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'Serpent or Half-Serpent? Bernhard Richel's *Melusine* and the Making of a Western European Icon', *Neophilologus* 100 (Jan. 2016), pp. 19-41

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Abstract:
This essay presents a much-needed exploration of the impact of the woodcuts of the first German *Melusine* edition on the iconography of the larger, Western European *Mélusine* tradition. Although the debt owed by printers of early German *Melusine* editions to Bernhard Richel's *editio princeps* has been acknowledged, the influence of Richel's images on the woodcuts of early editions printed in other languages – French, Castilian, Dutch, and English – as yet remains largely unexplored. By examining the impact of one of Richel's woodcuts in particular – that depicting Melusine's transformation into a half-serpent – this essay will trace how Richel's iconography came to play such an important role that his depiction of Melusine's hybrid body eventually became one of her defining and most recognisable characteristics. In so doing, it reveals a number of interesting transcultural connections between early *Mélusine* printers and the clever image-recycling strategies they employed. This case study will also give us valuable insight into the production and illustration of early printed books, as the cross-cultural reuse and copying of prototype images challenge modern ideas of coherence between text and image.

Keywords:
Mélusine – Translation – Woodcuts – Early Book Production – Hybridity – Monstrosity

Serpent or Half-Serpent? Bernhard Richel's *Melusine* and the Making of a Western European Icon

Although we might today think of the tale of the beautiful half-serpent Mélusine as a specifically French legend, different translations of the *Mélusine* romance have circulated around Western Europe from the late Middle Ages onward. In fact, the two earliest French versions – Jean d'Arras's *Mélusine ou La Noble Histoire de Lusignan* (c. 1393) and Coudrette's *Roman de Parthenay* (c. 1401) – were so popular both in and outside French speaking territories that before the end of the sixteenth century they had already been translated into German, Castilian, Dutch, and English. It was especially the story's relatively early transfer to print which contributed greatly to its international spread. Despite the story's pan-European appeal, however, previous scholarship has largely considered the French versions alone, neglecting the translations. Admittedly, Thüring von Ringoltingen's Middle High German version has recently received increasing scholarly attention – although its status as a translation is not always acknowledged – but the *Mélusine* translations in medieval Castilian, Middle Dutch, and Middle English remain relatively unexplored. More importantly, questions concerning the exact relationship between these various translations and their French sources, and what the translations may tell us about how the story of Mélusine travelled from one region to another, have not yet been fully addressed.

This essay will broaden the perspective by means of an exploration of the images of the various early Western European *Mélusine* editions.[1] More specifically, I will examine the legacy of the iconography of a particularly interesting incunable: the *editio princeps* of the German translation, printed by Bernhard Richel in Basel around 1473/74.[2] The influence of the iconography of this edition on the woodcuts found in *Mélusine* editions in other languages has hitherto been largely underestimated. Richel's woodblocks were reused by various printers, so that they appear in no fewer than six editions, printed in three different languages. When we consider the number of editions which contain images copied from or modelled after Richel's edition – which includes the Dutch, English, and many of the French editions – then the legacy becomes even greater.

The iconography of Richel's edition is what Martha Driver has deemed an influential prototype, the tracing of which can give us valuable insight into the production of early books (2004, 72). Exploring the impact of Richel's iconography on the images of other *Mélusine* editions will help us identify a number of interesting transcultural connections between printers, woodcutters, and merchants active on the early print market. These men played an important role in spreading the story of Mélusine throughout Europe, transforming it from local legend to a best-selling romance.

To illustrate exactly how Richel's iconography impacted on the overall Western European tradition of *Mélusine* images, we will focus on the legacy of one image in particular: that depicting Mélusine's transformation into a serpent. The woodcuts illustrating this key episode in the French, Castilian, and Dutch incunables have so far puzzled scholars. This is because the texts of these editions tell us that Mélusine turns into a serpent, whilst the accompanying images depict Mélusine as a hybrid figure. Instead of a serpentine or draconic body – regularly depicted in manuscript illustrations – the woodcuts depict Mélusine as having only the tail of a serpent, whilst the upper part of her body remains human. In solving

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[1] There are also versions in Danish, Czech, Polish, Swedish, and Russian, but these stem from the German translation. My research here focuses on the translations of the two French versions by Jean and Coudrette.

[2] *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (hereafter referred to as ISTC): im00476000, *Universal Short Title Catalogue* (hereafter USTC): 747181, *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* (hereafter GW): 12656. The edition printed by Johann Bämler in Augsburg in 1474 was long thought to be the first German *Melusine* edition, but Richel's is now generally regarded as the *editio princeps* (Backes 2004, 177-8; Rautenberg 2006, 61-77).

the conundrum of the transformation episode's discrepancy between text and image, this discussion will highlight that any examination of the rich image tradition of the early *Mélusine* editions must first consider the important influence of Richel's iconography.

The Story of Mélusine: Text and Image

One of the most popular romances of the late medieval and early modern period, *Mélusine* tells the story of the fairy Mélusine and her human husband, the knight Raymondin. Raymondin first meets Mélusine after accidentally killing his lord during a boar hunt. Raymondin is so distraught that he does not notice that his horse takes him to three women standing beside a fountain. The most beautiful of these women, Mélusine, knows about Raymondin's misfortune and offers him her help, on the condition that he promises to marry her. Not quite believing his luck, Raymondin consents but – as often happens in stories of unions between fairies and mortals – there is more to the promise: Raymondin must also swear never to visit Mélusine on a Saturday and, if he were to see her on that day, never to reveal what he sees to anyone. Raymondin is not at all alarmed by this rather specific condition and agrees, but the reader knows that Mélusine asks for his secrecy because she has been cursed to become a half-serpent every Saturday. For years Mélusine and Raymondin enjoy a happy marriage, during which time Mélusine gives birth to ten sons. Most of the sons are born with a monstrous attribute which links them with their mother's fairy nature and her unfortunate curse. Geoffroy, for instance, is born with a large boar-like tooth protruding upwards from his bottom lip. Anthoine is born with a lion's claw – complete with hair and nails – on his cheek.

Not entirely unexpectedly, Raymondin eventually breaks his vow: he not only secretly spies on his wife one Saturday, but also declares in front of several witnesses that he saw her bathing in the form of a half-serpent. The scene is a key turning point, as Raymondin's betrayal forces Mélusine to depart the human world, leaving behind her husband, her children, and the people of the lands she once ruled. Mélusine then transforms into a serpent and flies off, all the while crying and lamenting her fate. Because Raymondin ignored his wife's human side, Mélusine must embody the animal until the end of days.

Although the two earliest extant versions of this romance occasionally differ, both versions agree that Mélusine's fate is to become a serpent. According to Jean, Mélusine jumps from a window and "se mue en une serpente grant et grosse et longue de la longueur de .xv. piéz" (turns into a serpent, large and thick and fifteen feet long) (Vincensini 2003, 704).[3] Coudrette also describes how Mélusine takes to the air and "s'est en serpente müee / grande et longue estoit vraiement" (she was transformed into a serpent / it was truly large and long) (Roach 1982, 247). Oddly, in the French *editio princeps* – the edition of Jean's *Mélusine* published by Adam Steinschaber in Geneva in 1478 – the woodcut depicting this transformation scene shows Mélusine not as a serpent but as a hybrid figure (fig. 1).[4] Although the text of the edition clearly states that Mélusine transforms into a serpent completely, the accompanying image would have us believe that she has only a serpent's tail. What is even more interesting is that the incunables printed in Lyon in the 1480's also portray Mélusine as half-human when she is supposed to be an animal. In fact, all early editions of the French *Mélusine* illustrate the transformation scene with an image showing Mélusine's

[3] Translations of quotations from the various *Mélusine* versions into modern English are mine.
[4] (ISTC): ij00218380, (USTC): 71174, (GW): 12649. The comparison of the various early *Mélusine* editions is based on my personal consultation of copies found in various libraries and in the microfiche collection edited by Lotte Hellinga (2011).

emblematic hybrid form. Moreover, similar depictions are also found in the Castilian and Dutch incunables, and possibly even in the partially surviving English edition.[5]

The key to this discrepancy between text and image lies in the editions' different sources: the texts of the Castilian, Dutch, and English translations are modelled on the French version by Jean, but their images can be traced back to the iconography of the first edition of the German *Melusine*. In Thüring's German translation Melusine does not transform into a serpent – as in the French versions – but becomes "vom gürtel nider ein vyentlicher ungehürer grosser und langer wurm" (from the navel down, a fiendish, terrible, great and long serpent) (Schneider 1958, 96). This is why the full-page woodcut accompanying the transformation episode in the first German edition by Richel depicts Melusine as a hybrid (fig. 2).[6] Although it is easy to explain why Mélusine takes on hybrid form in Richel's transformation woodcut, it is somewhat more complicated to determine exactly why a similar hybrid image is also found in other, non-German editions. The next sections will map out how Richel's depiction of Melusine flying away in hybrid form became so influential that it resurfaces in many other *Mélusine* editions in various languages.

The relationship between Richel's iconography and that of the early French editions

The importance of Richel's iconography within the overall iconographic tradition of the German *Melusine* editions has often been stressed (Clier-Colombani 2013; Bock 2013). The influence of Richel's images is most apparent in the woodcuts of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century editions, but some of the iconographic features first established in Richel's edition – such as which scenes are illustrated and the standard composition of these images – even resurface in editions printed as late as the nineteenth century (Feraudi-Denier 2013). So significant was the influence of Richel's edition that the iconography of all German editions printed before 1500 can be traced back to Richel's in some way or another (fig. 3). The woodcuts of Johann Bämler's edition of 1474, for instance, are simplified cuts modelled on those of Richel's edition (Backes 2004, 177-78; Rautenberg 2006, 72-77). The woodcuts of the editions printed by Johann Prüss and Lucas Brandis are copies of Richel's woodcuts and, although the woodcuts of the various editions printed by Heinrich Knoblochtzer are smaller, they too were undoubtedly influenced by Richel's images (Hespers 2010, 170-76).

However, much still remains to be explored when it comes to the influence of Richel's iconography on the early French incunables – the first non-German editions in which these images were to play an important role. The relationship between Richel's iconography and that of the first French edition has attracted some scholarly attention (Harf-Lancner 1989; Clier-Colombani 1991; Bock 2013).[7] However, far less attention has been devoted to the editions which came after Steinschaber's. We will therefore leave aside Steinschaber's edition and focus on the French editions whose debt to Richel has not yet fully been brought to light.

Although the Lyon incunables' reuse of Richel's woodblocks is occasionally mentioned, the exact details of how the Lyon printers obtained his woodblocks and the effect of their reuse has not been discussed. The *Mélusine* editions printed in Lyon in the 1480's are often referred to as a group because they are very similar in their textual features and their

[5] The English edition survives in only a few cropped fragments; see my discussion below.

[6] Reproductions of Richel's woodcuts are found in a recent facsimile edition (Schnyder and Rautenberg 2006). Some of Richel's woodcuts may have been modelled after the images of a manuscript now found in Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, O I 18 (Harf-Lancner 1989, 29-55).

[7] Steinschaber's woodcuts were copied from those of Richel's edition, although only 63 of Richel's 67 woodcuts reappear and the images have been reversed. The style of the cuts is different and there is a minor change in the order. The four woodcuts which do not appear in Steinschaber's edition depict episodes found in the German translation, but not in Jean's version. See my discussion below for details of these episodes.

mise-en-page, including the division of chapters and the placement of woodcuts.[8] The first of the Lyon editions to contain Richel's woodblocks is that printed by Martin Husz sometime after 1479.[9] Husz was an apprentice in Basel and he acquired a quantity of Bernhard Richel's printing materials – presumably including several sets of woodblocks – in 1476 (Fau et al. 2003, 230). Husz established himself as a printer in Lyon between 1477 and circa 1481. During this time, he printed a number of editions for which he reused woodblocks first used to illustrate an edition printed by Richel, including his edition of *Mélusine*. Richel's woodblocks were reused again around 1485, for the *Mélusine* edition printed by Gaspard Ortuin and Pierre Bouttellier, also known as Peter Schenck.[10] The third Lyon edition to feature Richel's images is that printed by Guillaume Le Roy around 1487.[11] One other edition is sometimes added to this group: Matthias Husz printed his *Mélusine* edition – for which he also used Richel's woodblocks – in Lyon in 1493.[12] In this edition, however, Richel's iconographic programme becomes fragmented, as Richel's original woodcuts are mixed with smaller copies and with woodcuts derived from editions of other texts.

This is because the Lyon printers lent Richel's woodblocks to a workshop in Toulouse, where they were reused once more for the first Castilian edition of 1489. This exchange will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but it is relevant here that some of the blocks were damaged during the process. The Castilian edition features a number of new cuts closely modelled after Richel's woodcuts, which scholars have argued were likely created to replace damaged woodblocks (Bourdillon 1920, 36-37; Pairet 2012, 142). As a result of this damage, several French editions printed after the exchange – including that by Matthias Husz – feature some of Richel's woodcuts, but the set was never again transmitted as a whole. Since the woodcuts are still in place in Le Roy's edition, the damage must have occurred sometime between 1487 and 1489.

However, contrary to what was thought before, it is also possible that some of the new Castilian woodcuts were created not to cover up damage but to fill gaps in Richel's iconography. This is because the set of woodblocks received by the printers in Toulouse may have been incomplete. In most places where new blocks had to be cut for the Castilian edition, Matthias Husz's edition displays Richel's original woodcuts, suggesting that these woodblocks were not damaged but somehow remained behind in Lyon.[13] Unfortunately, there is no room here to puzzle out the exact relationship between the early Lyon editions, the Castilian edition, and Matthias Husz's edition. It will suffice to note that Matthias's edition has a strange but interesting mix of *Mélusine* images, especially since some woodcuts appear to be cropped versions of the new Castilian cuts, suggesting that he also had access to those.

What is more important for our discussion is that all the early Lyon editions contain Richel's woodcut of Mélusine transforming into a half-serpent, even though the accompanying text and headings do not mention her hybridity at all (fig. 4). The transformation image of another edition rarely mentioned among the French incunables – that

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[8] There are some minor textual variations between the Lyon editions, primarily concerning the abbreviation of particular words.

[9] ISTC: ij00218385, USTC: 71175, GW: 12560. Hélène Bouquin notes that the only known – and imperfect – copy of Husz's edition has disappeared (2000, 211), but the copy is in fact in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Res Fol-NFR-129. I have examined this copy: the 30 remaining woodcuts are the same as in the Le Roy and Ortuin-Schenck editions, but the woodcut on folio t7v is upside down.

[10] ISTC: ij00218390, USTC: 71176, GW: 12651.

[11] ISTC: ij00218400, USTC: 71177, GW: 12562.

[12] ISTC: ij00218405, USTC: 71178, GW: 12654. I have consulted the copy in the Biblothèque du Château de Chantilly (formerly Musée Condé). Some secondary sources confuse Matthias (or Mathieu) with Martin Husz, probably because they were related, both learned their craft in Basel and had ties to Bernhard Richel, and Matthias inherited much of Martin's printing material after his death. This, presumably, is how Matthias obtained Richel's *Mélusine* woodblocks.

[13] With the exception of the woodcut depicting Horrible's death.

printed by Pierre le Caron for Jean Petit in Paris sometime after February 1498 – similarly depicts Mélusine in hybrid form.[14] This edition reuses many of the woodcuts which replaced Richel's woodblocks in Matthias Husz's edition. Some images are reproduced in full size but others have been adapted into smaller, composite blocks (Bouquin 2000, 270-77). The second Parisian edition printed by Thomas du Guernier around 1503 copies the iconography of Le Caron's edition, meaning that there too we find the familiar image of Mélusine with her serpent's tail.[15] In fact, the iconography of Richel's edition had such an impact on the images of the early French editions that depicting Mélusine's metamorphosis into a half-serpent became the standard, even though the texts of these editions continue to mention that she becomes a full serpent.

Although the sixteenth-century French editions increasingly move away from Richel's image programme, even there the impact of the German iconography can still be seen. This is especially true for a number of Parisian editions which feature a particularly interesting woodcut on their title pages. This woodcut combines two key episodes of the Mélusine story into one image: on the left we see Raymondin looking at Mélusine in the bath, whilst on the right we see Mélusine flying away after her transformation.[16] In both cases, Mélusine is only a serpent from the navel down. The idea of opening an edition with a woodcut of Mélusine in hybrid form was picked up by Olivier Arnoullet in his editions printed in Lyon in the 1540's. Interestingly, Arnoullet's title woodcuts do not follow the Parisian woodcuts but copy Richel's bathing image. That these printers place an image of Mélusine in hybrid form on their title page tells us much about their – and their contemporary readers' – perceptions of the *Mélusine* romance. Since most early printed editions were sold without a cover, the title page was the place where a printer could indirectly communicate with a potential buyer, highlighting the contents and appeal of the book. It appears that Mélusine's monstrous hybridity becomes an emblem, with the dual function of making the romance recognisable to a contemporary reader whilst at the same time triggering the curiosity of anyone not yet familiar with her story.[17]

Parix and Cleblat's 1489 edition of the Castilian *Melosina*

As mentioned above, after Richel's woodcuts were used to illustrate Le Roy's Lyon edition, the set was lent to a workshop in Toulouse, where Juan de Parix and Estevan Cleblat used the same blocks to illustrate their 1489 edition of the Castilian *La Historia de la Linda Melosina*.[18] Parix and Cleblat's incunable is the first known witness to a Castilian version of the story of Mélusine.[19] The Castilian translation is likely modelled on the text of one of the

[14] ISTC: ij00218410, USTC: 71179, GW: 12653. Folio q1r.
[15] ISTC: ij00218415, USTC: 26044, GW: 11 Sp.218a. Two of Le Caron's woodcuts are not repeated; on the placement of the woodcuts see (Bouquin 2000, 278).
[16] The image is found on the title page of the editions printed by Philippe Le Noir around 1525; Jean II Trepperel after 1526; two editions by Alain Lotrian and Denis Janot printed around 1531-1532 and 1533-34; and two undated editions by Jean Bonfons or his widow. Bouquin suggests that the title woodcut can be traced back to Michel Le Noir's edition of 1517, of which no copy survives (2000, 217). Interestingly, the French editions are not the first to put an image of Mélusine in hybrid form on their title page: it is likely that the missing title page of Gheraert Leeu's Dutch edition would have featured a woodcut of Meluzine in the bath (Schorbach 1905, 147).
[17] These images have much in common with the Ars Moriendi images discussed by Driver, which she argues "are images with a history, with associations" and which "retained their potency because they were immediately recognisable to contemporary readers, identifying and introducing the contents of the text" (2012, 16).
[18] Hereafter shortened to *Melosina* (ISTC: ij00218430, USTC: 344879, GW: 12666). I have consulted the copies of this edition found in London, British Library IB.42463, and Brussels, Royal Library of Belgium INC B840.
[19] A later edition was printed by Jacobo and Juan Cromberger in Seville in 1526 (USTC: 337807). The 1526 edition is not an independent translation but a reworking of the 1489 edition. It contains 52 woodcuts not specific

Lyon editions (Tobar 1987; Gagliardi 1998; Frontón Simón 1996). Although the translation is shorter than its French exemplar, its narrative sequence remains the same as that given in Jean's version. Parix and Cleblat's reuse of Richel's woodblocks has been noted before, but what has not yet been explored in detail is how the printers could have obtained these woodblocks, nor how they recycled Richel's images.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how Richel's woodblocks came to Parix and Cleblat, but a possible link between the printers in Lyon and Toulouse is found in the person of Barthélemy Buyer. Buyer was a wealthy merchant who brought together various printers and typographers to set up the first printing workshop in Lyon. He employed several printers of *Mélusine* editions, including Guillaume Le Roy and Martin Husz (Fau et al. 2003, 230, 236-38).[20] After establishing himself in Lyon and opening up connections with the Italian market, Buyer wanted to expand his business by setting up connections with Toulouse. As printers such as Parix and Cleblat had already discovered, Toulouse's location allowed for easy access to the Iberian book market, and the city was conceivably less isolated from the commercial world of printing and established trade connections than a Castilian city would have been at the time. We know that Buyer sent one of his clerks to negotiate with a local bookbinder and bookseller, and that he managed to set up a warehouse in Toulouse (Febvre and Martin 1976, 118-20; Fau et al. 2003, 217). Buyer died in 1483, but his family took over the business and Toulouse became one of their most important trade connections.

The connections between the printing and book markets in Lyon and Toulouse – which Buyer helped foster – could easily have facilitated an exchange of materials between printers in both cities. The success of the Lyon editions of *Mélusine* – witnessed by the fact that they were reprinted several times – would have made this work an attractive candidate for a Castilian audience, already eager for chivalric romances.[21] That the story of Mélusine also refers to a number of locations in Northern Spain and even features the king and queen of Aragon surely would not have hurt its chances either.[22] Toulouse's connections with Spain also meant that Parix and Cleblat would likely not have had trouble finding a local Castilian translator. Under such favourable conditions, Richel's woodblocks were to be reused for the fourth time in less than twenty years.

As mentioned, because some of Richel's woodblocks were damaged or because they remained behind in Lyon, several new blocks had to be cut. Most of these new cuts are found towards the end of the Castilian edition, where they illustrate, for example, Melosina's final speech and testament, the death of her son Orrible, Melosina nursing her youngest sons, and Geofre's revenge on his uncle.[23] The images are inverted and closely resemble Richel's woodcuts, although they differ in minute details. In some cuts, we find a few extra lines on clothing, some slight variations in the shapes of rocks or trees, and the hair of the figures is more angular in shape than that of the figures depicted in Richel's woodcuts.

The woodcut depicting Melosina's transformation is one of the images that had to be recut (fig. 5). It is evident that the image does not come directly from Richel's woodblocks but from a close copy: Mélusine flies from left to right rather than the other way around, and the woodcut features a number of extra lines – on Remondín's wrists, for example – not found

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to the story of Mélusine. Another possible Castilian edition – printed in Valencia in 1512 – is presumed lost (USTC: 347537).

[20] It has been suggested that Martin Husz may have worked in Toulouse before settling in Lyon. Le Roy was no longer working from Buyer's workshop at the time he printed his *Mélusine* (Fau et al. 2003).

[21] The most popular chivalric romance of the time was of course *Amadís de Gaula*. On the popularity and readership of chivalric romances, see Eisenberg (1982).

[22] Ivy Corfis follows suggestions made by Louis Stouff and Alan Deyermond in speculating that the reference to Cardona might have influenced the Count of Cardona to give asylum to Thomas of Lusignan – a supposed descendant of Mélusine – after he was removed from rule in Cyprus (1986, v).

[23] The new cuts are found on folios q7v, q8v, r1v, r2v, r3v, r5v, r6r, and s5r.

in Richel's woodcut. What is more important for our discussion, however, is that the image copies Richel's depiction of Melosina as a half-serpent. Nonetheless, the text of the 1489 Castilian edition follows Jean's version and tells us that Melosina "se mudó en figure de sierpe muy grande e gruesa e luenga come de quinze pies" (transformed into the figure of a serpent, very large and heavy, and as long as fifteen feet).[24] Again, the reuse of Richel's woodcut results in a mismatch between text and image.

Parix and Cleblat not only used copies to replace the damaged – or missing – woodblocks, but they also filled gaps by using the same woodblock to illustrate multiple scenes. Interestingly, in some cases the Castilian edition's reuse of the same woodblock does not result in two imprints of the same image because the printers made some minor modifications. For example, the woodcuts found on folios d1r and f3v of the Castilian edition are essentially the same, but an alteration of its monstrous elements allows it to represent two different scenes (figs. 6 and 7). On folio f3v, the image – depicting Melosina on the left and three men on the right – is used to illustrate how Melosina gives her sons advice before they set off abroad. The son on the left has a lion's paw on his cheek – which identifies him as Anthonio – and the son in the middle has a tooth coming up from his bottom lip – which tells us that this is Geofre.[25] On folio d1r, the same woodblock is used to illustrate the scene where Melosina welcomes her guests at her wedding feast. This time, however, the paw and the tooth are gone.

Francis Bourdillon argues that the two images are different because the fragile lion's paw and tooth snapped off. He believes that the woodblock used for folio d1r is the damaged original and that the monstrous features of Melosina's sons on folio f3v were "reinserted by some device of the woodcutter" (Bourdillon 1920, 37). However, close inspection of the images suggests that we should look at these woodcuts from the exact opposite perspective. The image on folio f3v – with paw and tooth – is the same as that used for this scene in Richel's edition, which means that this image comes from the original, undamaged woodblock. Richel's edition features a different woodcut for the scene depicted on folio d1r, suggesting that this is the woodblock which was unavailable to Parix and Cleblat. It appears that the printers intentionally disguised the deformities of Melosina's sons visible on folio f3v so that the block could be reused.

The image itself gives us further evidence of this. The cheeks of the men depicted on folio d1r are unnaturally smooth: not only have the tooth and the paw disappeared, but the small lines on the cheeks of the man in the middle and the man on the right – which appear on folio f3v – are not found on folio d1r. This would suggest that the printers did not add the paw and the tooth on folio f3v, but that the modification went the other way: the printers removed elements of the design for the cheeks of the figures depicted on folio d1r.

Another example where the same woodblock is used twice – but with a small modification – is found in the images illustrating Remondín's and Geofre's visits to the Pope. Both images show a man kneeling before the Holy Father, confessing his sins. The images confirm Bourdillon's suspicion that Geofre's tooth was fragile and would have likely snapped off if a woodblock was reused too often. Richel's woodblock of Geoffroy's visit to the Pope shows us the enormous tooth. In the 1489 Castilian edition, however, the tooth is not part of the woodcut but has been drawn in after printing (fig. 8).[26] The damage is unfortunate but it allowed the printers to reuse this woodblock to illustrate Remondín's visit to the Pope several folios earlier. By adding a tooth in the second image, the printers could visually distinguish

[24] The quotation is from the edition by Frontón Simón (1996, 898).
[25] The woodcuts of the copy of Richel's edition in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek St. Peter 23, have been coloured in, possibly by a reader. The son on the right has been given a red face, which identifies him as Gedes.
[26] The same has been done to the woodcut in the Chantilly copy of Matthieu Husz's edition of 1493.

the two kneeling men from one another, identifying the one as Melosina's human husband and the other as her part-monstrous son.

Parix and Cleblat's reuse of Richel's woodcuts not only shows us how the early printing business opened up connections between various regions and encouraged the exchange of material, but also illustrates the degree of inventiveness – undoubtedly motivated by concerns to save on time and costs – on the part of these printers. It is interesting that it is especially the depiction of the monstrous deformities of Melosina's sons – a feature which sets the iconography of the *Mélusine* romance apart from that of other contemporary chivalric romances – which enabled Parix and Cleblat to recycle some of the woodblocks. Yet Melosina's monstrous form is so unique and emblematic that there was no way of covering for the missing transformation image without making it anew.

Leeu's 1491 edition of the Dutch *Meluzine*

The iconography of the first edition of the Middle Dutch *Meluzine* – printed by Gheraert Leeu in Antwerp in 1491 – is a little different from the examples discussed so far.[27] Leeu did not reuse or copy Richel's woodblocks directly but the woodcutter he employed nevertheless took inspiration from Richel's iconography. As such, the Dutch edition represents an alternative example of the impact of Richel's woodcuts on the iconography of *Mélusine* editions in other languages. Leeu's edition stands out from the French and Castilian editions in one other, crucial detail: it includes three images of scenes not illustrated in the Geneva, Lyon, and Toulouse editions, but which are illustrated in Richel's edition.

Because the title page of the only surviving copy of Leeu's edition is missing, the original title of the anonymous Dutch translation is unknown. However, a surviving sales prospectus designed to advertise Leeu's edition gives us a potential title: "een schoene ghenuechlicke ende seer vreemde hystorie van eenre vrouwen gheheeten Meluzyne" (a nice, pleasant, and very strange history of a lady named Meluzyne) (Schorbach 1905).[28] This prospectus also informs potential buyers that the edition has been illustrated with woodcuts crafted "na den eysch der materien" (according to the demands of the matter/contents). Indeed, most of the woodcuts are specific to the story of Mélusine and they appear to have been commissioned especially by Leeu, since they appear for the first time in his edition (Kok 2013, 267). Three of the woodcuts, however, depict rather more stereotypical scenes and differ from the rest in size and style. These woodcuts were derived from Leeu's French and Low German editions of *L'histoire de Paris et la belle Vienne* (Kok 2013, 267).[29]

The only – imperfect – surviving copy of Leeu's edition contains 46 woodcuts of about half a page in size, which were coloured in at a later stage.[30] By speculating which woodcuts may have appeared on the missing folios, Ina Kok argues that it is likely that the complete edition would have contained around 49 to 51 woodcuts (2013, 268). This number is supported by the fact that the second Dutch *Meluzine* edition – printed by Henrick Eckert van Homberch in Antwerp in 1510 – has a total of 50 woodcuts.[31] We know that Homberch

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[27] ISTC: ij00218420, USTC: 436129, GW: 12665. Leeu's edition is the earliest surviving witness to the Dutch translation. Karl Schorbach suggests that Leeu translated the work himself, but there is no direct evidence to support this idea (1905).

[28] The translation is here referred to under the abbreviated title of *Meluzine*. The adjectives 'schoene' and 'ghenuechlike' likely refer to the presentation of the text rather than its contents.

[29] The woodcuts illustrate the marriage of Raymondijn and Meluzine, the tournament following Meluzine's marriage, and the marriage of Anthonis and Kerstine.

[30] Brussels, Royal Library, INC B 1.369. Folios 1, 10, 105, 134 and 135 are missing.

[31] The USTC (436815) states that there are no surviving copies of this edition, but this is incorrect. There is a copy in the Washington Library of Congress, entry 1118 of the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, shelf mark

reused Leeu's woodcuts to illustrate his edition, so that the same 46 woodcuts – including those derived from *Paris et Vienne* – reappear in the second Dutch edition.[32] It is likely that Leeu's edition contained 50 woodcuts as well, as the four woodcuts added in Homberch's edition are found on pages corresponding to the folios missing from the surviving exemplar of Leeu's edition.

Although we do not know who created the woodcuts of Leeu's edition, we can tell that they were inspired by Richel's iconography.[33] The most important tell-tale sign is, of course, that Leeu's edition depicts Meluzine transforming into a half-serpent, whilst the text tells us that she "verkeerde haer in eenen serpent seer groot ende lanc wel xv. voeten" (turned into a serpent, which was very large and a full fifteen feet long) (Kuiper, no date). As in Richel's image, we see Meluzine flying from right to left over water and rocks, moving away from a castle where two men gesture at each other in surprise (fig. 9). Meluzine's tail and wings also look similar to those of Richel's Melusine. The only noticeable difference is that, instead of the two-pointed headdress, the Dutch Meluzine wears a headdress matching the contemporary Burgundian style. Many – though not all – of the other woodcuts also match scenes depicted in Richel's images and, more often than not, the figures depicted have the same posture and make the same gestures.[34]

Uniquely among the non-German language editions, Leeu's edition includes three images that illustrate episodes not found in the French prose version. This is because the Dutch translation is the only *Mélusine* translation which takes as its source both Jean's and Coudrette's versions. The Dutch translation is – like Meluzine herself – a hybrid. Although most of the translation is based on Jean's version, the translator also seamlessly inserts two episodes unique to Coudrette's version: the episode of Palestine and the English knight and that of the death of Godefroy. In fact, the transition from Jean's version to Coudrette's is so smooth that scholars have so far failed to notice that the Dutch translation contains episodes from both French versions.

The episodes translated from Coudrette's version are accompanied by three images: a woodcut of Palestine sitting on a mountain surrounded by monsters, a woodcut of the English knight being eaten by one of the monsters, and a woodcut of Geoffroy – here called Godefroy – on his deathbed. Since the German translation is based on Coudrette's version, Richel's edition also contains woodcuts depicting these same scenes.[35] However, as the French and Castilian editions follow Jean's narrative – where these episodes do not appear – their printers did not include the woodblocks of Palestine and the English knight and the death of Geoffroy.[36] In this respect, Leeu's iconography matches that of the early German editions much more closely than the French and Castilian editions.

That Richel's iconography had such a significant influence on the images of other *Mélusine* editions makes it difficult to determine the exact source for Leeu's woodcuts. The cuts have not been copied directly from other editions available at the time, which does not

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PQ1486 J25 M413. The 1510 edition is sometimes misattributed to Govaert Bac. Moreover, some bibliographies mistakenly mention that Homberch's edition was printed in Delft. The confusion is understandable, as the printer's colophon mentions the House of Delft – the location of Homberch's workshop in Antwerp.

[32] Leeu's woodcuts also reappear in the third Dutch edition, printed by Hieronymus Verdussen in 1602, again in Antwerp. Verdussen's edition contains only 25 woodcuts; 17 of these are derived from Leeu's set. Verdussen's edition has so far escaped scholarly attention. A copy of this edition is found in the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, 8 FAB III, 2011.

[33] William Martin Conway suggests that the woodcuts were made by the man he calls 'the first Antwerp woodcutter', who also designed the printing device Leeu used whilst in Antwerp (1884, 53-9).

[34] Some scenes illustrated in Richel's edition do not appear in Leeu's edition, and vice versa. For instance, Leeu has no image of Godefroy's discovery of his grandfather's tomb but it features an image of Raymond returning to Poitiers, which is not found in Richel's set.

[35] Richel's image of the English knight hacking various animals to pieces is not repeated in Leeu's edition.

[36] This explains, for instance, why Steinschaber's edition has 63 woodcuts.

help narrow down the list of candidates. However, the inclusion of woodcuts depicting Palestine and a dying Godefroy suggests that we are looking for a German source: either Richel's edition or – more likely – one that closely follows Richel's model. It would not have been difficult for Leeu to obtain a copy of an early German edition for his woodcutter to emulate. By 1491, the German *Melusine* was widely available in at least 10 different editions, each with a high number of illustrations. We know that Leeu had connections with printers of German *Melusine* editions – including Heinrich Knoblochzter – and the printer of a Low German edition, Lucas Brandis.[37]

On the face of it, Leeu's edition appears to be another example of a translation of the French *Mélusine* that is accompanied by images copied from a programme originally meant to illustrate the German version. However, in this case things may not be so simple. Although the episodes translated from Jean's version are almost certainly based on Steinschaber's edition, the source for the Coudrette episodes is more of a mystery.[38] It is possible that the translator worked from a manuscript, but one may wonder whether – as with the parts translated from Jean's version – we should not be looking for a printed source instead. Coudrette's version was not published until 1854, which means that the only printed accounts of the Coudrette episodes available in Leeu's time were those of Thüring's translation. Is it possible that Coudrette's episodes were mediated through the German version? Unfortunately, this question must remain unanswered for now: because the Dutch translator greatly abbreviates the Coudrette episodes, it is impossible to determine their exact source on philological evidence alone. However, it is not unthinkable that Leeu or his woodcutter noticed that the text of Jean's version did not entirely match the woodcuts of their German exemplar. Perhaps the Coudrette episodes were inserted in an attempt to complete the story told by the German images.[39]

The Printed Fragments of an English *Melusine*

Rarely mentioned amongst the *Mélusine* translations is a group of printed fragments of an English prose *Melusine*.[40] There are six surviving fragments of an edition printed in folio format, which were brought together after being scattered among the collections of Oxford's Bodleian Library.[41] The edition is thought to have been printed around 1510 and is commonly attributed to Wynkyn de Worde (Nolan 1970; Colwell 2014). However, since no colophon or other printing marks survive we cannot be entirely certain of printer or date. The text of the fragments bears a striking resemblance to that of the only known manuscript of an English prose *Melusine*, even though it has been reduced to three-quarters of its size and divided into a larger number of chapters.[42] Each of the fragments has been cropped, but the degree of

[37] The USTC lists four *Melusine* editions printed by Knoblochtzer (no. 747182, 747183, 747185, and 747187). The Low German edition was printed in Lübeck around 1477-78 (ISTC: im00475200, USTC: 747179, GW: 12664). Kees Gnirrep has discussed Leeu's connections to other printers (1993).

[38] Bob Duijvestein argues that Leeu's edition has far more in common with Steinschaber's edition than with the manuscripts (1996, 42). To Duijvestein's overview of similarities, I would add that the Dutch translation also matches Steinschaber's edition in that it does not feature count Aimery's digression on the seven liberal arts and the description of the preparations for Raymondin's funeral.

[39] The Dutch version appears more 'complete' than either Jean's or Coudrette's version, since it not only contains the episodes added but also those removed by Coudrette, such as Raymondin claiming his inheritance, Mélusine's advice to her sons, Geoffroy's adventures in Ireland, and the episode of the Knight of the Pommel.

[40] Oxford, Bodleian Library, Vet. A1 d.18. USTC: 501139.

[41] For an overview of the collections in which the various fragments were found, see (Colwell 2014, 276, note 6).

[42] London, British Library, ms Royal, 18. B. II. Robert Nolan argues the fragments represent an abridgment of the manuscript version (1970, 20-2). Carol Meale argues that the commonalities between the two texts are the result not of one version being modelled on the other, but of a common exemplar (1992, 287).

resizing varies per folio (Colwell 2014, 260). The fragments contain a total of four woodcuts.[43] Only one of the woodcuts is still intact; the other three have been cropped along with the rest of the folio. Nevertheless, enough remains to determine that Richel's iconography even had an effect on the images of the English edition.

As with the Dutch edition, the English woodcuts were not influenced by Richel's edition directly, but Richel's images were likely mediated through a different edition. Tania Colwell suggests that the *Melusine* images are part of a set "that de Worde (or his woodcut designer) probably copied from a French edition" (2014, 262). Colwell argues that this could have been one of the Lyon editions, as the woodcuts of some of De Worde's other editions were heavily influenced by the iconography of editions printed by Le Roy and by Martin Husz (2014, 262).[44] Colwell's suggestion is supported by a hitherto neglected comment by Arthur Rau, in his description of the only surviving copy of Martin Husz's Lyon edition (1956). Rau argues that this particular copy was found in England soon after it was printed, and that it can be linked to a workshop printing for William Caxton (1956, 431).[45] Although Rau does not mention any links with the English prose translation, his claim opens up the possibility that Richel's iconography was mediated through Husz's Lyon edition, the first to reuse Richel's woodblocks.[46]

Although it is difficult to make any definite claims about the source of the English woodcuts, it is clear that they were influenced by Richel's iconography. The woodcut found on fragment 4r, for example, shows a similar scene to Richel's woodcut depicting Geoffroy raising his arms to strike a giant with his sword.[47] The woodcut on fragment 4v – which depicts Geffray about to enter a cave – is even more similar to the image illustrating this same scene in Richel's edition: both woodcuts depict Geffray's large tooth, a spear in Geffray's hands, the head of Geffray's horse, and the scene is set in a rocky terrain.[48]

Unfortunately, it is likely that the woodcut which has been cropped the most – that on folio 3v – is the English edition's transformation image (fig. 10). Although only part of the heading above the woodcut can be discerned – "(…)e of a serpent" – and the text underneath is similarly fragmented, a comparison of the few remaining legible words with the text of the prose manuscript reveals that this woodcut would have accompanied a description of Melusine's final speech and her transformation into a serpent. However, so little of the woodcut remains that is difficult to tell which scene it illustrates. The small strip that remains shows us part of a building, some rocks and a tree, and what appears to be a bent arm. If the horizontal lines underneath this arm represent the stones of a castle, then the arm could belong to Melusine, who is flying through the air after just having transformed. If this image indeed illustrates Melusine's metamorphosis, then she is again depicted as a hybrid, even though the heading mentions that she becomes a serpent.[49]

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[43] Hodnett reproduces some of the woodcuts (1973, 320). As Colwell rightly observes, the woodcut Hodnett lists as number 1220 does not belong to the *Melusine* series: it does not depict a recognisable scene, nor is it found in any of the surviving fragments (2014, 263).

[44] Colwell's comment that the iconography of the Lyon editions "was closely modelled" on Richel's edition (2014, 262) should of course be modified, since the woodcuts actually come from the same woodblocks.

[45] Rau even suggests that Husz's edition was among the books Caxton imported to England in 1488 (1956, 431).

[46] This also raises several interesting questions concerning the dating and attribution of the printed fragments. For instance, does the presence of Husz's edition in a London workshop indicate that there might have been a now-lost, earlier *Melusine* edition? Is De Worde's *Melusine* edition one of his many reprints of works first printed by his former master Caxton? Could this explain why this edition is in folio – a format favoured by Caxton – whilst most of the romances newly printed by De Worde were in quarto format?

[47] Compare folio 72r (Schnyder and Rautenberg 2006).

[48] Compare folio 73v (Schnyder and Rautenberg 2006).

[49] Compare the heading in the English prose manuscript, which describes "how Melusyne in fourme of a Serpent flough out at a wyndowe" (folio 187v).

This short overview of the extent to which various printers of *Mélusine* editions borrowed, recycled, and copied the iconography of Richel's German edition illustrates that any examination of one particular *Mélusine* version in one language alone has its limits. The story of the Mélusine images is a story of cross-cultural, pan-European connections and exchanges, the significance of which goes far beyond the borders of the French versions alone. The German translator may have made a relatively small change by having Mélusine transform into a half-serpent rather than a full serpent, but this difference was to have a significant impact on the iconography of a large number of *Mélusine* editions printed in various languages. Not only do the first French editions consistently depict Mélusine as becoming a half-serpent, but her hybridity also becomes a standard feature in the iconography of the Castilian and Dutch editions. It is likely that the woodcut illustrating the transformation episode in the English edition similarly showed Melusine as a half-serpent.

The impact of Richel's images on those of other *Mélusine* editions also shows us that early book illustrations do not always match modern ideas of coherence between text and image. The *Mélusine* woodcuts discussed in this essay are not just illustrations, but their significance moves beyond the confines of the text they accompany. As the recycling of Richel's transformation image shows, early printers' reuse of an image is just as interesting as – or even more interesting than – an examination of the original prototype. Because of the clever image recycling strategies employed by these early *Mélusine* printers, Mélusine's animal-human hybrid form gradually became that which defined her character and identified her story to the contemporary reader. In fact, depictions of Mélusine as a hybrid continue even in modern times: although Mélusine is nowadays generally portrayed as a mermaid, her afterlife as a half-animal – albeit part-fish rather than part-serpent – remains one of her most defining characteristics.

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Figure captions

Fig. 1 Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*. Geneva: Adam Steinschaber, 1478, folio CLV
(© Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Lm 2° 17)

Fig. 2 Thüring von Ringoltingen, *Melusine*. Basel: Bernhard Richel, 1473/74, f. 65v
(© Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, GC 365)

Fig. 3 Influence of Richel's iconography on other *Mélusine* incunabula
Amended version of the table found in Rautenberg (2013, 9). The overview now includes the non-German incunabula. The arrows indicate a simplified representation of the degree of influence of Richel's iconography. For instance, Mathieu Husz's edition contains images derived from Richel's original woodblocks – as indicated by the uninterrupted line of the arrow – but it also contains several copies of Richel's woodcuts.

Fig. 4 Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*. Lyon: Guillaume Le Roy, ca. 1487, f. t5v
(© London, Royal College of Physicians, 5a(16))

Fig. 5 Anon., *Melosina*. Toulouse: Juan Parix and Esteban Cleblat, 1489, f. r3v
(© Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, INC B840)

Fig. 6 Anon., *Melosina*. Toulouse: Juan Parix and Esteban Cleblat, 1489, f. d1r
(© Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, INC B840)

Fig. 7 Anon., *Melosina*. Toulouse: Juan Parix and Esteban Cleblat, 1489, f. f3v
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Fig. 8 Anon., *Melosina*. Toulouse: Juan Parix and Esteban Cleblat, 1489, f. t1v
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Fig. 9 Anon., *Meluzine*. Antwerp: Gheraert Leeu, 1491, f. t5v
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Fig. 10 Anon., *Melusine*. London?: De Worde?, 1510?, fragment 3v
(© Oxford, Bodleian Library, Vet. A1 d.18)