Kodikologie und Paläographie im digitalen Zeitalter 2

———————————————

Codicology and Palaeography in the Digital Age 2

herausgegeben von | edited by

Franz Fischer, Christiane Fritze, Georg Vogeler

unter Mitarbeit von | in collaboration with

Bernhard Assmann, Malte Rehbein, Patrick Sahle

2010

BoD, Norderstedt

Towards a Comparative Approach to Manuscript Study on the Web: the Case of the *Lancelot-Grail* Romance

Alison Stones, Ken Sochats

Abstract

This paper presents an outline of the on-going *Lancelot-Grail* Project, an interdisciplinary collaborative research project drawing together, analysing, and making available in text and picture the surviving manuscripts of the popular Arthurian romance known as the *Lancelot-Grail*. The project uses web technology as part of the analytical process and as a means to navigate within the material, presenting models based on the concepts of geographic information systems (GIS) in a non-traditional context.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag stellt das laufende *Lancelot-Grail*-Projekt vor, das als interdisziplinäres und kollaboratives Forschungsprojekt Texte und Bilder der Handschriftenüberlieferung des unter dem Namen *Lancelot-Gral* bekannten populären Romans zusammenstellt, analysiert und online verfügbar macht. Das Projekt verwendet Web-Technologien sowohl für seine eigenen Analysen als auch als Navigationswerkzeug innerhalb des Materials. Es überträgt Modelle, die als Grundlage für Geoinformationssysteme (GIS) entwickelt wurden, in einen neuen Kontext.

1. Introduction

The *Lancelot-Grail* is the most popular version of Arthurian romance, surviving complete or in part in some 200 manuscript copies made between c. 1220 and 1504 (Woledge 1954 71-79, 1975 50–59). These manuscripts are housed today in libraries all over Europe and the USA but are available in the original only to scholars. Whereas some can be consulted complete in digitized form on the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) site Gallica or on Mandragore on Digital Scriptorium (illustrated pages only), on the French provincial libraries site Enluminures, or on the sites of individual libraries,[1] many more are available only as selected illustrations in secondary literature.

---

[1]   On Gallica: BnF fr. 95, 344, 16999; Mandragore: BnF fr. 105, 111, 113–116, 117–120, 122, 1422–1424, 9123, 19162, 24394); on the French provincial libraries site Enluminures: Tours, BM 961; Le Mans MM 354; Dijon

Some manuscripts are fully illustrated (London, BL Add. 10292–4 has 748 illustrations, the most of all), while others contain a single picture at the beginning of the major textual subdivisions or Branches into which the lengthy episodic narrative is divided (*L'Estoire del saint Graal, Merlin, Suite vulgate du Merlin, Lancelot* (with its own subdivisions), *La Queste del saint Graal, La Mort Artu*). Though attributed to authors Robert de Boron (*Estoire, Merlin*) and Gautier Map (*Queste, Mort Artu*), most of the manuscripts were made by anonymous scribes, decorators and illuminators. Some were made for or acquired by famous collectors—Jean de Berry († 1416), Jacques d'Armagnac (†1477)—but most patrons are unknown. We aim to determine what kinds of people found these texts interesting, where, and what aspects of the text the patrons and makers found compelling.

Why the *Lancelot-Grail*? In a previous research project organized by Alison Stones, a team of 15 specialists in literature, palaeography, codicology and history of art drew together an illustrated catalogue and essays on the 45 manuscripts and fragments of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes (see bibliography). In the project described in this paper we aim to make the manuscripts of the *Lancelot-Grail* and our findings available not just in print but also on the web, and to use web-based technology in the analytical and presentation processes.

The *Lancelot-Grail* Project began as a multi-institutional cross-disciplinary collaboration in the late 1990s, based at the University of Pittsburgh.[2]

2. Goals and Methods

Our aim is to enable on-line navigation of the manuscripts of the *Lancelot-Grail* romance and their illustrations in several ways, both synchronic and diachronic. We explore how the spatial analysis based on GIS concepts can be used in non-traditional applications, treating the manuscript page as a conceptual map in which different levels of information may be overlaid, using Active Server Pages to move within an individual folio, from a folio to an episode, and from an episode to a branch—or vice-versa. In the absence of a medieval term we define an 'episode' as a sub-section of a 'branch', a sequence of text and picture which concentrates on a particular hero or event (such as the False

---

BM 527: Digital Scriptorium: University of California, Berkley, Bancroft Library 106, 107; individual library sites: The John Rylands University Library of Manchester, French 1; Cologny-Genève, The Bodmer Library MS 147; New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke 229.

2   Technical collaborators: Ken Sochats (Information Science and Telecommunications, University of Pittsburgh); Guoray Cai (Information Science, Pennsylvania State University), research assistant Jane Vadnal (Pittsburgh); Medieval French: †Elspeth Kennedy (Oxford); Medieval French, History of the Book and Ownership: Roger Middleton (Nottingham); Medieval French and Codicology: Keith Busby (Wisconsin); Medieval Art History: Alison Stones (Pittsburgh), Martine Meuwese (Leiden); graduate students Katherine Dimitrova, Marion Dolan, Julia Finch, Courtney Long, Kathryn Martin, Karen Webb (Pittsburgh) and Irère Fabry (Paris-III); Palaeographical Consultant: Michael Gullick.

Guinevere in the *Lancelot*; Maritime Adventures in *Estoire* and *Queste*). The term 'branch' (branke, branche) is medieval: it is used in several manuscripts to distinguish the major subdivisions of the text (*Estoire, Merlin, Lancelot, Queste, Mort Artu*), and sometimes to mark subdivisions within the *Merlin* and the *Lancelot*. Branch divisions have been followed by modern text editors. What can be learned is how different copies of the same text differ from each other in wording, picture, page layout and the like, prompting investigation of what those differences mean.

3. Pilot Project

We selected three manuscripts from the same 'workshop' made in Northern France or Flanders c. 1310–1325: London, British Library Additional 10292–4 and Royal 14.EIII, and a third copy now divided among Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 1, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 215 and Manchester, The John Rylands University Library MS French 1. We chose these because BL Add. 10292–4 is the most fully illustrated of all; it is complete; it contains the date of 12 February 1316 (1317 new style) 'carved' on a tomb on f. 55 in BL Add. 10292; it was the basis for Sommer's 1907–1913 edition of the text.

   This phase was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and by Visiting Fellowships for Alison Stones at All Souls and Magdalen Colleges Oxford and Corpus Christi College Cambridge. We worked from printouts from old black and white microfilms, from first-hand study of the originals, and from new colour slides shot by Alison Stones at Amsterdam or purchased from the libraries (British Library, Bodleian Library, Rylands Library). Pittburgh students scanned the slides with a view to eventually devising a web site. At the time, digital images were not available but the scanned images gave us useful working copies, particularly for text pages. In subsequent phases we were able to acquire better images, as described below.

4. Product Models

To analyse the manuscript page as a conceptual map on which can be plotted picture (subject, treatment), decoration (minor and major initials, pen-flourished, champie or foliate initials), text (episodes and events, names of characters), layout (columns, lines) and margins (decoration, annotations, blemishes) we developed a taxonomy of descriptors based on the contents of single pages (layout, script, decoration, illustration, text, marginalia, notes and annotations, physical signs of use and wear and tear, together with subdivisions of these categories). This was presented at the New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies conference at Harvard organized by Derek Pearsall in 1998 (Stones 2000). Each of the mark-up instances has associated spatial and descriptive

data further describing that particular mark-up. By using a standard descriptive framework, we were able to show how components of one page might be linked to similar components on other pages or in other manuscripts.

We built authority lists for the subjects of the illustrations of *Estoire*, *Agravain* (the last part of the *Lancelot*), *Queste* and *Mort Artu.*[3]

5. Developing a Series of Navigational Options

Navigating comparatively by 'branch' and 'episode' (cluster of related scenes) gives new insight in the use of the manuscripts.

Table 1 compares British Library (BL) manuscript Add. 10292 with Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica (BPH) ms. 1, ii. BL Add. 10292 will be posted on the web later through DIAMM (see below). Eventually the images will be included in the comparative table and each folio will be linked to the folio analysis.

In this excerpt, BL Add. 10292 gives many more illustrations than Amsterdam although the text of the latter is not abbreviated. However the pictures in Amsterdam often include more detail than those in BL Add. 10292 where the action is played out over more scenes. A major difference is that BL Add. 10292 emphasizes the legal aspects of the challenge to Queen Guinevere's legitimacy and the downfall of the lying False Guinevere and her sponsor. BL Add. incorporates a significant detail borrowed from legal illustration (cf. Gratian's *Decretum*) where the motif of a lighted taper is used to indicate the pronouncement of excommunication and anathema. The patron of BL Add. is likely to have had a particular interest in the legal aspects of the text, unlike the patron of Amsterdam.

6. Extending the Parameters of the Project

This phase was funded by the Fulbright Foundation and by a Digital Innovation Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies for Alison Stones. Our goal was to obtain better quality images of the Pilot Project manuscripts and to broaden the scope of the project to include more manuscripts and to plot them across time and space.

High resolution scans from the British Library of the illustrated pages in BL Add. 10292–4 and Royal 14.E.III. were purchased.

Photography is done by the Digital Image Archive of Medieval Music (DIAMM).[4] We had the illustrated pages in Amsterdam BPH 1 and Manchester, The John Rylands

---

3   See the appendices in Stones 1977, 1988, 2000, 2008, 2009, forthcoming; Blackman 1999, Meuwese 1999, Shailor 1984.
4   Cf. the chapter by Julia Craig-McFeely in this volume 307–339.

S IV 69. 17	BL Add. 10292, f. 151r. Rubric: *Ensi que li rois Artus tint la roine Genieure par le main et la bailla a garder le roi Galehot par deuant lor baronie. et les barons en orent grant pitie.* King Arthur entrusts Queen Guinevere to King Galehot, witnessed by the barons. L, champie initial Text: *Lors prent li roys la royne et en uait a Galehot et li liure par le main...*	
S IV 72. 9	BL Add. 10292, f. 152r. Rubric: *Ensi que on gete sentence sour le roy Artu.* The pope enjoins King Arthur to leave his new wife and take back the old one, extending towards him a lighted taper, a motif derived from the canon law indictment of excommunication and the pronouncement of anathema. O, champie initial Text: *Oor* [sic] *dist li contes que ensi est li roys Arthus departis de sa femme par le desloiaute de lautre Genieure...*	Amst., BPH 1, ii, f. 227v. Rubric: *Chi gist malade de meselerie li fausse royne et li roys Artus le vint veir.* The False Guinevere, crowned, lying on her deathbed with Bertolai at her side holding a covered vessel, repeats her confession to King Arthur and the barons. O, pen-flourished initial Text: *Or dist li contes que ensi est li rois Artus partis de sa femme par le desoiaute de lautre Genieure...*
S IV 75. 16	BL Add. 10292, f. 153r. Rubric: *Ensi comme li rois Artu se fist confesser dun hermite en son hermitage.* King Arthur, repentant, confessing to the hermit Amustans in his church-like hermitage. T, champie initial Text: *Tant dist mesires Gauuain au roy Artus son oncle...*	
S IV 76. 37	BL Add. 10292, f. 153v. Rubric: *Ensi que li roys Artu et se baronie oirent messe en.j. hermitage* King Arthur and his men hear mass in an elaborate, Gothic, hermitage. Q, champie initial Text: *Quant li roys ot ensi parler lermite si giete vn souspir...*	
S IV 79. 4	BL Add. 10292, f. 154r. Rubric: *Ensi que li fause Genieure gist mesele et si uo* (uo expunged) *vint li rois Artu parler a li.* The False Guinevere, with veiled head, lying on her deathbed with Bertolai at her side holding a ciborium with a cross on top, repeats her confession to King Arthur and the barons. D, champie initial Text: *Dame vous gisies en si dolereuse carire comme cele qui a tout le pooir du cors perdu...*	

Table 1. The end of the False Guinevere episode, comparing BL Add. 10292 and Amsterdam BPH 1, ii (BL Royal 14.E.III lacks the Lancelot section of the text); text references are to Sommer (vol. 4); contractions have been silently expanded.

Figure 1. Amsterdam, BPH, ms. 1, ii, f. 202r (opening of the False Guinevere episode from the *Lancelot* branch reproduced courtesy of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam).
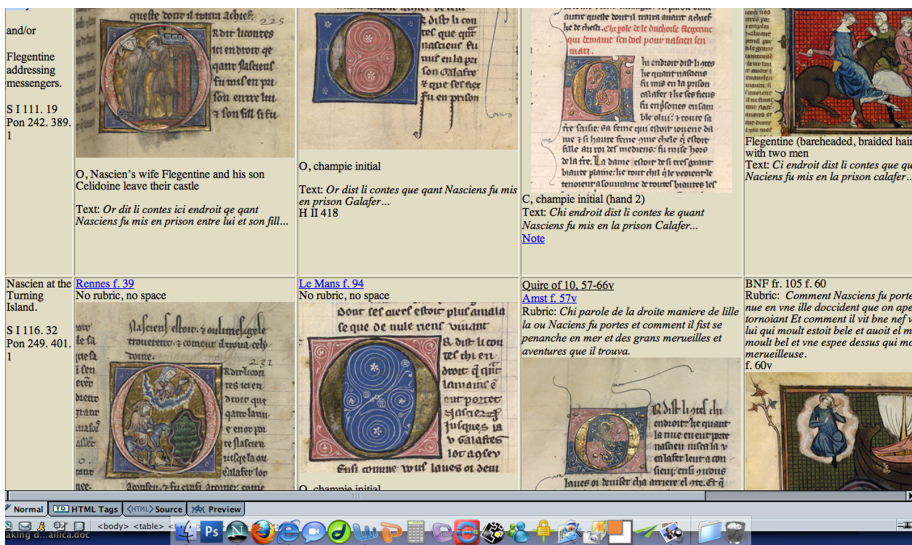
Figure 2. Maritime Adventures.

University Library French 1, Rennes BM 255 (c. 1220) and Le Mans MM 354 (c. 1285) photographed at high resolution by DIAMM.

We obtained permission from the Bibliothèque nationale de France to download for free and incorporate, or to link, *Lancelot-Grail* manuscripts from BnF sites Gallica and Mandragore. Downloading and resizing were done by University of Pittsburgh Art History graduate students.

We obtained permission to post images from the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam, and from Rennes BM 155 and Le Mans MM 354. The John Rylands University Library of Manchester has posted the images shot for the *Lancelot-Grail* Project by DIAMM on its web site. Lengthy attempts to negotiate a contract between the University of Pittsburgh and the British Library resulted in failure. We are now planning to display BL images through DIAMM under the terms of DIAMM's copyright agreement with the BL.

7. Comparative Selection and Treatment of Branches, Episodes, Folios

Fig. 2 shows a section from a comparative page of the Maritime Adventures episode from *Estoire* manuscripts in Rennes, Le Mans, Amsterdam and Paris (BnF). The choice

of champie initials links Le Mans and Amsterdam whereas long rubrics link Amsterdam and BnF and narrative scenes link Rennes and BnF: these findings point to levels of complexity in the transmission and illustration of these four copies which can be corroborated with further comparisons in order to reconstruct overall patterns of transmission and reception.

After the second phase of the *Lancelot-Grail* Project the collected data allowed the following conclusions: The manuscripts vary substantially in selection, placing, and treatment of illustrations. Sometimes a champie initial is substituted for an illustration. Of special interest is the treatment of Solomon's enchanted ship and its cross: sometimes as a cross on the sail, at other times a cross held by Tout-en-Tout in the ship. These pictorial variants depend on textual variants in the respective manuscripts, indicating that illustrators (or planners) paid careful attention to textual description (Stones 2009). A selector model is under development which will allow other manuscripts, branches, and episodes to be selectively compared.

8. The *Lancelot-Grail* Manuscript Tradition Across Time and Space

Using our expert art-historical and palaeographical analyses we plotted the chronological and geographical distribution of as many *Lancelot-Grail* manuscripts as possible, based on intensive research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and on scattered manuscripts in many other collections (such as New York, Yale, Berkeley, Bonn and others).

On the project web site we linked manuscripts either to pages created by ourselves or to existing sites of individual libraries. The laborious task of downloading, resizing, labelling, has been done by graduate students in art history at the University of Pittsburgh. The task continues.

The interest in the *Lancelot-Grail* romance spread from Northern France in the early 13th century to England and Italy: the map in figure 3 shows this graphically and is a sample of a series of projected maps which will chart in 50-year increments the gradual spread of interest as reflected in patterns of collecting and gift-giving between c. 1220 and 1504, the date of the latest dated manuscript.

The goals of this phase of the project are first to use mapping to better identify where and when the manuscripts were manufactured, and then to relate differences in manuscripts to local political, cultural, economic and other conditions. We hope our plotting of changing patterns of interest in these stories may lead to correlations with the significant improvements made in measurement, navigation and other geographic technologies.
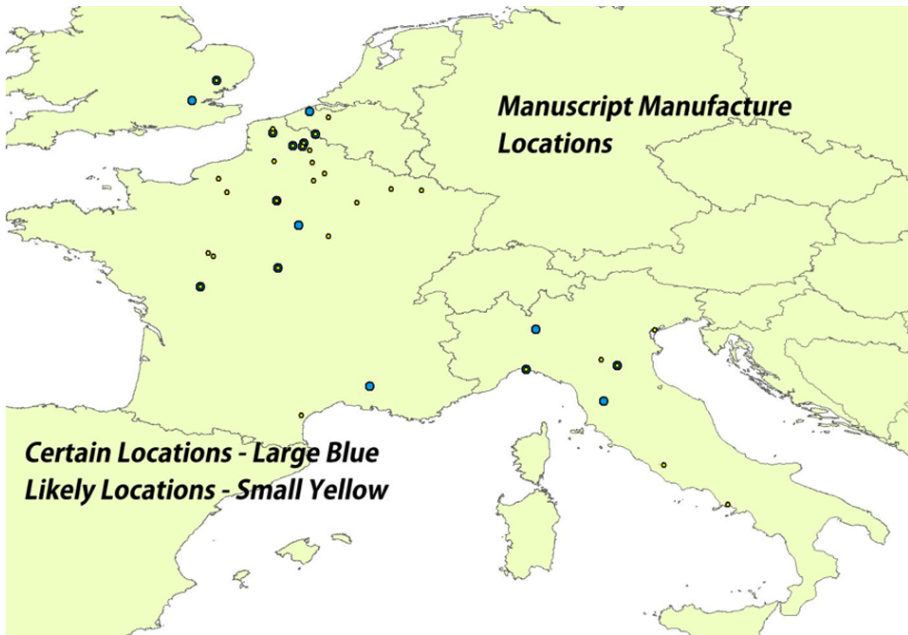
Figure 3. Sample map of distribution of *Lancelot-Grail* manuscripts.

9. Future Plans

The above outline indicates some of the directions that research on the *Lancelot-Grail* manuscripts have taken in the previous phases of research and development. The results of each phase can now be applied and exploited in more detail both on the web and in conference papers and published articles. Our goals are to make much more of our analysis available on the web and to unite in tabular form the illustrations with the descriptive and analytical research that has been carried out so far in the project. We hope our approach will be transferable to other manuscript projects.

Bibliography[5]

Beazley, Charles Raymond. *The Dawn of Modern Geography.* 3 vols. London: John Murray. 1897–1906.

---

5   Further references to articles by project participants are listed on the project web site.

Blackman, Susan. "A Pictorial Synopsis of Arthurian Episodes for Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours". *Word and Image in Arthurian Literature.* Ed. Keith Busby. New York-London: Garland, 1996. 3–57.

Digital Scriptorium. Columbia: Columbia University Libraries, [1996–2010]. <http://www.scriptorium.columbia.edu/>.

Edson, Evelyn. *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World. The British Library Studies in Map History.* Volume I. London: The British Library, 1997.

The History of Cartography. Eds. John Brian Harley and David Woodward. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Kennedy, Elspeth and Alison Stones. "Signs and Symbols in the *Estoire del saint Graal* and the *Queste del saint Graal." Signs and Symbols* (Harlaxton Medieval Studies XVIII). Eds. John Cherry and Ann Payne. Donington (Lincs.): Shaun Tyas. 2009. 150–167.

Lancelot-Grail Project. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, [1995–2010]. <http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/>.

Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes. Eds. Keith Busby et al. 2 Volumes. Athens (GA) / Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993.

Meuwese, Martine. "Three Illustrated *Prose Lancelots* from the same Atelier." *Text and Image: Studies in the French Illustrated Book from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 81/3). Eds. David J. Adams and Adrian Armstrong. Manchester: The John Rylands University Library, 1999. 97–125.

Sommer, Heinrich Oskar. *The Vulgate Version of Arthurian Romances.* 7 vols. Washington (DC): Carnegie Institution, 1909–1913.

Stones, Alison. "The Earliest Illustrated Prose *Lancelot* Manuscript ?" *Reading Medieval Studies* 3 (1977): 3–44.

Stones, Alison. "Some Aspects of Arthur's Death in Medieval Art." *The Passing of Arthur.* Eds. Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe. New York: Garland, 1988. 52–101.

Stones, Alison. "Teaching and Research on the Web: Three Sites." *Computing and Visual culture: Representation and Interpretation.* [Fourteenth Annual CHArt Conference.] Ed. Tanya Szrajber. London: CHArt, 1999. 111–122.

Stones, Alison. "The *Lancelot-Graal* Project." *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscripts.* Ed. Derek Pearsall. York Medieval Studies. Woodbridge: Brewer. 2000. 167–82.

Stones, Alison. "The Illustrations of *Mort Artu* in Yale 229: Formats, Choices, and Comparisons." *The Mort Artu in Yale 229.* Ed. Elizabeth Willingham. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008. 263–316.

Stones, Alison. "The Illustrations of the *Queste del saint Graal* in Yale 229 and other *Queste* manuscripts." *The Queste del saint Graal in Yale 229.* Ed. Elizabeth Willingham. Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming.

Woledge, Brian. *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française.* Geneva: Droz, 1954. And *Supplément.* Geneva: Droz, 1975.