Laura Chuhan Campbell and Leah Tether

Printers’ Prefaces and Rewriting in Arthurian Romance

The preface to Galliot du Pré’s 1528 edition of *Perceforest* is accompanied by a woodcut showing a writer in his study, copying by hand from an exemplar on a stand above his desk (sigs ii°–iii°; see Fig. 1).¹ The illustration of the writer at work at the beginning of a text is often found accompanying front matter, and some of this type are even found reused across multiple volumes (see Tether 2017, 43–44). This stock image originated, of course, in manuscript culture. As Anthony Bale notes, the image recalls the religious iconography of St Luke writing the Gospels, or St Jerome at his desk, both of whom are usually depicted as working in a contemporary study, surrounded by books (Bale 2008, 921–922). In relation to the image of Marie de Champagne as a writer in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 794, Alexa Sand (2014, 107) writes that the portrait “imbues the text with authority and a visible body. She makes the text – and its production – present in a way it would not otherwise be for the reader.” The author portrait brings not just the author, but the process of writing, to the reader’s attention. It makes the work involved in producing a text visible.

¹ The symbol for the signature is an upright fleur-de-lis – we approximate it here using the nearest available symbol in Wingdings.
In Sand’s example, however, Marie de Champagne is not the author in a holistic sense. As the work’s patron, she is being presented as the origin of the text, the person who supplied the story and subject matter, which were then crafted and shaped by Chrétien de Troyes. Whilst author portraits may give the illusion of a coherent notion of authorship, it was, in practice, often much more fragmented; behind every scribbling author on the first page of a manuscript lies an unknowable number of copyists, compilers, and editors, whose contributions to the mouvance of the text have shaped it in its exact present form (see, for example, Kennedy 1970; Zumthor 1972). If quasi-authorial interventions in manuscripts were uneven in their impact and deliberateness, the preparation of a text for an early printed book further belies the Perceforest’s image of the single author at his desk. Jane H. M. Taylor’s contribution to scholarship on early French print culture in *Rewriting Arthurian Romance in Renaissance France* (2014) has highlighted the extensive editorial work that went into preparing a manuscript text for publication in print, which was often carried out by one or more anonymous editors, redactors, and sometimes led by a marchand-libraire who played a directorial role in the process. This could involve linguistic interventions (“translation” from Old French to Middle French), formal
interventions (“translating” from verse to prose), corrections, and/or the establishment of a new paratext, such as a table of contents, illustration, or other front or end matter (Taylor 2014, 55). These practices, Taylor emphasizes, represented a continuation of the quasi-editorial role of scribes and manufacturers of manuscripts; given that transcribing and producing books by hand was still very much the norm in the early days of printing, the printer-publisher tended to adapt existing practices of preparing a text, rather than create new ones from scratch (Rouse and Rouse 1999, I: 329–30).

It may not be immediately clear whether the image of the scribe at his desk is supposed to represent the author of the Perceforest, Galliot du Pré himself, or an anonymous writer employed to carry out the revisions. However, it is not the function of the image to identify a specific author figure. It serves instead to bring the act of rewriting and revision to the attention of the reader. In this, the image works in tandem with the printer’s preface that is situated immediately beneath it. Taylor (2014, 85) argues that the preliminary material or front-matter, and most specifically, the printer’s preface or prologue, forms “the dialectal centre between the publisher and the reader, the locus where as modern readers we can overhear the ‘conversations’ between the makers of books and their buyers”. She believes it is especially possible to glean details of a printer’s rewriting strategy for his chosen text, or at least of the way in which this feature has the effect of rewriting the main text by influencing the reader before s/he experiences it. This is demonstrated through her analysis of the evolving preface to the Lancelot en prose (Taylor 2014, 85–89) published by a (probable) combination of Antoine Vérard and others between 1488 and c. 1504, in which she detects a particular focus on the chivalry in the text as something that Vérard wishes his readers to take seriously, whilst at the same time burying the moral failings of the main protagonist. But these sequential editions of Lancelot are not isolated examples of visible interventions by the printer. There are many other early modern prefaces that provide precisely that window into the commercial decisions that led to both the selection of the text at hand and its chosen packaging, which together offer the modern scholar with insight into the needs of audience at whom the product is targeted, at least as they were perceived by the

---

2 Taylor (2008) comments at greater length and in more general terms on printer prologues and prefaces.

3 See also Taylor’s more detailed analysis of Vérard’s prefatory work (2007). Vérard’s editions of Lancelot du Lac are: Rouen and Paris: Jean le Bourgeois and Jean du Pré (and Antoine Vérard?), 1488 (USTC 27606), Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1494 (USTC 71230), Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1504 (incorrectly dated 1494, USTC 47285).
publisher/printer, which fits neatly with Vial’s (1958) description of prologues and prefaces as “formules publicitaires” [publicity formulas]. In some cases, the visibility of the printer can even overshadow that of the original author. One of this study’s two authors has herself argued that the preface of the 1530 edition and prosification of Chrétien de Troyes’s *Perceval* and its Continuations provides clear evidence of the deliberately reduced visibility of Chrétien’s authorship and his transformation into “le Chroniqueur” [the chronicler] as forming a keystone in the commercial strategy of its publishers (Tether 2017, 105–106; see also Taylor 2013b).

Taken together, this suggests that printers could use the work of rewriting and preparing a text as part of their commercial strategy, by making it visible (or indeed invisible) in a preface or prologue. By showing that the text is newly refreshed, that it has been revised with some considerable labour in other words, the reader-consumer is given confidence that the product merits the cost. The implication is that the reader will get more than just a printed version of an old manuscript which, despite typesetting, would have been a less-than-easy read were it not for the efforts of the hardworking rewriter/printer/publisher. This study will thus examine a series of early modern French Arthurian prefaces and prologues to scrutinize the spectrum of visibility that is given by printers and their associates to the rewriting process in this space, and to evaluate how distinct (or not) prefatory matter actually is as a “locus”, to return to Taylor’s term, in which the modern reader can access dialogue between book maker and book consumer.

**The Printer’s Visibility**

Our study of the printer’s visibility takes as its starting point a concept from Translation Studies: the translator’s *invisibility*. Lawrence Venuti, who coined the term, argued that the Anglo-American publishing industry tends to favour a style of translation that “domesticates” the source

---

4 It is important to note that this study was carried out during the height of the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns, meaning that the case study examples included here are necessarily selective, being the sum total of what was available in digital format, mostly on Gallica <http://gallica.bnf.fr>, from amongst the extant early printed French Arthurian narratives. Whilst our coverage does ensure that all French Arthurian narratives to have been given treatment in early print (*Lancelot, Tristan, Artus de Bretagne, Merlin, Gyron le Courtois, Giglan, Saint Graal, Ysaïe le Triste, Méladius de Leonnoys, Perceforest, Perceval*) are given some representation, we have not been able to include analysis of all editions of them. Montorsi’s (2019, 172–173) listing would, when physical consultation and travel are once again possible, enable a researcher to be more comprehensive in coverage.
text, concealing its foreignness. This essentially erases the work of the translator, by giving the illusion that the text has been conveyed to the target language reader in a direct, unmediated form:

A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer’s personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the “original. The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator’s effort to ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator’s crucial intervention in the foreign text. (Venuti 1995, 1–2)

Paratexts further suppress the translator’s role by featuring only the name of the author on book covers, making the work of cultural mediation implicit (Tether 2017, 63–65; Genette 1997, 38). At the heart of the drive to make translation invisible is the assumption that translation is “a second-order representation […]. Only the foreign text can be original, an authentic copy, true to the author’s personality or intention, whereas the translation is derivative, fake, potentially a false copy” (Venuti 1995, 7). Effacing the translator and the act of translation produces “the illusion of authorial presence”, as if the reader had direct and unmediated access to the source text.

Late medieval and early modern printers, like translators, played a mediating role in the publication process: they prepared a text linguistically, formally, technologically, and financially for publication in print. The practice of translation was often involved; that is, translation in the expanded sense of updating antiquated language, converting verse to prose, as well as interlingual translation. More broadly, though, printers were responsible for translating the text from one medium to another, making it intelligible and accessible in a new format and for new audiences. And as with the modern translator, the extent to which printers make themselves visible to the reader has a great effect on their relationship with the text. As we have seen, the printer’s visibility can be used as a commercial strategy, in much the same way that a modern
translator’s invisibility is thought to be more commercially viable. Where the translator's invisibility “conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made”, does the printer’s visibility reveal to the reader the conditions under which the printed book is made?

The answer to that question is somewhat complicated by the fact that printers may make themselves and the work of rewriting visible without actually offering any accurate information about the rewriting process itself. A good, if perhaps overused, Arthurian example – albeit one from across the Channel\(^5\) – is William Caxton’s prologue for his edition of Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* (1485). Here, Caxton makes the now (in)famous claim that

> [m]any noble and duyers gentylmen of thys royame of Englonde camen and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherfore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the saynt greal / and of the moost renomed crysten kyng / Fyrst and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy / kyng Arthur […] (Malory 1485, sig. II\(^f\))

At the same time, Caxton assiduously avoids mentioning any detail of Malory’s more dubious past as a “knuyght prisoner”, the phrase used by Malory to describe himself (as witnesses the Winchester manuscript)\(^6\) and which Caxton edits out of the main body of the narrative, thus preserving only the fact that his author is of noble status. Caxton prefers, it seems, to lay far greater, indeed repeated, emphasis on the fact that Malory extracted this tale of quintessential English kingship “oute of certeyn bookes of frensshe and reduced it in to Englysshe” (Malory 1485, sig. III\(^f\)). On the surface, these cumulative claims and careful re-framings seem aimed at persuading Caxton’s audience not only that they will be in illustrious company in reading his book, but also that they will witness both the rescue and the repatriation, both thematically and linguistically, of an “English” hero, King Arthur, the one monarch who can unify the land, at precisely the moment when the divisive Wars of the Roses were reaching their eventual end after thirty years of turmoil, and the desire for national unity would have been great indeed.

Scholars have convincingly argued, though, that many of Caxton’s prefatory claims – particularly in respect of the requests to publish from important people – are little more than formulaic tropes or devices aimed at attracting a consumer, revealing far less about real editorial direction than Caxton might have us believe (see, amongst others, Blake 1966, 39–41, Kuskin

\(^5\) Translations of medieval French literary texts and their associated translators’ prologues are many in number and have been given detailed scrutiny by Dearnley (2016).

\(^6\) London, British Library, MS Add. 59687, fol. 70\(^v\).
1999, 512–513, and Summers 1997, 371). Caxton’s edition of Malory’s romance is, moreover, not his only publishing project to receive this treatment. For instance, if we look to Caxton’s prologue to his Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye (1473/74), another text with French origins and this time translated by Caxton himself, we find much of the same rhetoric. This eventually culminates in the epilogue to Book III, where Caxton claims that, such is the demand for this text, a mere translation in manuscript is not enough, which is why he has responded to the mandate from various people of status by accordingly turning to print as the right medium to ensure broader dissemination:

I have promysid to diverse gentilmen & to my frendes to addresse to hem as hastely as I might this sayd book / therfore I have practysed & lerned at my grete charge and dispense to ordeyne this said book in prynte after the mane & forme as ye may here see/ and is not wreton with penne and ynke as other bokes ben / to thende that every man may have them attones (Lefevre, 1473/74, sig. Tt5)

Thus, whilst Taylor’s observation of the potential for the printer’s preface or prologue to create a window into the rewriting strategy is borne out by some of the output of printer-publishers such as Vérard, who inject considerable individuality into their front-matter, there is evidence to suggest that some printers opted not to capitalize on the opportunity in quite the same way.

Amongst the printers who do compose/include a preface or prologue, what emerges in a number of cases – though certainly not all – is a tendency to resort to known formulae, marketing devices, and tropes that had a track record of persuading a reader to take the leap and buy. Nevertheless, although the details of the prefaces by printers who make themselves visible may rely more on commonplace tropes and advertisements than an accurate account of the rewriting practices that have taken place, the concept of rewriting itself is still brought to the fore and openly advertised to the reader. Moreover, could we consider the way in which prefaces present and contextualize the narrative material as a form of rewriting in itself? Perhaps Caxton’s emphasis on Arthur’s significance for English national unity could act as a lens which re-focuses the reader’s attention onto certain aspects of the text, even if he did not actively rewrite those aspects himself.

Does this suggest, then, that a heavily reworked text was more likely to appeal to the reader, in contrast to the illusion, produced by invisible translation, of direct access to the original? The different extents to which the printer dramatizes the work of rewriting for different
texts suggests that the reality is not so clear cut. It would be overly simplistic to think of this merely on the basis of an inversion (i.e., where modern publishing makes the translator invisible, early modern printing made the printer visible). Rather, in the early days of the printing industry, where *marchands-libraires* were undertaking huge financial risks and had yet to establish a foolproof marketing strategy, the visibility or invisibility of the printer and their revisions seems to be more of a spectrum than a strict opposition. There are, for instance, many examples of printers who do not provide any kind of prefatory matter other than the obligatory title page: in the world of printed French Arthurian romance, which will be our focus in this study, Vérard’s own four successive editions of the *Tristan en prose* provide a case in point, as do the editions published by any and all of the *Merlin’s* and *Artus de Bretagne’s* successive printers. Even the two editions of the *Saint Graal* contain no prologue, though the incorporation of a *privilège* in the 1516 edition (sig. ai), preventing other printers from producing editions of the text for a minimum of three years, does alert the consumer to some fine company amongst the books’ readers (amongst them François I; see Tether 2017, 168–169), if offering no particular insight into rewriting. In the remainder of this study, we will examine several instances of French Arthurian printed texts whose prefatory material can be situated somewhere on the spectrum from visibility to invisibility, and consider the extent to which the evident presence of the

---

7 For a full listing of all French Arthurian texts published by early modern printers in France, see Montorsi (2019, 172–173). Taylor (2014, 217–222) also provides a listing in her Appendix, but also includes the printing history of non-Arthurian *romans d’aventure*.

8 Printed 1489 (USTC 27596), pre-1496 (USTC 71497), c. 1499 (USTC 71498), and c. 1506 (USTC 8320).

9 The *Merlin* editions are: Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1498 (USTC 38121), c. 1503 (no USTC); Paris: Michel Le Noir, 1505 (USTC 26095); Rennes, Caen, Rouen: Jean Macé, Michel Angier, and Richard Massé, between 1507 and 1518 (USTC 55750); Paris: veuve J. Trepperel and Jean Janot, between 1512 and 1519 (USTC 55694); Paris: Philippe Le Noir, 1526 (USTC 6975) and 1528 (USTC 47146). On rewriting in Vérard’s *editio princeps* see Taylor (2011). The *Artus de Bretagne* editions, of which there are seventeen, are listed in Montorsi (2019, 172). Just two of these editions ([Lyon]: Jean de la Fontaine, 1493, USTC 70845 and Paris: Michel Le Noir, 1502, USTC 30255) were available for digital consultation. Their influence on the editions that followed them seems to have been considerable, so we are making an assumption that no prologue or preface was added, but there remains a chance a later printer might have sought to include one – only in-person consultation will enable confirmation.

10 Paris: Jean Petit, Galliot du Pré, and Michel Le Noir, 1516 (USTC 47273), and Paris: Philippe Le Noir, 1523 (USTC 27595).
rewriting process, or indeed, rewriting or re-framing within the preface itself, can inform a reader’s reception of the text.

**Galliot du Pré’s *Perceforest* (1528)**

We start with the vast romance of *Perceforest*, which was selected for publication first by the prolific publisher, Galliot du Pré, in 1528, before it was reprinted in more or less duplicate form by Gilles de Gourmont, Philippe Le Noir, and François Regnault in 1531–1532. The prologue and accompanying woodcut are set and reproduced identically in the two editions (sigs ℞ ii”–iii), as is the *privilège* (sig. ℞ ii’), possibly even using the original formes. As mentioned above, the preface is accompanied by a woodcut depicting an author (or editor?), which visually highlights the editorial work required to bring such a volume to its audience, and creating precisely that sense of the printer-publisher speaking directly to the reader. As such, we might well anticipate learning from the prologue that directly follows it some of the kinds of details that Taylor alerted us to look for.

The authorship of the prologue is not entirely clear. Whilst it is possible that it was written by Du Pré himself, Tania van Hemelryck (2016, 167) suggests that it is also likely that it could have been written by someone else in his employ; she points to the fact that in his other editions, Du Pré either preserves earlier prologues found in manuscripts, or commissions other writers to compose new ones.11 Whoever the prologue author may have been, he simply names himself as “le serviteur” (sig. ℞ iii’) at the end, which establishes a relationship of humble deference towards his readership. The prologue starts in exactly this vein, directly addressing the reader as “tresexcellentz belliqueulx invictissimes et insuperables heroes fra[n]coys salut honneur prouesse victoire et triumphe” (sig. ℞ ii’’)[the very best, warlike, invincible, and unsurpassable French heroes: greetings of honour, prowess, victory, and triumph]. Alongside flattering assumptions of nobility (“seigneurs tresmagnanimes”, *ibid.*), the heroic register of chivalric literature is extended to the prospective readers themselves, whose worthiness is compared to “les haultz faitz des princes francoys” [the high deeds of the French princes]: “le magnanime Pepin, le conquereur Charlemagne auguste, les chevaleureux pers” (sig. ℞ iii’) [the

---

11 Van Hemelryck (2016, 167) also points to the fact that Jacques de Mailles, author of another text published by Galliot du Pré in 1527, also refers to himself as “le Loyal serviteur” on the title page.
great Pepin, Charlemagne the venerable conqueror, the chivalrous peers]. It is notable that the prologue author takes his frame of reference from the *matière de France*, as opposed to the Arthurian context of the text at hand; indeed, as Christine Ferlampin-Acher (2017, 40) highlights, “l’édition de 1528 ‘désarthurianise’ *Perceforest*” [the edition of 1528 “dearthurianizes” *Perceforest*], a subject that Ferlampin-Acher (2020) has recently treated in even greater detail. This re-contextualization is also evident towards the end of the prologue, when the prologue author embarks on a sales-pitch style summary of what the reader will encounter in the story, with each episode introduced by “vous verrez” (sig. iii) [you will see]. The broad themes he mentions largely evoke those of Arthurian romance: we are told we will see tournaments, feasts, lovers experiencing joy and sadness, sons of kings disguising their identities. However, with the exception of Guinevere and Morgan, the majority of the characters that he names are ones that derive from the Classical tradition: Alexander, Circe, Julius Caesar, “Luces rommain”, and the knights’ deeds are compared to the Labours of Hercules. The prologue, then, relegates the Arthurian character of the text to the level of connotation through references to generic romance motifs, placing both the characters and readers into a literary genealogy that extends from the Classical period to the forefathers of its French readership.

Van Hemelryck (2016, 166) argues that the prologue operates “dans le but de s’approprier l’œuvre et de gommer toute contextualisation médiévale” [with the aim of appropriating the text and erasing any trace of its medieval context]. At the same time, it “révèle de l’ambivalence de la stratégie éditoriale de Galliot du Pré (qu’il soit ou non l’auteur du prologue): pour garantir un succès de librairie à ses œuvres, il loue, dans un subtil jeu de miroirs, à la fois son lectorat et sa production.” (Van Hemelryck 2016, 169) [reveals the ambivalence of Galliot du Pré’s editorial strategy (whether or not he is the author of the prologue): in order to guarantee successful sales of his works, he praises his readership and his production using a subtle game of mirrors]. When the prologue author praises the readers by invoking a list of contemporary scholars, including Robert Gaguin, Jean Bouchet, Clément Marot (sig. iii), Van Hemelryck (2016, 168) notes that Galliot du Pré had previously published works by all of these authors. Not only does the prologue author align the text with the work of these eminent writers, but also enables it to function as an advertisement for Du Pré’s other publications.

The “game of mirrors”, then, foregrounds Du Pré’s presence as a publisher and aligns the 1528 edition of *Perceforest* with his own back-catalogue, at the same time as re-framing the
matière of the text in ways that may appeal to his intended customers, and even influence their reading of the text. In this sense, the préfacier makes Du Pré, his work, and the act of publishing in print itself visible to the readers. But whilst the printer and/or prologue author foregrounds his intervention, he presents this explicitly as a form of passive mediation, as opposed to active rewriting. Whilst the readers are praised in the same terms as the text’s ancient heroes, the author of the prologue – much as Caxton does\(^\text{12}\) – adopts a corresponding tone of supplication, invoking the rhetorical position of *captatio benevolentiae* in order to secure the goodwill of his audience:

> veu que mon debile esprit a peine pourroit fournir stille condecent pour addresser au moindre de vous, parquoy d’entreprendre presenter escriptz a tant de claires et perspicaces veues pourra vous sembler trop téméraire […] A la verite, seigneurs, je suis assez adverty que mes imbecilles oeuvres ne pourroient desservir destre presentees a voz tresprudens regards. (sig. ii\(^\text{v}\))

[Given that my feeble mind can hardly find a way that is appropriate to addressing even the least of you, which is why it may seem too imprudent of me to present writings to such discerning and observant minds as yours […] In truth, lords, I am well aware that my foolish works are unworthy of being presented to your discerning gaze.]

The relationship between printer and reader that is established here does not only have the effect of flattering the prospective buyer of the text, but also, more subtly, of allowing the printer to position himself clearly in a triangular relationship between the text and reader. The *captatio benevolentiae* is conventionally a device adopted by the author of the text, and in adopting it, the prologue author implicitly places himself in an authorial position. However, the exact nature of this *captatio benevolentaie* paradoxically marks a clear separation between the author and the printer: he claims that he is not equipped to present his own work, so he must present the work of another author instead:

> “seigneurs tresillustres, que feray je? Si je me tais, je suis ingrat. Si j’escriptz, je ne puis si hault voller que d’attaindre le moindre de vos dignitez en dangier de temerite. Doncques convient il que je evite tous les deux vices s’il m’est possible. A quoy ne puisse autre meilleur moyen trouver que en non pouvant vous presenter du mien j’emprunte

\(^{12}\) Caxton (1485, sig. III\(^\text{v}\)) makes a direct comparison between himself and his exalted readers by referring to himself, in a moment of contrived false modesty, as a “symple persone” in his preface to the *Morte.*
l’autrui. Or est venu en mes mains la tresplaisante histoire du tresnoble roy Perceforest [...] (sig. ʒ iiiř)

[“My celebrated lords, what should I do? If I remain silent, I am ungrateful. If I write, will never be able to fly high enough to reach the least part of your worthiness, and I risk audacity. Therefore, I must avoid both vices if I can. And so, since I am unable to present my own work to you, I can think of no better solution than borrowing the work of another. Now, the very delight story of the very noble King Perceforest has come into my possession [...]”]

Whilst the visibility of the printer and his work is evident, he continues to assert that he is unable to present his own writing (“Et m’excusez si n’en pouvant vous offrir oeuvre par mon compilée [...]” (sig. ʒ iiiř) [And excuse me for not being able to present work that I have composed myself]). This, conversely, insists on his invisibility, making himself out to be nothing more than a poor conduit for another author's writing. In doing so, however, he succeeds in making himself very visible indeed. The frequent references to his inability offer his own work, alongside the absence of any references to rewriting, modernization, or adaptation, suggests to the reader that they will be accessing the text in a direct, unmediated form. At the same time, this protestation of invisibility only serves to make Du Pré’s role more evident; he enacts a clear separation from the original author by insisting that the work is theirs and not his, he replaces the author's voice with his own (or that of the prologue author, if not himself), and brings his role as an intermediary to the fore even as he extensively denies it. The interplay of the visibility and invisibility of rewriting, then, creates a relationship to the original text that is both transparent and heavily mediated, allowing the text to be marketed as both new and classic at the same time. This technique clearly proved successful, because the syndicate of three printers who then reprinted his edition in 1531–1532 kept the prologue in its entirety.

**Galliot du Pré’s Méliadus de Leonnoys (1528)**

Du Pré published his edition of *Perceforest* in the same year (1528) as another of his Arthurian enterprises, *Méliadus de Leonnoys*, which was also re-printed a few years later by Denis Janot in 1533. The *Roman de Méliadus* forms the oldest part of Rustichello da Pisa’s *Guiron le Courtois Cycle*, and is not found isolated from other parts of the cycle in manuscripts. The decision to separate *Méliadus* out in print seems to be one taken solely by the early modern printer-
publishers concerned, rather than one inspired or informed by earlier reading practice or preference, at least as far as the extant manuscript compilation sequencing is able to suggest (Taylor 2014, 92–94). As well as a fairly standard *privilège* (printed on the verso of title page), both editions are given a new prologue (textually identical in both, meaning Janot simply took over Du Pré’s into his edition wholesale), which is preceded by another “stock” woodcut of a scribe at work, whom again we are presumably to interpret as representing the printer-publisher responsible for the prologue (sig. ✽ii°v in Du Pré’s edition, and sig. ✽ii°v in Janot’s). Even though the text of the prologue is identical in both, the textual layout and accompanying woodcut (albeit not the scene depicted) are different.

On the face of it, then, Du Pré employs a strikingly similar treatment for *Méliadus* as he does for *Perceforest*, ensuring that the editorial process applied to the material is immediately visible to the reader. However, whereas the author of the *Perceforest* prologue conspicuously denies any textual intervention, the prologue to *Méliadus* instead insists on the rewriting that he has undertaken. This work of rewriting, which he repeatedly highlights as his “labour”, is described in essentially cosmetic terms. We are informed that the former version, was “plein de vieil langage” (Du Pré ✽ii°v; Janot ✽ii°v) [full of old language], and that he plans “de le purger de tous les vices qui y abundoient” (Du Pré ✽ii°v; Janot ✽ii°v) [to purge it of all the vices with which it is replete]. Not only has the language been subjected to improvement, but organizational work has been undertaken in relation to Rustichello’s narrative itself which, according to the préfacier, has been translated “amplement et confusionement” (Du Pré ✽ii°v; Janot ✽ii°v) [abundantly and confusedly]. He thus claims that he has done his level best to “[mettre] en ordre quelle nestoit devant” (Du Pré ✽ii°v; Janot ✽ii°v) [put it in an order that it did not have before].

The insistence on the adaptation of the language and organization, then, establishes a distinction between two author figures – the préfacier and Rustichello – which becomes mapped onto a distinction between form and content. The préfacier is concerned that the “nobles faits”

---

13 The symbol used for the signature in the Janot edition is a fleur-de-lis turned 90° clockwise. We approximate this using the closest symbol available in Wingdings. Note that the quotations from the *Méliadus* prologue follow the Du Pré edition; the Janot edition does not differ except insofar as more abbreviation is employed.

14 The woodcut from Janot’s edition is to be found as the cover image for this book. Du Pré’s is also the very same that he used for his 1528 *Perceforest* (see Fig. 1).
(Du Pré  ii, Janot  ii) [noble deeds] of King Méliadus would be lost to posterity if the content of the text were not made available, but he indicates that they must be mediated linguistically and formally by him in order to be acceptable to a modern audience. The distinction is not clear cut, as he accepts that he can only impose so much order on the narrative without having to “destruire ce present volume et en refaire ung tout nouveau qui eust este priver ledit maistre Rusticien de son labeur et donner peine infinye a celluy qui eust ce voulu parfaire” (Du Pré  ii, Janot  ii) [destroy the present volume and start again from scratch, which would have erased the work of Master Rustichello, and been a huge amount of effort for anyone who decided to undertake it], establishing Rustichello as a limiting factor in his own work of linguistic and formal rewriting. Nevertheless, the presence of Rustichello as a representative of “content” within the prologue becomes a foil used by the préfacier to set up a series of oppositions that frame the visibility of his own formal interventions. Rustichello’s work is valuable, yes, but it is also old, disordered, unintelligible; the préfacier’s interventions, on the other hand, are modern, organized, and intelligible.

As with the prologue to Du Pré’s Perceforest, then, the doubling and separation of the authorial figure serves to present the text as all things to all readers – original and authentic, but also modern and user-friendly. Curiously, though, whereas the Perceforest edition seeks to “dearthurianize” the text by re-contextualizing it with Classical references, the prologue to the Méliadus edition foregrounds and elaborates on the text’s place within the broader Arthurian intertext. Meliadus’ genealogy, which, according to the preface, was omitted in error by Rustichello, is briefly outlined here. Although not all of these ancestors are Arthurian in origin, the protagonist’s lineage begins with Bron, brother-in-law of Joseph of Arimathea in the Estoire del saint graal, which draws a connection to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle (Du Pré  ii, Janot  ii). More importantly, though, the préfacier uses this Arthurian intertext as another pretext to justify the work of formal revision that he seeks to make visible. He defends his redaction of some of the longer episodes by explaining that they are “bien au long declairees es livres faitz de la table ronde” (Du Pré  ii, Janot  ii) [extensively explained in other books that have been written about the Round Table], and that there is “rien inparfaict dedans ce present volume qui ne soit parfaict aux autres volume de la table ronde” (Du Pré  ii; Janot  ii) [nothing incomplete in the present volume that is not complete in other volumes about the Round Table]. In actual fact,
this printed edition does the opposite by borrowing Tristan’s death scene from the prose Tristan as an apparent means of creating closure (Taylor 2014, 95–96). Nevertheless, the prologue’s claims serve not only to highlight the rationalization and modernization of the printed text, but they also provide the reader with a specific frame through which to read the preface, situating the text both chronologically and generically within the Arthurian universe. By referring readers to the “premier volume de Tristan” (Du Pré ✿ ii; Janot ✿ ii) [the first volume of Tristan] for more information about Méliadus’s lineage, the prologue strengthens the intertextual connections that Du Pré had downplayed in his Perceforest. This strategy had an additional commercial benefit for Denis Janot who, as noted above, reprinted the Méliadus in 1533 following Du Pré’s model very closely (albeit with reset text), alongside an edition of the prose Tristan as a companion volume. The direct references to the story of Tristan are converted, in this new context, to an advertisement for Janot’s companion edition.

As Taylor (2014, 93–94) has noted, the preface to Du Pré’s edition is misleading in its claims to have “rationalized” and “re-ordered” the text on a formal level. Its effect, however, is to create a frame through which to read the narrative, rather than to provide an index of the actual rewriting practice in the main text. The préfacier separates himself clearly from Rustichello in order to make his own editorial interventions visible, producing a paratext that offers a filter through which the reader receives the text. This paratext presents the text as a thoroughly Arthurian narrative, but one which has been purged of the disorder and linguistic alterity that could make this genre less appealing to a contemporary reader.

Galliot du Pré and Pierre Vidoue’s Ysaïe le Triste (c. 1522)

In collaboration with Pierre Vidoue, Du Pré takes a similar approach to prefacing, or having prefaced, his Ysaïe le Triste, which appeared around six years prior to his Perceforest and Méliadus. However, and perhaps unsurprisingly given that it is the first of his Arthurian volumes to be published with a prologue, Du Pré’s approach appears a little less developed than in his later publications. There is no accompanying woodcut on this occasion, for instance, though

15 The Tristan was not published by Du Pré. Prior to his 1528 edition of Méliadus, it had been printed by Vérard (1489, before 1496, c. 1499 and c. 1506), Michel Le Noir and Jean Petit (1514), and Michel Le Noir (1520).
there is a *privilège* protecting the work for three years (sig. a.i\(^{v}\)) and a prologue or, as it is called here, a “proesme” of good length (sig. a.ii\(^{r}\)–a.iii\(^{v}\)). This prologue is also to be found re-used in a later edition published 1547–1566 by Jean Bonfons (sig. a.i\(^{v}\)–a.ii\(^{v}\)). In this prologue, Du Pré (or his *préfacier*) spends far less time extolling the virtues and high status of his reader than in his later Arthurian publications, though he does at least make sure of referring to him twice as “mon treshonnore et redouble seigneur” (Du Pré, sigs a.ii\(^{r}\) and a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sigs a.\(i^{r}\) and a.ii\(^{v}\)) [my most honoured and revered lord].

The *préfacier* of *Ysaïe* highlights his own textual interventions much more explicitly than the authors of the other Arthurian prologues, too. In his mind, there is little that is more instructive than “cognoissance des hystoyres / croniques / faictz / et tresglorieuses poussesses et vaillance de chevalerie”\(^{16}\) (Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)) [knowledge of the (hi)stories, chronicles, deeds, and glorious chivalric feats and valiance], and it is for this reason that he has taken it upon himself to “rediger par escript et reformer en commu[n] langaige vulgaire / lhistory du tresvaillant et peux chevalier Isaye le triste / filz de Tristan de leonnoys / iadis chevalier de la table ro[n]de” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{r}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)) [record in writing, and reformulate in the common vulgar language, the story of the valiant and brave knight, Isaïe the Sad, son of Tristan of Lyonesse, once knight of the Round Table]. Whilst expressing modesty with regards to the limits of his knowledge (“linsuffisance de mon scavoir”, Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{r}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)), he states more than once that he has proverbially “take pen in hand” (“mettre la main a la plume”, Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)), directly suggesting that the text has undergone rewriting or editorial work. As in the examples above, he clearly separates himself from the author (described here as the “premier hystoriographe”, Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)) [the original historiographer], whilst also claiming to have striven to reproduce “la verite des sentences” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sig. a.\(i^{v}\)) [the truth of the meaning]. This separation is similarly underlined by a juxtaposition between old and new, which, in this case, is superimposed more broadly onto a distinction between the present text and “other books” which may appear old and antiquated (“vieulx et anciens”) in comparison to this one, which will seem “du tout nouvelle” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\); Bonfons, sig. a.ii\(^{v}\)) [completely new]. In this sense, the

\(^{16}\) Transcriptions are given according to the Du Pré/Vidoue edition of *Ysaïe*. The Bonfons edition is textually identical, save for some minor orthographical and abbreviation differences.
préfacier adopts the same tropes as those discussed above, but he does so without cultivating an ambiguous visibility that both highlights and plays down his own work. Instead, his own interventions seem to eclipse more or less that of the author, making the work or rewriting and mediation very clear.

As we have seen with Méliadus, though, the extent of Du Pré’s planned rewriting (or reordering) of the narrative content is relatively limited, thus creating something of a mirage where rewriting serves as a lens through which the reader should consume and appreciate not only the narrative, but also – and importantly – the labour of the rewriter/printer/publisher. And, as in the previous examples, the printer’s labour is framed through the re-contextualization of the text, which acts as a filter for the reader’s reception. In this case, the préfacier presents the text not just for the purposes of entertainment, but also for the sake of moral edification. He suggests that the story would be useful for “l’institution de tous ieunes princes desirans et ayans le cueur instigue a veoir choses nouvelles touchant le noble faict des armes” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii;r; Bonfons, sig. a.i”) [the instruction of all young princes who desire and are eager to see new things related to noble deeds of arms], which might lead them to “tout honneur et gloyre” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii;r; Bonfons, sig. a.i”) [complete honour and glory]. Whilst the prologue largely plays down the Arthurian context in favour of a more Classical framing, which references Socrates and Aristotle, he argues that the deeds of Ysaïe exceed those of the Romans and “plusieurs aultres princes et chevaliers du temps passe” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii;r; Bonfons, sig. a.ii”) [many other princes and knights of times past] because Ysaïe’s Christianity makes him a more appropriate moral example: “car son intention estoit stimulee de charite/ si quil a faict ses nobles proesses vertueuses pour l’honneur de Jesucrist [...]” (Du Pré, sig. a.ii;r; Bonfons, sig. a.ii”) [Because his intentions were motivated by charity, as far as his noble and virtuous deeds of prowess were done for the honour of Jesus Christ.]

In doing this, the préfacier draws a conventional distinction between the old and the new that serves to validate the modernity of the present text, but in this case, it is articulated through the moralized opposition between the paganism of the ancients and the Christianity of more recent heroes. This distinction is then integrated into the préfacier’s description of his own rewriting practices, and his conventional claims to have modernized the antiquated language of the original. The préfacier explains that he wishes to preserve the story of Ysaïe for posterity, and in a form that is up-to-date and accessible. He is, he claims,
[p]ar le conduyt et souveraine guyde des livres et hystoires […] qui a faict prendre le labeur et peine a Julles Cesar empereur de Romme / de vouloir rediger par escript / et lesser a ses successeurs / les commentaires […] cest doncques la cause principalle qui a dressee ma main et mis ma plume sur le papier / pour ourdir et tistre la matiere et hystoire presente / non pas en petit de labeur / car loriginal estoit en si estrange et mausvais langaige mis et couche que a grant peine en ay peu entendre le sens / et elucider la forme de la matiere. (Du Pré, sig a.ii'); Bonfons, sig. a.ii')

[guided by the superior example of books and (hi)stories that have seized upon the labours and efforts of Julius Caesar, emperor of Rome, to wish to set down in writing and leave to his successors his commentaries […] This is thus the main cause that has directed my hand and put quill to paper: to warp and weave the present story, and not without considerable labour, for the original was set down in such a strange and terrible language that I could barely understand the meaning and grasp the form of the material.]

The visibility that Du Pré gives to the editorial task at hand, then, once again revolves around the modernization of language and the notion of creating “order”; however, in this case, the order and modernization is validated by the aforementioned distinction between Julius Caesar – ancient and pagan – and Ysaïe, who represents virtue through the contemporary frame of Christianity. Even without a woodcut to depict it, the emphasis on the importance of the editorial task – its visibility, in other words – if anything, is lent even more weight by the préfacier’s use of this conventional juxtaposition. This reworked, modernized text, then, is presented to the reader as a form of worthy instruction, which acts both as an advertisement for potential buyers and a paratextual re-framing of the text as a whole for potential readers.

Antoine Vérard’s Gyron le Courtois (c. 1503) and Claude Nourry’s Giglan (1512–1530)

As we have seen in the previous case studies, the printer and/or prologue author often treads a fine line between visibility and invisibility, frequently making their interventions visible whilst still appearing to offer unmediated access to the text. In all cases so far, this ambiguous visibility has been negotiated by enacting a clear separation between the author and printer. The final two examples, on the other hand, provide instances of prologues where the printers do not separate themselves from the author, and instead exploit the enigmatic identity of the authorial voice. To
begin with, in his edition of *Gyron le Courtois* of c. 1503,\(^{17}\) Antoine Vérard’s does not compose a printer’s prologue. Rather, he leaves Rustichello’s original prologue, relatively unchanged (albeit prefixed by a few summary sentences explaining the general subject of the narrative and slightly abbreviated; cf. that found on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1463, fol. 1r) to introduce the text on his behalf.\(^{18}\) As we have seen, Vérard’s edition of *Lancelot* was prefixed by an evolving, highly developed preface across its subsequent editions, whereas his various reprints of *Tristan* were endowed with no such prefatory matter whatsoever. Interestingly, his *Gyron* occupies a kind of middle ground between these two extremes. Upon reading it, this is perhaps not surprising, because the style and content of the prologue happens to align, already, with the gradually accruing conventions of print, covering many of the key features alluded to above as “must haves” for an early modern preface or prologue. For instance, Rustichello opens with a laudatory address to “Seigneurs / Empereurs / Roys / princes / ducz / contes / Barons / Chevaliers / Vicontes / Bourgeois et tous les preudhommes de cestuy monde qui talent avez de vous delecter en romans” (sig. ai v) [Lords, Emperors, Kings, princes, dukes, counts, Barons, Knights, Viscounts, Bourgeois, and all gentlemen of this world who have a wish to enjoy romance]: an audience made up of just the kinds of noble and important people an early modern printer would wish to be amongst his named readership, in other words. We are also introduced to the translator, “rusticiens de puise” [Rustichello da Pis\(a\)], who “compila” [compiled] and “translata” [translated] the text “du livre de Monseigneur Edouart le roy dangleterre” (sig. ai r) [from the book belonging to Edward, king of England]. We might of course question whether this book existed at all, given the commonplace of claiming the existence of an authoritative source in medieval literature. There then follows an enumeration of all the topics that Rustichello ensures to translate, summed up as follows: “Et saicchez que il traitctera en ce present livre de plusieurs nobles vaillantises dignes de memoire a tous nobles roys / ducz / contes et chevaliers et a tous ceulx que prendront plaisir a lire cy dedans.” (sig. ai v) [And know that in the present book he will treat several noble acts of valiance worthy of memory by all noble kings, dukes, counts, and knights, and all those who take pleasure in reading what is within.] In other words, this prologue uses so many of the key devices that Vérard may have felt

\(^{17}\) *Gyron* was also published in a later edition by Jean Petit and Michel Le Noir in c. 1516 (USTC 26336), which Michel Le Noir then reprinted in 1519 (USTC 26394).

\(^{18}\) The prologue can be found in the printed book on sig. ai v. On Rustichello’s prologue, see Cigni (2014, 24–26).
it unnecessary to make his own interventions visible. He may also, however, have been exploiting the ambiguity that is already present in the prologue as to whose voice it is that the readers are hearing. The fact that Rustichello is referred to in the third person means that the speaker could plausibly be either Rustichello himself, or a third party – perhaps Vérard, the public face of the printing enterprise. Whereas in Du Pré’s edition of the Méliadus part of the Guiron Cycle, the préfacier clearly separates himself from Rustichello and sets the latter up as the scapegoat for anything that might be considered antiquated, Vérard’s invisibility here allows him to share agency with both Rustichello and the supposed original author (who may have been Hélie de Boron). Why Vérard oscillates so significantly between visibility and invisibility in the prefatory matter to his different editions is hard to say, but perhaps he relied on a kind of gut instinct (like many of his contemporaries, since there was little else to inform printers’ business acumen at the time) as to which texts required his profile to sell whatever it was that the edition sought to achieve. Perhaps the content of this particular prologue allowed him to maintain the same ambiguous visibility cultivated by the prologues to Perceforest and Méliadus, which offer both direct and mediated access to an older text.

Vérard’s conflation of the authorial and editorial voice is reflected in the prologue to Claude Nourry’s Giglan (1512–1530) which, interestingly, adopts the same conventional topos of the mysterious source text that Rustichello uses to explain the composition of his cycle. Where Vérard uses a pre-existing prologue, Giglan’s publisher composes (or has composed) a new prologue that merely resembles the sort of preface found in older Arthurian manuscripts. Rather than a straightforward case of an Arthurian narrative simply being transmuted from manuscript to printed book with some rewriting as part of the process, Giglan is in fact an example of rewriting almost from scratch, since it represents an amalgamation (albeit rather hamfisted) of sections from Le Bel Inconnu by Renaut de Beaujeu and the Occitan Jaufré. Giglan’s printing history remains rather obscure; whilst the Lyon-based printer Claude Nourry is perhaps best known as the text’s publisher, there is some evidence that an earlier edition might have been produced between c. 1512 and 1519 in Paris by Veuve J. Trepperel and Jean Janot, the sole surviving example of which is to be found in the Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen. However, the

---

19 This is how the narrator refers to himself in the prologue to the Roman de Méliadus, the oldest part of the Guiron le Courtois cycle, but there is much speculation as to whether Hélie de Boron is in fact a literary fiction or device; see Lathuillère (1966) and Morato (2010).
Göttingen book has no date and no named printers, so its exact production history remains opaque (see Mortorsi 2019, 171–173; Cappello 2014, n. 3). Even Nourry’s first edition of the text is difficult to pinpoint, since an undated copy in the Bibliothèque nationale de France may date to between 1512 and 1530, whilst examples of a close comparator in other repositories such as the British Library are definitively dated to 1530 (Taylor 2014, 120). The Göttingen book also contains no prologue, so it is that found in Nourry’s edition(s), and later taken over in its entirety by fellow Lyon printers Gilles and Jacques Huguetan in their edition of 1539, upon which we focus on here.

Given the confusion around the text’s publication, it is especially interesting that this comparatively short prologue (just half a page in length and printed on the verso of the title page in both the Nourry and Huguetan editions) should forego the usual extended laudations in respect of the reader and instead give a detailed account of how the book came into being. As alluded to above, the first curiosity is that Nourry is apparently not the author, rather this is a “translator’s prologue”, and the translator names himself as one Claude Platin, “humble religieux de lordre monseigneur sainct Anthoine”20 [humble monk of the Order of St Anthony]. Platin, a genuine historical figure who is known to have been active c. 1515–c. 1540, claims that one day, in “ung petite librarie” [a small bookshop], he happened upon “ung gros livre de parchemin bien vieil escript en rime espaignolle assez difficile a entendre” [a large, very old parchment book, written in difficult-to-understand Spanish rhyme]. Inside this volume, he continues, he discovered a little story about two noble knights of the Round Table, which is what is now found translated into French prose here. Given what we know about the sources of Giglan, this seems an unlikely tale at best, and may be playing up to the growing taste for so-called sentimental romances derived from Spanish and Italian (Taylor 2014, 124). The story, as noted above, also recalls the conventional reference to a “mysterious source” often found in medieval narratives, which is perhaps designed to lend an air of authenticity and historicity to what is, in effect, probably a new compilation. Whilst it appears entirely likely that Platin was himself responsible for combining and rewriting Jaufré and Le Bel Inconnu into the present tale, the notion that he

---

20 Transcriptions follow the Nourry edition, but the Huguetan edition is identical save for slight differences in the use of abbreviation. Since in both editions the prologue is wholly on the verso of the title page, signature references are not given after every quotation.
translated and prosified *Giglan* from Spanish seems a remote possibility. \(^{21}\) By including this prologue, Nourry thus shines a light on an editorial process, even if not the editorial process, making it visible for all to see; the fact that the account of that process is likely inaccurate seems not to matter. And just as elsewhere, we find some of the usual devices to which we have become accustomed, such as an apparent anxiety to avoid appearing anything less than modest: “ie prie que les faultes qui y seront trouvees ilz veuille[n]t corriger: et excuser mon ignora[n]ce laquelle ne pas petite. Et aussi de ne se arrester pas audictes faultes.” [I pray that in respect of the faults that will be found here, please do correct them and excuse my ignorance, which is not small. And please do not stop at the said faults.] This is, in other words, a further example of the kind of self-protection trope that we have seen elsewhere. Even in this short prologue, then, by including Platin’s account of his work, Nourry gives his reader ample opportunity to note and appreciate the work that has been undertaken in bringing the text to print. There is little focus on what is rewritten in the narrative – indeed, the extensiveness of the rewriting whereby two separate texts have been combined is actually purposefully obscured in favour of the familiar tale of rescuing the narrative from an old, difficult language, and of providing a romanticized version of events presumably to achieve a more marketable effect. This romanticized version essentially relies on the vagueness in authorship that is implied by the discovery of a mysterious source; it is a convention that continually defers responsibility for the matter of the text back to a shadowy author figure who is lost in the mists of time. Other prologues tend to highlight and exploit the author’s identity, in order to project onto the original author aspects that they wish to appropriate or reject. In this case, the prologue absorbs and conflates the work of the author, translator, and printer in much the same way as Vérard’s *Gyron*, hiding the editorial work behind a familiar trope.

**Conclusion**

\(^{21}\) If Platin undertook any translation out of Spanish, it is more probable that the source might have been, for instance, the Spanish edition of *Jaufré* first published by Juan de Varela de Salamanca in Toledo in 1513 under the title *La coronica* [sic.] *de los nobles caualleros Tablante de Ricamonte y de Jofre hijo del conde Donason*). It was not uncommon for French printers to use as exemplars recent publications in “modern” foreign vernaculars over old manuscripts written in archaic language, such as has been shown for the French language printed versions of *Floire et Blanchefleur*, which were translated from a Spanish printed source; see Tether (2020, 371).
Lawrence Venuti’s work on the invisibility of the translator reveals that the *perception* of translation practices is more important than the practices themselves; in other words, giving a translated text the appearance of transparency, originality, and unmediated authorship is more crucial to the reader-facing publication process than the actual work that goes into the translation. For the early modern printer, similarly, it seems that the level of reader-facing visibility and the presentation of rewriting practices and/or editorial interventions was more commercially valuable than the genuine interventions themselves. The presentation of these practices – whether it be the modernization of antiquated language, the rationalization and redaction of the story, or indeed the absence of any interventions – provides a paratextual frame that guides reading.

In our study of Arthurian examples, we have seen total invisibility, where no preliminary material is included at all, whereas in others various types, and even levels, of visibility were employed to differing effect. Some prologues allowed the reader to glean a clear view of both the publisher and the process – and importantly the labour – of reshaping the text for modern needs, in the sense of adapting and renewing language (such as in Galliot du Pré’s *Méliadus*). Others, meanwhile, rewrote and reframed the narrative by placing emphasis on particular content and extra-textual connections that were not necessarily subject to associate heavy rewriting or foregrounding within the main text itself, in which cases the publisher gains visibility, but the process does not (such as, for example, in Du Pré’s *Perceforest* and Du Pré and Vidoue’s *Ysâie*). Equally, some publishers opted to remediate the process and/or the content through an “older” authority, either by retaining an existing prologue from the medieval original, subtly adapted (as in Antoine Vérard’s *Gyron le Courtois*), or by inventing one, but giving it the appearance of having preceded the current enterprise (such as in Claude Nourry’s *Giglan*). And indeed, several of these *préfaciers* adopted a combination of these tactics.

What is striking is how often certain similarities emerge in these prefaces and prologues, even where different levels of visibility of printer and process are used. With the exception of *Giglan* and *Perceforest*, *préfaciers* tended to enact a clear separation between themselves and the text’s author, which allowed them to project onto that author various attributes and values that they either wanted to reject or exploit. For the *préfacier* of *Perceforest*, the original author is the guarantor of the text’s quality and authenticity; for that of *Méliadus*, Rustichello represents the outdated, disordered, and linguistically difficult aspects that must be purged from the present
edition. Moreover, alongside flattery of the reader and, in several cases, emphasis of key content that might attract a consumer (most usually focusing on chivalric episodes for the benefit of “noble” readers), it is most frequently the updating, or translation, of language that is highlighted as the focus of the printer-publisher’s enterprise. Amongst our case studies, indeed, only one – *Perceforest* – avoided this trope, preferring instead to focus on reframing the *matière* within the Classical world. Even within this, “translation” appears to cover a range of practice; on the one hand, as well as translation from one vernacular to another (as alluded to in *Giglan*, for example), some printer-publishers present it as dragging the text into modernized language by purging it of old language (see Delsaux/Van Hemelryck 2019, 218–219 on Du Pré). On the other hand, the focus for some is more about facilitating the comprehension of difficult, as opposed to just old, language, such as transforming poetry into prose, which Colombo Timelli (2007, 145) refers to as a kind of “traduction intralinguale” [intralingual translation].

The prose *Perceval* printed in Paris by the syndicate of Jean Longis, Jean Saint Denis, and Galliot du Pré in 1530 provides perhaps the clearest example of this. Here the prologue is intriguingly entitled “Le prologue de l’acteur” (fol. 1r/ sig. ai) [the prologue of the actor/agent], thus blurring the visibility of who is responsible for it, just as we have seen elsewhere, but perhaps even more explicitly so; as Colombo Timelli (2008, 10–11) has argued, there are implicit shades of Chrétien here (thanks to subtle intertextual citation of his original prologue), and more explicit ones of the “translator/prosifier” and the printer-publisher (see also Tether 2017, 43–44). However opaque the prologue’s authorship is, however, process is certainly visible, as we are told that the job of “traduire et mectre [the narrative] de Rithme en prose familiere” (fol. 1v/ sig. ai) [translating and to putting [the narrative] from rhyme into familiar prose] is undertaken specifically “pour satisfaire aux desirs, plaisirs et uolontez des Pri[n]ces, seigneurs et aultres suyuans la maternelle langue de France” (fol. 1v/ sig. ai) [to satisfy the desires, pleasures and wishes of the princes, lords and others speaking the maternal language of France]. This sense of a readerly need being satisfied in itself goes some way to explaining why so many printer-publishers opt to showcase that aspect of their rewriting work in prefaces and prologues. On the surface, such prefatory references may seem generic, even indistinct from one another; they *are* tropes in a sense. But there are also subtle distinctions to be made. As Taylor

---

22 See also Taylor’s (2017, 169–170) taxonomy of translation as rewriting.
(2015, 290) puts it: “Translation and ré-écriture have, of course, always been about the power relation between source culture and target culture: the adaptor or translator has always as his first preoccupation to appropriate and thus refract – sometimes to rewrite – a source text in order to ensure that it can remain alive and functioning in a new cultural context.” To make sales, in other words, translation and modernization are powerful marketing devices and even the briefest, most generic mention should cement the “power relation” required; but as we have seen, it is also an umbrella term, underneath which a broad range of practice is housed. As such, the préfacier’s art lies less in the adoption of the trope than it does in the level of visibility he gives to it.

References


Giglan. Lyon: Charles Nourry, between 1512 and 1530 (USTC 88797); Lyon: Gilles and Jacques Huguetan, 1539 (USTC 79974).


Merlin. Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1498 (USTC 38121), c. 1503 (no USTC); Paris: Michel Le Noir, 1505 (USTC 26095); Rennes, Caen, Rouen: Jean Macé, Michel Angier, and Richard Massé, between 1507 and 1518 (USTC 55750); Paris: veuve J. Trepperel and Jean Janot, between 1512 and 1519 (USTC 55694); Paris: Philippe Le Noir, 1526 (USTC 6975) and 1528 (USTC 47146).


*Tristan en prose*. Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1489 (USTC 27596), pre-1496 (USTC 71497), c. 1499 (USTC 71498), and c. 1506 (USTC 8320).


*Ysâie le Triste*. Paris: Pierre Vidoue and Galliot du Pré, c. 1522 (USTC 26469); Paris: Jean Bonfons, between 1547 and 1566 (USTC 55821).