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The Magic of Translation: Dorothea Schlegel's Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin

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All translations are “reputed femalls [sic],” declares John Florio in his 1603 translator’s “Preface” to Montaigne’s *Essays*, because they are “defective” (1). Florio’s feminization of the translating profession has found echoes in theoretical and literary texts into the present day as scholars, writers, and translators continue to grapple with the relationship between gender and translation. Literary history reveals countless European women whose translations formed a main part of their *oeuvre*. In many cases, translation offered them an acceptable means whereby they could enter the literary market and pursue a viable, reputable livelihood.¹ Literary theory, beginning in the late twentieth century, has shown an interest in the distinction between writing and translating in a gendered context, marking, as Lori Chamberlain states, “the one to be original and ‘masculine,’ the other to be derivative and ‘feminine’” (455).² Jacques Derrida, in his efforts to break down the *difference* between binary oppositions, and in this case specifically between an original and its reproduction, brought heightened attention to the art of translation and women’s very necessary role in this creative process. In *The Ear of the Other* he writes that “the woman translator in this case is not simply subordinated, she is not the author’s secretary. She is also the one who is loved by the author and on whose basis alone writing is possible. Translation is writing; that is, it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text” (153).³ Although obviously both men and women have been translators, the proportion of translated works in relation to total published works was far greater for women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when women were beginning to enter the literary market, than for men during those times. As Lori Chamberlain states, in the same way that we have come to think of certain professions as largely female (nurses, teachers, secretaries) and others as largely male (doctors, professors, corporate executives), so too has translation become “an archetypal feminine activity” (467).

Dorothea Schlegel’s works, published during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany, do not deviate from the pattern of woman writer as translator.⁴ *Florentin*, published anonymously with her husband Friedrich Schlegel as editor, was her sole novel to appear during her lifetime. “Camilla,” a fragmented sequel to *Florentin*, much briefer than the novel, appeared posthumously in 1965. Hence, the five major translations that she com-

pleted and published during her lifetime comprise the main corpus of her works. Moreover, her translations were often collaborative efforts, thus supporting the idea that women writers were not working in isolation. She most likely had assistance from Helmine von Chézy, as Chézy reports in her dictated autobiography *Unvergessenes*.⁵

This high proportion of Dorothea Schlegel's works devoted to translations and the collaborative nature of her work could constitute the main reasons for the dearth of scholarship on her literary accomplishments. Except for a few studies on *Florentin*, literary scholars have largely ignored her writings.⁶ Instead, investigations have focused mostly on biographical subjects and her connections with famous male writers of her time (most notably Friedrich Schlegel), as they often have for nineteenth-century women writers in general.⁷ In Dorothea Schlegel's case, this observation holds true not only for older, more traditional scholarship but for recent feminist analysis as well.⁸ In fact, feminist scholars have tended to shy away from looking at her life and work, considering her close relationship to Friedrich Schlegel as a hindrance to her own independence in writing. Her own admission that she was writing only to support her husband financially in his literary endeavors and the anonymous appearances of her works, often under Friedrich's name as "editor," have deterred scholars from examining her as a writer in and of herself.⁹

Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin (Story of the Magician Merlin) first appeared in 1804.¹⁰ The work was published under the name of Friedrich Schlegel as editor, and according to Chézy, he chose the subjects. Still, we cannot ignore the part that Dorothea Schlegel played in supporting and assisting in the selection of the actual texts for her translations: in the case of other translations, such as *Lothar und Maller*, she mentions finding the novel in manuscript form herself.¹¹ In the Middle Ages there was only one known written account of the Merlin-saga, fragmented, but independent from the Arthur legend. This version was the verse one by Robert de Boron, composed around 1300. Otherwise, Merlin usually appears in the Arthur legends, as in the well-known account by Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, from the end of the twelfth century. Chézy also mentions a "library of novels" (Romanbibliothek) as one source for the Merlin legend, most likely that of Louis-Elisabeth de Lavergne, Comte de Tressan, also known as "Tressan," who lived from 1705 to 1783. He translated into French the manuscripts he had found in Latin in the Vatican during the mid-eighteenth century. His works appeared often in the eighteenth century, and an edition of his translations of the stories from which Dorothea Schlegel worked had appeared from 1775 to 1789 in a serial periodical under the title "Bibliothèque Universelle des Romans." This widely read collection appeared again from 1798 to 1805. The prose version of de Boron's verse appeared newly published in 1797 in Paris.

Nevertheless, Dorothea Schlegel's Merlin story is not an exact translation of any of these works; notably missing from Geoffrey of Monmouth's account, de Boron's verse, the eighteenth-century prose rendition, and Tressan's edition is the ending that includes Merlin's enchantment by the young woman, Nynianne, an explanation of which will come later.¹²

There were a number of factors that helped determine what works Dorothea Schlegel did translate and publish, including accessibility of manuscripts in libraries in Paris, where she and Friedrich were living at the time, and promise of financial gain through a promising popular topic. Still, the Merlin story, as Dorothea renders it in her *Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin*, resulted in a final creation that stands on its own artistic merit. Those who, since its publication in 1804, have categorized the book as a translation, have become baffled, even upset, that there is no one original to which she remained "true." The possible variety of sources for this so-called translation prevents an exact comparison of the translation to the original; at least one scholar, Konrad Sandkühler, has unsuccessfully attempted a comparison and subsequently criticized Dorothea Schlegel for her loose rendition. Scholars examining Dorothea Schlegel's work must ask instead a different set of questions than those set forth by a positivistic method of inquiry intended to compare the translation with the original word-for-word to ascertain whether the translation has succeeded or not. What might have interested Dorothea Schlegel about the story of Merlin when she undertook translating and eventually rewriting the story? In any of the theoretical treatises of her contemporaries are there justifications for the kind of liberties that she took with her translations? What variations from the original indicate her preoccupation with the intersection between the translation process and gender, and between the Merlin story and gender relations? Do any changes reflect subversive ideas on gender norms of her time? What would interest us today in this rewriting of the Merlin story?

In seeing Robert de Boron's work as the main original for Dorothea Schlegel's translation, scholars criticize her on two specific counts. One is that she abridges the beginning of the novel concerning Merlin's birth and thereby omits the important Christian role that Merlin, as messenger for Christ, plays in de Boron's work. The second point of contention is that she generalizes the specific political context that de Boron's version stresses, namely the struggle between the Celts and the Saxons. Instead of using "die Sachsen" (the Saxons) as a translation for "Saisnes," Dorothea Schlegel uses the words "enemies" (Feinde), or "rabble rousers" or "insurgents" (Aufrührer), or, in fewer instances, "Heathens" (Heiden). Criticism faults Dorothea Schlegel for her disloyalty to the text, claiming that she thereby ignores important religious and historical connections.¹³ This criticism becomes moot in the face of the above discussed findings: Dorothea Schlegel's translation indeed was not that of de Boron's

work solely, or of any one work, for that matter, but rather of various texts, some of which may not even be readily accessible to readers today. The variances in her rendition that are especially intriguing include the omission of repeated references to Christianity; the generalizations about the specific political situation, which became fraught with battles, bloodshed, and the demise of several kingdoms; and the ending with Nynianne enchanting Merlin after she has obtained all his knowledge from him. These three changes reveal much about the messages on religion, politics, and gender roles that Dorothea Schlegel transmits in her Merlin story. In order to examine those messages, we must first summarize certain details of the story.

Merlin is the son of a pious woman and the devil. The story of his conception forms the first three chapters of Dorothea Schlegel's book, which begins similarly to other versions: when Jesus descends into hell to free Adam and Eve, the Devil is enraged that God has fathered a savior with a mortal woman. The Devil wishes to follow suit and father a child with a woman on earth as well, but he wishes to find a pious woman in order to make the payback even harsher. Whereas de Boron's version continues on for a few pages to recount what Jesus has accomplished on earth, Dorothea Schlegel moves into the Devil's search for an appropriate accomplice on earth for his mission to find the right pious woman. He finds that accomplice in the wife of a rich man who has three daughters and a son. Together, the woman and the devil torture the husband by killing his crops, his animals, and his son. The possessed woman also eventually kills herself, seeing what evil she has wrought. The man is so distraught, that he, too, dies. Thus, the daughters are left alone.

The Devil convinces a young boy in the town to seduce one of the daughters. The Devil then reveals the act to the townspeople, at which point a statement appears in the story stressing the gravity of the situation as determined by legal and moral codes of the day: "Then he went there and exposed it to the whole world so that the virgin should be shamed; for at that time the law was so: when a girl, who was not a public woman was found guilty in her acquaintances with a man, then she must die" (*Geschichte* 11). [Dann ging er hin und entdeckte es der ganzen Welt, damit die Jungfrau zu Schanden werden sollte; denn damals war das Gesetz so: wenn ein Mädchen, das kein öffentliches war, des Umgangs mit einem Manne überführt wurde, so mußte es sterben.] The first chapter ends with the young girl being buried alive. In her version, Dorothea Schlegel added: "She was condemned and buried alive, but out of consideration for her relatives this happened in the night to avoid any sensation" (11). [Sie wurde verurteilt und lebendig begraben, aber aus Achtung vor ihren Anverwandten geschah es in der Nacht, um Aufsehen zu vermeiden.]

Omission of the works of Jesus in this first chapter certainly does downplay the references to Christianity. In observing this omission, one is tempted to

examine biographical information from Dorothea Schlegel's life at the time of translating and publishing *Merlin*, and especially the ways in which religion and gender roles interacted in her own life. As the daughter of the Jewish enlightenment intellectual Moses Mendelssohn, Dorothea Schlegel grew up in the midst of heated intellectual discussion on Jewish assimilation and emancipation. Regarding women's emancipation, her father was much less tolerant than he was of assimilation, for he arranged a marriage between his daughter and the banker Simon Veit when she was nineteen. The marriage yielded two children, but made Dorothea Schlegel so unhappy that she divorced Veit in 1799. Two years prior to her divorce, she had met the writer Friedrich Schlegel in Henriette Herz's salon. In the years that immediately followed, Dorothea Schlegel shows in her letters signs of grappling with various religious convictions that compared and contrasted Judaism with Christianity, and Protestantism with Catholicism. Many biographers have attributed her preoccupation with religion and her eventual turn to Catholicism to her relationship with Friedrich Schlegel, who was a Protestant when she met him, but then converted to Catholicism after he and Dorothea Schlegel were married. As Wolfgang Nehring points out, in contrast to those scholars who see her just adapting to Friedrich Schlegel with her decision to convert, Dorothea Schlegel already had her own ideas on religion and her own convictions before deciding to convert (297-99). For example, she writes in 1800 to Auguste Böhmer about her desires to convert to Catholicism, should she become a Christian (Raich 1: 42). While in Paris, however, she turns toward Protestantism, almost in a reaction to the largely Catholic Parisian population, whom she finds superficial and uneducated. On 6 April 1804 she was baptized as a Protestant and married Friedrich Schlegel. Concerns that she would lose all rights to her son Philipp, born during her arranged marriage to Veit, and that her siblings, who were still devotedly Jewish, would ostracize her prevented her at first from openly announcing her conversion to Christianity and her marriage to Friedrich. In the same year, she left Paris for Cologne, where she began to gravitate again toward Catholicism, this time as a reaction to the new forces of Enlightenment. Catholicism, she writes, is so "uralt," so "ancient," whereas "everything new is useless" [alles Neue taugt nicht] (Waitz II: 218). She and Friedrich converted to Catholicism together in 1808.

Hence, at the time of writing the *Merlin* story in Paris, Dorothea Schlegel was in the throes of working out her own religious convictions and possible conversion, and that certainly must have contributed to her own decision to downplay the role of Jesus in the *Merlin* work. While there may be correlations between her biography and literary production, speculating too highly on them can be risky. More obvious is the resulting aesthetic difference that the omission of various passages from the original engenders. Without inter-

ruption by the long sermons related to Jesus, the literary flow of the Merlin story evolves more smoothly and concisely. Moreover, emphasis shifts from Christian teachings to deeds that violate such teachings. In the process of focusing on the Devil's acts in the first scenes of the story, the seduction scene of the young girl comes to the forefront, thus emphasizing gender roles and sexual mores that could threaten girls' and women's lives. Dorothea Schlegel's addition that the girl was buried alive at night suggests a veil of secrecy to the action, an indirect statement on the legal codes and the social ramifications of such persecution. In this way, the interplay between religion and gender and the often contradictory, many times restrictive roles that she had witnessed in her own life were finding an outlet in her published Merlin "translation."

After the first sister is buried alive, the priest then comes to instruct the remaining two sisters. Again through an accomplice on earth, the devil convinces the third sister to follow the life of lust. The remaining sister attempts to stay pious by seeing a confessor. One evening, however, her lustful sister returns and angers her sibling with the lovers who follow her into the house and with accusations that the third sister loves her confessor. In her haste and anger, the pious sister flees the room and forgets to make the sign of the cross before she flings herself into bed and falls asleep. The Devil is thus able to sneak into her bed, and, as Dorothea Schlegel describes the scene: "Subsequently, the devil lay down with her, and she conceived, buried in deep sleep" (16). [Darauf legte der Teufel sich zu ihr, und sie empfing, vergraben im festen Schlafe.] The woman's reaction after the rape is contained in these words: "'Holy Virgin Mary,' she prayed, 'how has this happened to me? I feel myself defiled!'" (16). ["Heilige Jungfrau Maria," betete sie, "wie ist mir geschehen? Ich fühle mich entehrt!"] "Entehrt," in this context, holds the meaning of "deflowered" or "defiled," in specific reference to a woman during the sexual act. In comparison, de Boron's words, as Sandkühler translates them into German, are less strong and more passive. The sister states: "Honorable Woman, Holy Mary, Mother of God, what has happened to me? I am in a worse condition than I was before I lay myself down in this bed" (De Boron 16-17). [Edle Frau, heilige Maria, Mutter Gottes, was ist mit mir geschehen? Ich bin in einer schlimmeren Verfassung, als ich gewesen, ehe ich mich hier in dieses Bett legte.]

Again in this chapter, Dorothea Schlegel has omitted the longer prayers that the pious sister recites with her confessor. As when she omitted the references to the glory of Jesus's works, Dorothea Schlegel condenses the scenes in the first three chapters of her work into ones in which the involuntary seduction of women, and especially the rape of the pious sister by the Devil, takes center stage. Her version is one third shorter than de Boron's, but more pointed in its description of the sexual violations that occur.

The next section of the work relates to King Vortigern and the ensuing battles in his kingdom. In Dorothea Schlegel's rendition, there are neither references to Christian Kings, nor mention of England as the place of residence, although the references to histories of Brittany indicate the place of action. De Boron's chapter begins as follows:

And England at that time did not yet have any Christian king. But of the kings who lived at that time I do not need to tell much except that which relates to this story.

Now the story tells that a king lived in England who carried the name of Constance. (De Boron 37)

[Und England hatte damals noch keinen christlichen König. Aber von den Königen, die damals gelebt haben, brauch ich nicht viel zu erzählen, außer dem, was sich auf diese Geschichte bezieht.

Nun erzählt die Geschichte, daß ein König in England lebte, den den Namen Konstans trug.]

In contrast, Dorothea Schlegel's chapter begins:

At the same time there ruled a king by the name of Constance. We will not mention anything about the kings who reigned before him; whoever demands to know their numbers and their history must read the *Historia of Bretagna*, which is called *Brutus*; Meister Martin von Glocester has translated it from the Latin language into the Romance language. (*Geschichte* 32)

[Zur selben Zeit regierte ein König, namens Constans. Wir erwähnen nichts von den Königen, die vor ihm regieren; wer aber ihre Anzahl und ihre Geschichte zu wissen verlangt, der muß die *Historia von Bretagna* lesen, welche *Brutus* genannt wird; Meister Martin von Glocester hat sie aus dem Lateinischen in die romanische Sprache übertragen.]

Likewise, throughout the chapters concerning Vortigern's battles, instead of naming "the Saxons" (die Sachsen), Dorothea Schlegel talks about "the Heathens" (die Heiden), identifying them as follows: "they came from Rome and from other sides, conquered the country and fought the Christians" (32). [sie kamen von Rom und von anderen Seiten her, verheerten das Land und bekriegten die Christen.] Or, they are the "rabble-rousers" (Aufrührer) instead of "Saxons" (Sachsen) as in DeBoron's work (41). The instigators of the ensuing bloodshed are thus not specified.

Writing in 1804, Dorothea Schlegel could apply the story of Merlin to her own political times. Dorothea Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel's anti-Napoleon sentiments during the time they spent in Paris and the time the translation was completed are well documented in their letters, biographies, and writings.¹⁴ Although they had admired the people's passions and desires for democracy during the French Revolution, they had witnessed the ensuing ter-

ror. In May 1804, Dorothea Schlegel visited the historical meeting of the French tribunal during which it was decided that Napoleon would receive the title of Emperor. The one participant who impressed Dorothea Schlegel at this meeting was the small, pale Republican, Carnot, who stood alone in raising his hand against the decision. She writes: "I feel as if it takes more courage to raise his voice alone and unaccompanied and with the steady conviction of standing alone than to go into battle" (Raich 1: 130-31). [Es gehört meinem Gefühle nach mehr Muth dazu, seine Stimme allein und unbegleitet und mit der sicheren Ueberzeugung des Alleinstehens zu erheben, als dazu gehört, in eine Schlacht zu gehen.] Civil courage takes more guts than battling. Conquerors such as Napoleon, through their *hubris*, hunger for power and intrigue; they could bring about their own downfall, much as Merlin interprets the battle of the dragons for Vortigern, in which the red dragon loses to the white one: "the red color of the dragon is your bad conscience and your foolish sense; his size means your power" (*Geschichte* 54). [die rote Farbe des Drachens ist Dein böses Gewissen und Dein törichter Sinn; seine Größe bedeutet Deine Macht.] By keeping Merlin's message on a metaphorical level instead of specifying a historical period, Dorothea Schlegel conveys a message for her own times as well as for the future.

In both the scenes depicting Merlin's conception and those describing the battles, Dorothea Schlegel employs linguistic variants to convey a meaning that reflects her own position on gender roles in relation to the politics of her times. In this manner she joins the discussion of many of her own contemporary writers and intellectuals over the question whether the translator has an obligation to remain "true" to the text. Hence, it becomes necessary to go into more detail about key aspects of translation theory in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in order to assess Dorothea Schlegel's position as a "dutiful" translator and woman.

Given the details above, it is not unusual to define the act of translation as a creative one in which women frequently engaged during a time when publication for them would still be suspicious. Indeed, translation work did not always have the reputation for being less productive work than writing "original" texts. In the early nineteenth century, translation work was gaining increasing popularity and respect among recognized authors, male and female alike, especially in Germany; modern feminists (and Derrida) have thus not been the first to (re)value the profession. Granted, in 1804, when Dorothea Schlegel's *Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin* appeared, the field was still young, there were few models for actual translations, and standard dictionaries still did not exist.¹⁵ Moreover, composing an "original" literary work was not always the only impetus behind translations. As the number of readers grew through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the concurrent interest

in other lands as well as in one's own nation increased, translating could, and actually did, provide a viable economic livelihood for many writers, Dorothea and Friedrich Schlegel included. As the practice grew, however, more theoretical treatises appeared, so that by the mid-nineteenth century one could point to a respected body of literature — on the linguistic, philosophical, and social complexities of translation — by such authors as Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Germaine de Staël, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Friedrich Hölderlin, all writers engaged in the act of translation themselves. As Goozé points out in her analysis of Bettine von Arnim's translation of her own *Goethe's Correspondence With a Child* (Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde), late eighteenth-century German intellectuals witnessed a raging debate between those who called for a "freie," or free, non-literal translation, and a "treue Übersetzung," a "faithful translation." That debate often played itself out in treatises that focused on the translator's relationship to language and continued well into the mid-nineteenth century.

One of the earliest advocates for a free translation, and chronologically one of the few writers to whose works on translation Dorothea Schlegel would have had access, was Novalis. In his theoretical writings from 1797 to 1798 he remarks briefly and cogently on the act of translation. He centers his argument on a mystical view of language, emphasizing less the content of the translated work and more the linguistic adaptation of the translation. He distinguishes between a "grammatical" (grammatisch); a "transforming" (verändernd), and a "mythic" (mythisch) translation (4: 237). Of the three, the grammatical ones are in an "ordinary style," the mythic are "translations of the highest style," but the transforming ones reflect "the highest, poetic spirit" (4: 237). The translator is a poet, Novalis claims: "The true translator of this kind must actually be the artist himself . . . he must be the poet of the poet" (4: 237). [Der wahre Übersetzer dieser Art muß in der Tat der Künstler selbst sein . . . er muß der Dichter des Dichters sein.] Behind Novalis's ideas is the premise that a perfect translation would unify all languages and thus create a linguistic situation like that before Babel. That unifying principle became a basis for Goethe's later belief in the translator as poet, as delineated in his notes to the *Westöstlicher Divan*, published in 1819. The translator strives to make his own final creation an "Interlinearversion," an interlinear version that would stand equal to the original (255-58). (Goethe did refer only to male translators, a point to which I will return subsequently.) Although Dorothea Schlegel would not have had access to Goethe's words here when she was writing her Merlin story, Goethe's later remarks provide an indication of the way in which ideas on translation as a creative, artistic process were progressing through the beginning decades of the century.

While Novalis's and Goethe's claims that the translator is an artist and poet serve to stifle the attempts of critics to discredit translating work as unoriginal, as reproductive instead of productive, one cannot call their views exactly emancipatory for women. The mythic wholeness after which they believed the translator should strive positioned women within the triad of Nature, Love, and the Maternal.¹⁶ "The modern Madonna is also such a mythos" [Auch die moderne Madonna ist ein solcher Mythos], Novalis postulates (4: 237). Language was to be the mediator between these three elements of the transcendent world of knowledge. Viewing the translator in a messianic role allowed little access to women, much less regard for the diversity that translation work did assume for women. Novalis's writings contain numerous references to his beliefs in the dichotomy of the sexes, whereby the man represents "reason" (Vernunft) and the woman "feeling" (Gefühl) (2: 275). For him, the woman's sphere was "the nursery — the kitchen — the garden — the cellar — the pantry — the sleeping chambers — the living room — the guest room — the ground or the junk room" (3: 556). [die Kinderstube — die Küche — der Garten — der Keller — das Speisegewölbe — die Schlafkammer — die Wohnstube — das Gastzimmer — der Boden oder die Rumpelkammer.] The male philosopher's emphasis on the higher "mystical" language that will reunite with nature, love, and the eternal feminine left him with a blind spot towards the ways in which women may have participated in the public world with their translations. In fact, the mere idea of a woman publishing her work might have seemed impossible to Novalis, who saw the woman isolated in her own private, again mythic-like world: "Women know nothing about relationships with the community — only through their man are they connected to the state, church, public, etc. They live in their own natural state" (3: 568). [Die Frauen wissen nichts von Verhältnissen der Gemeinschaft — Nur durch ihren Mann hängen sie mit Staat, Kirche, Publikum, etc. zusammen. Sie leben im eigentlichen Naturstande.]

The early decades of the nineteenth century saw a flourish of treatises on translation. Two seem particularly important to a discussion of Dorothea Schlegel's work, namely the 1813 Berlin lecture of the German philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, entitled "Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens," and that of the French writer and philosopher Madame Germaine de Staël, entitled "De l'esprit des traductions," published in 1816. While both of these essays appeared long after *Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin*, they both show the continuing early-nineteenth-century belief of the poetic nature of translations and the artistic role of the translator which must have influenced Dorothea Schlegel's own translation practices. Dorothea Schlegel was a close friend of both Schleiermacher and de Staël and very knowledgeable about their ideas. The lengthy correspondence between

Schleiermacher and Dorothea Schlegel attests to their intellectual friendship. De Staël was the central member of a group that met at her Swiss residence in Coppet from 1805 to 1810, of which August Wilhelm Schlegel, Dorothea Schlegel's brother-in-law, was an active member. The publication of Dorothea Schlegel's translation of de Staël's *Corinne* in 1807-1808 also suggests that the two women were familiar with each other's ideas.

Both Schleiermacher and de Staël elevate translation to a creative art. Schleiermacher begins with the premise that all language production represents an act of translation and thus asserts that translation occurs within languages and between cultures, individuals, and social classes. Important for the discussion here is his distinction between interpreters, namely those in commerce who merely need to paraphrase from another tongue for practical reasons, and translators, or those in the fields of art and scholarship who need to go more deeply into the meaning and artistic flavor of the text. Staël argues for a kind of "free" translation that transcends restrictions that exact literal renditions set for the poet. Both Schleiermacher and de Staël offered translators in the early nineteenth century more pragmatic views on translation than Novalis did, while still advancing arguments for free, nonliteral creative translation.¹⁷ Both reinforce Novalis's positive view of the translator, while emphasizing the importance of translation for sharing the great works of nations among themselves. In this way, the two later philosophers move away from mythic proportions of language to assert the political and economic value of translations.

Schleiermacher, however, in his sharp dichotomy between the interpreter and the translator, shies away from promoting too much the practical value of translation, whereas de Staël is more realistic. She stresses that it is impossible to expect that all people in all countries know all languages. Thus, a nation needs translation to communicate with other cultures and peoples, and thereby build its national character through uninhibited circulation of ideas and forms. Within the realm of communication, "free" translation, in which novelty and pleasure gain ground over literalness and pedantry, is absolutely necessary. De Staël's advocacy of literature without linguistic borders mirrors the work that translators such as Dorothea Schlegel undertook in their translation of works by and about "forgotten" women in other countries.¹⁸ The subject of Dorothea Schlegel's translations — Joan of Arc, Margaretha von Valois, Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, and the legend of Merlin, as I will explicate subsequently with the figure of Nynianne — point to a conscious effort to make the lives and works of other European women in history, literature, and legend accessible to wider audiences in Germany. As we see in the Merlin rendition, however, the decision to publish his story in German was not solely pragmatic. The emphasis on freedom of translation by many male and female writ-

ers left much latitude for Dorothea Schlegel to assert her position, however indiscreetly, on a variety of issues pertinent to gender. Besides arising from the linguistic variations that we have seen thus far, her views manifest themselves in inserted texts or alterations in the content and narrative structure of the translated work. Such techniques mirror the “subversive activities” that scholars on women translators have examined in other translations by women.¹⁹

Thus we come to the final, and perhaps most marked, and subversive, variation in the text, the ending. Throughout the course of the story, Merlin becomes Arthur’s advisor, finding him Guinevere and offering counsel to the Round Table and the Grail Knights. They see Merlin as having redemptive qualities, even for his own actions. But when the ideals of Camelot begin to crumble and the knights begin to rebel against King Arthur, Dorothea Schlegel’s story adds the interesting footnote stating that the original sources ended here.

Because from here on Merlin no longer appears significant, except that he aids Artus constantly in victories in all battles, we will omit the largest part of the original all the more since all this is better and more thoroughly treated in the novel of King Artus, which we plan to publish subsequently. (*Geschichte* 129)

[Da von hier an Merlin nicht weiter bedeutend vorkommt, als daß er dem Artus beständig in allen Schlachten zum Siege verhilft, übergehen wir hier den größten Teil des Originals um so mehr, da dies alles in dem Roman vom König Artus, den wir in der Folge zu geben gedenken, besser und ausführlicher stattfindet.]

Dorothea Schlegel’s need to inject her story with editorial comments is not an unusual tactic for female translators. The asserting of the translator’s identity shows what Flotow calls a need to “claim responsibility for ‘meaning’” and to assert one’s position within the text (35-39). Ironically, however, Dorothea Schlegel does continue the story with three chapters relating Merlin’s final days. In an idyllic wood live the knight Dionas and his daughter Nynianne, who is an intelligent and beautiful twenty-two-year-old woman when Merlin meets her in the forest. He falls so in love with her that he teaches her all his charms and magic. From his powers of prophecy, he knows that she will be his demise, yet he cannot escape her enchantment and that of love. Indeed, one day she asks him to teach her yet one more piece of knowledge: “Teach me how I may capture a man, without chains, without tower and without walls, solely through the power of magic so that he never can escape if I do not free him” (139). [Lehre mich, wie ich einen Mann fessle, ohne Ketten, ohne Turm und ohne Mauer, bloß durch die Kraft des Zaubers, so daß er niemals entweichen kann, wenn nicht ich ihn entlass.] Merlin does this, knowing it will be his downfall. Indeed, he becomes entrapped in a structure built from a

thorn bush and her veil. When Knight Gawein searches him out, he finds him in this condition, reports back to King Arthur, and they all mourn the loss of Merlin. Thus ends the story, fraught with a plethora of implications regarding gender roles, politics, and the creative act of translating.

Again, this ending does not appear in other published versions to which Dorothea Schlegel would have had access. Where then might she have gathered the story? In *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances* (1908), Heinrich Otto Sommer published manuscripts that he found in the British Museum. Sommer's text appears to be the only manuscript that contains the rare ending with Merlin's enchantment by Nynianne. Subsequent modern renditions of the Merlin story, such as the *Merlin Trilogy* by the popular author Mary Stewart, have incorporated the character of Viviane, as she is known in English, into the explanation of Merlin's end. Naturally, the Schlegels did not know Sommer's text, but the similarities point to a rendition of the *Vulgata*, a manuscript to which Dorothea Schlegel may have had access in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Thus, while the story of Nynianne was not new, the fact that Dorothea Schlegel decided to add it to her version is significant. Not only does she make known to her German-speaking readers a "forgotten" woman of legend, but she shows that this woman is also very complex and controversial because of her position as the enchantress who now holds power over the man who gave her all her knowledge.

The story has come full circle, from the devil's seductions of unwilling women in the first three chapters to Nynianne's entrapment of Merlin in the last three chapters. Being able to foresee the future, Merlin knows about his end long before it occurs. Still, he follows his emotions willingly. Hence, the ending shows the triumph of love over any kind of rationality that told Merlin to escape the situation long before the trouble begins. This interpretation would coincide with the Romantic sensibility to which both Dorothea Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel subscribed. Dorothea Schlegel in many ways suggests another version of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde*, in which the man ends up learning from the woman that for his own good he should cultivate his feminine side. For Merlin, it is Nynianne who learns from the man and eventually uses that knowledge to her own ends.

But there are other interpretations that we can invoke from a contemporary standpoint, thus lending more credence to the idea that Dorothea's translation remains open-ended. Merlin's passing of his magic onto Nynianne points to the historical rise of witchcraft among women in the late Middle Ages. Dorothea Schlegel, too, would have been exposed to the plights of witches in history, having translated the story of Joan of Arc. A detailed textual analysis of the scene in which Merlin meets Nynianne would reveal countless refer-

ences to witchcraft, the most poignant being the ceremony that Merlin and Nynianne see a group of villagers perform in the meadow. That scene is remarkably similar to those now described as traditional rituals for witches.²⁰ After Merlin drew a circle (den Kreis gezogen) “ladies, knights, damsels and noble servants came walking around, held each other by the hand and sang with such delightful voice and such magnificent demeanor in a way that no one had ever heard before” (133). [kamen Damen, Ritter, Fräulein und Edelknechte daherspaziert, hielten sich bei den Händen angefaßt und sangen mit so lieblicher Stimme und so herrliche Weisen, als man niemals vorher dergleichen gehört.] The drawing of the circle results in dancing and merriment. In the end, the circle empowers and entrances, changing consciousness at will and healing on a level where there is no distinction between spirit and matter. In this regard, Nynianne’s empowerment through Merlin also suggests the beginnings of a possible matriarchy, or at least a society in which women have the tools to express their powers.

Over time, Nynianne comes to regret having robbed Merlin of his freedom, but she cannot counteract the power of the magic: “Merlin could never leave the place where he was bewitched by Nynianne; she, however, came and went as she pleased. She would have gladly given him his freedom again, for it tried her to see him in such imprisonment; but the magic was strong, and it no longer stood in her power, which devoured her with sadness” (141). [Merlin konnte nie wieder von dem Ort, an den er von Nynianne gezaubert war; sie aber ging und kam nach Wohlgefallen. Sie hätte nachmals ihm gern die Freiheit wiedergegeben, denn es dauerte sie, ihn in solcher Gefangenschaft zu sehen; aber der Zauber war zu stark, und es stand nicht mehr in ihrer Macht, worüber sie sich in Traurigkeit verzehrte.] Such reactions also bring into question the possibilities for totally successful romantic love. As we have seen, revision in the personal stories surrounding Merlin’s conception and birth, as well as the conception and birth of the later King Arthur, portrays a world not exactly full of traditional romantic love. Instead, intrigue, power, and violence have dominated the scene throughout most of the book.

As Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack remark in their study of Arthurian literature by women, many women “demonstrate a willingness to depart from the familiar stories and the expected interpretations of the characters — a willingness, even a desire, to turn aside from the usual manner of telling and the conventional concerns of the Arthurian world. . .” (4). In those departures, women may be rebelling against the story through reinterpretations that are sometimes topical, sometimes highly individualized, and sometimes very radical. The revised beginning of the Merlin story, which concentrates on the unwilling seductions of women, supports such an analysis, as does Dorothea Schlegel’s own interest in gender issues in her other translations. The subjects

of her other translations point to a strong interest in women characters, both historical and legendary: Joan of Arc, or the “Maid of Orleans,” was the peasant girl who led armies of France to victory over the English, but was burned afterwards as a witch by the English; Margaretha von Valois, the first wife of King Henry IV, King of France and Navarra from 1591 to 1610, was an intelligent, well-educated, proud, self-confident, but sometimes vengeful and blood-thirsty woman who fell victim to efforts to unite Protestants and Catholics in France; Corinne, the protagonist in Germaine de Staël’s novel, was a poet, independent and passionate about her travels, loves, and writing while in Italy. The subjects of these works show Dorothea Schlegel’s continual preoccupation with women who were independent, strong, willful in their own right, yet also ambiguous and complex in the context of their relationships with men. Both Merlin and Nynianne display similar intricacies: Merlin embodies the contrasts between piety and vileness, heaven and hell, godliness and satanic worship; Nynianne provokes questions about women’s roles in the acquisition of knowledge and power. Will men’s demise come through teaching women their powers? Or do women possess the power to perform wonders with their human capacities for love and knowledge?

Towards the end of her Merlin story, Dorothea Schlegel includes two editorial footnotes to confess to readers that she has left out parts of the original works. The first appears before Merlin meets Nynianne and the second appears after Nynianne has learned many of his secrets and he, knowing that he has succumbed totally to her enchantment through love, has gone back to see Arthur for the last time before his eternal entrapment. Both footnotes state that parts of the story where Merlin helps King Arthur in more battles have been left out because they are best found in the novel of King Arthur himself. In this way, Dorothea Schlegel admits to focusing the end of her story explicitly on the relationship between Merlin and Nynianne. Still, not even in editorial footnotes does she answer any possible questions about the future of that relationship. In the fragmentary manner of German Romanticism, she leaves many open ends and questions. We have seen how the act of translating offered her the opportunity to engage creatively with a literary legend.²¹ In turn, that creativity presents modern readers the opportunity to engage their own imaginations in linking new theories with old texts, just like magic! And we should never underestimate the power of magic.

Notes

1. It would be impossible to list all the women writers who have engaged in translation. Hanay’s anthology *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* has excellent examples of women in the field of publishing, writing, and translating in Tudor England. Susanne Kord’s entry “Adaptation/Translation” in *The Feminist En-*

cyclopedia of German Literature gives an overview of German women writers as translators. Dorothea Schlegel's German-speaking contemporaries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries included Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Bettine von Arnim, Helmine von Chézy, Emma Herwegh, Therese Albertine Luise von Jakob, Sophie Mereau, Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, Henriette Schubart, and Dorothea Tieck. For insights into Bettine von Arnim's translation of her work *Goethes Correspondence with a Child* [Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kind] into English in the context of translation theory, see Goozé. For analysis of Sophie Mereau's translation of Ninon de Lenclos's French letters into German, see Purdy. For a detailed analysis of Therese Albertine Luise von Jakob's or "Talvj's" translations, see Wallach's essay. The collection of essays edited by Wolf and Grbic contains essays on German women translators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

2. For recent investigations into the relationship between translation and gender, see also Flotow and Simon.

3. I cannot possibly do justice to the complexities of Jacques Derrida's thoughts in my introduction here. For more complete analysis of his ideas as they relate to translation and gender, see Chamberlain (468-71), Simon (92-95), and Goozé (295-96).

4. A note on names, for that is always a subject of controversy for German women writers. I use the name Dorothea Schlegel rather than Dorothea Mendelssohn-Veit-Schlegel, her maiden name, her first husband's name, and her second husband's name, because Dorothea Schlegel was the name she was using at the time of the publication of the Merlin story. I prefer to use her full name throughout the essay, although some might say it is redundant. The full name respects her as a professional and prevents confusion with Friedrich Schlegel and August Wilhelm Schlegel.

5. "For the discovery [of texts to translate] we are indebted to Friedrich von Schlegel; the translation (of *Euryanthe*) is by me, even though it appeared under F. von Schlegel's name. Dorothea von Schlegel and I translated the story of the magician Merlin, whose first traces Schlegel similarly found in the abovementioned library of novels" (*Unvergessenes* 1: 169).

[Ihre Auffindung verdanken wir Friedrich von Schlegel; die Übersetzung (der *Euryanthe*) ist von mir, wie wohl sie unter F. von Schlegel's Namen herauskam. Dorothea von Schlegel und ich übersetzten die Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin, deren erste Spur Schlegel gleichfalls in der obengenannten Romanbibliothek entdeckte.]

6. As exceptions, see studies by Brantner, Helfer, Nehring, Richardson, Steubben Thornton, and Weissberg. Still, all these studies look mainly at Dorothea Schlegel's *Florentin*.

7. As recent examples of the biographies available, see Frank, Stern, and my own biographical essays.

8. Whereas feminist scholarship has corrected this paucity for other women writers of the early nineteenth century, treatment of Dorothea Schlegel's works still remains noticeably absent from many recent scholarly essay collections and books. As Helfer points out in her article, Christa Bürger does not discuss Dorothea Schlegel in her book *Leben Schreiben: Die Klassik, die Romantik und der Ort der Frauen*. There is also no essay on Dorothea Schlegel in Katherine Goodman and Edith Waldstein's respected study *In the Shadow of Olympus: German Women Writers around 1800*. My own entries in the anthology *Bitter Healing* and in the essay collection *Women Writers in German-Speaking Countries* attempt to rectify that situation somewhat, although they are largely biographical (see footnote 5 above). Exceptions also come in those articles that do examine *Florentin* (see footnote 3 above). But as an example of the sketchy

treatment that Dorothea Schlegel still receives, I cite Carol Diethe's recent book *Towards Emancipation: German Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Dorothea Schlegel is mentioned only four times, all in biographical contexts related to other women writers, and once in a footnote: "Dorothea Veit, a close friend of Rahel von Varnhagen, was the daughter of Moses Mendelssohn; she divorced Veit to marry Friedrich Schlegel" (12n33).

9. Dorothea Schlegel supposedly tried to prevent Friedrich from publishing *Merlin* and her other translation *Lothar und Maller*. See Josef Körner (466).

10. In German, the word "Geschichte" means both "history" and "story." For Dorothea Schlegel's text, the latter applies best, for reasons that will become apparent in this essay. All translations in this essay are mine. The story appeared under the following title: *Sammlung romantischer Dichtungen des Mittelalters. (Zwei Bände.)* Aus gedruckten und handschriftlichen Quellen, herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel. Leipzig, in der Juniussischen Buchhandlung, 1804. Erster Teil: *Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin*. Herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel, Leipzig in der Juniussischen Buchhandlung, 1804. Zweiter Teil: *Geschichte der Tugendsamen Euryanthe von Savoyen*. Herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel, Leipzig, in der Juniussischen Buchhandlung, 1804.

11. See "Dorothea Schlegel an Helmina Chézy in Paris [Köln 1804]" in J. M. Raich (2: 23).

12. For consistency and context, I will use the character's name that Dorothea Schlegel does in German, rather than the English or French ones. The changing of the names into German ones, especially in the case of "Viviane" to "Nynianne," already indicates the unique qualities in Dorothea Schlegel's work, supporting the idea that it is not a direct translation.

13. Konrad Sandkühler writes: "For the purposes of scholarly research, however, the true reproduction of such texts is absolutely necessary. In the case of "Merlin" this is above all essential because otherwise Robert de Boron's Christian ways of thinking will not be clear enough" (171). [Für Zwecke geisteswissenschaftlicher Forschung jedoch ist treue Wiedergabe solcher Texte unbedingt notwendig. Im Falle des "Merlin" ist dies vor allem wesentlich, weil sonst Robert de Borons christliche Denkart nicht klar genug wird.]

14. See in particular Stern 198-202.

15. Even Tieck's many translations, most notably the Shakespeare edition, came later. See Lieselotte Dieckmann's introduction to *Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin* in the critical edition of Friedrich Schlegel's works (VIII); and Stern (213-17).

16. See Purdy (36-38) for a more detailed analysis of the role of women in this mystical view on language.

17. For a more thorough discussion of de Staël's ideas on translation, see Simon (62-65).

18. Scholars on women translators talk about the ways in which female translators have recovered "lost" women through translations, and thereby they have broken the image of the silent woman in history and literature. See Flotow 66-74 and Hannay 4.

19. Flotow analyzes the American writer Margaret Fuller's translation of Goethe's drama *Torquato Tasso* as such a subversive work (71-74). See also Goozé, Purdy, and Simon for examples from other individual translators.

20. See, for example, descriptions in Starhawk (38-39).

21. For comparative studies of the way in which the translations of other early nineteenth-century German women reflect the theories by their contemporaries expounding "free" trans-

lations, see studies by Purdy and Goozé. Both studies show how alterations in translations by Sophie Mereau and Bettine von Arnim reveal critical observations about gender norms, and, as with Dorothea Schlegel's translation, show what readers today can discern to be subversive measures to undermine those norms. The nature of that criticism and those measures, however, took a different form for all of them. Arnim created a new language for her existing language, as she translated her own work from German, her mother tongue, into English, a language she hardly knew. Mereau translated the works of the seventeenth-century Ninon de Lenclos, thereby establishing a female tradition across national boundaries, and, in doing so, as Purdy shows, offered a critique of a gendered ontology. Dorothea Schlegel, in contrast, or rather in conjunction, offered yet another model. Hers was a translation of several texts, most likely all by male authors, and then published under the name of a male editor, which she then melded together, cutting and pasting to form her own literary creation. The resulting work suggests both a critique of gender mores and a complex, yet powerful, role for a woman. All three writers together thus demonstrate various paradigms for the translators' possibilities. To recall Derrida's words, together they break down binary opposites, refusing to subordinate themselves, going beyond the act of mere transcription to one of production.

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