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ARTICOLI

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Danille Régnier-Bohler opens the preface to the Bouquins translation and compilation of Arthurian prose narratives with an often-cited *exemplum* by Caesarius of Heisterbach regarding disinterested monks supposed to be listening to a sermon by their Abbot[1]. In order to wake up his dozing brethren, the abbot announces: «Listen brothers! I will now to tell you a story about Arthur!» Of course, everyone wakes up and hangs onto his every word, to which the Abbot dresses them down for being interested only in frivolous words and sleeping through a sermon which could save their souls[2]. This story brings to mind a similar instance in an early thirteenth-century pious narrative: the story tells of a lovelorn man ready to renounce God and all the saints to win favour with the devil and his *inamorata*; however, he will not renounce the Virgin Mary, so the black magic will not be successful. The Virgin ultimately rewards the man for his loyalty and the audience is taught an important spiritual lesson: only a fool is interested in worldly riches and ignores the will of God. Such a fool can wait with the Britons for the return of King Arthur, an entirely futile wait since Arthur will never return[3]. The Britons were waiting for a mythical, un-dead Arthur to return, whereas the context of a pious narrative is one of preparing for the certain coming of the real and immortal Christ. It may seem slightly incongruous to wait simultaneously for the return of two messianic heroes – Arthur and Christ – although the English/Anglo-Normans could occasionally square that circle[4]. My interest lies

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(1) *La Légende Arthurienne. Le Graal et la Table Ronde*, ed. D. Régnier-Bohler et al., Paris, Bouquins-Laffont, 1989.

(2) «In sollemnitate quadam cum Abbas Gevardus praedecessor huius, qui nunc est, verbum exhortationis in Capitulo ad nos faceret, et plures, maxime de conversis, dormitare, nonnullos etiam stertere conspiceret, exclamavit: Audite, fratres, audite, rem vobis novam et magnam proponam. Rex quidam fuit, qui Artus vocabatur. Hoc dicto, non processit, sed ait: Videte, fratres, miseriam magnam. Quando locutus sum de Deo, dormitastis; mox ut verba levitatis inserui, evigilantes erectis auribus omnes auscultare coepistis. Ego eidem sermoni interfui. Non solum personas spirituales, sed et saeculares diabolus per somnolentiam tentat et impedit», C. of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. J. Strange, Köln / Bonn, Hebeele, 1851, I, 4: Capitulum 36: *De domino Gevardo Abbate, qui monachos in sermone dormitantes per fabulam Arcturi excitavit*, p. 205. Jeanine Horowitz and Sophia Menache note that this was not an invention of the early thirteenth century: «la ruse est ancienne, antique même. Démosthènes reprochait la même légèreté à ses concitoyens», in *L’Humour en chaire: Le rire dans l’église médiévale*, «Histoire et Société», 28, Genève, Labor et Fides, 1994, p. 111. See also J. Berlioz, *L’auditoire des prédicateurs dans la littérature des “exempla” (*XIII^{e}-XIV^{e} *siècles)*, «Medioevo e Rinascimento», 3, 1989, pp. 125-158 (p. 142, n. 48), and J. de Vitriaco, *The Exempla, or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. T. F. Crane, New York, Franklin, 1971; orig. 1890, p. XLII.

(3) «De fol avoir a grant talent/ cil ki s’afole a escïent;/ et ki son preu ne veult entendre,/ avec les Bretons puet atendre/ Artur, qui ja mes ne vendra», in *La Vie des Pères*, ed. F. Lecoy, 3 vols., Paris, Société des Anciens Texts Français, 1987, 1999, I, *Renieur*, vv. 1195-1199.

(4) In England, the most obvious example is late in the medieval period, the naming of Henry VII’s eldest son, Arthur. This was in deference to the belief in political prophecies (based ultimately on Geoffrey of Monmouth) that there would be a great ruler at the end of the world who would reunite all Britain, become Holy Roman Emperor, rule the world, win back the Holy Places, become a ‘secular saint’ in Heaven, and be King of England, of course. The politicisation of the Arthurian story

in exploring similar onomastic allusions in a body of short pious, moralising and comic Old French texts, composed broadly in the thirteenth century, by which time a large Arthurian *dramatis personae* and topography had been established[5]. The validity of this approach is further underpinned by Norris Lacy noting the «militantly religious flavour» of the *Perlesvaus*, and an «uncompromising moralistic rigour» of the Post-Vulgate cycle[6]. It would appear logical to assume that, by the first third of the thirteenth century (and then beyond), there might be a rich Arthurian seam running through courtly and clerical circles, strong enough to find echoes in the apparently incongruous contexts and intertexts of my pious and comic corpus[7]. The following pages offer evidence that, on a strictly onomastic level, this may not be the case.

My intention is not to challenge or expand the Arthurian canon, or to offer a catalogue of Arthurian onomastic allusions in all Old French short narratives. Rather, I seek to supplement what Arthurian scholars (and many enthusiasts) doubtless already know: that Arthurian names occur, though infrequently, in narrative texts which are not themselves Arthurian in theme or subject. It is common knowledge that the troubadours mention Tristan, Iseut, Arthur and Gawain with relatively frequency. Such texts also occasionally mention Erec, Merlin, Lancelot, Yvain, Kay, et al., but are specifically excluded from my corpus of pious and comic texts[8]. I aim to define a relatively tight corpus – one that is now the generally accepted 'grey' area of pious and comic *récits brefs*; generally accepted, but in part still somewhat neglected – in order to examine any Arthurian onomastics therein; and to examine in more detail one very interesting instance of the Arthurian onomastic world co-existing with that of Christian proselytising. The purpose of this essay is to offer a complement to the tools available for scholars interested in Arthurian, the use of names in the medieval world, and the confluence of cultures in Old French literary texts.

My corpus is broadly speaking the ten volume *Nouveau Recueuil Complet des Fabliaux* (mostly thirteenth-century, henceforth *NRCF*); Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles*

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has recently come to head again in United Kingdom due to an article in the «Daily Telegraph» by P. Allen, (*King Arthur is Propaganda, say French*, 30/06/2008), a polemical editorial in the same edition, and subsequent replies by, amongst others, Elizabeth Archibald. One clear example of the political power of Arthurian literature is the Anglo-Norman *Roman de Waldef*, composed *c.* 1200-1210, and which «acknowledges the linguistic displacement of the English past as a result of the Norman conquest and the change in language, but is confident that this past can be recovered through translation» (i.e. this could be an assertion of the links between Anglo-Norman and English cultures), see C. Weinberg, *Victor and Victim: a View of the Anglo-Saxon past in Layamon's 'Brut'*, in *Literary Appropriations of the Anglo-Saxons from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. D. Scragg and C. Weinberg, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 22-38 (pp. 34-35, n. 32). See also R. Field, *What's in a Name? Arthurian Name-Dropping in the "Roman de Waldef"* in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P.J.C. Field*, ed. B. Wheeler, «Arthurian Studies», 57, Cambridge, Brewer, 2004, pp. 63-74, who argues that the use of Arthurian names in *Waldef* might represent an intentionally negative reaction to the Matter of Britain.

(5) «Entre les années 1170, date des premiers romans de Chrétien de Troyes, et les années 1240, date où sont achevés les grands cycles en prose, la littérature arthurienne de langue française met en scène un très grand nombre de personnages, quelques-uns déjà mentionnés par les textes antérieurs [...] et d'autres, beaucoup plus nombreux, créés par l'imagination des trois ou quatre générations de poètes qui se sont succédé entre ces deux dates», M. Pastoureau, *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, La Thuile, Haute-Savoie, Éditions du Gui, 2006, p. 5. Pastoureau goes on to note (p. 15): «En France, vers 1250, après l'achèvement des grands ensembles en prose [...] le corpus français de l'anthroponymie arthurienne est presque définitivement constitué».

(6) N. J. Lacy and G. Ashe, *The Arthurian Handbook*, New York / London, Garland 1988, pp. 87-92.

(7) R. Trachsler reminded colleagues of the importance of proper names in chronicles and Arthurian romance in his paper, *De Stonehenge à Salisbury. De la chronique au roman*, delivered at the 22nd International Congress of the International Arthurian Society, Rennes, 2008.

(8) The fact that these onomastic allusions are common knowledge indicates that what is required is a tighter, rather than broader, corpus.

de Nostre Dame (henceforth *MND*); the forty-one pious tales comprising the first *Vie des Pères* (both around 1220-1230, henceforth *VdP*); a number of individual pieces; and the much earlier *Gracial*, a collection of Virgin Miracles composed and translated by the Anglo-Norman monk Adgar in the second-half of the twelfth century[9]. This is not an insubstantial body of material, one which should offer an interesting snapshot. Arthurian material examined is in the main the verse narratives. Logic might have it that the most popular characters or names of contemporary courtly literature would equally have some part in the reflection of courtly and clerical culture found in comic and pious material. My purpose therefore is to concentrate on tangible Arthurian names occurring in my corpus[10].

Themes, motifs and names

There is little need to study shared themes and motifs, which are hardly difficult to locate[11]. Two simple examples reveal just to what extent thematic intertexts and intersections occur. First, just as Yseut's maid servant Brengain takes her mistress' place in the wedding bed with King Marc, so too does the cousin of the heroin of *Sénéchal* (*VdP*, vv. 12596-13297) – although the reasons for the queen's non-virginity in the *VdP* story, also unfortunate, are very different (she has effectively been raped)[12]. This

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(9) W. Noomen and N. van den Boogaard, *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, 10 vols., Assen, Van Gorcum, 1983-1998; G. de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame,* ed. V. F. Koenig, 4 vols., Genève, Droz, 1955-1970; *La Vie des Pères*, ed. Lecoy, I-II (that is the first *VdP*; there were two continuations which do not concern us, dating from perhaps 50 years as the primitive text. These are largely Virgin miracles, and were published by Leccoy as vol. III; Adgar, *Le Gracial*, ed. P. Kunstmann, Ottawa, Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1982. Other texts include *Le Chevalier au barisel. Conte pieux du* XVIIIe *siècle*, ed. F. Lecoy, «Classiques Français du Moyen Âge», 82, Paris, Champion, 1955; L. Karl, *La légende de L'Ermite et le jongleur*, «Revue des Langues Romanes», 63, 1925, pp. 110-141; *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, ed. P. Bretel, Paris, Champion, 2003; and H. Kjellman, *La Deuxième Collection Anglo-Normande des Miracles de la Sainte Vierge et son original Latin*, Paris and Uppsala, 1922. *Exempla* were checked using only F. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, «FF Communications», 204, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981; J. Berlioz et M. A. Polo de Beaulieu, *Les Exempla médiévaux*, Carcassonne, Garae / Hésiode, 1992; and A. Lecoy de la Marche and J. Berlioz, *Le Rire du prédicateur*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1999. I have also consulted J. Morawski, *Proverbes français antérieurs au* XVe *siècle*, «Classiques Français du Moyen Âge», 47, Paris, Champion, 1925.

(10) This essay does not aim for exhaustivity since exclamations to the saints, place names used solely to give location, vague references to antiquity, etc., seem insignificant in most cases.

(11) A brief perusal of E. H. Ruck, *An Index of Themes and Motifs in Twelfth-Century French Arthurian Poetry*, Cambridge, Brewer, 1991, is sufficient to confirm the 'courtliness' of both Gautier de Coinci and the author of *VdP*. Two recent articles provide compelling concrete evidence: R. Trachsler, *Uncourtly Texts in Courtly Books: Observations on MS Chantilly, Musée Condé 475* in *Courtly Arts and the Art of Courtliness,* ed. K. Busby and C. Kleinhenz, Cambridge, Brewer, 2006, pp. 679-692; and P. Kunstmann, *L'Annominatio chez Gautier: vocabulaire et syntaxe*, in *Gautier de Coinci, Les Miracles de Nostre Dame: Miracles, Manuscripts, Music*, ed. A. Stones and K. M. Krause, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, pp. 102-112. The courtly parody in *La Demoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre* (*NRCF*, 4/26) (unambiguous intertextual echoes of Chrétien's *Yvain* and *Perceval*) has been analysed by K. Busby, *Courtly Literature and the Fabliaux: some Instances of Parody*, «Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie», 102, 1986, pp. 67-87; and R. J. Pearcy, *Intertextuality and La Demoisele qui n'ot parler de foutre qui n'aust mal au cuer*, «Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie», 109, 1993, pp. 526-538. In a later work, Busby shows plentiful codicological and thematic intertextualities regarding Arthurian material and short narratives, see K. Busby, *Codex and Context. Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, Faux-Titre, 2002, pp. 221-222, (see for example his discussion of *BnF*, MS f. fr. 12603 on pages 435-436).

(12) *Sénéchal* is a popular legend (cfr. Tubach, 4023) which has for its central themes lust, loyalty and justice. A. H. Krappe notes that the tale in its existing form does not date from before the thirteenth century, although the legend was in circulation earlier: «Il est à supposer qu'il y avait, sur le continent européen, une forme latine du conte [...] qui fût l'archétype de toutes les versions occi-

motif is the property neither of pious nor Arthurian tradition, simply a shared part of the collective medieval cultural landscape. In the comic world, a second example can be drawn from the fabliau of *Le Pescheur de Pont seur Saine* (*NRCF*, 4/28); indeed, with a little creative thinking, this fabliau may provide evidence that this *fableor* at least knew Arthurian material well[13]. It is not reaching too far to see in this tale is a parody or comic analogue of the Excalibur story, providing us with a sort of surrogate the Excalibur penis which would have surely pressed all the right sort of buttons in communal memory. A wife claims – obviously deviously – that she does not only love her husband for his penis. The husband tests this by cutting off the still erect member of a dead priest he finds floating in the river. When he shows the penis to his wife, claiming it to be his, she prepares to disown him. It is only when she discovers his hard prick in his breeches that she once again showers him with affection. The *fableor* does not go all the way: the penis is not named, and although this may have been a neat addition to his story, the lack of a name is unsurprising[14]. This is a comic tradition whose *dramatis personae* remain largely anonymous and whose audience were frequently invited to draw their own moral conclusions and make their own folkloric, textual, cultural links (and presumably delighted in doing so)[15].

Although it is easy to find common Arthurian themes and motifs beyond the canon, in many cases this has limited value: Arthurian literature borrowed and inherited much from the same culture(s) as moralising, pious texts and comic texts. There is every reason to presume that a sophisticated medieval audience might at times have been alive to Arthurian borrowings, skits or effects. Might an actual name have 'woken up' a reader or audience of vernacular short pious or comic narratives, in the way suggested by Caesarius of Heisterbach in his *exemplum*? Might an author have been aware of such a need[16]? To answer these questions inevitably involves speculation. Still, Arthur was hardly unknown in monastic and clerical circles from the very earliest moments[17]; even our earlier authors would have been aware of the Matter of Britain. Writers of fabliaux had extra leeway and many consciously exploited inter-

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dentals», see *La fille de l'homme riche*, «Byzantion», 17, 1944-1945, pp. 339-346 (p. 342). It is clear to see why this tale of adventure, double-crossing and vengeance should be popular. The author of the first *VdP* successfully manages to harness the various elements which constitute the narrative (the folk-tale aspects of the hunt, weather, paths and a castle by a river; the romance motifs of swapping beds, an evil seneschal and his bad advice, and a background of powerful barons needing to be listened to; and the almost *fablialesque* action scenes of the various murders) without it losing its hagiographical, pious nature. For a résumé of the tale and some sources and parallels, see A. P. Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue: the First Old French Vie des Pères*, preface by M. Zink, Amsterdam-New York, Rodopi, Faux Titre 253, 2005, pp. 300-316. Cfr. in the comic tradition, *La dame qui se venja du chevalier* (*NRCF*, 7/82).

(13) This fits well with the very tentative date of composition proposed by the editors of the *NRCF*, i.e. second half of the thirteenth century (p. 110). The fabliau is anonymous.

(14) On the other hand, any search for Arthurian names might expect to be a very fruitful in the fabliaux, in that there are so many parodies of contemporary life.

(15) The joke of the surrogate Excalibur/penis can perhaps be taken even further: as part of the staging of the motif of the Lady at the Fountain in Arthurian romance it is generally the lady who seduces the knight. What we have in this fabliau is a complete inversion of that theme: the husband is very easily able to seduce his wife with a floating dead priest's penis hacked off in order to make the ruse successful.

(16) The questions are certainly valid. In another field, Keith Busby has plausibly suggested that some manuscripts had recourse to «sugaring the pill» by spicing up the *tituli* announcing pious and moralising material. See Busby, *Codex and Context*, p. 202.

(17) Alan Lupack reminds us that Arthur is a character in a number of eleventh- and twelfth-century Saints' Lives and that the picture of Arthur which emerges «is sometimes at odds with the heroic image found in many of the Chronicles and romances». Occasionally episodes are not conventional and «sometimes portray Arthur as in opposition to the saint or the Church or as a foil to reveal the power of God working through the saint». See A. Lupack, *The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 22-23.

textualities with consummate ease. Writers of pious material unashamedly calqued popular texts and traditions. Quite what sort of 'shock value' (if any) Arthurian onomastics may have had in courtly and clerical circles of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries is open to investigation.

Tristan and Yseut

Somewhat predictably, there are many similarities and crossovers between the names and places forming the topographical backdrop to the various narrative worlds: Rome, Lombardy, Egypt, France, England, Jerusalem and Paris (amongst many others) are variously cited as distant places, destinations or the homes of characters. Few of these shared geographical allusions are specifically Arthurian. Derek West was right to warn, in the first part of his *Index of Proper Names*: «It should be remembered […] that the appearance in a text of a name is no certain guarantee that this name has any relevance to the story. This is especially true of place names: a poet striving to give emphasis to a turn of phrase, or to create an effective expression, will suddenly introduce a particular name the selection of which seems to have been determined largely by the demands of rhyme»[18]. As far as the proper names of characters are concerned, there is also a variety of common figures, ranging from Pépin, Ovid and Paris to Renart and Roland. At times there are obvious uses of popular names in different contexts: for example, there are a number of identifiable and mixed Arthurian characters named Robert; in the fabliaux (and in one pious tale), this is practically a joke name; there is evidently no connection to be drawn for our purposes[19]. Equally, the same prophets and saints are frequently invoked, and there is no lack of appealing to or swearing by God or the Virgin[20]. Familiar romance, epic and spiritual people and places abound, therefore, but there is also the occasional use of specifically Arthurian onomastics.

Referring to Arthur in a pious context in France in the first third of the thirteenth century appears to invite a relatively unproblematic reading. For his part, Gautier de Coinci, the Benedictine Prior of Vic-sur-Aisne, was certainly not unused to borrowing from pre-existing vernacular and profane traditions. Ardis Butterfield has indicated how Gautier freely appropriates secular models to serve his purpose, noting how «his work conforms as much as it rejects courtly secular values [...] His tactic is the old ecclesiastical trick of using the very forms of lewd entertainment as the material for his own spiritual performance»[21]. Although Arthurian material may

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(18) G. Derek West, *An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Verse Romances 1150-1300*, University of Toronto «Romance Series», 55, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1969, p. xiii. I have also found of (limited) use L.-F. Flutre, *Table de noms propres avec toutes leurs variantes figurant dans les Romans du Moyen Âge*, Poitiers, CESCM, 1962. In order to limit this research to manageable proportions, I have tended to limit myself to the verse Arthurian texts.

(19) The pious tale is *Renieur* (*VdP*, vv. 1277-1278), which includes a proverbial saying «Qar .ii. Gautiers por un Robert/ treuve cele ki le sien pert».

(20) For invocations to the saints in the fabliaux, see A. Cobby, *Saint Amadour et sainte Afflise: Calling upon the Saints in the Fabliaux*, in *Grant risee? The Medieval Comic Presence/ La Présence comique médiévale*, ed. A. P. Tudor and A. Hindley, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, pp. 173-191.

(21) A. Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France from Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 105. Koenig made a similar point when noting that «Bien qu'à maintes reprises Gautier exprime son mépris de la littérature profane, on est en droit de douter un peu de sa sincérité à cet égard; car il montre nettement qu'il connaissait trop bien cette littérature pour n'en avoir pas fait ses délices» (*Miracles de Nostre Dame*, p. xxxiii). B. J. Levy pointed out the many similarities between Gautier's work and fabliau narratives in *Or escoutez une merveille! Parallel Paths: Gautier de Coinci and the Fabliaux*, in *Gautier de Coinci*, ed. Stones and Krause, pp. 331-343.

not in our minds quite equate to «lewd entertainment», its Christianization was (and perhaps remains) far from complete. In the extremely popular miracle of Empress of Rome who is coveted by her brother-in-law and subsequently suffers any number of undeserved misfortunes, only to be saved by the Virgin Mary (*MND,* II Mir. 9), there is an interesting mention of Tristan, one of the paragons of medieval love tradition[22]. Gautier employs Tristan's name in an extremely negative context: the Empress has already been described as a «sainte fame» (v. 205), and her sanctity will constantly be recalled and amply illustrated throughout the miracle story. Therefore, when her brother-in-law makes improper advances towards her, using Tristan and Yseut and Pyramus and Thisbe as examples of how rotten he feels without her love (vv. 300-303) we instantly learn that the brother-in-law is wholly lacking in *mesure*, understanding and respect. I am inclined to agree with Annette Garnier who posits that in this instance «l'évocation de Tristan consacre le caractère fatal et irréversible d'une défaite temporelle»[23]. He has lost control in an unwanted and destructive manner: the object of his passion is, in the context of Gautier's Virgin Miracle, a character that should remain above such worldly grubbiness. The brother-in-law's words are subversive, transgressing moral and social order: the comparison of his love to that felt by Tristan is emblematic of this. In the Tristan's story, the hero's love is certainly transgressive and subversive, but on a political rather than spiritual level: Tristan and Yseut may threaten to subvert social order, but the brother-in-law in Gautier's Miracle, by invoking these notorious names in his expression of wholly misplaced passion, openly threatens to subvert spiritual, Christian order. The absent emperor had explicitly placed his empire and his brother under the rule of his wife and God: the brother-in-law's act is consequently one of treason, not only political but also divine.

A second, if less obvious onomastic allusion to the Tristan legend in a pious *récit bref* is that of «Picous li folz». In the *VdP* an unjustly treated hermit is mocked with this name, «Picous» being also the name adopted by Tristan when feigning madness in the *Folie Tristan de Berne*. J. M. Telfer suggests (not especially convincingly) that the name might be connected with William Picol, one of King John's court fools. In the fabliau of *Le Prestre teint* (*NRCF*, 7/81), the possible variant «Picon» is the name of a not-quite-so-stupid husband[24]. Tentative or not, we retain an attachment to the Tristanian world.

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[22] S. Gaunt makes an interesting observation with regard to the Tristan legend, relevant to our purpose: «While it is likely that at least three full-length versions of the Tristan story in verse were composed in Old French in the period 1160-1180, only two survive and these only in fragmentary form, those of Thomas and Beroul. However, the existence of three other short texts relating episodes of the longer narrative (the two *Folies* and Marie de France's *Chevrefoil*), and also the rapid transposition of two of the longer texts into German attest to their albeit transitory popularity: in all likelihood, the earlier verse texts were regarded as obsolete once prose versions went into circulation in the thirteenth century, and unlike Chrétien's five contemporary canonical Arthurian romances, verse romances about Tristan seem not to have been deemed susceptible to compilation with a view to being subsumed to longer Arthurian mega-narratives (probably of course because Tristan and Iseult die, thereby giving a type of narrative closure that lends itself a lot less well to continuation)», *Martyrs to Love: Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 108. For his part, Pastereau notes that «de tous les héros mis en scène par la légende arthurienne, Tristan est le préféré du public médiéval», Pastereau, *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, p. 230.

[23] A. Garnier, *Mutations temporelles et cheminement spirituel: analyse et commentaire du Miracle de l'Empeeriis de Gautier de Coinci*, «Essais», 11, Paris, Champion, 1988, p. 30.

[24] *VdP*, *Ivresse* (v. 15499); in the *Folie Tristan de Berne* there are two instances of the name by which Tristan calls himself either Picous or Picolet (*La Folie Tristan de Berne*, vv. 156, 187 in *Les Deux poèmes de la Folie Tristan*, «Classiques Français du Moyen Âge», 116, Paris, Champion, 1994). J.M. Telfer's conclusion is dubious: «It seems to me most likely that it was the fool, William Picol, who was the historical character, the point of departure, for this name», in Id., *Picous, Folie Tristan de Berne*, line 156, «French Studies», 5, 1951, pp. 56-61 (p. 60).

In the comic (or mock moral) tradition, a few other Tristans materialize. The name pops up in what appears to be a proverbial saying in the fabliau *Sire Hain et Dame Anieuse* (*NRCF*, 2/5, vv. 321-323)[25]. The two protagonists, an eminently well-matched married couple, are in the middle of a fight: the wife falls into a basket giving her husband the upper hand. He tells her that she can now «chanter de Tristan». The context suggests that the expression «chanter de Tristan» means that «you can go on for all you want, I'm not going to help you». It is possible that this is a reference to the way that Tristan and Yseut's way of expressing love and passion for each other was inevitably through monologues and songs, since they spent so much time apart. However, it seems much more likely that «chanter de Tristan» – which I cannot find attested elsewhere – is just a variation on «chanter d'Ogier» ('to crow over one's victory'), «chanter de Bernart» ('to change one's tune'), or «parler d'autre Martin» ('to change the subject')[26]. In a further fabliau, *De la dame qui aveine demandoit pour morel sa provende avoir* (*NRCF*, 9/108)[27], Tristan and Yseut are again recalled (vv. 29-30) in a wholly uncourtly context: a wife's sexual appetite drives her husband to near impotence; he can only save the situation by defecating in her lap, an external stimulant that is anything but magical. In *Sire Hain et Dame Anieuse* and *De la dame qui aveine demandoit pour morel sa provende avoir*, allusions to Tristan are worldly, pithy, banal.

What appears to be emerging from these few occurrences of the name Tristan is a picture in which the two unfortunate lovers are exploited solely as an extreme point of comparison. This hypothesis, which is relatively uncontroversial, is further supported by the role assigned to the name of Yseut when used on its own. In the fabliau of *La Vieille Truande* (*NRCF*, 4/37, MS A v. 57) an old hag falls most inappropriately for a handsome squire[28]. Two romance/Arthurian characters are used to stress her passion for him, since (according to the hag) neither Blancheflor nor Yseult had loved anyone as much as she loves him...[29]!

Other Proper Names

If the names associated with the Tristan legend are used as references to extreme suffering, the same notion of «an extreme» obtains also for many other potentially Arthurian proper names. England, for example, plays a central role in Arthurian geography, but its use in my corpus is either incidental or comparative. It is either where the action occurs naturally – Adgar was, after all, Anglo-Norman, so it is hardly surprising to find England in his miracles 28, 31 and 42... – or is simply seen as a faraway place (Gautier, *MND*, II Mir 13-17 inclusive, *Estormi*, *NRCF*, 1/1, v. 208; *Le Vilain mire, NRCF*, 2/13, v. 131; Rutebeuf's *Frere Denise*, *NRCF*, 6/56, v. 208). In the pious story of a deserving pagan king baptised after death (*Païen*, *VdP*, v. 11453), England is used to explain the dictum that no one is a prophet in their own land. I find it difficult to read anything more into this: there appears to be no looser link to 'Britain' suggesting negativity along the lines of Caesarius of Heisterbach's *exemplum*. For the writers of my corpus, operating, broadly speaking, in northern France, «England» seems simply to suggest distance, just as the love of Tristan and Yseut implies passion. Similarly, Brittany is a distant land: the *Chavlier au Barisel*, dating from the turn of the thirteenth century, spells this out: the pious tale begins with the lines: «entre Normandie et Bretaigne/ en une terre mout estraigne,/ manoit jadis uns mout haus hom,/ ki mout estoit de grant renom» [between Normandy and Britanny/ in a distant land/ once lived a very noble man/ of great reputation] (vv. 1-4)[30]. The same can be said for Ireland («Vez vos ci le plus hardi home/ Qui soit d'Illande jusqu'a Rome» [«Behold the bravest man/ from Ireland to Rome»], Trubert, *NRCF*, 10/124, vv. 1954-1955) and Wales («N'a si fort hom jusque en Gales» [«There is no more sturdy man as far as Wales»], *Le Vilain au buffet*, *NRCF*, 5/52, vv. 174-75). There is a character in *La Bourse pleine de sens* (*NRCF*, 2/8, v. 418) called 'Jehan le Galois'; but then there is no reason not to be. In this context at least, the name carries no obvious subtext. Basically, these places – England, Ireland, Wales, Brittany – are used to highlight a man's strength or reputation, or even to provide a useful rhyme; I sense no underlying political or spiritual purpose in their use[31].

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[25] Authorship is uncertain; the editors of the *NRCF* tentatively suggest composition in the second half of the thirteenth century (p. 4).

[26] Cfr. however E. BAUMGARTNER, *The Parole amoureuse: Amorous Discourse in the Prose Tristan*, in *Tristan and Isolde: a Casebook*, ed. J. T. GRIMBERT, York-London, Garland, 1995, pp. 187-206 (esp. pp. 197-98). There is another noteworthy onomastic allusion in this fabliau: when the wife finds herself helplessly upended in the basket, her husband sneers: «tu es el paradis de Bertran» (v. 321). Might this be a reference to the same Bertran who discovers Cligès and Fenice together after the supposed death of the latter, and one of whose legs Cligès slashes off? This would give the expression as found in the fabliau a rather fitting meaning: «you are legless like Bertran», «you haven't got a leg to stand on», either of which would be literally and metaphorically correct in context. Naturally, I in no way discount the possibility that such interpretations might be nothing more than a twenty-first century flight of fancy.

[27] The fabliau is anonymous; according to the editors of the *NRCF* it may be one of the later fabliaux (pp. 185-186).

[28] The fabliau is anonymous; the editors of the *NRCF* plump for a date around the middle of the thirteenth century (p. 317).

[29] «[…] ainc Blanceflor n'Iseus la Blonde,/ […]/ N'ama onques si tost nului/ Com ele fist tantost celui» (critical edition, vv. 57-64, p. 340; «[…] onques Tristans Yesut la blonde/ […]/ N'ama onques si fort nului/ Comme ele fist tantost celui» (diplomatic text, my capitals, MS A, vv. 57-60, p. 322).

To recap: so far, the name Arthur is found in an interesting but hardly pioneering (and minor) role in one pious tale; Tristan and Yseut are used by authors of pious stories and comic fabliaux as an extreme point of comparison; and some place names strongly associated with the Arthurian legend appear to be used in entirely unrelated contexts, but fulfilling, essentially, a similar role to that of Tristan and Yseut. What of the other major Arthurian figures and places?

Gauvain, the model of Arthurian courtliness, is present in the conclusion to the fabliau of *Le Pescheor de Pont seur Saine* (*NRCF*, 4/28, vv. 205-206). Here, his name is used to explain that women are so made that even chivalric virtues equal to those of Gauvain are worth less to them than sexual prowess. A great Arthurian hero is again reduced to a mere point of comparison, and in a mocking context at that. A slight step sideways away from my relatively tightly defined corpus we also encounter Gauvain in *Courtois d'Arras*, an early Old French drama which may equally have been performed as a dramatic monologue[32]. Pourette, a woman of ill repute,

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(30) Decades earlier, Adgar had written that King William of England was afraid of no one, including «Bretuns», with the exception of the Danes whom he suspected were liable to invade at any minute (Miracle 31, v. 5). Brittany equally appears as part of an incidental line in *Estormi*. The rather daft *Estormi* has been duped into burying the bodies of three priests killed by his uncle, although he believes there only to be one dead body: each time he sees the new corpse he thinks this to be the devil playing with him. So, while burying the second corpse (or in his mind, the only one for the second time) vows to place it very deep in the ground. In doing so, he swears by the Saints of England, France and Brittany that the priest will not come back today (vv. 408-411).

(31) This comment requires a caveat, notwithstanding: given that we are all dealing with largely anonymous material, and given the distance between the texts and ourselves, it is simply not possible to know if a greater symbolic meaning was given to these names in the context of composition, ownership and/or reading.

(32) *Courtois d'Arras, jeu du* XIII^{e} *siècle*, ed. E. Faral, «Classiques Français du Moyen Âge», 3, Paris, Champion 191; many reprintings. Cfr. V. Le Clerc, *Fabliaux*, *Histoire littéraire de la France*, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1856, pp. 69-215, (esp. pp. 70-71); G. Frank, *The Beginnings of Comedy in France*, «Modern Language Review», 31, 1936, pp. 377-

exclaims sarcastically upon encountering the unworldly boy named Courtois: «Ore, pute, de l'enivrer / car nous avons trové Gauvain!» [«Now bitch, get him drunk! we've found/ Sir Galahad upon a stick»[33]] (vv. 246-247). This allusion again clearly linked to the Arthurian character's nickname, the 'chevalier aux demoiselles', where ladies fall in love with him simply through his reputation.

Merlin / Merlot

One remarkable short narrative which intentionally places a principal Arthurian character centre stage is today often referred to as *Merlot* (*VdP*, vv. 18258-18855). Copied in some manuscripts as *Le Vilain asnier*, this is the final tale of the first *VdP* and is known in a number of versions[34] . It provides evidence of God's generosity and man's spiritual and charitable duty. A needy peasant has a wife, daughter and son to support. One especially harsh winter he bemoans his lot. Suddenly, from behind a bush, a voice asks him to explain his tears. The voice identifies itself as Merlin, preaches the love of Christ, tells the peasant where he will find hidden treasure and commands him to return to that very spot in a year's time. Acting on this advice, the family soon becomes well-off. A year later, the peasant returns to the forest, now addressing Merlin as «Sire Mellin» as opposed to «Biax dous sire». Although his family is comfortable, he would like a higher station in life. This is duly promised and once again he is enjoined to remember charitable works and return in a year's time. The peasant is subsequently made provost, but no longer thinks of doing good and lives only for pride and riches. Again, at the end of the year, he returns to the forest and requests Merlin – now addressed simply as «Mellin», with no honorific – that his daughter marry the Provost of Aquileia. He also asks for a bishopric for his son. This again is granted; a mild warning regarding his behaviour is given, and the next rendezvous is set for a year's time. As the peasant becomes increasingly obsessed with worldly fortune and power, he does not act as should a good Christian. At the next meeting with Merlin he decides that he no longer needs the support of his benefactor and insultingly addresses him simply as «Mellot». This is too much for an enraged Merlin: he pronounces terrible vengeance. First the *nouveau riche* peasant's daughter dies, then his son. Next he has his lands and riches confiscated and his office stripped from him. He is eventually forced to spend the rest of his life in a situation worse than that in which he found himself at the beginning of the narrative.

This eschatological parable based on a pre-existing *exemplum* (Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 3650) feeds off the increasingly complex nature of Merlin, who here is judge and jury[35]. Contemporary to the composition of the *VdP* story, the *Estoire de*

384; L. Kovács, *The Dramatisation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Catalan and European Sixteenth Century Drama*, in *Mainte belle oeuvre faicte. Études sur le théâtre médiéval offertes à Graham A. Runnalls*, ed. D. Hüe, M. Longtin and L. Muir, Orléans, Paradigme, 2005, pp. 265-288.

(33) Translation by J. DuVal in *From Adam to Adam: Seven Old French Plays*, Asheville, NC, 2004, p. 92.

(34) For an interesting reading of this tale alongside the fabliau of the same name, see John F. Levy, *Le Vilain asnier: a perfect little exemplum*, «Reinardus», 19, 2006, pp. 107-127. J. R. Simpson offered an important discussion of this tale at the Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, May 2010. Simpson's text is shortly to be published as *Voice, Verse and Spirituality: Form, Re-Expression and Identity in Merlin Mellot*, in *The Other Within: Imposing, Imposed and Self-Imposed Identities in Old French Narrative*, ed. by A. P. Tudor and K. L. Burr.

(35) The first mention of Merlin by name was Geoffrey of Monmouth (*c.* 1036). By the time of the composition of *Merlot* (first third of the thirteenth century), the name had consequently already been in written circulation for almost a hundred years. It may be that we should not be surprised to find Merlin as such a pivotal figure in a pious context, given that he was to be found in all sorts of unexpected places throughout the medieval period. For example, S. N. Rosenberg discovers that the Merlin

Merlin (c. 1215-1235) recounts how the devils who plot to bring an antichrist into the world at one point destroy the livestock of a wealthy man, kill his son, and cause his wife to take her own life. When the man grows ill from grief and dies, one of his daughters is impregnated by an incubus as she sleeps, and baptizes her son Merlin as soon as he is born; this frustrates the devils' plan to make him a servant of evil. There are some similarities here suggesting at least some cultural common source, and more importantly there are clear indications of the various roles which might be played by Merlin in Arthurian literature. In *Merlot*, we witness Merlin as a prophet, a magician-cum-miracle worker, an adviser, and the mouthpiece of the divine. He is an invisible, somewhat mysterious character who provides warnings, grants wishes, and wreaks terrible punishment. There is an unambiguous moral message: pride in riches is misplaced and worthless. Regardless of one's standing, the heart and the purse should always be placed at God's service. Although set *jadis* (v. 18320) the tale is one of contemporary hardship and values. This Merlin figure is an agent of the Divine, in a position to teach a sinner a terrible lesson but still offer him the potential to save his soul. This is Merlin as the narrative sword of Christ, the literary preacher par excellence.

Another important extratextual allusion in *Merlot* is found early in the narrative, before Merlin makes his first appearance: Roland, the epic Matter of France hero (Charlemagne's strength) precedes the entry of the romance Matter of Britain (Arthur's strength)[36]. All of this serves to accentuate the secular nature of *jadis*. In *Merlot* 'long ago' is obviously not the distant time of the Desert Fathers, contrary to the indications found in some other *VdP* tales. Rather, thanks to the centrality of the character Merlin, this is a more secular legendary past which cannot wholly be divorced from the timescape of Arthurian legend. Might this centrality of an Arthurian, named character simply be a device enabling the author (of a pious tale, let us remember) to create a setting which would have been instantly attractive – and in medieval terms more 'immediate' – to his audience?

The emergence of Merlin's disembodied voice in our tale has not only Arthurian but also clear Biblical echoes. Merlin offers earthly salvation to the peasant but in return the peasant does have a duty to do charity with his promised wealth: this is part of the 'deal'[37]. Another fundamentally interrelated part of the 'deal' becomes apparent as the annual meetings take place: respect and due reverence for the divine is necessary, even as a man's position in life improves. There is an implicit agreement made between the two parties, the breaking of which will warrant the peasant's severe punishment on both feudal and religious grounds. Merlin is fully justified in withdrawing his aid once the agreement has been violated: he gives warnings at various stages in the narrative, none of which is insisted upon and all of which are ignored. Nonetheless, the severity of his vengeance comes as a surprise in what Michel Zink has labelled a «poésie de conversion»[38].

Merlin's role in the *Vie des Pères* is very similar to how Robert de Boron's *Merlin* functions. In Robert's text the character acts as the prophet of the Holy Grail, a motif explicitly implying the mingling of pre-Christian and Christian elements (an aspect

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unexpectedly encountered with some frequency in lyric poetry tends to be a wise authority figure, a great prophet, a character serving in the main to uphold intellectual power or used as a means to channel rebuke. See *Merlin in Medieval French Lyric Poetry*, «Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations», 1, 4, 1991, pp. 1-18.

(36) «Ains somes nice et orgueillous,/ sorcuidié, fel et desdaignous,/ et cuidons bien par nos bobans/ valoir mez que ne fist Rolans», (vv. 18276-18279).

(37) «Que toz jorz mes riches seroies,/ se tu de cuer servir voloies/ Jhesucrist et sa povre gent», (vv. 18434-18436).

(38) M. Zink, *Poésie et conversion au Moyen Âge*, «Perspectives Littéraires», Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2003.

of the Arthurian legend which has been well studied)[39]. The identification of Merlin with divine powers is hardly an invention of the author of the *VdP*, nor for that matter Robert de Boron[40]. Alexandre Micha has pointed out a number of compelling similarities between the figures of Christ and Merlin, all of which were in circulation by the turn of the thirteenth century, before the composition of our short pious narrative. The author of *Merlot* was able to draw upon an established and fashionable tradition. In Micha's words: «sa mission politique est subordonnée à sa mission religieuse qui donne sa véritable dimension au personnage»[41]. Robert himself makes it clear that Merlin has been chosen by God for his mission[42]. For Micha, Merlin is «homme de Dieu, prophète, inspirateur des rois, génie tutélaire du royaume, conscience sensible au péché»[43]. Bernard Cerquiglini concurs: «Merlin, dont la naissance est parallèle à celle du Christ, et qui dispose du passé comme de l'avenir, prêche une nouvelle révélation, un nouvel Evangile, celui du Graal»[44]. It ought therefore to be noted that Merlin's role in *Merlot* is entirely in keeping with one of those assigned to the same character in contemporary Arthurian romance. The choice of Merlin's voice, as opposed to «a heavenly voice» or «the Virgin's voice» was, it can be posited, made out of the spiritual author's ardent desire to keep the audience's attention; he perhaps also wanted to show off a little.

Each of Merlin's prophecies in the *Vie des Pères* prove accurate, so there is no reason for doubt when he announces, in quasi-Biblical terms: «vilains ies et vilains seras/ et a ton labor revendras» [«A peasant you were and a peasant you will be again/ and you will return to your labours»] (vv. 18760-18761, cfr. Genesis 3,19: *in sudore vultus tui vesceris pane donec revertaris in terram de qua sumptus es quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris*). The peasant himself had complained that Fortune had not favoured him (v. 18396) and now, after Fortune has indeed smiled on him, Merlin returns to those very words to insist that Fortune's wheel will turn once more (v. 18769). These prophetic words are not heeded and, in the manner of the previous warnings, even the deaths of his children will not be interpreted correctly by the peasant. There are two aspects to Merlin's indignity: the peasant ignoring his Christian duty of charity, and the increasingly ill-mannered way in which he addresses his benefactor. The peasant begins by addressing Merlin as *vous* and uses honorifics of decreasing value: «biax douz sire» (v. 18428), «mes sire Mellin» (v. 18448), «sire Mellin» (v. 18550). At this point the vainglorious peasant switches to *tu* and addresses Merlin as «Mellin» (v. 18603) and «Mellot» (v. 18698). The peasant's lack of respect as exemplified in his increasingly offhand choice of address offers a contrast with his increasing wealth and worldly status: this chiasmus is a neat (if obvious) device employed to describe his spiritual downfall[45]. It shows that the author of the *Vie des Pères* clearly understands the power of names. It also reflects a variety of pre-established character traits assigned to the figure of Merlin.

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(39) For example, see P. Zumthor, *Merlin le Prophète. Un thème de la littérature polémique, de l'historiographie et des romans*, Genève, Slatkine, 1973.

(40) «Déjà Geoffroy [of Monmouth] et Wace ménageaient discrètement certaines harmoniques avec les récits évangéliques. De ce fait Robert a pris pleine conscience et il a poussé plus loin les analogies [between Merlin and Christ], en puisant parfois dans l'*Evangile apocryphe de l'Enfance*. On peut aisément suivre cette vie de Jésus-Merlin», A. Micha, *Étude sur le Merlin de Robert de Boron*, Genève, Droz, 1980, p. 180.

(41) Micha, *Étude sur le Merlin*, p. 185.

(42) «Diex m'a esleu a un suen service faire que nus ne porroit faire se je non», R. de Boron, *Merlin*, ed. A. Micha, Genève, Droz, 1979, 23: 8.

(43) Micha, *Etude sur le Merlin*, p. 188.

(44) *Le Roman du Graal par Robert de Boron*, ed. B. Cerquiglini, Paris, 10/18 Union Générale d'Editions, 1981, n. 1412, «Bibliothèque Médiévale», p. 9.

(45) For examples of the significance of onomastics to the author of the first *Vie des Pères*, see A. P. Tudor, *La légende de l'enfant juif: peinture des personnages, mouvance d'épithètes*, in *Les Lieux Interdits*, ed. A. P. Tudor and W. L. Duffy, Hull, Hull University Press, 1998, pp. 31-62.

Arthurian Names at a Premium: Text and History

The names Arthur, Tristan, Yseut, Gauvain and Merlin have an occasional degree of importance in a small number of pious and comic short narratives. Otherwise, the names of obviously Arthurian characters are notable by their absence, and this may come as a surprise to the modern reader of thirteenth-century texts brimming with intertextualities. There is equally a relative dearth of other intertextual onomastic allusions, whether Arthurian, romance or other: we do encounter names such as Malaquin, Roland, Ganelon, Renart, Ysengrin, but usually briefly and in rather predictable situations. A few examples: the name «Malaquin» occurs in short pious narratives (e.g. the *VdP* tale of that name in which an evil pagan duke converts; in some prose Arthurian texts, where the characters bearing this name are almost always positive[46]; and in *Chansons de geste*, where the name generally denotes a Saracen king or place)[47]. Other names figuring in my corpus which have been lifted from the epic tradition are employed in a predictable manner: «Ganelon» is emblematic of treason in both Gautier de Coinci's *MND* (II Mir 9, v. 832; II Mir 20, v. 462) and in Arthurian romance (e.g. *Cligès*, v. 1076); «Roland» signifies the Matter of France in Arthurian romance, but is used more pejoratively in pious texts (e.g. *MND*, I Mir 39, v. 91[48]; *VdP*, *Merlot*, v. 18279), and in an almost throwaway manner in one comic fabliau (e.g. Trubert, *NRCF*, 10/124, v. 1762)[49]. There are also mentions of «Renart» and «Ysengrin» in Arthurian romance and pious tales, rather predictably warning the audience of impending trickery and deception.

There it is a smattering of uses of place names which merit brief note. Winchester, one of Arthur's principal residences, is mentioned in *Le Prestre comporté* (*NRCF*, 9/102, v. 917), but the name appears to have little importance save for the rhyme it affords (it is used in an expression meaning 'you would be better off elsewhere'). Canterbury appears in *La Male honte* (*NRCF*, 5/43, version II, v. 167), a fabliau whose action unfolds in England. This town is where the recently deceased man called «Honte» had lived and is simply mentioned as such. The editors of the *NRCF* suggest that the fabliau was composed in a region of northern France which had contact with England. There appears no other reason necessary to explain the mention of such an accessible city, which in turn implies that the fact that Arthur may have held his court here is of no significance[50]. Cornwall is also mentioned in the same fabliau («un chevalier de Cornouille», v. 148), but again it seems to be used to stress distance. Elsewhere, places associated with Arthurian romance are apparently used out of expediency or are dependent on the poets' geographical worldview. So, the significance of the River Thames in *Le Prestre et Alison* (*NRCF*, 8/91, v. 15) might be understood to be minimal: it is just part of a throwaway comic couplet, with no obvious link to Arthurian material. The same could be said about Mont Saint Michel in *Les Trois dames qui troverent un vit* (*NRCF*, 8/96, v. 10): there is no reason why a poet in thirteenth-century northern France might not make reference to real-life geographical locations without giving a second thought to their significance in other literary/textual/legendary traditions[51]. Arthurian geography, impossibly complicated and half-mythical as it may be, is still more concrete than that of much pious material: unless a real miracle happened on a site that exists, or probably existed, place has little importance beyond the symbolic («jadis ot en Egypte»). The fabliaux can be very specific – local, localised, personal, but lacking the need for the allegorical meanings afforded by the Arthurian and other literary worlds. Fabliaux are certainly more complicated creatures than simple *contes à rire en vers*[52], but they remain generally anonymous stories of funny or smutty happenings that we presume never happened. Unless a specific satire or parody of an event, person or belief, their landscape can be as ostensibly meaningless as the names given to their characters (or even attributed to authors).

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[46] G. Derek West, *An Index of Proper Names in French Arthurian Prose Romances*, University of Toronto Romance Series, 35, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978, pp. 205-206.

[47] A. Moisan, *Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et des lieux cités dans les chansons de geste et les œuvres étrangères dérivées*, 4 vols., Genève, Droz, 1986, I, 609.

[48] See O. Collet, *Glossaire et index critiques des œuvres d'attribution certaine de Gautier de Coinci*, «Publications Romanes et Françaises», 227, Genève, Droz, 2000, p. 577.

[49] Another fabliau which establishes a firm intertext with epic material, and more broadly with the threat from beyond the Christian world, is the rather wonderful *D'une seule Fame qui a son cors servoit cent chevaliers de tous Poins* (*NRCF*, 9/109). This story tells of two prostitutes who service a whole garrison between them. One becomes jealous and decides that she wants the garrison of a hundred men for herself. The story ends both in murder by and victory for the jealous prostitute. The fabliau appears to be a relatively uncomplicated parody of *Chansons de Geste*, but onomastic allusions – which if handled carefully might have enriched the tale – are lacking.

[50] Adgar sets one of his miracles in Canterbury (miracle 28, vv. 1-6), but it ought to be remembered this Anglo-Norman writer was translating from an earlier Latin source in the second half of the twelfth century.

One of the keys to understanding the scarcity of concrete Arthurian names in short pious and comic Old French narratives – material composed by often courtly, educated writers – is their ambiguity. Names such as Lancelot and Guinevere are just too ambiguous for the serious, unambiguous Christian world of a miracle or pious tale. In the fabliaux the lack of Arthurian onomastic allusions is perhaps a little more puzzling, since there is, arguably perhaps, plenty of space for the ambiguity that an Arthurian-named character would generate. And yet the fabliaux are basically – mostly at least – fairly unambiguous spaces too, where laughter and social satire have a purpose, and most are rather orthodox in their (albeit mock) morals. In fact, the general anonymity of the players across my corpus is very much at odds with the Arthurian world where not only people but also animals and objects received the name. Short pious tales, miracles and fabliaux tend to place their protagonists in the role of universal paradigm. It is perhaps this representative nature which explains why intertextualities are more obviously present in themes and motifs and in more elaborate literary and technical mechanisms, than on an onomastic level. The heroes of the short narratives are either representative (a poor man, holy woman, hermit) or extremely specific (a saint, the recipient of a miracle, a shrine). The Arthurian 'peoplescape' and the world of the short text (Virgin Miracles, pious tales, fabliaux) rarely overlap: the texts have their own functions and different narrative spaces which do intersect, but as far as names are concerned very intermittently: «a mythical/vaguely historical Arthurian past», «Christian reality, past, present and future», and «the comic other».

A brief final word is necessary to bring this research away from generally speculative literary criticism back towards the real world. As far as giving names in real life is concerned, at least one historical source suggests that no Arthurian name (perhaps with the exception of Arthur)[53] seems to rival the popularity of Ro-

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(51) More exotic names frequently found in verse Arthurian narratives also crop up in short narratives: «Armenia» – which is basically a kingdom in the Arthurian world – is used metaphorically by the author of the *VdP*, who sees it as a large/attractive/rich place (*Prévôt d'Aquilée*, v. 13985; see also Adgar, miracle 44, v. 6). Lombardy and its inhabitants carry a variety of connotations in verse Arthurian texts, and both place and people are used either in proverbial sayings, or as a *locus amoenus* in pious tales, miracles and fabliaux. Cfr. *NRCF*, 5/48, 4/29, 4/34; *Le Chevalier au barisel*, v. 626; and *Image de Pierre*, *VdP*, v. 8507.

(52) J. Bédier, *Les Fabliaux: études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Bouillon, 1893, p. 6; J. Ribard, «Et si les fabliaux n'étaient pas des contes à rire?», «Reinardus», 2, 1989, pp. 134-146.

(53) «Même si, d'après le témoignage des légendes de sceaux, les noms arthuriens portés par les individus véritables se rencontrent dans toutes les classes de la société, il apparaît bien que ce sont les petits nobles (écuyers, officiers de guerre) et les "bourgeois" aisés qui les adoptent le plus vo-

land and Olivier[54]. Arthurian names carry a different weight/meaning; even baptising a son or adopting the name Arthur might be viewed as a treasonable act in medieval England. In France there was arguably more space for such names, but ambiguity cannot dissociate itself from the Arthurian onomastic world. It would seem that there was no real glut of Arthurian names in France across the Middle Ages[55]. After all, who would have thought of baptizing a daughter «Guinevere»? Literature creates a fictitious space, but it still mirrors real life to some extent – as Pastoureau notes, «l'imaginaire est toujours à la fois le modèle est le reflet de la réalité. L'anthroponymie littéraire n'échappe pas à cette règle» – and is also to varying degrees politically charged[56]. 'Tristan' was more popular than 'Lancelot' and 'Arthur'. Of the 550 seals that Pastoureau examined which belong to women, there is (naturally) no 'Guinevere' and only three 'Yseut'. Perhaps short pious and comic narratives are indeed relatively dependable windows on how people actually lived and what people actually did, as opposed to suggestions of how the same people dreamed.

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lontiers aux XIVe et XVe siècle. Mis à part le cas d'Arthur – nom de baptême traditionnel chez quelques grandes familles [...] – les exemples sont rares dans la haute noblesse après le XIIIe siècle. Il est vrai que pour le royaume de France, jusqu'à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, les noms de baptême sont moins diversifiés et plus "patrimoniaux" dans la haute noblesse que dans les milieux situés plus bas dans la hiérarchie sociale», Pastoureau, *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, p. 22. See also, *Chivalric Literature. Essays on the Relations between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. L. D. Benson et J. Leyerle, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 1980.

(54) In addition to Pastoureau's survey of seals, the following works have been most useful in my exploration of literary and historical onomastics and nomenclature: W. Jackson, *The Arthurian material and German society in the Middle Ages* in *The Arthur of the Germans: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval German and Dutch Literature*, ed. W.H. Jackson and S.A. Ranawake, «Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages», 4 vols., Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2000, pp. 280-292 who discusses the naming of children after Arthurian characters; P. K. Ford*, On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh*, «Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies/ Bwletin y Bwrdd Gwybodau Celtaidd», 30, 1983, 268-273; J.-C. Lozac'hmeur, *Le problème de la transmission des thèmes arthuriens à la lumière de quelques correspondances onomastiques* in *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à monsieur Charles Foulon*, Rennes, Institut de Français, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 1980, pp. 217-225; J. Chocheyras, *Le nom de Tristan et ses connotations*, «Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society» (henceforth *BBIAS*), 45, 1993, pp. 257-261; Id., *Sur le nom d'Iseut dans Béroul*, *BBIAS*, 40, 1988, pp. 265-267; C. Foulon, *Le nom de Brocéliande*, *BBIAS*, 21, 1969, pp. 163-164; D. Hook, *Further Early Arthurian Names from Spain*, *Corónica* 21, 2; 1993, pp. 23-33; R. W. Ackerman, *An Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English*, Stanford University Publications, University Series, «Language and Litterature», 10, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1952; *Studies on the Personal Name in Later Medieval England and Wales*, ed. D. Postles and J. T. Rosenthal, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2006; *Personal Names Studies of Medieval Europe: Social Identity and Familial Structures*, ed. G. T. Beech, M. Bourin, and P. Chareille, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 2002.

(55) Pastoureau, *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, has done some interesting preliminary research finding that in medieval France there was no lasting fashion in baptising children after Arthurian characters. On pp. 20-23, under the subheading «fréquence des noms de chevalier de la table ronde employés comme noms de baptême ou comme surnoms, d'après le dépouillement d'environ 40,000 légendes de sceaux français antérieur à 1501», Pastoureau notes only 431 cases of an apparently Arthurian name given to a real-life person. «Chronologiquement, c'est à la fin du XIIIe siècle et pendant tout le dernier tiers du XIVe siècle que la vogue de ces noms semble avoir été la plus forte. Il ne faut toutefois pas perdre de vue qu'ils sont portés par des possesseurs de sceau, c'est-à-dire par des adultes nés une voire deux générations avant la date du document auquel est apendu ce sceau» (p. 20).

(56) Pastoureau, *Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*, p. 14. Pastoueau goes on to make an interesting (if statistically unsubstantiated) observation: «on peut observer que de tous les noms arthuriens, Tristan est le seul qui, sans être très fréquent, est encore donné à des nouveau-nés dans la France d'aujourd'hui; les autres sont devenus excentriques ou légèrement ridicules (mais Arthur, encore largement porté entre les deux guerres, semble revenir à la mode après avoir disparu pendant près d'un demi-siècle)» (pp. 22-23).

Conclusions

Aquinas' synthesis of faith and reason made acceptable that which was incompatible. In their own way, on the evidence of the texts examined here, authors of pious and comic Old French short narratives did likewise. There was a comfortable, and often writerly placing, or absence, of names that were potentially controversial. Gautier de Coinci's *MND* (and other miracle collections/texts) tend to be less anonymous than the tales of the *VdP*: the former cites places to add *auctoritas*, the latter generally draws on other paradigms to claim authority. The *MND* are full of named prophets, monks, Biblical figures, hermits and saints, shrines and places of pilgrimage, many of which are very precise. There are also references to characters and places from antiquity. Naming evidence has helped us date, localise and people Gautier's and other miracle stories, and to a much lesser extent the comic fabliaux. In the case of the most celebrated Virgin Miracle collection, it helps that we know relatively much about Gautier himself. He was the courtliest of authors who alludes to many types of text in his *MND*[57]. If he makes few onomastic allusions to the Matter of Britain, then this is for a reason. Pious authors do not naturally explore moral and socio-political issues from the standpoint of Arthurian texts. Narratives of a spiritual nature provide firm answers to spiritual (and sometimes political) concerns. Intertextual literary games are certainly allowed, but a blurring of Christian orthodoxy with the *mores* of the Arthurian world seems not to be desirable[58]. Names in the fabliaux may well have had much more significance for the immediate audience than we will ever know. And even then, throwaway references to popular Arthurian names are few. Real names and places root Gautier's *MND* in a thirteenth-century reality which is wholly other to Arthurian legend: although Arthurian legend had at that time and in certain places vague claims to (sometimes controversial) historicity it remained firmly disconnected from the 'real life' of the Prior of Vic-sur-Aisne. As for pious tales, their landscape is legendary in that Egypt, Pagan lands and the desert represent the pretty standard backdrop to tales of Christian heroism[59]. Not unlike the *MND*, names in the fabliaux reflect the space in which its authors' lived. None of the late twelfth- and thirteenth-century traditions considered here needed to exploit the burgeoning Arthurian world and its relatively new onomastic tradition (new, that is, when compared to Christian

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(57) In addition to the two seminal works on Gautier, A. P. DUCROT-GRANDERYE, Études *sur les Miracles Nostre Dame de Gautier de Coincy: description et classement et édition des Miracles*, Helinski, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1932, and J. CHAILLEY, *Gautier de Coincy. Les chansons à la Vierge de Gautier de Coincy (1177-1236)*, Publications de la Société Française de Musicologie,15, Paris, Heugel, 1959, can be added three more recent magisterial studies: A. BUTTERFIELD, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France from Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, COLLET, *Index et Glossaire*, and *Gautier de Coinci*, ed. Krause and Stones. Innumerable articles, chapters and volumes highlight various aspects of Gautier's *courtoise*.

(58) I borrow the expression from Karen Pratt's introduction to *The Arthur of the French. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. G. S. BURGESS and K PRATT, «Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages», 4 vols., Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2006, IV, 4. There is a neat parallel to be drawn, however: short pious narratives, to some extent and with obvious constraints, shared French Arthurian literature's ability «to generate new and exciting stories through the techniques of continuation, compilation, adaptation, interpolation and the complex interlacing of mysterious adventures» (ibid.). P. MEISTER argues that Arthurian literature is fully capable of corresponding in a complete and satisfying way with Christianity, *Arthurian Literature as a Distorted Model of Christianity*, «Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations», 1, 2, 1991, pp. 32-43.

(59) If a miracle or pious tale really was based on an older text (sometimes patristic) it goes without saying that the earlier source may predate what we tend to believe to be the beginnings, popular development and transmission of Arthurian legend: the Fathers of the Church and early saints were hardly inspired by Arthurian material. A more specific locus – Bourges for example – refers to a story of Christian conversion already established and in circulation.

history and legend). If and when they do have recourse to refer by name to the mystical world of Arthurian romance, it is not naïve for us to presume that they do so with intention and not a little cunning. That is not to say that there is an absence of intertextuality: quite the reverse since no text was composed in a cultural void[60]. But Arthurian names were hardly ever used. This is perhaps to be expected in Christian texts; after all, they speak of conversion, piety and tangible spiritual reward. The real threats to the Christian world from both within (Jews, heretics) and without are at the root of these texts. Why ambiguously cite Arthurian characters and places when there are 'real life' places and 'true' Christian heroes (and villains) to recall from the epic world[61]? What is interesting, and testament to the paradoxes of medieval life is that whilst at the same time as Gautier and the author of the *VdP* criticised the activities of *jongleurs*, good-for-nothings who recounted tales of Arthur, Charlemagne or comic activities, they borrowed nonetheless from their techniques[62]. Once again, this snapshot of the medieval literary world – viewed here through the lens of Arthurian onomastics – provides ample evidence of a confluence of cultures, even in works of genuine brevity.

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(60) It should not be forgotten that a *jongleur's* repertory might include composing or reciting stories from many traditions, leading to a natural intertextuality.

(61) At the risk of labouring the point, there are many names from Picardy villages and other places in the vicinity of Soissons in Gautier's text. Similarities are obviously to be drawn with many fabliaux. It is just a commonsense that the authors were writing about 'their' worlds.

(62) See the entry under 'Auchier' in COLLET, *Glossaire et index critiques*, pp. 535-36.