robyn Hood and his meynie'. *Rolls of Parliament, v, 16b.*

[895] Sponsler, Claire (1997) *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England.* The University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. P.42.

[896] Ibid.

[897] Burgess, P.50.

more dangerous and/or magically charged in romance – the transvestite approach appears most frequently in outlaw texts. Whereas the noble Orfeo and chivalric Horn habitually don the lowly attire of beggars and minstrels in demonstration of their humility even in disguise, Eustace's masquerades range from monk to inn-keep to prostitute. Although there is a comedic element here, with *Eustace* being more inclined towards the burlesque than the staider romance texts, there is also a deeper, more significant meaning that relates to his literal state of being outside the law. Disguising oneself as a woman (and particularly, as Sponsler observed, an 'unruly woman') contained a further act of subservience for, at least during the early part of the Middle Ages, custom decreed that men and women were not to dress in the garments of the other. In part a social law based on definitive gender roles, partially a Catholic doctrine derived from Scriptures,[898] traditional Germanic law firmly prohibited cross-dressing and emphasised the necessity of gender distinction. Indeed, in their *Cross Dressing, Sex and Gender,* Bullough and Bullough even go as far as to say that cross-dressing was in itself a cause for outlawry: '[m]ales and females who adopted the appearance of the opposite sex, whether in the way they dressed, cut their hair, or in the insignia they bore (such as on weapons), could be declared outlaws.'[899]

The connection between outlaws and female bodies is thus not only used to a symbolic effect in fugitive narratives, but is also enacted in very 'real' terms. In his *The Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion* Alexander Kaufman describes how, during the popular 1450 revolt now commonly known for its leader as the 'Jack Cade Rebellion', there existed a trio of pseudonyms under which rebels would operate, an affiliation that unequivocally links the Morganic woman with the outlaw rebel:

> In Cade's Revolt aliases were common among his company, and its leaders had their identities hidden, at least for a time, under such names as 'King of the Fairies,' 'Queen of the Fairies,' and 'Robin Hood.' These three aliases that Cade's followers exploit reveal an aspect of the revolt that some scholars have explored in minimal detail: the highly-charged air of carnival that is present during the revolt, and which overtakes Cade and his band as they proceed to institute their own form of rule, government, and order on the city and its people.[900]

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[898] For instance Deuteronomy 22:5: 'The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.'
[899] Bullough and Bullough, Pp.45-46.
[900] Kaufman, Alexander L. (2013) *The Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion.* Ashgate Publishing (eBook).

Although she is not consistently provided with the title of fairy queen, Morgan le Fay has, as Ashleen O'Gaea rightly claims, 'as legitimate a claim to fairy monarchy as any'.[901] She is descended from a royal Celtic lineage and is often depicted as the Queen of Avalon, a connection that later presents her as queen of a real province in *Le Morte Darthur.* Disregarding popular contemporary notions of the fairy as a gentle if somewhat playful winged spirit of tiny stature, medieval fairies (excluding the explicitly Christian minority such as portrayed in *Huon of Burdeux*) were almost consistently presented as baleful, seductive figures with dangerous intent. That both Morgan with her epithet of 'the fairy' and subordinate outlaw rebels should adopt the title of 'Queen of the Fairies' should therefore not be dismissed as a coincidental or blithe reference to mythos, but rather seen as a sinister and somewhat threatening indication of their ill intent.

Although cross-dressing remained a punishable offence throughout and even beyond the Middle Ages, with records of cross-dressers such as one Robert Chetwyn being asked to leave London for 'going abroad in the City…in a womans apparell', the law was more forgiving in cases of rustic celebrations and festal rites where cross-dressing was regarded more as a custom than an act of personal depravity. In his 'Cross-Dressing in Robin Hood Plays', Michael Shapiro notes that Marian 'retained her separate identity in folk practices, becoming the female character in the all-male dance known as the morris'. [902] In this performance 'she was represented by a boy or a man, and usually paired not with Robin Hood, if he was there at all, but with a lusty friar, presumably to suggest coupling symbolic of fertility'.[903] Just as the Virgin Mary did not become an integral part of Christian iconography until after the dissolution of the more androgynous Christ of artworks composed prior to the fourth century, Maid Marian appears to have been incorporated into the Robin Hood saga around the time that Robin's personal cross-dressing tendencies beginning to diminish.[904] Rather than eliminating the cross-dressing element all together, authors of outlaw texts shift the androgynous aspect onto this newly

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[901] O'Gaea, Ashleen (2005) *Celebrating the Seasons of Life: Lore, Rituals, Activities, and Symbols.* The Career Press: Franklin Lakes. P.50.

[902] Shapiro, Michael (1998) 'Cross-Dressing in Elizabethan Robin Hood Plays' in Lois Potter (ed) *Playing Robin Hood: The Legend as Performance in Five Centuries.* Associated University Presses: Cranbery, London and Mississauga. Pp.77-90 (77).

[903] Ibid.

[904] This fashion of art was arguably executed in order to entreat celebrants formerly accustomed to worshipping both male and female deities to Christianity, a trend that mostly died out with the emergence of the addition of the iconographic Virgin Mary to the more masculine, bearded Christ who first appeared during the fourth-century. However, the allure of a more effeminate Christ appears to have prevailed in more rustic parts of Europe, as suggested in the famous 'mermaid' lines taken from the medieval Cornish play the *Ordinalia*: 'He might well be,/Half man and half God,/Human is half the mermaid,/ Woman from the head to the heart,/ So is the Jesus'. It is interesting to note that where these great socialist heroes are

integrated character, herself part of a newly flourishing aspect of the Other Woman. In later fugitive narratives a more idealised Robin assumes a function akin to the romantic hero and is paired with Marian, a Morganic woman who now assumes the role of the man-woman cross dresser. A reversal of the traditional outlaw transvestite who dons female apparel to pass through a guarded area unseen, in stanza 8 of *Robin Hood and Maid Marian* the author describes a deconstructed Marian searching for her lover in men's clothing:

> Perplexed and vexed, and troubled in mind,
> Shee drest her self like a page,
> And ranged the wood to find Robin Hood,
> The bravest of men in that age.[905]

It is perhaps owing to this appearance of a Morganic woman in Late Medieval outlaw narratives that the masculine face of Morgan le Fay begins to recede in the tales. As Crystal Kirgiss notes: 'Maid Marian bec[omes] the object of [Robin's] devotion, replacing the [the Virgin Mary permanently and completely',[906] a gesture promoting a more obvious female power that allows female Others to appear alongside more masculine heroes. The ultimate example of this can be found in Ben Johnson's 1637 Robin Hood play 'The Sad Shepherd', in which the witch Maudlin morphs into the beautiful form of Marian in the opening of the second act in mimicry of the Loathly Lady. According to the stage directions: 'The Witch Maudlin, having taken the Shape of Marian, to abuse Robin-Hood, and perlex his Guests, cometh forth with her daughter Douce, reporting in what confusion she hath left them...glorifying so far in the Extent of her Mischief. [907]

Although the medieval outlaw cannot be described as a 'renamed Morgan' in the same way as her female cognates, it is clear that the character does not derive from an exclusively masculine prototype, but adopts various elements from the female exemplar that has been the focus of this thesis. In her thought provoking statement that Robin Hood

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concerned, their female counterparts almost invariably stem from the Morganic school of womanhood, with Mary Magdalene, Maid Marian and in this case the mermaid all providing the potential for dissidence.
[905] *Robin Hood and Maid Marian.* Lines 30-33.
[906] Kirgiss, Crystal (2011) 'Popular Devotion and Prosperity Gospel in Early Robin Hood Tales' in Alexander L. Kaufman (ed) *British Outlaws of Literature and History: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Figures from Robin Hood to Twm Shon Catty.* McFarland & Company: Jefferson. P.176.
[907] Johnson, Ben (1838, 1641) 'The Sad Shepherd' in Barry Cornwall (ed) *The Works of Ben Johnson.* Edward Moxon: London. Pp.490-501 (490).

'seemed to represent everything that Arthur opposed'[908] Stephanie Barczewski highlights two points: that the outlaw and Morgan share a mutual enmity towards Arthur, and that these quasi-historical figures exist in their literary form as *representative* characters, intended to educate as well as entertain. By developing their pseudohistorical heroes upon a partially Morganic blueprint the authors of outlaw narratives are able to 'cue and trigger' the subversive dissidence already equated with Other females, creating powerful recollections of outsiderness without the need for developing an entirely new paradigm. Whether this is the result of the outlaw's anomalous position as a social pariah during the Middle Ages, for which there is no heroic standard outside of hagiography, or if authors based their outlaws upon Morganic women to highlight their Otherness as characters literally 'outside' the law, they share a series of undeniable parallels. Male outlaws in ballads and romance may thus be described as the foremost example of the Morganic male, operating on the boundaries associated both geographically and socially with the female Other. Unsurprisingly, however, where she is reviled for her sexuality, independence and rejection of social values, he, as an example of the superlative male, is revered.

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[908] Barczewski, Stephanie (2000) *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York. P.v.

Conclusion

The sign expresses the thing,
The thing is the virtue of the sign.
There is an analogical correspondence between the sign and the thing signified.
The more perfect is the sign, the more complete is the correspondence.
To say a word is to evoke a thought and make it present. To name God is to manifest God.
... To utter a name is to create or evoke a being.
In the name is contained the verbal or spiritual doctrine of the being itself.[909]

Robert Nye

Although the idea of fictional characters as phantasms – and therefore critical to knowledge – may seem, as Irvine points out, 'strange' to us, it is also '[t]he strangeness…of…medieval literary theory [that] will to some extent free us from the 'blind modernism' which obscures our view of the past'.[910] Given the disassociation of many current Morgan studies with the narrative models of the Middle Ages, the overall conclusion of this thesis is that it is not the fay who conspires 'most consistently and…effectively against our preconceived notions of literary form',[911] but rather the biases of contemporary scholarship that fail to understand her function as a medieval character. Indeed, that Morgan does not align with our modern perceptions is arguably a result of how we think literary characters *should* behave, rather than any particular irregularity on her part. This also reflects our general overlooking of some of the semiotic writing processes involved in medieval composition: as Nikolajeva notes, 'the mimetic view of fictional characters has, similarly to the mimetic view of literature, dominated literary theory until relatively recently.' [912] Having considered the differentiations between medieval and contemporary modes of learning, however, we are better placed to consider Morgan as a semiotic character, both within her own right and as part of the universal identity to which she belongs. To reiterate my opening statement, as a sign-based character Morgan's le Fay's manifestation across multiple forms provides 'an opportunity to comment on…social expectations for women and men

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[909] Nye, Robert (1797) *Merlin: Darkling Child of Virgin and Devil*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. P.161

[910] Irvine, Martin (1994) *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350-1100.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge etc. P.7.

[911] Vinaver, Eugene (1971) *The Rise of Romance.* Clarendon Press: Michigan. P.90.

[912] Nikolajeva, Maria (2014) *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature.* John Benjamins B.V.: Amsterdam and Philadelphia. P.76.

alike, and a means by which we can imagine how those expectations might be expanded, rebelled against, even overturned.'[913]

While many of the characters who feature in the general codex of medieval literature are stimulated by trends for logic and an authorial desire to formulate concepts from the outside world – Lancelot, for instance, has often been described as a manifestation of 'secular chivalry', and Guinevere frequently serves as Morgan's antithesis by indicating notions of penance and penitence – we see in Morgan le Fay a greater than usual adherence to the phantasmal tradition. There are various reasons for this, most prominently the medieval desire for tangible representations of abstract conceptions in conjunction with the popular subject of gender ideology. As Judith Bennett observes, the medieval community, focussed as it was on Woman's unassailable difference from the superlative male, 'struggled with the simultaneous humanity and otherness of women'.[914] It is largely in response to this that the Other Woman, an age-old concept with innumerable expressions in folklore and history, appears with unprecedented regularity in the culture of medieval Europe. Within this context, women were necessary but inferior to men; women had their own agency but needed to be subjugated; women were a gender that needed saving and yet constraining. In order to deal with the complexity of these issues, authors within the burgeoning world of 'imaginative writing' recognised their own potential to manifest the abstract (and thus 'unknowable') female Other, giving her a physical form in order to further enact her relegation to the social margins. Rather than being intended primarily as a source of entertainment, the Other Woman of medieval literature should therefore be regarded as a synthetic phantasm, a 'mental conception' clothed with a series of markers deliberately intended to equate non-conforming women with fearsome outsiderness, sin, and ultimate *difference* from the superlative male.

Although reading Morgan as a phantasm or 'conformatio' rather than 'embodiment' may not have a particularly dramatic effect on how we interpret her as a story-based character, asserting that Morgan's function within medieval narratives is primarily to signify an abstract subject matter resolves many of the scholarly criticisms surrounding her persona. Reducing her mimetic capability, we stop expecting Morgan to behave as a whole, coherent, or even believable person, instead accepting that, as her connotative subject matter changes, so must she. In light of this, Morgan le Fay's inclusion in

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[913] Hebert, Jill Marie (2013) *Morgan le Fay, Shapeshifter*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.248.

[914] Bennett, Judith M. (2005) 'Medieval Women in Modern Perspective' in Bonnie G. Smith (ed) *Women's History in Global Perspective, Volume 2.* University of Illinois Press: Urbana and Chicago. Pp.139-186 (167).

medieval narratives seems to be less concerned with her role as a character (which will appear 'inconsistent' if we attempt to read her as such), and rather more with connoting a constantly shifting yet universal female Otherness. We might therefore respond to Hebert's statement that 'critics are at a loss, generally, for a satisfactory explanation of this contradictory characterization'[915] with the rejoinder that these 'contradictory' aspects indicate real-life historical changes in a subject matter that Morgan, a sign-based character, accurately relates. Moreover, unlike contemporary authorship, a medieval author would have expected his or her audience to be familiar with a network of established signs and markers that might indicate a character's belonging to a certain type. An emphasis (or de-emphasis) on one or more of these markers could be used to provide different interpretations of types while maintaining characters' roles as individuals within an ongoing narrative saga. Since medieval authors would have approached characterisation with the expectation that a character may belong to a certain type by adhering to a standard list of attributes, despite his or her differences, we should think of Morgan as being 'the same' in spite of her outward inconsistencies.

Using the theory of singular universality in conjunction with Morgan not only helps resolve some of the problematic variations in her persona, but also allows us to establish a further range of characters as belonging to her generic *species*. Recalling the idea that there can be written signs of objects that appear quite different to one another, and yet still be used to refer to the same concept,[916] we are able to substantiate Bane's claim that Morgan le Fay has 'had many names…in religion and folklore'[917] with a theoretic model that is 'genuine and historically right'.[918] Just as Morgan can be regarded as 'the same character' even in cases where she differs significantly between texts, so might characters who share her essential attributes, but differ in name, be thought of as examples of her persona. This suggests that the universal character type to which she belongs was not generated in response to Morgan's literary role, but rather exists in advance of the character and her cognates. As Anne Berthelot notes, 'if Morgue, the Lady of Avalan, [the usually unnamed Lady of the Lake] and even the Queen of Norgales are in fact but one character, we are once again presented with the evidence of only…one

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[915] Hebert, P.23.

[916] Marenbon, John (2002) *Early Medieval Philosophy 480-1150: An Introduction.* Routledge: New York. P.137

[917] Bane, Theresa (2013) *Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology.* McFarland and Company: Jefferson. P.237.

[918] Minnis, Alaistair (2010, 1984) *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages.* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. P.7.

prototype'.[919] This not only allows semiotic characters like Morgan to fulfil their specifications as signifiers *and* persons, but also provides authors with a means of presenting a universal subject matter in a way that is most relevant to their readers. In the same way as two painters viewing the same landscape will likely produce two very different pieces of artwork, so might authors approaching the complex issue of Other Womanhood generate a series of characters that have both generic and personal identities. As Cartlidge surmises: '[e]ven in the case of characters and character-types that have relatively distinct and continuous literary traditions of their own, different texts can tell very different stories about them.'[920]

Even with the post-medieval advances in cognitive science that have invalidated the idea of wax-like phantasms, the 'associative' form of characterisation continues long after Morgan's medieval appearances: while phantasms might belong firmly to the Middle Ages, signs have the potential to be as timeless as the subjects they convey. Bearing in mind the universality of both Morgan's connotative subject matter and the prevalence of 'Morgan le Fay' as a means of indicating 'the Other', authors before and after the Middle Ages employ many of the same 'cues' to identifying the female Other as do Geoffrey, Chrétien, and Malory. Various scholars have for instance commented on the reappearance of medieval Others in post-medieval texts that draw upon the principles of earlier forms of characterisation. Although Morgan might not appear by name in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* Hebert believes that the author's deliberate incorporation of her 'standard list' may be read as a further instance of her 'absent' presence in earlier narratives. She argues: 'the allusions to aspects of [Morgan's] character are numerous, encouraged by her connections to fairy.'[921] Duessa is portrayed as consistent with Morgan by her ability to shapeshift, her penchant for ensnaring men, and, in her later incarnations, as a destroyer of knights.

In a further example from Victorian fiction, the 1860 *The Mill on the Floss,* Celia Wallhead has similarly likened Elliot's Maggie Tulliver to the universal Other found in medieval characterisation. Pursuing something very close to Morgan's theme of sibling incest, Eliot's character is a marginalised figure whose ostracism is defined by the behaviours of the medieval archetype: a thirst for learning, a quest for sexual freedom, and an intrinsic connection with water. In being likened to the mythological Gorgon in Eliot's

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[919] Berthelot, Anne (2003) 'Merlin and the Ladies of the Lake' in Peter H. Goodrich (ed) *Merlin: A Casebook*. Routledge: London. Pp.160-182 (177).

[920] Cartlidge, Neil (2012) *Heroes and Anti-heroes in Medieval Romance.* D.S. Brewer: Cambridge. P.2

[921] Hebert, P.95.

famous description of her as 'a small Medusa with her snakes cropped',[922] Maggie is ultimately 'placed in a long line of femmes fatales, strong women of sinister and tempting beauty, like Eve, associated with Satan.'[923] Recalling the Morganic woman's penchant for M initialled names, it should also be noted that Maggie's Otherness is achieved both figuratively and onomastically. Kathryn Ambrose observes: '[a]s Eliot uses several different techniques to evoke 'otherness', which include the comparison between women and animals (and particularly the use of the image of the serpent), the use of water folklore…and her choice of names for her female characters.'[924]

Harrell believes that the refashioning of older character types in more recent settings might be attributed to a reconfiguring of medieval phantasms for use in contemporary contexts, a process he ascribes to the intermediary phantasm's ability to prompt and reveal generic identities though 'social tools'.[925] While these tools may previously have been limited to the written word, the generic Other now appears with across various mediums, both in reinterpretations of earlier guises (for instance onscreen adaptations of the Arthurian legend), and new roles that cohere with contemporary cultural expectations. Even in the advent of a three-wave feminist movement, says Horner, the deviants of the inaugural Eve figure found in classical and medieval culture, such as 'Delilah, Salome, Bathsheba, Helen of Troyes, Circe and Morgan le Fay,' can be seen in 'a great many fables, poems, novels, paintings and operas.'[926] Helen Mirren's portrayal of 'Morgana' in the 1981 *Excalibur* is for instance modelled closely on the medieval Other Woman, drawing on the idea of a character type rather than any one representation of Morgan:

> Morgana's affinities range right across medieval enchantress tradition; she shares Morgan's envy of her brother's power, Viviane's desire for magical knowledge and the *damoiselle cacheresse's* obsessive hatred of Merlin. The motif of entrapment of knights, ascribed to Morgan in the later medieval works, is integrated with the role of the deceptive temptress in the Grail quest.[927]

[922] Elliot, George (1867) *The Mill on the Floss.* William Blackwood and Sons: Edinburgh and London. P.86.

[923] Wallhead, Celia (2007) *A.S. Byatt: Essays on the Short Fiction.* Peter Lang AG: Bern. P.190.

[924] Ambrose, Kathryn (2015) *The Woman Question in Nineteenth-Century English, German and Russian Literature.* Brill Rodopi: Leiden and Boston. P.73.

[925] Harrell, Douglas Fox (2013) *Phantasmal Media: An Approach to Imagination, Computation, and Expression.* MIT Press: Cambridge. P.332.

[926] Horner, Grant (2010) Meaning at the Movies: Becoming a Discerning Viewer. Crossway: Wheaton. P.172.

[927] Larrington, Carolyne (2006) *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her sisters in Arthurian Tradition.* I B Tauris: London, New York. P.188.

In a yet more recent example of these 'affinities', the character Morgana in the BBC's 2008–2012 *Merlin* exemplifies a universal pattern that also seems to derive from medieval formulations of the Other Woman type. Rather than deriving from any particular manifestation of the medieval Morgan, the character, played by Katie McGrath, appears as a generic microcosm for her literary analogue. In the series' onset she is presented in accordance with Geoffrey of Monmouth's benevolent Morgan, assisting Arthur in his chivalric quests and performing healing acts that benefit the realm of Camelot. In keeping with the antecedent Morgan, however, her persona embarks on a process of steady decline that seems to be generated in accordance with the increasing emphasis on her magical power. Turning against Arthur, whom she discovers is her half-brother, Morgana is forced out of conventional society and into a marginal occupation within the same liminal forest as her literary forebears.[928]

This use of much older characters in contemporary media is, like their medieval counterparts, intended to be familiar to us as audience participants. Ziva Ben Porat writes: 'there is a fixed set of characters, played over and over again by the same actors, whose inter-relations, functions, and order of appearance are as fixed as their individual traits and mannerisms.'[929] In contemporary fiction, George Martin has freely admitted to borrowing from medieval female character archetypes, the Other Woman making several appearances in his *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. While he may not present a singular Morgan figure, he presents a range of subversive females that demonstrate aspects of the medieval standard list. Frankel comments on this in her *Women in Game of Thrones: Power, Conformity and Resistance,* linking Martin's aptly named Melisandre to Morgan's universal archetype on the basis of what she sees as a typecast Otherness:

> Charlatans and lying mediums are a common trope, but a more popular one is the evil seer. She is the murderous Medea or Morgan le Fay more often than she is the helpful and stable Galadriel. Most often she embodies female rage rather than acting as an inspiratrice and counsellor. Mirri is the former, Quaithe is the

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[928] Philippa Semper also believes that the series deliberately sought to emphasise the Celtic descent of Morgana's literary analogue, observing: 'Colin Morgan replaced his Northern Irish accent with estuary English and Alexander Vlahos's Welsh disappeared for Mordred, but Katie McGrath (Morgana)…kept [her] Irish accent'.

Semper, Philippa (2015) '"Camelot must come before all else": Fantasy and Family in the BBC *Merlin* in Gail Ashton (ed) *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture.* Pp. 115-123 (117).

[929] Cited from Ezell, Silas Kane (2008) *Ripping on People: The Traditional and Postmodern Satire of "South Park".* ProQuest LLC: Ann Arbor. P.16.

latter. Melisandre displays qualities of both, and her true role as bringer of light or darkness has not yet been revealed.[930]

Frankel's statement is particularly useful in its reference to tropes; by referencing not only Morgan le Fay but a range of characters from multiple genera, we are reminded of the use of characterisation as a literary device that may be used to transpose a particular subject matter between stories, eras, and setting. Martin's reconstruction of the type also recalls the tendency of medieval authors to 'split' the Other Woman's attributes across a number of characters, as well as the usage of M initialled names to delineate the character type. Mirri and Melisandre share the identity of the similarly appellated Medea and Morgan le Fay, whereas Quaithe, the ambiguous medium, represents a different aspect of Woman.

We experience a similar reconstruction of medieval *topoi* in the early films of Walt Disney: viewers are exposed to the dominant villainy of supernatural females including Maleficent (*Sleeping Beauty*), the wicked stepmother (*Snow White*), and Madam Mim (*The Sword in the Stone*) in a way that draws on our extant knowledge of the stories' medieval settings. Concerning Maleficent, the character derives her personal name from a medieval definition for the ultimate form of female enchantment, 'maleficent magic', which was punishable by death in the later Middle Ages. She also exhibits various qualities from Morgan's standard list; a reclusive dwelling away from ordered society, an association with powerful spells, and a vendetta against the beautiful and inclusive courtly heroine, Aurora. Keith Booker comments on this obvious use of character typing, describing her as '[yet] another in the string of evil females who together constitute the central villains in the Disney canon. Aided by an army of evil black birds, Maleficent…is the epitome of the threatening female.'[931] The scholar makes a valid point concerning the character's ornithological connotations: the raven is traditionally associated with the Morrígan, Morgan's primary analogue in the medieval saga, also appearing in *Snow White* as the familiar of the nameless Queen who transforms her appearance using demonic magic. Regarding *Snow White* more specifically, the anonymous Other might be linked with the Loathly Lady belonging to medieval narratives, for her guises signify two equally threatening aspects of womanhood. As Breuer notes: '[h]er transformation into the old hag with the tempting apple reconstructs her figure in a way that aligns it more

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[930] Frankel, Valerie Estelle (2014) *Women in Game of Thrones: Power, Conformity and Resistance.* McFarland: Jefferson. Pp.129-30.

[931] Booker, Keith M. (2010) *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films.* Praeger: Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford. P.28.

closely with medieval typology – it is if her moral character has been moved from the inside to the outside, the mask removed'.[932] The shapeshifter motif can also be found in the 1963 *Sword in the Stone.* Although, somewhat unusually, Morgan le Fay does not appear by name in the obviously Arthurian film, her role is realised by the aptly entitled 'Madam Mim', a forceful example of the 'renamed' Morgan. Not only does the character demonstrate a magic powerful enough to rival Merlin's, she conforms to traditional notions of the Loathly Lady by morphing from a dumpy hag into a youthful beauty. It is also no coincidence that Mim occupies a reclusive dwelling in the woods, which the Arthurian hero is made to enter *via* a passage of rock; in this case the young Arthur flies down her chimney.

Recalling Cooper's statement that 'the usage and understanding [motifs] changes over time, rather in the way that a word may change meaning',[933] contemporary culture has imposed upon the Other Woman's generic blueprint a series of 'accidental qualities' that reflect a modern interpretation of the subject matter. As Sklar notes, 'we have made Morgan our own in a rather interesting way':

> [I]n the process of transforming her from a virtual nonentity into a fictionally viable persona we have actually created two Morgans, both reflexes, I think, of the same cultural phenomenon: the Morgan of fantasy fiction, where feminist ideology accords her varying degrees of sympathy; and the Morgan of texts designed for mass audiences – films, comic books, and role-playing games – a Morgan who, as the very embodiment of evil dedicated to the subversion of all forms of governance, expresses the fears that inevitably accompany the sort of radical cultural change represented by social realities and ideological imperatives of escalating female empowerment during [the last] century.[934]

While she might be 'universal', our Morgan is clearly as different from Malory's as was his to Geoffrey of Monmouth's; we have reinterpreted the definition of the female Other in accordance with our own cultural ideologies. Although gender polarity may still exist in twenty-first-century society, with various studies and statistics pointing to women occupying a more obviously marginal role than men, the increasingly blurred lines of

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[932] Breuer, Heidi (2009) *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England.* Routledge: New York. P.97.

[933] Cooper, Helen (2004) *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare.* Oxford University Press: Oxford. P.4

[934] Sklar, Elizabeth S. (1992) 'Thoroughly Modern Morgan: Morgan le Fay in Twentieth-Century Popular Arthuriana' in Sally Slocum (ed) *Popular Arthurian Traditions.* Bowling Green University Popular Press: Bowling Green. Pp.24-35 (25).

what constitutes Otherness give contemporary re-interpretations of Morgan le Fay a voice that is infrequently found in the medieval accounts. In Nancy Springer's *I am Morgan le Fay,* for instance, Morgan may still be constrained by 'cultural ideologies concerning the roles of women'[935] but is also provided with an authoritative first-person voice from which to tell her story. Arguably reflecting a more contemporary Otherness relevant to Springer's intended young-person audience, Morgan is here presented as 'a young woman struggling to choose between two paths of magic, to form her own identity with both help and hindrance from those around her.'[936]

By providing a comprehensive study of Morgan's multiplynamed forms, this thesis has addressed numerous issues including the scholarly confusion surrounding the character's various guises, Morgan's interrelation with literary figures belonging to the same 'type', and several factors relating to medieval theories of writing. The result of this is, I hope, a series of methodologies that might be put to use in other contexts, not only relating to the use of medieval semiotics in literature, but also gender based studies concerned with the idea of a universal Other. Although contemporary gender ideologies may have begun to redefine notions of the generic character, the Otherness imposed upon the female sex for several millennia provides an affirmative answer to Allison Weir's question of '[whether there is] an essential Woman as Other behind the masculine projections of otherness'.[937] Because of this, any examination of the character type to which Morgan belongs should acknowledge a view of the outsider Woman as an 'essential' identity. Rather than utilising contemporary theories concerning female dichotomy, allusions to Haggard's *She* and limited notions of the *femme fatale* (all of which have the potential to restrict and alienate subgroups of the outsider woman), using medieval theories to open the boundaries of what we consider to be 'Morganic' allows for a study of the character in not one, but all of her manifestations. For the purposes of my thesis, this has not only substantiated what appear to be the gaping holes in Morgan's persona but has also, by exploring the semiotic elements of her character formulation, resulted in developing her conception as a 'synthetic phantasm'. Ultimately, when we speak of the universal character that is Morgan le Fay, we are not referring not to Geoffrey of Monmouth's character, or Malory's, or even our own: we speak instead of Morgan le Fay *and Other Women.*

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[935] Hebert, P.138.
[936] Hebert, P.142.
[937] Weir, Allison (1996) *Sacrificial Logics: Feminist Theory and the Critique of Identity.* Routledge: New York and Abingdon. P.94.

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