

## The semantic field of Old French *Astele*: the pitfalls of the medieval gloss in lexicography

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### ABSTRACT

The case of *astele* is used in this article to demonstrate how Old French organized its semantic fields differently from the modern language, with more synonymy and polysemy. Consequently, dictionaries of Old French need to take account of this situation when compiling their entries if they are to reflect accurately the semantic organization of the language rather than that of modern French. This raises the question of the use to be made of the thousands of multilingual glosses which, in line with this medieval linguistic attitude, are liable to be dismissed as vague or inaccurate and so excluded from dictionaries.

At first sight the medieval French *astele* is unlikely to create problems for the lexicographer. Classical Latin had *hastile* and *hastula* ('**hastile** . . . **A.** A spear, javelin . . . **B.** In gen. a piece of wood in the form of a shaft.' [Lewis and Short, 1879]), so the Medieval Latin form *astella*: '**astella** . . . stick (esp.) for firewood. **b.** cart-pole, shaft. **c.** splint (med.)' (Latham, 1975) comes as no surprise. Nor is it unexpected to find the primary Latin meaning of 'stick, piece of wood' present in medieval French along with the form *astele*, although, as will be demonstrated, it would be unwise to assume that the medieval French term must inevitably have been modelled on the medieval Latin. Yet the treatment of **astele/estele** in the two standard dictionaries of Old French could hardly be more divergent. For Godefroy (1.456c–457b) *astele* is basically '*un éclat, morceau de bois, éclat en général*', a broad sense that gives rise to more specialized meanings accommodated within the same semantic structure – '*petite planchette en bois mince, latte de bois mince sur laquelle on met l'étoffe du fourreau*' and '*éclisse servant à maintenir les fractures*'. Yet one of his quotations appears to seriously extend this narrow framework of meaning, using not *astele* but *estele* to mean '*poteau, jambage d'une porte*', a piece of wood much larger than the usual 'chip', 'splinter', 'sliver of wood'. This meaning is supported by a note at the end of the entry: '*Dans la Beauce et le Perche estelle désigne le poteau d'une porte, le jambage*'. Moreover, Godefroy's very first quotation shows that from the middle of the twelfth century, at the latest, *astele* could mean a stick big and heavy enough to be used as an offensive weapon (*Roman de Rou*), and the note referred to above mentions the survival of this sense in Normandy at the end of the nineteenth century. For Godefroy

then, the various spellings beginning with 'a' in his entry and the single form *estele* all belong together, the determining semantic factors being the nature of the material and its general shape rather than the size of the object. However, although in his 'E' volume he has only a cross-reference '**ESTELE**, voir **ASTELE**' (3.605c), thus indicating that he regards the two as merely alternative spellings of the same word, this perception does not lead him to recognize the link between his entry immediately below this – '**ESTELEE**, s.f. *appentis*' – and the root noun *astele*, although the contexts of the quotations show that his *appentis* consists of wooden posts put together to make a 'lean-to' or 'shed'. This applies also to his entry '**ESTELET** -eulet, s.m. *sorte de poutre*' (3.605c). So, yet again, it would seem that the medieval conception of the basic sense of this 'word-family' was not specifically linked to size, but rather to the material concerned and its shape.

The approach taken by Tobler-Lommatzsch to the *astele/estele* question is quite different, its entries revealing a perception of the semantic situation completely at odds with that of Godefroy. Under '**astele**, *estele*' (1.610–11) the editors give the glosses '*Spahn (sic)*, *Scheit*' as the primary sense, with '*astelles*' in just one single quotation glossed as '*hölzerner Schaft einer Helbarde, Picke u. dgl.*' and two cases where the sense is that of '*als Minimalwert*' (we shall return to this below). However, later in the dictionary (3.1372) they give no fewer than four entries with the head-word '**estele**', thus indicating incontrovertibly that in their view the words are separate entities. The last of the four can be disposed of without further ado, being no more than an alternative spelling of *estoile*, but the other three deserve detailed attention, since they show the thinking behind the editors' semantic analysis of their evidence. In the first one, '**estele** s.f. s. *astele* [*Tilander Glan. lex.96: éclisse*]', the cross-reference and the absence of illustrative quotations tell the reader that he is dealing with a simple divergent spelling of **astele**, so that its meaning is basically 'a piece of wood', although the bracketed reference to Tilander's *Glanures lexicographiques* with its *estele* in the sense of 'splint' shows the form being used in one of the specialized senses picked up by Godefroy in his **astele** entry, where *estelles*, *astelles* and even '*attelle ou estelle*' are to be found with this meaning. New evidence kindly made available by Professor D.A. Trotter from his researches into the medical treatise *Albucasis* provides ample confirmation of this from Old French, Provençal and Latin. A mid-thirteenth-century continental manuscript of the work uses *estele* very frequently to mean 'splint' in its book on fractures, e.g. 'Et vis .i. autre mire qui [f.1va] prist en cure .i. duc de nostre terre qui avoit la jambe brisié et avec la briseure ot plaie et li mires plain d'ignorance estraint la plaie as esteles par fort lieure.' (ms. Bibliothèque nationale fr. 1318). Similarly, the thirteenth-century version of *Albucasis* in Old Provençal, *La Chirurgia* (Elsheikh, 1992), uses *astela*, *astelha(s)*, *stelhas(s)* repeatedly with this meaning (ff.112b, 114a, 114b, etc.), giving a drawing of the device at f.113b. Unsurprisingly, the Latin version of the text found in MS. 89ter in the École de Médecine at Montpellier uses *astella* etc.

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on a regular basis (ff. 158v, 160a etc.) to mean ‘splint’, and it too provides a drawing of the instrument. Additionally, several of the quotations given in the Tobler-Lommatzsch under **astele** (I.610) would call for a gloss such as *Stock* or *Knüppel* rather than *Span* or *Scheit*, the object being big enough to be used aggressively as a weapon. The third supposedly independent entry ‘**estele** s.f. *Pfosten, Pfeiler* (=estel)’ with a variant ‘*estalons*’ quoted for ‘*esteles*’ meaning ‘door-jambs’ and the significant ‘*mit Bezug auf diese Sache wird eb. 379,37 postis gebraucht*’ can also be shown to be less discrete than is implied by the editors. Under **astele** (I.611,12–16) they had already given the meaning ‘*hölzerner Schaft einer Helbarde, Picke u. dgl.*’, as mentioned above, so that the difference between their *astele* ‘wooden shaft of a halbard’ and *estele* ‘post’ can hardly be significant. Furthermore, immediately above their **astele** entry they give **astel** (I.610,24–7) as a masculine noun. This is inexplicably left without a gloss, but the accompanying quotation makes sense only if *astel* is treated as meaning ‘post’: ‘*Rampa tant de banc en astel (:fel) Qu’ il est venuz au hardeillon Ou il vit pendre le bacon*’. The subject of the sentence is crawling from the bench to the post where he sees the bacon joint hanging from the cord (‘*hardeillon*’). *Astel* here is clearly the same word as T-L’s ‘*estele, Pfosten*’. The reader is, indeed, invited to compare it with *estel* (I.1371), which is glossed as ‘*Pfosten, Pfeiler*’. However, had the editors absorbed their own entries more fully, they might have referred the reader similarly to two of their quotations under **estal** (3.1343.43–47) correctly glossed as ‘*als Minimalwert*’ (just like ‘*estele*’) and which have no connection whatsoever with the main semantic content of the entry – ‘*Stellung, Stellung zum Widerstande*’. The ‘*hestal*’ and ‘*eltal l. estal*’ here are simply alternative spellings of *astele/estele* and need to be put with those on 3.611. This error perpetuates Godefroy’s failure to recognize that his first three quotations under **estal** (3.392b) ‘*pieu, poteau*’ (cf. T-L’s **estel** ‘*Pfosten, Pfeiler*’ (3.1371) referred to above) have nothing to do with the main sense of the word – ‘station, position’ etc., but belong under his **astele**. Indeed, a note at the end of his **estal** entry makes the connection crystal clear: ‘*Poitou, etaux, s. m.pl., fagots faits avec des branches d’arbre*’. We are back to the basic sense of *astele*. When all this evidence concerning these two **estele** entries in Tobler-Lommatzsch is put together it serves to confirm the validity of the semantics of Godefroy’s single, but not quite comprehensive **astele** entry.

Whilst it is not difficult to see that the two separate Tobler-Lommatzsch entries under **estele** considered above are, in reality, no more than parts of the semantic content of **astele**, the remaining entry ‘**estele** s.f. *Kummet*’ would appear to be in a different category. The quotations in support of this gloss are as follows:

Les cous de chivaus portunt esteles (*Gl. hames*), *Walt. Bibl.* 168 [*Walt. Bibl.*<sup>2</sup> 883: *esceles*]. Si des hesteles du chival (*Gl. horshames = horse-hames*) Sacet hasteles (*Gl. schides to brennen = shides to burn*), *vus fret mal eb. 171* [*Walt. Bibl.*<sup>2</sup> 1001: *osceles*] (‘*Walt. Bibl.*’ in Tobler-Lommatzsch represents the edition by T. Wright of one of the Bibbesworth manuscripts. This gives the text as found in MS

British Library, Arundel 220; the quotation is on p.171, f.304vb in the manuscript. 'Walt. Bibl.<sup>2</sup>' is the Owen, 1929 edition). Three points are immediately obvious here: firstly, the evidence for the meaning given comes from only one text and its glosses, although from different manuscript versions; secondly, this single text is of insular, not continental origin, namely Walter of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*, composed by an Englishman to teach French to a rising anglophone generation of English nobility around the middle of the thirteenth century. This important fact is not made clear by the compilers of the dictionary. Thirdly, a singular object *Kummet* ('horse-collar') is represented by plural forms not only in the Anglo-Norman but also in the Middle English glosses – 'hames' and 'hors-hames'. A 'hame' is not a horse-collar, but: 'Each of two curved pieces of wood or metal placed over, fastened to, or forming, the collar of a draught horse' (*OED*). The first edition of the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* got the meaning right, but failed to make the connection with *astele*. So we are back with the basic sense of *astele/estele* 'piece of wood' and very close to Godefroy's '*éclisse*', the splint for a fractured limb, and, incidentally, near also to his thin piece of wood around which the scabbard is constructed (1.457a). In the case of the horse-collar, the padding and leather outer cover to protect the animal's neck are built around the 'hames'. This means that, setting aside the *estele* which is merely a spelling variant for *estoile*, the three other *estele* entries in the Tobler-Lommatzsch are in effect the same word and ought to be combined with *astele*. Moreover, tucked away in Godefroy's **ASTELE** is a quotation given in support of his meaning 'petite planchette de bois . . .' used in the making of a scabbard (1.457a) which in fact has nothing at all to do with scabbards but confirms the existence on the continent of Bibbesworth's sense of 'hame' for *estele*. Dated 1309 and coming from Artois, this quotation runs: 'Pour unes noeves *astelles* et pour refaire le sele', a clear example of the use of these pieces of wood to make the framework of a saddle. This is reinforced by two other entries on the same page (1.457c), diminutive forms derived from *astele*, firstly, **ASTELLET**: 'Du collier de traiz garni d'astellets et de billons, huit sols' (dated 1350); and secondly, **ASTELLETTTE**, glossed as 'partie du collier des chevaux, à laquelle les traits sont attachés.' This latter comes from glosses inserted into the work of the Englishman John of Garland. So, right across the board, *astele* and *estele* in their various spellings are semantically the same word, and the insular variety of French is not aberrant in using forms of the *astele* group in connection with horses, as might be inferred from the Tobler-Lommatzsch entry '**estele Kummet**'. The wide range of meanings found for *astele/estele* is a reflection in linguistic terms of the truth of Jacques le Goff's repeated comments regarding '*Les insuffisances de la technique et de l'équipement*' at this time (Le Goff, 1964: 304), a theme enlarged upon in the chapter 'La Vie Matérielle' (*ibid.* 249–318). One of the marks of a society that is rapidly developing its technological base is the corresponding formation of a technical vocabulary to carry the new knowledge, as may be seen today in the linguistic innovations

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brought by the computer industry, where the specialized Anglo-American terminology can now be seen and heard in both French and German on a regular basis.

The Anglo-French material included in the Tobler-Lommatzsch entry for *estele* has not only led astray its editors, but, half a century on, their errors have been perpetuated in a new dictionary – *Old French-English Dictionary* (Hindley, 2000) which follows the Tobler-Lommatzsch pattern for **astele** and **estele** but without giving any quotations in support. So it may be appropriate to examine the wider context surrounding the various insular forms found in Tobler-Lommatzsch under the *estele* entry, because the brevity of what are supposed to be explanatory extracts gives the reader, whether versed in Anglo-French or not, little chance of understanding what the writer is aiming to do and, therefore, of passing a correct judgement on the editors' interpretation of their source material. If they had read in full the texts from which they quote here, the editors would have been faced with the obvious question as to why Bibbesworth should have used *esteles* etc. at all if he wanted to teach his readers the French term for 'horse-collar'. Although the dictionary makes an improbable distinction in both form and meaning between its '**coler**, colier' (2.563–4), given as *Halsband*, *Halsrand*, *Koller am Panzer*, but also *Kummet*, and its '**coliere**' (2.566), *Halsstück des Pferdegeschirrs* [*Vorderdecke*], its entries provide abundant evidence to show that the 'collar' for both the knight's steed and the draught-horse is well attested in France from the mid-twelfth century onwards. Across the Channel the picture is the same as may be seen from Thomas of Kent's use of *colere* in his *Roman de toute chevalerie* in about 1175, the best part of a century before Bibbesworth:

E meint cheval covert [de] colere e cropere,'(Foster, 1976–77: 2760)

Indeed, if the editors of the Tobler-Lommatzsch had provided no more than two verses of their '*Bibl*<sup>2</sup>' instead of just the one word, *esceles*, they would have found *colers*:

Les couls de chivaus portent esceles (hambrowes)  
E colers du quir en lur osseles (homes)

(Owen 1929 vv. 883–4; Rothwell 1990 vv. 889–890)

Moreover, a number of unpublished manuscripts of the *Tretiz* also use it; for instance, MSS London, British Library Additional 46919, f.12ra, Oxford, All Souls College 182, f.338va; Cambridge, Trinity College 0.2.21, f.131r. The reason for Bibbesworth's use of *esteles* is to be found in his didactic purpose: he was not writing a narrative, but was attempting to guide his pupils through some of the difficulties presented by French words which looked similar but had different meanings. Centuries before the modern interest of philologists in homonyms, his *Tretiz* deals with a number of cases where similarities of spelling and/or sound in medieval French were likely to present difficulties for

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an anglophone, and it is against this background that *astele/estele* must be considered. For example:

'vous avez la levere (*lippe*) e le levere (*the hare*),  
La livere (*the pount* = 'pound') e le levre (*bock* = 'book')' vv. 61–2;  
'En mer nee (*swimmeth*) li peschoun,  
E en mer noe (*drounes*) meinte prodom;  
Mes des virouns (*hores*) deivent nager (*rowen*)  
En bateles (*bot*) li mariner (*szipman*).  
Mes en yver veoms negger (*snowe*) . . .' (*ibid.* vv.741–46);  
'Il ad essel (*axtre* = 'axle-tree'), e assel (*clout* = 'metal plate'),  
E li tierz ki ad a noun ascel (*armeholle*)' (*ibid.* vv. 867–8), etc.

(All these examples are taken from Rothwell, 1990. See also Rothwell, 1976 & 1994)

Having no system of phonetic writing and no dictionary at his disposal, all Bibbesworth could do to show his pupils the difference between words of similar appearance but different sense was to spell them differently, hence the numerous apparently aberrant forms in his work that so upset scholars imbued with notions of regular spellings believed to have resulted from the play of phonetic 'laws' and to have reflected genuine pronunciations, even if these were restricted to particular dialectal areas. Whatever aberrant forms there may have been in the unknown original of Bibbesworth's treatise, it must be remembered that the scribes who copied it did so at one remove, so to speak, being themselves anglophone and, in all probability, far from possessing a native mastery of French. As in other branches of education in medieval England (Rothwell, 2001), this copying did not imply rigid adherence to the letter of the text, so the different manuscripts of Bibbesworth not only add or subtract pieces of material at the whim of the copyist, but also present forms that diverge from those in the Cambridge University Library version (MS Gg.1.1.) that is deemed to be the best copy now available, but which comes from the first half of the fourteenth century.

Bearing in mind these important considerations, the expansion of the quotations given in Tobler-Lommatzsch in the second **estele** entry shows them to be less hermetic than their form in the dictionary would suggest. Firstly, however, it is necessary to correct an error of transcription that completely destroys the sense of the second one as printed. As was seen above, the editors set down without comment the following: 'Si des hesteles du chival (*Gl.* hors-hames = *horse-hames*) Sacet hasteles (*Gl.* schides to brennen = *shides to burn*), vus fret mal *eb.* 171 [*Walt. Bib<sup>2</sup>1001*: osceles].' However, 'Sacet' is an error for the 'Facet' of the manuscript. When read correctly the sense is clear: 'If you make kindling out of the horse-hames you do wrong,' i.e. it is a mistake to chop up the hames for fire-wood. Immediately above this, the first of the Tobler-Lommatzsch quotations under their second **estele** entry is not actually erroneous, but, presumably on account of the difficulty presented by

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the following verse in the text, is so curtailed as to be unhelpful to the reader. Once more, the addition of the next line clarifies the sense:

‘Les cous de chivaus portunt esteles (*Gl. hames*),  
Coleres de quyr & bourlé hocelés (*beruhames*)

(f.304rb), i.e. ‘The horses’ necks carry hames, Leather collars and padded barghams’ (or ‘hambarghs’ – see *OED*). The text reads, of course, *bourle*, but the position of the word calls for an adjective rather than a noun, hence the reading *bourlé*. The difficulty here is again the result of an erroneous transcription. Once the editor’s incorrect *boceles* in the second line is replaced by the *hocelés* of the manuscript, it makes sense. Apart from noting the presence of the normal word for ‘horse-collars’ – *coleres*, both *bourlé* and *hocelés* need to be explained. Another early fourteenth-century manuscript of Bibbesworth’s treatise (MS. Cambridge, Trinity College, O.2,21, ff. 120r-133v) is helpful in this regard, reading at this point:

‘Les cous de chivaus portent hesteles (M.E. hames)  
E colers de quir (M.E. berouhame) e bourle’ (f.131r).

Not only is the separation of the *hesteles* and the *colers de quir* demonstrated unequivocally in these two verses, but the presence of the padding – *bourle* – is clear. Tobler-Lommatzsch are unhelpful here, confusing the issue by giving no German gloss for their **borle** (I.1075), but quoting an insular form *burles* taken from Alexander Nequam, where the sense is clearly ‘wool flock’, the material for padding, as in the Bibbesworth, and yet they refer the reader to Godefroy 8Comp. 397a, where the single example **burle** is correctly glossed ‘plaisanterie’. They then give the correct meaning of *borle/b(o)urle* lower down the same page under the form **borre**. This is yet another example of the tyranny of form over sense, both semantic and common. The *FEW* \***burrula** (I.646a) glossed *kleine wolleflocke* is supported from a number of insular sources in the sense of ‘ball of wool’: e.g. *flocis, borles, fruçuns, floccis de leine* ( Hunt, 1979a: 250); as ‘shoddy, refuse wool’: ‘Nul ne face draps ou (= ‘in which’) *bourle seyent mellé en la layne*’, (Gross, 1890: ii 204). Other insular forms of the word are *bort, borun* and *burre*: ‘*flocis laneis, bort de lane, flocsouns de leyne, borun de lane, burres*’, (Hunt, 1990: ii 73); *borts: floccis* (*ib.*: ii 73, Note 82). The possible interpretation of the form *bourle* in the Arundel 220 manuscript given above as an adjective *bourlé* arises from its grammatical position. A similar situation is found in another Bibbesworth manuscript in the same context – ‘Et les colier de quyr & bourle (*l. bourlé* (?): M.E. *flockes*) *hosceles* (M.E. *beruhan*)’ (MS British Library Additional 46919, f.12ra.).

This question of unorthodox forms being used in the various Bibbesworth manuscripts at this point brings us back to the *esceles* given in the Tobler-Lommatzsch entry ‘**estele** *Kummet*’ as a variant spelling found in the Cambridge University Library manuscript Gg. 1.1. In the light of the orthographical proximity and frequent confusion in manuscripts of the characters ‘t’

and ‘c’, especially in cases such as the present one, where the down-stroke linking the long *s* to the *c/t* immediately following makes it virtually impossible to state categorically which of these characters is intended, it is all but certain that the original work had *esteles*, not *esceles*. The same error is found in the MS British Library Additional 46919 in the same context: ‘Si des esceles (horshames) le cheval Faitez hasteles vus faites mal’. A few verses later the scribe uses the terms again in respect of lighting a fire: ‘Pus va quere le fou (baly) . . ., Mais pur la verdour des asceles Jeo ne vy ysser estenceles (sparkes),’ (f.13rb). This means: ‘Then go and fetch the bellows . . ., But on account of the green nature of the sticks I cannot see sparks coming out’, i.e. the unripe wood will not catch fire. This time the scribe seems to be making *asteles* into *asceles* to rhyme with *estenceles*.

Less easy to deal with are the outlandish forms found in some of the manuscripts to represent the ‘bargham’, the two hames put together so as to form the framework of the horse-collar. The scribes are at pains to distinguish between the ‘hames’ as individual items and the combination of them into the ‘bargham’, artificial though that separation may be. It is from this that there results the scribal creation of pairings that are difficult to explain convincingly: *esceles* (hambrowes)/*osseles* (homes=hames); *esceles* (hamberewes)/*oceles* (berw=berwam?); *osteoles* (hames)/*ostooles* (coddes), etc. These forms are found in the ANTS edition vv. 889–890, MS British Library Additional 46919 f.12ra and MS Oxford, All Souls College 182 f.338va respectively. In Middle English ‘cod’ is ‘A pillow or cushion’ or ‘A metal “cushion” such as a bearing of an axle or a bell’ (*MED codi* 4a and 4b). It would appear that the *c/t* confusion referred to above is responsible not only for *esceles*, but also for the *c*, *ss* and *st* forms here. Whether they all ever existed outside the one Bibbesworth text is questionable, since they have not been found elsewhere. The scribe who compiled the late *Femina*, much of it a not very intelligent copy of Bibbesworth, confirms this suggestion by his rendering of the two verses:

‘Lez coilez du chivales portent eisselez  
Escolers de quyer oue lour hosselez/  
The nekkes of hors beruth haunbergez  
Coleres of lethyr with hare beryughames’

(Wright W.A., 1909: 76, 1–4). Ignoring his not unexpected confusing of *col* with *coile* and *coler* with *escoler*, his *eisselez* glossed ‘haunbergez’ is evidently based on *esceles*, the variant of *esteles*. These anglophone scribes are trying to distinguish quasi-homonyms by using different spellings and are probably simply following each other without necessarily being familiar with their French material at first hand.

These problems arising from a close enquiry into just one small section of a single insular text are symptomatic of wider questions regarding, in the first place, the use of Anglo-French material in dictionaries of medieval French without any indication of its provenance and, secondly, the acceptability or



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otherwise of glossarial material in general in such dictionaries. As is clear from the inadequate Tobler-Lommatzsch entry '**estele** *Kummet*', Anglo-French – especially if it brings with it Middle English – is not easy to handle for anglophones and non-anglophones alike. If an insular text lies outside the narrow confines of the early romances or saints' lives used by the compilers of the teaching manuals, the tendency on the part of scholars concerned with medieval French has always been to assume that it will be more or less heavily contaminated by a whole range of errors. This assumption goes back into the nineteenth century and is visible only too clearly in the case of Bibbesworth. In printing without so much as a question-mark a faulty quotation which they could not possibly translate so as to make good sense, the editors of the Tobler-Lommatzsch were following in the footsteps of the three eminent scholars – Antoine Thomas (président), Mario Roques and Albert Jeanroy – who made up the *jury* which accepted for a Paris doctorate the seriously defective edition of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* submitted by Annie Owen in 1929. This *jury* can hardly be blamed for not going back to the manuscripts to check the provenance of the manifold errors of French contained in the Anglo-Norman text as presented in the thesis, because their training and linguistic outlook would lead them to assume that these were the responsibility of the author, not of the candidate (Rothwell, 1982). Indeed, the most distinguished medieval French scholar of his day, Gaston Paris, had written long before 1929 that: 'l'anglo-normand n'est pas à proprement parler un dialecte: il n'a jamais été qu'une manière imparfaite de parler le français.' (Paris, 1881, xxxv). This is not the place to deal *in extenso* with this statement. It may suffice to say that no one has ever proved the existence of the *manière parfaite* of speaking French (or any other language) that is implied here: this would require a language to remain for ever in a state of suspended animation so as not to lose its 'perfection' by accepting even the smallest change. Gaston Paris himself must have modified his French on a daily basis throughout his life, depending on the age, status or relationship of the person(s) with whom he was communicating in oral or written form and also the changing nature of French overall between the beginning and end of his long life.

These reservations regarding the blanket condemnation of all insular French are amply borne out as far as the correctness of Bibbesworth's use of *esteles* to mean the framework of the horse-collar is concerned, being confirmed at the highest level by the *FEW*. In a lengthy article on **astela** (25.593b–605b) the new revision of the dictionary not only gives abundant chapter and verse for this sense, but adds evidence from all over France that, in various spellings, *astele* could, and still can, mean not just a piece of kindling, but a large piece of wood, an aggressive weapon, a harness, a splint, or a swingle-tree. A small selection of definitions culled from the twelve closely-printed pages of the *FEW* must suffice here to illustrate the point at issue: following on the basic sense given of '*petit éclat de bois*' (593b) come '*morceau de bois employé comme arme*' and '*bûche d'environ un mètre de long*' (594a), 'f.pl. "*attelles*", *pièces de bois*

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*qui garnissent le devant du collier des chevaux de trait* (595b), ‘*attelles, planches formant l’ossature du “goriau”, “atèle”, une des deux moitiés du collier du cheval*’ (596a), ‘*morceau de bois servant à maintenir les fractures (t[erme] de chirurgie 1378/1389)*’ – dates which the evidence provided by the *Albucasis* now greatly modifies – (596b), ‘*“estalle”, grand palonnier, pièce transversale de l’avant-train du char ou de la charrue où se fixent les traits ou les petits palonniers*’ (602b). Moreover, Anglo-French can add even to this new *FEW*. In later medieval York the ‘fletchers’ (arrow-makers) are prohibited from working on Sunday except to put arrow-heads on to shafts in cases of necessity. These shafts are ‘*estes*’ (*l. estés*, i.e. *estels*), the root meaning of *astele/estele*: ‘que nul ffleccher de yceste citee ne overera desormés ascun dymenche . . . forsque pur mettre les chefs sur les estés quant busoigne soit’ (Johnston/Rogerson, 1979: i 6). So the despised insular brand of French cannot simply be dismissed as irrelevant to the overall lexical development of the language, even if its wayward syntax poses problems.

The second question concerns the use of glossarial material in dictionaries. Over the past two decades Tony Hunt has provided much new evidence in this area, with most of the material from many articles on the glosses now brought together in his *Teaching and Learning Latin* (Hunt, 1991), but before this can be used satisfactorily the variable nature of the glosses needs to be clearly understood. In view of the dictionary errors demonstrated above it is legitimate to ask whether glossarial material in general can rightfully claim a place in any serious dictionary of medieval French or whether it can safely be ignored. The essential point here is that glosses are mainly used to explain terms belonging to the more specialized areas of a language, rather than the familiar everyday or mainly literary vocabulary. The fact that glosses are often provided for terms which might be regarded as commonplace does not affect the issue: it is for the medieval glossator to judge the need for a gloss, not the modern commentator surrounded by dictionaries. This applies particularly to terminology of the countryside in the wider sense, including the parts of the equipment used in working the land, the vocabulary of building techniques and of household implements as well as crops, flowers, trees and so on. Without the glossarial material available in these areas our knowledge of the reality of medieval society would be seriously impoverished.

However, any introduction of glossarial material into the dictionaries of medieval French must take cognizance of the two quite distinct types of gloss. The faulty entry in the Tobler-Lommatzsch illustrated above results from its compilers’ failure to deal accurately with Anglo-Norman and Middle English, but Anglo-Norman was used far more often in combination with Latin. These two distinct situations cannot be treated automatically as being on the same footing. In the first case the scribe is dealing with only one foreign element, but in the second both the original language of the text and the gloss are in what were foreign languages for him. Again, in the first case the English scribe is translating *from* Anglo-Norman into his own language, whilst in the second

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one he is translating *into* Anglo-Norman from a second foreign language – Latin, with a consequential increase in the scope for error. In the first case at least one of the components of the gloss, that containing the native language of the scribe, can usually be taken at its face value, but in the second case both constituent parts could well be subject to an erroneous interpretation on the part of the glossator, so these glosses need to be treated with especial caution. Additionally, the vernaculars involved – Anglo-Norman and Middle English – have usually been regarded as being less tightly organized semantically than the Latin of the Schoolmen, so that the vernacular components of the glosses have been judged to be liable to variation, approximation and error in their attempts to render a Latin lexis whose terms were considered to be more precisely defined, hence more reliable semantically. Semantic rigour or its absence, however, is the product not of any particular linguistic system, but of those who use that system. For instance, in *Teaching and Learning Latin* forms of the Latin *epiphia* are glossed in French as *harneis* (in different spellings), *paruns* or *loreins*, and, on the other hand, *bastun(s)* can represent the Latin *fustes*, *paxillus*, *pedum*, *limones* or *palos*. Polysemy and synonymy are inherent in medieval Latin just as much as in the vernaculars, because all three languages of medieval England were often used by the same people moving from one to the other in the course of their work. They did not alter their linguistic perceptions with every move across their three languages. Finally, it must be remembered that, although Tony Hunt has increased immeasurably the access of medievalists to a rich glossarial harvest, it is not feasible to situate each set of glosses in its full Latin context, so that the evidence available for making a semantic judgement will remain less than complete until editions of the Latin texts concerned are produced with all the attendant glosses in place.

The consequences of all these factors become clear if *astele/estele* is re-examined in a wider context which includes the multilingual glosses. Whilst it could be applied to pieces of wood of various sizes used for different purposes, *astele/estele* did not have a monopoly of all or even any of these senses in medieval French. As a ‘splinter’ or ‘fragment’ it is rivalled by 1) *esclice/esclis(s)e*: **esclice** ‘*Splitter*’ *T-L* 3.924–5, but also ‘*Stäbchen*’, ‘*Rute zum flechten*’ *ibid.* 3.928, **escliz** ‘*cum lignea spata: ov le clise de fusz, espeye de fust, speye, esclyce, spey de tref*’ *TLL* ii 139; 2) *esclat*: **esclat** ‘*Splitter*’ *T-L* 3.918–9, and 3) *copel/escopel*: **escoupel** ‘*petit copeau*’, ‘*aiguillon à boeufs*’ *G.* 3.432c, **escopel** ‘*Rute*’ *T-L* 3.963, **copel** ‘*mod. copeau*’ *G.* 9.192b, **copel** ‘*Span, Splitter*’ *T-L* 2.828–9. In the sense of ‘stick (for beating opponents)’ it is used synonymously alongside ‘*baston*’, ‘*fust*’ and ‘*pel*’: **baston** *Stab, Stock, Stock als Waffe*’ *T-L* 1.865–67; in *TLL* the Latin terms glossed by *bastun* run from the small *paxillus* (a small peg, marker) through the more sizeable *fustes* and *palos*, extending up to the very considerable *limones*, the ‘cart-shafts’. Under ‘**palus** Pfahl’, the *FEW* (7.524a–30b) gives a range of meanings running from ‘*poteau (d’amarrage), échalas, . . . palissade, pieu de haie, piquet*’ up to ‘*gros morceau de bois pour décharger les bennes, etc.*’ Moreover, it adds a highly pertinent observation: ‘Es ist in

den fr. mundarten [. . .] schwierig, die vertretern von **PALUS** und **POSTIS** mit sicherheit zu scheiden' (529b). In the medical field *estele* shares the sense of 'splint' with *esclice/esclis(s)e* (See *Petit Robert*), and, according to Tobler-Lommatszsch 3.1219, with (*e*)*splente* '[Brettchen, Schiene für das gebrochene Glied des Jagdvoegels . . .]'. Godefroy, however, glosses **esplente** as 'lame' (3.536a). In fact, the quotations used by the two dictionaries, although different, are both from Anglo-Norman sources, but this is not indicated to the reader. Since the *DMLBS* has only one quotation containing *astela* in the sense of 'splint', and that as late as the fourteenth century, it looks as though the doctors in England did not adopt the Latin-based *astele/estele* to cover this meaning, but turned instead to a Germanic term. The links between 'splint' and 'splinter/*Splinter*' are obvious. Both the 'splint' and 'plate' senses of *esplente* can now be confirmed from other insular sources. As 'splint' it occurs in a medical text: 'si la fraiture (i.e. 'fracture') avient de la plaie, n'i metez pas lunge esplente desure', (Hunt, 1994: i 70); as 'plate' or, perhaps better, 'strip of wood' – hence near to *astele/estele* – in a legal volume: '(a sword having) le manuz de fer a deus eplentes d'arable fretté endesus', (Sayles, 1936–71: 58, 1939.102). Indeed, Anglo-Norman forms a verb *esplenter/enplenter* 'to splint, apply a splint to', thus confirming the currency of the noun: 'Ke quel seit u jambes u braz, tut adeprimes l'esplenteras. Quant ert esplenté, si seit lié . . .', (Heatt/Jones, 1990, vv. 1239–40); 'Pus si le (*sc.* broken bone) enplentez mult mainement, ne trop ferm ne trop lache', (Hunt, 1990, 281:127).

Perhaps even more interesting in the context of the present enquiry are the synonyms or quasi-synonyms used alongside *astele/estele* in the general area of the harness. Godefroy (5.785a) records the forms **paronne**, *-one*, *-une*, also *paironne* and *peronne*, translating them all as 'pièce de charrue à laquelle on attèle les chevaux, limon.' He gives a quotation from 1387 which would support this: 'Un baston appelé paironne, qui estoit une pièce cheue dudit harnais', but he also provides another quotation, from 1469, in which the term is used of an offensive weapon (just as we have seen in the case of *astele/estele*), and he adds at the foot of his entry: 'Norm. paronne, collier pour les bêtes de trait'. However, his preceding entry **paron**, *parun* is said to be 's.m., syn. de *paronne*' (5.784c–785a), yet the single Anglo-Norman quotation he provides under **paron** – 'Epifia, coloria equorum, *paruns*' – manifestly calls for the gloss 'horse-collar', not 'cart-shaft', etc., so, ignoring the minor orthographical differences as being of no consequence, both the 'horse-collar' and the 'cart-shaft' senses must have been current from the medieval period onwards. The listing of forms displaying minor differences of spelling as independent words in their own right in both Godefroy and Tobler-Lommatszsch shows a touching faith in the tenets of nineteenth-century historical linguistics, but does not help in plotting the semantic map of Old French. Moreover, another Anglo-Norman gloss would give the sense of 'small stake, peg, marker' for *parun*: '*pauxillum* .i. parum a paulo, paxillus a palo .i. sude .i. pel' (Hunt, 1979b: 137).

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For their part, under **parone** (7.339–40) Tobler-Lommatzsch translate an undifferentiated mixture of continental and insular quotations as ‘*Kummet*’, although one of the insular examples contains an unambiguous phrase: ‘quod idem est quod *hame* (my italics) de cheval’. Furthermore, they offer a second layer of meaning at the foot of this *parone* entry – ‘*Ortscheit, Querscheit am Wagen oder Pfluge*’, yet provide no supporting quotation, merely a sybilline reference: ‘*Urk. des 14. und 15. Jahrh. Carp. paronus. [nfrz. palonneau, palonnier, s. FEW VII 527b palus; Gam. 662b]*. (This has now been identified for me by Professor D.A. Trotter as coming from Du Cange 6.180). So the two dictionaries of medieval French diverge once more, as in their treatment of ‘*estele*’. Despite Godefroy’s own evidence showing *parun* as meaning a horse-collar, for him *paronne*, etc. meant ‘cart-shaft’ or ‘swingle-tree’ in medieval French, and survives in the modern dialect of Normandy as a ‘horse-collar’: Tobler-Lommatzsch, however, see things the other way round, the original horse-collar being succeeded by the later cart-shaft/swingle-tree. In fact, owing to the absence of fine semantic differentiation in medieval French, both senses were present all along.

Confusing the issue still further are the entries **pairons** (Godefroy 5.696c) and **pairon** (*T-L* 7.53), to which are attributed senses that do not appear to have any common semantic denominator. In Godefroy’s entry the word is marked as plural and means either ‘le père et la mère’ or ‘Les deux penes des ailes’, whilst Tobler-Lommatzsch do not mention its plural state, although all their examples, including the apparently singular form *pairon*, are, in fact, plural, and they translate it as ‘*die zwei langen Federn am Flügel des Stossvogels*’ or ‘*die Alten, die Eltern von Tieren*’. The use of *penes/langen Federn* in this broad area of meaning is confirmed by the recommendation in the *Novelle Chirurgie* for one to be used to put liquids into the eye – ‘*icés tres jus uelement . . . De une penne as oilz meteras*’ (Hieatt/Jones, 1990, vv. 296–299). However, it has been seen above that Godefroy’s **paronne** entry meaning ‘cart-shaft’, ‘swingle-tree’ contains a quotation using the form *paironne*. If looked at from the point of view of semantics rather than orthography, the **pairon(s)** entries in both dictionaries ought to be split up. There are two quite distinct terms here, although this is masked by the orthography. The sense of ‘parents’ should be kept and that of ‘quill’ moved to Godefroy’s **paronne** and *T-L*’s **parone**, because the sense ‘quill’ is in line with the general shape of a long, thin object that has been shown to be at the root of the *astele/estele/e(s)clisse* group. A perceptive insight into the semantic complexities of medieval French was provided some years ago by Gilbert Salmon’s study on the overlapping of its synonymy and polysemy (Salmon, 1984). Time and again he illustrates the ways in which the meanings of words in medieval French can vary from one text to another or even within a text, and he shows how the semantics of one word can overlap completely or partially those of numerous others. (I am indebted to Professor D.A. Trotter for drawing my attention to this important

work). Here again, the new *Old French-English Dictionary* leads its readers into error, copying T-L under *pairon* and treating *paron* simply as a variant of *pairon*, without any mention of its link with the harness of horses.

Neither Godefroy nor Tobler-Lommatzsch bring Latin into their entries under *astele/estele* etc., the first relying on medieval French contexts to illustrate the senses given, the second introducing the Middle English ‘hames’ as proof of meaning. Adding information from Latin that they lacked and which is now available from Tony Hunt’s material (*TLL*) and the *DMLBS*, it is possible to arrive at a more rounded picture of the semantic field of *astele/estele* in medieval French, and particularly in Anglo-Norman. In *TLL* the separation between the ‘horse-collar’ and the ‘hames’ is clearly made. The Classical Latin *collare/collarium*/pl. *collaria* is not attested in the equestrian sense in Lewis and Short, and its first appearance as a plural form in Medieval Latin used in the context of horses (1179) is probably no earlier than the Anglo-Norman *colers* mentioned above in the *Roman de tote Chevalerie* (c.1175), so that a direct channel of transmission from Classical to Medieval Latin and from there to medieval French is not proven. The Anglo-Norman *colers* and *colerys* occur several times in *TLL* glossing *colaria (equina)* (ii 69, 99, 111, 120, 134), whilst forms of ‘hames’ are used to gloss the Latin *arquillis* (ii 134, 154), *epiphia* (ii 147), *epispha* (ii 114), and *loricas* (ii 136), so it is appropriate to follow these Latin terms through *TLL* and the *DMLBS* into the vernacular.

*Arquillus/is* is glossed in *TLL* not only by ‘hames’ but also by the Middle English ‘boües’ (modern English ‘bows’) (ii 134) and by the French *archun/arçun* (i 227), *estels* (ii 154), *rotres* (ii 150) *tortues/torturs/ tortuys* (ii 134), and *halsteuz* (ii 145), clearly a plural form of *astele*. There are two basic strands of meaning here: firstly, *estels* and *halsteuz* indicate the ‘stick’ sense, the material and shape of the hame, whilst the others are all based on the ‘bow/ bent’ or ‘round’ senses, its shape. *Arquillus* in the *DMLBS* has only the ‘bow’ meaning – ‘bow of a cross-bow, saddle-bow, ox-bow’. The publication of *TLL* was, of course, much too late to allow its important contribution to be made to the earlier volumes of the *DMLBS*. Any future revision of the dictionary will need to incorporate all this new evidence.

The next Latin term glossed by *hames/hamis* in *TLL* is *epiphia* (ii 147, 150), or *epispha* (ii 114), which, represented also in the forms *epiphium* and *epiphicia*, brings other French terms into the glosses – *harneys* (ii 94)/*herneys* (ii 74)/*hemois* (ii 114), *loreins* (i 148), *hureus* (ms. *bureus*) (ii 150) and *paruns* (i 297, ii 94, ii 102, ii 114). A scribe of the early thirteenth century provides an etymological explanation of *epiphium*: ‘hoc epiphium collarium equorum et dicitur ad epy, quod est supra, et phanes, quod est apparens, quia supra apparent in collo equi et vocant gallice perones’ (Hunt, 1979c: 13.47). We shall return to this juxtaposition of *epiphium* and *perones* shortly. The *DMLBS* translates *ephippium* as ‘saddle, caparison, horse-collar, harness, trappings’, a broad spectrum of meaning connected with horses, even broader, in fact, hence perhaps less precise, than the medieval French. The general ‘caparison’ and ‘trappings’ of this *DMLBS* definition

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really merge into the 'harness' in its wider sense, which is well represented in the French by *herneys*, etc. and also by *loreins*, the straps fixing the saddle, so that up to now the Latin and the French would both suggest a general rather than a narrowly prescribed meaning. The Latin sense of 'saddle' is apparently not represented in the French, although *hureus* (corrected by Tony Hunt from *bureus*) is given as *Pferdejoch*, *Kummet* in Tobler-Lommatzsch (4.1172). However, the dictionary cites only that one single Anglo-Norman example, which is isolated and merely copied from Godefroy 4.497a **horeul** 'collier de cheval', which Professor F. Möhren has confirmed in a private communication does not exist. It therefore cannot be taken as providing incontrovertible proof of the missing sense. Returning to the Latin definition of *epiphium* given above with its French equivalent *perones*, it would appear that, at least for this particular scribe, the plural *perones* are the 'hames' of the horse-collar, but another Latin gloss from around 1200 links *parum* with *pauxillum* and the vernacular *pel*: '*pauxillum* .i. parum a paulo, *paxillus* a palo .i. sude .i. pel' (Hunt 1979b: 137), which, in turn, is linked to *bastun* and *fust* 'palos: bastuns de fust' (Hunt, 1979c: 18). Cf. *fustes*: *bastuns*, *fusts*; *palos*: *peus* (Hunt, 1979d: 252), illustrating yet again the semantic flexibility of the medieval lexis, whether Latin or vernacular, and hence the crucial role played by context in the determination of meaning.

In all questions involving Latin and French in the medieval period it is assumed, if only tacitly, that the Latin, being a language of considerable antiquity as well as of great prestige, will antedate the vernacular, but this is not always correct. In the case of the horse-collar that, together with the harness, enabled the draught-animal to safely take the strain of its load, this technical development took place after the Classical Latin period (although the simple collar for controlling the charger was in use long before that) and therefore called for a new term in Medieval Latin as well as in the vernaculars. According to Lynn White Jr 'the modern harness was the product of a slow development in the Occident' (White, 1962: 60), not being perfected until 'the eighth-ninth century' (*ibid.* 61). Jacques le Goff would place the widespread use of the device even later, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: 'La première représentation sûre que nous ayons du collier d'épaule – élément décisif de l'attelage moderne – se trouve dans un manuscrit de la bibliothèque municipale de Trèves datant de 800 environ, mais la nouvelle technique ne se répandit qu'aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles.' (Le Goff, 1964: 268). The Latin evidence would support this, as may be seen by an examination of the dating of the terminology involved. As was shown above, the Latin terms equated with the English 'hames' in *TLL* are forms of *arquillus*, *ep(h)ip(h)ium* and *lorica* (iii 275). *Arquillus*, a diminutive of *arcus*, is not found in Classical Latin and is recorded by the *DMLBS* only as 'bow of a cross-bow,' 'saddle-bow' and 'ox-bow', the nearest of these to the 'hames' – the 'saddle-bow' – being attested only from 1225, the earliest attestation of the word in any sense being only some two decades earlier. Even in the much later *Promptorium parvulorum* of 1440 *arquillus*

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is translated as 'sel, hors-harneys', not as 'hame' (*DMLBS*). Since the original Bibbesworth text in which 'hames' is first recorded for Middle English (*MED*, *OED*) is thought to have been composed around the middle of the thirteenth century, and since the writer clearly assumed that the word would be familiar to his English audience at that time, an audience living on the land, not writing in the towns, it is at least debatable whether the Latin *arquillus* is earlier than the Middle English 'hame'. It looks as though the English adopted a Germanic term when they took up this invention in the development of which Germany had played an important role (see *OED*). The same argument applies also to the French *astele/estele* of the Bibbesworth text. As is only to be expected in the light of the chronology of the development of the horse-collar, there is no trace of any equine connection in the Classical Latin *hastile/hastula*. Although the *DMLBS* lists 'stick', 'cart-pole, shaft' and 'splint' as meanings for *astella*, there is no attested development at all towards its use in the sense of 'hame'. When a similar absence is found in the Latin part of the mass of glossarial evidence brought to light in *TLL*, it may safely be assumed that it was in the vernacular that the extension from 'stick' to 'curved stick>hame' was made, not in Latin. This is hardly surprising, since the 'horse-collar' was more likely to figure in the concerns of the non-Latinate workers on the land rather than in the preoccupations of the Latin-trained scribes and officials living and working in the towns.

The case of *epiphia* in its various spellings is somewhat different, but points towards a similar conclusion. This time we are dealing with a Classical Latin term meaning 'saddle-cloth', whose range of senses was extended in the medieval period. As in the case of *arquillus*, the *DMLBS* gives a broad definition for its *ephippium*, without ascribing any of its various constituent parts to any particular quotation, thus implying that its meaning was fluid: 'saddle, caparison, horse-collar, harness, trappings'. Its earliest quotations come from around the third quarter of the twelfth century, but it is only from the later glossarial work of the thirteenth, now set down *in extenso* in *TLL*, that the sense of 'horse-collar' is evident. The Latin quotation given above, which juxtaposed *epiphium* and *perones*, illustrates the link that has been established between the overall sense of 'trappings' and the 'stick>hame' sense always present in *paron* etc.

The third Latin term glossed by a form of 'hames' in *TLL* is *loricas*, but its context reveals that this is, in fact, an error. When translating *loricas* in the *Dictionarius* of John of Garland, the Cambridge and the Durham scribes correctly used the French *haubers* and *hauberks* respectively, only the Lincoln scribe using the Middle English 'hammes' (*TLL* ii 136). He was confusing *loralia* and *lorica*. Whilst the basic Latin term *lora/lura* 'thong' goes back into pre-Medieval Latin, and the derivative *lorica* 'cuirass of thongs', i.e. a leather cuirass, is well attested, the derived form *lorale* 'rein, bridle; bit, curb' (*DMLBS*) is first recorded in the work of Garland himself and supported only by the *Catholicon anglicum* of 1483. So '*loricas*: hammes' can be discounted on



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two grounds: the Latin is misunderstood and even the correct Latin never meant 'hames'. More importantly, we have here another illustration amongst many that the traditional practice of seeking the origins of Medieval French in Latin can be highly dangerous if used indiscriminately. In the present case, as has been shown earlier, it is possible that Godefroy's earliest attestation of the French *astele* might even antedate by a few years the first Latin example of *astella* given in the *DMLBS*. (See Rothwell, 2000: 22–3.)

The close scrutiny of just one apparently simple entry in Tobler-Lommatzsch suffices to show that any serious lexicographical work involving Anglo-French must take account of the interplay of all three languages used in medieval England as they have been handed down not only in the form of full translations from one to the other, but also in the abundant bi- and trilingual glosses, no matter how recalcitrant or apparently contradictory these may be. At a deeper level, however, it is a warning against the production and subsequent use by the uninitiated of dictionaries of a medieval language that provide no quotations in support of their definitions, giving merely one-to-one translations of the medieval vocabulary into the modern language which are not verifiable. Only the presence of attributable medieval quotations enables the user of a dictionary of Old French to avoid the kind of errors illustrated above. That Godefroy and Tobler-Lommatzsch should on occasion misinterpret their material is of little consequence: the mass of textual evidence they provide constitutes the essential basis for any future progress in this field. For such progress to be made, however, any new dictionary should avoid imposing modern semantic 'fences' on a society to which they were foreign – in Salmon's words 'les analyses sémantiques sommaires et abusives, trop claires pour être vraies' (Salmon, 1984: 440).

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